

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY<sup>1</sup>**

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, I may at times 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 or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (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 when we meet and we can talk more about it.

### **FANNING**

I have had a Facebook Page for my professional practice and decided to close it. I do not trust the ethics of Facebook and am also concerned for the confidentiality of my patients.

### **FOLLOWING**

I may publish a blog on my website or on Twitter. I have no expectation that you as a client 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), 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.

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<sup>1</sup> (I am indebted to Dr. Kolmes for authoring this language. I wish to acknowledge her work:

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Note that I will not follow you back. I only follow other health professionals on Twitter and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. 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 my 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 you wish to share with me things from your online life, 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, not even Signal) or 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 might 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 by phone. The second best way** for quick, administrative issues (such as changing appointment times) is **email to [Christo@DrChristoFranklin.com](mailto:Christo@DrChristoFranklin.com)**. 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 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), I might opt in such an instance to use a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) as a means of ensuring your welfare. These situations are rare, and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document them and discuss them with you when we next meet.

#### BUSINESS REVIEW SITES

You may find my psychology practice on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places that 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. Indeed, the American Psychological

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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 to protect your 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.

None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with me wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that I cannot tell people that you are my client and my Ethics Code prohibits me from requesting testimonials. However, 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, 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.

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 Board of Psychology, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

Board of Psychology  
1422 Howe Avenue, Suite 22  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
1-866-503-3221  
bopmail@dca.ca.gov

#### 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

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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. 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.

#### 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, even though I use a special email account that is encrypted. 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, and stored—illegally—by the federal government. Although no one is likely to be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read.

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 medical record that I maintain.

#### CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to review my 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 my attention so that we can discuss them.