

## AGREEMENT FOR SERVICE / INFORMED CONSENT

### Welcome to A Better Way Center for Wellness!

#### Introduction

This Agreement is intended to provide [name of clients] \_\_\_\_\_ (hereafter "Client") with important information regarding the practices, policies and procedures of Dorothea "Doreen" Van Leeuwen, LMFT (hereafter "Therapist") and to clarify the terms of the professional therapeutic relationship between Therapist and Client. Any questions or concerns regarding the contents of this Agreement should be discussed with Therapist prior to signing it.

#### Therapist Background and Qualifications

Doreen has been practicing as a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) since 1986, working with couples and individuals, addressing issues of depression, anxiety, infidelity, sexual problems, ineffective communication, anger management, domestic violence, parenting, step-family adjustment, chemical dependency, and trauma, grief or loss.

Doreen is a certified Imago Relationship Therapist. This certification was issued by the Imago Relationship Institute in September 1999. She also has certification In Critical Incident Stress Management and Debriefing, and Domestic Violence Treatment.

Doreen's theoretical orientation can be described as based on Imago Relationship Theory, which incorporates concepts and methods from a wide array of psychological approaches, including behavioral, Jungian, communications, family systems, solution-focused and more.

#### Risks and Benefits of Therapy

Psychotherapy is a process in which Therapist and Client discuss a myriad of issues, events, experiences and memories for the purpose of creating positive change so Client can experience her/his life more fully. It provides an opportunity to better understand oneself and one's relationships, as well as the frustration and difficulties Client may be experiencing. Psychotherapy is a joint effort between Client and Therapist. Progress and success may vary depending upon the particular issues being addressed, as well as many other factors.

Participating in therapy may result in a number of benefits to Client including, but not limited to: reduced stress and anxiety, a decrease in negative thoughts and self-sabotaging behaviors, improved interpersonal relationships, increased comfort in social, work, and family settings, increased capacity for intimacy, and increased self-confidence. **Such benefits usually also require substantial effort on the part of Client, including an active participation in the therapeutic process, honesty, and a willingness to challenge and change thoughts and behaviors.** There is no guarantee that therapy will yield any or all of the benefits listed above.

Participating in therapy may also involve some discomfort, including remembering and discussing unpleasant events, feelings and experiences. The process may evoke strong feelings of sadness, anger, fear, guilt and shame. At times, Therapist may challenge Client's perceptions and assumptions, and offer different perspectives. The issues presented by Client may result in unintended outcomes, including

changes in personal relationships. Client should be aware that any decision on the status of his/her personal relationships is the responsibility of Client.

During the therapeutic process, Clients may sometimes find that they feel worse before they feel better. This is generally a normal course of events. Personal growth and change may be easy and swift at times, but it may also be slow and frustrating. Client should address any concerns he/she has regarding his/her progress in therapy with Therapist.

### **Professional Consultation**

Professional consultation is an important component of a healthy psychotherapy practice. As such, Therapist regularly participates in clinical, ethical, and legal consultation with appropriate professionals. During such consultations, Therapist will not reveal any personally identifying information regarding Client.

### **Records and Record Keeping**

Therapist may take notes during sessions, and will also produce other notes and records regarding Client's treatment. These notes constitute Therapist's clinical and business records which, by law, Therapist is required to maintain. Such records are the sole property of Therapist. Therapist will not alter his/her normal record keeping process at the request of any client. Should Client request a copy of Therapist's records, such a request must be made in writing. Therapist reserves the right, under California law, to provide Client with a treatment summary in lieu of actual records. Therapist also reserves the right to refuse to produce a copy of the record under certain circumstances, but may, as requested, provide a copy of the record to another treating health care provider. Therapist will maintain Client's records for ten years following termination of therapy. However, after ten years, or upon demise of Therapist, Client's records will be destroyed in a manner that preserves Client's confidentiality.

### **Confidentiality**

The information disclosed by Client is generally confidential and will not be released to any third party without written authorization from Client, except where required or permitted by law. Please understand that the following exceptions apply and that confidentiality will not be maintained under the following conditions or circumstances:

1. If Client or family member threatens suicide, or other harm to self, or a family member of the client reports to Therapist that client is threatening suicide, or other harm to self, the law requires that Therapist report this situation immediately to the appropriate authorities;
2. If Client or family member threatens harm to another person or persons or property, including murder, assault, or physical harm, the law requires that Therapist report this situation immediately to the proper authorities;
3. If Therapist has knowledge of, observes, or suspects that a child or youth, an elder adult or a dependent adult is or has been a victim of abuse, the law requires that Therapist report this situation immediately to the proper authorities. This abuse could include neglect and/or physical, emotional, verbal and/or sexual abuse;
4. If a referring agent requires reports on a Client's attendance and/or level of participation;
5. If an insurance company or managed care company requires information in order to establish eligibility for payment or to process a claim.

### **Client Litigation**

Therapist will not voluntarily participate in any litigation, or custody dispute in which Client and another

individual, or entity, are parties. Therapist has a policy of not communicating with Client's attorney and will generally not write or sign letters, reports, declarations, or affidavits to be used in Client's legal matters. Therapist will generally not provide records or testimony unless compelled to do so. Should Therapist be subpoenaed, or ordered by a court of law, to appear as a witness in an action involving Client, Client agrees to reimburse Therapist for any time spent for preparation, travel, or other time in which Therapist has made him/herself available for such an appearance at Therapist's usual and customary hourly rate.

### **Psychotherapist-Client Privilege**

The information disclosed by Client, as well as any records created, is subject to the psychotherapist-client privilege. The psychotherapist-client privilege results from the special relationship between Therapist and Client in the eyes of the law. It is akin to the attorney-client privilege or the doctor-client privilege. Typically, Client is the holder of the psychotherapist-client privilege. If Therapist received a subpoena for records, deposition testimony, or testimony in a court of law, Therapist will assert the psychotherapist-client privilege on Client's behalf until instructed, in writing, to do otherwise by Client or Client's representative. Client should be aware that he/she might be waiving the psychotherapist-client privilege if he/she makes his/her mental or emotional state an issue in a legal proceeding. Client should address any concerns he/she might have regarding the psychotherapist-client privilege with his/her attorney.

### **Fee and Fee Arrangements**

Fees are paid at the beginning of the session, unless otherwise arranged.

Fees for individual, couple or family counseling services are as follows:

75-80 minutes: ("a session and a half").....	\$200.00
Intake session, 45-50 minutes.....	\$150.00
45-50 minutes: .....	\$120.00
30 minutes:.....	\$65.00
120 minutes (two hours) couples group counseling:.....	\$150.00 per session per couple.

Longer sessions are charged for the additional time pro rata.

Therapist reserves the right to periodically adjust this the fee. Client will be notified of any fee adjustment in advance. In addition, this fee may be adjusted by contract with insurance companies, managed care organizations, or other third-party payors, or by agreement with Therapist. All fees are due and payable at the time of service (unless prepaid.) Therapist accepts cash or checks. **If Client would like a receipt, please request one.** Otherwise the cancelled check will serve as record of payment.

From time-to-time, Therapist may engage in telephone contact with Client for purposes other than scheduling sessions. Client is responsible for payment of the agreed upon fee (on a pro rata basis) for any telephone calls longer than ten minutes. In addition, from time-to-time, Therapist may engage in telephone contact with third parties at Client's request and with client's advance written authorization. Client is responsible for payment of the agreed upon fee (on a pro rata basis) for any telephone calls longer than ten minutes.

### **Insurance**

Client is responsible for any and all fees not reimbursed by his/her insurance company, managed care organization, or any other third-party payor. **Client is responsible for verifying and understanding the limits of his/her coverage, as well as his/her co-payments and deductibles.**

Therapist is a contracted provider with the following companies: Blue Cross of California, Blue Shield of California, TriWest, United Behavioral Health, United HealthCare, Value Options, various EAP companies and has agreed to a specified fee. If Client intends to use benefits of his/her health insurance policy, Client agrees to inform Therapist in advance. Therapist's billing service will assist in obtaining

