

Informed Consent for Technology-Assisted Counseling & Consultation

The purpose of this Informed Consent for Technology Assisted Counseling is to inform you, the client, about the process of online counseling services, the counselor and the potential risks and benefits of these services. The purpose is to also help safeguard you, the client, and give you information regarding alternatives to online services.

This consent is in addition to the general informed consent agreement, and any prior informed consent agreements. The focus of this document is on sessions that take place using the phone and/or other technology.

A. Privacy and Confidentiality

Maintaining client confidentiality is extremely important. The counselor will take appropriate care and consideration to prevent unnecessary disclosure in accordance with the consent to treatment agreement and privacy guidelines.

Although the internet provides the appearance of anonymity and privacy in counseling, privacy is more of an issue online than in person. The client is responsible for understanding the potential risks of confidentiality being breached through unencrypted email, lack of password protection or leaving information on a public access computer.

Other potential risks of breaching confidentiality could include messages failing to be received if they are sent to the wrong address or if they are just not noticed by the counselor. Confidentiality could be breached in transit by hackers or internet service providers or at either end by others with access to the client's account or computer.

Clients accessing the internet from public locations such as a library, computer lab, or café should consider the visibility of their screen to people around them. Position yourself to avoid others seeing your screen.

Using cell phones can be risky in that signals are scrambled but rarely encrypted. The counselor has a right to maintain privacy and may restrict or prohibit making and/or using copies or recordings. Clients must obtain written permission of the counselor before recording any portion of the session. The client is prohibited from posting any portion of sessions online, i.e. internet websites, Facebook, YouTube.

The client is responsible for securing their own computer hardware, internet access points, chat software, email and passwords that are encrypted, secure, and Hippa compliant when possible. If encryption is not made available to client, client should be aware that they are risking unauthorized monitoring of transmissions and/or records of Internet counseling sessions.

I make every effort to keep all information confidential. Likewise, if we are working online together, I ask that you determine who has access to your computer and electronic information from your location. This would include family members, co-workers, supervisors and friends and whether or not confidentiality from your work or personal computer may be compromised due to such programs as a key logger.

I encourage you to only communicate through a computer that you know is safe wherein confidentiality can be ensured.

Be sure to fully exit all online counseling sessions and emails. If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. If you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it may be possible for others to surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at my office.

B. Lack of Non-Verbal Cues and Asynchronous Communication

The client should be aware that misunderstandings are possible with telephone, modalities such as email, and real-time internet chat, since non-verbal cues may be lacking. Even with video chat software, misunderstandings may occur since bandwidth is limited and images may lack detail. Counselors are observers of human behavior and gather much information from body language, vocal inflection, eye contact and other non-verbal cues. Please clarify information if you do not feel heard or understood.

C. Benefits, Risks & Alternatives

Note that there are both benefits and risks associated with technology-assisted counseling and other options are available.

Online counseling may not be appropriate for many types of clients including those who have numerous concerns over the risks of internet counseling, clients with active suicidal/homicidal thoughts, clients who are experiencing active manic/psychotic symptoms, or clients who are minors.

An alternative to receiving mental health services online would be receiving mental health services face to face with the counselor or adjunct using both modalities or working with another counselor.

{ } Yes, I have read and agree to the terms listed above.

I understand that Peg Marland RN, LPC is licensed in the state of Missouri.

I understand that telephone/online psychotherapy is not a substitute for Medication services under the care of a psychiatrist or doctor. I understand that online and telephone therapy is not appropriate if I am experiencing a crisis or having suicidal or homicidal thoughts. In case of emergency situations, I agree to contact local resources, call 911 or go to my nearest emergency room.

Signing this form is your agreement for psychotherapy services with Peg Marland, RN, LPC and confirms that you understand and accept any and all risks of technology assisted treatment.

Client Signature

_____ Date ____/____/____

Printed Name

_____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

Confidential, Peg Marland Counseling - 3