

Social Media Policy

This document outlines Westlake Psychiatry & Psychology's policies related to the 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 and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

Friending

We do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former patients/clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). We believe that adding patients/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.

Liking/Following

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

You are welcome to view our Facebook or Instagram Profiles and read or share articles posted there, but we do not accept Likes/Followers of this Page from patients/clients. We believe having patients/clients Like or Follow our Profiles creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view our list of Likes/Followers 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 patients/clients. We feel that Liking for Following comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of our practice.

Note that you should be able to subscribe to our Facebook page via RSS without "Liking" and without creating a visible, public link to our Page. You are more than welcome to do this.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn to contact us. These sites are not secure, and we may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Page postings, @replies, Direct Messages, or other means of engaging with us in public online if we have an already established patient/provider 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.

If you need to contact us between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone.

Use of Search Engines

It is NOT a regular part of our 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 when we next meet.

Business Review Sites

You may find our 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 my listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as our patient/client.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for providers 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 have worked with us wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people that you are our patient/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 provider 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 Psychology or the Texas Medical Board and they will review the services we have provided.

Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists
333 Guadalupe Street
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 305-7700

Texas Medical Board
333 Guadalupe Street
Austin, TX 78701
(800) 201-9353

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 our practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Facebook, Foursquare, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a patient/client due to regular check-ins at our office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in," from our office or if you have a passive LBS app ena-

bled on your phone.

Email

We prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email us content related to your treatment or 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.

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.