

Social & Electronic Media Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to the use of social and electronic 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, please bring them up with me. 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 and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

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/social networking websites. If there are aspects of your online presence that you think are relevant to our work together, please bring this to our sessions. Exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If I have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and have not been in touch with me via our usual means, 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 circumstances, and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Email

I prefer to use email only for setting and changing appointments, billing matters and simple administrative issues in order to protect client confidentiality. Please do not email me about therapy sessions, personal, clinical or confidential matters. Email is not secure, not confidential, and is not appropriate for contacting me in the case of an emergency.

If you choose to communicate about appointment scheduling via email, please be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and my internet service providers. While it is unlikely that anyone will look at these logs, in theory they are available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the internet service provider. You should also be aware that any emails you receive from me or send to me become part of your legal record.

If you need to discuss a clinical matter with me, please call me so we can discuss it on the phone, or wait so we can discuss it during your therapy session. The telephone or face-to-face contexts are simply much more secure modes of communication.

Interacting

I maintain a practice website for the purposes of providing information and practice updates. Neither my website or any other social/electronic media sites I am associated with are monitored for contacting me in the event of an emergency.

I do not communicate with or contact, any of my clients through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. I do not “follow” clients on Twitter, “like” their pages on Facebook or otherwise acknowledge clients online. In addition, if I discover that I have accidentally established an online relationship with you, I will cancel that relationship. This is because these types of casual social contacts can create

significant security risks for you. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter me by accident. If that occurs, please discuss it with me during our time together.

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter 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. Email is okay for administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions. I try to respond to emails and voicemail messages within 24 hours with the exception of weekends, holidays and vacations/time out of the office.

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. Please raise any questions you have about this with me.

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 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."

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. It also allows us to try to resolve concerns when they arise. 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. In posting an online review you risk divulging that you are receiving mental health treatment. The more information you provide, the greater the risk to your privacy. If you do post an online review, 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 Psychology, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided. You may contact the Board on the internet at www.psychboard.ca.gov, by emailing bop@dca.ca.gov, calling (916) 574-7720, or by writing to the following address:

Board of Psychology
1625 North Market Street, Ste N-215
Sacramento, CA 95834

Location-Based Services

If you use location-based services on your phone, you may wish to be aware of privacy issues related to using such services. I do not place my location as a check-in location on social media websites such as FourSquare. 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 location-based information available via your device. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in” from my address or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

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. I will be glad to discuss them.