



Raymond E. Branton, PsyD
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Informed Consent and Agreement

Informed Consent and Agreement for Psychological Assessment, Counseling/Treatment, and/or Related Professional Services

Welcome to my professional counseling and psychology practice. I am committed to providing psychological services, including assessment and counseling/psychotherapy, toward your desired outcome. A professional, therapeutic counseling situation, clinical assessment, consultation, or specific psychological evaluation establishes a unique relationship between the two of us. In order to assist you in understanding the responsibilities and expectations involved in this professional relationship, please read and sign the following Informed Consent (hereafter, "Agreement"). Once this Agreement is signed, we can schedule and conduct the first meeting. During the initial meeting I can answer any questions about this Agreement and I will also verbally highlight your legal rights to the *Privilege of Privacy* and the ethical standards regarding *Confidentiality*. At any time, I am happy to provide you with a copy of this signed Agreement.

Professional Disclosure

I am an Arizona Licensed Psychologist and the Founder, Owner and Clinical Director of Arizona Psychology Consultants (APC) and Professional Counseling Associates (PCA). I earned my Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical and Family Psychology, as well as my Master of Arts in Clinical and Family Psychology, from Azusa Pacific University. I completed my doctoral internship at the University Counseling Center at Texas State University at San Marcos. I also completed my Bachelor of Education in Secondary Education at Arizona State University. I'm honored to sit on the board of directors for Chris Simning Ministries, dba Obscure Ministries. I enjoy teaching and have served as adjunct faculty at Azusa Pacific University, Citrus Community College, South Mountain Community College, Scottsdale Community College's Business Institute and Phoenix Seminary. Currently I am an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. I am a member of the Arizona chapter and national chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts; the Christian Association for Psychological Studies; Division 43 of the American Psychological Association – The Society for Family Psychology; and the American College of Professional Neuropsychology. I am also on the preferred providers list for both Pinal and Maricopa County Superior Courts – Family Court Divisions.

Primary services I provide are psychological evaluations and ongoing assessment, counseling/psychotherapy, interventions, seminar presentations, and consulting services. Types of consultation services for organizations include candidate and employee screening assessments, staff development and team-building, and mediation services. I also provide court-related and forensic services such as court ordered evaluations, custody evaluations, parenting coordination, and therapeutic supervised visitations. I have practiced in several different settings including private practice, non-profit community outpatient clinics, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, residential group homes, public schools, and university counseling centers. Frequently, I also work closely with nonprofit, church and para-church organizations. Thus, I have experience with a wide range of clientele, including children, adolescents, and adults.

Primary orientations that I work out of (although not exclusively) include Family Systems Theory, Existential Theory and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. Treatment modalities I provide are individual, couples and marital, family, and group therapy. I provide services for and enjoy speaking engagements on topics such as men's issues, brain science and developmental stages, marriage, sexuality and intimacy issues, process and substance addictions, mood issues (i.e., depression, anxiety), positive psychology and motivation, loss and grief, trauma and abuse as well as other psychological, spiritual, and existential issues.

Agreement

By initialing and dating each page and signing this Agreement, I understand and agree to the following:

The following paragraphs include the structure and standards regarding your rights as a client and the specific arrangement for services. Dr. Branton reserves the right to refer a client to another professional or appropriate resource/organization at any time if a client's needs and goals are not a good match for his skills or experience. Please take time to review the following information:

Financial

Payment is due at the time services are rendered. By signing this document, you are agreeing to pay for the services rendered and any additional expenses that may be accrued in collecting said fees. Currently, the fee for an initial individual 75 minute intake session is \$195.00 and the fee for an individual 45-55 minute counseling/psychotherapy session is \$165.00; the fee for a 45-55 minute couples, marital or family session is \$175.00; the fee for a 90-100 minute "double" counseling session is \$300.00. Consultation and seminar fees vary and are contracted on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to the basic session and intake fees, there may be other fees for additional services such as psychometric testing, report writing, telephone or electronic counseling, consulting, books and materials, copies of chart records, etc. Currently, psychological evaluation and feedback sessions are \$185.00 per session hour (50-60 minutes). Fees for scoring and interpreting assessment measures are additional and vary according to the test battery. The standard rate for the scoring and interpretation of assessment measures is \$45.00 per 15 minutes. Fees for forensic and court related cases are \$225.00 per 60 minutes and require a retainer to initiate services. Fees for intervention services are \$225.00 per 60 minutes. If less than 60 minutes, court related and intervention services are billed incrementally at \$57.00 per 15 minutes, respectively. Please be aware – in cases where Dr. Branton is subpoenaed, deposed, or asked to voluntarily participate in a legal, court-related, forensic activity, in or outside of a court of law, whether civil or criminal, the fees for service may change. Currently, activities related to preparation as an

expert witness; participation or testimony as an expert witness; communication with the client(s), attorney(s), or other entities; and other related time such as travel are \$57.00 per 15 minutes. Other expenses related to your specific court-related case may also be a client expense. Please be aware, if you choose to have an attorney or any other professional contact me by phone, email, etc., to discuss your case, provide case notes, provide a report of services rendered, provide diagnostic impressions, etc., the fee will be \$57.00 per 15 minutes. Copies of chart notes or any other documents are \$10.00 for the first 20 pages, thereafter .25 per page, plus actual postage if applicable – these rates help to cover any administrative time and postage needed to efficiently forward the client records.

Currently, debit or credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, Discover Card, American Express), personal checks, business checks, and cash are all accepted as forms of payment. APC reserves the right to change any fees with 30 days notice posted in the office. Please be aware, returned check fees are \$35.00 per returned check plus any other fees the bank may assess APC. You have the right to be informed of all fees that you are required to pay and to be informed about the refund and collection policies. Please discuss these with Dr. Branton or the administrative assistant if you have any concerns. A separate Payment Agreement form is provided to you for clarification.

While payment is expected at the time services are rendered, there are unique times and individual cases in which fees are assessed and a balance becomes due. If a client has a balance due, the office will contact and inform the client either by phone, email or mail of this balance. If the balance is not paid in a timely manner, the client will be informed of any possible additional late fees and collection fees that might be incurred. If the unpaid balance is more than ninety (90) days past due and no payment plan has been agreed upon by the parties, a \$90.00 late fee will be assessed to the account. Additionally, if an account is more than ninety (90) days past due and repeated attempts to contact the client(s) are unsuccessful or the client(s) is/are informed to remit payment and the request for payment is refused, APC reserves the right to utilize other third party collections agencies to then assume the responsibility for collections; the unpaid balance may be submitted to a collections agency if not paid in a timely manner. In the event that a third party collections agency is utilized to pursue and collect payments, please be aware that only the necessary demographic information needed in order for the third party to locate and contact the client will be disseminated. No other personal or confidential information related to any diagnoses, treatment, or other sensitive mental health information will be provided to the third party. However, please note that Dr. Branton's name, occupation, and information about APC will be provided to the third party as allowed by law in order to establish a business relationship with the third party, thus allowing the third party to pursue collections. By signing this Agreement, you are agreeing to this collections policy. Dr. Branton will make every effort to work with clients to create a payment plan on a case by case basis if necessary, however, this is an exception; normally payment will be collected at the time of service. If you feel you are in need of a payment plan, please speak directly to office personnel.

Insurance

Please pay in full for the services rendered at the time of service. At the time you check out, you will be provided with a "superbill" which many clients use to subsequently submit to their insurance companies for possible "out-of-network," direct-to-client reimbursement. As a courtesy, for clients with Blue Cross Blue Shield only, Dr. Branton will bill BCBS directly for any services rendered. Otherwise, Dr. Branton does not currently bill any other insurance companies. Please keep in mind that many insurance plans do not cover marital counseling or forensic services. It is recommended that you contact your insurance provider before you initiate any psychotherapy or other professional services to identify what is and is not covered by your unique insurance plan (including BCBS clients). Please note, at times, BCBS clients may find that

their mental health coverage has been “carved out” to another insurance provider. In all cases, however, payment is due at the time of service and is ultimately the responsibility of the client, not an insurance company.

Additionally, Dr. Branton has opted out of and **does not accept Medicare**. By signing this informed consent you agree not to submit any receipts or forms from Dr. Branton’s office to Medicare for reimbursement.

Third-Party Contracting Client

Organizations, employers, individuals and any other third-party payers that wish to contract as the primary client in order to provide clinical services for an individual, such as an employee, are doing so with the knowledge that they will be solely financially responsible for services rendered. Unique contracts can be created to address your unique organizational needs.

Availability of Services

Every effort is made to answer phone calls and email requests in a timely manner. The main office is open from 8:00am to 5:30pm, Monday through Friday, with the exception of holidays. Phone messages and emails are not typically returned outside of normal business hours. While APC makes every effort to respond in an appropriate manner, APC does not have the capability to respond immediately to counseling or medical emergencies. True emergencies should be directed to the community emergency services (911) or to the local hotlines (Empact crisis line: 480-784-1500; Banner Help line: 602-254-4357; Maricopa County Crisis Hotline: 602-222-9444). Established clients with an urgent need to make contact may call APC and every effort to respond as soon as possible will be made, but an immediate response is not guaranteed. A quick or immediate response in one situation does not constitute a commitment of rapid response in another situation. In most cases, while exceptions do apply, Dr. Branton and APC make efforts to respond to phone calls or emails within 48 hours.

Appointments

Regular attendance at your scheduled appointments is one of the keys to successful outcomes in counseling. For a regular counseling session “hour,” Dr. Branton reserves 45-55 minutes for each client appointment. A regular session “hour” for psychological testing is typically 50-60 minutes. Appointments canceled at the last minute are very detrimental to the practice as it disallows other clients the use of that particular time slot. Therefore, please notify Dr. Branton or the office administrator a minimum of one full business day (24 hours), Monday through Friday, prior to a cancellation. Please note, Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays are not considered business days; we are not usually in the office on weekends and holidays and a cancellation on a Friday evening or a weekend day may not allow for 24 hour notice.

Please Note: You will be financially responsible for appointments you fail to cancel in accordance with this 24-hour policy. Please refer to the Payment Agreement for further details.

If you do miss a scheduled appointment for any reason, and you do not call our office within 30 days to reschedule, Dr. Branton will accept that as your notice that you have terminated this Agreement and that you wish to discontinue counseling or any other professional services. At that time, your case will be closed.

Appointment availability varies with the client load at the time. High demand appointment times, such as a 4pm slot, are likely to be sporadic in their availability. Dr. Branton reserves the right to limit commitments

of high demand appointment times to any particular client in order to meet the needs of all current clients and balance his workload.

Privacy Privilege, Confidentiality, and Records

All communications and records created in the professional treatment process of psychotherapy or other professional services are held in the strictest confidence according to state and federal laws, including HIPAA privacy and security regulations. However, there are numerous exceptions to your privacy and confidentiality, as defined in the state and federal statutes. Examples of the most common of these exceptions are:

- when a real or potential life or death emergency is suspected;
- when a judge issues a court order for client records;
- or when child, vulnerable adult or elder abuse or neglect is suspected.

Please note, a civil subpoena issued by an attorney does not automatically guarantee the release of records. In most instances where a subpoena has been issued, the client must still sign a release of information authorizing the release of records.

Also, by signing this Agreement, you are agreeing not to audio or video tape any of the interactions (psychotherapy, assessment session, phone consult, etc.) with Dr. Branton or any APC or PCA personnel. Audio or video taped sessions cannot be guaranteed to remain confidential outside of this office and therefore they are not usually permitted. This Agreement can be amended with prior written authorization signed by Dr. Branton and all other parties involved. However, please be aware that at times, particularly in forensic cases, Dr. Branton will audio or video tape sessions upon his discretion; if Dr. Branton deems it necessary to audio or video tape a session, he will inform all parties involved.

Dr. Branton also participates in a process where selected cases are discussed with other professional colleagues to facilitate continued professional growth and to give clients the benefit of a variety of professional experts guidance. Additionally, Dr. Branton may utilize selected case samples with supervisees or students in order to facilitate the professional or graduate level learning process. While no identifying information is released in the peer consultation or instructional process, the dynamics of the case issues are discussed along with the treatment approaches and methodology. There are also numerous other circumstances when information may be released including: when disclosure is required by the Arizona Board of Psychologist Examiners; when a lawsuit might be filed; to comply with worker compensation laws; to comply with the USA Patriot Act; and to comply with other federal, state or local laws. The rules and laws regarding confidentiality, privacy privilege, and records storage and maintenance are complex. Please verbalize any concerns if there are further questions regarding your privacy and confidentiality.

Please note, progress notes and other chart records may also include phone and email communication between the client and Dr. Branton, office staff, and (if a release is signed) with other individuals involved in treatment. Any messages that a client might leave on voicemails, text messages, and/or emails may be printed out or transcribed and entered in to the client chart records at any time to ensure proper documentation of any client interactions.

Also, if you are married and primarily seeking marital counseling, a single chart will be created in both spouses' names. Please be aware that if records from a joint marital chart are requested by any party or entity in the future, the signatures of both spouses must be obtained in order to voluntarily release any information. If you are a married couple seeking marital counseling and you would prefer separate charts

in each of your names, please specifically request this and every effort will be made to accommodate your request.

Important to note and agree upon for marital counseling/co-therapy or in multi-client cases: By signing this Agreement, you are agreeing that any information you disclose is acceptable to share with the other spouse or other client(s) in the treatment process with you. In other words, in marital counseling or co-therapy, secretive information will not be confidentially held between one of the clients and Dr. Branton and subsequently withheld from the other spouse; Dr. Branton will not agree to hold any secretive information between the spouses. Unless Dr. Branton believes that there is imminent danger to one of the spouses if the disclosed information is shared, all information shared by each spouse is free to be shared with the other spouse, even if that particular information was originally shared in an individual session or by phone or email. If you have any questions regarding this ethical stance and preference, please ask Dr. Branton before you sign this agreement.

Purpose, Limitations, and Risks of Treatment

The practice of psychotherapy/counseling and/or psychological assessment and evaluation, like most endeavors in the helping professions, is not an exact science. While the ultimate purpose of counseling is to reduce one's distress through a process of personal change, there are no guarantees that the treatment provided will be effective or useful. Moreover, the process of counseling usually involves working through difficult personal issues that can result in some emotional or psychological pain for the client. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to counseling in the first place may result in changes that were not originally intended.

Counseling and/or psychological assessment may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, relationships, or virtually any other aspect of your life. 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 more often it will be slow and often frustrating. There is no guarantee that counseling will yield positive or intended results. In the case of marriage and family counseling, interpersonal conflict can increase as family issues are discussed and processed. Of course, the potential for a divorce is always a risk in individual or marital counseling. Psychometric testing/evaluation and psychological assessment can also be an intense process of self and other-revelation. Interpretations are based on the client's test scores, clinical interviews, and other collateral information. While not an exact science, the goal is to be as accurate as possible in the interpretations. At times, psychological testing results can cause increased distress for the client and/or family.

Treatment process and rights

Your treatment process will begin with one or more sessions devoted to an initial intake and/or psychological assessment so that Dr. Branton can better understand the most salient issues, your background, and any other factors that may be relevant. When the initial intake and/or assessment process is complete, ways to treat the primary issue(s) and problem(s) that prompted your participation in the counseling process will be discussed. In doing so, you will be asked to develop specific shortterm and long-term goals that together equal a "fluid" treatment plan. You have the right and the obligation to participate in treatment decisions and in the development and periodic review and revision of your treatment plan. You also have the right to refuse any recommended treatment or to withdraw consent for treatment and to be advised of the potential consequences of such refusal or withdrawal.

Client-Psychologist Relationship

The client–psychologist relationship is unique in that it is exclusively professional and therapeutic. In other words, it is usually inappropriate for a client and his or her contracted psychologist to spend time together socially. The purpose of these boundaries is to ensure that roles are clearly defined to help ensure the best methodology for your treatment and that your confidentiality is maintained. If there is ever a time when you believe that you have been treated unfairly or disrespectfully, please talk directly with Dr. Branton. Although never intentional, sometimes misunderstandings can inadvertently result in hurt feelings. Dr. Branton would like the opportunity to address any issues that might get in the way of the treatment process as soon as possible - this includes administrative or financial issues as well.

Client Consent for Evaluation, Treatment, and Professional Services

Consent is hereby given for evaluation and treatment under the terms described in this Agreement. It is agreed that either party, client or provider, may discontinue the evaluation and treatment process at any time and that the client is free to accept or reject the treatment provided.

In the case of minor children, I hereby affirm that I am a custodial parent or legal guardian with legal decision-making power allowing me to authorize mental health services for the child(ren) and that I authorize services for the child(ren) under the terms of this agreement.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Additional Signature of Consenting Adult if Needed for Minor Child(ren) or for Marital Counseling:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

In the case of minor child(ren) or adolescent(s) (under age 18), please specify the following:

Full name of minor: _____ DOB _____ Relationship: _____

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Full name of minor: _____ DOB _____ Relationship: _____

Full name of minor: _____ DOB _____ Relationship: _____

For office use only - Verification that client has received and reviewed this Informed Consent document. Client was provided time and opportunity to read and ask questions about this Informed Consent document.

Authorized Representative: _____ Date: _____