
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.

Friending

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). I believe 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

I keep a Facebook Page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts, articles, and practice updates with other Facebook users. All of the information shared on this page is available on my website. You are welcome to view my professional Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there. I have no expectation that you, as a client, will want to “like” my professional Facebook page. However, if you choose to “like” my professional Facebook page, this may compromise your privacy and confidentiality. Choosing to “like” my professional Facebook page is comparable to you choosing to tell another person you are receiving counseling or anything else about your counseling. If you use an easily recognizable name on my professional Facebook page and I happen to notice that you have “liked” or posted onto this page, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

Following

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

Note that I will not follow or “like” you back. I only follow or “like” other mental health professionals or sites offering relevant mental health information or resources on Facebook and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Facebook. I believe casual viewing of clients’ online content outside of therapy counseling sessions 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 SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as 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 current or former client/therapist relationship. Engaging with me this way could compromise your privacy and 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. Additionally, if you choose to use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me online, I may or may not choose to respond to your message. I will not respond to any message if I believe it may compromise your confidentiality or privacy. I urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as I take my commitment of confidentiality to you.

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. If you choose to contact me by email, please read the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

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 highly 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 private 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 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 National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics states under Section 4.07(b) that it is unethical for social workers to solicit testimonials: "Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client's prior statement as a testimonial endorsement of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence."

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, I will not 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 Code of Ethics prohibits me from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to voluntarily 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.

Location-Based Services

If you used location-based services (LBS) 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 check-ins at my office on a regular 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

I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email me content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and my 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. 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.