

KARI KOKKO, MSW, RSW, SEP

*Located at: The Refuge Centre for Healing and Recovery
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COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Electronic means of communication can be an efficient way to make contact between appointments. However, Kari wishes to outline the risks and benefits of these methods and to outline her policy for their use, so you can understand our parameters and consent for her to communicate with you via these methods, if you choose.

Risks of Email and Texting

- Email and texts can be circulated, forwarded, stored electronically and on paper, and broadcast to unintended recipients.
- Backup copies may exist even after they are sent or the recipient has deleted their copy.
- Employers and online services have a right to inspect email sent through their systems.
- Emails can be used to introduce viruses into computer systems.
- Emails and texts may not be secure, and therefore it is possible that the confidentiality of such communications may be breached by a third party. Email/text can be intercepted, altered, forwarded, or used without authorization or detection.
- Senders may accidentally enter the incorrect email address or phone number, even though all care will be taken to enter the correct contact information
- Written communications can be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted, and could inadvertently lead to distress that your therapist will not be able to address effectively outside of session.

Policy Guidelines

Kari cannot guarantee, but will use reasonable means, to maintain security and confidentiality of electronic communication. Kari will not be liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not caused by intentional misconduct. She kindly asks that you acknowledge and consent to the following conditions if you wish to use email or text to communicate:

- Email or text messages sent to her may be documented as part of your clinical record. She will not forward client identifiable emails or texts to others outside the practice without your prior written consent, except as authorized or required by law.
- Kari does not use email or text for communication pertaining to clinical matters. Clients may choose to use email or text for brief, non-clinical communication (such scheduling or cancelling an appointment, or letting Kari know if you may be running late for an appointment).
- Email or texting is not appropriate for urgent matters or emergencies. Kari cannot guarantee that any particular message will be read and responded to within any particular period of time. The same is true of voicemail. In the case of an emergency, please call 911, your local crisis line, or go to the nearest hospital.
- Brief emails will only be used for the purposes of sending you invoices, receipts, links, resources or homework/aftercare instructions, or to cancel or reschedule appointments. Please book an appointment to discuss clinical matters and keep emails concise.

- Kari will check email on a regular basis, but there may be exceptions to this. For instance, she will not check email when out of the office, on vacation, or in training.
- There can be server problems or connection issues (such as when someone attempts to send a message from an area with limited or no internet connection or a weak cell phone signal). As a result, sometimes voicemail, email, or text messages are not delivered. If you do not receive a reply to your message within 48 hours, please try again.
- Kari will never distribute your email address to a third party.
- Please use caution when using your employer's computer or your work email address to correspond with Kari.
- Please inform her if your contact information changes.
- Ordinarily there will be no charge for use of periodic, brief emails. Should a message require a lengthy response, a regular correspondence rate may apply. Rather than paying this fee, you may wish to discuss your questions during your next session.
- Should email and voicemail begin to be used in a more frequent, intensive way beyond the parameters set out in this policy, Kari will explore your needs further with you to determine alternative resources or solutions that may be helpful.

Social Media Use

Kari uses social media such as LinkedIn to connect with colleagues. Kari does not add clients as contacts on social media.

Virtual Sessions

In certain circumstances, Kari may offer the option of doing sessions online. Please let her know if you would like to discuss this option. Below are parameters for doing online sessions:

- Kari uses Doxy.me to do online sessions. This platform complies with all relevant privacy legislation.
- Kari will send you an email with a link to connect. This email will be sent prior to the scheduled appointment time. You will be able to click the link and enter the virtual waiting room prior to your session time. Kari will meet you online at the scheduled time of the appointment.
- If there is a technological malfunction and the connection is disrupted partway through the session, or connection is not able to be established on Doxy.me at the time scheduled for the session, Kari will:
 1. Do her best to establish/re-establish the connection
 2. Call you by phone if she is unable to connect
 3. Send you an email if she is unable to reach you by phone
- Virtual sessions will not be recorded or shared in any way by either client or therapist.
- When you connect for an online session, please ensure that you are in a private location where other people are not around and confidentiality can be maintained. If you would like to invite another person to be part of the therapy session, please discuss with Kari in advance. This is the same process as if you would like to invite another person into an in-person therapy session.

- It is understood that any internet-based communication is not 100% guaranteed to be secure/confidential, even when using software that is represented as compliant with all applicable privacy legislation.
- It is understood that virtual sessions are not primary interventions for situations of crisis or immediate risk, and that in these situations clients are to connect with their local crisis line or emergency services.

Consent and Agreement

I understand that Kari accepts no liability for any breach in privacy or confidentiality caused by myself or any third party, or for any interference with or damage to my computer system, software or data occurring in connection with my use of insecure / unencrypted email to communicate with her.

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand this consent form. I understand the risks associated with the use of email and text communication and agree to abide by the parameters outlined in this communications policy.

Client name: _____

Client signature: _____

Date: _____

****Effective March 21, 2020 : Because of current social distancing guidelines due to Covid-19, Kari will only be offering online sessions. Clients who would like to do online sessions are requested to return a signed copy of this agreement by email if possible. If this is not possible, Kari will document verbal agreement, and will request a signed copy at the next possible opportunity.*