

All Seasons Counseling Mark Travis, MA, M.DIV, LMFT
345 Knechtel Way NE Suite 111, Bainbridge Island WA 98110
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Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to use of social media and electronic communication with the goal of safeguarding your privacy. 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 via social media and/or electronic communication, such as email and text messaging. (If you are the parent of a client, this policy is designed to protect your child's privacy, as well as your family's privacy.)

If you have any questions about anything within this document, I encourage you to discuss them 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 notify you in writing of any policy changes and provide you a copy of the updated policy.

“Friending”

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking sites (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 discuss with me when we meet.

Interacting via email and cell phones

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by calling me at 206-472-0535. Please be advised that this number is a cell phone, and I cannot guarantee the security of calls on cell phones.

I use “Hushmail” email delivery system that allows me to send encrypted messages. You will need to create a password to open any encrypted messages I send you.

You may also contact me via direct email at mark@allseasonscounseling.biz for quick, administrative issues such as scheduling or changing appointment times. I prefer using email only to arrange or modify 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 emails I receive from you and any responses that I send to you become a part of your legal record. Also note that I do not use client's names in email correspondences.

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Text Messaging

As text messaging is a non-secure form of communication, I only use texts for quick, administrative issues such as scheduling or changing appointment times. As with emails, I never use your name in any text messaging as a precaution to safe guard your privacy.

By signing this document, you acknowledge that you accept the security risk to your protected health information if you choose to email me. You also accept the security risk to your protected health information by me emailing you regarding administrative issues such as scheduling or confirming appointment times.

If you wish to email me private information, please do so using a secure, encrypted email provider.

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 most likely will not see them. 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 medical chart.

Search Engines

I do not 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 this activity in your medical record and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Review Sites

You may find my 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 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. 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." I am not a psychologist, and I do adhere to this ethical standard.

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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 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. I 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 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, 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 at regular check-ins at my office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from my office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

Online or Distance Therapy

I do provide online therapy sessions through the HIPPA secure platform of “Simple Practice”. If you wish to use your phone for these sessions, you will need to download the “Telehealth by Simple Practice” app and follow the set up instructions. If using your computer, simply click on the link I will email you on the day of our session. You will need to fill out and send in the Telehealth Consent form found on my website before we engage in Telehealth sessions.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review my Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy. 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.