

Communication and Technology Policy

This policy addresses the various ways that I may communicate with clients over the course of therapy, and for what purposes. The intent is to clarify each of our roles and responsibilities, as well as provide guidance when making choices about how to communicate. My professional training is in mental health and counseling, not technology, so the information provided is my best understanding. If you have concerns, I encourage you to share them with me and we can research answers to your questions together.

Voice calls

My office phone is a cell phone and as with all cell phones our voice calls may be routed through either cell towers or the internet, depending on my location and availability of services. Telephone conversations are generally considered confidential and private, but there is always the possibility that they may be intercepted. I do not consider this a significant risk. I do not record any telephone conversations and I ask that you do not record any conversations without my knowledge.

Text and voicemail messages

I use a Google Voice number as my office phone, and I have transcription of voicemail messages turned off. This number does receive text messages, which are forwarded to my email for my convenience. I routinely delete all voicemail, text message, and call records to protect your privacy. Please limit text communication to brief messages, for requests such as scheduling or needing a call. If a longer message is necessary please use a different method of communication.

Email

Email is a convenient way to communicate and I am happy to receive email from you. Most of the time I will respond to email very briefly, and by the next business day. Common uses for email include scheduling, providing information that is useful for an upcoming session, or communicating other specific information. Some clients find it useful to send me things they have written, such as journal entries. This can be helpful and will be discussed on a case-by-case basis as needed. I do not do therapy by email and so my responses will generally be limited to a sentence or two letting you know I received and understand your message.

Standard medical practice is to maintain copies of written communication from clients in their medical records. When appropriate, I do this by generating PDF copies of email and text exchanges and uploading them into your file where they become a part of your confidential record. Original email and text messages are then deleted and destroyed to protect your privacy. Email and text messages that are administrative in nature, such as scheduling only, are not necessarily saved into your client record, at my discretion.

Social media

I do not participate in any social media as a professional. My website is a source of information only and not a place to interact with clients. It is my understanding that some social media platforms access contacts from people's phones and then make suggestions about people you might know. I do not knowingly allow any apps or other platforms access to the contacts in my phone, and client phone numbers stored as contacts are identified with acronyms rather than names to protect your confidentiality. If you feel that your confidentiality may have been breached through a social media platform, please bring it to my attention so that we can try to resolve that issue and prevent it if possible.

I will never seek information about you via social media or the internet, and I ask that you extend me the same courtesy.

Teletherapy

Telehealth, Telemedicine, Teletherapy, and other similar words all generally mean the same thing: services that are provided in any fashion other than face-to-face in an office. Typically, we think of Teletherapy as a therapy session that is provided either by audio and/or video communication platform, such as a phone call or video connection. My preference is to limit this type of session to times when in-person sessions are not possible for some reason, and a session is still necessary or desirable. If Teletherapy is going to be the main type of service delivery, a separate telehealth consent will be required. For intermittent or as-needed teletherapy, such as crisis calls or other between-session support, all the same policies apply as for in-person therapy.

Some things to consider when engaging in Teletherapy on an as-needed, incidental basis are:

- Technology sometimes fails. We may get cut off, or the communication may be “glitchy,” which may lead to some misunderstandings and/or impair service delivery. If the connection is abruptly cut off, I will try to reconnect with you, and we will attempt to complete the session or service if that is possible and reasonable.
- My ability to assess and treat mental health concerns over phone or video connection is limited to what each of us can see and hear, which may not be as much as could be communicated were you in my office. This may mean that the quality of services I provide is diminished.
- My ability to assure your privacy is limited, and it is your responsibility to make sure you can maintain your confidentiality in your location. I will maintain confidentiality in my location to HIPAA standards, as always.
- Any of your data use fees or other expenses associated with teletherapy are your responsibility.