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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 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 questions about this, please bring them up when we meet, and we can talk more about it.

### **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 satisfying my curiosity. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially negatively influence our working relationship. If you wish to share things from your online life 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 messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. Text messages and social network sites are not secure, and I may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Text messaging is also sometimes unreliable, so I may not receive a text you sent. It is important that you know that your employer legally owns texts sent through your employer's phone or computer. You should also be aware that text and messaging 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, it is best to phone.

### **Use of Search Engines**

It is not a regular part of my practice to search for clients on Google, Facebook, or other search engines. Infrequent 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 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.

### **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 where 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 positive or negative. I urge you to take your 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 you will bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an essential 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 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 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.

Board of Psychology

1422 Howe Avenue, Suite 22 Sacramento, CA 95825 1-866-503-3221 bopmail@dca.ca.gov

### **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. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, 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 book reference/link or questionnaire to complete and either bring to your next appointment or mail to me using surface mail (“snail mail”). 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 Internet service provider's system administrator(s). Please be aware that your employer legally owns an email sent from your employer’s computer or email address. You should also know that any emails I receive from you and any responses 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 our potential interactions on the Internet, please bring them to my attention to discuss them.

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Signature

Name

Date