**GAMING CONSENT FORM** 

**VIDEO GAMES – ONLINE GAMES – ROLE PLAYING GAMES**

Play and therapy have been used together in treatment for over 50 years. Gaming can be a useful therapeutic tool in treatment as it allows for rapport building and increasing individualization of the treatment plan. Video games, online games, and roleplaying games have their specific benefits and risks. This document is designed to inform clients of those benefits and risks and consent to specific gameplay. This document also reports what the expectations and etiquettes during the use of these digital supplemental platforms are.

**General Awareness:** I will evaluate if gaming would be a good fit for clinical treatment. Some areas I will evaluate: gaming devices you have, what games you own, and your personal preferences around gaming. If you have a specific interest in certain games that I have not used before, I will evaluate if they can be used therapeutically. I will also consider your developmental age and, if a youth, what your parent/guardian/legal representative will allow.

There will be various styles and types of games that we will consider using in your treatment. Some are linear and story-based, where we must accomplish specific tasks in a particular order to complete the game. Some are freeform and allow more opportunity to choose how we engage in the game. Some are more traditional, including card games, matching games, and puzzles. We may even create our own game, depending on which platform we use. No matter the style or outcome, I will consider your clinical needs, the needs identified in the treatment plan, and what interventions can be used with the game. This will be the basis of what we choose to engage in.

It is important to note that gaming can be a very personal experience. Depending on the style and type of gaming, it can often require you to open yourself up, making you more emotionally vulnerable. Additionally, specific themes and gameplay styles may be triggering, particularly if you have a trauma history. It's crucial for you to be aware of this and be open to communicating your needs and expectations with me. Even if not emotionally or mentally triggered, games can be challenging to master, such as learning controls or understanding the rules. If you need me to pause and explain or assist you in figuring out the controls, please do not hesitate to do so.

Additionally, you have the right to discontinue using it whenever you feel uncertain, uncomfortable, or are unable to understand its connection to your treatment. Even in the middle of gameplay, you can stop at any time. We will explore the reasons for discontinuing, and collaboratively, we will create new boundaries to continue to game, utilize new tools, or learn new coping skills. If clinically determined that the gameplay is not therapeutically helpful, it will be removed as part of the treatment plan.

**Game Rating:** Another consideration when choosing a game to play includes the game’s Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating. The game’s content and the client's age and maturity level will be considered when selecting a game. Below you will find a description of the ESRB ratings.

* Titles rated EC (Early Childhood) have content that may be suitable for ages 3 and older.
* Titles rated E (Everyone) have content that may be suitable for ages 6 and older.
* Titles rated E10+ (Everyone 10+) have content that may be suitable for ages 10 and older.
* Titles rated T (Teen) have content that may be suitable for ages 13 and older.
* Titles rated M (Mature) have content that may be suitable for ages 17 and older.
* Titles rated AO (Adults Only) have content that should only be played by persons 18 years and older.

**Video Games:** A video game is an interactive game played using a specialized electronic gaming device or a computer or mobile device, and displayed on a screen, either through the device or on a monitor/television. These games may or may not require access to the Internet. When utilizing a video game involving a gaming device, such as “Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch, mobile phone, etc.”, it will be with a device of the therapist. There will be no expectation of purchasing a device. The specific video game played will be one that has been chosen according to age and appropriateness of intervention. There is no expectation of buying a game.

**Role Playing Games:** A role playing game is one in which the participant assumes a character's role in a fictional setting. This participant then takes responsibility for acting out the roles within a narrative. These games may or may not require access to the Internet. These games may or may not need a specific gaming platform or gaming device. These games may or may not require particular objects to participate, such as dice, a character sheet, writing utensils, and/or a board. This form of gameplay may involve learning how to create a character, keep score of your character's achievements, and follow specific commands around in-game rules to move the story forward. This form of gameplay often involves a group of people and may be provided in a group or family therapy setting.

**Themes:** Games have various themes, and as part of our consideration for gameplay, we want to identify any that you are not comfortable with. Even if the game is rated appropriate for your age, gameplay can be triggering when specific scenarios or graphics occur. Please consider some of these themes and what you are and are not comfortable with.

* Body horror: gore, rot, needles, severed body parts, etc.
* Bodily fluids: blood, vomit, excrement, etc.
* Spiritual horror: demons, possession, souls, undead, ghosts, etc.
* Vermin: rats, spiders, snakes, etc.
* Phobias: heights, claustrophobia, etc.
* Violence: harm to animals, injury to people, abuse, etc.
* Sexual abuse: objectification, suggestive language, unwanted advances, etc.
* Romance: relationships, partnering, marrying, intimate touching, kissing, etc.
* Physical health: cancer, chronic illness, paralysis, etc.
* Mental health: depression, hallucinations, PTSD, anxiety, etc.
* Discrimination: homophobia, sexism, racism, ableism, etc.
* Current events and issues: police violence, societal disenfranchisement, poverty, politics, etc.

I understand that it may be jarring to read these themes, but some of them are intentional within the gameplay, and others, including themes of discrimination, are often subtle and missed by those who are not triggered by them. Though some gameplay does not involve any storyline and may include simple online games such as cards or matching games, it is essential to be informed and aware of the potential themes we may engage in.

Before choosing games, we will identify the possible themes we will run into, and you can notify me if you wish to engage in them. If you are triggered during gameplay, you will inform me immediately, and we will review what triggered you. We may decide to discontinue gameplay, postpone gameplay, or attempt to continue gameplay with a heightened awareness or using coping skills or other mediums to address potential symptoms of being triggered. If in group, family, or couples therapy, clients will notify me beforehand what themes may be triggering and we will attempt to avoid these topics to the best of our abilities. If you are triggered during group/family/couple's therapy gameplay, you will notify me immediately. I will stop the gameplay, and we can review what triggered you. If you do not wish to examine this, then we will formulate a new plan for the session, which may include discontinuing gameplay, postponing gameplay, or attempting to continue gameplay with a heightened awareness or using coping skills or other mediums to address potential symptoms of being triggered. If someone else is triggered during group/family/couple's therapy, you will be expected to respect their request for stopping and the result for supporting them, even if it means discontinuing gameplay.

**Consent Agreement**

By signing below, I agree with the following statements:

1. I have read all sections of the "Gaming Consent Form" and understand my rights as a client or parent/guardian/legal representative of the client.
2. I attest that I had a conversation with my therapist and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this document and to use gaming in treatment.
3. I attest that all questions, if asked, were discussed and answered in a language I understand.
4. I attest that I understand that I am "opting-in" to use technology or other digital supplemental material that does not comply with all HIPAA and privacy standards for treatment, and therefore release my therapist and Iowa Family Counseling of liability.
5. I attest that I understand the differences in gaming that could be utilized in my treatment.
6. I attest that I understand the limits to confidentiality regarding using gaming and gaming platforms.
7. I understand that my therapist is an independent practitioner employed at Iowa Family Counseling; therefore, the platforms for gaming used are not responsible for my care or treatment and that neither my therapist nor Iowa Family Counseling has any affiliation with their products.
8. I attest that I will maintain the expectations and etiquette regarding gaming that my therapist has established, and am fully aware that my therapist may choose to discontinue using gaming in treatment if I do not engage with them or for any other reason deemed appropriate from their clinical judgment.
9. I acknowledge that no guarantees have been made about the effects of using gaming in treatment of my condition.
10. I acknowledge that my developmental age and access to gaming will be considered before gaming is incorporated into my treatment plan.
11. I understand that I can bring up any concerns regarding potential triggering content anytime throughout treatment, including during active gameplay.
12. I attest that I understand that I may terminate using gaming in treatment whenever I feel it is no longer useful, necessary or any other time.

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Client’s Printed Name

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Client’s Signature Date

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Parent/Guardian/Legal Representative Signature Date