

Social Media Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how I conduct myself on the Internet as a mental health professional and how you can expect me to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet.

If you have any questions about anything within this document, I encourage you to bring them up when we meet. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when I need to update this policy. If I do so, I will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy and place this new policy on my website.

Friending

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc) unless not doing so will cause harm. I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

Fanning and Liking

I keep a Facebook Page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users.

You are welcome to view my Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there, but I do not accept clients as Fans of this Page. I believe having clients as Facebook Fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and I feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view my list of Fans to know that they will not find client names on that list. In addition, the American Psychological Association's Ethics Code prohibits my soliciting testimonials from clients. I feel that the term "Fan" comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of my practice.

Note that you should be able to get notifications when new content is posted to the page via email without becoming a Fan or liking the page and without creating a visible, public link to my Page. You are more than welcome to do this.

Following

I publish a Wordpress blog on my website. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my blog. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on Wordpress and I happen to notice that you've followed me there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

Social Media Policy

My primary concern is your privacy. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow me.

Note that I will not follow you back. I only follow other health professionals on Social Media Sites and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. My reasoning is that I believe casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it's being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy my personal curiosity. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on our working relationship. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with me, please bring them into our sessions where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

Interacting

Please do not use Social Networking sites such as **Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn** to contact me.

These sites are not secure and I may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me in public online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging with me this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone.

Texting is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email and text interactions **along with your rights**.

Use of Search Engines

It is **NOT** a regular part of my practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions *may* be made during times of crisis. If I have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with me via our usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there *might* be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Google Reader

I do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and I do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with me that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, I encourage you to bring these items of interest into our sessions.

Business Review Sites

You may find my psychology practice on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places which list businesses. Some of these sites include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Many of these sites comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of

Social Media Policy

whether the business has added itself to the site. **If you should find my listing on any of these sites, please know that my listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as my client.**

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for psychologists to solicit testimonials: "Psychologists do not solicit testimonials from current therapy clients/patients or other persons who because of their particular circumstances are vulnerable to undue influence." **I am not a psychologist, but I am a member of the APA and have agreed to abide by the APA's code of ethics.**

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, I cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. I urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as I take my commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with me about your feelings about our work, there is a good possibility that I may never see it.

If we are working together, I hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide we are not a good fit. None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with me wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that I cannot tell people that you are my client and my Ethics Code prohibits me from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that I'm your therapist or how you feel about the treatment I provided to you, in any forum of your choosing.

If you do choose to write something on a business review site, I hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. I urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

If you feel I have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with me, you can always contact the Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy, which oversees my licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy
2829 University Ave SE Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 548-2177 FAX (612) 617-2187
Comments? email: bbht.board@state.mn.us
<http://mn.gov/health-licensing-boards/behavioral-health/home/>

Location-Based Services

If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. I do not place my practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at my office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in," from my office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

Email/Text

I prefer using email/text only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not text/email me content related to your therapy sessions, as email/text is not completely secure or confidential when not encrypted. If you

Social Media Policy

choose to communicate with me by email/text, be aware that all emails/texts are retained in the logs Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider. In addition, messages you send from your email address or phone may be accessed by anyone with access to your phone/computer/tablet if it is not properly password protected or it is lost or left out for anyone to access. You should also know that any emails I receive from you and any responses that I send to you become a part of your legal record.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review my Social Media Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, do bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States License.
To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>
or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.