

PSYCHED TO CLIMB

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CONSENT TO THERAPY

Working Together

I (Dr. Kate Thomas) am grateful for the opportunity to work with you and hope the information below will assist you in understanding my obligations as a licensed psychologist. If you have any questions about my policies, or any other aspect of our therapy work together through *Psyched to Climb*, please discuss them with me. Your signature at the end of this document will indicate that you understand and accept all the information it includes.

Therapy experiences and interventions can have emotional and other consequences. For example, exploring problems can uncover painful feelings, and learning new ways of understanding and relating can be difficult and frustrating. There is often pain in healing and hard work in growth. To have the best chance of benefiting from our work together, you will need to show up consistently and participate in the activities and process.

If you notice things about our work together that are not benefiting you, please talk to me about it. We can discuss new approaches or if there is another type of treatment that is better for you. If you lose your ability to pay for our sessions (e.g., after a layoff or unexpected expense), talk to me and we can discuss options so our work together doesn't have to end abruptly.

Outside of our sessions and in the event of an emergency, call 911 or a 24-Hour Crisis Hotline (512-472-4357). You can also go to an nearby ER or Urgent Care, or if you're in Austin, TX, you can contact the local Shoal Creek Psychiatric Hospital (512-452-0361).

Climbing Therapy

The outcome of any therapy cannot be guaranteed to help any and everyone. We (*Psyched to Climb*) cannot guarantee that participating in our services will help you in anyway, and we acknowledge later in this document ways that participating in our services can cause harm. We can speak to research showing how climbing therapy, and other types of "active therapy" more broadly, help a lot of people progress, feel stronger, and reduce symptoms.

Climbing reveals behavioral, emotional, and thinking patterns on the wall that also show up in our daily lives. Through climbing therapy, we can practice noticing and changing some of our automatic thoughts and actions.

Climbing offers several therapeutic benefits like:

- Focusing us on the present moment and facilitating flow states and mindfulness
- Putting us in the way of fear and other strong emotions and helping build tolerance and resilience to them
- Promoting acceptance, adaptability, mind-body connection, self-efficacy, and growth
- Enabling us to communicate clearly, show up for others consistently, and trust people who are safe
- Teaching us how to try hard, support and celebrate others, and fail without shame
- Boosting dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with executive functioning, mood, and motivation

Several peer-reviewed research studies have shown that climbing therapy is an effective treatment, particularly for depression (which is often the first disorder studied for new and broadly beneficial treatments). Although more research is needed, initial studies are encouraging and highlight how climbing therapy can be as effective as cognitive-behavioral therapy (and more effective than exercise alone) for decreasing symptoms of depression^{1,2,3,4}.

OUR SERVICES

Climbing Therapy Groups

We offer climbing therapy groups for people ages 14 and older. We run separate groups for people of different ages and with different goals. All our groups are facilitated by a certified climbing instructor and a licensed psychologist.

Our climbing therapy groups will be three-hour sessions based on the following structure:

- 10 min: warm-up and discuss our theme for the day (e.g., fear, trust, breathing)
- 90 min: climbing and activities connected to our theme for the day
- 10 min: break and snacks
- 60 min: group discussion processing our experiences
- 10 min: meditation, relaxation, closing

¹ Dorscht, L., Karg, N., Book, S., Graessel, E., Kornhuber, J., Luttenberger, K. (2019). A German climbing study on depression: a bouldering psychotherapeutic group intervention in outpatients compared with state-of-the-art cognitive behavioural group therapy and physical activation – study protocol for a multicentre randomised controlled trial. *BMC Psychiatry*, 19, 154.

² Karg, N., Dorscht, L., Kornhuber, J., Luttenberger, K. (2020). Bouldering psychotherapy is more effective in the treatment of depression than physical exercise alone: results of a multicentre randomised controlled intervention study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 20, 116.

³ Kratzer, A., Luttenberger, K., Karg-Hefner, N., Dorscht, L., Weiss, M. (2021). Bouldering psychotherapy is effective in enhancing perceived self-efficacy in people with depression: results from a multicenter randomized controlled trial. *BMC Psychology* 9, 126.

⁴ Luttenberger, K., Karg-Hefner, Berking, M., Kind, L., Weiss, M., Kornhuber, J., Dorscht, L. (2021). Bouldering psychotherapy is not inferior to cognitive behavioural therapy in the group treatment of depression: A randomized control trial. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61(2), 465.

Individual and Couples Climbing Therapy

We also offer individual and couple's climbing therapy to people looking for a different approach to therapy. Active therapy can help people build strength and experience new ways of interacting with the world. We offer individual climbing and therapy to teens 14 and older and to couples looking to build trust, grow together, and connect in new ways.

Our climbing therapy sessions will be two and half hours and typically follow this format:

- 90 min: climbing activities and exercises related to your goals for the day
- 60 min: therapy session discussing and processing your experiences

The climbing instructor and therapist will both be present during the climbing portion of the session; only the therapist will be present during the therapy portion of the session.

Fees for Services

Psyched to Climb is currently a private pay model. We reserve space for people unable to pay our full fee, including reduced rate and pro bono options. *We will agree on your fee for our services prior to our first meeting together.* Are standard rates are as follows:

- Climbing therapy groups cost \$180 for each three-hour session
- Individual and couples climbing therapy costs \$325 for each two and a half hour session

Our rates include:

- Access to Mesa Rim climbing gym where we meet (with free parking)
- All the climbing gear and equipment you'll need (including shoes, harness, chalk)
- 1+ hour of climbing (with a certified climbing instructor)
- 1+ hour of therapy (with a licensed psychologist)
- Snacks and drinks

Payment for Services

We will charge you for all meetings of the group you enroll to participate in (for example, all eight meetings of an eight-week group) *regardless* of whether you attend, cancel, or skip all or part of the session. This is because, by agreeing to participate in the group, we are reserving that time and space for you each week. We will work with you on a case-by-case basis to determine a plan if unforeseen financial or life circumstances change your ability to participate. *Be aware that most insurance companies will not reimburse costs for missed sessions.*

We will send you a weekly invoice for our work together, which you can pay by cash, check, credit/debit card, bank account transfer, or Venmo. Each invoice will include the cost, date and length of our sessions, as well as a CPT clinical code that insurance companies use to consider reimbursement. Most of our *Psyched to Climb* services will be billed with CPT code 97530 for time spent climbing and common CPT codes like 90853/90837/90847 for time spent in group/individual/couple's therapy, respectively.

I do not directly accept insurance, but I am happy to provide you with a “super bill” if you would like to submit for reimbursement from your insurance provider. I cannot guarantee coverage by any provider, but can provide any documents you need to submit.

If you experience problems paying your invoices, please contact us as soon as possible so we can set up a payment plan. If an invoice remains unpaid after four weeks and multiple reminders, we have a right to withhold services until you initiate payment. *Overdue accounts (i.e., those which remain unpaid for 100 days or those for which an agreed-upon payment plan is not followed or made) may be turned over to a collection agency as a final resort for non-payment.*

CONFIDENTIALITY

The privacy and confidentiality of our sessions is extremely important to us. To the degree I (Dr. Kate Thomas) am allowed by law, I will not disclose information about our work together to any person or organization outside of *Psyched to Climb* unless you have signed a release form allowing me to do so.

I am required not to discuss our work together without your express written authorization, and this includes giving information to the parents or spouses of individuals who are age 18 or older, even when the spouse or parent is paying for the services. Communication between clients and myself (and those whom my clients have authorized me to contact) are protected by confidentiality regulations as stipulated by federal and state laws and by professional standards and ethics as a licensed psychologist.

Confidentiality in Therapy

The list below is not exhaustive, but these are the most common circumstances that may occur related to your confidentiality. The situations outlined below typically have no impact on the large majority of people seeking professional mental health services, but I share this information with you so that you can be fully informed before beginning treatment.

1. I am legally required to report any situation of suspected abuse or neglect toward a minor, elderly, or disabled individual to the proper authorities.
2. In some circumstances, my records may be subject to a subpoena issued by court. In particular, confidentiality may be waived with regard to any suit affecting the parent-child relationship.
3. If I believe a client may harm him/herself or another individual, I am permitted by law to break confidentiality by contacting law enforcement and/or medical officials who may then take protective actions.

4. If I am contacted by an insurance company or auditor, I may be required to release client information as dictated by law. The law also permits me to release information to a collection agency in order to collect on an overdue account.
5. If a client discloses to me the identity of a mental health professional who has engaged in sexual contact with him/her during the process of treatment, state law requires me to report that professional to the appropriate authority. I am not permitted to disclose the identity of the client if she or he does not wish to be identified.
6. Confidentiality does not extend to criminal proceeding in Texas.

Confidentiality in Group Therapy

I follow all the guidelines outlined above when it comes to protecting confidentiality of people who participate in therapy groups with me. I also remind all participants every session that confidentiality is the bedrock of group safety, and that what happens in group stays in group. That said, I cannot guarantee that group members maintain one another's anonymity and privacy. Every employee of *Psyched to Climb* who participates in therapy sessions (including the climbing instructor) will receive training regarding client confidentiality and its limits regarding mandated reporting (as outlined above). All employees of *Psyched to Climb* will honor our participants' anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Confidentiality in Climbing/Gym Therapy

The list below is also not exhaustive, but it includes common situations related to confidentially that arise by participating in *Psyched to Climb* at Mesa Rim. The situations outlined below are likely to occur. We share this information with you so that you can be fully informed before participating in our services.

1. We cannot guarantee your confidential participation with our services, as they will take place in Mesa Rim, and to allow us to operate in their facilities, we are required to wear shirts or otherwise identify ourselves as *Psyched to Climb* facilitators. Therefore, it is likely that people in the gym who see you with us could know that you are participating in climbing therapy with us.
2. We will engage in certain climbing activities that may draw attention from people in the gym at the same time as us (e.g., climbing while blindfolded). Although we will not converse with onlookers or disclose that our climbing activities are part of a therapy experience, we cannot control what other people in the gym perceive or how they react to our activities.
3. Although all attempts will be made to not engage in private conversations when others are in close proximity to us, we cannot guarantee that our conversations will not be heard by others. We can guarantee a private space for our therapy groups and services, but while climbing, we

will be around other people who are not part of our group and not bound by our contracts and guidelines.

4. Any of us could come into contact with someone we know while participating in *Psyched to Climb* at Mesa Rim. If we (*Psyched to Climb* staff) see someone we know, we will not disclose that you are a client working with us, although of course they may be able to tell. If you come into contact with someone you know, we will not interact with that person unless following your lead (e.g., if you initiate introducing us).

5. Given the prevalence of cellphones, it is possible that we may be photographed or videoed together without our knowledge and that we would have no control over the dissemination of those photos/videos.

6. Although climbing therapy can sometimes feel more like a social interaction than a therapeutic interaction, it is a therapeutic activity. Despite the relative informality of our setting, the relationship between us as client and therapist is entirely professional, and not a social relationship.

7. The liability and risks related to possible physical injuries while participating in our services are outlined in our ***Psyched to Climb Participant Agreement***.

AGREEMENT & INFORMED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you understand and agree to the following:

- You have read the information in this document and understand the policies described.
- You are responsible for paying all invoices for services we provide in our work together, and you understand we cannot guarantee reimbursement from an insurance provider.
- You understand that participating in climbing therapy is completely voluntary and that there are alternate therapeutic services available (e.g., traditional talk therapy).
- You agree to obtain approval from your doctor before engaging in climbing therapy if you have any medical condition that could affect your ability to participate in our services. You also agree to disclose those conditions or limitations to us (*Psyched to Climb* staff).
- You agree to let your us know immediately if you become physically or emotionally uncomfortable during a session.

In compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996, I (Dr. Kate Thomas) have developed a ***Notice of Privacy Practices*** which I have shared with you and put on my website. In addition to the statements above, by signing below you acknowledge that you have received a copy of my *Notice of Privacy Practices*. Your signature below also gives

me your consent to use and disclose Protected Health Information (PHI) about you to carry out our work together and in receipt of your payment. A description of these uses and disclosures is contained in my *Notice of Privacy Practices*. If you have any questions about your consent or rights, please ask me! If you refuse to give this signed consent, we have the right to refuse services.

Client/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Client/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Client/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

CLIENT INFORMATION

Preferred Name: _____ Legal Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ SSN: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

May we send emails? ___ Yes ___ No

May we send text messages? ___ Yes ___ No

May we leave a voicemail? ___ Yes ___ No

Parents/guardians of clients under age 18, please provide your information on the following pages as relevant.

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION
(required for clients under 18)

Preferred Name: _____ Legal Name: _____

Relationship to Client: _____ SSN: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

May we send emails? ___ Yes ___ No

May we send text messages? ___ Yes ___ No

May we leave a voicemail? ___ Yes ___ No

SECOND PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION
(if relevant for clients under 18)

Preferred Name: _____ Legal Name: _____

Relationship to Client: _____ SSN: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

May we send emails? ___ Yes ___ No

May we send text messages? ___ Yes ___ No

May we leave a voicemail? ___ Yes ___ No

THIRD PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION
(if relevant for clients under 18)

Preferred Name: _____ Legal Name: _____

Relationship to Client: _____ SSN: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

May we send emails? ___ Yes ___ No

May we send text messages? ___ Yes ___ No

May we leave a voicemail? ___ Yes ___ No

FOURTH PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION
(if relevant for clients under 18)

Preferred Name: _____ Legal Name: _____

Relationship to Client: _____ SSN: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

May we send emails? ___ Yes ___ No

May we send text messages? ___ Yes ___ No

May we leave a voicemail? ___ Yes ___ No