Teletherapy Counseling Informed Consent

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During the initial intake process and the first couple of sessions, I will assess if I can be of benefit to you.

Risks and Benefits of Teletherapy Coaching

Benefits: On-line coaching provides a number of benefits that on-ground coaching does not. The following are just some of the benefits that you might find helpful during our work together.

* convenience of service
* greater continuity of care
* greater availability of times.

Risks: Online coaching also brings with it some risks that you need to be aware of. The following are some risks for you to consider before agreeing to online coaching:

* Even with efforts to comply with the strictest encryption protocol, there is no way to fully guarantee that teletherapy will be secure.
* I cannot control whether you are keeping information confidential on your end, there can be technology failures during our sessions that could disrupt the flow.
* There might be limited knowledge of the use of technology.

As a client you also understand that distance coaching is a different experience as compared to in-person sessions, among those being the lack of “personal” face-to-face interactions, the lack of visual and audio cues in coaching process to which you may have previously come to expect. You understand that online coaching is not appropriate if you are experiencing a crisis or having suicidal or homicidal thoughts.

Communication Plans

Time Zone: The time zone that we will be using to make appointments will be mountain standard time.

Video Disruption: In the case that our connection is disrupted, we will wait 30 seconds to see if it doesn’t re-stabilize on its own. If connection is not re-established, we will both end the session and re-login. If this doesn’t work, then I will call you at your designated telephone number.

Expectations of Communication: When you need to contact me for any reason, these are the most effective ways to get in touch in a reasonable amount of time: -

By phone @ 617-953-5859. You may leave a message on the voicemail. By email at val@ValerieHamaker.com or text @ 617-953-5859. Please speak to me about any concerns you have regarding my preferred communication methods. I cannot promise that I will be available at all times. I do not take telephone calls when I am with a client. You can always leave a message, and I will return your call within 24 hours barring an urgent situation. If you have an urgent issue, I will see you as soon as I can realistically schedule an appointment. You are welcome to call me during normal business hours (8am-5pm) at 617-953-5859 and leave a message. If you are having an emergency please to call 9-1-1 or to proceed to the nearest emergency department.

Social Media

Please refrain from making contact with me using social media messaging systems such as Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. These methods have very poor security and I am not prepared to watch them closely for important messages from clients. It is my policy to not have current or former clients in my social media network. It is also not my practice to look up clients on social media applications or sites. I do not accept friend requests from clients as a way to preserve the client/coach relationship. I will also not send current or former clients friend requests.

E-mail and Text

In order to communicate with you by email or text message, I need to make sure you are aware of the confidentiality and other issues that arise when we communicate this way and to document that you are aware of these and agree to them.

I understand that all e-mail messages are sent over the Internet and are not encrypted, are not secure, and may be read by others. I understand that my e-mail communications with my therapist will NOT be encrypted and, therefore, my therapist can NOT guarantee the confidentiality and security of any information I send to him or that he sends to me via e-mail. I understand that SMS messages are even less secure than e-mail, and the same conditions apply.

I understand that for this reason my coach has advised me not to send sensitive information via e- mail or SMS message. This includes information about current or past symptoms, conditions, or treatment, as well as identifying information.

I hereby give permission for my coach to reply to my messages via e-mail, including any information that she deems appropriate, that would otherwise be considered confidential. I agree that my coach is not liable for any breach of confidentiality that may result from this use of e-mail via the Internet.

I understand that my therapist will limit SMS messages to brief inquiries or responses regarding scheduling.

I understand that my therapist may at times e-mail me information about resources that I can use as part of my treatment. I hereby consent to receive such information via e-mail.

Privacy and Confidentiality

You agree to work with me using Teletherapy through Zoom or another encrypted email/chat service determined to be suitable by Zoom. Additionally,

* Text messaging via mobile phone is acceptable for appointments and housekeeping issues and can be used sparingly for support throughout the week.
* I do not store your name in my phone.
* If you call me, please be aware that unless we are both on landline phones, the conversation is not confidential.
* Any computer files referencing our communication are maintained using secure and encrypted measures.
* I will not respond to personal and clinical concerns via regular email.
* If you wish to use email as a way to “journal” information between sessions, you understand that I may not have the opportunity to review your journal emails until our next scheduled session.

I make every effort to keep all information confidential. Likewise, If we are working online coaching together, I ask that you determine who has access to your computer and electronic information from your location. This would include family members, co-workers, supervisors and friends and whether or not confidentiality from your work or personal computer may be compromised. I encourage you to only communicate through a computer that you know is safe i.e. wherein confidentiality can be ensured. Be sure to fully exit all coaching sessions/emails.

It is not a regular part of my practice to search for client information online through search engines such as Google or social media sites such as Facebook. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If I have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with me via our usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

As stated previously, if a life-threatening crisis should occur, you agree to contact a crisis hotline, call 911, or go to a hospital emergency room.

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