

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

This document outlines my practice policies related to the use of Social Media. Please read in order 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.

### **Social Media Policy**

My primary concern is your privacy. I will not follow nor contact you via social media. 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 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.

### **Friending**

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

### **Interacting**

Please do not use messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. These sites are not secure and I will not be using these as communication formats for my practice. 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 for brief, administrative issues such as scheduling or changing appointment times, the best way to do so is by phone, text or email. Please do not use these communication vehicles for therapeutic content. See the email section below for more information regarding email and text interactions.

**Risk of using Email and Text Messaging:**

The transmission of client information by email and/or texting has a number of risks that clients should consider prior to the use of email and/or texting. These include but are not limited to, the following risks:

1. Emails and texts can be circulated, forwarded, stored electronically and on paper. They can also be broadcasted to unintended recipients.
2. Email and text senders can easily misaddress an email or text and send the information to an undesired recipient.
3. Backup copies of emails and texts may exist even after the sender and/or the recipient has deleted his or her copy.
4. Employers and online services have a right to inspect emails sent through their company systems.
5. Emails and texts can be intercepted, altered, forwarded or used without authorization or detection.
6. Emails and texts can be used as evidence in court.
7. Emails and texts may not be secure and therefore it is possible that the confidentiality of such communications may be breached by a third party.

**Conditions for the use of Emails and Texts:**

I cannot guarantee but will use reasonable means to maintain security and confidentiality of email and text information sent and received. I will not be liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not caused by intentional misconduct. Clients must acknowledge and consent to the following conditions:

1. Email and texting is not appropriate for urgent or emergency situations. I cannot guarantee that any particular email and/or text will be read and responded to within any particular period of time.
2. The client should call and/or schedule an appointment to discuss complex and or sensitive situations rather than send email and/or text regarding such situations.
3. Email may be printed and filed into your client file, texts may be printed and filed as well.
4. I will not forward a client's identifiable emails and/or texts to outside parties without

your written consent, except as authorized by law.

5. Clients should use their best judgment when considering the use of email and/or text for communication of sensitive medical information. I will not be responsible for the content of these messages.

I will not be liable for breaches of confidentiality caused by the client or any third party. It is the client's responsibility to follow up and/or schedule an appointment if warranted.

### **Business Review Sites**

You may find my counseling 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 American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics states under Section C.3.b. that "Counselors who use testimonials do not solicit them from current clients, former clients, or any other persons who may be vulnerable to undue influence. Counselors discuss with clients the implications of and obtain permission for the use of any testimonial."

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. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, I hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personal information in a public forum. 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 will never see these.

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 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 feel I have done something harmful or unethical, please discuss this with me. As a consumer, you may also contact the State Department of Health to request a copy of the law relating to counselors at the following location:  
Health Professions Quality Assurance, Consumer Service Center, PO Box 47865, Olympia, WA 98504, 360.236.4700.

### **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.