

INFORMED CONSENT FOR OUTDOOR THERAPY DURING COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

This document contains important information about the decision (yours and your therapist's) to begin therapy sessions outdoors in light of the COVID-19 crisis. It is a supplement to the general informed consent that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together. Please read this document carefully and let us know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will be an official agreement between you and Pike Creek Psychological Center (PCPC).

Outdoor psychotherapy may take several forms. It may involve sitting outdoors on a bench/chair outside of our offices or sitting in a public place such as a park pavilion. It may also take the form of walking while addressing therapeutic goals and topics. If you decide to walk, some of the activities you might participate in include walking on sidewalks/bike paths and/or exploring public parks and open spaces. The focus of the experience is therapy, not exercise.

Please indicate below the reasons you and your therapist determined that outdoor therapy is an appropriate mode of therapy for you:

- It is clinically appropriate for the therapeutic goals you have agreed upon
- The specific benefits of outdoor therapy are likely to be helpful for your therapeutic process (e.g., bilateral rhythmic movement, potential helpful changes in brain chemistry evoked through physical exercise, less direct eye contact which can be helpful for people with various diagnoses, in person venue, less formal/clinical setting, potential help in getting “unstuck” in therapeutic process, potential increase in productivity of session, different setting/options for grounding/relaxation strategies)
- Meeting outside of the typical office environment will likely provide a therapeutic change of scenery
- Meeting in person when possible instead of virtually is likely to be beneficial for you.
- Other: _____

COVID-19 Specific Information

As a way to mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19, our practice has begun to offer the option of engaging in therapy outdoors in order to minimize time spent in close proximity to others while indoors. The decision about whether to engage in outdoor therapy is based on current conditions and guidelines which may change at any time. It is possible that a return to remote services will be necessary at some point based on health and safety considerations. This decision will be made in consultation with you, but your therapist and/or PCPC will make the final determination based on a careful weighing of the risks and applicable regulations.

In order to engage in outdoor therapy, the following protocols must be followed by clients and providers:

- You agree to take certain precautions which will help keep everyone safer from exposure, sickness and possible death. If you do not adhere to these safeguards, it may result in you starting / returning to a telehealth arrangement.
- You agree to only keep your in-person appointment if you are free of COVID-19 symptoms.
- You agree that if you have been exposed to another person who is showing signs of infection or is confirmed to have COVID-19 within the last two weeks you will re-schedule your outdoor session or do a telehealth session instead.

If you wish to cancel within 24 hours due to symptoms or exposure, you will not be charged the normal cancellation fee.

- You will be asked to text or call the provider upon arrival and wait in your vehicle until you receive a text or call with instructions for meeting your provider.
- You agree to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you begin your outdoor session.
- It is recommended that clients and providers wear face coverings or masks while engaging in outdoor therapy.
- You will keep a distance of 6 feet and there will be no physical contact (e.g. no shaking hands or hugging) with your therapist or others.
- If you are bringing your child, you will make sure that your child follows all of these sanitation and distancing protocols.
- You will take steps between appointments to minimize your exposure to COVID.
- If a resident of your home tests positive for the infection, you will immediately inform your therapist and/or our staff and we will then begin or resume treatment via telehealth.

We may change the above precautions if additional local, state or federal orders or guidelines are published. If that happens, we will talk about any necessary changes.

In addition, please be aware that we may become legally required at some point to disclose that you and your therapist have been in contact, especially if either you or your therapist were to test positive or show signs of COVID-19 infection. If we are legally compelled to disclose information, we will inform you and will only provide the minimum necessary information (e.g., your name, contact information, and the dates of contact) required by law. By signing this form, you are agreeing that we may fulfill our legal obligations to report without an additional signed release.

Additional Considerations:

There are possible risks of outdoor therapy, including, but not limited to:

- Accidental injuries from tripping or falling while walking, or potentially being struck by a bicyclist or a car.
- Physical dangers including insect stings, animal bites, falling branches or sticks, sunburn, exposure to heat/cold, and similar risks.
- Adverse weather conditions including heat, rain, and storms. Please note that when rain or storms are forecast, it may be necessary to reschedule the session or use a telehealth platform instead.

- Confidentiality issues: complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Though every attempt will be made to not engage in private conversations when others are in close proximity, it is not possible to guarantee that conversations will not be heard by others.
- Coming into contact with someone the therapist or client knows. If the therapist comes into contact with a known person, therapist will not disclose that you are a client or any other confidential information. If you come into contact with a known person, therapist will not initiate interaction with that person but will follow your lead in guiding any interactions.
- Given the prevalence of cellphones, it is also possible that you may be photographed or videoed with your therapist without your knowledge and that you and your therapist would have no control over the dissemination of those photos/videos.
- Perceived informality of the interaction. Although outdoor therapy might feel more like a social interaction rather than a therapeutic interaction, it is a therapeutic activity. Despite the relative informality of the interaction, the relationship between client and therapist continues to be entirely professional, and not a social relationship.

Consent and Agreements

In order to engage in outdoor therapy, you understand and agree to the following:

- You understand that participation in outdoor therapy is completely voluntary and that there are alternative options such as teletherapy or in-office services available.
- You agree to obtain approval from your doctor before engaging in outdoor therapy if you have any medical condition that could affect your ability to participate in this activity and to disclose those conditions or limitations to your therapist.
- You agree to take full responsibility for your physical safety and to not engage in any activity in which you do not feel safe.
- You agree to let your therapist know immediately if you become physically or emotionally uncomfortable during a session.
- You agree to abide by all COVID-19 protocols noted above.

By signing below, you indicate that you understand and accept the risks of outdoor therapy, including potential risk of exposure to COVID-19, and nevertheless consent to outdoor therapy under the conditions outlined above. This consent can be withdrawn in writing at any time.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Client (if not same as above)

Client Date of Birth