

Updated Policy Re. Social Media, Texting, Email and other related issues:

The following business practices, though not all-inclusive, may constitute a potential risk to your confidentiality, in spite of my sincere attempts to protect your privacy. This document outlines my office policies related to use of Social Media and other issues related to protecting your confidentiality. Please read it carefully 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 online or by phone.

If you have any questions about anything within this document, I strongly encourage you to bring them up when we meet in person and discuss it with me. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when I need to update my policy. If I do so, I will notify you in writing of any changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

Friending:

I do not accept friend requests from current or former counseling clients on any social networking site. I believe that adding clients as friends on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship.

I keep a Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/lifeguidetexas> for my professional practice to allow people to share my posts and practice updates. You are welcome to view my Business Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there.

Following:

I post psychology and health related news and twits on my Twitter. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my Twitter stream. Please 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. 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.

Life Guide Counseling Services

Tel: 214-697-5557

www.lifeguidetexas.com

E-mail: sheaalexanderlpc@gmail.com

2809 Regal Rd., Ste. 110

Plano, Texas 75075

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 SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me about therapeutic issues. 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, text or direct email, which is used only for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. 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) 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 I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Business Review Sites:

You may find my counseling 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. I do not solicit testimonials from current or former counseling clients.

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Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site and in any way 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.

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 **CAN NOT** tell people that you are my client, unless you request it in writing via a signed "Release of Information". But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that I'm your therapist or how you feel about the treatment I provide 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 revealing personal 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 use location-based services on your mobile phone, please 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 enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client at my office on a weekly basis. 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, share articles and links. Please do not use regular email for issues related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these emails, 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 therapy record. If you choose to communicate your therapeutic issues with me by email, please use the secure encrypted email, a free service provided by Gmail (if you are not already signed up for Gmail, you can sign up and access Gmail, click on the lock next to compose, it will provide you with directions to password protect and encrypt your email. You can then call me to make me aware of the password for the email.

Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to review my Social Media and other policies. If you have any questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, please bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.

By signing below you understand and acknowledge the possible risk and your consent for such practices to be utilized including the following:

- Use of an electronic and/or a paper calendar
- Use of a webcam for meetings
- Use of a cell phone for communication with you and other professionals
- Use of a laptop computer
- Use of unencrypted email
- Use of computerized billing
- Use of shared office space with the independent practice of other mental health professionals, which may result in a chance meeting, or noticing delivered mail.

Client's Name: _____

SIGNATURE OF CLIENT OR PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

NOTE: If you feel I have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with me, you can always contact **Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors at 1100 W. 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756, Phone: 512-834-6658, Hotline: 1-800-942-5540, Fax: 512-834-6789.**