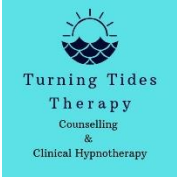


Digital Policy



This document is made for the benefit of my counselling clients and aims to address and contain the most likely eventualities that may arise by way of digital exposure with reference to maintaining privacy and data protection.

This document acknowledges the complex world of digital media and tries its best to address issues that may impact the therapeutic relationship. The guidelines are based on the choices I have made with regard to my own online activities. I ask all my clients to read through this document so they can be familiar with these positions.

My media activities:

It is important for you to be aware that I maintain an active social media presence. Online resources such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram enable me to reach a broad swathe of people to whom I can communicate my services in that I hope I can be useful in their lives. *I hold my duty of care and confidentiality to my clients as sacrosanct and consider my work to be related to, but completely separate from my personal life.*

Keeping Boundaries:

The nature of an online presence can blur interpersonal boundaries, so it is important to be as clear as possible about how boundaries may be compromised. As a general rule, I like to keep clinical work in the consultation room as much as possible. However, the nature of the digital world can sometimes stretch these boundaries, so I offer the best clarity I can below.

Data Protection:

If you are a client you will have been asked to agree with and sign my counselling contract. My Privacy Policy is available on request and at turningtides-therapy.co.uk

Email:

I am not currently using an e-mail encryption programme, so any emails we send to each other may be vulnerable to viruses or human error. For this reason, it is best to be thoughtful about what you include in emails to me. Often, it is best to rely on email for non-confidential communications like setting up appointment times and things like that. In an effort to keep confidential and psychological material “in the room” it is best avoided in emails unless we discuss it beforehand. I will always request your preferred email address from our first session.

If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of Internet Service Providers. Furthermore, they can be vulnerable to viruses and unintended forwarding or replication. If you are concerned about the confidentiality of your emails, you may wish to contact me by telephone instead.

I check emails only at fixed times during office hours – I avoid checking them on evenings, weekends and holidays. I endeavour to respond to all emails as soon as possible. If I am away for an extended period, you will receive an automated response. *Emails should never be used in the event of an emergency, in which case you should contact emergency services.*

Text messages:

You may feel free to contact me by text message to alert me if you are running late for a session or for similar reasons. However, because of the lack of context of text messages, it is generally not the best method for communicating with me about more important matters, so please do phone and leave me a message.

As a private practitioner I am unable to offer an emergency service, even by phone. Should you experience an emergency please contact either the emergency services or if you are feeling suicidal, ring The Samaritans: 116 123. If you feel that this may be an issue, please discuss it with me.

Telephone and Google Meet:

Should we work together remotely, I will give you further instructions about how to join. When engaging via video conferencing, we both agree not to record sessions. It is also crucial that you're sure your environment from which you are talking with me is safe, secure, and private.

Social Media:

I maintain a public Facebook Page as a way of promoting my business through the media, and to make people aware of my services and to share others that are of relevance to my clients and may be of interest. I may send across relevant links and sometimes engage in public conversations on these topics.

Despite my online presence, I would prefer that our relationship remain as much as possible between us in the therapy room, therefore I will not knowingly engage with clients over social media. Whether you follow me or not is of course to your discretion.

I, like many others, maintain a private Facebook account for personal reasons, and a LinkedIn account for professional ones. I aim to keep my Facebook as private as possible and it would not be appropriate to be Facebook "friends" with former or current clients. I acknowledge that there can be some overlap across social networks, and that this sometimes comes to light on Facebook. If this were the case, it would be something we would need to discuss in session.

As the above, I have decided that it would not be appropriate to add current or former clients as "connections" on Linked-In.

Google:

I have found it is best to avoid encountering information about you that does not come directly from you, so in general practice I do not Google my clients. I am aware, however, that clients will often Google prospective therapists as part of their process in choosing one. If you did so with me, and this produced any questions, I would be happy to address them with you. Going forward, I have found it is best to find out from each other what we need to know face-to-face.

Client Records:

I use Cliniko, a secure practice management software, to manage appointments. Cliniko is designed specifically for healthcare providers and complies with relevant data protection regulations, including GDPR. Any personal information you provide which is stored securely within Cliniko's systems and is only accessed by authorised members of the team for the purposes of delivering your care and managing our services. Cliniko employs encryption, secure data storage, and regular system monitoring to help protect your information from unauthorised access, disclosure, or loss.

I would like to thank Aaron Balick for his guidance in the formation of this digital policy.