

Communication with clients



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1 Introduction

This document has been written for the benefit of my counselling clients, to give clarity about how I will communicate with them outside of our counselling appointments. This is undertaken with an acknowledgement of the complex world of digital and social media and outlines how I intend to manage the professional and ethical boundaries of working as a counsellor within the digital and online world we live in.

2 Contact outside of sessions

Our contact between appointments will be limited to practical arrangements, such as arranging or confirming appointments. You can contact me using the phone number or email address at the top of this document.

When we start working together I shall ask you for details of your phone number and email address, and ask for you to confirm which communication method you would prefer for me to use. I will use your stated communication method should I need to make contact with you between our appointments.

When I am not able to answer the phone, you will be able to leave a voicemail message. I check my emails and voicemail during office hours in the working week. I endeavour to respond to messages within the day they are received, except for periods when I am away. At these times, you will receive an automated reply, or message.

As a private practitioner, I am unable to offer an emergency service, by phone or email. In the event of an emergency please contact the emergency services. If you are feeling suicidal or seeking immediate support, please contact the Samaritans on 116 123 or Lancashire Care Wellbeing and Mental Health Helpline on 0800 915 4640.

3 Email

I am not currently using an encrypted email system, so any emails we exchange may be vulnerable to viruses or human error. All emails exchanged between us will be retained in the logs of your and my Internet Service Providers. I take appropriate measures to limit access to my email account to myself.

Given that the security and confidentiality of emails cannot be completely assured, I would suggest you give consideration to which email address you choose to use to communicate with me, and what you include in emails to me.

4 Phone and text messages

I can receive voicemail and text messages to my phone number. I take appropriate measures to limit access to my phone and text messages to myself.

Given the security and confidentiality of voicemail and text messages cannot be completely assured, I would suggest you give consideration to what you chose to include in voicemail and text messages.

5 Social Media

I maintain a private Facebook account for personal reasons, and a Linked-In account for professional use. I believe that adding clients as 'friends' or 'connections' can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy, as well as blurring the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for me to be Facebook 'friends' or add 'connections' on Linked-In with former or current clients.

6 Internet searches

It is likely you will have undertaken an internet search before contacting me. I acknowledge that this is now a generally accepted aspect of daily life. However, I wish to avoid encountering information about you that does not come directly from you. Therefore, I do not undertake an internet search about my clients before I meet them, or whilst I am working with them. It is of course your right to conduct an internet search about me. If in your search some questions are raised, I would request that you raise them to me at the first opportunity.

7 Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of this, or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, do bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.