

Informed Consent for Counseling Services

Welcome. You are reading this because you are either considering seeing me for counseling, or have already made an appointment. Either way...congratulations. It takes courage to seek counseling. This document contains information about me and my practice, as well as what you can expect in our sessions. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign it or at any time in the future.

My Background

I graduated with a Master's degree in Counseling from Georgia State University and a diploma of Christian Counseling from Richmond Graduate University (previously called Psychological Studies Institute) in Atlanta in 1991. I worked in Georgia and Ohio as a Licensed Professional Counselor with adults, couples, adolescents, and children with a variety of issues. I became a stay at home mom when I moved to Mississippi in 2002, and acquired my LPC license here in Mississippi in 2010. I have been at counseling at St. Mark's since October of 2011.

Therapeutic approach

I believe that the client-therapist relationship is central to the healing process of therapy. I will strive to create a safe place for you to relax, take a deep look inside, talk, learn, and grow. This process is different for everyone and should not be put on a timetable. A big part of what I do is to help people identify lies that have bound them and to encourage them to embrace truth that brings freedom.

Christian emphasis

Because I believe Jesus is the Father of all Truth, He is the One I look to for help as I counsel others. I will be sensitive to where you are spiritually, seeking to incorporate Biblical truths and prayer into sessions as appropriate when the timing is right.

Counseling services

Counseling (also called *therapy*) is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in counseling, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. I, as your counselor, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections. Counseling has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness, because the process of counseling often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life. However, counseling has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. But, there are no guarantees about what will happen. Counseling requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

After I see you for the first time, I will be able to give you just an initial impression of how I think I can help you. After 3-4 sessions, you and I will know each other well enough to formulate some goals. You should evaluate this information and make your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them

whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

Appointments and Fees

Your first session will last approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes, and there is **no charge** for our first session. Consider it a “try it before you buy it” approach... so you can see if I am a good fit for you. Subsequent sessions will last 50 minutes and are \$50. (Lower rates are available for those who need them). If you are late, we will still need to end on time. I have chosen to set my fee substantially lower than the going rate and, therefore, do not participate in insurance plans. Payment may be made by cash, check, or credit/debit card. **I do charge \$25 for a missed appointment. If you are unable to give 24 hour notice to the cancellation of an appointment, you may be charged this \$25 fee** (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control.)

There will also be a prorated charge for phone conversations lasting longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings or consultations which you have requested, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request of me. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires my participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required even if another party compels me to testify.

Confidentiality:

My policies about confidentiality, as well as other information about your privacy rights, are fully described in a separate documents entitled: Confidentiality Policy and HIPPA Notice of Privacy Practices. When you sign this document, you are agreeing that you have been provided with a copy of those documents and we have discussed those issues. Please remember that you may reopen the conversation at any time during our work together.

Contacting me:

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. If, for any number of unseen reasons, you do not hear from me or I am unable to reach you, and you feel you cannot wait for a return call or if you feel unable to keep yourself safe, 1) go to your Local Hospital Emergency Room, or 2) call 911 and ask to speak to the mental health worker on call. I will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences, and provide you with the name and phone number of the mental health professional covering my practice. For scheduling matters, it is fine to contact me through texting and email. You will be provided with a separate policy about emailing and texting and be given the choice for secured email and texting.

My Social Media Policy:

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

Jo Hebert, LPC

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Other rights:

If you are unhappy with what is happening in therapy, I hope you will talk with me so that I can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that I refer you to another therapist, and you are free to end therapy at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about my specific training and experience. You have the right to expect that I will not have social or sexual relationships with clients or with former clients.

Consent to Counseling:

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Agreement, the Confidentiality policy and the Notice of Privacy Practices and agree to their terms.

(Client Signature)

(Date)

(Parent signature if under 18)

(Date)

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