

Social Media & Communications Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it 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.

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

Friending

I do not accept friend requests from current or former clients on any social networking site. I believe that adding clients as friends 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.

Facebook

I keep a Facebook Page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users. You are welcome to view my Facebook business page and read or share articles posted there, but I do not accept past or present clients as followers of this page.

I believe having clients as Facebook friends creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and I feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view my list of followers to know that they will not find client names on that list. Note that 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. You are more than welcome to do this.

Following

I publish a blog on my website and I post psychology news on Twitter. I have no expectation that clients will want to follow my blog or Twitter stream. 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.

My primary concern is your privacy. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow me on Twitter (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), so that you don't have a public link to my content.

You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow me. Note that for ethical reasons I will not follow you back. I mainly follow other health professionals on Twitter and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter.

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 confidentially, during the therapy hour.



The
British
Psychological
Society

Chartered Psychologist



www.babcp.com



www.hcpc-uk.org

Interacting

Please do not use messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. These sites are not secure and I may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me in public 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 as such would need to be documented and archived in your notes.

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email at alesia@onlinepsychologyandcounselling.com 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 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 good 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 very unusual situations and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Business review sites

You may find my psychotherapy practice on sites such as Google Local (now called Google My Business), 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. 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.

You are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that I'm your therapist or how you feel about the treatment I provided to you, in any forum of your choosing. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, please 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.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

During the course of therapy we will need to communicate with each other about appointments. These communications may be by telephone, text or email but should be kept brief and not involve private material. If you are unable to get hold of me directly by telephone, please feel free to leave an answer phone message, text or email me and I will endeavour to respond within 24 hours. Therapy sessions are usually conducted via video call, but if requested, may also be conducted via telephone or email. This will have been fully discussed and agreed when we started working together if it is the case.

Email:

Across all the therapy packages I offer, I provide a weekly email check in to assist you in staying focused on your therapy goals, and provide help if you are having difficulty with your home-based practice that week. I use an encrypted, secure platform to do this (Hushmail) and will spend up to 15 minutes per week helping you in this way. I will not be able to engage in lengthy email exchanges, and therefore please restrict any other email contact to practical matters such as arranging or modifying appointments. 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 email I receive from you and any responses that I send to you will be stored by me and kept in your treatment record.

Text messages:

I use a free secure encrypted messaging service called Signal, available for Android and Apple devices. It is linked to your mobile phone number but requires you to open up the app in order to use it, much like WhatsApp. If you download this to your mobile phone, laptop or desktop from the App Store we will be able to protect the confidentiality and security of our text message communications. Please note that if you choose to contact me by regular text message, I cannot guarantee the security and privacy of your communication as these are not encrypted.

Telephone calls:

You can also make free secure telephone calls to me via Signal. Please note that if you choose to use a standard telephone service, I cannot guarantee the security and privacy of your communication as these are not encrypted. When we started therapy you will have told me whether you are happy for me to leave answer phone messages. Please let me know if this changes.

Video calls:

Our usual method of communication for therapy sessions is by pre-arranged video call sessions. My preferred videoconference application is an encrypted platform called Zoom. If we experience technical glitches using Zoom, we can switch to the videoconferencing facility of Signal which is also encrypted. I use a unique private meeting link for our sessions. You can either access the online Zoom meeting room via a link I will send in an email, or directly form the Zoom app on your desktop or mobile.

Acknowledgements: this policy has been adapted from one designed by Clinton Power + Associates, Australia