



Family Therapy Institute of Santa Barbara

Consent Form for Alternate Communication

If you choose to communicate to your therapist at FTI via e-mail, home phones, cell phones (texting, calls, or voicemails), this raises issues about confidentiality that we want you to understand.

Confidentiality

- Because email/texting is generally less secure, we cannot offer the same degree of confidentiality as for other forms of communication.
- When you email FTI or your therapist from a given account, we will assume that it is acceptable to return mail to you at that same email address. While we will do our best to honor requests to return mail to a different email address than the address from which your mail was sent, we do not have a system in place that can guarantee an error will not be made. Consequently, it's best to refrain from emailing from accounts you do not wish us to return mail to.
- Because email accounts require a third party to maintain, FTI or your therapist cannot guarantee confidentiality and privacy protection provided by the vendors.
- While we endeavor to protect our computers from hackers, viruses, worms and other threats to the security of your correspondence, we regret that we cannot fully assure their protection.
- If your therapist has given you permission to call their personal cell phone number or home phone, the same level of confidentiality cannot be safeguarded.

What is a good use of email?

- If you are a potential client wanting to know more about FTI services.
- If you are a client and have a document you would like reviewed before our next meeting. It is always a good idea to bring a paper copy to your next appointment in case the email has not been received.
- If there is a development in your life you want your therapist to be aware of, but is not urgent enough to require a phone call.
- If your therapist requested that you email as part of a homework assignment.
- If you have a quick question that cannot wait until your next appointment.

While everyone at FTI does his or her best to respond to email correspondence in a timely fashion, it is not always possible. Sometimes email goes into junk or is not received.

Inappropriate uses for email . . .

- In an emergency. If you have tried to reach your therapist by email, text, or voicemail and have not received a response, call 911, go the local emergency room or call 805-280-2072 to reach the FTI on-call therapist. Do not use this phone number for non-emergency purposes (e.g. if you will be late or if you need to cancel your session).
- As a substitute for therapy sessions. If you are emailing about a therapy issue, your therapist may choose not to respond by email but to wait to discuss at your next appointment. Additionally, because the volume of email can be overwhelming, FTI therapists must treat email with the same policy as phone calls, billing for email correspondence requiring more than 15 minutes to process. *NOTE - THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO NEW CLIENTS SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT TREATMENT PROGRAMS or CLASSES.*
- For appointment cancellations and/or the need to reschedule your appointment that email often provides, *TO GUARANTEE YOU WILL NOT BE CHARGED A LATE CANCELLATION FEE, ALL CANCELLATIONS MUST BE MADE BY PHONE WITHIN 24 HOURS OF YOUR APPOINTMENT TIME--THEREBY ASSURING WE WILL RECEIVE YOUR MESSAGE PROMPTLY.*
- Please note – few, if any of our staff are able to check their email constantly. There can be gaps of hours or days at a time when your therapist or Nancy Villalobos, our administrator, will NOT be available by computer. If you are having difficulty reaching your therapist by email or texts, please call the office at (805)882-2424 and leave a message on your therapist’s extension (not the general voicemail box which is not checked as frequently).

Informed Consent . . .

I understand that by initiating email correspondence and/or providing you with my email address, I am agreeing to use email as an acceptable form of communication for confidential information. _____ (initials)

I understand that all the same issues are involved if I communicate via cell phones (texting/calls/voicemails) or the therapist’s home phone. _____ (initials)

Signature

Date