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Communications and Social Media Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to communications and the use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how I conduct my practice, 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 via electronic means.

If you have any questions about anything within this document, I encourage you to bring them up when we meet.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication in the Therapy Relationship

The main form of communication in our work together is face-to-face communication during our therapy sessions. However, it may become useful during the course of treatment to communicate by phone, email, text message (e.g., "SMS"), facsimile, or other electronic methods of communication. Be informed that these methods, in their typical form, are not confidential means of communication. If you use these methods to communicate with me, there is a reasonable chance that a third party may be able to intercept and eavesdrop on these messages. The kinds of parties that may intercept these messages include, but are not limited to:

- People in your home or other environments who can access your phone, computer, or other devices that you use to read and write messages. (In addition, such devices might also store records of your phone calls and voicemail messages.)
- Your employer, if you use your work email to communicate with me.
- Third parties on the Internet such as server administrators and others who monitor Internet traffic.

Communications Policies

- I respond to emails, text messages, and phone calls as soon as possible. My response time is typically faster for emails and text messages. I typically respond to all communication within 24-hours of receipt during normal business hours.
- All electronic communication will become a part of your medical record.
- Electronic communication is best used for administrative purposes (i.e., appointment scheduling, billing). It is typically more helpful to communicate about clinical issues during our scheduled session times. If something arises between sessions, please feel free to contact me to set up a time to discuss in person or over the phone.
- Sometimes when working with adolescents, parents will send me periodic emails with clinically relevant information that they want to share with me. This can be helpful as a time effective and convenient way to relay information to me. However, please be aware that if you choose to send such clinical information via unsecure electronic means, there is always the risk of your privacy being breached. In addition, I tend to respond to such messages solely with an acknowledgement that I received the information. If you instead desire to have a more in-depth conversation about such clinical issues, please contact me to schedule an appointment.
- **If you have a crisis or emergency, you may call me or send me an email or text message. However, you should also call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.**
- All faxes sent to my office are received as e-faxes, which make them vulnerable to the same potential breaches in security as email and text messages.
- Your email/text communication will not be forwarded to a third party without your expressed permission, unless you have already signed a release for me to communicate with a professional or unless required by law.

SOCIAL MEDIA 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 in regard to 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.

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.

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 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.

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, 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 whenever 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 am your therapist or how you feel about the treatment I provide 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. 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.

Consent for Transmission of Protected Health Information by Non-Secure Means

I consent to allow Dr. Lucy Smith to use unsecured email and mobile phone text messaging to transmit to me the following protected health information:

(Please initial each that you are consenting to.)

- _____ Information related to the scheduling of sessions or other appointments.
- _____ Information related to billing and payment.
- _____ Referral information when relevant.
- _____ Responses to email or text messages that I sent to Dr. Smith of my own accord.
- _____ Brief clinical information or updates that Dr. Smith feels is better communicated in writing (for reasons of either clarity or convenience).

In addition, I offer automated appointment reminders that can be sent via email or text message 48-hours prior to your scheduled appointment time. These messages are sent via unsecure methods so have the same potential risks as outlined above. If you would like to receive these reminder notifications, please initial below (you can select either email or text messaging or both options):

- _____ I would like to receive appointment reminders via email. Please use the following email address:

- _____ I would like to receive appointment reminders via text messaging to the following cell phone number:

- _____ None of the above. I will remember my appointments on my own.

I have been informed of the risks, including but not limited to my confidentiality in treatment, of transmitting my protected health information by unsecured means. I understand that I am not required to sign this agreement in order to receive treatment. I also understand that I may terminate this consent at any time. I also express understanding of Dr. Smith's policies regarding Social Media.

Signature of Client or Authorized Representative

Date Signed

Printed Name of Client or Authorized Representative