

Suwanee Counseling
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INFORMATION, AUTHORIZATION & CONSENT TO TREATMENT

Welcome to [Suwanee Counseling](#). I am very pleased that you selected my facility for your treatment, and am sincerely looking forward to facilitating you in your journey toward healing. This document is designed to inform you about what you can expect from me as your therapist, policies regarding confidentiality and emergencies, and several other details regarding your treatment here at [Suwanee Counseling](#). Although providing this document is part of an ethical obligation to my profession, more importantly, it is part of my commitment to you to keep you fully informed of every part of your therapeutic experience. Please know that your relationship with me is a collaborative one, and I welcome any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding your course of therapy at any time.

Background Information

The following information regarding my educational background and experience as a therapist is an ethical requirement of my profession. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. I have provided counseling services in the Forsyth/Gwinnett County area for the past 25+ years. I specialize in a variety of areas including family and marital counseling, anxiety, depression, pain management, bereavement, sexual issues, and addictive disorders. I began my career at Forsyth Mental Health 25 years ago. While working at the mental health center I continued my education at The University of Georgia focusing on families and child and adolescent treatment. I received my Masters degree in Social Work in 1993 and began to work in private practice. I received my LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) from the state of Georgia in 1995. New Day Counseling & Assessments was opened in 1996 as my own private practice. I have served on numerous boards and community organizations as well as a field instructor for the University of Georgia, Georgia State University and Florida State University teaching students in various counseling techniques, theory, ethics, and interventions. My philosophy is that the focus of intervention should be not only on healing but also on the personal empowerment of the individual providing them with the necessary skills to obtain healthy relationships with others while continuing to achieve their greatest personal potential. I also offer services for those who wish to enhance their relationships as well as Motivational Coaching for those who wish to enhance their career direction. After many years of education and experience, I recognize that most individuals are dealing with transition and/or loss when dealing with the changes in an ever increasingly fast past world. I utilize a wide variety of techniques and theories including cognitive-behavioral, experiential, family systems, humanistic, and hypnotherapy and EMDR. I believe that my role in life is to help others understand and cope with the changes that occur during the course of their lives.

Theoretical Views & Client Participation

It is my belief that as people become more aware and accepting of themselves, they are more capable of finding a sense of peace and contentment in their lives. However, self-awareness and self-acceptance are goals that may take a long time to achieve. Some clients need only a few sessions to achieve these goals, whereas others may require months or even years of therapy. As a client, you are in complete control, and you may end your relationship with me at any point.

In order for therapy to be most successful, it is important for you to take an active role. This means working on the things you and I talk about both during and between sessions. This also means avoiding any mind altering substances like alcohol or non-prescription drugs for at least eight hours prior to your therapy sessions. Generally, the more of yourself that you are willing to invest, the greater the return.

Furthermore, it is my policy to only see clients who I believe have the capacity to resolve their own problems with my assistance. It is my intention to empower you in your growth process to the degree that you are capable of facing life's challenges in the future without me. I also don't believe in creating dependency or prolonging therapy if the therapeutic intervention does not seem to be helping. If this is the case, I will direct you to other resources that will be of assistance to you. Your personal development is my number one priority. I encourage you to let me know if you feel that transferring to another facility or another therapist is necessary at any time. My goal is to facilitate healing and growth, and I am very committed to helping you in whatever way seems to produce maximum benefit.

Confidentiality

As your therapist, I always keep everything you say to me completely confidential, with the following exceptions: (1) you direct me to talk to someone else and you sign a "Release of Information" form; (2) in the event I determine that you are a danger to yourself or to others; (3) you report information about the abuse of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled individual who may require protection; or (4) I am ordered by a judge to disclose information. In the latter case, my license does provide me with the ability to uphold what is legally termed "privileged communication." Privileged communication is your right as a client to have a confidential relationship with a counselor. The state of Georgia has a very good track record in respecting this legal right. If for some unusual reason a judge were to order the disclosure of your private information, this order can be appealed. I cannot guarantee that the appeal will be sustained, but I will do everything in my power to keep what you say confidential.

Please note that in couples' counseling, I do not agree to maintain confidentiality between partners. Also, from time to time I may consult with other licensed therapists about your case in order to get another professional opinion. However, I will never use your name and will always disguise your identity. The purpose for these consultations is strictly to provide you with the best possible care. If you have any questions about confidentiality, please ask.

Structure and Cost of Sessions

I agree to provide psychotherapy for the fee of \$100.00 per 50 minute session, \$125.00 per 80 minute session, and/or \$20-\$45.00 per 90 minute group therapy session, unless otherwise negotiated by you or your insurance carrier. Doing psychotherapy by telephone is not ideal, and needing to talk to your therapist/group leader between sessions indicates that you must need extra support. If this is the case, you and I will need to explore adding sessions or developing other resources you have available to help you. Telephone calls that exceed 5 minutes in duration will be billed at \$2.00 per minute. The fee for each session will be due at the conclusion of the session. Cash, personal checks or money orders are acceptable for payment, and I will provide you with a

receipt of payment or statement for insurance, if applicable to you. It is your responsibility to file for insurance reimbursement, but I will be glad to assist you with any questions you may have in this area.

Cancellation Policy

In the event that you are unable to keep an appointment, you must notify me at least 24 hours in advance. If such advance notice is not received, you will be financially responsible for the session you missed. Please note that insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions. Many cancellations is typically a reflection of lack of desire and commitment to therapy. Please note that even within a 24 hour time frame, there may not be enough time for someone else who may need an appointment to make arrangements to be there. Please respect that I have also made a commitment to being there as well.

In Case of an Emergency

Suwanee Counseling is considered to be an outpatient facility, and it is set up to accommodate individuals who are reasonably safe and resourceful. I do not carry beepers nor am I available at all times. If at any time this does not feel like sufficient support, please discuss this with me so that we can coordinate additional resources or transfer your case to a therapist or clinic with 24-hour availability. Generally, I will return phone calls within 24-48 hours. If you have a mental health emergency, I encourage you not to wait for a call back, but to do one or more of the following:

- Call your personal physician.
- Call Ridgeview Institute (770) 434-4567.
- Dial 911.
- Go to your nearest emergency room.

Professional Relationship

Psychotherapy is a professional service I can provide to you. Because of the nature of therapy, your relationship with your therapist has to be different from most relationships. It may differ in how long it lasts, the objectives, or the topics discussed. It must also be limited to the relationship of therapist and client only. If you and I were to interact in any other ways, we would then have a "dual relationship" which could prove to be harmful to you in the long run and is, therefore, unethical in the mental health profession. All of the different therapy professions have rules against such relationships to protect us both.

I want to explain why having a dual relationship is not a good idea. Dual relationships can set up conflicts between your therapist's interests and your (the client's) best interests, and then the client's interests might not be put first. In order to offer all of our clients the best care, your therapist's judgment needs to be unselfish and professional. Therefore, I may not participate in any of the following relationship examples:

- Your therapist/group leader cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator.
- Your therapist/group leader cannot be a therapist to her or his own relatives, friends (or the relatives of friends), people she or he knows socially, or business contacts.
- Your therapist/group leader cannot provide therapy to people she or he formerly knew socially, or to former business contacts.
- Your therapist/group leader cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you besides the therapy itself. For example, your therapist cannot employ you, lend to or borrow from you, or trade or barter your services (things like tutoring, repairing, legal advice, dentistry, etc.) or goods for therapy.
- Your therapist/group leader cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of professional advice in an area that he or she has not received training in.

- Your therapist/group leader cannot have any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with a former or current client, or any person close to a client.

There are also important differences between therapy and friendship. Friends may see your position only from their personal viewpoints and experiences. Friends may want to find quick and easy solutions to your problems so that they can feel helpful. These short-term solutions may not be in your long-term best interest. Friends do not usually follow up on their advice to see whether it was useful. They may *need* to have you do what they advise. A therapist offers you choices and helps you choose what is best for you. A therapist helps you learn how to solve problems better and make better decisions. A therapist's responses to your situation are based on tested theories and methods of change.

You should also know that therapists are required to keep the identity of their clients secret. As much as your therapist/group leader would like to, for your confidentiality she or he will not address you in public unless you speak to him or her first. Your therapist/group leader also must decline any invitation to attend gatherings with your family or friends. Lastly, when our therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends. In sum, it is my duty to always maintain a professional role. Please note that these guidelines are not meant to be discourteous in any, they are strictly for your long-term protection.

Statement Regarding Ethics, Client Welfare & Safety

[Suwanee Counseling](#) assures you that our services will be rendered in a professional manner consistent with the ethical standards of the [American Counseling Association and/or the American Psychological Association](#). Also, sometimes your therapist/group leader may use a type of therapeutic intervention involving experiential exercises. Any intervention or process is entirely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time. However, it is your responsibility to communicate this to your therapist/group leader in order for him or her to honor your decision. If at any time you feel that I am not performing in an ethical/professional manner, I ask that you please let me know immediately.

As much as I would like to guarantee specific results regarding your therapeutic goals, I am unable to do so. However, together we will work to achieve the best possible results for you. Please also be aware that changes made in therapy may affect other people in your life (e.g., an increase in your assertiveness may not always be welcomed by others). It is my intention to help you manage changes in your interpersonal relationships as they arise, but it is important for you to be aware of this possibility nonetheless.

I am sincerely looking forward to facilitating you on your journey toward healing. If you have any questions about any part of this document, please ask me.

Please print, date, and sign your name below indicating that you have read and understand the contents of this form, you agree to the policies of your relationship with me, and you are authorizing me to begin treatment with you.

Client Name (Please Print)

Date

Client Signature

The signature of the intake therapist below indicates that she or he has discussed this form with you and has answered any questions you have regarding this information.