

## John McConnell Ph.D.

Psychology License PSY10673  
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***Please bring in the last page – signed – for your first session***

### **Therapy Services Contract & Informed Consent**

Please review this contract carefully. You will be asked to sign this document at your first session.

This is a legal contract that binds you to certain agreements regarding your participation in individual and/or group therapy with Dr. John McConnell. Much of this document is required by HIPPA, a federal law.

You can save time by printing this document and bringing it to your first session already signed.

### **Psychotherapy – There Are No Guarantees**

Often the decision to seek therapy is not an easy one. Most persons approach psychotherapy with a mix of feelings and thoughts, however they typically relax into the process after a few sessions.

Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. **Therapy calls for a very active effort on your part, honesty, and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings and/or behavior.** You will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, worry, fear, insomnia, depression, loneliness, and helplessness. Psychotherapy may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member. Change will sometimes be easy and swift, but often it will be slow and frustrating.

Much research has found that psychotherapy helps most patients, but there is no guarantee that it will help you individually.

My goal is to help people heal and move on as quickly as possible, but there is no magic. What at first looks like a simple task of symptom relief can sometimes uncover deeper issues, and deeper change takes time. "Short-term work" is 12 to 15 sessions. "Long-term work" can last a year or several years.

## **The Relationship**

Without a doubt, the most important single factor in therapy is the relationship between therapist and client. Over time, and with patience, a trust can develop which makes the work go faster. Trust is built on honesty.

As a therapist Dr. McConnell cannot be your friend, but he ought to be your ally - someone you trust enough to relax your usual boundaries and defenses and work on core issues. Someone who you trust to accept your embarrassments and shames, and who understands that your particular struggle to be happy may take many unexpected twists and turns. He knows that if what you seek in therapy was easy then you would get there by yourself; you seek help because the task is difficult.

## **Different Clients and Problems Call for Different Approaches**

Dr. McConnell is likely to draw on various psychological approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and his assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, existential, system/family, developmental (adult, child, family), or psycho-educational. From time to time he may use hypnosis or other means of inducing trance states. Individual, couple, and family therapy require very different approaches:

- Some need short-term work, while others need longer-term work.
- Some benefit from delving into the unconscious, while others benefit more by keeping to immediate issues and decisions.
- Some need specific guidance, coaching and solutions, while others need support in a struggle to find their own solutions.

## **The First Sessions**

During the first session the business aspects of therapy must be addressed - fees, contracts, intake forms. After that, we can launch directly into the work.

Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, Dr. McConnell will discuss with you (client) his working understanding of the problem, treatment plan, therapeutic objectives, and his view of the possible outcomes of treatment. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, Dr. McConnell's expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully.

Success depends on a good match between therapist and client. In the first few sessions one of our main tasks is to explore whether there is a good fit. Will working together be likely to produce the results you seek? If you don't think we are a good match, or want a second opinion, Dr. McConnell will be happy to refer you to another provider. He knows many providers in the city and - based on your initial few sessions - can probably suggest a good match.

## **Things to Let Me Know During Treatment**

A goal of therapy is to provide you with a safe place to experience all your feelings and the conflicts that inhibit their understanding. That includes thoughts and feelings about your doctor. Be sure to tell Dr. McConnell about thoughts, feelings or dreams you are having about him or the work. Some difficult feelings you may have toward him include shame, guilt, embarrassment, anxiety, warmth, affection, moments of anger, frustration, or being ignored or unwanted. If you experience these or other difficult feelings toward him or the therapy, it is important to talk about them. Sex is never a part of therapy, and knowing this makes it easier for some clients to talk about sexual feelings. If you have feelings of sexual attraction to Dr. McConnell, it is important to talk about them with him.

Let Dr. McConnell know any health conditions you have and any changes to your physical health. This includes physical exercise, illness, and medications. Medications, which are prescribed for conditions unrelated to your psychological functioning may have a profound affect on your mental wellbeing. It is particularly important for you to make Dr. McConnell aware of any changes in medications that may affect your psychological functioning. Keep him informed of any significant changes in your financial status. Also, alert him if the frequency of sessions is not meeting your needs or budget. Sessions can be scheduled more or less frequently.

## **Working Well With Others**

You have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits. If at any time you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, Dr. McConnell will assist you in finding someone qualified. If he has your written consent, he will provide her or him with the essential information needed.

## **Dual Relationships**

Not all dual relationships are unethical or avoidable, but many are. Therapy never involves sexual or any other dual relationship that might impair Dr. McConnell's objectivity, clinical judgment, or therapeutic effectiveness or might be exploitative in nature. Dr. McConnell will assess carefully before entering into non-sexual and non-exploitative dual relationships with clients. Parts of San Diego are a small community and many clients know each other and Dr. McConnell from this community. Consequently you may bump into someone you know in the waiting room or into Dr. McConnell out in the community. Dr. McConnell will never acknowledge working therapeutically with anyone without his/her written permission. Many clients choose Dr. McConnell as their therapist because they know him before they enter into therapy with him and/or are aware of his stance on some issue. Nevertheless, Dr. McConnell will discuss with you the possible complexities, potential benefits, and possible problems that may be involved in such relationships. Dual or multiple relationships can enhance therapeutic effectiveness but can also detract from it and often it is impossible to know that ahead of time. It is your, the client's, responsibility to communicate to Dr. McConnell if the dual relationship becomes uncomfortable for you in any way. Dr. McConnell will always listen carefully and respond accordingly to your feedback. He will discontinue the dual relationship if he finds it interfering with the effectiveness of the therapeutic process or the welfare of the client and, of course, you can do the same at any time.

## Termination

Usually the decision to terminate evolves as a joint decision; however either therapist or client may initiate the termination.

**It is good practice to meet for one or two sessions after the decision to terminate has been made. Clients often are reluctant to schedule these winding down sessions, but almost always find them well worthwhile.**

If treatment is not going well – not just a rough patch, but for some underlying reason - Dr. McConnell will initiate discussion of this. If appropriate, he might insist you see another therapist or another professional. He will not continue to treat you if he believes the treatment is not working for you. If you could benefit from any treatments that Dr. McConnell does not provide, he has an ethical obligation to recommend them.

## About Custody Disputes and Divorce Proceedings

There are some clear limits about the degree Dr. McConnell can become involved if you become involved in a divorce or custody dispute. He will not provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. There are two reasons for this: (1) Dr. McConnell's statements will be seen as biased in your; and (2) the testimony might affect our therapy relationship, and Dr. McConnell must put this relationship first.

## Payment Procedures

**Payment or co-payment is collected at each session. Cash or checks are preferred. Credit cards can be accepted but are expensive to process.**

It is usually best to settle the payment at the start of the session, because at the end of the session time can be rushed and if you have been working you will have other things you want to focus on than paying bills.

All rates are subject to change at any times, and are routinely reviewed at the start of each calendar year.

## Fees for Individual Therapy

- \$100 for the initial 45-minute session for individuals.
- **Before 6:00pm: \$150 for a standard 45" session for individuals.**
- \$75 for each 25" (or part thereof) longer than 45".
- **After 6:00pm: \$170 for a standard 45" session.**
- \$85 for each 25" (or part thereof) longer than 45".

## Fees for Couples and Relationship Therapy

- \$100 for the first 75-minute session for couples.
- **Before 6:00pm: \$225 for a standard 75" session for couples.**
- \$75 for each 25" (or part thereof) longer than 75".
- **After 6:00pm: \$255 for a standard 75" session for couples.**

- \$80 for each 25" (or part thereof) longer than 75".

### **Fees for Phone Consultations**

- After the first 5" for phone conversations or e-mails, the charge is \$15 per every five-minute increment (or part thereof).
- There is no charge for brief phone calls or e-mails for the purpose setting up or changing appointments.

### **Fee for Group Sessions**

- \$40 per 90 minute group session.

### **Fee for Evaluation of Suitability for Group Sessions**

- \$100 for the initial individual evaluation session for the group. To ensure a good fit between your needs and the group's needs, all potential group members meet with me for a individual session before joining the group.

### **Reduced Fee**

Dr. McConnell has a limited number of therapy slots at a reduced rate for students or others who cannot afford his regular fee. If affordability is a problem please raise this during the first session. **If you are being seen at a reduced fee, you agree to alert Dr. McConnell to any improvement in your financial situation, and understand that your fee will be adjusted upward accordingly. If you do not alert Dr. McConnell to an improvement in your financial circumstances, then you agree to pay the difference between full fee and reduced fee retroactive to the point your finances changed.**

### **Legal and Administrative Fees**

The fee for any service involving legal matters is \$60 for each 15-minute increment or part thereof.

A third party will sometimes request a copy of treatment records or other documents related to your care, for example another provider, an insurance company, or an attorney. These requests typically need ten working days to process. A \$50 administrative fee will apply (for set-up time and filing). In addition, copies are charged at \$0.35 per page. An administrative assistant makes the copies.

Documentation (reports/letters of evaluation and recommendations) for court-mandated, employer-mandated and disability (FMLA, etc.) will be billed at a \$250 per hour. Please, note that a minimum of 1 hour will be charged (for chart/data review and documentation). On-site depositions (taken at Dr. McConnell's office) will incur the fee of \$300 per hour. Off-site depositions will be billed at \$350 per hour with a 2.5-hour minimum charge, billed in 15 minute-or-part-thereof increments.

### **Late-Cancellation/No-Show Policy**

**If you miss your scheduled appointment without notifying Dr. McConnell at least 24 business hours in advance you will be charged for the missed session.**

Exceptions are made in cases of extreme emergency (flight cancellations, hospitalization, etc.) The charge for the missed session will equal the amount that would have been charged for the scheduled session. Insurance does not cover missed sessions.

### **Insurance**

Dr. McConnell does not bill any insurance except for Workers Compensation and Victims of Crime. He is not on any panel, HMO or PPO. Many clients pay cash up front and bill their insurance carrier for reimbursement. If requested, at the end of the month Dr. McConnell will provide an invoice that is in the standard form accepted by insurance companies.

### **Missing or Late Payments**

Inability to pay or partial payment on the day of the service incurs a \$10 bookkeeping fee. If you paid for the services with a personal check and if your check "bounces" because of insufficient funds, an administrative (processing) fee of \$30 will be added to your balance.

If your account is 30 days past due Dr. McConnell reserves the right to discontinue services. Dr. McConnell reserves the right to forward the following protected health insurance information (PHI) to a collection agency if your account is over 60 days past due: your name, address, date of birth, your SIN, your phone number, dates of services, diagnosis, the record of accounts, and the amount/balance due.

### **If You Are In Crisis, Thinking of Harming Yourself, or are Suicidal**

You can call Dr. McConnell at (619) 993-3397 but your call is likely to go to voicemail. Dr. McConnell usually does not answer the phone or check voicemail for many hours each day, in the evenings, at night, or on weekends.

### **For Immediate Crisis Counseling:**

1. **Call 911**
2. Go the nearest Emergency Room
3. Call Contact San Diego Access and Crisis Line at 1-888-724-7240
4. Call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE) or 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK)
5. If deaf, call (619) 641-6992 TDD or (800) 799-4889 TTY

**Contacting Me**

My number is: (619) 993-3397, and my e-mail is [John@JohnMcConnellPhD.com](mailto:John@JohnMcConnellPhD.com)

My phone is usually answered by voicemail. Please leave a full message, including several good times when I can call you back.

**I usually retrieve and return messages Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM.**

**I may or may not pick up and return messages at other hours.**

If I do not return your message within the expected time, please assume the message didn't go through and call again.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNATURE**

*My signature below indicates that I have read (or had read to me) and understand Dr. McConnell's "Therapy Services Contract & Informed Consent" in its entirety, and that I agree to treatment within its terms,*

*I understand that any of the policies in this contract may only be changed by agreement of Dr. McConnell and me. Changes must be documented in writing and signed by both parties.*

*By signing my name below I attest that I have read and understand this document, and as a condition of treatment with Dr. McConnell I agree to the practices described in it.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient's printed name

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**If The Patient is a Minor:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian's printed name

Parent or Guardian's Street Address:

Parent or Guardian's City/State/Zip: