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Social Media Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to the 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 written 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 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 any questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk about it more.

Following:

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 regarding 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.

Texting or Messaging:

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text message) to contact me for anything other than a schedule change. Text messages are sometimes unreliable, so I may not receive the text you sent. I may not read the text in a timely fashion so the best way to contact me in an urgent situation is by phone. You should also be aware that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

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), there may be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, to 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.

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.

While you have the right to tell anyone you wish that I am your therapist or how you feel about the treatment I provided you, I ask that you consider not submitting online reviews, because this has the potential to undermine your own confidentiality as well as the integrity of our work together. 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.

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 protection and privacy.

Location-Based Services:

If you use 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 geosocial networking sites 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 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 (location-based services) app enabled on your phone.

Email:

I prefer using email only to send a form or a book reference/link or questionnaire for you to complete and either bring to your next appointment, or mail to me using surface mail. I may also email you with scheduling issues. Please do not email me content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. Also, email can get lost in cyberspace. I prefer to have a conversation with you in session or over the phone. If you choose to send me an 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, please bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.

I have read and consent to the social media policy:

Client’s Signature

Date