

## **Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy Information**

This document contains important information about our services regarding Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy (KAP).

Please read it carefully, and feel free to ask us any questions, before you decide to participate in KAP. It is very important to us that you feel safe, and have a chance to share any concerns you might have about the process.

### **What is Ketamine?**

Ketamine is a synthetic pharmaceutical compound, classified as a dissociative anesthetic. It is one of the most widely used drugs, and is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines. It was developed in 1963, FDA approved in 1970, and adopted by many hospitals and medical offices because of its rapid onset, proven safety, and short duration of action.

Ketamine is most commonly used in surgical settings, including pediatric surgery, due to its excellent safety profile. It has also been utilized successfully in managing acute and chronic pain.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the therapeutic properties of ketamine as tool for treatment-resistant depression, and other psychiatric disorders.

### **The Ketamine Experience**

The ketamine experience is characterized by the relaxation of ordinary concerns and usual mindset, while maintaining conscious awareness. This tends to lead to a disruption of negative feelings and preoccupations. This interruption-and the exploration of other possible states of consciousness-can lead to significant shifts in overall well-being.

At lower doses, you will most likely experience mild anesthetic, anxiolytic, antidepressant, and psychoactive effects. You might experience increased sensitivity to light and sound, as well as an altered sense of time.

Higher doses are more likely to produce psychedelic, dissociative states. Body sensations are greatly diminished and you may experience formlessness and the dissolving of boundaries.

Other sensory effects of ketamine may include distorted visualization of colors, feeling suspended in space or floating, experiencing out-of-body sensations, vivid dreaming, and changes in visual, tactile and auditory processing. Synesthesia (a mingling of the senses) may occur. Familiar music may not be recognizable and you may lose your sense of time.

Some alterations in sensory perception, speech, and motor ability may continue for approximately 5 hours.

## **SPECIFICS OF THE KAP SESSIONS**

Preparation for a ketamine session requires assessment of your readiness for the experience and the development of rapport and trust between you and your treatment team. We will work with you to prepare you to create a mindset that facilitates openness, growth, and transformation.

The degree to which we interact verbally will depend on the intentions we set together before the session, the ketamine dosage, and what psychological material arises to work with in the moment. For this reason, we may require at least one Preparatory Session prior to your initial KAP Session. Depending on how the preparation process unfolds, we may require additional Preparatory Sessions.

During the KAP session, we ask you to make two agreements with us to ensure your safety and well-being:

1. You agree to remain at the location of the session until we decide it is safe for you to leave.

2. You agree to follow any instructions we provide to you regarding safety and follow up.

The length of the sessions varies from person to person and from experience to experience. We use sublingual lozenges and the sessions typically last up to 3 hours. Please allow additional time for recovery. We may ask you to remain at our center until it is safe for you to leave.

Driving an automobile or engaging in hazardous activities should not be undertaken until all effects of the medication are out of your system. We therefore require that you have someone drive you home after ketamine sessions, and that you do not drive for the remainder of the day after ketamine administration.

Because of the risk of nausea and vomiting, please refrain from eating and drinking for at least 4 hours prior to the sessions. Eat lightly when you do, and hydrate well in that same time frame. If you are prone to nausea, we may offer you an anti-nausea medication.

We also ask that you do not use alcohol or benzodiazepine medications (e.g., Ativan, Valium, Xanax) prior and following 24 hours, as this may have negative emotional and physiological consequences, or may decrease the efficacy of the treatment.

## **TOUCH, SAFETY, AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES**

KAP can be a very vulnerable process. We will do everything to assure your physical safety and comfort as we work with potentially uncomfortable psychological issues. Some clients find that the reassuring physical touch of a hand on a shoulder, hand or foot can be helpful to increase safety and connection. Others do not want any kind of touch at all. We will discuss the potential use of touch with you during your preparatory session(s) and assure you that touch will only happen when you request it and within the boundaries of appropriate professional contact. We adhere to strict professional boundaries, and ethics related to physical touch.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF KAP**

Ketamine has been found to be helpful for treating depression, even in individuals who have not responded to other interventions. It has a unique effect, in that it can work very rapidly, with individuals frequently seeing improvement in their depression within hours.

Ketamine has also demonstrated benefit in anxiety conditions, including PTSD. However, ketamine response is not guaranteed and relapse can occur. Coupling the biological effects of the medicine, with psychotherapy and behavioral change is designed to maximize benefit and sustained gains.

While important positive changes in mood, cognition, coping, and defense structures are often noted immediately following a KAP session, sometimes effects take longer to manifest, and can happen in the days and weeks that follow.

Individual responses vary widely. It is important to realize that participation in KAP can involve experiencing uncomfortable feelings, engaging in difficult interactions, or being challenged to see the world in new and different ways. It is not uncommon for people to experience painful memories or be confronted with new images of the self. Occasionally — in the process of working through issues — depression or anxiety can temporarily increase, before improvement is seen.

We make no guarantees as to the result of this treatment. If any questions or concerns about our work together arise at any point during treatment, please bring them to our attention.

## **Potential Risks and Side Effects of Ketamine**

Ketamine has an extensive record of safety and has been used at much higher doses for surgical anesthesia. As with any other medication, there are also some potential risks and side effects to be informed of and consider.

The most common physical side effect is a short-term spike in blood pressure, pulse, or heart rate, which may be a risk to those with heart disease.

Other possibilities for side effects include dizziness/lightheadedness, sedation, impaired balance and coordination, slurred speech, mental confusion, excitability, headache, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, and diminished awareness of physical functions, such as respiration. These effects are temporary and usually resolve within 4 hours.

Ketamine does not meet the criteria for chemical dependence, since it does not cause tolerance and withdrawal symptoms. However, "cravings" have been reported by individuals with a history of heavy use of ketamine. In addition, it can have effects on mood, cognition, and perception that may make some people want to use it repeatedly. Therefore, ketamine should never be used except under the direct supervision of a licensed physician.

Repeated high dose and chronic use of ketamine has also caused urinary tract symptoms and even permanent bladder dysfunction in individuals abusing the drug. This typically does not occur within the framework of our treatment.

In terms of psychological risk, ketamine has been shown to worsen certain psychotic symptoms in people who suffer from schizophrenia or other serious mental disorders.

During the experience itself, some people have reported frightening and unusual experiences. These experiences, however, may be of value in your recovery from the suffering that brought you to KAP work. You will receive psychotherapeutic support and ongoing guidance in the follow-up sessions, which are an essential part of treatment.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Legal and ethical codes require that information provided during psychotherapy be kept confidential at all times except under the following circumstances:

Client information may be shared amongst the **Whole Living Center KAP**

team members as is deemed necessary for client safety and treatment efficacy.

There may be circumstances in which it will be necessary or beneficial to release or exchange information about your treatment with other professionals such as your primary care physician or another psychotherapist or psychiatrist. In these situations, we will ask that you sign a Release of Information form.

We may disclose limited information to necessary people without your permission if there is clear evidence that you are a serious danger to yourself or others. We are also mandated to breach confidentiality if we learn of an incident of child or elder abuse by you or any other identifiable person.

There are also some situations where the court can mandate that we release your records (i.e., you use mental health as a defense in a court proceeding). This is very rare; and should we receive a subpoena for your records, we will consult with you prior to responding.

## **SCHEDULING AND CANCELLATION POLICY**

Whole Living Center requires a 48 hour notice to cancel a session without charge. If however — due to illness or another emergency — you cannot make your scheduled appointment, and we are able to reschedule your appointment during the same week, you will be charged only for the session(s) that you attended. Please note that while we will make every effort to reschedule in emergency situations, it is often the case that there are no available times for rescheduling.

## **CONTACTING US AND EMERGENCIES**

Although we are not available by phone 24/7, we welcome you to leave us a voicemail anytime at **617-981-4287**. We check this voicemail on a daily basis, and make every effort to return your call within 24 hours during business days. We will inform you of exceptions for periods when we are unavailable.

If you have an emergency and cannot reach us, please call 911, Cambridge Emergency Services at (617) 665-1560, or go to your nearest Emergency Room.

## **TERMINATION OF TREATMENT**

You have the right to end treatment at any time without any legal or financial obligation other than those already accrued. If you wish, we will provide you with referrals to other qualified professionals. In some circumstances, people choose to stop psychotherapy when they are about to face something that is uncomfortable, yet potentially very fruitful. We therefore request at least one session to discuss termination.

We also have the right to terminate treatment at our discretion. Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to: untimely payment of fees; inability or unwillingness to follow treatment recommendations; or client needs which are outside the scope of our competence or practice.