



ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY (ECP)

The use of various types of electronic communications is increasingly common and many individuals prefer electronic methods of communication over other forms of communication, both in their personal and professional lives. However, many of these common modes of communication put your privacy at risk and the law and standards of the counselling profession require the protection of your privacy. The Katie Dorsten, IMFT electronic communications policy (ECP) has been prepared to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment, and to assure that it is consistent with professional ethics and the law.



This document is intended to clarify our use of electronic communication during your therapy. Please also see the Katie Dorsten, IMFT Social Media Policy. Reviewing these policies (ECP and SMP) will help you understand how our counsellors conduct themselves online as mental health professionals. It will also help you understand how you can expect them to respond to various interactions that may occur online. Providing you with this information helps you understand the benefits and limitations of electronic communication and helps ensure that you can give informed consent to such communication.



As new technology develops there may be a need to update this policy. Clients will be notified in writing of any policy changes, and a copy of the updated electronic communications policy will be provided upon request. The most current version of this policy will be found online. It is important that as we communicate, we also protect the confidentiality that is vital to therapy.

NON-SECURE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION OVERVIEW

Email, text and other forms of electronic messages provide convenient methods of communication. Please be advised that these methods, in their typical form, are not confidential means of communication. Therefore, Katie Dorsten, IMFT prefers to use email communication and text messaging only with your permission, and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another arrangement. If you use these methods to communicate with your counsellor or with the practice, there is a reasonable chance that a third party may be able to gain access to those messages. The types of parties that may intercept these messages include, but are not limited to:

- Those who have access to your phone, computer, or other devices that you use to read and write messages
- Your employer, if you use your work email to communicate with us
- Internet server administrators and others who monitor Internet traffic

If there are people in your life that you do not want accessing these communications, please talk with your counsellor about ways to keep your communications safe and confidential.

Let your counsellor know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this.

EMAIL

Email is not a confidential form of communication. Therefore, Katie Dorsten, IMFT chooses not to conduct counselling by email, and discourages the use of



email communication between clients and counselling staff, except for administrative purposes, such as arranging or changing appointments and for forwarding links to articles, meditations, books and other resources to enhance your therapy.

There is still a possibility that your privacy may be compromised when appointment times and resources are sent electronically. Please read below for more information:

1. No form of encryption is used by the practice for outgoing emails.
2. Katie Dorsten, IMFT sends appointment reminders via email. If you do not wish to receive reminders via email, please inform us of that preference.
3. The list of counsellors at Katie Dorsten, IMFT can be found on our website. Only those counsellors or coaches listed as part of our team at Katie Dorsten, IMFT entitled to read and respond to emails from clients. Each counsellor has their own business email address and communication intended for your counsellor should be sent to their Katie Dorsten, IMFT email address; if you do not know your counsellor's email address send the email to (**admin@bridgecounseling.net**). When using the admin email address, please put the counsellor's name and confidential in the subject line. This email will then be forwarded unread to your counsellor. For example: Attn: Joe Counsellor, Confidential.
4. When you receive a message from a counsellor at Katie Dorsten, IMFT the personalized signature line clearly indicates the sender.
5. Emails will generally be responded to within two business days (unless your counsellor is unavailable for some reason), and if a response has not been received within that time, you can call (306-222-9741) to leave a message for your counsellor.
6. Please identify the purpose of emails, and their urgency, in the subject line (for example: "Question- Non-urgent", or "Cancellation, request to Rebook- Urgent")
7. Email messages become part of your counselling records and may be shared along with your record should the documents be subpoenaed by the courts, RCMP or other governing agencies.



8. You may revoke your consent for email communication at any time. You may discuss any questions or concerns with your counsellor further in your next session.

ADDITIONAL STEPS TO KEEP EMAIL SECURE AND PRIVATE:

If you use a secure email service that offers end-to-end encryption, your messages are difficult to get. There are still more precautions you can take:

1. Beware of keylogging software that captures what you type right from your keyboard – before the secure email encryption can protect it.
2. Safeguard your mobile devices and make sure they are protected with strong passwords and have no guest accounts or similarly unprotected access allowed.
3. Be vigilant of social engineering. Phishing attempts can be very cleverly designed to trick you into handing out personal details, information or even passwords.
4. Do not write down or share any passwords. Never make a note of the password that lets you decrypt secure emails you receive. Guard passwords to other email accounts or social networking accounts.

TEXT MESSAGING

Katie Dorsten, IMFT sends appointment reminders via text message. If you do not wish to receive reminders via text message, please inform us of that preference. While this is an easy and convenient way to send communication, it is also not secure and you may want to consider the risks to your confidentiality surrounding your access to counselling services. Below is a list of potential risks associated with the use of text messaging:

1. Communication issues can arise when communicating in text due to the lack of access to visual or voice cues, as well as the possibility of limited space, and the chance of misunderstanding when using “shorthand” words or characters to represent meaning.



2. A lost or misplaced cell phone, or a phone simply left in an insecure location, can inadvertently communicate to others that you are in counselling.
3. Your identifying information will NOT be stored in the Katie Dorsten, IMFT counsellor's cell phone. If you are texting your counsellor please identify yourself in a way that your counsellor will know who is sending the message.
4. Text messages are intended to be used for booking, rescheduling, or cancelling appointments and for links to resources to be made accessible to you for enhancing your therapeutic process. Should they be used inappropriately (for example to "chat" or to "access counselling support"), the messages will not be responded to and this may be discussed for clarification in your next session.
5. Typically, text messages will be responded to within two business days, unless your counsellor is unavailable for some reason. If you are in a crisis and if your counsellor has agreed to crisis contact, you may try to send a text message requesting a phone call, but if this is not responded to in a timely manner, please call 911 or a local crisis line.
6. All text messages become part of your counselling records and as such may be subject to being shared along with your record should the documents be subpoenaed by the courts, RCMP or other governing agencies.
7. You may revoke your consent for text message communication at any time. You are also welcome to discuss any questions or concerns with your counsellor further in your next session.

THIRD-PARTY ACCESS TO COMMUNICATIONS

When you use electronic communications methods, such as email, texting, online video, etc., there are various technicians and administrators who maintain these services, and who could conceivably have access to the content of those communications.

If you use your work email to communicate electronically, your employer may access to those communications. There may be similar issues involved in school email or other email accounts associated with organizations that you are affiliated with.



Furthermore, people with access to your computer, mobile phone, or other devices may gain access to your email or text messages. It is important to contemplate the risks involved if any of these persons were to access the messages exchanged with your counsellor.

SHARING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS

If you wish to publicly reveal information related to your therapy through electronic communication with your counsellor, it is requested that you consult with your counsellor before doing so.

BETWEEN SESSION CONTACT

Between session contact with your counsellor is normally limited to short messages regarding scheduling sessions. Longer contact is possible, by arrangement, and the charge will be prorated per your session fees. Phone calls lasting longer than 5 minutes or emails (or multiple emails) requiring more than 5 minutes to read will be considered as additional counseling services and billed accordingly.

COLLECTION AND STORAGE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Storage and collection of client information is in accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and in accordance with professional guidelines.

EMERGENCIES

Katie Dorsten, IMFT is not an emergency service. Please do not contact Katie Dorsten, IMFT as an emergency resource. If you are in crisis or require emergency mental health assistance please call 911, go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital, or contact a crisis line in your area.