

Little Red Telescope

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Social Media Policy

This document outlines Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW, DBA Little Red Telescope, policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how Little Red Telescope and Courtland McPherson conduct interactions on the Internet as a mental health provider and how you can expect a response to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet.

If questions arise about this document, you are encouraged to discuss them directly with us. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when a need to update this policy emerges. If that happens, notification in writing of any policy change will be provided to you.

Friending

Little Red Telescope or Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW does not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google +, etc.). We 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 the therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

Following

The primary concern is your privacy. We currently do not have a Twitter, Instagram, etc. account nor do we plan to at this time. However should that change please note that we will not follow you nor accept requests from current or former patients. The reasoning is that we believe casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it's being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy our personal curiosity. In 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, please bring them into your appointments where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy session.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact Little Red Telescope. These sites are not secure and these messages will not be read. Do not use wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with us online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging with us in 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 us between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone at 510-473-6032 or direct email at Courtland@LittleRedTelescope.com. This should only be used for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: (510) 473-6032

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Use of Search Engines

It is NOT a regular part of our practice to search for clients on Google, Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If there is 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 this occurs it will fully be documented and discussed with you when we next meet.

Google Reader

We do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and we do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share and feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, it is encouraged that you to bring these items of interest into sessions.

Business Review Sites

You may find Little Red Telescope 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 our listings on any of these sites, please know that the listing is **NOT** a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as my client.

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics states under Principle 4.07 that it is unethical for social workers to solicit testimonials:

4.07 Solicitations

“(a) Social workers should not engage in uninvited solicitation of potential clients who, because of their circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence, manipulation, or coercion.

(b) Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client’s prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current clients or from other people who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence. “

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However, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. Due to confidentiality, we cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. We urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with us about your feelings about our work, there is a good possibility that we may never see it.

If we are working together, we 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 we cannot tell people that you are our client and our Ethics Code prohibits us from requesting testimonials. You are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you are in therapy or how you feel about the treatment provided to you, in any forum of your choosing.

If you do choose to write something on a business review site, we hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We 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 we have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with us, you can always contact the Board of Behavioral Sciences, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services provided.

Board of Behavioral Sciences

1625 North Market Blvd., Suite S200, Sacramento, CA 95834

Telephone: (916) 574-7830 TTY: (800) 326-2297

www.bbs.ca.gov

Location-Based Services

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. Our practice is not placed as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. but we do use google mapping on our website and as business registration, which may create a GPS trail. 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 our office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from our office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

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Email

We prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with us by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and our 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 we receive from you and any responses that I send to you become a part of your legal record.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review our 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 our attention so that we can discuss them.

References

Kolmes, K. (2010). Social Media Policy. San Francisco, CA, USA.

Workers, N. A. (2008). NASW Code of Ethics (Guide to the Everyday Professional Conduct of Social Workers). Washington, DC: NASW.

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