

## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Electronic means of communication can be an efficient way to make contact between appointments. However, Sarah Schlote wishes to outline the risks and benefits of these methods and to outline her policy for their use, so you can understand our parameters and consent for her to communicate with you via these methods, if you choose.

### Risks of Email and Texting

- Email and texts can be circulated, forwarded, stored electronically and on paper, and broadcast to unintended recipients.
- Backup copies may exist even after they are sent or the recipient has deleted their copy.
- Employers and online services have a right to inspect email sent through their systems.
- Emails can be used to introduce viruses into computer systems.
- Emails and texts may not be secure, and therefore it is possible that the confidentiality of such communications may be breached by a third party. Email/text can be intercepted, altered, forwarded, or used without authorization or detection.
- Written communications can be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted, and could inadvertently lead to distress that your therapist will not be able to address effectively outside of session.

### Policy Guidelines

Our office cannot guarantee, but will use reasonable means, to maintain security and confidentiality of email information. Sarah and her staff will not be liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not caused by intentional misconduct. We kindly ask that you acknowledge and consent to the following conditions if you wish to use email to communicate:

- Email or text messages sent to Sarah or reception may be documented as part of your clinical record. Sarah and her staff will not forward client identifiable emails or texts to others outside the practice without your prior written consent, except as authorized or required by law.
- Sarah and her staff do not use texting for communicating directly with clients. For non-urgent matters or questions, please call and leave a confidential voicemail. Sarah will not reply to text messages sent to her phone.
- We use an online booking system called OWL Practice, which has the option of sending you reminder emails and text messages for your upcoming sessions. Do not reply to texts or emails sent from OWL Practice as they will not be received.
- Email (or texting) is not appropriate for urgent matters or emergencies. We cannot guarantee that any particular message will be read and responded to within any particular period of time. The same is true for voicemail. In the case of an emergency, please call 911, your local crisis line or go to the nearest hospital.

- Brief emails will only be used for the purposes of sending you invoices, receipts, links, resources or homework/aftercare instructions, or to cancel or reschedule appointments. Please book an appointment to discuss clinical matters and keep emails concise.
- We will check email on a regular basis, but there may be exceptions to this. For instance, Sarah and her staff will not check email when out of the office, on vacation or in training.
- There can be server problems or connection issues (such as when someone attempts to send a message from an area with limited or no internet connection or a weak cell phone signal). As a result, sometimes voicemail or email messages are not delivered. If you do not receive a reply to your message within 48 hours, please try again.
- We will never distribute your email address to a third party.
- Please use caution when using your employer’s computer or your work email address to correspond with Sarah and reception.
- Please inform us if your contact information changes.
- Ordinarily there will be no charge for use of periodic, brief emails. Should a message require a lengthy response, a regular correspondence rate may apply. Rather than paying this fee, you may wish to discuss your questions during your next session.
- Should email and voicemail begin to be used in a more frequent, intensive way beyond the parameters set out in this policy, Sarah will explore your needs further with you to determine alternative resources or solutions that may be helpful.

**Social Media Use**

We use social media through professional accounts on Facebook and LinkedIn to connect with colleagues and to share resources and updates that may be of interest to you in your growth. We do not add clients as contacts on social media as a general rule, but you do have the option of following or subscribing to our updates or pages.

**Consent and Agreement**

I understand that Sarah and her staff accept no liability for any breach in privacy or confidentiality caused by myself or any third party, or for any interference with or damage to my computer system, software or data occurring in connection with my use of insecure / unencrypted email to communicate with Sarah or her staff.

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand this consent form. I understand the risks associated with the use of email communication and agree to abide by the parameters outlined in this communications policy.

Client name: \_\_\_\_\_

Client signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_