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## ***Informed Consent for Couple's Therapy***

***Couples counseling can be a rewarding and sometimes difficult experience. The decision to enter into couple's therapy is often made during an especially stressful and painful time in your relationship. It requires courage and a willingness to explore issues that can be extremely private. In the interest of providing a safe and protected environment in which you can feel safe to explore difficult topics and seek solutions, I have developed policies intended to protect each of you and your relationship as a whole.***

**Approach to Couple's Counseling:** I approach the change process from a system perspective which means that I recognize the roles of family, culture, environment and experience in creating the lens through which we all view our world, our relationships, and ourselves. Couple's therapy begins with an evaluation of your relationship, past and present, and working together to define your goals for creating a healthier and more satisfying partnership. Because therapy is a significant investment of time, energy and money, I encourage you to ask questions of me to help the two of you determine whether you feel I am a good fit to help you work toward your relationship goals. The time required for achieving your therapeutic goals varies. It is important that you maintain consistency in attendance and frequency so as to best utilize the therapeutic process. You may feel during this experience, an increase in stress, heightened emotions, increased conflict, uncertainty and/or other uncomfortable feelings. It is important to discuss these in session and to recognize that this can be an indication of change taking place and can be a sign of progress. The experience of change can sometimes float gently into our lives on calm waters but sometimes it roars in on high seas and heavy winds!

**Confidentiality:** Our communication is confidential and will not be divulged to anyone without your prior knowledge and written approval. The exceptions to confidentiality required by law include: threat to health or safety of yourself or others, and/or abuse of a child, elder or disabled person.

In couple therapy I view my work with you from a perspective that treats your RELATIONSHIP as my client. This means that our focus will be on helping both of you move towards greater health in your relationship.

In the interest of maintaining balance and integrity in the therapeutic process, I maintain a "**NO SECRETS**" policy in couple's therapy. Because my focus is on, and allegiance is to, the relationship and not to either partner as an individual, I will hold no secrets for either partner. I frequently find it useful to have at least one individual session with you separately. In this case, the individual session is still considered as part of the couple's counseling relationship. Therefore, information disclosed during individual sessions, as well as by telephone or email, may be brought into the couple's sessions (unless

significant safety risk exists or in my clinical judgment a mental health issue warrants special consideration). Please do not contact me with information that you do not want divulged to your partner unless your safety is concerned. If an individual shares sensitive information with me, I will offer that individual every opportunity to disclose the relevant information and will provide guidance in this process.

If the individual chooses not to disclose this information, I may determine that it is necessary to discontinue couples counseling and may provide referrals to therapists who can provide individual therapy.

**Length and Cost of Therapy Sessions:** Couple's therapy sessions will be either 60 or 90 minutes in duration depending on your needs. Time will not be added for late arrivals. If you or your partner arrives late for your appointment, the session will be postponed until both of you are present and will end at the regularly scheduled time. I do not provide an individual session if one partner does not attend the appointment. This provides the couple with the safety of knowing I am working for them both equally. The fee for a 50 minute session is 175. The fee will be due at the conclusion of each session. Credit/debit cards are acceptable for payment.

**Health Insurance:** I do not bill insurance carriers. Some health insurance companies will reimburse clients for counseling services at an "out of network provider" rate and some will not. I encourage you to contact your insurance provider regarding the policies and procedures of reimbursement.

If you do seek reimbursement for my services, I will be happy to provide you with a receipt containing all of the required information for submittal to your carrier.

Regardless of whether you are seeking reimbursement, you are responsible for payment at the conclusion of each session.

\*\*\*Health insurance companies often require that I provide a mental health diagnosis and include that information on your receipt before they agree to reimburse you. In the event a diagnosis is required, I will inform you of the diagnosis prior to submittal to the health insurance company. This diagnosis will become a part of your permanent insurance records.

**Interruptions in Therapy:** I may at times need to interrupt our meetings due to situations that may include professional development, vacations, medical emergencies, etc. If such interruptions should occur, you will be informed and together we will develop a plan of action should you need support or assistance while I am away.

**Cancellation Policy:** Because of the nature of therapy and the length of each session, I can only work with a limited number of clients each day. Therefore, a missed appointment prevents me from seeing someone else in need. For this reason, I require a 24-hour advance notification of cancellation. The session fee is due if the appointment is canceled with less than 24-hour notice. If for any reason I need to cancel and cannot give you 24 hours notice, I will provide our next session free of charge.

**Contact Between Sessions and Emergencies:** I am available by phone between therapy sessions; however, I do not offer a 24 hour service and in the event of an emergency, please follow the safety plan we created and/or go to your nearest

emergency room. You may also call the Washington County Crisis Line at 503-291-9111.

While I can be reached between sessions via email, I request that all electronic communication be limited to logistical information only (e.g. scheduling appointments) and not include sensitive clinical information. Please be aware that if my email were breached your confidentiality may be compromised in either circumstance.

**Facebook, Linked In, and other social media:** I cannot have contact with you in these media due to laws that require me to protect the confidentiality of our relationship

**Release of records:** Because couple therapy involves more than one person, no identifiable health information, including clinical notes, will be released without written authorization of BOTH participants. If this authorization is provided and the documents are released, only copies will be provided. There will be a charge at the rate of \$30 for 10 or fewer pages, 50 cents for 11-50 pages and 25 cents for each page thereafter, due in advance of release. Time spent preparing summary documents will be charged at 100.00 per hour and will be prepaid.

In an effort to create a safe and respectful therapeutic environment, I maintain a policy of no involvement in legal cases involving any client seen presently or in the past.

***Your signature below indicates that you have read, understood, and have had opportunity to ask questions regarding the above information and that you wish to proceed with couple's counseling.***

***Both please sign this copy.***

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Client Signature

Date

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Client Signature

Date

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Cynthia Aerni, M.S., LPC

Date