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Consultation Guidelines and Agreement

Thank you for choosing me as a consultant/facilitator/advisor. I'm excited to draw from the broad range of my current and prior professional skills and experiences - as a psychologist, professor, group leader, researcher, administrator and clinical supervisor - to facilitate growth and movement toward your goals. A fundamental philosophy underlying this work is that we benefit from being accompanied through the difficult or confusing times that arise in human life – and that seeking guidance and support is a sign of health and self-respect.

What is Consultation?

The premise of consultation is that of psychological wellness. Even people who are psychologically healthy and emotionally well will encounter moments/phases of temporary distress. This is the nature of being human. It can be quite useful (not to mention humane) to use guidance/service/coaching/information - and the confidential ear/emotional support of a trusted guide to make through some of life's harder moments. Not because we're ill, but because it's kind and decent and oh-so-useful to have someone accompany us when we're in pain.

What is the difference between Psychotherapy and Consultation?

The premise behind psychotherapy - as defined by the health insurance companies - is that a person is experiencing a mental disorder. Just like a broken knee or diabetes or the flu are identifiable aberrances from health, psychotherapy is deemed "medically necessary" only because an individual is suffering from a diagnosable mental disorder, for which psychotherapy is one possible treatment. It is not based on the premise of psychological wellness.

In the long course of my practice, often times someone presents for the very first time in therapy in what is likely a mental disorder – an episode of depression or anxiety or something like that – a clear sense that they are not themselves, that their work or personal lives are being impacted by their distress, and this distress and negative functioning have been going on for a couple of weeks if not more. Often, as therapy progresses, symptoms resolve, and people to return to a baseline of mental health – navigating life's easier and harder moments – not perfectly, but well enough. At these times, many people wish to stay in therapy to address how to better or improve their lives/self-understanding, etc. The desire for personal growth is not because they continue to have a mental disorder, but because they are human, and to be alive and to be human is to experience periodic times of confusion, pain, loss and suffering, and the never-ending motivation to grow and learn.

Unfortunately, our society has no means to give us access to the kind of care/support/consultation/guidance/coaching in these moments of human difficulty. The use of psychotherapy has been "stretched" so that people continue to come in and use insurance to pay for it, the insurance pays, and it's all workable...except that I don't like the model. I do not wish to work with people with it feeling a bit like a wink and a nod. I don't wish to say someone has a mental disorder solely for the use of a 3rd party payor.

If someone moves from wellness to phase of true psychological distress that meets criteria for a mental disorder, I believe the person deserves to have their care provided by someone who is embedded in the larger psychological/psychiatric/medical system where they live. If we are engaged in consultation and this situation arises, I will refer you to seek psychotherapy with a qualified professional. At that time, we

could continue our consultation services, and the treatment to alleviate the mental disorder would be provided by the other professional.

What to expect / Consent for Consultation

It is my role to help broaden discussions, add perspectives not readily seen, and to guide in problem-solving with the goal of creating solutions that are flexible, respectful and dignified for all involved. It is also my role to help participants take in new, difficult and/or emotionally charged information in ways that are constructive and healthy. I will bring attentive listening, understanding, belief in you and commitment to your success. You can expect me to respect your autonomy and inner wisdom, challenge you, offer fresh perspectives, make requests, and ask you to follow-up on things between appointments. I may make referrals to community resources, such as social service agencies, 12-step programs, self-help groups, books, etc., if I believe these would help you reach your goals.

In the course of our work, it is quite likely that we will address and encounter emotional, personal, professional and relational challenges and/or painful emotional experiences. It is my goal to help name and process these experiences in a learning framework. Although I am a clinical psychologist, the work we are undertaking is not psychotherapy, and, as such, I am not assuming your clinical care. If I believe it necessary and a potential benefit to you, I will make referrals and/or recommendations for clinical care.

If I ever say or do anything that upsets you or doesn't feel right, please bring it to my attention so that we can resolve it as soon as possible. My objective is to have a professional relationship that is fully open, honest, real and trusting in our communication styles.

There are a few responsibilities as a consultee:

1. FEES, PAYMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEES

I charge \$250.00 for a 55-minute consultation. I may make a reduction in the hourly rate for sessions that go over 2 (two) hours.

Payment is due in full 24 hours prior to the time services are provided; I can accept payment electronically, via Quickpay/Zelle or PayPal.

Health plans do not pay for consultations/workshops/facilitation/coaching, so neither you nor I can submit these charges to your health insurance company.

In person or virtual, consultation is NOT covered or reimbursable by health insurance plans – sort of like gym membership, nutritional counseling, or coaching isn't deemed "medically necessary" by health insurance companies. If you have a Health Savings Account, you may check with the administrator to see if consultation would fall under an expense from which you could reimburse yourself, but you'd have to check with your particular employer plan/details.

I don't particularly like how this plays out financially for clients, as it puts more burden on them, but I do prefer the sheer honesty of it. Because consultation costs clients more, I am willing to share some of that financial burden if cost is a true and legitimate barrier to obtaining service. In that circumstance, based on what a person believes is fair and workable for their financial situation, I can accept any amount between \$165 and \$250 (the full fee) per hour.

2. **SESSION TIME, LATE CANCELLATIONS AND MISSED APPOINTMENTS**

You are responsible for arriving to our meeting(s) on time, at the time we have scheduled. If we videochat, you understand that we will physically be in different locations, possibly different time zones, and that the platform may not comply with HIPAA regulations. If you miss a session without cancelling, or cancel with less than one full business day's (24 hours) notice, you must pay for that session in full, at or before the next scheduled meeting.

3. **RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUTCOME**

You accept full responsibility for yourself and any actions you might take that might result from this work. Consultation is not a guarantee of positive outcome or resolution, nor a guarantee against unwanted circumstances. What you choose to do - and not do - with the information we discuss is your responsibility, and you accept the consequences, both short-term and long-term, positive and negative.

4. **CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

In this day and age, electronic communication is subject to privacy invasions about which we understand very little. I use HIPAA compliant video platforms, phone or WhatsApp, my records are password protected on a password-protected devices. Emails, texts and any other electronic communication between us will be at risk of any other breach of privacy as you accept in your daily personal life. By agreeing to work with me, you agree to this level of good-faith protection of your privacy. I also ask that you agree to protect the privacy of our work – do not record our sessions, do not forward texts or emails from me to anyone else, etc.

AGREEMENT/CONSENT

I have read and agree with these consultation guidelines. Your signature on the signature page, located on the "Forms" page of my website ([http:// www.drbonnie.net/forms.html](http://www.drbonnie.net/forms.html)) conveys your understanding of, and agreement to, the terms laid out in this document, your consent to consult with Dr. Wolkenstein, and your agreement to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Please remit the signature page prior to the start of our first session, as it will be kept on file. Thank you.