

## 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 your therapist know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your therapist.

### 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 sessions take place outside of the therapist's private office, there is 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 get access to 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 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 telepsychology 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 therapist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

## **Electronic Communications**

I am currently using [ZOOM®](https://Zoom.us), an encrypted, HIPAA compliant telemedicine platform, to offer telepsychology services. Detailed information about [ZOOM®](https://Zoom.us) is available at <https://Zoom.us>. You may have to have a certain computer or cell phone systems to use this service. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telepsychology.

For communication between sessions, I only use text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that text messages with my office should be limited to brief administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by text and prefer you do not either. Also, I do not regularly check my texts, nor do I respond immediately, so this method **should not** be used if there is an emergency. If you wish to communicate clinical information to me outside of session, please use the encrypted, HIPAA compliant Patient Portal® email system only. Please be aware that while I try to check my Patient Portal® email daily, I cannot guarantee a same-day response to your message. Patient Portal® **should not** be used if you are in an emergency situation.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. But if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach me by phone. I will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays, or when I am on a scheduled vacation. If you are unable to reach me and feel you cannot wait for me to return your call, 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 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 telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality outlined in Evolutionary Wellbeing's general Informed Consent Form still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

## **Appropriateness of Telepsychology**

From time to time, we may schedule in-person sessions to “check-in” with one another. I will let you know if I decide that telepsychology is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. We will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

## **Emergencies and Technology**

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telepsychology than in traditional in-person psychotherapy. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology services. 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 that you sign the authorization below, allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the telepsychology session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, or otherwise feel unsafe (e.g. the session has been, or is likely to be, affected by coercion, force, unauthorized third party involvement, or an unsafe physical environment) immediately take all necessary measures to insure your safety, such as calling 911 or going to your nearest emergency room. Call me back only after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If the telepsychology session is interrupted and/or the privacy of our session is compromised, and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and I will immediately send a link to your email for a new ZOOM® session. Once you have reestablished privacy at your location, please use the new link to reconnect with me. If you do not receive an email from me within two minutes, or you are unable to reestablish privacy, please call me on the phone number I provided you. If we are unable to resume the connection due to technological failure, or to your inability to reestablish privacy, you will only be charged for the prorated amount of actual session time.

## **Fees**

The same fee rates will apply for telepsychology as apply for in-person psychotherapy. However, insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic psychotherapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our 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.

## **Informed Consent**

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that 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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Evolutionary Wellbeing

Psychological & Counseling Services for optimal mental, physical & relational health

## Emergency Contact

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give permission for my Therapist,

\_\_\_\_\_ to contact

\_\_\_\_\_ if there is an emergency situation.

(First Name, Last Name, Phone #)

I also provide the following contact information for my local emergency services for my Clinician's use, as needed, in case of an emergency:

POLICE: \_\_\_\_\_

FIRE DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY MEDICAL AMBULANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL EMERGENCY ROOM: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date