

## **Private Practice Social Media Policy**

This document outlines my office policies related to the use of Social Media. Please read it thoroughly so that you understand how I conduct myself on the Internet as a mental health professional and what you can expect response will be to the various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet.

If you have 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.

### ***Email***

*I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments.* Please do not email me content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of 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.

### ***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.

The Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers states under the section Conflict of Interest 1.06 (h) that it is unethical for Licensed Clinical Social Workers to engage in personal relationships in social media: "Social workers should avoid accepting requests from or engaging in personal relationships with clients on social networking sites or other electronic media to prevent boundary confusion, inappropriate dual relationships, or harm to clients."

### ***Interacting***

With the exception of scheduling, please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn 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.

### ***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 highly unusual situations—if I ever have to resort to such means, I will fully document the instance and discuss it with you when we next meet.

### ***Google Reader***

I do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and I do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with me that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, I encourage you to bring printed items into our sessions.

### ***Business Review Sites***

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.

The Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers states under 4.07 Solicitations (b) that it is unethical for Licensed Clinical Social Workers to solicit testimonials: “Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client’s prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current clients or from other people 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 your feelings about our work, it is more than likely I will 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 Code of Ethics prohibits me from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that I am 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 personal 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 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 State Board of Social Work Examiners, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

**Division of Consumer Affairs  
State Board of Social Work Examiners  
P.O. Box 45033  
Newark, NJ 07101**

***Location-Based Services***

If you used 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 Google Maps, Waze, Foursquare, GetGlue, Yelp and Facebook Places, 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.

***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 regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, please bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.