

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING SERVICES

In accordance with Section 54-3410A, Idaho Code (Rule 525) please find here a full and reasonable disclosure of information about my therapy practice and business policies so you may be informed and get your questions answered before you agree to treatment.

### 1. Name, Business Address and Phone Number of Licensee

Gemma P. Utting, MA, LMFT, CLC  
Office: Hillside Studios, Suite 14, 1674 Hill Road, Boise, ID 83702  
Phone: 208-340-8989 \* Email: [gemma@gemmautting.com](mailto:gemma@gemmautting.com) \* Website: [gemmautting.com](http://gemmautting.com)

### 2. License Type and License Number, Credentials, and Certifications

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Idaho LMFT # 5704  
For more about marriage and family therapists, see  
[www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/About\\_AAMFT/About\\_Marriage\\_and\\_Family\\_Therapists.aspx](http://www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/About_AAMFT/About_Marriage_and_Family_Therapists.aspx)

I have over 27 years working in the fields of Individual, Couple, Marriage & Family Therapy; facilitation; crisis response; teaching and training in a rich variety of settings including 24 Hour Crisis Centers, Community Mental Health Clinics, private practice and schools.

Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT)  
President, Idaho Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (IDAMFT)

### 3. Education and Training

- \* 2 year post Masters Degree, Systems Theory & Therapy, with Seattle Pacific University & Presbyterian Counseling Services, Seattle, USA ~ [www.pscounseling.org](http://www.pscounseling.org)
- \* M.A. Existential Phenomenological Psychology, Seattle University, USA ~ <https://www.seattleu.edu/artsci/map/curriculum/>
- \* B.A. Social Anthropology, University of Sussex, UK ~ [www.sussex.ac.uk](http://www.sussex.ac.uk)
- \* Certified Life Coach, with Coach For Life and it's positive focused Fulfillment Coaching Model.

### 4. Theoretical Orientation and Approach

I specialize in the practice of marriage and family therapy and am experienced in working with problems of childhood, parenthood, marital/relational difficulties, and the life difficulties of adulthood that may relate to disturbances in family relationships.

I am a Certified PREPARE/ENRICH Counselor and run my own pre-marital preparation program.  
(See <https://gemmautting.com/pre-marital-preparation-couples-counseling-relationship-coaching/>).

### What to Expect from Therapy and What I Expect from Clients

#### Initial Session

When we first meet it helps to have everyone who is to be part of the focus of treatment present. By the end of the first session I hope we will have accomplished some or all of the following:

As my client, I will invite you to answer these sorts of questions ~

- What brings you into therapy? Why now?
- What would you like life to look like when the problem is resolved?
- What have you already tried to do to fix the problem?
- What do you think needs to happen to fix it now?
- Can you tell me a bit about your physical and emotional health history?
- Can you describe some of the interactions with your family member(s) that bother you?

As your therapist I will ~

- Talk a bit about how I work and invite your questions
- Review and invite your signatures on this Informed Consent
- Review each client's Intake Form
- Review fees, how to pay and insurance details
- Share my initial assessment as to whether I'm the right therapist to help you.

### Follow-Up Sessions

Assessment does not stop at the end of Session One.

If you wish me to bill your insurance I will probably use Session 2 to confirm the appropriate diagnosis, and to finalize the goals, treatment plan and methods for assessing our progress. Subsequent sessions we will follow the treatment plan, assessing and refining progress as we go.

### Benefits and Risks of Therapy

There are no guarantees in life or therapy. You may (in fact, probably will) experience some strong emotions such as fear, anger, depression, frustration, shame, unworthiness, self-criticism and despair. This is all quite normal. Much of our emotional pain comes from evading our deepest experiences and the way toward healing involves feeling what we feel and listening to what we tell ourselves while cultivating an attitude of curiosity and compassion toward ourselves. I am not in the business of giving advice or being overly directive. I am in the business of listening with you to those Parts of you who have been marginalized or buried; of cultivating an attitude of curiosity toward your inner experiences, and of connecting you to your own deep well of self-compassion. I am interactive. I will ask lots of questions. I will advocate for your wellness. For couples and families, if therapy is working you will all feel some shifts. Sometimes these shifts are unexpected. Usually they are welcome, but it is fair to warn you that your connections with significant others may be improved and/or disrupted as change occurs. However, as I quote John Maxwell on my web site,

*“If we’re growing,  
we’re always going to be  
out of our comfort zone.”*

The following have been useful influences in my growth as a therapist.

*Internal Family Systems*, Dr. Richard Schwartz - <http://www.selfleadership.org/>

*Collaborative Couples Therapy*, Dan Wile - <http://danwile.com/>

*Intimacy From The Inside Out*, Toni Herbine Blank ~

*The Gottman Institute*, Dr. John Gottman - <https://www.gottman.com/>

*Existential Psychotherapy* - [http://www.existentialtherapy.com/general\\_overview.htm](http://www.existentialtherapy.com/general_overview.htm)

*Emotional Intelligence*, Dr. Haim Ginott - <http://www.betweenparentandchild.com/>

*Narrative Therapy*, Michael White - <http://www.goodtherapy.org/narrative>

*Solutions Focused Therapy* - <http://www.psychpage.com/family/library/sft.htm>

*Coach For Life*, Dr. Peter Reding & Marcia Collins - <http://coachforlife.com/adult-learning.html>

## **5. The Clinical Relationship, Referrals, Fees & Insurance**

### The nature of the clinical relationship

I take the nature of our clinical relationship very seriously and my ethical code

([http://www.aamft.org/imis15/AAMFT/Content/Legal\\_Ethics/Code\\_of\\_Ethics.aspx](http://www.aamft.org/imis15/AAMFT/Content/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx))

helps us keep things simple: as your therapist the only relationship we may have is that of therapist/client. So, while it may seem distant or unkind, to the best of my ability I try not to blur that line. It is NEVER appropriate for a therapist to be physically or sexually intimate with former or current clients or known members of the client’s family system. It will never happen with me. If however this has ever happened for you, please help protect the public from the rare unethical therapist and report that person to the licensing board he or she is bound by.

### Records

As your therapist I document our work – noting the date, agenda and outcome of each therapy session, and keep any correspondence, release-of-information forms, and payment data. I do not provide access to these records to anyone else (i.e.; other providers, a court) without written authorization from each individual competent to execute a waiver. I commit to storing these records for 6 years following the end of treatment, or for 6 years after a minor client reaches the age of 18 after treatment is over. In preparation for moving a practice, closing a practice, or my death, I commit to arrange for the storage, transfer, or disposal of client records in accordance with applicable laws and in ways that maintain confidentiality and welfare. It is my intention to keep my web site ([gemmouting.com](http://gemmouting.com)) up and funded so you will always be able to turn there for information about your records and my whereabouts.

### Referrals

If I believe I am not the best clinician for the issues you want help with, I may suggest we discuss a referral. Please know a referral is not a rejection! On the contrary, it is me wanting the best for you.

### Emergencies

Because I work alone, I am not an “on-call” provider. I am available to you only for our set appointment times. If you are in crisis please call the emergency services which are set up to respond 24/7.

Use any of these options:

Police - Emergency = 911

Police Non-emergency in Boise = 208-377-6790

Suicide Phone Hotline = 800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line = Text START to 741741 from anywhere in the USA anytime, about anything.

Saint Luke’s = 208-381-2235

Saint Alphonsus = 208-367-3221

### Fees

I charge \$100.00 per 55-minute session. Fees are due at time of treatment.

I accept • Cash • Checks • MasterCard / Visa / Discover / American Express • Paypal • All of the above cards from Health Savings Accounts • Your Health Insurance

### Insurance

I am an in-network provider with Blue Cross / Regence / Select Health.

This means I will take a copy of your insurance card and direct bill to these companies on your behalf. Using your health insurance can get complicated however, so I invite you to please read a form called *Using Your Health Insurance* (See <https://gemmautting.com/services/>)

Variables such as what is covered, co-payments and deductibles are important for you to understand. Ultimately, while I will do my best to help you access your benefits, you are responsible for my fees.

### If you wish to use your insurance for our work please do the following:

1. Review your policy. Do you have Mental/Behavioral Health coverage?
2. Understand the terms and conditions e.g., is there a limit to the number of sessions covered, are visits subject to your deductible?
3. Clarify your co-payment, as this will be due to me each session.
4. Be sure to bring your Insurance Membership Card.

If you are insured with a provider other than the three listed above, I may be considered an in or out of network provider. Call your insurance carrier to discuss whether you might be reimbursed for our work.

When you call, the company may ask for:

My Idaho license number = LMFT # 5704

My NPI (National Provider Identity) = 1386 024 602

My Business Tax ID = 47-11255455.

### Important Information Regarding Submitting an Insurance Claim.

Please know that insurance companies will only reimburse services that are “medically necessary.” This means they will only pay if you (or your partner or family member) are diagnosed with a mental health disorder that is currently impacting your health on a day-to-day basis.

The following issues will not be covered by insurance:

- Psychological or spiritual growth;
- Premarital counseling;
- Couples Counseling (unless one or both partners has a diagnosis).

Presuming there is a legitimate diagnosis impacting your life and relationships, I am happy to discuss both my diagnosis and the implication of this diagnosis for ongoing health, wellness and treatment.

## **6. The Extent and Limits of Confidentiality**

Issues in therapy are private and are considered legally protected as privileged information. However, there are exceptions to this confidentiality. These exceptions include but are not limited to:

1. If you reveal to me, or if I determine in my professional opinion, your suicidal thoughts and intentions present a real danger, I will do all in my power to keep you safe. I believe there is always ambiguity around suicide and will act in support of those parts of you who wish to live.

2. If you reveal to me, or if I determine in my professional opinion, that you present a physical danger to someone else, I have a duty to warn him or her.
3. I am legally bound to report the abuse of children and elders.
4. If you are involved or may in the future be involved in litigation of any kind and your mental health becomes an issue before the court, your treatment records may be mandated for disclosure to the court, but only by duly authorized court order.
5. If sign a Release of Information form requesting that I share certain information.
6. My NO SECRETS policy with couples & families:  
 When I agree to work with a couple or family (the treatment unit), I consider that couple or family to be the client until or unless that initial contract is changed by mutual consent. I may need to share information learned in an individual discussion with the entire treatment unit that is, the family or the member of the couple, if I am to be effective with the treatment unit. Please know I will not hold secrets since - as you can imagine - this would utterly undermine trust and the healing will be sabotaged. It is very common for me to see different combinations within any treatment period with a couple or family. Seeing one person does not mean we have to share everything that happens with everyone else, only that I can't hold onto secrets. If a couple comes to me seeking to repair the marriage "the marriage" is my client. If during therapy it becomes apparent that one partner wants to leave the relationship, this then becomes a conversation until:
  - a) both parties agree to a separation/divorce and the focus of therapy then becomes a conscious separation/divorce; or
  - b) both parties agree to continue working on the marriage; or
  - c) one partner leaves the relationship and the remaining partner establishes new goals for therapy.

**7. Client's Rights**

As my client, you have the right to - the standards of confidentiality (above); participate in treatment decisions; seek a second opinion; to file a complaint without retaliation; and to refuse treatment.

**8. Technology**

Your "client rights" to confidentiality and transparency are nowhere more challenged these days than in the vast and expanding field of technology. Please consider the following five arenas where becoming more conscious about how we use these technologies will, I hope, go a long way toward protecting your rights, privacy and confidentiality.

1) Email - As your therapist I may have already used email to confirm our appointment and send a link to the intake forms on my website. You will note I discourage clients from sending me their intake forms via email, preferring instead that you bring the forms with you in person. This protects your intake data from any possible email privacy breach. During the course of our work, I am open to using email to correspond with you for a variety of reasons. Before you request this, I would like you to decide for yourself what you are and are not comfortable with regarding corresponding with me as your therapist.

Please circle YES or NO in response to the following inquiries:

- \* I understand my employer may legally view email sent or received from a company computer or assigned email . . . . . YES / NO
- \* The email address I have given you is private and only I can access it . . . . . YES / NO
- \* I am aware all emails become a part of my clinical records . . . . . YES / NO
- \* I am aware emails cannot be kept secret in couples work . . . . . YES / NO
- \* I understand normal email is vulnerable to being read by others at home or work or via hacking software . . . . . YES / NO
- \* I understand that Internet transmissions stop at different ISP servers leaving a trail between sender and recipient . . . . . YES / NO
- \* I understand that deleting a message from my inbox does not actually delete the message. Multiple copies remain abroad and can be accessed by law enforcement, ISP technicians and hackers. . . . . YES / NO
- \* I accept these risks and wish to use my normal email methods with you . . . . . YES / NO
- \* I wish to discuss using a password-protected PDF when corresponding with you YES / NO  
 My secret code password will be \_\_\_\_\_

2) Text messaging - Please only use texts to let me know you are running late, or have to cancel unexpectedly.

3) Social Networking

Sites such as Facebook, Google+ , Twitter and Pinterest are places where identities and roles can be dangerously obscure. Because I do not want to compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy, I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site.

4) Internet searches

While my present or potential clients might conduct online searches about my practice and/or me, I do not view my clients on Google, Facebook, or other search engines unless there is a clinical need to do so, as in the case of a crisis or to assure your physical wellbeing. If clients ask me to conduct such searches or review their websites or profiles and I deem that it might be helpful, I will consider it on a case by case basis and only after discussing possible impacts to our professional relationship and your privacy.

5) Technology-Assisted At-a-Distance Therapy

It can be helpful to use technology if you cannot get into my offices for every session, and I am prepared for, and open to, this option. However, it opens us all up to some complications I wish to review with you now. The technologies I currently use for distance therapy include:

- a) Your landline telephone –for voice-only calls. Please never use a wall mount telephone with handheld receiver. Calls using these phones may be picked up by baby monitors, the police and radio ham users. It is up to you to ensure the privacy our conversation.
- b) Your Smart phone – for voice only connections. Choose a location with good reception; ensure your phone is fully charged or plugged in; and that you can be assured of privacy where you are.
- c) Your Smart phone or Computer– for video-assisted voice and visual connections. Please ensure your device is fully charged or plugged in; you have privacy and that you have pre-installed an encrypted platform. I am currently using VSee, which is HIPAA compliant.  
You may download VSee for free here: <https://my.vsee.com/download>

Caveats

If the technology fails - our connection gets dropped, there are long delays, the sound echoes or the visuals break up, I suggest we both hang up, and I will call you on your preferred telephone to discuss an alternative approach to the session. This could mean we complete the call using the telephone (good for one on one sessions), or that we reschedule (if this is a couple or family session). I reserve the right to make this decision. It can be unwise to conduct couple or family sessions where I am unable to see the non-verbal conversations that take place between the people I am working with, as I am sure you can understand.

9. Board Information

Providing counseling or therapy to members of the public is a regulated practice in Idaho. I am required to hold a license which is regulated by a Board, whose mission is: *“To protect the public health, safety and welfare through the licensure and regulation of those who provide counseling and marriage and family therapy services in Idaho.”*

Board Name: Idaho Licensing Board of Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists  
 Board Web Site: <https://ibol.idaho.gov/IBOL/BoardPage.aspx?Bureau=COU>  
 Board Address: Idaho Bureau of Licensing, 700 W State St, Boise, ID 83702  
 Board Email: [COU@ibol.idaho.gov](mailto:COU@ibol.idaho.gov)  
 Board Phone: 208-334-3233

Signed by

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Date