

Informed Consent and Management of Personal Information

Introduction

This important document initiates a 'therapeutic contract', whereby a client is openly informed regarding central considerations underlying the psychotherapy treatment process. In particular, it should be recognised that therapy is a collaborative exercise, yet moreover, above all else is focused upon the client's wellbeing, and prevention of harm to the client. Further, in all respects actions arising during psychotherapy, and more broadly all actions to do with Central Clinical Psychology Practice, are undertaken in full compliance with the Australian Psychological Society (APS) *Code of Ethics* (2007), and related *Guidelines*, plus also the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (2009), the Privacy Act (1988) & Australian Privacy Principles (2014), and other relevant Standards and Legislation. In this regard, the Attachment 1 to this document is the APS *Charter for Clients of APS Psychologists*, which also provides advice regarding notifications of concerns about a psychologist's conduct.

Procedures and Role of Psychologist

Psychotherapy treatment is an evidence-based conversation process examining a client's thoughts, emotions, behaviours and memories.

Unless otherwise explained, therapy is conducted under the paradigm of 'cognitive behavioural therapy' (CBT), which is an internationally recognised, best-practice intervention model with a substantial and expanding research basis. Following a process of assessment, client and therapist agree upon the focus of treatment, which may entail a formal diagnosis, and of course agreement regarding the treatment modality, which usually involves negotiated homework exercises.

Risks and Discomfort

At all times intervention is focused upon a client's wellbeing and safety. This said, understandably, insightful examination of difficult life experiences during a consultation (60 mins) may sometimes trigger discomfort and tears, which likewise frequently is later found to bring relief and issue resolution; adequate time will be afforded to process all unsettling moments during therapy, and each consultation is concluded with a Client Session Rating (Attached). As required, a client should contact the Practice immediately should issues arise for them, and on occasion a mobile number is provided for this purpose.

Benefits, Alternatives, and Questions

It is also important to appreciate that each client should at all times have a clear understanding as to their stage of treatment, the likely benefit of treatment, alternatives if therapy is not adequately successful, and importantly, a client should at all times feel comfortable to ask questions and to receive an suitable response (there are no “silly questions”).

Confidentiality

It is well recognised that the therapeutic alliance rests upon confidence and trust in the confidentiality and fidelity of the psychotherapy relationship, including all information gathered during the therapy process (see below). This said, whereas a client’s right to privacy is protected under Australian Law, confidentiality between client and therapist is not privileged under Law, and thus, the foreseeable boundary of confidentiality during the treatment process may be revisited. For example, under Law a Court may access a complete case file with a Subpoena. Similarly, criminal behaviour, a missing person, child abuse & neglect, and a significant threat of harm to others may well occasion revision of the confidentiality held by the Practice. At all times, where possible, such occurrences will be engaged as a collaborative undertaking.

Additionally, a client should appreciate that, following discussion, routinely letters of progress will be written to a client’s General Practitioner, and other treating health professionals. Also, although in a ‘de-identified’ fashion, a case may be discussed by the therapist with their supervisor (mandatory process for registration), who is a respected, senior practitioner.

Finally, at all times a client may have access to their case file for inspection.

Cost

Fees are negotiated in advance, and in many cases rest simply on the standard, Medicare rate,

GP Mental Health Care Plan, MBS 2710**Clinical Psychology, MBS 80010**

Bulk billed, \$124.20 (> 50 min session; unsalaried, pension etc.)

Full fee, \$146.45, attracting above rebate, therefore gap of \$22.25 (salaried)

Conversely, fees may be paid by a client's employer (e.g., Emergency Services), or WorkCover etc., or a client may elect to pay for treatment themselves, with Health Insurance rebate where applicable.

Additionally, it is standard practice to request a 'Non-Attendance' fee from fee-paying clients. That is, if a client fails to notify of non-attendance for a properly scheduled appointment (a minimum of 24 hrs is requested) the following fee is requested (N.B. not redeemable via Medicare)

Non-Attendance

Bulk Billed, \$15.00

Full Fee, \$30.00

At all times a client should fully understand the fee arrangements, and Non Attendance fee, pertaining to their case.

Management of Personal Information

As above, the practice of psychology is subject to National Law with respect to management of client information; i.e., the Privacy Act (1988) & Australian Privacy Principles (2014).

All information collected, including responses to tests and evaluations, plus reports and letters from other health professionals, and also collateral information provided by other people, will be securely stored for a minimum period of seven years (where possible, secure electronic storage is utilised).

At any time a client may request to see the information contained in their file. Ideally, a 14 day period is requested to arrange for retrieval of stored material. All reasonable steps will be taken to correct information which is not accurate, complete, or out of date.

A client may lodge a complaint regarding the use of/access to their case information with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, 1300 363 992, or GPO Box 2999, Canberra 2601.

Conclusion

With the above understandings in place, a sound and collaborative psychotherapy journey may be undertaken, where a client at all times feels uniquely valued and understood, and moreover, comfortably places a high degree of trust in their psychologist as a reliable and committed professional who holds their best interests at heart.

Signature

.....

(Client & date)

.....

Dr Michael John PhD, MAPS MCCLP MCFP, & date