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CONSENT FOR INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY TREATMENT

This provides important information. Please read it carefully and we can discuss any questions you may have. Please sign one copy and keep one for your reference.

As a licensed marriage and family therapist, I work with individuals, couples, partners, families and groups, to improve your personal, professional, and relationship lives, and to work through a wide range of issues. I draw from a variety of approaches, including somatic, psychodynamic-relational, spiritual, cognitive, and expressive arts therapies. People seek therapy to better understand how they think, feel, respond, and cope with challenges, and to experience real change in their lives. Our work together attends to your wholeness—mind, body, heart, spirit—and incorporates both the present moment as well as the influences of your past experiences and family history.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THERAPY

Therapy can enable you to experience more satisfying relationships and more effectively recognize and meet your needs, desires, and aspirations. Such changes can reduce stress and allow you to more fully enjoy life and feel better about yourself. While most people benefit from psychotherapy, it is natural that unpleasant or difficult feelings and thoughts arise in the psychotherapy process as you deepen your self-awareness and explore habitual patterns. Sometimes feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, shame or helplessness arise. Though uncomfortable, these are a natural and healing part of therapy and often give rise to desired changes. Progress and the length of psychotherapy treatment vary depending on the nature and intensity of the issues being addressed, as well as the client's motivation, dedication, effort, and other life circumstances. The therapist/client relationship is unique and we will work together to determine what will be most helpful to you.

SESSIONS

A standard appointment is 50 minutes; however I also offer the option of longer, 75 or 100 minute, sessions for individuals who prefer longer sessions. Appointments are typically once or twice a week, though some people opt for more frequent sessions. I do not offer every other week sessions for individual work.

At the beginning of our work together, I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2-4 sessions. During the evaluation period, we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, we will usually set a regular weekly appointment time (or multiple regular appointment times if you're coming more than once a week).

CANCELLATION AND LATE POLICY

Psychotherapy is a commitment, for both of us. Once we begin to work together, I am agreeing to hold space for you, whether or not you are there. By beginning psychotherapy, you are agreeing to take seriously the responsibility of showing up for your appointments.

You may cancel appointments, up to four (4) weeks within a calendar year without being charged. That means, for example, that if you are coming to therapy once/week, you have four (4) vacation days for every calendar year.

When you cancel, you have three options:

1. If you have vacation days, you can take a vacation day without being charged for the session.
2. As a courtesy, I will try to reschedule you for a makeup session within seven (7) days of your missed appointment. If we are able to reschedule the appointment, you won't have to use one of your vacation days. However, if we are unable to find an alternate time for you, you are still responsible for the missed session, and you will either use one of your vacation days or pay that session's fee.
3. Once you have used all of your vacation days, you will be charged for all missed appointments for the remainder of the calendar year (unless you are able to attend a makeup appointment within seven (7) days of the missed appointment).

Beginning January 1st of each year, you will again be eligible to cancel appointments for up to four weeks.

If you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, please send an email to sonya@sonyabrewer.com. You can also use the online scheduling system to find a new time at <http://sonyabrewer.com/request-an-appointment/>

If you are going to be late, please call and let me know at (510) 496-6010. If you are more than 20 minutes late without calling, I may leave and the regular fee will be charged.

If you are absent for 4 or more weeks in a row without communication, I will consider your therapy terminated, unless you have made alternative arrangements with me.

PAYMENT POLICY

The fee for our psychotherapy sessions will be established at the beginning of our work together. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include: telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, report writing and time spent performing any other service you may request of me.

Full payment (cash, check or credit card) is due at the beginning of each session. Please take the time to write checks in advance of our meetings so that we can take advantage of the full session hour. Make checks payable to Sonya Brewer. If a check is returned, there will be a fee (as determined by the bank). If a second check is returned, you are expected to pay for ongoing sessions in cash.

In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan. If you are paying an adjusted fee, you agree to report changes in your financial situation so that we may reassess the fee accordingly.

As standard practice, the fee for psychotherapy services does occasionally increase. I will announce any increase in fee at least one month in advance. I may wave or postpone an increase given certain financial limitations.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a patient's treatment is their name and the amount due.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the privacy of all communications between client and therapist (including the fact that you are my client) are protected by law as confidential, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. However, by law, confidentiality must be suspended when a person is determined to be a danger to self or others, where reasonable suspicion of child, elder or dependent adult abuse exists, or upon receipt of a valid court order.

PRIVILEGE

I do not provide services for expert testimony in contemplation of legal proceedings such as discrimination and worker's compensation cases. If, during your treatment, a situation arises where a subpoena for your records is issued, I will first hold the stance of client privilege, not releasing records unless you, the client, sign a consent form to release the information. However, I may still be required to release information, without your consent, despite this initial stance, upon receipt of a valid court order.

AUDIO TAPING

Audio taping is sometimes utilized in order to facilitate therapy. Recordings are used for me to review my therapeutic work. They are regularly erased and discarded, and are not kept as part of your client file. Issues of confidentiality will be observed.

PHONE CONTACTS

If you need to contact me between sessions, please send an email to me at sonya@sonyabrewer.com. This is the fastest way to reach me.

You may also leave a message on my office line at (510) 496-6010. Please indicate if your call is urgent and leave good times for me to reach you. During the business week, I check my voicemail *once* per day and return calls as quickly as possible, usually within 48 hours.

Weekend and holiday calls are returned within 48 hours of the next business day, except in emergencies. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, leave me a message, and then contact the nearest emergency room and ask for the mental health professional on call.

If we do talk on the phone between sessions, phone calls of ten minutes or less are standard. After ten minutes, I will ask you if you would like to do a phone session, which will be billed at the regular

session rate. If phone calls are frequent, I will explore with you the possibility of increasing the number of face-to-face sessions. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact if necessary.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy.

SOMATIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

Many clients seek out my psychotherapy work due to the depth and effectiveness of the body-centered, experiential approach. My work encourages us to explore and celebrate what your body has to teach you about your innate capacities for healing, growth and transformation. In addition to talk therapy, our work can include movement, somatic coaching and hands-on work, meditation, artmaking, writing and breathwork.

I may sometimes offer to use therapeutic touch during a session when it would facilitate your therapy. If you choose, touch can be used as a direct way to help deepen awareness and help you learn about and transform your habits or stuck places. Touch can also be used as a way to guide you in learning some of the somatic practices we will be using. When this gentle, non-invasive approach to hands-on work is offered, it is always done with your permission and input, and does not involve the removal of clothing. If you agree to, or consider, the use of touch in psychotherapy, you are encouraged to think about or modify it, change your mind, ask questions, or stop at any time. Touch is always optional; therapy can be very effective without it.

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Your initial four sessions will be a time of discovering whether this therapy and our therapy relationship are a good “fit”. It is always your right to end therapy when you choose. That said, ending is a part of the therapy process; it is valuable to take adequate time to allow for a satisfying closure where we can consider gains made and disappointments, as well as “next steps”. In a longer therapy, we will likely explore termination over many months. However at times, the desire to terminate can be a sign that you are moving into unfamiliar psychological territory. In this case, exploring your feelings, thoughts and embodied experiences can lead to therapeutic “break-throughs”. In signing this consent, you express the intention to return for a minimum of three sessions after expressing an inclination or decision to terminate therapy.

<p>_____ I have received Sonya Brewer’s Notice of Privacy Practices <i>(Client initials)</i></p>

I have reviewed and understand the above policies:

Signature _____

Date _____