

## CLIENT INFORMATION FORM

**Rick Hanson, Ph.D.**  
**Licensed Psychologist: PSY 12938**  
**25 Mitchell Blvd., Suite 3, San Rafael, CA 94903**  
**415/491-4900**

I would like you to understand the policies, approach to treatment, and legal/ethical guidelines which make up part of the framework of the professional services I provide. Those services include psychotherapy, consultations, assessment, and reports. (For simplicity, the terms "services" and "psychotherapy" are used interchangeably in this form.) A clear framework helps make it safe for the exploration, vulnerability, and self expression which are typically key elements in psychological services. I am not trying to be legalistic, but thorough and clear; the topics discussed and much of the text are based on recommendations from professional organizations.

Please review this form carefully and make sure that you understand all of its points. Please also read "Approach to Psychotherapy." If you have any questions or reactions about either document, please tell me immediately. If you can agree to the policies and legal/ethical guidelines contained in this form, then sign one copy, return it to me, and keep another copy.

I reserve the right to revise these policies unilaterally from time to time. If this occurs, I will distribute the new policy for your review, and if it is agreeable to you, ask you to sign it. If you disagree with any element of the new policy, we will discuss that and try to come to some accommodation. If that is not possible, then we will need to stop working together and I will refer you to other licensed professionals.

### SERVICES AND FEES

Hours: A single "hour" of therapy is actually fifty minutes long so I can have a little time between sessions. (Otherwise, an hour of services is sixty minutes.) If you are late, we will still need to end on time. If I am late, you will receive a full session.

Psychotherapy sessions: To get the most out of psychotherapy, it is important to maintain a regular schedule of sessions, typically one or two per week. Sessions should be missed only if absolutely necessary, and rescheduled during that same week if at all possible. It can feel difficult to end a therapy session on time. Your understanding and cooperation on this will be appreciated.

Fees: The fee for a fifty-minute "hour" of services is \$\_\_\_\_\_. Fractions of that time are charged for proportionately; five minutes are considered one-tenth of one hour. The fee is paid at the end of each appointment, and please make checks out to Dr. Rick Hanson. Please have your check ready in advance so that you will not need to take up our time preparing it. As a general principle, I charge for time spent on your behalf, including telephone calls, reviewing records, testing, writing treatment plans, submitting detailed information to insurance companies, and communicating with other individuals related to your therapy.

In the unlikely event that your check is returned, I ask that you reimburse any bank charges to me. In the extremely unlikely event that you have not paid a fee due me within 60 days of the last date of services provided, I reserve the right to send your account to a collection agency and to pursue payment through legal means if necessary.

If at any point in our working together, you anticipate not being able to sustain its cost, please tell me early on so we can discuss possible options. I occasionally increase my fees. I will notify you at least two months in advance of any increase. If an increased fee is a problem for you, please let me know right away.

At the beginning of psychotherapy: New clients may fill out a standard autobiographical form and may take one or more psychological tests. I often review records of previous psychotherapy or testing, and/or confer with the professionals who performed these. Gathering this information helps our work be most effective.

Records: I take notes of most appointments. My notes are brief and summary in nature, and an incomplete account of any given appointment. While I take reasonable precautions to preserve the confidentiality of my records, it is conceivable that that confidentiality may be breached.

If you wish to review my records, I may give you either a copy or a summary, at my discretion. I may charge you a reasonable fee for copying or summarizing your records. I will not withhold records in the unlikely event that you have an outstanding fee due to me. If you review the original records, it is best to do so while meeting with me so that I can translate my personal shorthand and explain aspects of the records that are incomplete.

I may choose to withhold a copy of my records if I believe that reviewing them would have negative consequences for you. In this case, you can designate a psychologist or psychiatrist of your choice to review your records; I will transmit a copy or summary of my records to that individual who can decide whether to release them in their entirety to you.

Missed appointments: Missed appointments with less than 24 hours notice will be charged a full fee, unless in my judgment there has been an emergency.

Insurance: Health insurance can help make psychological services possible, but it requires some work. If it is available, it is your responsibility to collect reimbursement from your insurance company. I can give you statements upon your request which you can submit.

Please be aware that using insurance reimbursement involves an inherent breach of your confidentiality. I cannot prevent this information from becoming accessible to other individuals or insurance companies.

Insurance benefits are usually limited. If your benefits run out, it is possible that you may not be able to continue to afford the cost of services with me. If this occurs, I can refer you to other professionals.

Telephone calls and emergencies: I can be reached by telephone between sessions at 415/491-4900. If it is urgent, and you cannot reach me at my office, please leave a message on my office phone and call me at home, at 415/479-7325.

If you cannot reach me, or if you simply feel the need to talk with a professional, I urge you to immediately contact another licensed professional or the emergency room of a local hospital; the crisis service at Marin General Hospital can be reached at 415/499-6666. I will communicate with you as soon as I can. Because of my full schedule, I have a very limited capacity to respond to psychological crises and

emergencies; please be aware of this, and you may wish to consider working with another therapist.

Changes in schedule: Please tell me in advance of any planned breaks in your regular schedule of appointments. I will also let you know of breaks in my schedule. Some disruptions in the continuity of services are inevitable, and if desired, a referral can be made to another professional during my absence. I will have another therapist cover for me if I am out of town.

Sometimes changes in my overall schedule are necessary, and you may be asked to choose another appointment time. Although every effort will be made to prevent this, it is possible that changes in my schedule may make it impossible for you to see me; in this unlikely case a referral to another professional would be made.

Duration of services: As a general principle, more limited goals are typically associated with a shorter duration of services. If you wish to have a specific number of appointments, perhaps because of limited insurance benefits, please let me know when we begin working together so we can plan accordingly. Time-limited psychotherapy can be very effective, but its success requires that our aims be clear and that you grapple directly with your issues both during and between appointments. In more open-ended work, we keep going as long as we each feel the process is valuable and you are able to sustain its costs.

Termination of therapy: Good therapy ends. If I propose the ending, it is typically because you seem to have accomplished your therapeutic goals. Occasionally I feel that a client would be better served with a different professional. I also reserve the right to end therapy if a client does not adhere to these policies.

You may withdraw from therapy at any time. If you begin to feel that you need to or would like to end therapy, for whatever reason, please discuss this with me early on. Closure in psychotherapy is important, and usually calls for a few sessions prior to a mutually agreed-upon termination date.

Questions and concerns: If you have any questions or concerns about the direction or approach taken in my services, please discuss them early on with me. I can readily provide a referral to another professional, perhaps for a second opinion.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I respect your rights to privacy regarding information you share with me. I would like you to understand the legal and ethical limitations to confidentiality so that you can make an informed decision about what you disclose.

The typical way in which confidential information could be conveyed is if you specifically agree to disclosures of confidential material by me (such as allowing me to speak with your physician, former therapist, other family members, school officials, and so forth) as a means of furthering our work together. Additionally, in atypical situations, I can be compelled or allowed under law or ethical canons to disclose confidential information (and I am not required to inform clients of my actions) *if* any of the following conditions exist:

- My records are subpoenaed or my testimony is compelled, and I must comply with a legitimate court order.
- You are a danger to yourself or to the person or property of others, or unable to care for yourself. (Involuntary hospitalization may be required.)
- You make a serious threat of physical violence against a reasonably identifiable victim.
- I reasonably suspect that a minor is the victim of neglect or sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, or an elder or dependent adult is the victim of abuse.
- You seek my services in order to enable yourself or another to commit a crime, or to avoid detection of or apprehension for a previous crime.
- I am appointed by a court to assess you, to determine your sanity in a criminal proceeding, or to establish your competence under law.
- I must file a report which may become public (such as court-ordered psychotherapy within a drug-treatment program).
- A client of mine is under sixteen years old and the victim of a crime.
- After you have died, our communications are important to establish your actions or intentions regarding your will or other disposition of property, or important to an issue between parties claiming through you.
- You have claimed mental/emotional damage as part of a legal action (such as after a car accident).
- You make or threaten a legal, administrative, or ethical claim against me.
- You default on a fee due me.

I occasionally consult with other professionals. Such consultations can be helpful to a client, and reasonable precautions are taken to withhold identifying information.

I may also use administrative help, who has signed a confidentiality agreement and has access to basic client information and may contact you for scheduling.

When working with a couple or family, clients waive confidentiality with regard to each other. This encourages direct communication and prevents situations in which I cannot reveal information from one client which could benefit another.

### **RISKS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY**

If you and I work at it, there is a good chance that you will gain from psychotherapy. On the other hand, psychotherapy carries risks which you should be aware of. Everyone has issues in their life, but not all of these are symptoms of a mental disorder that demands treatment. Therapy may be a valuable though elective personal growth experience, but not a medical necessity. The risks of therapy should be weighed against its benefits.

There are many approaches to psychotherapy, and the one I employ may not be the right one for you. And even if the general approach seems right, sometimes the "fit" between two well-intentioned people, therapist and client, is just not right. For whatever reason, if you feel you are not getting sufficient benefit from therapy with me, let's discuss it, and if desired, a referral to another professional can be made.

Psychotherapy is a difficult process with uncertain benefits. Despite our efforts, matters can get worse, as well as better. There is no promise of a "cure," or that you will solve the problem(s) or attain the goal(s) which brought you to therapy. The appropriate duration of one's psychotherapy can be unpredictable. Issues and difficulties will probably remain after termination of both time-limited and more

open-ended therapy. For you to get the most out of therapy, you will need to attend scheduled sessions, probably do some mutually agreed upon homework, and spend some time each week really thinking about the therapy. Even then, beneficial results may not occur.

Even when positive results are gained, they may be different from those initially intended. Or benefits in one area may lead to problems in other areas; for example, an awareness of new choices may raise anxiety about making the right choice. Further, if a couple or family comes to therapy, the couple or family as a whole may benefit in some ways while an individual member may not. In couples' or family counseling, my focus is on relationships and it is not my task to "fix" one family member or another, or somehow get that person to see the error of his or her ways.

By its nature, psychotherapy stirs things up. Sometimes feelings, desires, memories, or aspects of the self surface to awareness or become more intense. Some of the emotions, thoughts, or experiences which emerge may not reflect literal reality or historical accuracy. This process of "stirring" may be welcome, but it can also be unsettling or distressing. If you are experiencing any discomfort or resistance related to therapy, I would like to know about it. It is especially vital that you contact me immediately if you feel that you might do something destructive to yourself or others.

There are alternatives that can sometimes be as effective as psychotherapy, including medication, brief psychotherapy, self-help groups, talking with friends or relatives, discussions with clergy, reading books, or no psychotherapy at all. While these are often useful adjuncts to psychotherapy, you should consider them as replacements as well.

Finally, psychotherapy is not medical care. I cannot anticipate health problems you may have or be responsible for their treatment. If you think that you may have or develop a physical dysfunction or disorder, I recommend that you seek the care of a physician immediately.

\* \* \*

I have read, understood, and agree to the above:

Client name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Client name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If client is a minor:

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_