

Ethical Media Use: Setting Boundaries in a Connected World

ETHICS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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I work primarily with children, teens, adults, and families experiencing anxiety, grief, trauma, suicidal ideation, and stress.

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Let's Get Ethical



Contents

Today's Presentation:

- Social Media and Marketing
 - Trends in social media and potential pitfalls of connecting with clients via social media
- Personal Social Media Posting
 - The importance of keeping your personal profile professional
- Boundaries and Communication with Clients
 - The importance of setting boundaries to prevent burnout and how to continue to facilitate support when out of the office.

What is Social Media?

Why are we talking about it?

Hayley in 2016



Social Media

Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Social networking is using internet-based tools to connect with friends, family, or colleagues.

Activity

Write down every social media you can think of!

Activity

Let's read a list!

Are you surprised what others listed?

Activity

Write down every gadget one could use to get on the internet!

Activity

Let's read a list!

Are you surprised what others listed?

Examples of Social Media

Facebook

Social Networking Site

Users can build a profile and add other users as "friends"

Has the ability to share written posts and pictures

Offers "groups" revolving around mutual interests, fields of study, professions, and more

Criticized for user privacy

2.85 billion monthly users



Twitter

Microblogging social networks site

Users can make singular posts consisting of up to 280 characters and 4 photos

Can create "threads" of multiple posts

Users can have followers who they do not necessarily follow back (and vice versa)

Use hashtags to track and engage with "trending" topics

- #caturday

330 million average monthly users



Instagram

Photo sharing social network site

Now owned by Facebook

Users upload images and can edit the posts using filters

Users can also post "stories" which allow multiple videos and photos in a single post that are available for up to 24 hours.

Also allows users to post descriptions and use hashtags to find and follow reels

- #caturday

Users can have followers who they do not necessarily follow back (and vice versa)



Snapchat

Allows users to send and share messages and photos to other users, as well as post photos and videos to their stories

Stories are usually only available for 24 hours, but messages can be available for as little as 1 second at a time before they "disappear"

If the recipient screen shots a post, the sender is notified

Snapchat keeps all data-even that which has "disappeared"

Approximately 4 BILLION snaps are sent daily



Discord

Instant messaging software available in app form on computer, table, and phone

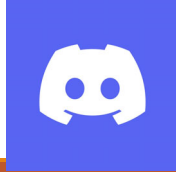
Allows users to create "channels" and allow other users to join to view and make posts with varying levels of gatekeeping

- Malthaus Games, Dead Meat

Users can communicate with videos, voice calls, and messages

Became very popular in the pandemic

- Ex. colleges



Twitch

Live streaming service available on computer, tablet, or apps

Allows users to live stream game play, creative content, or other activities

- Anyone remember [Among Us?](#)

Viewers can interact in the chat which each other and the streamer

Users can subscribe to streamers to provide monetary support

15 million daily active users



Reddit

Social media discussion website

Users create profiles and subscribe to "subreddits"

Subreddits can vary.

- "R/AmitheAsshole" "R/okc" "worldnews" "r/Catswithjobs"

Users must follow the subreddit's rules before making posts

- Moderators monitor and delete posts that do not follow the rules

Users accumulate points or "karma" for making posts and replies to others' posts



TikTok

Social media app and website

Users posts videos ranging from topics such as comedy, cosplay, how-to, travel, and more

Users can have followers who they do not necessarily follow back (and vice versa)

Use hashtags to track and engage with "trending" topics

- #caturday

1 billion active accounts



LinkedIn

Business-oriented social media service

Like Facebook's "friending" option, users can invite others to "connect" with their account.

Users can also follow others' accounts without becoming connections

Users often display their resume and work history, as well as their openness to new job opportunities on their profiles


Users can make posts similarly to Facebook, though the topics are generally related to career, education, or professional topics.

774 million registered users




What have I missed?

Social Media and Marketing




Which social media sites do you use to market mental health services?



Social Media and Marketing

Tips for maintaining a professional social media account
Ethical considerations for marketing services
What to do when a client leaves public feedback (good and bad)



Maintaining Professional Social Media

On all social media accounts, it is important to keep your personal profile separate from your professional profile.

- It is not necessarily unethical for a client to follow your professional social media profile, but it may be considered a dual relationship if you are friends or mutual followers on social media, especially on your personal accounts.

What might be some other potential problems of not having separate accounts?

Maintaining Professional Social Media

It is also important to be mindful of our role as a clinician when presenting ourselves on professional social media pages. We want to be mindful that:

- Our posts or comments cannot be construed as medical advice.
- We aren't inadvertently entering into a type of therapeutic relationship on social media.
- We don't correspond with clients or potential clients on social media.

That being said...

Maintaining Professional Social Media

Direct messaging services are not HIPAA compliant forms of communication.

Even if the direct message to your business page from a client or potential client is sent privately, you should not assume that the correspondence is private.

In many cases, it may be best to disable the direct message feature on your professional social media profile or opt for the email button instead so any correspondence is sent to your HIPAA compliant email.

Good Rule of Thumb



Maintaining Professional Social Media

Remember, even if the client is voluntarily sending you sensitive information over social media, ultimately it is up to you as the clinician to make sure their information is secure.

It is also up to us to maintain the boundaries of the therapeutic setting.

Clients may not be aware of what is HIPAA compliant or secure. We do.

If you do decide to keep the DM function active on your profile, add disclosures on each page that inform potential clients that correspondence may not be secure.

Ethical Dilemma

A client initially set up services by direct messaging your professional Facebook page. Since then, they opt to DM the page to cancel or reschedule appointments rather than call your office number or email you.

What are some potential ethical pitfalls of this situation?

How can you mitigate this?

Maintaining Professional Social Media

As clinicians, we are in the field because we want to help folks.

Again, we also want to be mindful that our posts cannot be construed as medical advice and we aren't inadvertently entering into a type of therapeutic relationship online.

Making a post versus replying to comments.

Questions?

Food for Thought

Earlier in the pandemic, therapists across the country were using Animal Crossing to connect with clients. Therapists made professional accounts, created a "therapy room" in the game, and invited clients to join them for session on their island.

Are there any potential ethical pitfalls of this?

Ethical Considerations for Marketing Services

Example Therapist Bio from a Professional Site

Dr. Delta Dawn is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Oklahoma. Dr. Dawn received her masters of arts degree in counseling psychology in 2002 and PhD. In philosophy in 2007. Dr. Dawn specializes in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

What is wrong with marketing this bio?

Ethical Considerations for Marketing Services

According to both the BBHL, the BLADC, and the BLCSSW, if a counselor holds a PhD they may not advertise or present themselves in a counseling environment as a "doctor" if their doctorate is not from an accredited university or if it is unrelated to mental health.

Clinicians may only advertise the highest educational achievement they have earned that is related to their license.

Doctorates can be advertised if they are related to counseling and are from a regionally accredited program.

Ethical Considerations for Marketing Services

According to the LPC Permanent Rules, Oklahoma LPCs may not represent themselves as specialists of any kind unless they have been designated by the Board of Behavioral Health to hold that title.

• However, the same standard has not been set for LADC, LMFT, or LCSW license holders.

What are some ways LPCs can market post-graduate competencies without labeling it as a "specialty?"

Ethical Dilemma

You, an LPC, have completed a Pesi Course on trauma treatment. The certificate of completion designates you as a "trauma specialist." You are not designating yourself as a specialist on your website, but you do list this certificate of completion under your credentials.

Is this ethical?

What are some potential ethical pitfalls of this situation?

How can you mitigate this?

Questions?

Responding to Reviews and Comments

An important rule to follow when it comes to responding to clients' reviews and comments on your professional pages is...

Responding to Reviews and Comments

Don't.

Responding to Reviews and Comments

Really...

Don't

Responding to Reviews and Comments

When a therapist sees their client outside of the clinical setting, in order to protect confidentiality they typically do not acknowledge a client unless the client acknowledges them first.

In cases of comments and ratings online, it can be tempting to reply to the client's post because the client initiated the contact.

However, in replying to the comment technically a clinician would be publicly acknowledging that the individual has indeed received services.

Ethical Dilemma

A client comments on your professional Facebook post, calling you the "best counselor ever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

If you respond,
What are some ethical pitfalls of that?

If you don't respond, the client brings it up next session. They're feelings are hurt.
How could you address the with the client?

Responding to Reviews and Comments

Even though each one of us could be considered the "best counselor ever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" there may come a time when you get a bad review online.

Since it's unethical to respond, therapists might want to drown out the bad review with a bunch of good ones.

- However, it is unethical to solicit reviews from current or former clients.

However, you can ask colleagues, coworkers, and other professionals to leave you stellar reviews on your work ethic, training, and professionalism.

- This may be a good marketing strategy to boost your ratings even if you don't have any reviews.

Ethical Dilemma

A current leaves a 1-star review and rant on your Facebook page, calling into question your competency as a therapist. You have session with them later in the day. Will you address with them? If so, how?

Ethical Dilemma

A person who has never been a client of yours leaves a 1-star review and rant on your Facebook page, calling into question your competency as a therapist. You have no idea who this person is. What do you do?

Questions?

Personal Account Considerations

Personal Account Considerations

What types of personal social media do you have?

Personal Account Considerations

Privacy

- Setting your account to private or locked
- Not allowing direct messages from non-friends/mutuals
- Limiting who can see when you're tagged in someone else's posts
- Setting up your account under a nickname

Personal Account Considerations

Don't add your clients on social media.

- Or their parents.

If a client reaches out via social media, refer them to HIPAA compliant modes of communication.

Be mindful of what groups or online communities you are a part of.

- You may be using your personal Facebook page to interact in the neighborhood group, but your client will still be seeing their therapist.

Personal Account Considerations

Are there any other privacy considerations you can think of?

Ethical Dilemma

A client found your personal Instagram page and has followed you. You did not follow them back. You notice they begin to like your stories and posts and the next session asks you how the hike in Beavers Bend went.

What are some potential ethical pitfalls of this situation?
How can you mitigate this?

Personal Account Considerations

Even if your account is private, still be mindful of what you post.
Clients may one day come across one of your posts.

- Refrain from posting:
 - Stories from sessions, even if de-identified
 - Complaints about stress/workload
 - Some mental health memes

TikTok Therapist

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vt0VtET5UrQ&ab_channel=Dramakween



Food for Thought

Your client said the funniest thing in session today. You de-identify the information of course, but you post the anecdote on twitter. A different client finds the post. How might this make them feel?

Food for Thought

You've had a rough week at work. Your caseload is too high and every one seems to be in crisis this week. You vent on Facebook. How might a client feel if they see you vent?

Food for Thought

How might a client feel about seeing this meme on your page?

Me rolling up to my therapists office when I'm manic, convinced that I've been "cured"



Personal Account Considerations

In the end, don't post anything on social media that you wouldn't be prepared to explain to a client.

Small World

As clinicians, we also want to be mindful of how small of a world Oklahoma is.

It is important to comb through your social media posts and friends lists to make sure you are abiding by ethical codes.

I had the same Facebook page since age 13. What might be some problems with that?

If I have 1,500 Facebook friends, what potential problems may come from that?

Communication Boundaries

Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries

- [Burnout is caused by excessive stress and can lead to mental, physical, and emotional symptoms.](#) Overdemanding jobs combined with a lack of support from supervisors are among the most significant causes of burnout.
- Signs of burnout can include exhaustion, loss of motivation, illness, decreased satisfaction in work, and using maladaptive coping strategies, such as overeating or using substances. For therapists, [burnout can cause mental health issues, lapses in ethical judgement, and poor boundaries.](#)
- Setting communication boundaries with clients can model a healthy relationship while preventing burnout.

Boundaries


Inform your clients of your boundaries

- When are you available for check-ins?
- What are your boundaries regarding texting clients?
- When are you out of the office?

Bolster support

- After-hours number or crisis number
- Safety plan review
- Providing secondary resources, such as group therapies or support groups
- Reviewing support network


Questions?



In Conclusion

Using media and telecommunication platforms to connect with clients can be helpful, but provide more considerations for boundary setting.

It is up to us to stay informed on changes in media trends, as well considerations for online relationships and communication, not only for marketing mental health services ethically, but also having a better understanding of our clients' potential experiences.



Thank You!

