



NEW ROOTS

c o u n s e l i n g

COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA PRIVACY POLICIES

Introduction

Healthy client/counselor boundaries and confidential communication are key to ethical therapeutic practice and positive client outcomes. This policy governs the use of Social media and electronic communication and the many tools that have become a part of modern life. It is crucial for clients and parents to understand best practices in protecting their privacy when choosing to use social media or electronic communication and online tools in conjunction with their care.

Our Social Media Policy

For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, public directories, review sites, and social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, FaceBook, and YouTube.

Comments on Social Networking Sites

New Roots Counseling and Luke Morrissey will only respond to comments on social networking sites, articles, professional blogs, and or podcast interviews if there is not a pre-existing counseling relationship, in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the American Counseling Association (ACA).

Section A.5.e. of the (ACA) code of ethics states that Professionally Licensed "Counselors are prohibited from engaging in a personal virtual relationship with individuals with whom they have a current counseling relationship (e.g., through social and other media)."

Clients and family members are welcome to view or read interesting articles and blogs that are published on New Roots Counseling's business Facebook Page, Instagram, or similar social media platforms and to use these pages to stay informed about upcoming events or information.

It is not, however, recommended to comment on articles, blogs posts, guest articles, podcasts, or public directories of New Roots Counseling or Luke Morrissey if you are a current or former client or family member as your comments could identify you as a client and compromise your confidentiality online. Therefore, in order to maintain client confidentiality, safety, and ethical boundaries, New Roots Counseling and Luke Morrissey reserve the right to block, reject, or deny comments that could blur the lines of the therapeutic relationship or create a dual relationship.



Your Privacy and Rights on Social Media

Please be aware that if you like, follow, or share our business social media pages (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, or Pinterest), you will show up on a list of friends or followers, and your friends and followers may see what you like, follow or share. This can compromise your privacy and your confidentiality. However, with this knowledge of the above-mentioned risks to your privacy, you do have the right to “like” or follow New Roots Counseling business pages from our website or your Facebook or Instagram pages and/or to share anything that you wish to share online. We recommend you use the same discretion online that you would normally use when sharing information about therapy sessions in personal conversations with friends, family, or the general public. New Roots Counseling and Luke Morrissey will not friend, like, or follow you in return on social media platforms as our obligation is to follow ethical practices and protect your privacy. New Roots Counseling also provides clients with encrypted and private ways to connect and communicate with our practice which will eliminate you having a public link or connection to our social media content.

Public Friend & Contact Requests

Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the importance of minimizing the risks of establishing a personal virtual relationships, New Roots Counseling and Luke Morrissey, will not follow, like, or accept friend or contact requests of/from current or former clients and families on any social networking site (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc). Honoring such requests may blur the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship and create a personal virtual relationship. Current and former clients and their families are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as clients of New Roots Counseling or Luke Morrissey, LPC.

Consumer Review Sites

New Roots Counseling and its counselors do not solicit or request testimonials or consumer reviews. You may find our practice on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Google, 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 listing on any of these sites, please know that our listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you.

Leaving a Review or Rating

Leaving a review or rating may compromise your confidentiality. Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But 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 you have praise, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the services you have received, please speak with us directly.



Testimonials

Confidentiality means that we cannot tell people that you are a patient at New Roots Counseling and our Ethics Code prohibits us from requesting testimonials. However, you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you are a patient here or how you feel about the treatment provided to you and your family.

Email & Text Messaging

New Roots Counseling cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through unencrypted email and text messages. Email providers like Gmail are not always secure or confidential. Your emails are retained in the logs of your Internet Service Provider. 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 ISP.

Encrypted and Unencrypted Communication

You can leave messages for your counselor using the secure forms on our website and our encrypted email portal which will better ensure your confidentiality. If you prefer to communicate via unencrypted email or text messages for issues regarding scheduling, cancellations, or to ask a general question you will be asked to sign a form authorizing the use of unencrypted communications. While your counselor will try to return messages in a timely manner, we cannot guarantee an immediate response. **We request that you do not use unencrypted email or text messages to discuss therapeutic content and/or request assistance for emergencies.** Therapeutic disclosures 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 medical chart.

After Business Hours Communication and Emergencies

You are welcome to contact our office during regular business hours for follow up care and nonemergency assistance. You can also send non urgent messages to your counselor using our secure email portal. However we can not insure someone will be available to respond to urgent requests after normal business hours. If you ever need emergency assistance please call 911.

Cell Phone Location Services

Many people use location-based services on their smartphone or tablets to enable friends and acquaintances to follow their itinerary via their mobile phones. Please be aware that use of location-based service on your smartphone may inform friends and acquaintances that you are visiting a therapist, thus compromising your privacy and confidentiality. If you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a counseling patient 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 GPS app enabled on your phone, tablet, or laptop



Use of Search Engines

New Roots Counseling and staff will not conduct electronic searches on Google, Facebook or any other search engine about clients unless there is a genuine emergency where information obtained electronically might protect a client from harm. Our reasoning is that casual viewing of a patient's online content outside of the therapy can create confusion in regards to whether it's being done as part of your treatment or to satisfy personal curiosity. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without our explicit arrangement toward a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on our counseling relationship. If there are things online that you wish to share with us, please bring them into our sessions where we can view and explore them together in a therapeutic context.

If we have reasons to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with us through approved means (coming to appointments, phone calls) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if we ever resort to such means, we will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

Conclusion

If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding any potential interactions on the Internet or social media, do bring them to our attention so that we can discuss them. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when we need to update this policy. If we do so, we will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of our updated policy.



I acknowledge that I have received and read the communication and social media privacy policies and practices. I further acknowledge the above mentioned risks, benefits, and policies concerning electronic communications and social media use as a client of New Roots Counseling. My signature below confirms that I understand and accept the risks associated with my communication choices and social media practices.

_____	____/____/____	_____	____/____/____
<i>Client Name (Please Print)</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Parent/Guardian Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	____/____/____	_____	____/____/____
<i>Client Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Parent/Guardian Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>