

## ***Self-disclosure, the Internet and you!***

While I was preparing for an upcoming workshop, I decided it was once again time to conduct a Google search on myself. Imagine my shock when the first page of hits returned newspaper articles stating that I was dead! Well, not exactly me, but someone with my exact name who had lived in the state I was born was tragically murdered earlier this year. I couldn't help but read the related newspaper articles about her heartbreaking death and wondered what else I might find if I searched a bit further. Likewise, I realized that it would be naïve to think that our clients do not search the Internet for information about us in an effort to know more about who we are and what we do.



When we deliberately reveal information about ourselves to others in an effort to build intimacy and relationships, we are engaging in a form of self-disclosure. However, when information is unintentionally or inadvertently made available about us, it feels more like self-exposure rather than self-disclosure. In today's world of instant access to the Internet, it is critical to know what your clients know about you and what your Internet presence reveals about yourself.

For that reason, conducting a general Internet search utilizing the most popular search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing will help assess your level of self-exposure on the Internet. The most comprehensive Internet searches include several variations of your name as well as searches for images and photos. If you maintain a website, blog frequently, or utilize social media accounts, you should conduct general Internet searches more frequently. Minimally, it is advisable to conduct a search at least twice per year, with increasing regularity if your web presence dictates more frequent searches. Don't be the last to know what everyone else knows about you on the Internet. Happy searching!

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