

INFORMED CONSENT FOR OUTDOOR THERAPY DURING COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

This Informed Consent for Outdoor Therapy During COVID-19 Public Health Crisis (this "Consent") contains important information about our mutual decision to begin therapy sessions outdoors in light of the COVID-19 public health crisis. It is a supplement to the general Office Policies and Informed Consent for Treatment that you agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together, as well as my Notice of Privacy Practices. Please read this Consent carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

OUTDOOR THERAPY INFORMATION

Outdoor (or walk/talk) psychotherapy may involve sitting outdoors on a bench or in a public place such as a park pavilion. It may also take the form of walking while addressing therapeutic goals and topics. If you decide to walk, some of the activities might include walking on sidewalks/bike paths and/or exploring public parks and open spaces. While movement may be a benefit to you physically, the focus of the experience is therapy, not exercise. You will be invited to set the walking pace that feels appropriate for you, and to choose preferred areas in the environment that feel most comfortable. (Note that outdoor therapy is a service I am offering you individually. As with any appointment, please do not bring others, including children and pets, without discussing it with me first.)

Potential Benefits

Outdoor therapy has a variety of potential benefits that may help us determine if this an appropriate mode of therapy for you:

- Meeting outside of the typical office environment can provide a change of scenery and help in getting "unstuck" in the therapeutic process.
- Meeting in person instead of virtually can enhance presence and connection.
- Evidence that bilateral rhythmic movement (i.e. walking) can evoke potentially helpful changes in brain chemistry and enhance processing difficult therapy material.
- Expanded options for grounding, relaxation, or mindfulness strategies.
- Less formal/clinical setting can increase accessibility and comfort.
- Empirical evidence that contact with nature decreases rumination and negative mood states, and positively impacts attention and concentration.

- Greater connection to the natural world and the environment has been shown to improve well-being.
- Other specific benefits related to the treatment plan (gradual exposure for phobias, social anxiety, etc.).

Potential Risks

There are possible risks of outdoor therapy, including, but not limited to:

- Accidental injuries from tripping or falling while walking, or potentially being struck by a bicyclist or a car.
- Physical dangers including insect stings, animal bites, falling branches or sticks, sunburn, exposure to heat/cold, and similar risks.
- Adverse weather conditions including heat, rain, and storms); exposure to poor air quality (see section below).
- Decreased focus on surroundings, including hazards, conditions, and individuals who might present potential safety risks.
- Potential limitations on exploring uncomfortable therapy content (thoughts, feelings, memories) that might be dealt with more openly in a closed private setting

Confidentiality Issues

- Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Though every attempt will be made to not engage in private conversations when others are in close proximity, it is not possible to guarantee that our conversations will not be heard by others.
- Coming into contact with a known person: if we encounter someone I know, I will not disclose that you are a client or disclose any other confidential information. If you come into contact with a known person, I will not initiate interaction with that person, but will follow your lead in guiding any interactions, with the limitation that I will not continue engaging in any psychotherapy-related discussions with the third person present.
- Given the prevalence of cellphones, it is also possible that you may be photographed or videoed with me without your knowledge and that we would have no control over the dissemination of those photos/videos.
- Perceived informality of the interaction: although outdoor therapy might feel more like a social interaction rather than a therapeutic interaction, it is a

therapeutic activity. Despite the relative informality of the interaction, our relationship will continue to be entirely professional, and not a social relationship.

Weather/Air Quality and Alternative Arrangements

Please dress appropriately for being outdoors, including layers of clothing to accommodate changing weather conditions, and shoes that are comfortable for walking in a park setting. You may want to consider various forms of sun protection (sunblock, hat, etc.), as well as a water bottle to rehydrate, snacks, or any other personal items that might add to your comfort during the session.

I will reach out to you the day before our appointment to make alternate arrangements if inclement weather is predicted during our meeting, or if we are currently experiencing local air quality concerns that necessitate limiting outdoor activities.

Additionally, you agree to let me know if for whatever reason (injury, illness, etc.) you are unable to meet outdoors on a given day, including personal preference for your therapeutic process. If we cannot meet outdoors, we may proceed with a phone/video appointment, or arrange to reschedule if mutually possible and desired.

Note that by signing this Consent, you represent and warrant to me that there are no physical conditions or other limitations limiting your ability to participate in outdoor therapy. I do not provide emergency services of any kind, and if you appear to suffer a medical or psychiatric emergency during our outdoor time together, I will call 911.

COVID-19 Specific Information

I have begun offering the option of engaging in therapy outdoors as a way to mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by minimizing time spent in close proximity to others while indoors. The decision about whether to engage in outdoor therapy is based on current conditions and guidelines, which may change at any time. It is possible that a return to remote telehealth services will be necessary at some point based on health and safety considerations. This decision will be made in consultation with you. If you have concerns about meeting through telehealth, we will talk about it first and try to address any issues. You understand that, if I believe it is necessary, I may determine that we return to telehealth for everyone's well-being.

If you decide at any time that you would feel safer returning to telehealth services, I will also respect that decision, as long as it is feasible and clinically appropriate.

You understand that while the risk of COVID-19 exposure may be reduced by meeting outdoors, you are nevertheless assuming some risk of exposure to the coronavirus (or other public health risk). This risk may increase if you travel to our meeting site by public transportation, cab, or ridesharing service.

To engage in outdoor therapy, you agree to take certain precautions which will help keep everyone (you, me, our families, and other clients) safer from exposure, sickness, and possible death. If you do not adhere to these safeguards, it may result in our starting or returning to a telehealth arrangement.

Please initial each item to indicate that you understand and agree to these actions:

- You will only keep your appointment if you are symptom free.
- If your temperature is elevated (100° F or more), or if you have other symptoms of the coronavirus, you agree to notify me prior to the appointment. If you wish to cancel for this reason, I won't charge you our normal cancellation fee.
- You will wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately prior to our meeting.
- We will keep a distance of 6 feet and there will be no physical contact (e.g. no shaking hands).
- You will wear a mask or other appropriate face covering while engaging in outdoor therapy. (Note: we may mutually agree on meeting without masks when outdoors, and may shift our decision based as local, state or federal orders are released over the course of the pandemic.)
- You agree to avoid touching your face or eyes with your hands. If you do, you will immediately wash or sanitize your hands. Please have hand sanitizer with you.
- You agree to take steps between appointments to minimize your exposure to COVID.
- If you have been exposed to someone that you know is actively infected or otherwise shows signs or symptoms of the COVID-19 virus in the two weeks prior to our meeting, you will let me know prior to our meeting.

I may change the above precautions if additional local, state or federal orders or guidelines are published. If that happens, we will talk about any necessary changes.

Your Confidentiality in the Case of Infection

In addition, please be aware that if I become infected with the COVID-19 virus, I may need to comply with the contract tracing requirements of local health authorities. This means that I may need to disclose to the authority the identity of individuals with whom I have been in contact. Any information given will be limited to the minimum necessary information (e.g., name, contact information, and dates of contact). I will not go into any details about the reason(s) for our visits. Moreover, any client names would be intermingled with the names of staff, friends, neighbors, family and other associates, so that the case investigator would have no knowledge of any particular client relationships. I will inform you if I am required to provide contract tracing information. By signing this form, you are agreeing that I may fulfill these legal obligations to report without an additional signed release.

CONSENT AND AGREEMENTS

In order to engage in outdoor therapy, you understand and agree to the following:

- You understand that participation in outdoor therapy is completely voluntary and that there are alternative options such as teletherapy or phone-based services available.
- You agree to obtain approval from your doctor before engaging in outdoor therapy if you have any medical condition that could affect your ability to participate in this activity and to disclose those conditions or limitations to me.
- You agree to take full responsibility for your physical safety and to not engage in any activity in which you do not feel safe.
- You agree to let me know immediately if you become physically or emotionally uncomfortable during a session.
- You agree to abide by all COVID-19 protocols noted above.

By signing this form, you indicate that you understand and accept the risks of outdoor therapy, including potential risk of exposure to COVID-19, and nevertheless consent to outdoor therapy under the conditions outlined above. You can withdraw this consent in writing at any time.

