

J A S O N E V A N M I H A L K O , P S Y . D .
L i c e n s e d P s y c h o l o g i s t

Notice of Dr. Mihalko's Social Media Policies and Practices

THIS NOTICE OUTLINES MY OFFICE POLICIES RELATED TO USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA. PLEASE READ IT TO UNDERSTAND HOW I CONDUCT MYSELF ON THE INTERNET AS A PSYCHOLOGIST 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 AND 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.

I. **Friending, following, and interacting**

I maintain a variety of different social media sites on the Internet. Some are public in nature and others are private and personal.

I do not allow clients (current or past) to friend or follow any of personal accounts at any time. These personal accounts are generally protected through various privacy protections and cannot be found by casual internet searches. I believe that adding current or past clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It also can create a situation in which the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship become blurred or other unexpected consequences arise. If you have questions about this policy please bring them up at any point in our work together so we can talk more about it.

I do have a public Twitter account, two public blogs, and a public Facebook page. Current and past clients may or may not follow me in these public media. After careful thought, I have decided that because of the volume of followers on these sites, there is a reasonable expectation that your privacy will be maintained. I encourage you to think carefully about the implications of following me. We can discuss these implications together at any point during our work together that it seems important.

Some important things to be aware of:

- If I can recognize that you are a current or former client from your screen name I will not follow you back.
- I will make no public recognition in any public forum that I know you within the context of a therapeutic relationship.
- It is my policy to attempt to respond to every public comment on my blogs, Facebook account, and Twitter stream. I strongly encourage you to not interact with me directly online in these sites. If you do, know that my response will not be therapeutic in nature and will not identify our current or past therapeutic relationship.
- Be aware that any interactions we have can possibly require being documented and archived in your legal medical record.
- I will delete any public comments that I feel may compromise your privacy. While I will discuss this with you in therapy, any comments that concern me will be deleted based on my own professional judgment and if needed, without notice.
- If I feel that a clients use of social media with me presents a problem to treatment, a potential risk to privacy, or problematic based on my professional judgment, I will discuss those concerns with you. If the situation requires, I

will block your participation in my sites without notice and discuss my concerns at our next scheduled appointment.

- I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my blogs, Facebook page, or Twitter stream.
- Please do not use messaging on Social Network sites to contact me. These sites are not secure and I may not read these messages in a timely fashion.

II. Uses of search engines

It is not a regular part of my practice to search for information about clients on Google, Facebook, or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. For example, 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 discuss it with you when we next meet.

III. Business review sites

You might 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.

My ethical code states 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. However, 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.

IV. 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. If you check in at location aware social networking sites it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins 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.

V. Email

Please be aware that email is not completely secure or confidential. With that said, I also realize that a great number of people use email as their primary way of communication. 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.

VI. 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.

This policy was adapted from one made publically available by Keely Kolmes, Psy.D.