**Josh Dodes, LCSW**

**Informed Consent for Psychotherapy**

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

**PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES**

Therapy is a relationship that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a patient in psychotherapy, you have certain rights that are important for you to know about because this is your therapy, and the goal is your well-being. There are also certain limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. As a therapist, I have corresponding responsibilities to you, too. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness, because the process of psychotherapy often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life.  However, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it.  Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems.

**APPOINTMENTS**

Appointments are 45 minutes in duration, on a schedule we will agree upon. The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone.

**CANCELLATION POLICY**

If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with at least 24 hours’ notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24 hour notice, you will owe the full amount of your fee, unless we can find another time to reschedule that week. 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.

**PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My fee is $130 per 45 minute session. You will be asked to pay for each session at the time of the session. Payment can be by check, cash, or PayPal. A statement of the month’s sessions will be furnished to you on the first of each month for the previous month’s sessions and payments. You can use the statement for tax purposes or for reimbursement. There is no direct billing with any insurance company.

I am willing to consider a sliding scale in certain cases, depending upon financial need. I discuss this on a case-by-case basis with each patient, in order to come to an agreement on an acceptable fee.

It may be necessary to change my fee from time to time, in which case I would discuss this with you well in advance.

**INSURANCE**

At the present time, I have elected not to accept insurance. There are several benefits to you that come from working with an out-of-network provider: If you work with an in-network provider, your insurance company can influence treatment goals and will usually limit the number of sessions. Insurance companies also can, and do, audit in-network therapists’ records, which violates your confidentiality. By working with an out-of-network provider, you can often receive some reimbursement for your fees paid without these risks to your confidentiality or the autonomy of your treatment. Because I am out-of-network, all treatment decisions will be made solely between us, including the type of therapy used, its length, and who should or should not be consulted.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

With the exception of certain specific exceptions described below, you have the absolute right to the confidentiality of your therapy. I cannot and will not tell anyone else what you have told me, or even that you are in therapy with me without your prior written permission. Under the provisions of the Health Care Information Act of 1992, only in an emergency may I legally speak to another health care provider or a member of your family about you without your prior consent. I will always act so as to protect your privacy even if you do release me in writing to share information about you. You may direct me to share information with whomever you chose, and you can change your mind and revoke that permission at any time. You may request anyone you wish to attend a therapy session with you. You are also protected under the provisions of the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

If you elect to communicate with me by email at some point in our work together, I am willing to respond briefly by return email, but please be aware that email and other electronic media are not completely confidential. I do not use an encrypting program on email at this time.

The following are legal exceptions to your right to confidentiality. I would inform you of any time when I think I would have to put these into effect.

* If I have good reason to believe that you will harm another person, I must attempt to inform that person and warn them of your intentions. I must also contact the police and ask them to protect your intended victim.
* If I have good reason to believe that you are abusing or neglecting a child or vulnerable adult, or if you give me information about someone else who is doing this, I must inform Child Protective Services within 48 hours and Adult Protective Services immediately.
* If I believe that you are in imminent danger of harming yourself, I may legally break confidentiality and call the police or the county crisis team. I am not obligated to do this, and would explore other options with you before I took this step. If at that point you were unwilling to take steps to guarantee your safety, I would call the crisis team.

If you and your partner decide to have some individual sessions as part of a couples therapy, what you say in those individual sessions will be considered to be a part of the couples therapy, and can and probably will be discussed in our joint sessions. Do not tell me anything you wish kept secret from your partner. I will remind you of this policy before beginning such individual sessions.

**PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

I keep brief records of each session noting the dates we meet, the topics we cover, my interventions and impressions and next steps.

**DIAGNOSIS**

If you wish to have your insurance company consider partial reimbursement for my out-of-network fees, I will normally be required to give a diagnosis to that third party in order for them to consider reimbursing you. Diagnoses are technical terms that describe the nature of your problems and something about whether they are short-term or long-term problems. If I AM REQUIRED TO use a diagnosis, I will discuss it with you.

**CONTACTING ME**

Because I am an independent practitioner, I do not have 24 hour emergency or “on call” coverage. If you believe you will need a therapist with 24 hour coverage, I will be happy to make a referral. If you experience a psychiatric emergency, you should call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room rather than waiting for me to call you back. When I am out of town for an extended period of time I will give you the name of a colleague you can contact in case of an urgent need.

**ENDING THERAPY WELL**

I want to make your therapy as successful as possible. For that reason, it works best to find a rhythm and structure to the beginning stages with sessions that meet regularly. To support your leaving, I request several weeks of notice prior to your actual leaving to allow you to have an experience of leaving well, with a sense of completion. My ethics and license requires that I offer quality service and have my patients’ needs as paramount in my treatment planning. If I no longer feel that I am the best or right practitioner for you, I will offer referrals to other sources of care.

**MY TRAINING AND APPROACH TO THERAPY**

I received my bachelor’s degree in psychology from Yale University and my master’s degree in clinical social work from New York University. I have advanced training in psychodynamic psychotherapy from the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Study Center in New York City, but I draw upon a number of treatment approaches in my work, including relational therapy, psychodynamic therapy, self-psychological therapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

**OTHER RIGHTS**

You have the right to ask questions about anything that happens in therapy. I’m always willing to discuss how and why I’ve decided to do what I’m doing, and to look at alternatives that might work better. You can ask me about my training for working with your concerns, and can request that I refer you to someone else if you decide I’m not the right therapist for you. You are free to leave therapy at any time, although I recommend that we have advance notice so that I can help you end treatment well and consolidate gains, as described above.