

Risks to Your Confidentiality with Email and Texting Disclosure

Disclosure Regarding Third-Party Access to Communications

Please know that if we use electronic communications methods, such as email, texting, online video, and possibly others, there are various technicians and administrators who maintain these services and may have access to the content of those communications. In some cases, these accesses are more likely than in others.

Of special consideration are work email addresses. If you use your work email to communicate with me, your employer may access our email communications. There may be similar issues involved in school email or other email accounts associated with organizations that you are affiliated with. Additionally, people with access to your computer, mobile phone, and/or other devices may also have access to your email and/or text messages. Please take a moment to contemplate the risks involved if any of these persons were to access the messages we exchange with each other.

Regarding Email

1. Technical experts often describe email as being like a postcard, in that it can be viewed by all hands it passes through. Are you familiar with the risks of emails being viewed by various engineers, administrators, and bad actors as it passes through the Internet?
2. Think about where you read and write emails, and what devices you do that on. Think about who can see you reading and writing emails in these places, and who can access the devices you use to read and write emails. Would there be any negative consequences to any of those people reading or glancing at emails exchanged with your therapist? Are there certain kinds of email contents that you would feel safe letting these people see and other kinds of contents you would not feel safe letting them see? Let your therapist know the answers to these questions if you wish to use email with him or her.
3. Think about which email address(es) you might use with your therapist. Who has access to each address? If you use a work email address, know that your employer may legally view all the emails you send receive with that address. Be aware that engineers and administrators at your email service provider may be able to view your emails.
4. How quickly do you normally receive replies from others via email? Do you expect replies more quickly than your therapist's stated response time? Can you see any negative consequences occurring if your therapist does not or cannot reply to an email as quickly as others in your life typically do?

Regarding Texting

1. Text messages are often sent using the Internet, even though they are usually a part of one's phone service. Are you familiar with the risks of texts being viewed by various engineers, administrators, and bad actors as it passes through the Internet?
2. Are you aware that text messages wait on phone company computers until they are retrieved, and may remain there indefinitely? Can you imagine any negative consequences if engineers, administrators, or law enforcement personnel viewed these stored texts from or to your therapist?
3. Think about where you read and write text messages, and what devices you do that on. Think about who can see you reading and writing texts in these places, and who can access the devices you use to read and write texts. Would there be any negative consequences to any of those people reading or glancing at texts exchanged with your therapist? Are there certain kinds of text contents that you would feel safe letting these people see and other kinds of contents you would not feel safe letting them see? Let your therapist know the answers to these questions if you wish to use texting with him or her.
4. How quickly do you normally receive replies from others via text? Do you expect replies more quickly than your therapist's stated response time? Can you see any negative consequences occurring if your therapist does not or cannot reply to a text as quickly as others in your life typically do?

There are some interesting effects depending on what devices you and clients use. For example, if you and your therapist both use iPhones, then your text messages may not be typical SMS text messages. Instead, your messages may be iMessage chat messages. On iPhones, iMessage chats are colored blue, while classic SMS text messages are colored green.

SMS (normal phone text messages) are not designed for emergency contact. SMS text messages occasionally get delayed and on rare occasions may be lost. So, please refrain from using SMS text as your sole method of communicating with emergencies or timely matters.

Note: *If you have concerns about either texting or email confidentiality, please mention your concerns to your therapist. Feel free to ask your therapist what kind of phone they use when texting with clients as well as the type of security on their email account.*