

## **INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY**

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information focusing on doing psychotherapy using the phone or the Internet. PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY, AND LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### **BENEFITS AND RISKS OF TELEPSYCHOLOGY**

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy services, remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Telepsychology, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- **Risks to Confidentiality.** Because telepsychology takes place outside of the clinician's private office, there is a potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end, I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- **Issues Related to Technology.** There are many ways that technology issues might impact telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to access our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- **Crisis Management and Intervention.** Usually, I will not engage in telepsychology with patients/clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in telepsychology, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our psychotherapy work.
- **Efficacy.** Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapists' ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

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#### **Electronic Communications**

We will decide together which kind of telepsychology service to use based upon the approval from your insurance company and/or your preference. If the latter is not approved by your insurance company, it will be your responsibility to pay in full for the telepsychology session.

You may have to have a certain computer or cell phone system to use telepsychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories or software to take part in telepsychology.

#### **Communication Between Sessions**

For communication between sessions, I only use email communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with my office should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting, confirming and changing appointments and other related issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any communication communicated by email or text, although on my end the email and text technology have added HIPPA compliant technology. **I WILL NOT DISCUSS ANY CLINICAL INFORMATION BY EMAIL OR TEXT AND PREFER THAT YOU DO NOT EITHER.** Also, I do not check my email or texts on an ongoing basis, nor do I respond immediately, so these methods **should not be used if there is an emergency.**

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at our regularly scheduled sessions. If an urgent issue arises, feel free to attempt to reach me by telephone either at my office (561) 686-7996 or on my mobile phone at (561) 801-9216. The mobile number is often on silent, especially when I am in session. I will try to return your call as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours during weekdays. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, please contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If I will be unavailable for an extended period of time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in my absence, if necessary.

#### **Confidentiality**

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for

telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for technology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my Office Procedures and Polices Consent signed upon your initial evaluation still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any exceptions to confidentiality.

**Appropriateness of Telepsychology**

Telepsychology is not appropriate for all patients/clients and will be used only under the following circumstances within this clinician’s practice setting: 1) Situations of pandemic crises, namely, the COVID-19 (Coronavirus crisis), cases when the patient/client is either immunocompromised, or otherwise medically ill at the time of the scheduled appointment placing an undue hardship on that individual.

**Emergencies and Technology**

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telepsychology than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties it will be necessary to create an emergency plan. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who I will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. I will ask you to sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological communication fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services, if at all possible.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back with two (2) minutes, then call me on the number I provided you (561 801-9216)

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, your insurance company or you (if self-pay) will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

**Fees**

The same fees will apply for telepsychology as apply for in-person psychotherapy including any applicable co-payments/co-insurance. Most insurance companies cover fees during the COVID-19 crisis and other similar situations. Some companies may waive copayments during the COVID-19 crisis. You may check with your insurance company about the waiver of copayment during the COVID-19 crisis. Under other situations, if your insurance company, PPO, HMO, third-party payer, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic psychotherapy, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to engaging in telepsychology sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

**Records**

The telepsychology sessions **shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent.** I will maintain a record of our session in the same way I maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

My HIPAA compliant email address is: <https://sendsafe.to/dradmackay@gmail.com>

**INFORMED CONSENT**

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent/Office Policies and Procedures that is included and/or we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient/Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Psychologist/Clinician  
Adele MacKay, Psy.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date