

Hope Counseling Solutions Private Practice Social Media Policy

This document outlines Hope Counseling Solutions policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as a mental health professional and how you can expect us to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet. If you have any questions about anything within this document, we encourage you to bring them up when we meet. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. Such updates will be made available to you on our website.

FRIENDING

We do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). We 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

We may keep a Facebook Page for professional practice to allow people to share blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users. You are welcome to view our Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there, but we do not accept clients as Fans of this Page. We believe having clients as Facebook Fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and we feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view our list of Fans 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

We may publish a blog on our website or elsewhere online. We may use other social media sites to share information related to our professional field and practice. We have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow our blog or postings. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on such an account and we happen to notice that you've followed us there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship. Our primary concern is your privacy. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow me online (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate your having a public link to our content. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow us. Note that we will not follow you back. Our reasoning is that 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 your treatment or to satisfy our 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 us, please bring them into our sessions where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy appointment.

TEXTING and ONLINE MESSAGING

Please do not use texting or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact us. 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 we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging with us 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 you need to contact us between sessions, the best way to do so is through the secure client area on our website.

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 you are in danger and you have not been in touch with us 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 / check-ins) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if we ever resort to such means, we will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet. Such searches would be used only as a last resort after exhausting other known options, including your emergency contact person.

BUSINESS REVIEW SITES

You may find our 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 our listing on any of these sites, please know that our listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as our client. Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, we cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. We urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with us about your feelings about our work, there is a good possibility that we may never see it. If we are working together, we 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 us wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people that you are our client and my Ethics Code prohibits me from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that we provide your therapy or how you feel about the treatment we provided to you, in any forum of your choosing. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, we hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We 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 we have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with us, you can always contact the US Department of Health and Human Services 200 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201.

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. We do not place our 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 our office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from our office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

EMAIL

Please be aware that if you email content related to your therapy sessions, **email is not completely secure or confidential**. If you choose to communicate with us by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and our 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 received from you and any responses that we send to you become a part of your legal record. You can email us securely by logging into your account on the patient login link to the electronic medical record system on our webpage.

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, do bring them to our attention so that we can discuss them.

In summary, if you wish to contact us, please call the office at (317) 961-8366 or email us at heather@hopecounselingsolutions.com. Any other attempts to contact us online or via texting will receive no response. Thank you.

*****This form's original author is Keely Kolmes, Psy.D. It has been modified to address specific matters related to Hope Counseling Solutions.****

