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Information for Clients of Dr. Melissa Hofstetter

This brochure answers some questions clients often ask about any therapy practice. It is important to me that you know how we will work together. I believe our work will be most helpful to you when you have a clear idea of what we are trying to do.

This brochure talks about the following in a general way:

- What the risks and benefits of therapy are
- What the goals of therapy are, and what my methods of treatment are like
- How long therapy might take
- How much my services cost, and how I handle money matters
- Other important areas of our relationship
- Psychotherapy via Interstate Telehealth (PsyPact)

Therapy is an investment that you make toward fulfillment in your personal relationships, and toward your overall emotional and psychological well-being. I commend you for considering this potentially life-changing endeavor. Since you will be investing time, money, and energy into the therapeutic process, I encourage you to be thoughtful in choosing your therapist. The therapist you choose should be a professional whom you can trust to partner with you on your journey toward healing and wholeness. When you feel confident in your therapist's professional competence and care, therapy has the greatest potential to be helpful to you. In my practice I both see therapy clients directly, and I also supervise the therapy work of my clinical trainees. I may see clients in-person in Arizona or California, or else through telehealth for clients in PsyPact participating states. Let me describe how I understand therapy to work:

My general approach to therapy has been described as “contemporary psychodynamic.” My work with clients unfolds as a mutual, collaborative process occurring in an atmosphere of safety, confidentiality (see below), and respect. I recognize that it is important to manage symptoms that cause excessive discomfort. I also seek to listen to what a client's symptom(s) may be communicating about an overarching problem. Symptoms also sometimes communicate ways that a client has historically demonstrated strength & resilience in difficult situations. I view a client's problem(s) in a framework that places an emphasis on how their past emotional and interpersonal experiences are affecting the way they think, feel, and act today. We both know that we can't change what happened in the past, but I try to understand your past in so far as it is of service to the present and to the future. Additionally, I believe that a client's unconscious beliefs and feelings (i.e., those thoughts & feelings that are just “beneath the surface” of awareness) can have a powerful influence on their subjective experiences (those experiences that are internal, and valid in their own right) of the outside world.

One of the goals in treatment is for the clients to understand all parts of themselves in order that they may have a better quality of life and have more choice in their emotional and behavioral responses. In addition, an integrative, systems perspective is used in which historical, biological, cultural,

interpersonal, cognitive, and emotional factors are seen as combining to form an individual's personality and sense of self. Creating a new and healthy relationship with the therapist is seen as a central factor in treatment using this approach. As such, my goal in therapy is to remain open, interactive, and engaged in finding ways to help encourage clients to live the richest, fullest, most satisfying life possible.

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

As with any powerful treatment, there are some risks as well as many benefits associated with therapy. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. For example, in therapy, there is a risk that clients will, for a time, have uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. (This is natural, and you and your therapist should talk about these feelings as they arise.) Clients may recall unpleasant memories. These feelings or memories may bother a client at work or in school. Also, clients in therapy may have problems with people important to them. In some settings, one may find that there can be a stigma attached to seeking therapy. Family secrets may be told. Therapy may even disrupt a marital relationship. (When one partner in a marriage grows or changes, the marriage must accommodate those changes and “growing pains.” If the marriage is not flexible enough to make such accommodations, then the marriage may even end in a divorce.) Sometimes, too, a client's problems may feel worse after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work out well for you.

While telehealth increases accessibility of psychotherapy, it may not be the best mode of treatment for everyone, or at every time or situation. I make every effort to offer appropriate referrals for those with whom telehealth may not be the right fit.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that the benefits of therapy have been shown by scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may no longer feel afraid, angry, or anxious. In therapy, people have a chance to talk things out fully until their feelings are relieved or the problems are solved. Clients' relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. They may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Their personal goals and values may become clearer. They may grow in many directions—as persons, in their close relationships, in their work or schooling, and in the ability to enjoy their lives.

Therapy is a collaborative process and I do not take on clients I do not believe I can help. Therefore, over the course of treatment, we will have many opportunities to explore our progress. I encourage you to ask questions and be open.

Consultations

If you could benefit from a treatment I cannot provide, I will do my best to help you to get it. You have a right to ask me about such other treatments, their risks and their benefits. Based on what I learn about your problems, I may recommend a medical exam or your use of medication, for example. If I do this, I will fully discuss my reasons with you, so that you can decide what is best. If you are treated by another professional, with your permission, I can coordinate my services with them.

If for some reason I sense that treatment is not going well, I might suggest you see another therapist or another professional in addition to me. As a responsible person and ethical therapist, I cannot continue to treat you if my treatment is not working for you. If you wish for another professional's opinion at any time, or wish to talk with another therapist, I will help you find a qualified person and will provide him or her with the information needed.

It may take several sessions to determine whether there is a good therapeutic fit for you to become a client of my psychological services. If a client is receiving telehealth services, I will make an on-going assessment of that mode of treatment for you, and make professional recommendations that are appropriate to your care.

What to Expect from Our Relationship

As a professional, I will use my best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the standards of the American Psychological Association, or APA. In your best interests, the APA puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and I will abide by these. Let me explain these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you.

First, I am trained to practice psychology—not law, medicine, finance, etc. I am not able to give you good advice from these other professional viewpoints.

Second, state laws and the rules of the APA require me to keep what you tell me confidential (that is, private). You can trust me not to tell anyone else what you tell me, except in certain limited situations. I explain what those are in the “About Confidentiality” section of this brochure. Here I want to explain that I try not to reveal who my clients are. This is part of my effort to maintain your privacy. This explains why, if we were to happen to meet unexpectedly on the street or socially, I may not say hello or talk to you very much. My behavior will not be a personal reaction to you, but a way to maintain the confidentiality of our relationship. The same is true with respect to “social media”; I will not “friend” a client on Facebook, for example.

Third, in your best interest, and following the APA’s standards, I can only be your therapist. I generally avoid having any other role in my clients’ lives. I cannot be a close friend or socialize with any of my clients. I cannot be a therapist to someone who is already a friend of mine. I can never have a sexual or romantic relationship with any client. I generally avoid having a business relationship with any of my clients, other than the therapy relationship. When there is a dual relationship, I do my best that you are not harmed by that dual relationship.

About Confidentiality

I will treat what you tell me with great care. My professional ethics and the laws of this state prevent me from telling anyone else what you tell me unless you give me permission. There are several occasions where I may be required by law to break confidentiality in order to keep you or others safe. The following instances are times when I may be required to contact the police department, hospital, and / or family:

- **You are a danger to others.** If I come to believe that you are threatening serious harm to another person, I am required by law to try to protect that person. I may have to tell the person and the police, or perhaps try to have you admitted to the hospital.
- **You are a danger to yourself.** If you seriously threaten or act in a way that is very likely to harm yourself, I may have to seek a hospital for you, or to call on your family members or others who can help protect you. If such a situation does come up, I will fully discuss the situation with you before I do anything, unless there is a strong reason not to.
- **Suspected Abuse of a child, elder adult, or disabled “dependent” adult.** If I believe or suspect that you or anyone else is abusing a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person - or if any of these individuals is in danger of being abused - I am required by law to file a report with a state agency. To “abuse” means to neglect, hurt, or sexually molest another person, for

example. I do not have the legal power to investigate the situation to find out all of the facts. The protective agency or state agency will investigate.

In any of the above situations, I would reveal only the information necessary to protect you or the other person(s). I will not reveal everything that you have told me throughout the course of your treatment.

I am required by law to keep records of your treatment, such as therapy notes and forms. You have the right to review these records with me. If something in the record might seriously upset you, I may leave it out, but will fully explain my reasons to you.

My Background

I am a psychologist with decades of experience in a variety of psychotherapy settings. I have been licensed in the states of California and Arizona as a clinical psychologist. I am certified by ASPPB PsyPact E.Passport to provide interjurisdictional telehealth services under specific circumstances. I am trained and experienced in doing one-on-one therapy with adults and late-adolescents, as well as couples therapy, family therapy, & group therapy. I have worked in settings of outpatient mental health centers, inpatient rehabilitative hospitals, neuropsychiatric institutes, VA medical centers, outpatient programs for eating disorders, and have had pre-doctoral psychoanalytic training. I also hold these qualifications:

- I have completed a doctoral program (PhD) in clinical psychology from Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, whose program is approved by the American Psychological Association (APA).
- I completed an internship in clinical psychology at Wright Institute Los Angeles.
- I have been a member of the San Gabriel Valley Psychological Association (APA).
- I am an associate member of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (CAMFT).

About Our Appointments

Sessions are scheduled for 50 minutes. We can schedule meetings for both your and my convenience. I will attempt to give you advanced notice of my vacations or planned absences. Please ask about my schedule in making your own plans.

In therapy with me, it may take several sessions for both of us to assess goodness of therapeutic fit. If you are seeing one of my supervised clinical trainees for your therapy, it is part of the supervisor's (Dr. Hofstetter's) role to ultimately determine the therapeutic fit.

An appointment is a commitment to our work. We agree to meet here and to be on time. If I am ever unable to start on time, I ask your understanding. I also assure you that you will receive the full time agreed to. If you are late, we will probably be unable to meet for the full time, because it is likely that I will have another appointment after yours.

Cancellations - If a minimum of 24 hours notice is not given to cancel an appointment, then the full fee is charged. I will consider our meetings very important and ask you to do the same. This space is reserved for you and cannot be filled at a late notice. If I have to cancel due to an emergency or illness (myself or my family), I will make every effort to reschedule for that week if possible.

Fees, Payments, and Billing

Payment for services is an important part of any professional relationship. This is especially true in therapy; one treatment goal is to make relationships, and the duties and obligations they involve, clear. You are responsible for seeing that my services are paid for.

My current regular fees are as follows. You will be given advance notice if my fees should change.

Regular therapy services: For a session of 50 minutes, the fee is \$200. On a limited basis I do reserve a few spaces for persons who are in need of a reduction in fee. (I also supervise clinical trainees to provide therapy, which may be more affordable.) If this applies to your situation, your amended fee as agreed upon with Dr. Melissa Hofstetter will be stated on your signed consent form. If at any time your financial situation changes you may consider returning to the regular fee in order to make a reduced fee space available for others.

Payment is expected at each session unless other payment or fee arrangements have been arranged. If you think you may have trouble paying your bills on time, please discuss this with me. I will also raise the matter with you so we can arrive at a solution. If your unpaid balance reaches \$500, I will notify you by mail. If it then remains unpaid, I must stop therapy with you. Fees that continue unpaid after this will be turned over to small-claims court or a collection service.

Telephone consultations: I believe that telephone consultations may be suitable or even needed at times in our therapy. If frequent or lengthy consultations are needed, I will charge you our regular fee, prorated over the time needed. I will notify you when such charges will be accrued. If I need to have long telephone conferences with other professionals as part of your treatment, you will be billed for these at the same rate as for regular therapy services. If you are concerned about all this, please be sure to discuss it with me in advance so we can set a policy that is comfortable for both of us. Of course, there is no charge for calls about appointments or similar business.

Other services: Charges for other services, such as hospital visits, consultations with other therapists, home visits, or any court-related services (such as consultations with lawyers, depositions, or attendance at courtroom proceedings) will be based on the time involved. Some services may require payment in advance.

If there is any problem with my charges, my billing, your insurance, or any other money-related point, please bring it to my attention. I will do the same with you. Such problems can interfere greatly with our work. They should be worked out openly and quickly.

If You Need to Contact Me

I cannot promise that I will be available at all times. I usually do not take phone calls when I am with a client. You can always leave a message with my voice mail and I will return your call as soon as I can. Generally, I will return messages within 48 hours except on Sundays and holidays.

If you have an emergency or crisis you may try to contact me, but if I do not return your call promptly you will need to seek additional assistance. If you have a behavioral or emotional crisis and cannot reach me immediately by telephone, you or your family members should call a local community emergency agency, including a county mental health facility or the hospital emergency room.

Legal Testimony

If you ever become involved in a divorce or custody dispute, I want you to understand and agree that I will not provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. This position is based on two reasons: (1) My statements will be seen as biased in your favor because we have a therapy relationship; and (2) the testimony might affect our therapy relationship, and I must put this relationship first. I will not make appearances in court unless mandated to do so by a court order.

Statement of Principles and Complaint Procedures

It is my intention to fully abide by all the rules of the American Psychological Association (APA) and by those of the state licensing board.

Problems can arise in our relationship, just as in any other relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concerns with me at once. Our work together will be slower and harder if your concerns with me are not worked out. I will make every effort to hear any complaints you have and to seek solutions to them. If you feel that I, or any other therapist, has treated you unfairly or has even broken a professional rule, please tell me. You can also contact the state or local psychological association and speak to the chairperson of the ethics committee. He or she can help clarify your concerns or tell you how to file a complaint. You may also contact the state's Board of Psychology, the organization that licenses those of us in the independent practice of psychology.

In my practice as a therapist, I do not discriminate against clients because of any of these factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, color, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. This is a personal commitment, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. I will always take steps to advance and support the values of equal opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic/cultural diversity. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to my attention immediately.

I truly appreciate the chance you have given me to be of professional service to you, and look forward to a successful relationship with you. If you are satisfied with my services as we proceed, you are permitted (but never obligated) to refer other people to me who might also be able to make use of my services.