

# **Thelma Costello, MS, LMHC, PC.**

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## **Online Counseling Practice Social Media Policy**

This disclosure outlines my office policies related to use of Social Media. Please read it to understand how I conduct myself on the Internet as a mental health professional and how you can expect me to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet.

If you have any questions about anything within this document, I encourage you to bring them up when we meet. As new technology develops and the Internet changes, there may be times when I need to update this policy. If I do so, I will notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy.

[Counseling@thelmacostello.com](mailto:Counseling@thelmacostello.com) [www.thelmacostello.com](http://www.thelmacostello.com)

## **National Board for Certified Counselors Code of Ethics Disclosures**

When counseling is initiated, and throughout the counseling process as necessary, counselors inform clients of the purpose, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks and benefits of services to be performed and clearly indicate limitations that may affect the relationship as well as any other pertinent information

Note that you should be able to subscribe to the page via RSS without becoming a Fan and without creating a visible, public link to my Page.

### **FOLLOWING**

I DO NOT publish a blog on my website or post psychology news on Twitter. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on Twitter and I happen to notice that you've followed me there, we may briefly discuss it and its potential impact on our working relationship.

My primary concern is your privacy. If you share this concern, there are more private ways to follow me on Twitter (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate your having a public link to my content. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow me.

Note that I will not follow you back. I only follow other health professionals on Twitter and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs or Twitter. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on our working relationship. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with me, please bring them into our sessions where we can talk and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

## **INTERACTING**

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email at [Counseling@thelmacostello.com](mailto:Counseling@thelmacostello.com) is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

[Counseling@thelmacostello.com](mailto:Counseling@thelmacostello.com)

[www.thelmacostello.com](http://www.thelmacostello.com)

## **BUSINESS REVIEW SITES**

You may find my counseling practice on sites such as Yahoo Local, Bing, Google 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 my listing on any of these sites, please know that my listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as my client.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for psychologists to solicit testimonials: "Psychologists do not solicit testimonials from current therapy clients/patients or other persons who because of their particular circumstances are vulnerable to undue influence."

Due to confidentiality, I cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. I encourage you to take your own privacy seriously and respect confidentiality. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with me about your feelings about our work, there is a good possibility that I may never see it.

If we are working together, I hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy session. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide we are not a good fit. Confidentiality means that I cannot tell people that you are my client and my Ethics Code prohibits me from requesting testimonials.

If you do choose to write something on a business review site, I hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. I urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for privacy and protection.

If you feel I have done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with me, you can always contact the Board of Counseling, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

## LOCATION-BASED SERVICES

If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. I do not place my practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at my office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from my office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

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[www.thelmacostello.com](http://www.thelmacostello.com)

## EMAIL

I prefer using email only to schedule or modify appointments. Please do not email me personal information related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and my Internet service providers. 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 Internet service provider. You should also know that any emails I receive from you and any responses that I send to you become a part of your legal record.

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to review my Social Media Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, do bring them to my attention so that we can discuss them.

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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