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Welcome! I have prepared this letter to inform you about my policies, as well as your own rights as a counselling client. Please read it carefully and feel free to question or discuss any misunderstandings or concerns before signing.

I hold a Master of Counselling Psychology Degree, and I am a Registered Clinical Counsellor with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors (# 16940), a Registered Psychotherapist in Ontario (#009815) and a Certified Clinical Counsellor with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (#10005267). As a member of these associations, I am bound to uphold strict codes of ethical conduct and standards of clinical practice. I am trained as a Certified Bariatric Counsellor through the American Association of Bariatric Counsellors. This certification requires that I take a certain number of hours of educational sessions to keep up to date in this area. I also have previous professional training as a biochemist and hold a Bachelor of Science Degree in this discipline. I used to work with pharmaceutical companies doing everything from clinical research to sales, therefore I am also a Certified Clinical Research Associate.

As my client, you have the right to know and consent to what is happening in therapy at all times. We first assess your therapy needs before tailoring an appropriate treatment approach. We may use various approaches at different points in therapy, but always in thoughtful ways that align with your overall treatment goals. I welcome any questions and feedback about any therapeutic interventions I may suggest. These are the particular approaches I draw from:

- Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT)
- Mindfulness and meditation
- Positive Psychology
- Cognitive behavioral approaches (CBT)
- Humanistic Therapy including Gestalt and Person-centered approaches
- Rational Emotive Therapy (RET)

Informed consent is an ongoing process and you have the right to confidentiality, access to your file, and how and if you choose to participate in therapy. I hold a guiding philosophical belief that we all have a natural impulse towards health and healing that strengthens when it is supported and nurtured. Therapy should be collaborative, not forceful.

Therapy, like life, does not happen in a bubble. Our cultural factors are inseparable from our experiences, regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, religion, and physical or mental ability. Despite my efforts to remain culturally attuned, I may unintentionally make mistakes in our relationship that could feel culturally insensitive or disrespectful. Please let me know if this happens so that we can discuss any cultural issues that arise so I can benefit from your wisdom around how to adjust our relationship or communication style. It is important that you feel safe and comfortable.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Refuse

- 1) You have the right to participate as much or as little in the counselling process.
- 2) You have the right to question, ask for explanations, or refuse any task, exercise, assessment tool, or other intervention I suggest.
- 3) You have the right to stop therapy at any time. If you wish to stop working with me, or if I am unable to help you, I have the responsibility to inform you of other practitioners and offer an appropriate referral. You do not have to accept this referral.

Confidentiality

Clients are naturally entitled to complete confidentiality. This is the foundation of a safe and effective counselling relationship. I will never share with anyone anything that you say to me, and I will not reveal to anyone whether or not you are a client of mine, even if we encounter each other unexpectedly in public. You are welcome to approach me, however. You are free to talk about our professional relationship with whomever you choose.

You should be aware, however, that there are a few situations where I may not be able to guarantee confidentiality. I will always let you know before I feel I need to take any of the actions that are described below, and I will do my best to provide an opportunity for collaborative discussion around how these actions unfold:

- 1) If I believe that you are at serious risk of suicide, I may legally break confidentiality in order to protect you. I would explore all other options with you before doing this, and if at that point you were unwilling to take steps to ensure your safety, I would have to take action to ensure that you were protected from harming yourself.
- 2) If you tell me that you are seriously planning to hurt or kill an identifiable person, and I have reason to believe that you will follow through with it, I am legally required to try to inform that person and protect them from harm. I must also inform the police of your intentions.
- 3) If you tell me about a child or dependent adult who is being abused or neglected, then I am legally required to take steps to protect that child or adult by reporting this information to child protection authorities.
- 4) If you are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about our work together, I may ask you for written consent to disclose the requested information. I may be required to disclose information without your consent, but I will do all that I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and I will inform you of anything that I disclose.
- 5) If you request that I coordinate care with another care provider, I will get a signed release from you and discuss with you what information will be shared.

When necessary, I may ask for your permission to seek professional supervision regarding your case. I will not reveal any identifying information or details that may allow my supervisor to know your identity.

Your File

Your file is maintained according to the provisions of the BC Personal Information Protection Act. It is always kept in a secure place and retained for seven years after the end of our relationship. You own the contents of the file and can ask to see its contents at any time. You can also ask for a copy of your file to be forwarded to any other professional.

The Therapy Process

In our first session(s), I will ask questions to try to get a sense of what brings you in to counselling/therapy. We will talk together about a plan for your time in therapy, and discuss what your goals are. It is not uncommon that we refine these goals over the course of therapy. I may ask you about things that you do not normally feel very comfortable thinking about or feeling. You have the right to decide what you are comfortable sharing, and may choose not to discuss certain topics.

However, therapy can stimulate emotions and uncomfortable experiences, and we can discuss if there is any benefit to be gained from enduring a tolerable yet limited amount of discomfort. Counselling is supportive, but some clients can find it challenging at times. I will always track your progress and hold your sense of safety as a priority. I strive to respect "your window of tolerance", and these limits are unique to each client. Please let me know how you are doing or if you are unhappy with any aspect of our work together.

Fees and Payment Policy

My session fees are \$150 per 50-minute session including GST, unless we have negotiated a different sliding scale fee. Fees are payable by cash or cheque by the end of each session, or by e-transfer within 7 days of the appointment. I will provide an official receipt with my registration number through a secure online administrative service (wix.com) within 7 business days after receiving payment.

Missed or Late Appointments & Out of Session Contact

If you need to cancel or change an appointment, I require 24 hours advance notice. Session fees will be charged for missed appointments and late cancellations, unless we are able to reschedule for another time the same week (I cannot guarantee my availability, however).

When necessary, I also offer an online or phone counselling option via a professional, securely encrypted telehealth video platform; this platform offers flexibility if a client is relocating, travelling, or unable to attend in-person session.

If you need to reach me outside of our sessions, please use the e-mail contact on this letterhead or on the website www.victoriacounsellingandtherapy.com. I will call or email you back within one to two business days (unless I have advised you that I am unavailable for other reasons). E-mail is the best choice for contacting me, but please limit the use of email to scheduling or invoice issues. I cannot guarantee confidentiality through the internet unless we are communicating via a secure, encrypted format.

Services may be covered in full or in part by your health insurance or employee benefit plan. I ask that you pay for the cost of your session and then submit your receipt to your extended health care provider.

If there is an emergency, please call a crisis line, 911, or go to your nearest hospital emergency department. Crisis line numbers can be found in the resources section of my website and are listed below for your convenience:

- Vancouver Island Crisis Line 1-888-494-3888
- Province wide 24/7 crisis line: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- BC-wide Mental Health Support: 310-6789
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Client Consent to Psychotherapy

I have read this statement, had sufficient time to consider it carefully, asked any questions that I needed to, and understand it. I understand the limits to confidentiality required by law. I understand the fee per session and my rights and responsibilities as a client, and my therapist's responsibilities to me. I know I can end therapy at any time I wish.

Client Name: _____

Signature: _____

Dated: _____

Therapist Signature: _____

Dated: _____