



**Kate Dunn**  
**Psychotherapeutic Counsellor**

Web: [www.katedunncounselling.co.uk](http://www.katedunncounselling.co.uk)

## **DIGITAL POLICY**

### **Ethics and Boundaries:**

Digital communication of any kind is open to misuse and boundaries can be broken if not carefully thought through. The nature of an online presence can blur interpersonal boundaries, so it is important to be as clear as possible about how boundaries may be challenged in an online environment. The nature of the digital world can sometimes stretch these boundaries, so I offer the best clarity I can below.

My duty of care to my clients and my professional commitment to confidentiality means that ***I never refer to clinical material in my media activities.*** As my client you will have received a contract covering my commitment to your confidentiality.

### **Use of Email for Clients Engaging in Face-to-face Counselling:**

Any emails we send to each other may be vulnerable to viruses or human error. For this reason, it is best to be thoughtful about what you include in general emails to me, and which email address you choose to use with me. Often, it is best to rely on email only for non-confidential communications such as arranging appointment times. In an effort to keep confidential and psychological material “in the counselling room” it is best avoided in emails unless we specifically discuss an online approach to counselling beforehand. I will always request your preferred email address from our first session.

If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of Internet Service Providers. Furthermore, they can be vulnerable to viruses and unintended forwarding or replication. If you are concerned about the confidentiality of your emails, you may wish to contact me by telephone instead.

### **E-invoicing:**

I sometimes use an online software application to process my invoices that are then sent out to your chosen e-mail address. If you would prefer not to receive invoices by email, please let me know and I can provide you a printed copy at your counselling session.

### **Use of Email for Clients Engaging in Pre-arranged Online Counselling:**

I use additional security measures for pre-arranged email counselling in order to protect client confidentiality. These include the use of password-protected documents. Further specific information, including information about e-invoicing, is sent to clients requesting this approach to their work before any therapeutic exchanges begin.

**Text messages:**

I am happy for you to contact me by text message to alert me if you are running late for a session or for similar reasons. However, because of the lack of context of text messages, it is generally not the best method for communicating with me about more important matters, so please do phone and leave me a message.

**Instant Messaging and Video Conferencing:**

Some of my work is carried out by Instant Messaging (IM) and/or Video-conferencing. Any such sessions will be discussed in advance and further information concerning security will be given at this stage. I make every effort to choose video conferencing software that is recognised to be adequately encrypted – so this may involve you downloading certain software or logging into a web-based application. (Skype is not generally considered appropriate for this use due to security limitations). When engaging via video conferencing, we both agree not to use any recording devices for remote sessions.

**Social Networking sites:**

Despite my online presence, I would prefer that our relationship remain as much as possible between us in the consultation room or, for clients engaging in online counselling, within our agreed online boundaries. I will not respond to any friend requests from current or former clients on Social Networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Due to the nature of these sites, it may occasionally happen that there is some overlap across social networks. Should this arise, it is something we should discuss in a counselling session.

**Google:**

In general practice I do not Google my clients before I meet them, nor do I use the internet to elicit information unless it is with the specific informed consent of a client. It is of course your right to Google me. However, if in your search some questions are raised, I would request that you raise them with me directly at the first opportunity.

I will continue to update my digital policy as I learn more, and welcome your feedback. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please do let me know.

I am grateful to Dr. Aaron Balick for his advice and assistance in connection with this policy.

<http://www.aaronbalick.com/>