

# Social Media Policy

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This document outlines my professional policies related to use of Social Media as it relates to the counseling process. Other clinicians might differ in their use of social media. Please read my policies to understand 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 on the Internet. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when I need to update this policy. If I do so and you are an active client, I will notify you of any policy changes and provide you a copy of the updated policy, if requested.

## Friending

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). Adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship.

## Fanning

In the future, I might keep a Facebook Page for my practice to allow people to share my professional contact information with other Facebook users.

When available, you are welcome to view my Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there, but I do not accept clients as Fans of this Page. Having clients as Facebook Fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality. All who may view my list of Fans can know that they will not find any clients, former or present, on that list.

As an alternative, you should be able to subscribe to the Page via RSS without becoming a Fan and without creating a visible, public link to my Page.

## Following

I have a professional presence on Twitter. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my Twitter feed. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on Twitter and I happen to notice that you've followed me there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship. There are more private ways to follow me on Twitter (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate your having a public link to my content. Use your own discretion.

Please note that I will not follow you back. I only follow other health professionals and organizations on Twitter. I do not follow current or former clients on Twitter. Viewing your online activities without your consent 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 up during our sessions.

## Interacting

Do not use SMS, MMS (mobile phone text messaging), or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. These sites are not secure and I do not monitor or respond to text messages. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me 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.

**If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is via email.** Directing email to [CBrotherton.LCMFT@gmail.com](mailto:CBrotherton.LCMFT@gmail.com) is best for quick, administrative issues such as changing/confirming appointment times, as well as canceling sessions. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions. Contacting me by phone usually elicits a slower response. **After your first intake session, over-the-phone conversations lasting at least ten (10) minutes will be prorated using my hourly rate.**

## 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, email, and/or phone) there might be an instance in which using a search engine might become necessary as part of ensuring your welfare.

## Business Review Sites

You may find my 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 use search engines to compile 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. Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. Due to confidentiality, I cannot respond to any review on any of these sites. I do not search out reviews on such sites. 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. Feedback often allows me to become a better clinician. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. I would urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

## **Location-Based Services**

If you use location-based services (LBS) on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. 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 near my office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in," near my office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

## **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 your and my 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.

## **Conclusion**

If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, please bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.