

Digital Policy 1.0

Keeping Boundaries:

The nature of an online presence can blur interpersonal boundaries, so it is important to be as clear as possible about how boundaries may be challenged when, as a general rule, I like to keep clinical work in the consultation room as much as possible. However, the nature of the digital world can sometimes stretch these boundaries, so I offer the best clarity I can below.

Email:

You may email me to arrange sessions and sometimes you may choose to update me on your progress via email. Please be advised that although I take precautions to keep your emailed information safe (please see GDPR policy) I feel it is best to communicate face to face. I cannot guarantee the absolute safety of any emails we send each other which may be vulnerable to virus or human error. For this reason, it is best to be thoughtful about what you include in emails to me, and which email address you choose to use with me. If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of Internet Service Providers. Furthermore, they can be vulnerable to viruses and unintended forwarding or replication. If you are concerned about the confidentiality of your emails, you may wish to contact me by telephone instead. I check emails only during office hours and not weekends. I endeavour to respond to all emails within 24 hours when I am not away. Emails should never be used in the event of an emergency, in which case you should contact emergency services.

Text messages:

You may feel free to contact me by text message to alert me if you are running late for a session or for similar reasons. However, because of the lack of context of text messages, it is generally not the best method for communicating with me about more important matters, so please do phone and leave me a message. As a private practitioner I am unable to offer an emergency service, even by phone.

Should you experience an emergency please contact either the emergency services or if you are feeling suicidal or overwhelmed, ring The Samaritans: 116123. If you feel that this may be an issue, please discuss it with me.

Telephone and Skype:

There may be times when we have a session by telephone or video conferencing. Any such sessions will be discussed in advance. I make every effort to choose video conferencing software that is recognised to be adequately encrypted – so this may involve you downloading certain software or logging into a web-based application. When engaging via video conferencing, we both agree not to use any recording devices for remote sessions. It is also crucial that you're sure your environment from which you

are conferencing with me is safe and secure. We will discuss these details should we decide to work in this manner.

Linked-In:

I have decided that it would not be appropriate to add current or former clients as “connections” on Linked-In.

Google:

It is likely that you will have Googled me before you contacted me. While I acknowledge that Googling others is now a generally accepted aspect of daily life, I wish to avoid encountering information about you that does not come directly from you. In general practice I do not Google my clients before I meet them. It is of course your right to Google me. However, if in your search some questions are raised, I would request that you raise them with me at the first opportunity. There are a number of public people named “Jane Renton” so please use some discrimination and judgement if you see anything you think might be related to me on the Internet.

Twitter and Facebook

Social Media: I maintain a public Twitter profile as a way of promoting psychological ideas through the media. I frequently send across relevant links and sometimes engage in public conversations on these topics. Despite my online presence, I would prefer that our relationship remain as much as possible between us in the consultation room, therefore I will not knowingly follow any current or former clients on Twitter. Whether you follow me or not is of course to your discretion, though I would suggest for reasons of confidentiality and preserving our therapeutic relationship that it's advisable not to.

Instagram

I do have an Instagram account for my counselling business and I often post meditations and other information there. Whilst you are welcome to view and join the meditations I will not follow you on Instagram, and if your user name becomes visible (ie during the course of a live meditation) I will never interact with you directly on Instagram or give any hint of how I might know you. I will not engage with direct messaging or discussion with you on Instagram.

Other social media

If you have any questions regarding other social media please raise with me.

The world is changing fast:

This is the 2.0 version of my digital policy. I put it this way because this world is changing so rapidly, and my own responses to it are in constant development. I will continue to update it as I learn more, and would appreciate

your honesty and input along the way. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please do let me know.

I am grateful to Dr Aaron Balik who provided the initial model for this policy.