



Social Media & Technology Policy for Psychotherapists at Potentia Family Therapy, Inc.

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Social Media and E-Mail Policy

This document outlines Potentia's policies related to the use of Social Media. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, updates to this policy will be made accordingly.

FRIENDING

Potentia's Licensed and Intern Psychotherapists do not accept friend requests from current or recent former clients on any social networking site. Adding clients as friends on these sites can compromise client confidentiality and client's respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship.

FANNING/LIKING

A Facebook Page for Potentia Family Therapy, Inc. has been created to allow people to check out blog posts, events, and topics of concern to Potentia. We do not accept clients as Fans of this page because we believe having clients as Facebook Fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view my list of Fans/Likes to know that they will not find client names on that list. In addition, the professional ethics code for psychotherapists prohibits soliciting testimonials from clients. The term "Fan/Like" comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of Potentia. Note: Current or recent former clients should be able to subscribe to the page via RSS without becoming a Fan which creates a visible, public link to my Facebook Page or they can check the page whenever they wish without "liking" the page.

FOLLOWING

A blog is published on the Potentia website. There is no expectation that clients will want to follow the Potentia blog or one of the Potentia clinician's Twitter or Pinterest. However, if clients use an easily recognizable name on Twitter or Pinterest and we happen to notice that you've followed one of us there, this will be discussed accordingly with current or recently terminated clients. Our primary concern is protecting client privacy. For those clients who wish to follow a Potentia clinician on Twitter or Pinterest, there are more private ways to follow us, such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list, which would eliminate having a public link to our content. Clients are



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welcome to use their own discretion in choosing whether to follow a Potentia clinician. Potentia psychotherapists will not follow clients back. We mainly follow other health professionals, health media, health advocates, related industries and colleagues on Twitter/Pinterest and do not follow current or former clients on blogs, Twitter or Pinterest. We 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 treatment or to satisfy our personal curiosity. In addition, viewing client's online activities without consent and without explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on the therapeutic relationship. If it would be meaningful, current clients can bring items from their online life to discuss in session.

INTERACTING

Clients are not to use messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact a Potentia clinician. These sites are not secure and we may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with us in public online if you have an already established client/therapist relationship with a Potentia clinician. Engaging with us in 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 clients need to contact their psychotherapist between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone or direct email. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

USE OF SEARCH ENGINES

It is NOT a regular part of our practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions *may* be made during times of crisis. If we have a reason to suspect that a client is in danger and we have not been able to connect with a client via our usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there *might* be an instance in which using a search engine becomes necessary as part of ensuring client safety. These are unusual situations and if we ever resort to such means, it



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will be fully documented discussed the next time you meet with your psychotherapist.

GOOGLE +

We do not follow current or former clients on Google+ and do not use Google+ to share articles. If there are things clients want to share with their psychotherapist, we encourage our clients to bring these items of interest into their sessions or e-mail their psychotherapist directly.

BUSINESS REVIEW SITES

Potentia may be listed 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 a client should find a Potentia listing or a listing for a Potentia psychotherapist on any of these sites, please know that this listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from current or former clients. The BBS code of ethics states that it is unethical for psychotherapists to solicit testimonials. Of course, current and former clients have a right to express themselves on any site they wish. But due to confidentiality ethics and laws, we cannot respond to reviews (positive or negative) on any of these sites. For those who use these sites to communicate indirectly about their work at Potentia, there is a good possibility that we may never see it. Our hope is that current clients will bring their feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy. None of this is meant to keep clients from sharing that they are in therapy at Potentia wherever and with whomever they like. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people who our clients are and our Ethics Code prohibits us from requesting testimonials. Clients are of course free to tell anyone that they work with a psychotherapist at Potentia. For those who do choose to write something on a business review site, our hope is that individuals will be mindful, for their own sake, they may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. Creating a pseudonym that is not linked to regular email address or friend networks may help protect privacy.

If clients feel their psychotherapist has done something harmful or unethical and do not feel comfortable discussing it directly with their psychotherapist, individuals can contact the Board of Behavioral Services, www.bbs.ca.gov, which oversees licensing for our license.



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EMAIL+TEXTING

E-mail is not completely secure or confidential. For those who choose to communicate with us 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. E-mails we receive from clients and former clients along with any responses that are related to treatment and diagnosis may be printed out kept in respective treatment records. We do have a newsletter that goes out regularly and often send out other information re: upcoming events, groups, etc that may be of interest to our current and former clients in addition to the community at-large. Clients will be given a chance to opt-in to receive these e-mails. Anyone on this e-mail list can always opt out of receiving this information. Current and former client e-mail information is always kept secure and not shared with any third parties. Potentia psychotherapists make it a policy to not communicate with their clients via text for security, record keeping and clinical boundary reasons. We understand it is the preferred method of connecting for many but we ask that clients use email or our secure voicemail system to connect with their psychotherapist.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review our Social Media 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 the attention of your psychotherapist so that they can be discussed in session.