



# **Grelling Psychology Associates**

*sensitive, professional care for individuals and families*

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## **TELETHERAPY SERVICES – INFORMED CONSENT**

Name of Patient: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

This Teletherapy Services – Informed Consent document contains important information focused on conducting psychotherapy using phone or videoconferencing systems, as well as using email or other electronic messaging systems to contact your therapist. Please read this document carefully and let them 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 Teletherapy**

Teletherapy refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as videoconferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of teletherapy 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. Teletherapy, however, requires technical competence on both the client's and therapist's parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of teletherapy, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and teletherapy, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because teletherapy 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. Your therapist will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy, but it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for the session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of the 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 teletherapy. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to your private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, therapists will not engage in teletherapy with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in teletherapy, your

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**Mailing Address:** 21C Orinda Way #141, Orinda, CA 94563  
**Office Address:** 61 Avenida de Orinda #100, Orinda, CA 94563

therapist will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of teletherapy work.

- Efficacy. Most research shows that teletherapy 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**

Your therapist and you will decide together which kind of teletherapy service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use teletherapy services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in teletherapy.

For communication between sessions, therapists will only use email communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless you have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with your therapist should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that your therapist cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text though they will make every effort to insure privacy on their end. Therefore, your therapist will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. While your therapist will make every effort to regularly check email or texts, they may not respond immediately, so these methods should not be used if there is an emergency. **Please note that texts should never be sent to the main office number (925-215-8694) as texts sent to this number will not be received by your therapist and cannot be responded to directly.**

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. However, if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach your therapist by phone. Generally, they will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach your therapist and feel that you cannot wait for them to return your call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If your therapist will be unavailable for an extended time, they will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in their absence.

### **Confidentiality**

All psychotherapists have a legal and ethical responsibility to make their best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of teletherapy. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that they cannot guarantee that your communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to your communications. Your therapist will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of

communications, for example, only using secure networks for teletherapy sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for teletherapy.

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in Grelling Psychology Associates "Clinical Services – Policies and Procedures" still apply in teletherapy. Please let your therapist know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

### **Appropriateness of Teletherapy**

From time to time, we may also schedule in-person sessions to "check-in" with one another. I will let you know if I decide that teletherapy 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 teletherapy than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, your therapist may work with you create an emergency plan before engaging in teletherapy services. They may ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who they will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. They may also ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing them to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If a teletherapy session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call your therapist back; instead, call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call your therapist back only after you have called or obtained emergency services and ensured your own safety.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and your therapist will wait one minute and then re-contact you via the teletherapy platform on which you agreed to conduct therapy or will call you back. If you do not receive a call back within one minute, you can call them at our main number 925-215-8694 or any other number you have agreed to.

### **Fees**

The same fee rates will apply for teletherapy 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 teletherapy sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

### **Records**

The teletherapy 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 Grelling Psychology Associates Clinical Policies and Procedures document that you were given at the outset of your clinical work with your therapist and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Initial or write "decline":

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to the use of telephone sessions to conduct psychotherapy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to the use of secure videoconference services to conduct psychotherapy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my therapist contact me by email to discuss scheduling and other administrative matters.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my therapist contact me by MMS/SMS "text messaging" to discuss scheduling and other administrative matters.

Your signature below indicates agreement with the above terms and conditions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient/ Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Personal Representatives Authority  
(as appropriate - e.g. Parent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Provider

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date