

Social Media Policy

This document outlines the office policies at Psychology Houston, PC related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as mental health professionals, and how you can expect us to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet.

If you have any questions about anything within this document, we encourage you to bring them up when we meet. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. If we do so, we will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

Friending

It is our policy to not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). We 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

The psychologists who work at Psychology Houston, PC may publish a blog on our website and may post psychology news on Twitter. We have no expectation that you, as a client will want to follow these blogs or Twitter streams. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on Twitter and we happen to notice that you've followed us there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

At Psychology Houston, PC, our primary concern is your privacy. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow us on Twitter (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate your having a public link to our content. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow us.

Note that we will not follow you back. We only follow other health professionals on Twitter and we do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. Our reasoning is that we 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 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 one of us, please bring them into our sessions where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact us. These sites are not secure and we may not

read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with us in public online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging with us 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.

If you need to contact your psychologist between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

Use of Search Engines

It is not a regular part of our practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If we have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with your psychologist 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 we ever resort to such means, it will be fully documented and discussed with you when we next meet.

Google Reader

It is our policy to not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and we do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with us that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, we encourage you to bring these items of interest into our sessions.

Business Review Sites

You may find our 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 our listing on any of these sites, please know that our listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as a client of Psychology Houston, PC. 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, we cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. We urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with your psychologist about your feelings about your therapy work, there is a good possibility that we may never see it.

If you are working with us, we 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 one of us wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people that you are a client and our Ethics Code prohibits us from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish who your psychologist is or how you feel about the treatment provided to you, in any forum of your choosing.

If you do choose to write something on a business review site, we hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We 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 that any of the professional at Psychology Houston, PC has done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with us, you can always contact the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services that have been provided. The Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists can be contacted at 333 Guadalupe, Tower 2, Room 450, Austin TX 78701. Phone 512-305-7700. Web: tsbep.texas.gov

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. We do not place our practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, 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 our office on a weekly or other regular basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in” from our office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

Email

We prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with us by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and our 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 we receive from you and any responses that we send to you become a part of your legal record.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review the Psychology Houston, PC 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 the attention of your psychologist here so that we can discuss them.