

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

This document outlines my policy related to the use of Social Media and communication. Please read it to understand how I conduct myself on the Internet as a mental health professional/mental health practice and how you can expect me to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet and other forms of communication. If you have any questions about anything within this document, I encourage you to bring them up with me 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 post the new policy in an area that you can review.

**Please read the paragraphs below and initial on the lines provided, indicating you understand and agree to the content of each section.** *If coming to Intimate Connections Counseling for couples counseling, a signature from each party indicating understanding and agreement is required including the reading and initialing of each section.*

**INTERACTING:** If you need to contact me 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.

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 will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

\_\_\_\_\_ *initial(s)*

**EMAIL/TEXTING:** As stated above, preferred method of communication is by phone call. I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email or text me content related to your therapy sessions, as emailing/texting 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 of the Internet service provider. It is important to me to keep thorough passwords and codes on my email accounts, tablet, computer and business phone; however, there still remains a risk to your confidentiality should you choose to attempt communicating with me in this fashion.

*If I receive an email or message from you that contains content related to your treatment and is unrelated to administrative concerns, such as scheduling, please know that I will likely suggest that we discuss the content during our next therapy session. You should also know that any email or text message I receive from you and any responses that I send to you will be printed out and kept in your treatment record.*

I do my best to check emails and messages at least once per day Monday – Friday. It's important to me to respond within 24-hours; however, occasionally I am unable to respond in a timely manner due to being away from the office. Please be advised that I will let you know when I will be unavailable or out of the office.

\_\_\_\_\_ *initial(s)*

**IN PERSON:** If we happen to see each other in public, it is my policy to continue with what I am doing in order to do everything I can to protect your confidentiality. I will not approach or acknowledge you, at all. If you choose to come up to me and interact in any way, you need to know that your confidentiality could be compromised at that time. It is your right as a current or past client to choose whether or not you would like to acknowledge me in public and know I would never feel insulted or disappointed, in any way, should you choose to not.

\_\_\_\_\_ *initial(s)*

**FRIENDING:** I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site on my personal accounts (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I 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 with me where we can talk more about it.

\_\_\_\_\_ *initial(s)*

**FOLLOWING:** I publish a professional blog on my website and I post psychology and private practice-related information and news on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow any of these social media feeds. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on any social media site 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 various sites (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list, which would eliminate your having a public link to my content. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow me.

I do not follow current or former clients on social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, or blogs. My reasoning is that I 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 me, please bring them into our sessions where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

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*initial(s)*

**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, 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 I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you during a therapeutic session.

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*initial(s)*

**GOOGLE READER:** I do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and I do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with me that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, I encourage you to bring these items of interest into your sessions.

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*initial(s)*

**BUSINESS REVIEW SITES:** You may find my private 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 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.

I legally and ethically cannot solicit testimonials from current clients or other people 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, 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 together, there is a good possibility that I may never see it. I hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions to me directly in the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide it is not a good fit. None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with your therapist wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that I cannot tell people that you are a client and my Ethics Code prohibits me from requesting testimonials. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, I hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. If you feel I have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with me, you can always contact the state licensure board ([utah.dopl.gov](http://utah.dopl.gov)), which oversees licensing, and they will review the services you have received.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*initial(s)*

**LOCATION-BASED SERVICES:** If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. I do not place my practice as a "check-in" location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, 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 my office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in" at my office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*initial(s)*

**EMERGENCIES:** In an emergency you may try to reach me. However, as a sole practitioner, I do not offer 24-hour crisis intervention or afterhours/weekend availability. In case of an emergency, you agree to take necessary steps to remain safe, including calling 911 or going to the nearest emergency room, as needed. Additionally, if you live in Utah or Salt Lake County, you also have 24-hour access to crisis lines, such as in Utah County you may call Wasatch Mental Health at 801.373.7393 or in Salt Lake County you may call the University Neuropsychiatric Institute at 801.587.3000.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*initial(s)*

**By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the preceding information.**

**Client #1:** I have read and fully understand and agree to the above.

**Client #2:** I have read and fully understand and agree to the above.

**Responsible party:** *(if applicable)* I have read and fully understand and agree to the above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print client #1 name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print client #2 name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print responsible party name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client #1 signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client #2 signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Responsible party signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date