



BIRCH TREE
PSYCHOLOGY

BIRCH TREE PSYCHOLOGY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES BIRCH TREE PSYCHOLOGY'S POLICIES RELATED TO USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA. PLEASE READ IT TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE BUSINESS CONDUCTS ITSELF ON THE INTERNET AS A PROVIDER OF MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND HOW YOU AND BIRCH TREE CLINICIANS CAN RESPOND TO VARIOUS INTERACTIONS THAT MAY OCCUR BETWEEN YOU ON THE INTERNET. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT ANYTHING WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO BRING THEM UP WHEN YOU MEET WITH YOUR CLINICIAN.

'Friending'

Birch Tree Psychology does not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook etc). We 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 the therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when you see your clinician.

Birch Tree Psychology does have a website; an Instagram account; and a Facebook Page. All information and updates regarding the practice are available on the website.

Birch Tree Psychology has an Instagram page as well as a Facebook account, which allows us to share interesting information and news, although our primary concern is your privacy. You are welcome to use your own discretion in choosing whether to follow Birch Tree, but please note that we will not follow you back. Birch Tree will only follow other health professionals or companies that may be of use or interest to our clients. Our reasoning is that we believe that casual viewing of clients' online content outside the therapy session can create confusion with regards to whether it's being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy a 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 your working relationship with your therapist. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your clinician then please bring them into your sessions where they can be viewed and explored together, during the therapy hour.

Interacting

Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact the service. These sites are not secure and the messages may not be read in a timely fashion. Please do not use Wall postings,

@replies, or other means of engaging with Birch Tree in public online forums if you have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging in 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. If you need to contact your therapist between sessions, the best way to do so is by phone. Direct email at info@birchtreepsychology.com.au is best for quick, administrative issues such as changing appointment times. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

Use of Search Engines

It is NOT a regular part of the practice at Birch Tree to search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If your clinician has a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with them via the 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 your therapist ever resorts to such means, they will fully document it and discuss it with you when you next meet.

Business Review Sites

You may find this psychology practice or other practices belonging to/affiliated with your therapist on sites such as Google, Yelp, 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 this business listing on any of these sites, please know that this listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as a client of the service. The Australian Psychological Society's Ethics Code states that: "a person must not advertise a regulated health service, or a business that provides a regulated health service, in a way that uses testimonials or purported testimonials about the service or business"; and that "testimonials or endorsements that are solicited in exchange for remuneration or have the potential to exploit clients".

Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, Birch Tree cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. You are encouraged to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with your clinician about your feelings about your work, there is a good possibility that they may never see it. If you are in a therapist/client relationship and are working together, it is hoped that you will bring your feelings and reactions to your work

directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide you are not a good fit with your therapist.

None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that your therapist cannot tell people that you are their client and the professional Ethics Code prohibits them from requesting testimonials. However, you are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish that you have a therapist or how you feel about the treatment that is provided to you, in any forum of your choosing. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, we hope you will keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We 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 that your therapist has done something harmful or unethical and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with them, you can always contact the Board of Psychology, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services that have been 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. Birch Tree do not place the practice as a check-in location on various sites, 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 the Birch Tree Psychology office on a regular basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in,” from the clinic or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

Email

It is preferred that you use email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email your therapist content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with your therapist by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and the practice 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 that are receive from you and any responses that are sent to you become a part of your legal record.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review Birch Tree Psychology’s 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 the attention of your clinician so that they can be discussed.