

Main Line Adult Counseling: Private Practice 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.

Interacting

If you need to cancel or change an appointment time; a telephone call or SMS (text) may get the message to me in a timely manner. Please notify me if you decide to avoid or limit, in any way, the use of e-mails, cell phones SMS (text), faxes, or storage of confidential information on computers. If you communicate confidential or private information via SMS (text) or e-mail, I will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted. Please do not use text, e-mail or faxes for emergencies. Due to computer or network problems, e-mails may not be deliverable, and I may not check my e-mails or texts daily.

I prefer to use e-mail to arrange or modify appointments only. If you e-mail me content related to your therapy sessions, please note that e-mail is not completely secure or confidential. If e-mail communication outside of therapy requires more than 5 minutes to read and respond to, I may charge for my professional services rendered in 15 minute increments. Please indicate if you intend to pay these charges, or I will save it for review during your appointment time. Please do not send forwarded

messages regardless of how inspirational they may seem to my professional e-mail address. I use this for work related issues and do not want to risk viruses spread by forwarded e-mails.

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 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.

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, 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.

Friending May Expose Our Professional Relationship and Undermine Your Privacy

This social network policy serves as your notification that being linked as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. As in any other public context, you have control over your own description of the nature of our acquaintance, if you choose to disclose a professional relationship. For example, if I saw you at church or school and you ignored me, I would follow your lead and do the same. If you introduce me to your friends I would agree with your description of how you know me. I will not confirm nor deny any professional relationship between myself and clients on any social network sites. I reserve the right to discontinue any social network connection without prior notification, and I encourage you to do the same. I discourage the use of social network sites for any communication about our therapeutic relationship, including scheduling issues, due to the lack of privacy protections.

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. My current treatment agreement states that I keep patient information private and do not share it with others unless there is reason to believe that the patient or another individual is at risk. It is easy to forget that when we type names into a search engine or a field on a social network, we are also sharing information with others. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

Location Based Services Reveal Your Location

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 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 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 app enabled on your phone.

I Do Not Use Search Engines to Learn About You

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 unusual situations and if I ever resort to

such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Liking My Professional Page May Imply Endorsement

I keep a Facebook Page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts 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 Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there, and comment on them. However, referrals from other clients are one of my best sources of business. My website and Facebook Fan page are intended to let others know who I am as a professional and to make it easy to refer those you feel would benefit from my services. I will not confirm nor deny any professional relationship between clients on any social network site. This social media policy was constructed to inform you of the risks involved with associating on a social network. I will not ask you to “like” my page or endorse me on other business pages.

I will not search for you on social media. 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. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent or without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially influence 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.

Business Review Sites are Ineffective Places to Voice Your Complaints

You may find my psychotherapy 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. 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, 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. In addition, I have a Feedback form on my website that allows you to provide anonymous feedback through SurveyMonkey. 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.

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.

Acknowledgement of Review of Social Media Policy

By signing below I am indicating that I have read this document, understand my rights as a client, and accept the responsibility as stated. I have been offered a printed copy of the Social Media Policy and all questions regarding these policies have been answered to my satisfaction. This document is also available at www.mainlineadultcounseling.com

Name: _____ Date: _____

Therapist: _____ Date: _____