**A Primer on Facebook for Eating Disorder Professionals**

**from The Academy for Eating Disorder**

**What is Facebook?**

Facebook is a social networking site where you connect and share with friends, family, businesses and organizations online. It was originally designed for college students and launched in 2004 by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg.

**Why Join Facebook?**

World’s largest social media platform with 1.8 billion monthly users.

Ability to utilize Facebook’s targeted advertising mechanisms to reach people specifically who can benefit from your services or that you would like to connect with.

Connect and keep up to date with developments at other organizations.

And of course, you can be a part of AED’s online community on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/AcademyforEatingDisorders/>

**How Do I Join?**

**1. To create a Facebook account:**

1. Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).
2. Enter the name you go by in everyday life (*or the name you want to use for people to find you)*.
3. Enter your email or mobile phone number.
4. Select your gender and date of birth, and choose a password.
5. Tap Sign Up.
6. To finish creating your account, you need to confirm your email or mobile phone number.

**How Do I Manage My Privacy on Facebook?**

Facebook changes privacy settings frequently. Even if your information was set to private at one point, a change in their structure can make previously private information more accessible to others. Be sure to give yourself a privacy checkup frequently to make sure that you have your settings set to your wishes, and stay up to date with procedures for doing so.

[Facebook Privacy Information](https://www.facebook.com/fbprivacy/)

**Tips for Successful Posting on Facebook**

**Tip #1: Keep up with Facebook algorithm changes.** Facebook changes their algorithm for what shows up in people’s “Newsfeeds” frequently. Keep up to date with what that algorithm looks for in a “successful” post.

As of January 11th, 2018, Facebook has upped priority for posts from your “friends” and pages and organizations that you have liked, and de-emphasized posts from publishers and businesses. That means for most people tracking their engagement via Facebook’s tool, it will be significantly down for the month of January.

More important right now are posts “interactions,” clicks on links and reactions such as likes, specifically those that occur in the first hour or so of a post.

**Tip #2: Treat your online posting as a form of self-disclosure.** If it is online, it is findable, even under strict privacy settings. Make sure you are ok with what you post being public knowledge.

**Tip #3: Refrain from posting anything identifiable about clients online.** Even if you think it is vague, even posting about your own feelings around a specific client interaction, positive or negative can breach confidentiality. Rule of thumb: if the client or someone they know was reading it (even if they won’t due to privacy settings) could figure out who you were talking about, you probably shouldn’t post it on line.

**A Sample of Questions to Ask Yourself in Managing your Presence Online**

Do I want to have a personal account in addition to a professional account?

How much are my personal and private accounts linked?

Do I want to use my real name?

How will I deal with clients online? Will I “block” them?

How will I deal with friend requests? While blocking clients preemptively online can be helpful for your privacy, it may breach confidentiality for you to enter their names into your social media profile if your contract does not specify that you may share client information with Facebook.

Does my online presence include endorsements, advertising or any personal beliefs that my clients may not share? How does that affect my clients?

Will I “like” posts? Could this be seen as an endorsement and how does that affect my clients/my privacy?

**References**

Brew, L., Cervantes, J.M. & Shepard, D. (2017) Millienial counselors and the ethical use of Facebook. *The Professional Counselor.* (http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org/millennial-counselors-and-the-ethical-use-of-facebook/

Ventola, C.L. (2014). Social media and health care professionals: benefits, risks, and best practices. *Pharmacy and Therapuetics, 39*(7), 491-499. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4103576/