

April Forella, MS, LMHC

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My Private Practice Social Media Policy

This document outlines my office policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it 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 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.

FRIENDING

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I 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

I maintain a Facebook Business Page for my professional private practice to allow people to share my blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users. All of the information shared on this page is available on my website.

You are welcome to view my Facebook Business Page and read or share articles posted there, but I do not accept counseling clients as Fans of this Page. I believe counseling clients as Facebook Fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality and I feel it is best to be explicit to all who may view my list of Fans to know that they will not find client names on that list.

FOLLOWING

I publish a blog on my website and I post mental health-related news on social media websites. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my blog or other social media streams. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on social media and I happen to notice that you've followed me there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

My primary concern is your privacy. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow me (such as using an RSS feed), which would eliminate you having a public link to my content. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow me.

Note that I will not follow you back. I do not knowingly follow current or former counseling clients on blogs or other media tools. My reasoning is that I believe casual viewing of counseling 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. 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. 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. Direct email at april@aprilforella.com is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment.

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.

GOOGLE READER

I do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and I do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with me that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, I encourage you to bring these items of interest into our sessions.

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 counseling client.

The American Counseling Association's Ethics Does states under Principle C.3.b. that it is unethical for counselors to solicit testimonials from current or past clients: "Counselors who use testimonials do not solicit them from current clients nor former clients nor any other persons who may be vulnerable to undue influence."

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

If you feel I have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with me, you can always contact the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

LOCATION-BASED SERVICES

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to 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 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.

EMAIL

I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email me content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential.

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. My emails to and from you are NOT encrypted.

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.

COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS PAGE

OUR AGREEMENT CONCERNING USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

I, the client / guardian, have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand my rights / responsibilities detailed in this document. My signature below indicates that I have discussed those points I did not understand and have had my questions, if any, fully answered.

It is also my understanding that any of the points mentioned above can be discussed and may be open to change. If at any time during the treatment I have questions about any of the subjects discussed in this document, I can talk with this therapist about them and she will do her best to answer them.

I agree to abide by and act in accordance with the points covered in this document. I understand that by signing this agreement, I am acknowledging the circumstances under which April Forella, MS, LMHC is legally obligated to waive confidentiality.

I hereby agree to cooperate fully and to the best of my ability with this Social Media Policy, as shown by my signature below.

Signature of client

Date

Printed name of client

Signature of therapist

Date