

ELECTRONIC MEDIA & ACCEPTED COMMUNICATIONS

This document outlines my policies related to the use of social media, internet searches, business websites, and our electronic communications. Please read it to understand how I conduct myself online as a psychologist, and how you can expect me to respond [or not] to various interactions that may occur between us online. Once you review this, please indicate either your declination or approval for communications by email or text messaging so we communicate in a way that is in line with your privacy preferences.

If you have any questions about this, please bring them up when we next meet. As new technology develops there may be times when I need to update this policy. If I do so, I will notify you in writing of any 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) despite the many offers we may both get from them. Adding patients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It also blurs the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. My boundaries are loose, but I do know where they are, and this is one I strictly adhere to.

FOLLOWING

I somehow have a twitter account, but have yet to send a single tweet. Should this change I have no expectation that you will want to follow my Twitter stream. However, if this situation does change and you do follow me and use an easily recognizable name on Twitter and I happen to notice that you've followed me there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

Under no circumstance will I follow you on any social media site. I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter, etc. I believe casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour creates confusion in regard to its purpose. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could 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, in person. It is best to work with what you present to me directly in our work together, and the more you can freely share the more helpful I can be to you.

ONLINE RESEARCH AND USE OF SEARCH ENGINES

I prefer to know you, not your online self, and form my own opinions based on what I see and hear when we meet in person or talk on the phone. Therefore, I will NOT search for you on Google or Bing or any other search engine or database. 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) I will call your emergency contact first before calling the police to check on your safety. That has been my practice and it has worked well. That said, once having

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called the police I might then be moved to search online (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) 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. In some 40 years of practice I have called the police multiple times but have never needed to search for online information.

BUSINESS REVIEW SITES

You may find my psychology practice on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places which list health care providers. 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 there by my choice – far from it. I have zero interest in being on those websites, and it is most certainly NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you.

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, 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.

It is your right to say or post whatever you wish. That said, it is my fervent professional goal to spend my entire career without ever being mentioned on any website other than my own, or the few professional websites [UCSF, APA, ACBS] that I am affiliated with.

I encourage you to bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy session. This is an important part of therapy. Speaking to me directly can help you grow. 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 were/are my client and my Ethics Code (and my values) prohibits me from requesting testimonials. But you are welcome to tell anyone you wish that I’m your therapist or how you feel about or work together, in any forum of your choosing. If you do write something on a business review site, bear in mind that in so doing you are probably sharing personally revealing information in a public forum.

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cont.

INTERACTING WITH ME

Short version

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone, or — if you give your explicit permission — by email and/or cell phone text messages.

Long version

Do not use messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. These sites are not secure, I will not read these messages in a timely fashion, and if I do see them I will not respond. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me in public online. Engaging with me this way compromises your privacy. It also creates the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your medical record that need to be documented/archived in your chart, subject to litigation, etc.

EMAIL

Though we all use it and depend upon it, email is not 100% secure and confidential. Please consider before emailing me with any content related to your therapy sessions. If you choose to communicate with me by email, remember that all emails are retained in the logs of my (if not your) Internet Service Providers (ISP), forever. Google never forgets! While it is unlikely that someone will look at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by some random system administrator(s) of the ISP. Finally, bear in mind that any emails I receive from you and any responses that I send become part of your medical chart/legal record.

CELL PHONE TEXT MESSAGES

SMS (mobile phone text messaging) present the same challenges as emails described above. They become part of your legal record, can in theory be read by others, and for all I know are kept on some server in perpetuity.

PRIVACY ISSUES and YOUR COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES:

Fact: The most secure communications take place in person, either in my office, or by voice on the telephone.

Despite the risks to privacy described above, most patients have accepted some use of email and/or cell phone text messaging to communicate with me. In practice, I often use email or text messages to arrange or modify appointments. If you are willing to communicate by email or text messaging, I may on occasion send you links to websites and videos, or documents relevant to your treatment, or at times send a question or thought that comes to me between sessions that might help you to hear prior to our next meeting.

David A. Donovan, PhD

C L I N I C A L P S Y C H O L O G Y

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cont.

If you do not wish to communicate by email or text messaging, you can simply call me, as these calls are far more secure. If I can pick up I will, otherwise leave a message and I will return the call as soon as I am able. For the record, I am unaware of the confidentiality and legal status of messages that you may leave. For all I know recorded messages are kept in perpetuity somewhere, so if you are not comfortable with that, either speak with me in person or by letter.

Whenever you call me:

Do **NOT** call my landline, 415-731-3264; I only check that each evening.

DO call (or text) my cell phone, 415-786-4785; I check this throughout the day.

You have several options for how we communicate outside of our sessions, and what may be communicated.

Option I:

If you only wish to communicate by telephone, please sign and date below:

Full name and date signed

Option II:

If, despite the non-zero privacy risks described above, you still wish to send and receive emails and/or text messages from me, indicate the types of information you will accept, how you will accept them, then sign and date below:

Please indicate the type of content you are willing to accept by text message and/or email by checking the box provided:

David A. Donovan, PhD

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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cont.

1. Brief communications re: scheduling, making and changing appointments:

I consent to this by Email: [] *Text:* []

2. Links to websites, documents, videos, or documents that may be of helpful relevance.

I consent to this by Email: [] *Text:* []

3. Brief communications with questions, post-session thoughts, checking in, etc.

I consent to this by Email: [] *Text:* []

4. Invoices. Note: This will not be routine. Physical invoices are typically provided to you in person, which is best for your privacy and most efficient for my office. Invoices contain confidential diagnostic/procedural codes required for billing and reimbursement from your insurance company. If you initial here, it means on rare occasion, in response to your specific verbal request and permission, I may send a scanned copy of your invoice to you.

I consent to this by Email: []

I accept any risk to my privacy that use of email and text messages may bring, and authorize David A. Donovan, PhD to communicate with me with the content selected using the methods indicated. *[Please sign and date below]:*

Full name and date signed