



Crossroads Counseling, LLC

A ministry of Stroh Church of Christ

Stephen Leininger, LMHCA

Informed Consent for Counseling

An Introduction to Your Therapist

My name is Stephen Leininger, and I believe in the power of counseling to transform lives for the better. Before entering into full-time counseling, I spent almost twenty years in Pastoral Ministry, serving in three different Christian churches in Northern Indiana. My time in ministry consisted of Biblical preaching and teaching, leadership training, office management, youth work, Celebrate Recovery coordination, and of course counseling. For years I have worked with married couples, families, children, teens, and the elderly. I have counseled people struggling with substance abuse, mental illness, relationship problems, trauma, and various other life issues. My educational background consists of two degrees from Huntington College (B.A. in Educational Ministries and an M.A. in Christian Ministry) and one degree from Grace College and Seminary (M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling). At present, I am pursuing full licensure in the state of Indiana.

I approach counseling from a Cognitive Behavioral and Adlerian orientation. This means that I work with my clients to examine their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about themselves, others, and life experiences. As we dig into these elements, we will work to bring healing to broken places and correction to unhealthy perceptions. As a Christian counselor, my final authority in all matters is the word of God – the Bible. This does not mean that I am opposed to working with clients who do not share my values or that I will impose my personal values upon my clients. It simply means that I approach counseling from a Biblical worldview while at the same time embracing scholarly therapeutic principles that do not contradict this worldview. I am willing to employ the use of Scripture and prayer in the counseling process with my clients only with their consent.

The Counseling Process

When you enter into a therapeutic relationship with me as your counselor, you can expect a compassionate and non-judgmental atmosphere. In this environment, we will pursue true healing, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and perhaps spiritually. This may involve the exposure of some difficult thoughts, feelings, and memories, but be assured that this is the proper path to wholeness. In the therapeutic relationship, we will exercise confidentiality within the limits described later in this document. This makes for a safe place for you to share who you really are and what you are truly facing.

In order to engage in productive therapy, it is necessary to assess various elements of the client's life and background. This will include relationship dynamics, past experiences including crisis or trauma, existence of mental illness, usage of drugs or alcohol, potential for suicidality, and medical issues. Knowledge of this information works to give a complete picture of who you are as a person and helps me in my role as your therapist.

The typical therapy session lasts fifty minutes. After the initial assessment, we will come to an agreement on the number of sessions required for your particular needs. In ongoing sessions, we will regularly assess for productivity. We will also agree upon the termination of counseling based upon productivity and need. I will only terminate this therapeutic relationship with your consent. The exception lies in a total lack of communication from the client after a period of four weeks. In such cases, I am no longer bound in my responsibility as your therapist.

Counseling can be a messy and risky process. We will be delving in to some sensitive areas of life as we pursue healing and wholeness. As a result, there can be some discomfort and pain. In the

end, the rewards far outweigh the risks when we work together through the therapeutic process. If you as a client commit to honestly and openly working through this process, I believe that you will experience positive and life changing results.

The counseling process is specifically shaped to address the issues, needs, and life-stages of the client. In working with teens and children, there are certain aspects of counseling that are quite different from the work done with adults. Minor clients require the written consent of parents or guardians. A certain level of confidentiality will be established with minor clients, however, not all information shared in sessions will be withheld from legal guardians for the client's own protection. In working with married couples, each client has the right of confidentiality in the counseling relationship, unless otherwise stated in this document. For ethical reasons, I cannot simultaneously counsel a married couple and each member of that couple as separate clients.

The Rights and Responsibilities of the Client

Confidentiality is the hallmark of the counseling experience because it frees the client to be open and honest with the therapist without fear of inappropriate exposure. The client has the right to keep his or her information confidential. However, there are some exceptions to this standard listed below:

- If I believe that you as the client are at risk to harm yourself or someone else, I have the ethical obligation to break confidentiality. If you might be at risk of harming yourself or others, I will take measures to contact a proper support system or the authorities.
- If I believe that you are abusing or neglecting a child, I have the ethical responsibility to report this to Child Protective Services.
- If I believe that you are abusing or neglecting an elder, specifically an adult under your care who is not able to care for himself or herself, I have an ethical obligation to report this to the authorities.
- If I am under a court order to release your information for a case, I will first consult with legal counsel and inform you as the client before releasing this information.

I may have need of consulting with a licensed colleague or supervisor about your case in order to provide you with the best level of therapy. In these situations, I assure you of extended confidentiality while you receive the expertise of multiple therapists for the cost of only one. Non-therapist office personnel will not be included in such consultation. As my client, you have access to your personal files at any time. You also have the right to give written consent if you would like your information shared with others.

Due to the fact that I have not completed my licensure in this state, I will not be taking insurance for services rendered. The cost per session is \$60 for individuals and \$70 for couples and families. Payment is due at the beginning of each session. If you need to cancel an appointment, you must give 24 hours notice or you will be charged for the missed session. For those clients who are not financially able to pay the full price for sessions, there is a sliding fee scale available based upon your current financial status.

If for any reason you feel that I have violated your rights as a client, you may contact my supervisor or report violations to the American Counseling Association (1-800-422-2648).

My Responsibilities as a Counselor

My primary responsibility is to offer you the best care possible as your counselor. Because of this responsibility, it may be necessary for me to consult a supervisor or colleague for your specific needs. Such consultation still falls within the boundaries of confidentiality while at the same time opening the doors to more effective therapy. I also have the responsibility of keeping accurate and current records concerning our sessions. This includes assessments, case notes, diagnostic information,

and treatment plans. Such information will be kept confidential and secure under a “double-lock” policy.

Because of the sensitivity and security of the therapeutic relationship, I must abide by certain standards when it comes to counseling. When you agree to taking me on as your therapist, we will differentiate between the social and professional relationship based upon levels of public interaction that may take place between us. We will not discuss or give reference to therapeutic information or meetings outside of our sessions. If we do come into contact with each other in public, we will agree upon appropriate interaction guidelines that protect the therapeutic relationship. If you need to communicate with me about scheduling, you may contact me by phone, text, or email. As your therapist, I will not discuss therapeutic information via phone or text. I do not have a social media account. These guidelines help to uphold your dignity and autonomy as my client.

If I have need of cancelling or rescheduling an appointment, I will contact you immediately. If for some reason I am unable to continue seeing you as a therapist, I will offer the proper referral to meet your specific needs. If at some point I feel that I cannot offer you productive ongoing therapy and need to terminate the therapeutic relationship, I will inform you directly and provide an appropriate referral based upon your specific needs.

Closing Thoughts

I believe in the power of effective therapy to transform the lives of people for the better. I also believe that this is best accomplished by the power of the Living God through the authority of His word and under the influence of His amazing grace. *Isaiah 41:10* echoes this thought when the Lord states, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed; for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” By His power and truth, it is my desire to offer you healing and wholeness through effective therapy.

Client Consent

“I have fully read this informed consent document. By my signature, I understand and agree to the parameters set forth in this document as I enter into the therapeutic relationship.”

Client Signature: _____

Date: _____

Counselor Signature: _____

Date: _____