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Dear Client,

This letter explains important aspects of how we work. We encourage you to read it before you meet with your therapist, so that you have the chance to ask any questions you have either about our way of working or about psychotherapy in general. Please feel free to bring this into your session.

We are licensed mental health professionals in the state of Florida. We operate from a perspective that is health-oriented, emphasizes empowerment and collaboration, and affirms and supports diversity. Our therapeutic backgrounds are best described as a approach that is sensitive to the influence of the oppression and power differentials individuals experience in the various domains of their lives (e.g., gender, race, culture, class, health). It is important that we collaboratively establish the goals for our therapeutic work.

Over the years, we have come to recognize the powerful influence of disturbing life events and trauma in our everyday lives and relationships. As a result of this, we specialize in EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) as our therapeutic approach to release cognitive, emotional, and/or physical blocks. We will discuss how it works and what you can expect from the experience as we begin our work together.

Different family members may experience unequal benefits from therapy. It is possible that others not participating the therapy will potentially be affected by the changes occurring in individuals engaged in therapy. Therapy may also lead to outcomes viewed as undesirable by one or more family members.

Services are rendered on a fee for service arrangement. The fee for an extended initial interview is \$225.00. The standard fee for subsequent services is \$150 per clinical hour. Unless other arrangements have been made, payment is expected at the time of services. We will make every possible effort to work with you in the event of financial difficulties, but you are ultimately responsible for the charges incurred. If the unpaid balance becomes excessive, it is necessary to discuss and agree upon a payment plan before the therapy can continue. If services are not paid ninety days after receiving a statement, we may initiate whatever action may be required for the collection of unpaid fees. A \$35.00 service charge is assessed for each returned check.

Sessions are generally 45-50 minutes, but you and your therapist may agree to work for longer periods of time if indicated or needed. The frequency of sessions and the length of the psychotherapy are aspects of the work that you, the client, and your therapist will decide together. Generally, therapy will continue until you decide your work is complete. We encourage you to ask pertinent questions before initiating treatment and at any time during therapy. Your therapist will answer them honestly to the best of her/his ability. You can terminate therapy at any time. It is important to begin sessions on time; our schedules require that we end sessions promptly, which means that a client who arrives late for an appointment will not have a full session.

When you schedule an appointment, that time is reserved for you. In the event that you are not able to keep that appointment, please let your therapist know as soon as possible. You will not be charged for sessions that are missed when I have at least 24 hours notice. However, **if an appointment is missed, and notification is not received 24 hours in advance, you will be charged on that day for that missed session, regardless of the reason.** Should you cease attending sessions with me for 30 days without prior indication of reason, your case will be considered closed. You may reinstate therapy with me at a later date by contacting me at (386) 775-0990.

Our office hours are by appointment. Messages for us can be left on our private voice mail at any time. We are not available on a 24-hour on-call basis. We return calls as our schedule permits. Please feel free to email us. In the event of an emergency, clients may go to the emergency room of any hospital or call 911. The time to use an emergency room or 911 is when physical safety is at risk. In the event of a crisis, you may contact ACT at (386) 255-7384 or the Neighborhood Center at (386) 734-8120.

Services may be covered by health insurance, depending upon the individual policy. Please check with your insurance company if you wish to utilize the outpatient mental health care benefits. We encourage clients

to read their insurance policies with care; many policies place significant limitations on mental health benefits, and it is important to know what these are. It is also important to know that using mental health benefits may have implications for future insurance coverage. We ask that clients please let us know if it would be helpful to discuss such implications: we are happy to do so. Though we do not deal directly with all insurance companies, we will be happy to prepare a statement for you to submit if we are not a participating provider.

We are sometimes asked to provide documentation when clients are using their insurance. If we receive such a request, it is our policy not to release material until the client and the therapist have discussed the matter and there is a written release from all individuals involved in the therapy in the file. Although certain confidentiality laws apply to insurance companies, once material is released your therapist no longer controls who may have access to the released information.

We have both a legal and ethical duty to ensure that what a client and therapist talk about remains confidential. In addition, both the law and ethics require that the therapist discuss circumstances in which aspects of the work may not be kept confidential. If the therapist has reason to believe that a child, an elderly or disabled person is being physically/sexually abused, neglected, or taken advantage of, that therapist is legally obligated to disclose this information to a state agency. Your therapist will disclose confidential information to the appropriate authorities and/or to the person(s) that may be in danger if s/he believes someone's safety is seriously at risk. Should a situation arise in which a significant other might be helpful in averting an immediate danger to a client, your therapist will contact them AND notify the client. In addition, if a client's mental status or emotional condition is introduced at a legal proceeding, your therapist may be required to turn records over to a court or to testify. Additionally, a therapist can reveal information if s/he is named as a defendant in a lawsuit brought by the client. For clients who would find it helpful, we can provide a copy of the actual laws and regulations governing confidentiality. Should the necessity of releasing confidential information arise, your therapist will make every reasonable effort to discuss this matter with the client first; it is our preference to make any such disclosure together with the client, from our office.

We consult with other professionals in the fields when we judge that doing so would be helpful to the therapy. When speaking with other professionals we will attempt to disguise any identifying information about a client. Any professional with whom we speak is also bound by confidentiality. We are not experts in matters involving the law, and do not conduct evaluations ordered by a court. If a client is involved in, or intends to commence, a legal proceeding in which any aspect of his or her mental or emotional functioning will be examined, it is ESSENTIAL that this matter be discussed as soon as possible.

We are NOT medical physicians or psychiatrists; therefore we will not provide you with advice, other than referral, in these areas. We are not responsible in any way for the actions of any professionals to whom we might refer you.

Finally, it is important to know that other therapies are available. Clients should feel free to explore other therapies if they find this therapy not as helpful as they would like; we can provide referrals to therapists whose way of working is different than our own. Our first session will include time for you to ask questions you may have about anything in this letter or about counseling or psychotherapy in general.

We look forward to beginning our work together.

The Independent Private Practitioners of EMDR Counseling Associates

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