

# SHANNON WEST, MS LMFT / SPEAKING PINK

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LF00002571)

## SOCIAL MEDIA PRIVACY POLICY

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

***The purpose of these policies is to protect and preserve the confidentiality of our relationship. In a world becoming increasingly more public through the Internet, it's my desire to help ensure the privacy of our relationship is protected. I care about our relationship and it's the intention of this policy to clarify how I practice that regard via Social Media.***

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 do my best to notify you in writing of any policy changes and make sure you have a copy of the updated policy. I will also keep a downloadable version of this policy notice on my website. Please review it from time to time for relevant social media updates.

### FRIENDING

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our professional relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.

### FANNING

I do not have a Facebook Page for my professional practice. It's been my understanding that having clients as Facebook Fans creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality. Furthermore, I feel the term "Fan" comes too close to an implied request for a public endorsement of my practice and thus compromises The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Code of Ethics, as Principle 1.7 states that it is unethical for therapists to utilize their relationships with clients to further their own interest: "Marriage and family therapists do not use their professional relationships with clients to further their own interests." Thus, it is not appropriate for me to solicit or support "fanning" from clients to enhance or advance my practice.

Please note that I do maintain a personal Facebook Page. Due to compromises of confidentiality and in respect for my own personal connections with family and friends, I will not be using my Facebook account to correspond with clients.

### FOLLOWING

I publish a blog on my website and I post psychology news on Twitter as well as Pinterest. I have no expectation that you as a client will want to follow my blog, Twitter stream, or Pinterest pages. I'll be using Twitter and Pinterest as Internet mediums for providing psychology news and resources as well as posting items of interest unique to me and my practice. It is my intention to provide a place through Social Media where I can be both helpful to the community and create a means of others (including you) becoming more familiar with me and my work. However, if you use an easily recognizable name on such accounts and I happen to notice that you've followed me on these sites, 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 specifically 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. You can also view my recent tweets on my website. This ensures you can still view posts and tweets without needing to follow my Twitter feed should you choose.

Note: I will not follow you back on any sites. I only follow other professionals and I do not follow current or former clients on blogs, Twitter or Pinterest. My reasoning is that I believe casual viewing of clients' online content outside of our time together can create confusion in regard to whether it's being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy my personal curiosity. 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 view and explore them together.

In specific regard to Pinterest, please use caution if/when you might re-pin an item from any of my boards. The act of re-pinning may reveal our relationship in a way you may not prefer or may be asked to explain to others in your Pinterest community. I encourage you to use the original source of my pin when re-pinning to preserve the confidentiality of our relationship.

## **INTERACTING**

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Pinterest, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact me. These sites are not secure and I may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with me in public online if we have an already established professional relationship. Engaging with me this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may 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 chart. Please note that I will not respond to any comment or interaction made in a public and/or social media forum.

If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email at Shannon@speakingpink.com is second best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times or discussing payment details. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

## **USE OF SEARCH ENGINES**

It is NOT a regular part of my practice to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If I have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with me via our usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

## **GOOGLE READER**

I do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and I do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with me that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, I encourage you to bring these items of interest into our sessions.

## **BUSINESS REVIEW SITES**

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

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Code of Ethics states under Principle 1.7 that it is unethical for therapists to utilize their relationships with clients to further their own interest: "Marriage and family therapists do not use their professional relationships with clients to further their own interests." Thus, it is not appropriate for me to solicit or support testimonies from clients to enhance or advance my therapy practice and professional work.

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, I cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. I urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as I take my commitment of confidentiality to you. 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 process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide we are not a good fit. None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy with me wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that I cannot tell people that you are my client and my Ethics Code prohibits me from requesting testimonials. But you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish about our relationship, that I'm your therapist, or how you feel about the services or treatment I provided to you, in any forum of your choosing.

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 your own 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 our state's Department of Health and they will review the services I have provided.

## **LOCATION-BASED SERVICES**

If you use location-based services on your mobile phone, you need 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 Facebook, Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise you are a therapy client. 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 mobile phone.

## **EMAIL**

I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments or discuss financial matters. Please do not email me content related to your 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.

To assist in increasing the protection of confidentiality during email exchanges, my email signature reads as follows:

“Confidentiality Notice: This is a confidential communication. This e-mail message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential, proprietary, and/or privileged information protected by law. If you are not the intended recipient, you may not use, copy, or distribute this e-mail message or its attachments. This transmission belongs to the sender and is legally privileged and bound by Federal Law 42CFR and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). It is intended only for the use of the individual(s) to whom it is addressed. If you are not that intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution or the taking of any action in reliance on the content of this e-mail is strictly prohibited. If you believe you have received this e-mail message in error, please contact the sender by reply e-mail and destroy all copies of the original message. Confidentiality is not waived/lost by error in transmission. Due to the risk of technological security, email messages may not be confidential as intended. If you have sent an e-mail in response to an emergency situation, please call 911.”

Please note: References throughout this document pertaining to legal medical records and the policies of HIPAA are in exclusive reference to therapeutic services and do not pertain in such language to non-therapeutic consultation or coaching services.

## **EMAIL NEWSLETTERS**

I send out a monthly email newsletter to past and present clients, members of the community, and other professionals and/or healthcare providers. This e-newsletter is sent via a service provided by Constant Contact. Though I use their service, I am the sole administrator of this newsletter. No personal or healthcare information is stored or used within this service, nor is there any indication of our confidential relationship given how your email address is stored. Your email address is the only information used in the distribution of this e-newsletter. You have the right to remove yourself from this e-newsletter at anytime.

## **CONCLUSION**

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