

A Recovery Bill of Rights for Trauma Survivors

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As a Matter of Personal AUTHORITY, You Have the Right . . .

- to manage your life according to your own values and judgment.
- to direct your recovery, answerable to no one for your goals, effort, or progress.
- to gather information to make intelligent decisions about your recovery.
- to seek help from a variety of sources, unhindered by demands for exclusivity.
- to decline help from anyone without having to justify the decision.
- to have faith in your powers of self restoration -- and to seek allies who share it.
- to trust allies in healing as much as any adult can trust another, but no more.
- to be afraid and to avoid what frightens you.
- to decide for yourself whether, when, and where to confront your fear.
- to learn by experimenting, that is, to make mistakes.

For the Preservation of Personal BOUNDARIES, You Have the Right . . .

- to be touched only with your permission, and only in ways that are comfortable.
- to choose to speak or remain silent, about any topic or at any moment.
- to choose to accept or decline feedback, suggestions, or interpretations.
- to ask for help in healing, without having to accept help with work, play, or love.
- to challenge any crossing of your boundaries.

- to take appropriate action to end any trespass that does not cease when challenged.

In the Sphere of Personal COMMUNICATION, You Have the Right . . .

- to ask for explanation of communications you do not understand.
- to express a contrary view when you do understand and you disagree.
- to acknowledge your feelings, without having to justify them as assertions of fact or actions affecting others.
- to ask for changes when your needs are not being met.
- to speak of your experience, with respect for your doubts and uncertainties.
- to resolve doubt without deferring to the views or wishes of anyone.

Specific to the DOMAIN of Psychotherapy, You Have the Right . . .

- to hire a therapist or counselor as coach, not boss, of your recovery.
- to receive expert and faithful assistance in healing from your therapist.
- to be assured that your therapist will refuse to engage in any other relationship with you -- business, social, or sexual -- for life.
- to be secure against revelation of anything you have disclosed to your therapist, unless a court of law commands it.
- to have your therapist's undivided loyalty in relation to any and all perpetrators, abusers, or oppressors.
- to receive informative answers to questions about your condition, your hopes for recovery, the goals and methods of treatment, the therapist's qualifications.
- to have a strong interest by your therapist in your safety, with a readiness to use all legal means to neutralize an imminent threat to your life or someone else's.
- to have your therapist's commitment to you not depend on your "good behavior," unless criminal activity or ongoing threats to safety are involved.
- to know reliably the times of sessions and of your therapist's availability, including, if you so desire, a commitment to work together for a set term.
- to telephone your therapist between regular scheduled sessions, in urgent need, and have the call returned within a reasonable time.

- to be taught skills that lessen risk of retraumatization:
 - a) containment (reliable temporal/spatial boundaries for recovery work);
 - b) systematic relaxation;
 - c) control of attention and imagery (through trance or other techniques).
- to reasonable physical comfort during sessions.

