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Email, Texting and Phone Policy

Email

HIPAA regulations and my professional Code of Ethics both require that I keep your Protected Health Information (PHI) private and secure. Email can be a convenient way to handle administrative issues like changes in appointment time, but email is not 100% secure.

Some of the potential risks you might encounter if we email include:

- Misdelivery of email to an incorrectly typed address.
- Email accounts can be 'hacked,' giving a third party access to email content and addresses.
- Email providers (ie, Gmail, Comcast, Yahoo) keep a copy of each email on their servers, where it might be accessible to employees, etc.
- **Please note:** *An email originating from your email account is mostly likely not private or secure.*
- **If you do not want to use email, we will handle administrative issues via the telephone if they cannot be handled in-person.**

Use of Encrypted Email

Because of the security risks of using traditional email, I use an encrypted email service (Hushmail.com) to send email. I have a Business Associate Agreement with Hushmail on file.

- If I send you an email that may contain PHI, I use an encrypted email service to protect your information. If you reply directly to the email I send through the encrypted email service, your reply to me will also be encrypted.
- Additionally, you may send me a message through a secure form field via my website or through a secure patient portal.
- Please note that if you have requested that I send or receive records on your behalf, I send and receive records via the encrypted email service I use. Prior to sending records, I verify the recipient's email address with you or the recipient.

Content over email

Please note that any emails I receive from you and any responses that I send to you become a part of your legal record.

Whenever possible, I avoid using email to discuss clinical issues (i.e: the important things we talk about in session), even though we have access to an encrypted email service. Rather, I use email for administrative issues, such as setting up the initial appointment, changes in appointment time, receipts, billing issues, and sending/receiving records.

Please aid in protecting your PHI by not using email to discuss your symptoms or clinical issues. If something cannot wait until our next session, please contact me by phone.

If you would like to me review emails/documents pertinent to your situation, please send them to me via the encrypted email option. I will review these emails and bill you my current rate to read them.

To avoid discussing clinical issues over email, to maintain your privacy in therapy and to maintain clarity about what emails you want me to read and bill you for, I ask that you do not carbon copy (cc) or blind carbon copy (bcc) me on emails between you and other parties (ie: spouse, social workers, lawyers, etc).

Telephone

- While I am the only person who has access my voicemail, please consider minimizing your PHI in voicemails.
- I may leave you a voicemail at phone numbers you have provided me unless you inform me otherwise in writing.
- I will minimize PHI in voicemails.
- Please note that my name and phone number are connected with my psychotherapy private practice.

Texting

I do not text. I do not text about clinical or administrative matters. To aid in protecting your PHI, please do not send text messages. I will not respond to text messages.

You can request an automated secure text message for appointment reminders through a secure patient portal.

Crisis

I do not provide emergency services and may not be able to respond quickly to phone messages or email. If you have a mental health emergency or are in crisis, call 911, visit the nearest emergency room, or call the Santa Clara County Suicide and Crisis Line at (855) 278-4204.

I understand the risks and benefits to the use of email.

I understand and agree to the email, texting and phone policy of Melissa Pirwani, LCSW.

Exceptions noted for voicemails:

If given, consent will expire 2 years after our last appointment.

Client Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date