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NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This notice describes how clinical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

Your health information and privacy

As a physician, psychiatrist, and psychotherapist, the privacy of your health and personal information is extremely important to me. Almost every contact you have with a medical or mental health professional involves communicating information related to your health: it might be something you report, the results of a medical, a diagnostic impression or treatment plans, a prescription, your insurance plan, or even just your phone number. I need to record this information in order to give you good care, and it is my responsibility to keep it private and confidential.

All of your health information is protected under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and other laws. Like most other mental health professionals, I maintain even stricter standards of privacy than these laws require. This notice describes ways in which I may use your information, circumstances under which I may disclose it, what my obligations are in handling it, and what your rights are. The current policies take effect on June 22, 2009, and remain in effect until replaced by me. My most current policy is always available on my web site at www.natkuhn.com/privacy. If at any time you want a paper copy of policy in effect at that time, please tell me and I will provide it for you.

In addition to keeping your information confidential, I have a responsibility to communicate with you in ways that maintain your privacy. Please be sure to tell me if there are addresses, phone numbers, or email addresses that you have provided to me that you do **not** want me to use for conversations, messages, etc.

Because mental health treatment involves information which is often more personal and sensitive than general medical information, psychotherapy notes are kept separate from the medical record and receive an even higher level of privacy protection under HIPAA. The medical record includes information such as the initial evaluation, subsequent information about symptoms and functioning, information (as applicable) about medical prob-

lems, medications, and side effects. It also includes information about life circumstances as they relate to any of those matters. The psychotherapy notes include information beyond what is necessary in the medical record including feelings, thoughts, worries, and more intimate details of personal circumstances.

How I use and disclose your health information

I routinely use your health information for the following purposes:

- **Treatment:** I use your health information for diagnosis, treatment planning, and the treatment itself. As part of that process, I may provide information to other professionals and their staff, e.g. people who cover for me when I am on vacation.
- **Health Care Operations:** I use your information for administrative purposes, e.g. to contact you about appointment scheduling.
- **Payment:** I use your information for billing and collection of payment for the services I provide you. If you wish to use insurance, you will need to sign a consent form which permits me to share any necessary information with my billing service and your insurance provider(s), all of whom are also bound by the terms of HIPAA. This information generally includes a diagnosis code, and may include information about symptoms, functional status, risk behaviors, etc.

Subject to professional judgment, I may also use or disclose a patient's information in the following exceptional circumstances, without additional authorization:

- In an emergency, I will disclose information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to a patient's health and safety, or the health and safety of the public or another person. For example, if a patient needs emergency treatment, I am able to communicate with the emergency room staff. If there is no workable alternative, I might have to involve a friend or family member of the patient to make sure that the patient gets to the emergency room.
- I can disclose information, subject to all applicable legal requirements, when required by law, subpoena, court order, etc. For example, as a psychiatrist, I am a mandated reporter of child abuse.
- I can use a patient's information to defend myself in the event of legal proceedings against me brought by that patient.

In all of the above situations, I work to disclose the minimum amount of information necessary to the situation at hand.

Essentially every other use of your health information requires a specific authorization, signed by you. After you give such an authorization, you can prevent further disclosures at any time by giving me a written request revoking the authorization. The revocation does not affect any action taken prior to its receipt.

Your rights regarding your health information

Under HIPAA, you have the following rights regarding health information I maintain about you:

- **Right to Inspect and Copy:** You have the right to inspect and copy your health information, such as medical and billing records. You do not have the right to inspect and copy psychotherapy notes, though I will attempt to accommodate such a request subject to my professional judgment. You do not have the right to inspect or copy or information compiled by me in reasonable anticipation of, or for use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding.
- **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures:** You have the right to a list of the disclosures I have made of clinical information about you for purposes other than treatment, payment, and health care operations.
- **Right to Request Restrictions:** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information I use or disclose about you for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the health information I disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for it. Although I am not required under HIPAA to agree to all such requests, I am generally able to do so, except in cases where emergency treatment demands otherwise.
- **Right to Amend:** If you believe that clinical or billing information I have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you can request that I change the information. If I accept the request, I will make reasonable efforts to inform others of the correction, as appropriate. If I deny the request, I will provide you with an explanation, and you may respond with a statement of disagreement that will be added to the information you wanted changed.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about my privacy practices, please speak to me, or contact me by mail, telephone, or email as listed above. If you are not satisfied by my response to a complaint, you can also contact the Department of Health and Human Services (www.hhs.gov/ocr). HIPAA specifically forbids any sort of penalty for filing a complaint.