

# Ann Stoneson, LPC-S

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## My Private Practice Social Media Policy

This document outlines my office policies concerning 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.

Please read this document in its entirety, then sign and date the signature page. If you consent to email contact for scheduling appointments and other administrative concerns, please also sign and date in the space provided under the “EMAIL” subheading.

### 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.

### LIKING

I keep a Facebook Page for my professional practice to allow people to share my blog posts and practice updates with other Facebook users. You are welcome to view my Facebook Page and read or share articles posted there, but I do ask that you do not “Like” this Page. I believe having clients “Like” my Facebook Page 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 people who have “Liked” my Page to know that they will not find client names on that list. In addition, the American Counseling Association’s Ethics Code prohibits my soliciting testimonials from clients. I feel that the “Like” designation comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of my practice.

### FOLLOWING

I publish a blog on my website and I post psychology news on Twitter. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my blog or Twitter stream. However, if you 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.

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

Please note that I will not follow you back. I only follow other health professionals on Twitter and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. My reasoning is that I believe casual viewing of clients’ online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it is being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy my personal curiosity. In

\*This document was adapted, with permission, from Dr. Keely Kolmes’s social media policy form. For more information, please see <http://www.drkkolmes.com>

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 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 **ann [at] labyrinthhealing [dot com]** is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. 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 (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 document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

## **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 Counseling Association's Ethics Code states under provision C.3.b that it is unethical for licensed professional counselors to solicit testimonials: "Counselors who use testimonials do not solicit them for 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 together, 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.

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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 Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors, which oversees my licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors  
Complaints Management and Investigative Section  
P.O. Box 141369  
Austin, Texas 78714-1369  
1-800-942-5540

## **LOCATION-BASED SERVICES**

If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you should 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, 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**

HIPAA regulations and my professional Code of Ethics both require that I keep your Protected Health Information private and secure. While email is a very convenient way to handle administrative issues like scheduling or receipt requests, it is not 100% secure. Some of the potential risks you might encounter if we email include:

- Misdelivery of email to an incorrectly typed address
- Email accounts can be hacked, giving a 3<sup>rd</sup> party access to email content and addresses
- Email providers (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail) keep a copy of each email on their servers, where it might be accessible to employees, etc.

For these reasons, I will not use email to discuss clinical issues (e.g., the important things we discuss during session). If *you* are comfortable doing so, I am happy to use email to handle small administrative matters like scheduling and billing. If you are *not* comfortable with these risks, we can handle administrative issues via phone calls. If you choose to subscribe to my practice e-newsletter, that will be emailed to you until you choose to unsubscribe. 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.

Please indicate your preference about email correspondence below and sign.

I DO \_\_\_\_\_ DO NOT \_\_\_\_\_ consent to use email for administrative matters.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

### **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.

**LABYRINTH HEALING**  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF NOTICE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of Labyrinth Healing's Notice of Social Media Policy to read. I understand that a personal copy of this Notice is available to me upon request.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Date