

Keeping Confidentiality

Clients should have the expectation of privacy, beginning with the first phone call and continuing throughout the entire relationship. Gossiping (or complaining) about clients to others is a violation of confidentiality. If you talk to your clients about other clients, they're going to wonder if you'll be talking to the next client about *them*.

The Internet—and social media in particular—has magnified the issue of client confidentiality exponentially. There are open groups on Facebook where people chatter away about clients, open being the key word. That means anyone, not just massage therapists, can see everything that's said in the group, including past, present, and future clients, although the latter is apt to be scared off by some of the things they see there.

Many times, social media posts about clients take the form of bragging. Hardly a day goes by without my seeing a massage therapist bragging about some celebrity they've given a massage to. Hopefully, you wouldn't put it on social media that you massaged Mary Jones from down the street, so why would you think it's okay to say you massaged someone that everyone knows? It isn't. This seems to be a particular trend whenever there's a major sporting event, like the Super Bowl, the World Cup, or the U.S. Open.

If you massage a celebrity, and they take a selfie with you, give you a written testimonial or post a public review, or tweet that they got a massage from you and it was great, then carry on. Otherwise, keep your lip zipped and your fingers off the keyboard. Many of these violations take place without mentioning the client's name, but when it's someone that has a public persona it's still a clear violation. I've seen people on Facebook saying they massaged the Crown Prince of Dubai, the CEO of the Miami Dolphins, the winner of the Stanley Cup, Beyoncé's manager, owners of big corporations, and anyone can look that up in an instant.

The same holds true in a rural area or small town, if you mention someone's identifying information; everyone in your small town probably knows there's an eccentric 85-year old who drives a Porsche, dyes her hair purple, and has 50 cats. You don't have to say her name for everyone in town to know who you're talking about.

Observing confidentiality is in the code of ethics in every regulated state. A massage is a personal, private thing, or at least, it should be. If any client, celebrity or not, chooses to brag—or complain—publicly about the massage you gave them, that's okay; *they're the client*. It's okay for them to say it; it's not okay for you to say it.