

ASJ Family Counseling Center Inc.

Social Media Policy

This document outlines our 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 when we meet. 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, offer a printed copy of the updated policy, or you can view it at www.ASJ Counseling Center.com/forms.

Some of the relevant ethical codes to consider in our social media policy considered here state:

- Marriage and family therapists do not disclose client confidences except by written authorization or waiver, or where mandated or permitted by law.
- Verbal authorization will not be sufficient except in emergency situations, unless prohibited by law.
- When providing couple, family or group treatment, the therapist does not disclose information outside the treatment context without a written authorization from each individual competent to execute a waiver.
- In the context of couple, family or group treatment, the therapist may not reveal any individual's confidences to others in the client unit without the prior written permission of that individual.
- Marriage and Family Therapists are aware of their influential positions with respect to clients, and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid conditions and multiple relationships with clients that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. Such relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with a client or the client's immediate family. When the risk of impairment or exploitation exists due to conditions or multiple roles, therapists take appropriate precautions.

SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:

Messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn is not secure. It could compromise your confidentiality to use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. 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. We may not read these messages in a

timely fashion. If you need to contact us between sessions, the best way to do so is to phone or text **Dr. Audrey S. Johnson at (818) 384-3115 or by direct e-mail at gcm@sbcglobal.net**. The latter is the second best method for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the e-mail section above for more information regarding e-mail interactions.

FRIENDING MAY EXPOSE OUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP AND UNDERMINE YOUR PRIVACY:

We do not accept friends 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/LIKING MY PROFESSIONAL PAGE MAY IMPLY ENDORSEMENT:

We keep a Facebook Page for our professional practice to allow people to share our 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 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. In addition, the American Psychological Association's Ethics Code prohibits our soliciting testimonials from clients. We feel that the term "Fan" comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of our practice.

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 our Page. You are more than welcome to do this.

TWEETING AND FOLLOWING PROMOTE OUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:

We publish a blog on our website and 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, 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 us on Twitter (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. We only follow other health professionals on Twitter and do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. Our reasoning is that we believe casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion with 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 hour.

EMAILS, CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS AND FAXES ARE NOT PRIVATE:

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) 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.

Although they add convenience and expedite communication, it is very important to be aware that computers and e-mail and cell phone communication can be accessed relatively easily by unauthorized people and hence can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. E-mails, in particular, are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Although we are exploring various encryption software programs to protect your privacy, our emails and data on our computers may not be encrypted, it is always a possibility that faxes can be sent erroneously to the wrong address, and computers, including laptops, may be stolen. Our computers are equipped with a firewall, virus protection and passwords, and we also password-protect and back up all confidential information from our computers (stored off-site) on a regular basis.

If you need to contact us between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email at gccm@sbcglobal.net is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. If you communicate confidential or private information via SMS (text) or e-

mail, we will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted, and we will honor your desire to communicate on such matters via e-mail. Please do not use e-mail or faxes for emergencies. Due to computer or network problems, e-mails may not be deliverable, and we may not check our e-mails or faxes daily. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

WE DO NOT USE SEARCH ENGINES TO LEARN ABOUT YOU:

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.

GOOGLE READER

We do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with us 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 our sessions.

BUSINESS REVIEW SITES ARE INEFFECTIVE PLACES TO VOICE YOUR COMPLAINTS:

You may find our 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 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.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for psychologists to solicit testimonials: "Psychologists do not solicit testimonials from current therapy clients/patients or other persons who because of their particular circumstances are vulnerable 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 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 our Ethics Code prohibits us from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that we are your 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 us, you can always contact the Board of Behavioral Sciences, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services we have provided.

Board of Behavioral Sciences
1625 North Market Blvd., 2nd Floor, Suite S-200
Sacramento, CA 95834
(916) 574-7830
email BBSWebmaster@dca.ca.gov
or file a complaint at https://app.dca.ca.gov/bbs/complaint_ssl.asp

LOCATION BASED SERVICES REVEAL YOUR LOCATION:

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. 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 ONLY TO ARRANGE OR MODIFY APPOINTMENTS:

We prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. 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.

If you communicate confidential or private information via SMS (text) or e-mail, we will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted, and we will honor your desire to communicate on such matters via e-mail. Please do not use e-mail or faxes for emergencies. Due to computer or network problems, e-mails may not be deliverable, and we may not check our e-mails or faxes daily.

If you e-mail us content related to your therapy sessions, please note that e-mail is not completely secure or confidential. If e-mail communication outside of therapy requires more than 5 minutes to read and respond to, we may charge for our professional services rendered in 15 minute increments. Please indicate if you intend to pay these charges, or we will save it for review during your appointment time. Please do not send forwarded messages regardless of how inspirational they may seem to our professional e-mail address. We use this for work related issues and do not want to risk viruses spread by forwarded e-mails.

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.