

INFORMED CONSENT FOR COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Please read everything below and initial on the right to indicate you have read and understand each section regarding your treatment.

Introduction

Ruth is licensed as a professional counselor by the Oregon Board of Counselors and Therapists. Ruth has a masters and doctorate in Clinical Psychology and has been working in the mental health field since 2006.

Ruth prefers to primarily address counseling from a holistic and relational Gestalt therapy orientation. Holistic meaning addressing the whole life of the person, not just the problem they are seeking counseling for. This includes assessing one's health care needs, relationships, employment, spirituality, hobbies, activities, etc. Relational Gestalt Therapy includes a belief that the relationship between therapist and client is key to your healing. Gestalt therapy indicates a foundational trust in the client as a human being who can collaborate on the topic and at the pace that will help them integrate their many experiences in the best way for the moment at hand.

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The goal of counseling is to reduce internal distress and problems in one's life. Some individuals may experience an exacerbation of problems or different problems in the course of counseling. These problems can increase anxiety, depression, sadness, sleep disturbance, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, self-destructive or angry impulses, suicidal tendencies and problems in family relationships. In some situations, hospital care may be necessary.

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Persons who are in counseling/therapy benefit from having a support system. Expressive activities such as exercise, art, writing, and music are helpful in one's healing. Other treatment modalities such as family therapy, group counseling, 12 step groups and support groups, medication, natural and alternative healing modalities may be helpful. Referrals can be provided to help develop a support system at your request.

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Medical Concerns

Ruth cannot recognize or diagnose medical conditions. It is recommended that you obtain a medical examination to determine any medical origins for your psychological problems, neurological disorders, endocrinological disorders, side effects of medication etc. Not being a medical doctor, Ruth cannot prescribe medication but will refer you for psychiatric consultation if this appears to be indicated.

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Assessment

Counselors and therapists must conduct both an initial and ongoing assessment to understand your psychological needs. It is essential that you cooperate by completing all forms requested. Please be completely open and honest about your symptoms. Ruth can only help you with your problems to the extent of the information you provide.

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Confidential Therapy

The content of your sessions will be held confidential. Ruth cannot release any information or confirm or deny that you are in counseling without your written consent.

Confidentiality from Third Parties

Counseling and therapy is confidential from parties with important exceptions:

1) Information may be released to designated parties by written authorization of clients or legal guardians.

2) When you seek reimbursement for therapy/counseling from insurance companies or other third parties, information, including psychological diagnosis, and in many cases, explanations of symptoms and treatment plans, and in rare cases, entire client records, must be provided to the third party. If health coverage is provided, employers could possibly have access to such information. Insurance companies usually claim to keep psychological diagnosis confidential, but may enter this information into national information data banks where it may be accessed by employers, other insurance companies etc. It may limit your future access to disability insurance, life insurance, jobs, etc. Ruth can provide you with copies of reports submitted to insurance companies at your request. They are required by law to adhere to HIPAA regulations of confidentiality.

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3) Ruth is required to release information obtained from collateral sources, other individuals involved in your counseling/therapy to which such disclosure may help to advert danger to any psychotherapy client or others. This can include imminent risk of suicide, homicide, abuse of a child or a disabled or elderly person, and destruction of property that could endanger others. Counselors and therapists are required to report when you are at imminent risk of a life-threatening danger. This includes suicidal or homicidal intent or action, suspected past or present abuse or neglect of children, adults and elders, and children being exposed to domestic violence. Ruth is required to report to the authorities including DHS and law enforcement based on information provided by you and/or collateral sources.

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If you are required to undergo counseling as a result of a court order or mandate from DHS or probation departments, Ruth may be required to provide all notes of your therapy and contact with collateral sources in response to a court order or legitimate subpoena. Ruth does not provide any recommendations for child custody, settlement cases or other legal issues.

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As a counselor and counselor educator, Ruth often consults with other professionals on cases and teach about the psychotherapy process. Ruth disguises identifying information when doing so. Please indicate if you wish to place restrictions on consultation or teaching related to your case.

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Cell phone, texts, faxes, written letters and email communications can be intercepted by third parties. Ruth cannot guarantee complete confidentiality when communicating with you or your insurance companies via these forms of communication. Ruth will discuss with you how you want to communicate. Ruth is required to make a record of each client contact. Emails outside of Theranest are printed/scanned in full and become a part of your file.

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Professional Records

The Oregon Board of Counselor and Therapists requires that Ruth keep treatment records. Ruth is required to keep your records for 7 years. At the completion of 7 years, Ruth will delete your records electronically. Ruth keeps an electronic file on Theraest.com. Ruth has notified the Oregon Board of Counselors of her contact person in the event of her death or an illness that prevents her from managing her affairs.

Professional records can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records. Ruth charges copying costs of \$2.00 per sheet for professional time spent responding to information requests. Your records will be provided within 30 days of your documented request. Your record includes a copy of the signed informed consent form, acknowledgment of receipt of privacy policies and practice, progress notes, and any release of protected health information and copies of your bill. If Ruth keeps any paper records, they are kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office and are also destroyed at the end of the 7 year time period explained above.

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Alternative Treatments

Other treatment approaches are sometimes used when Ruth counsels or provides therapy. Ruth will also discuss these approaches beforehand with you and ask for your consent to proceed. Such techniques may include, breath work, teaching meditation techniques, expressive journaling or art therapy, group counseling, mindfulness techniques referrals to 12-step groups, and referrals to a variety of practitioners based on you request or interest. Additional alternative treatments can include guided imagery, compassion model instruction, and dialectical behavioral therapy. Ruth will explain each of these methods and receive your permission prior to implementing them.

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Fees

Counseling and therapy sessions are determined through your contract with your EAP, insurance company, or at the cost of \$130/hour for the initial 50-minute session. \$120/hour for additional individual sessions, and \$150/hour for couples or family sessions. Payment is due at the time of service unless other arrangements have been made prior to your session. There are additional options for a sliding fee/monthly retainer at a reduced rate. Please ask Ruth if you have questions about the cost of therapy.

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Cancellations

Please understand that your appointment is reserved for you. Ruth cannot put someone in your place if you do not give her enough notice to do so. You agree to call 24 hours in advance if you must cancel a session. The following applies depending on how you are paying for your sessions:

Insurance/cash: If less than 24 hour's notice is provided, you will be billed half of your regular session rate. Insurance and most EAPs do not cover missed sessions, so you will be responsible for half of the full fee for the session which may be higher than your regular copay.

Sliding Fee/Subscription: If you have chosen the sliding fee/monthly retainer, no additional fees will incur unless a pattern is noted of late cancellations of 3 or more sessions. If you are paying a monthly retainer, and 3 or more sessions have been missed or cancelled within 24 before your appointment, counseling will be suspended until the matter that prevents attendance is resolved.

The exception to late cancellations is if a sudden medical emergency has occurred. Two late cancels or no shows within a 3-month period will result in termination of counseling and a referral to another provider, or counseling will be suspended until the matter that prevents attendance is resolved.

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Emergencies

Ruth is not immediately available by phone or online. If it is a life or death situation or you or another person is in a severe mental health crisis, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room. If you are a Multnomah County resident, you may also call the Multnomah County Crisis line at 503-988-4888 24 hours a day to speak with a Crisis Counselor. Lake Oswego and Clackamas clients may call the Clackamas Crisis Line at 503-655-8585 24 hours a day to speak with a Crisis Counselor.

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Length of Counseling or Therapy

Some problems can be alleviated in just a few sessions. Other problems require longer treatment. It is often difficult to predict the length of therapy needed. The decision to terminate therapy belongs to you or at the therapist's recommendation. If termination occurs before adequate treatment has been achieved, Ruth will provide you with referrals to other providers upon your request or you may choose to find your own therapist.

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Social Media, Email, Texting

Ruth can be contacted through Theranest.com. It is not, however, a forum for discussing very serious issues or counseling. Therefore, you can expect brief responses from her until you can talk on the phone or at your next session. Ruth does allow you to text, however, she will not use texting as a means to discuss counseling issues. Texting should be reserved for appointment issues or minimal communication.

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Contact Outside of the Office

As your counselor, Ruth is obligated to do her best at keeping our relationship professional and confidential. Therefore, Ruth will not accept invitations to weddings, birthdays, etc. Additionally, if she runs into you in the community, she typically will not acknowledge you because of confidentiality reasons. While gifts are discouraged and considered on a case by case basis, Ruth appreciates the kindness and generous thoughtfulness of a verbal or written "thank you."

Termination of Counseling

You always have the right to request a change in treatment or to refuse therapy. It is important that the therapeutic process meets your needs. If you believe you are not being helped, please tell Ruth so that you can work through this difficulty together. If this is not possible, Ruth will assist you in finding another therapist. **Although you are free to terminate therapy at any time, Ruth requests that you discuss your decision and reasons for termination at the beginning of a regularly scheduled session.** Ruth considers it of therapeutic value to you that the counseling relationship be closed in a straightforward manner, ensuring that all counseling issues have been dealt with to the best of your and her abilities. Ruth also requests this to demonstrate the importance of establishing boundaries and closure for all parties, and to intentionally set aside the therapeutic relationship as a behavior different from those we habitually engage in.

As your counselor, Ruth may choose to terminate counseling with you as a result of lack of attendance, or if Ruth has reason to believe you should be referred to another professional, if Ruth is finding that your

needs are out of her scope of service or for other ethical reasons set forth by her licensing board. Ruth will provide you with a list of 3 names or agencies you may contact to transfer care or you may contact your insurance company or find other providers of your own choosing. If you are absent from counseling for over 30 days and wish to return, it may require a new intake assessment.

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Complaints about your Counselor

Disciplinary recourse is available by contacting the Board at the following address and phone number: Board of Counselors and Therapists, 3218 Pringle Rd SE #250, Salem, OR 97302-6312. Phone (503) 378-5499

Counseling and Therapy Contract

Your signature below indicates that you have read the above information, have asked questions as needed and understand the issues related to risks and benefits of therapy and counseling, medical concerns, assessment, confidentiality, collateral contacts with others, professional records, confidentiality form third parties, alternative treatments, length of therapy, fee for therapy emergencies and cancellations.

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I agree to treatment based on my informed wish to proceed.

Full Name of Client (please Print) **Date of Birth**

Signature (if applicable) **Date**

Complete address (including Street, City, State, Zip Code) **Client's Phone Number**

Email Address **Emergency Contact (Name/Phone Number)**

 Parent or Guardian or Conservator Signature (if applicable) Date

 Insured's Signature (if different from above) Insured's Address Insured's Date of Birth

Ruth Diaz, LPC, Psy.D. **Date**