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INFORMED CONSENT FOR TREATMENT

The following document includes my office policies and your agreement to enter into treatment with me, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in California. When you sign this document, it signals that you agree with the policies and information contained herein. If you have any questions about any of this material, please feel free to raise them with me at any time.

CANCELLATION POLICY: In order to provide a consistent meeting time for us, I hold your spot for you and only you each week. Because of this, I require a **48-hour notice** for the first three (3) sessions missed during the calendar year. If you cancel with less than 48 hours' notice, you will be charged your normal fee, **unless we can reschedule within that same business week.**

In addition, **if you miss more than three (3) sessions in a calendar year, you will still be charged your usual fee, even if you cancel your session with 48 hours' notice.** This is in addition to any time I may take off from treatment (usually 4-5 weeks per year).

I can make an exception to this policy given the following circumstances: You have cancelled outside of 48 hours, and we can reschedule the missed session within 7 calendar days on either end of your usual appointment time. Keep in mind that if my calendar is full, we may not be able to reschedule your missed session, and you will be liable for your fee.

APPOINTMENTS, FEES, AND PAYMENT: Appointments are \$200 for a 50-minute session, unless prior arrangements are made. Longer sessions are pro-rated for the additional time. Full payment by cash, check, or credit card is due at the start of each session. You may also pay monthly. If you have a PPO insurance that reimburses you for psychotherapy, upon request I will provide you with a monthly statement to submit to your carrier for reimbursement. I do not take insurance, so you will pay the fee directly to me, and submit a statement to your insurance company for reimbursement.

Please note that if you choose to pursue reimbursement by your insurance company, call them to find out if you have a deductible and what percentage of your payments will be reimbursed. Because your insurance provider is contributing financially to your treatment, they may have access to certain privileged information (including your diagnosis) and may have access to your medical records so that they can determine whether appropriate treatment is being provided. If I am ever requested to give your mental health records to your insurance provider, I will notify you and we will discuss your options to preserve your right to privacy.

I may raise my rates each calendar year either in September or January. I may raise my rate more frequently if your financial situation changes considerably. We will have an opportunity to talk about fee increases and how they impact any feelings you have about the treatment.

LATE FEE: Please pay on time. If you have more than two (2) unpaid sessions with me, and we have not made prior arrangements, I may charge a late fee of \$20 per session missed. If you have more than three unpaid sessions and you are unable to pay your bill, we may stop treatment until the bill is paid, or make other arrangements for your treatment.

PHONE CALLS: When you leave a message on my voice mail, I will respond to you within 24 hours during the business week, and up to one business day after the weekend. If our between-session phone call lasts longer than 15 minutes, the call will be billed at the rate of a 50-minute session. **I do not offer full phone sessions in lieu of appointments missed due to late cancellation**, but I do offer a check-in up to 15 minutes in length. If I feel we are having more frequent check-ins, I may suggest to you that we increase the frequency of our in-person sessions.

EMAIL, TEXT MESSAGE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA: Email is not a confidential method of communication and can be intercepted by unauthorized persons. If you are willing to assume the risk and prefer to reach me by email, please use therapy@mollymerson.com. It may take me up to three working days to respond to email, so if you need a faster response, please call. I do not use text message, and my phone line is a voice mail only and is not able to receive text messages. Please see my Social Media Policy for more information about how I preserve and maintain your privacy on social media.

MISSED SESSIONS/NO SHOWS/LATE ARRIVALS: If you are going to be more than 15 minutes late to a session, please call or email me to let me know you will be late or are not coming. If you do arrive late, we will end on time to preserve the following person's full session time.

TERMINATION: If you decide that you are ready to end therapy with me, I suggest you give several weeks notice so that we can process the transition and the feelings that come up around discontinuing therapy. It can be a significant experience to terminate a therapeutic relationship, and it is important that we have the time and space to help you understand and explore whatever feelings may be coming up. We will also talk about how you will know whether you need to return to therapy for "check ups". If it does not feel possible to phase out of therapy over the course of several weeks, I recommend you allow at least two sessions to offer closure to the process. I am also happy to provide referrals to other therapists or providers should you feel that you need a different style of therapy and wish to terminate for that reason.

If, during our work together, I feel as though I am unable to help you, I will give you three referrals for other clinicians, and offer an opportunity to process the feelings that come up about termination. Failure to pay fees on time may also result in termination of therapy until such time as you are able to pay for services. If finances and affordability are a limiting factor and we cannot come to a mutually agreeable fee, I will provide you with several referrals to sliding scale clinics and clinicians.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Therapy can offer a number of benefits, including new ways of understanding yourself and your relationships, finding a clearer path to identifying and achieving your goals, unblocking places you feel stuck, and improving your relationships and quality of life. Therapy may lead to decisions about changing jobs, homes, schools, partners, or other aspects of your life. Therapy can also bring up memories of events that you may have been pushing away to protect yourself from uncomfortable feelings. During some parts of the therapy, feelings

of frustration, anxiety, discomfort, depression, and other difficult emotions may arise. If any of these feelings or others not listed here are coming up for you, I strongly recommend that you bring them to the therapy so that you are not alone in your experience, and so that we can process them together and find new ways of navigating what is coming up for you.

Though there are no guaranteed results, therapy works best when you are honest with yourself and with me. I will likely challenge many of your usual assumptions, and it might feel difficult to bring some things into therapy (especially if you are used to pushing certain feelings away). Therapy is not a linear process, and sometimes the work can feel quick and painless, and even cathartic; other times, it may feel gradual and frustrating. If you are ever feeling stuck in the treatment, please let me know, so we can work together to understand what is feeling intimidating or uncomfortable and work towards a deeper understanding of your experience.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Unless you give me specific written consent to disclose information, all client/patient information is confidential. I may, and sometimes must, break confidentiality under the following circumstances:

- **Suspected child or elder abuse/neglect (notify CPS/APS)**
- **Intent to harm self or others (contact your friends and family, or police)**
- **Subpoenas and court orders (share treatment information with the courts for legal proceedings)**

Parents may have access to information regarding minor children's treatment *unless*: I deem it detrimental to the child's well being, there is suspected child abuse, or all of the following are present: The minor is over 12, has consented to their own treatment, and is paying for their own treatment without parental support, according to the state of California. Also, there is a new law that states if you disclose the downloading or viewing of child pornography, I must report to Child Protective Services.

I share non-identifying client/patient information with consultants and in case conferences with professional therapists as permitted by law. I keep limited treatment, billing, and appointment records for each session, which are held under multiple security layers (similar to bank-level security) and are stored in therapy-specific software in the cloud.

If you use your insurance provider to reimburse you for our sessions, or if your parents are paying for therapy and you are under the age of 18, they may have access to your medical records. If your records are ever requested by a third party, or if anyone contacts me in regards to your treatment, I will notify you. In some cases, I may be required to disclose information, but in these cases will attempt to reach you so that we can decide together the best course of action. One exception is the Patriot Act, which states that if you are suspected of terrorism by the Federal government, they are allowed to subpoena my records of our treatment and I may not be allowed to notify you. Please let me know if you have any questions about these or other issues of privacy or confidentiality. You may also refer to my website for more information about my practice and policies.

Policy updated 5/1/18

I agree to these terms and conditions and consent to treatment with Margaret “Molly” Merson, MFT:

Name

Date

(if in a couple/dyad:)

Name

Date

I have received, read, and understood the Social Media Policy and Notice of Privacy Practices:

initials

Policy updated 5/1/18