

Social Media and Technology Policy for Psychotherapists

at Shelley C. Wilson, LMFT, LPCC Counseling

Social Media and E-Mail Policy

This document outlines the policies of Shelley C. Wilson, LMFT, LPCC Counseling (“SCW Counseling”) related to the use of social media. As new technology develops and the internet use changes, updates to this policy will be made accordingly.

Friending

SCW Counseling’s licensed and intern psychotherapists do not accept friend requests from current or recent former clients on any social networking sites. Adding clients as friends on these sites can compromise client confidentiality and privacy. It also may blur the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship.

Fanning/Liking

A Facebook page for SCW Counseling may be created to allow people to check out blog posts, events and topics of concern to SCW Counseling. We do not accept clients as fans of this page because we believe having clients as Facebook fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view the list of fans/likes to know that that they will not find client names on that list. In addition, the ethics code for psychotherapist prohibits soliciting testimonials from clients. The term “fan/like” comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement.

Following

A blog may be published on the therapist’s website. There is no expectation that clients will want to follow the blog or the therapist’s Twitter or Pinterest. However, if a client uses an easily recognizable name on Twitter or Pinterest and we happen to notice that you’ve followed one of us, this will be discussed accordingly in session. Our primary concern is protecting client privacy. Clients are welcome to use their own discretion in choosing whether to follow a clinician. Our therapists will not follow clients back. We believe casual viewing of clients’ online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion with regard to whether it is being done as a part of treatment or to satisfy our personal curiosity. Viewing client’s online activities without consent and without explicit arrangement toward a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on the therapeutic relationship. Clients are free to bring items from their online life to discuss in session.

Interacting

Clients are not to use messaging on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn to contact a SCW Counseling clinician. 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 SCW Counseling therapist. Engaging with us in this way could compromise your confidentiality. It also may create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will be need to be documented and archived in your file. If clients need to contact their therapist between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone, text or direct email.

Business Review Sites

Shelley C. Wilson or the other therapists may be listed 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 comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If a client should find a listing for a SCW Counseling clinician on any of these sites, please know that this listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating or endorsement from current or former clients. As mentioned previously, it is unethical for clients to solicit testimonials. Of course, current and former clients have a right to express themselves on any site they wish. Due to confidentiality ethics and laws, we cannot respond to reviews. For clients who use these sites to communicate indirectly about their therapeutic work, there is a good possibility that we may never see it. Our hope is that clients will bring their feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy. None of this is meant to keep clients from sharing that they are in therapy with one of our clinicians wherever and with whomever they like. Clients are free to tell anyone that they work with us. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people who our clients are. For those who do choose to write something on a business review site, our hope is that individuals will be mindful, for their own sake, that they may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. Creating a pseudonym that is not linked to a regular email address or friend networks may help protect privacy.

If clients feel their psychotherapist has done something harmful or unethical and do not feel comfortable discussing it directly with their therapist, individuals can contact the Board of Behavioral Services which oversees licensing for our license.

Email and Texting

Email and texting are not completely secure or confidential. For those who 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. Emails and texts we receive from clients along with any responses that are related to treatment may be printed out and kept in the client's treatment records. We may have a newsletter and may send out other information that may be of interest to our clients in addition to the community. Anyone on the email list can always opt out of receiving the information. Current and former client email and text information is kept secure and not shared with third parties.

If you have any questions or concerns about these policies or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, please bring them to the attention of your therapist so that they can be discussed in session.