

Heart Journey Christian Counseling, LLC

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INFORMATION, AUTHORIZATION, & CONSENT TO TREATMENT

I am very pleased that you have selected me to be your therapist, and I am sincerely looking forward to assisting you. This document is designed to inform you about what you can expect from me regarding confidentiality, emergencies, and several other details regarding your treatment. 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 am the sole owner and independent practitioner of Heart Journey Christian Counseling, LLC (HJCC). I have been a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC 005700) with the State of Georgia since 2009. I received a Masters of Arts in Professional Counseling from Argosy University in 2004. I am also a Licensed Minister through Charis Bible College Atlanta, where I received a Masters of Arts in Biblical Studies. I am also a Board Certified Christian Counselor through the Board of Examiners for Georgia Christian Counselors and Therapists.

In addition to private practice, I have worked as a therapist in a variety of capacities including working in community health, psychiatric hospitals, and in-home. I have served children, adolescents, their families, adults, and couples. I have addressed issues of trauma, grief and loss, anger management, family-of-origin, addiction, anxiety, depression, interpersonal relationship conflicts, spiritual roots, etc. I am also an PREPARE/ENRICH Facilitator. I have been trained in Anger Management, Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Strategic Trauma and Abuse Recovery. I have also been trained in inner healing and deliverance ministry. This ministry is a spiritual intervention and not a counseling tool that is completely optional and can be used in conjunction or independently of counseling.

Theoretical Views & Client Participation

This is a professional counseling practice that offers counseling services to individuals seeking to integrate Christian principles into the process of resolving personal issues. I rely on the Bible as the final authority for faith and conduct and recognize that lasting change is the result of the power of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Guided by biblical principles, my role is to utilize guided questioning, empathic support, problem definition, reflection/reading assignments, encouragement, and prayer to provide wise, biblical and faithful counsel to those who are hurting and in need. Please review my Statement of Faith and Philosophy of Care located on my website for further explanation.

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.

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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 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 terminating therapy or transferring to 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. I truly hope we can talk about any of these decisions. If at any point you are unable to keep your appointments or I don't hear from you for one month, I will need to close your chart. However, as long as I still have space in my schedule, reopening your chart and resuming treatment is always an option.

Professional Relationship

Psychotherapy is a professional service I will provide to you. Because of the nature of therapy, our relationship 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 only the relationship of therapist and client. If you and I were to interact in any other way, 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. Dual relationships can set up conflicts between the therapist's interests and the client's interests, and then the client's (your) interests might not be put first. In order to offer all of my clients the best care, my judgment needs to be unselfish and purely focused on your needs. This is why your relationship with me must remain professional in nature.

Additionally, there are 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 confidential. For your confidentiality, I will not address you in public unless you speak to me first. I must also decline any invitation to attend gatherings with your family or friends. Lastly, when your therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends. In sum, it is my ethical duty as a therapist to always maintain a professional role. Please note that these guidelines are not meant to be discourteous in any way, they are strictly for your long-term protection.

Statement Regarding Ethics, Client Welfare & Safety

I assure you that my services will be rendered in a professional manner consistent with the ethical standards of the American Christian Counselor Association. If at any time you feel that I am not performing in an ethical or professional manner, I ask that you please let me know immediately. If we are unable to resolve your concern, I will provide you with information to contact the professional licensing board that governs my profession.

Due to the very nature of psychotherapy, as much as I would like to guarantee specific results regarding your therapeutic goals, I am unable to do so. However, with your participation, we will work to achieve the best possible

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results for you. Please also be aware that changes made in therapy may affect other people in your life. For example, 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.

Additionally, at times people find that they feel somewhat worse when they first start therapy before they begin to feel better. This may occur as you begin discussing certain sensitive areas of your life. However, a topic usually isn't sensitive unless it needs attention. Therefore, discovering the discomfort is actually a success. Once you and I are able to target your specific treatment needs and the particular modalities that work the best for you, help is generally on the way.

Confidentiality & Records

Your communications with me will become part of a clinical record of treatment, and it is referred to as Protected Health Information (PHI). Your PHI will be kept in a file stored in a locked cabinet in my locked office. Additionally, I will always keep everything you say to me completely confidential, with the following exceptions: (1) you direct me to tell someone else and you sign a "Release of Information" form; (2) 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 therapist. This state 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 couple's counseling, I do not agree to keep secrets. Information revealed in any context may be discussed with either partner.

Structure and Cost of Sessions

There is a \$35 fee for any returned checks. The receipt of payment & services completed may also be used as a statement for insurance if applicable to you (see below).

Insurance companies have many rules and requirements specific to certain benefit plans. At the present time, many do not cover TeleMental Health services. Those insurance companies that accepted Telemental Health services it is generally limited to video conferencing. Unless otherwise negotiated, it is your responsibility to find out your insurance company's policies and to file for insurance reimbursement for TeleMental Health services. As stated above, I will be glad to provide you with a statement for your insurance company and to assist you with any questions you may have in this area.

I provide in-person, telemental health (telephone or video conferencing), or both. Telemental health services are available if the therapist determines it is clinically appropriate. We will discuss what is best for you.

The structure and cost of TeleMental Health sessions are exactly the same as in-person sessions. Individual and couples' psychotherapy are billed at the same rate. The initial assessment fee of \$175 per 90-minutes and \$150 thereafter per 50-60-minute session; \$225 per 90-minute session. Group therapy will be offered at the rate of \$30 per 90-minute. These are my standard rates, unless otherwise negotiated by you or your insurance carrier.

Doing psychotherapy by telephone is not ideal, and needing to talk to me between sessions may indicate that you 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 10 minutes in duration will be billed at \$25 per 15-minute. The fee for each session will be due prior to services being rendered.

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I require a credit card to be on file for TeleMental Health therapy for ease of billing. Please sign the Credit Card Payment Form, which was sent to you separately and indicates that I may charge your card without you being physically present. However, it is prefer that telemental health clients log in to Professional Charges to make your payment prior to your appointment time. If for some reason that is not possible, your credit card will be charged at the conclusion of each TeleMental Health interaction. This includes any therapeutic interaction other than setting up appointments.

Cash, personal checks, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express are acceptable for payment, and I will provide you with a receipt of payment. The receipt of payment may also be used as a statement for insurance if applicable to you. Please note that there is a \$35 fee for any returned checks. I do not keep cash in the office nor am I able to make change.

If telemental health clients want to prepay by check or money order, you may mail your payment to:

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Insurance companies have many rules and requirements specific to certain plans. Unless otherwise negotiated, it is your responsibility to find out your insurance company's policies and to file for insurance reimbursement. I will be glad to provide you with a statement for your insurance company and 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 at the rate of \$50 per session. Please note that insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions.

Communication Response Time

I am required to make sure that you're aware that I'm located in the Southeast and I abide by Eastern Standard Time. My practice is considered to be an outpatient facility, and I am set up to accommodate individuals who are reasonably safe and resourceful. I do not carry a beeper nor am I available at all times. If at any time this does not feel like sufficient support, please inform me, and we can discuss 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. However, I do not return calls on Sundays, Mondays, or holidays.

In Case of an Emergency

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 Behavioral Health Link/GCAL: 800-715-4225
- Call Ridgeview Institute at 770.434.4567
- Call Peachford Hospital at 770.454.5589
- Call Riverwoods Behavioral Health at 877-394-5271
- Call Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 (National Crisis Line)
- Call 911.
- Go to the emergency room of your choice.

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Emergency Procedures Specific to TeleMental Health Services

There are additional procedures that we need to have in place specific to TeleMental Health services. These are for your safety in case of an emergency and are as follows:

- You understand that if you are having suicidal or homicidal thoughts, experiencing psychotic symptoms, or in a crisis that we cannot solve remotely, I may determine that you need a higher level of care and TeleMental Health services are not appropriate.
- I require an Emergency Contact Person (ECP) who I may contact on your behalf in a life-threatening emergency only. Please write this person's name and contact information below. Either you or I will verify that your ECP is willing and able to go to your location in the event of an emergency. Additionally, if either you, your ECP, or I determine necessary, the ECP agrees take you to a hospital. Your signature at the end of this document indicates that you understand I will only contact this individual in the extreme circumstances stated above. Please list your ECP here:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

- You agree to inform me of the address where you are at the beginning of every TeleMental Health session. You agree to inform me of the nearest mental health hospital to your primary location that you prefer to go to in the event of a mental health emergency (usually located where you will typically be during a TeleMental Health session). Please list this hospital and contact number here:

Hospital: _____ Phone: _____

Technology Statement

Thank you so much for choosing the services that I provide. This document is designed to inform you about what you can expect from me regarding confidentiality, emergencies, and several other details regarding your treatment as it pertains to TeleMental Health. TeleMental Health is defined as follows:

“TeleMental Health means the mode of delivering services via technology-assisted media, such as but not limited to, a telephone, video, internet, a smartphone, tablet, PC desktop system or other electronic means using appropriate encryption technology for electronic health information. TeleMental Health facilitates client self-management and support for clients and includes synchronous interactions and asynchronous store and forward transfers.” (Georgia Code 135-11-.01)

TeleMental Health is a relatively new concept despite the fact that many therapists have been using technology assisted media for years. Breaches of confidentiality over the past decade have made it evident that Personal Health Information (PHI) as it relates to technology needs an extra level of protection. Additionally, there are several other factors that need to be considered regarding the delivery of TeleMental Health services in order to provide you with the highest level of care. Therefore, I have completed specialized training in TeleMental Health. I have also developed several policies and protective measures to assure your PHI remains confidential. These are discussed below.

The Different Forms of Technology-Assisted Media Explained

Telephone via Landline:

It is important for you to know that even landline telephones may not be completely secure and confidential. There is a possibility that someone could overhear or even intercept your conversations with special technology. Individuals who have access to your telephone or your telephone bill may be able to determine who you have talked

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to, who initiated that call, and how long the conversation lasted. If you have a landline and you provided me with that phone number, I may contact you on this line from my own landline in my office or from my cell phone, typically, only regarding setting up an appointment if needed. If this is not an acceptable way to contact you, please let me know. Telephone conversations (other than just setting up appointments) are billed at my hourly rate.

Cell phones:

In addition to landlines, cell phones may not be completely secure or confidential. There is also a possibility that someone could overhear or intercept your conversations. Be aware that individuals who have access to your cell phone or your cell phone bill may be able to see who you have talked to, who initiated that call, how long the conversation was, and where each party was located when that call occurred. However, I realize that most people have and utilize a cell phone. I may also use a cell phone to contact you, typically only regarding setting up an appointment if needed. Telephone conversations (other than just setting up appointments) are billed at my hourly rate. Additionally, I keep your phone number in my cell phone, but it is listed by your initials only and my phone is password protected. If this is a problem, please let me know, and we will discuss our options.

Text Messaging:

Text messaging is not a secure means of communication and may compromise your confidentiality. Therefore, I do not use text message for communication.

Email:

Email is not a secure means of communication and may compromise your confidentiality. However, I realize that many people prefer to email because it is a quick way to convey information. Nonetheless, please know that it is my policy to utilize this means of communication strictly for appointment confirmations and the occasional handout. Therefore, if you email me regarding clinical information, I will not respond. Please do not bring up any therapeutic content via email to prevent compromising your confidentiality. You also need to know that I am required to keep a copy or summary of all emails as part of your clinical record that address anything related to therapy.

Even though we will only utilize email for appointments and brief topics, I utilize a secure email platform that is hosted by Google Apps for Work for your added protection. I have chosen this technology because it is encrypted to the federal standard, HIPAA compatible, and the company has signed a HIPAA Business Associate Agreement (BAA). The BAA means that the company is willing to attest to HIPAA compliance and assume responsibility for keeping your PHI secure.

I also strongly suggest that you only communicate through a device that you know is safe and technologically secure (e.g., has a firewall, anti-virus software installed, is password protected, not accessing the internet through a public wireless network, etc.). If you are in a crisis, please do not communicate this to me via email because I may not see it in a timely matter. Instead, please see below under "Emergency Procedures."

Social Media - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Etc:

It is my policy not to accept "friend" or "connection" requests from any current or former client on my personal social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. because it may compromise your confidentiality and blur the boundaries of our relationship.

Heart Journey Christian Counseling, LLC has a professional Facebook and Pinterest page. You are welcome to "follow" me on any of these professional pages where I post counseling and spiritual information. However, please do so only if you are comfortable with the general public being aware of the fact that your name is attached to HJCC. Please refrain from making contact with me using social media messaging systems such as Facebook Messenger. These methods have insufficient security, and I do not watch them closely. I would not want to miss an important message from you.

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Google, Bing, etc.:

It is my policy not to search for my clients on Google, Bing or any other search engine. I respect your privacy and make it a policy to allow you to share information about yourself with me as you feel appropriate. If there is content on the Internet that you would like to share with me for therapeutic reasons, please print this material out and bring it to your session.

Blogs:

I may post counseling and spiritual information on my professional blog. If you have an interest in following my blog, please feel free to do so. However, please be mindful that the general public may see that you're following HJCC's blog. Once again, maintaining your confidentiality is a priority.

Video Conferencing (VC):

Video Conferencing is an option for us to conduct remote sessions over the internet where we not only can speak to one another, but we may also see each other on a screen. I utilize Doxy.Me. This VC platform is encrypted to the federal standard, HIPAA compatible, and has signed a HIPAA Business Associate Agreement (BAA). The BAA means that Doxy.Me is willing to attest to HIPAA compliance and assumes responsibility for keeping our VC interaction secure and confidential. If we choose to utilize this technology, I will give you detailed directions regarding how to log-in securely. I also ask that you please sign on to the platform at least five minutes prior to your session time to ensure we get started promptly. Additionally, you are responsible for initiating the connection with me at the time of your appointment.

I strongly suggest that you only communicate through a computer or device that you know is safe (e.g., has a firewall, anti-virus software installed, is password protected, not accessing the internet through a public wireless network, etc.).

Faxing Medical Records:

If you authorize me (in writing) via a "Release of Information" form to send your medical records or any form of PHI to another entity for any reason, I may need to fax that information to the authorized entity. It is my responsibility to let you know that fax machines may not be a secure form of transmitting information. Additionally, information that has been faxed may also remain in the hard drive of my fax machine. However, my fax machine is kept behind two locks in my office. And, when my fax machine needs to be replaced, I will destroy the hard drive in a manner that makes future access to information on that device inaccessible.

Recommendations to Websites or Applications (Apps):

During the course of our treatment, I may recommend that you visit certain websites for pertinent information or self-help. I may also recommend certain apps that could be of assistance to you and enhance your treatment. Please be aware that websites and apps may have tracking devices that allow automated software or other entities to know that you've visited these sites or applications. They may even utilize your information to attempt to sell you other products. Additionally, anyone who has access to the device you used to visit these sites/apps, may be able to see that you have been to these sites by viewing the history on your device. Therefore, it is your responsibility to decide if you would like this information as adjunct to your treatment or if you prefer that I do not make these recommendations. Please let me know by checking (or not checking) the appropriate box at the end of this document.

Electronic Transfer of PHI for Certain Credit Card Transactions:

I utilize ProfessionalCharges.com as the company that processes your credit card information. This company may send the credit card-holder a text or an email receipt indicating that you used that credit card for my services, the date you used it, and the amount that was charged. This notification is usually set up two different ways - either

Please initial that you have read this page _____

upon your request at the time the card is run or automatically. Please know that it is your responsibility to know if you or the credit card-holder has the automatic receipt notification set up in order to maintain your confidentiality if you do not want a receipt sent via text or email. Additionally, please be aware that the transaction will also appear on your credit-card bill. The name on the charge will appear as Professional Charges.

Your Responsibilities for Confidentiality & TeleMental Health

Please communicate only through devices that you know are secure as described above. It is also your responsibility to choose a secure location to interact with technology-assisted media and to be aware that family, friends, employers, co-workers, strangers, and hackers could either overhear your communications or have access to the technology that you are interacting with. Additionally, you agree not to record any TeleMental Health sessions.

In Case of Technology Failure

During a TeleMental Health session, we could encounter a technological failure. The most reliable backup plan is to contact one another via telephone. Please make sure you have a phone with you, and I have that phone number. If we get disconnected from a video conferencing or chat session, end and restart the session. If we are unable to reconnect within ten minutes, please call me. If we are on a phone session and we get disconnected, please call me back or contact me to schedule another session. If the issue is due to my phone service, and we are not able to reconnect, I will not charge you for that session.

You are also responsible for the cost of any technology you may use at your own location. This includes your computer, cell phone, tablet, internet or phone charges, software, headset, etc.

Limitations of TeleMental Health Therapy Services

TeleMental Health services should not be viewed as a complete substitute for therapy conducted in my office, unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent you from attending therapy in person. It is an alternative form of therapy or adjunct therapy, and it involves limitations. Primarily, there is a risk of misunderstanding one another when communication lacks visual or auditory cues. For example, if video quality is lacking for some reason, I might not see a tear in your eye. Or, if audio quality is lacking, I might not hear the crack in your voice that I could easily pick up if you were in my office.

There may also be a disruption to the service (e.g., phone gets cut off or video drops). This can be frustrating and interrupt the normal flow of personal interaction.

Please know that I have the utmost respect and positive regard for you and your wellbeing. I would never do or say anything intentionally to hurt you in any way, and I strongly encourage you to let me know if something I've done or said has upset you. I invite you to keep our communication open at all times to reduce any possible harm.

Face-to Face Requirement

If we agree that TeleMental Health services are the primary way we choose to conduct sessions, I require one face-to-face meeting at the onset of treatment, unless it is unsafe due to a national health crisis. I prefer for this initial meeting to take place in my therapy office.

If that is not possible, we can utilize video conferencing as described above. During this initial session, I will require you to show a valid picture ID and another form of identity verification such a credit card in your name. At this time, you will also choose a password, phrase, or number which you will use to identify yourself in all future sessions. This procedure prevents another person from posing as you.

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Consent to TeleMental Health Services

Please check the TeleMental Health services you are authorizing me to utilize for your treatment or administrative purposes. Together, we will ultimately determine which modes of communication are best for you. However, you may withdraw your authorization to use any of these services at any time during the course of your treatment just by notifying me in writing. If you do not see an item discussed previously in this document listed for your authorization below, this is because it is built-in to my practice, and I will be utilizing that technology unless otherwise negotiated by you.

- Texting
- Email
- Video Conferencing
- Recommendations to Websites or Apps

In summary, technology is constantly changing, and there are implications to all of the above that we may not realize at this time. Feel free to ask questions, and please know that I am open to any feelings or thoughts you have about these and other modalities of communication and treatment.

Our Agreement to Enter into a Therapeutic Relationship

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

Please print, date, and sign your name below indicating that you have read and understand the contents of this “Information, Authorization and Consent to Treatment” form **as well as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Notice of Privacy Practices**” provided to you separately. Your signature also indicates that 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

If Applicable:

Parent’s or Legal Guardian’s Name (Please Print)

Date

Parent’s or Legal Guardian’s Signature

My signature below indicates that I have discussed this form with you and have answered any questions you have regarding this information.

Therapist’s Signature

Date

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