

My Private Practice Social Media Policy

These next few paragraphs outline my telebehavioral practice 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 policy, I encourage you to bring them up when we speak. 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, and so on). 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 speak and we can talk more about it.

Fanning

I keep a Facebook Page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users. All the information shared on this page will be available on my website. If, and when, I create my Facebook Page and share articles posted there, I plan not to accept clients as Fans of this Page. I believe having 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. In addition, the American Psychological Association's Ethics Code prohibits my soliciting testimonials from clients. I feel that the term "Fan" comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of my practice. When my Facebook Page is up, please note that you should be able to subscribe to the page via RSS without becoming a Fan and without creating a visible, public link to my Page. You are more than welcome to do this.

Following

I may publish a blog on my website. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my blog. However, if 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.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. You may use WhatsApp, as it provides encrypted messaging. Most 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 or confidential e-

mail. Direct email at flavio@flavioepstein.com. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

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 (e.g.: 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 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. 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.

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 Board of Psychology, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

Board of Psychology 1625 North Market Boulevard, Suite N-215 Sacramento, CA 95834 1-866-503-3221 - E-mail: bopmail@dca.ca.gov.

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.

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.