

Family Based Therapy Associates' Social Media Policy and Practices

This document outlines Family Based Therapy Associates' (FBTA) office policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how we conduct ourselves on the Internet as mental health professionals 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 to FBTA administration or with your therapist. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. If we do so, we will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

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 to FBTA administration or to your therapist so we can talk more about it.

We keep a professional Facebook Page to allow people to share blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users. All of the information shared on this page is available on our website.

You are welcome to view our professional Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there, but we do not accept clients as Fans [Friends?] of this Page. We believe having clients as Facebook Fans [Friends?] 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 [Friends?] to know that they will not find client names on that list. In addition, the American Psychological Association's Ethics Code prohibits the soliciting of testimonials from clients. We view that the term "Fan" [Friend?] comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of our clinic.

Note that you should be able to subscribe to the page via RSS without becoming a Fan [Friend?] and without creating a visible, public link to our Page. You are more than welcome to do this.

Following

We publish a blog on our website and we post psychology news on Twitter. We have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow our blog or Twitter stream. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on Twitter and we happen to notice that you've followed us there, your therapist may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship with you.

Social Media Policy

Our primary concern is your privacy. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow us 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 us.

Note that we will not follow you back. we only follow other health professionals on Twitter and we do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. Our rationale 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 your therapist, please bring them into a therapy session where you and your therapist can view and explore them together.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact your therapist or administrative staff. 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 FBT therapist. 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 by phone. Messaging your therapist via our secure HIPAA compliant ClientPortal is the second-best way to address quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. You may contact your therapist or clinic administrative staff to help you set up a ClientPortal account. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

Use of Search Engines

It is NOT a regular part of our clinic 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) 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 the next time you meet with your therapist.

Google Reader

We do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and we do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with your therapist that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, we encourage you to bring these items of interest into your psychotherapy sessions.

Business Review Sites

You may find our clinic 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 clinic 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.

Our respective professional associations' ethics codes prohibit us from soliciting client testimonials so as not to take advantage of client's potential vulnerability to undue influence.

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 you are working together with your therapist, 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 that you and your therapist are not a good fit. None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with a FBTA therapist wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people that you are our client and our professional Ethics Codes prohibits us from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you are seeing a FBTA therapist 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 your therapist, you can always contact the professional licensing board of your therapist which oversees licensing, and they will review the services which have been provided to you.

Psychologists - Minnesota Board of Psychology 2829 University Avenue SE, Suite 320, Minneapolis, MN 55414 612.617.2230, psychology.board@state.mn.us

Social Workers - Minnesota Board of Social Work 2829 University Avenue SE, Suite 340, Minneapolis, MN 55414 888.234.1320 Social.work@state.mn.us

Marriage and Family Therapists - Minnesota Board of Marriage and Family Therapy 2829 University Avenue SE, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55414 612.617.2220 mft.board@state.mn.us

Professional Counselors and Alcohol and Drug Counselors - Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy 2829 University Avenue SE, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55414 612.548.2177 bbht.board@state.mn.us

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 my 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 clinic office. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from our clinic office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

Email

We DO NOT prefer using email to arrange or modify appointments. If we deem it appropriate to email you for any reason, we will send the email via a secure encrypted format. NOTE that we are using our professional email to send telehealth meeting invitations during the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency Response, which are not in encrypted format. We chose to do this so as to make the process as user friendly on your end so as to mitigate any barriers to continuity of care as we can responsibly do.

Please do not email us content related to your therapy sessions, as 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 we receive from you and any responses that we send to you become a part of your legal record.

Please DO NOT email us if you are experiencing an emotional/psychiatric crisis or for any other reason that would require emergency services. This is because we cannot guarantee that the email you send seeking emergency help will be seen soon enough to respond properly to keep you or others safe.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review FBTA’s 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.