

Craig Ellis M.A., LPC

Informed Consent Agreement

Client-Counselor Service Agreement

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies.

Counseling is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in counseling, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. As your counselor, I have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Goals of Counseling

There can be many goals for the counseling relationship. Some of these will be long term goals such as improving the quality of your life, learning to live with mindfulness, and self-actualization. Others may be more immediate goals such as decreasing anxiety and depression symptoms, developing healthy relationships, changing behavior or decreasing/ending drug use. Whatever the goals for counseling, they will be set by the clients according to what they want to work on in counseling. The counselor may make suggestions on how to reach that goal but you decide where you want to go.

Risks/Benefits of Counseling

Counseling is an intensely personal process which can bring unpleasant memories or emotions to the surface. There are no guarantees that counseling will work for you. Clients can sometimes make improvements only to go backwards after a time. Progress may happen slowly. Counseling requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

There are also many benefits to counseling. Counseling can help you develop coping skills, make behavioral changes, reduce symptoms of mental health disorders, improve the quality of your life, learn to manage anger, learn to live in the present and many other advantages.

Appointments

Intake and ongoing appointments are typically 50 minutes in duration. Sessions are usually once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask though you inform me by 1PM the day before your scheduled appointment. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel late, you may be required to pay for the session unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

Confidentiality

I will make every effort to keep your personal information private. If you wish to have information released, you will be required to sign a consent form before such information will be released. There are some limitations to confidentiality of which you need to be aware. I may consult with a supervisor, consultant or other mental health professional in order to give you the best care. Counselors are required by law to release information when the client poses a risk to themselves or others and in cases of abuse to children or the elderly. If your counselor receives a court order or subpoena, he may be required to release some information. In such a case, your counselor will consult with other professionals and limit the release to only what is necessary by law.

Confidentiality and Technology

I will take every precaution to safeguard your information but cannot guarantee that unauthorized access to electronic communications could not occur. Please take precautions with regard to authorized and unauthorized access to any technology used in counseling sessions. Be aware of any friends, family members, significant others or co-workers who may have access to your computer, phone or other technology used in your counseling session.

Record Keeping

I will keep records of your counseling sessions and a treatment plan which includes goals for your counseling. These records are kept to ensure a direction to your sessions and continuity in service. Should the client wish to have their records released, they are required to sign a release of information, which specifies what information is to be released and to whom. Records will be kept for at least six years but may be kept longer. Records will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office.

Professional Fees

You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. Payment must be made by credit card, cash, or a digital payment system such as Venmo or Zelle. If you refuse to pay your debt, I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment.

If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires my participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required.

Fee Schedule

~ Intake/Initial visit (60 minutes) \$ 150

~ Individual or Couples Visit (50 minutes) \$150

Time spent in other professional services such as telephone calls, consulting with other professionals, and time spent performing any other services you may request is \$2/minute.

Legal proceedings

I am not a specialist in forensic psychology nor do I have an interest in testifying or participating in court proceedings. But, if you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation you will be expected to pay for all of my professional time, including preparation and transportation cost, even if I am called to testify by another party. You will also be responsible for my legal representation fees. I charge \$400 per hour for my involvement in legal proceedings. If I go to court to testify you agree to pay 24 hours in advance either \$1600 for half a day 8AM-12Pm or \$3200 for an entire day.

Contacting Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone at 713-320-7481. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. If you feel you cannot wait for a return call or it is an emergency situation, go to your local hospital or call 911. For non-urgent requests or inquiries you may contact me via text at the above number, or email at CraigEllisLPC@gmail.com.

Email

I will request your email address as part of gathering standard contact information however you have the right to refuse to divulge your email address. I may use email addresses to periodically check in with clients who have ended therapy suddenly. I may also use email addresses to send newsletters with valuable therapeutic information such as tips for depression, relaxation techniques, or upcoming workshops.