

Informed Consent for Telephone, Electronic, and Mail Contact

Important Note: Ordinary privacy precautions such as voice scramblers, pin codes, voice mail boxes, and locked fax, mail, and computer rooms are by no means foolproof, so that ***your confidentiality is always compromised*** when communicating by electronic devices or mail. Nor is deletion or shredding of private material a totally safe means of disposal, so that you are always at risk of breaches in confidentiality when electronic or mail communication of any type is used for private information. Your use of such means of communication with your therapist, consultant, tutor, or supervisor constitutes implied consent for reciprocal use of electronic and mail communication as well.

It is the consensus of mental health professionals that reliable and valid psychotherapy, consultation, tutoring, and supervision are ***always*** conducted in a face-to-face setting, so that nonverbal communications can be taken into consideration. Body language, voice tone, pacing, emotional overtones, eye contact, and other variables are an important part of counseling or psychotherapeutically oriented professional services. However, there may be times or circumstances under which telephone, e-mail, postal, or other kinds of communication may have a limited value, such as:

1. Brief, between-session contact calls, e-mail, or mail messages.
2. Long distance communication when either party is out of town or otherwise unavailable.
3. Long distance communication when therapy seems near its natural termination and either party relocates, making regular standard sessions impossible. Electronic communication is ***always*** incomplete without standard, agreed-upon, and periodic face-to-face contact.

4. Limited long distance consultation, supervision, tutoring, or assessment may be appropriate when specialty or expertise is an issue. However, considerations of reliability and validity without regular face-to-face contact necessarily limit the kinds of interventions the consultant or tutor can make to (1) general questions about the client's concerns, (2) general theoretical considerations or advice, and (3) recommendations as to what kinds of professional consultation to seek locally.

I am aware of the limited validity and reliability of telephone and other kinds of electronic and mail communication as suggested above. I am further aware that I am not guaranteed confidentiality when I contact or receive such contacts from my therapist, consultant, tutor, or supervisor. I understand that the purposes for engaging in telephone, electronic, or mail communication must be limited in scope and time and that the validity and reliability of information given and received is necessarily limited. This consent supplements other or previous agreements.

Client

Date

Professional

Date