

# Private Practice Social Media Policy

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This document outlines my office policies related to the 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 on 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 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 sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). I believe the adding clients as friends or contacts on the sides can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. And they 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 about it more

I keep a Facebook page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts and practice of dates with other Facebook users. You are welcome to view my Facebook page and read or share articles posted there, but I do not accept clients as fans of the stage. I believe having clients as Facebook fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and I feel it is best to be explicit to all who view my list of fans to know they will not find client names on that list . In addition, the American Psychological Association graphics code prohibits my soliciting testimonials from clients. I feel that the term fan comes to close to an implied request for public endorsement of my practice.

Note that you will 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 this.

## FOLLOWING

I publish a blog and I post psychology news 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 happened to notice that you've followed me there, we made briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

My primary concern is your privacy. If you sure 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 having a public link to my content. You are welcome to use your discretion in choosing whether to follow me.

Note that I will not follow you back. I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or

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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 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.

## INTERACTING

Please do not use 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.

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email at [steveborgmanlpc@gmail.com](mailto:steveborgmanlpc@gmail.com) is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions

## BUSINESS 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.

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 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. But 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.

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<sup>1</sup> With permission from the author, Keely Kolmes, Psy.D., I have adopted this social media policy she developed and has generously given me her permission for its use. <http://www.drkkolmes.com>

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## **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. 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.

## **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.

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