

MARKETING YOUR PRIVATE PRACTICE



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

When you think about how much you learned in your six years of higher education, thousands of hours of supervised clinical practice, and countless all-nighters cramming for your licensing tests, it's breathtaking.

You mastered the physiology and function of the mind. You learned how to approach crushing conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD with compassion and humanity.

Through your hard work, you acquired the most valuable gift a person can possess: the ability to set others free from the unresolved behaviors and deeply ingrained traumas that hold them back.

But in all your studies and practice, one word never came up: **marketing**.

In the New York Times Magazine, therapist Lori Gottlieb writes about **getting her fledgling private practice off the ground**:



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“I fully assumed, in what now seems like an astounding fit of naïveté, that I’d send out an e-mail announcement and network with doctors, and to paraphrase ‘Field of Dreams,’ if I built it, they would come.

Except that they didn’t.”



What they didn't tell you in graduate school is that the market for therapy clients is contracting. Insurance companies are covering fewer sessions, and the giant pharmacology industry is pushing medication alone as an adequate replacement for talk therapy.

Meanwhile, clients with demanding jobs and busy lives are becoming more reluctant to commit to months or years of psychotherapy. They want immediate results.

"No one wants to buy counseling," says therapy branding expert Casey Truffo. "...They search for answers to problems they have."

Popular Science reports that, despite ample evidence that psychotherapy can work more effectively and its results last longer than medication alone.



"[B]etween 1998 and 2007, psychotherapy use for people being treated for mental health conditions in the U.S. **decreased from almost 16 percent to 10.5 percent**, and therapy use in conjunction with medication went from **40 percent to 32 percent**. By contrast, usage rates of medication alone shot up from 41 percent to a little more than 57 percent."

If you're just starting your private therapy practice or you're trying to revive a practice that has plateaued, you have your work cut out for you. You can no longer expect clients to miraculously find their way to your door.



Why Therapists Struggle with Marketing

To attract new clients, fill your schedule, and grow your therapy practice, you need to announce your presence to the world. You need to let potential clients know you're available and able to help them solve their mental health issues.

Usage may be declining, but the market is still there. In fact, the need for psychotherapy in America has never been higher.

According to the **National Alliance on Mental Illness**:

- One out of five adults in the U.S. faces a mental health challenge in any given year.
- One out of 25 adults experiences a serious mental health disorder in a given year.
- Only 41 percent of adults with mental health difficulties receive mental health services.

The question is, *how can you connect your services to the people who need them the most?* That, in a nutshell, is the definition of marketing.

Unfortunately, some people see marketing a private therapy practice as somewhat distasteful.

"There seems to be a faint air of disapproval in the whole therapeutic community," **writes one therapist** who specializes in teaching other therapists to promote themselves.

It's as if marketing — and any other practicality involved with running a business and generating revenue — betrays the purity of therapy and the trust of clients. But why should it?





“Your life’s goal is to help others but in order to help them, you must make yourself accessible to those needing your help.”

Donna Lynes Miller, [Local Therapy Marketing](#)

You became a therapist to help people. We believe marketing a private therapy practice is helping:

- Helping clients find the provider who is the best fit for treating their issues.
- Helping your local community by providing much-needed mental health services.
- Helping you overcome financial pressure so you can focus on treating your clients.
- Helping those who depend on you to make a living.

We put together this guide to marketing your private practice so you can achieve the success you, your clients, and your future clients deserve.

In this guide, we’ll cover several strategies for growing your practice, gaining more clients, and differentiating yourself from other local therapists. You’ll notice a focus on modern online marketing strategies. In the connected world in which your clients live, marketing and online marketing are one in the same.

Enjoy the guide and happy marketing!

For further reading: Our article “Are Hypnotherapists in Demand?” surveys the market for hypnotherapy specifically, but explores the 2018 market for psychotherapy in general, as well.



CHAPTER 2

Do Your Research

You can't expect to sell your therapy services to just anyone.

First, not everyone needs therapy. So at the very least, you must set up shop in an area where there is some unmet demand for psychotherapy. Fortunately, this is about everywhere in the United States.

Second, you may be more or less adept or more or less interested in serving particular communities or helping with specific issues. For example, if your training focused on helping adolescents with depression, you shouldn't waste your time or money marketing to seniors with anxiety.

Third, you have limited resources. Even if you have an unlimited marketing budget, every hour you spend marketing is an hour not spent treating clients, staying up-to-date on the latest therapeutic techniques, or enjoying downtime with your family.

Businesspeople use the term **ROI** — return on investment — to talk about the cost-vs.-reward decisions they make every day. Thinking in terms of ROI is common sense. You want to invest your limited resources (money, time, effort) in things that pay off the most.

The ROI equation for marketing your private therapy practice is simple:

The right marketing strategies + The right target audience = A growing practice



Two Big Questions for Marketing Your Private Practice

The first step for marketing anything — from your private therapy practice to the latest iPhone — is to answer two questions:

- To whom do you want to market your services?
- What potential markets exist in your region?

Let's look at both questions.

1. Who Do You Want to Target?



“Whether it’s getting physically fit, or growing your practice, it’s hard to get from point A to point B if you’re not clear what point B looks like.”

Jesse Hartman, The Wellness Institute

Success is only success if you achieve it on your own terms. Marketer Jesse Hartman writes that **the first thing you should do when developing a marketing plan for your private therapy practice** is “get clear on the result you’re looking for.” He suggests asking yourself six questions:

1. Who is your ideal client?
2. What age group do you prefer/are you best at working with?
3. What gender do you prefer/are you best at working with? Male, female, both, other?



4. How much do you want your clients to pay?
5. What issues/problems does your ideal client have and want your help with?
6. Where does your ideal client live?

As your ideal client starts to take shape, you'll have a better idea of how to make the most of the marketing strategies described in this guide to build the private therapy practice you've always envisioned.

2. Who Can You Target?

Miranda Palmer runs a "Business School Bootcamp" for therapists. When she started her private practice, she says, **she had no idea what "market research" meant.**

"That led to several bad...or at least odd decisions," she writes.

Because she didn't do her research, Palmer says, she marketed to her area as if it was saturated with therapists. In fact, therapists were in short supply, and Palmer had many more options than she realized.

Market research sounds like something people with MBAs and business suits do. But it's really not that complicated. Here's a good definition of market research for therapists:



Market research: Understanding the needs of potential therapy clients in your area and how those needs are already being (or not being) met.

Finding Your Niche

Once you understand who might be seeking therapy in your area, what they're struggling with, and the kind of treatment they're interested in, you can begin to see where you might fit in. You can even adapt your practice to serve an unmet need. We call this finding your niche.

Successful businesses grow from nothing when they discover an underserved community of customers. In the psychotherapy field, your niche might be:

- Specific groups of clients, such as seniors, couples, or veterans.
- A less-common methodology, such as **hypnotherapy**, **EMDR**, or art therapy.
- Specific mental health issues that are prevalent in your area, such as PTSD or eating disorders.

Brian Dear, founder of the therapy practice management software company iCouch, **writes that** thinking of your product as merely "therapy" is like a restaurant owner thinking of their product as simply "food."

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“While technically accurate, if I went to an investor and told them I wanted to start a restaurant and sell food, they'd politely tell me to get lost. If I went to an investor and had a plan to open a Korean restaurant in a growing Korean neighborhood where there weren't yet any Korean restaurants, then perhaps the investors might take my plan more seriously.”



For further reading: Looking for your niche? Discover [11 ways private practice therapists can differentiate themselves](#) in our recent article.

Market Research for Therapists

Thanks to the internet, market research has never been easier. Brian Dear suggests starting simply by **thinking of yourself as a client** and doing what clients do: a Google search for providers in your area who can treat your issue.

If your web skills are a little bit more advanced, Dear also suggests **using the Google Keyword Planner** (it's free). This tool will tell you how often people in your area search for a particular word or phrase, for example, "depression counselor for teens" or "hypnotherapist in Milwaukee."

Most therapists list their practices on online directories such as [Psychology Today](#) and [GoodTherapy.org](#). **These directories are also useful market research tools.** General review sites, such as Yelp, can also help you get the lay of the therapy land in your area.

Finally, a little networking goes a long way. As we'll discuss later, **networking is an essential marketing strategy.** But it's not just because networking with physicians and other therapists can lead to referrals.

By **plugging yourself into the local healthcare community**, you'll learn more about the makeup and needs of the local client population. You'll find out which mental health issues are common and which therapists could use relief from their crowded waiting lists.

Plus, doctors and therapists are generally a supportive group. It never hurts to get advice from veterans with deep experience and connections in a community.



Review: 4 Tips for Researching Your Local Therapy Market

- Think of yourself as a client.
- Use the Google Keyword Planner.
- Search online directories.
- Network with local healthcare providers.

For further reading: Tapping into an underserved niche is one of the best ways to build a profitable private therapy practice quickly. With the right approach, you can easily exceed six figures in annual income. Learn how in our article, ["How to Make Six Figures as a Private Practice Therapist ."](#)



CHAPTER 3

Your Website



“Online marketing isn’t rocket science. If you’ve made it through grad school and you’ve passed your licensing exam, you’re smart enough to learn how to launch a website and attract new clients online.”

Daniel Wendler, [Marketing for Therapists](#)

Since you’re reading this guide online, you should hardly need convincing that, if you want new clients to find your private therapy practice, you need a robust online presence. In the modern era, the internet is where people go to find what they need — including therapy.

We included “neglecting your online presence” among our “3 Pitfalls to Avoid When Building a Private Therapy Practice ” for a good reason. Not having a web presence in this day and age is like not being listed in the phonebook 30 years ago.

What the Numbers Say: Clients Are Searching for You Online

- In 2017, 97 percent of Americans used the internet to find a local business. — [BrightLocal survey](#)
- 46 percent of all searches on Google are local. — [HubSpot infographic](#)
- 80 percent of internet users have searched for health-related information online. — [Pew Internet & American Life Project](#)



Here is why your therapy practice needs to be online:

- Potential new clients are starting their search for a therapist online.
- An online presence will help potential clients get to know you and your practice as more than a name and a phone number.
- Potential clients will consider your practice more “legitimate” if they can find you online.

Online marketing isn't just about setting up a website for your practice. It can involve contributing to social media communities like Facebook and LinkedIn, creating and promoting a blog, and buying advertising on Google.

We'll get to some of those other strategies later on, but we'll start with your practice's online storefront: your website.



4 Steps to Set Up Your Private Therapy Practice Website

When potential clients search for your therapy practice online (and they will), the first thing they'll see will probably be your website. So it's worth investing some time and money in building an attractive, professional site populated with the information for which clients come searching.

However, resist the temptation to obsess over your website. You're not in this to attain internet celebrity, nor do the latest whizz-bang web design

Daniel Wendler, author of [Marketing for Therapists](#), says you should always keep **the primary objective of your site in mind: “Your website should get clients to book their first session with you.”** Everything else, Wendler says, is secondary.

Fortunately, there are copious online resources that make building a business website easier than it’s ever been. Launching a professional website for your therapy practice shouldn’t take too long. If you set aside the time, you can do it in a weekend.

These four steps should help you get started:

1. Choose and Buy a Domain Name

Your **domain name** is ([as Jesse Hartman describes](#)) “the thing between www and .com, .org, etc...” If you glance up at the address bar in your browser, you’ll see our domain name is [wellness-institute.org](#).

Some free web hosting services force you into using their own domain names, such as [weebly.com](#) — unless, of course, you pay up. Your website visitors will see this as less professional. A clean, easy-to-remember domain name is a sign of a business that has its act together.

You can also use your domain name as part of a customized email address.

Where Do You Buy a Domain Name?

Registrars like [Namecheap](#) and [GoDaddy](#) sell domain names for reasonable prices. Unless you’re gunning for a “premium” domain name that’s in high-demand (like, say, “[therapy.com](#)”), your domain name won’t cost more than \$20 per year, and you should be able to buy the rights to your domain name for several years at once.

If you already have a website, your domain name registrar should be able to walk you through connecting it to your new domain name.



How Do You Choose a Domain Name?

Start with the name of your practice. For example, our domain name is wellness-institute.org because that's the name of our business. If your practice doesn't have a name, go with your name: "hannahjones.com" or "drhannahjones.com."

Experts also recommend including a keyword in your domain name that has to do with a specialty of your practice or your location: "therapyforteachers.com" or "northjerseypsychotherapy.com."

Whatever you choose, your domain name should align with your practice and be easy to remember. If a client refers your practice to a friend, they should be able to share your website without writing it down.

Tip: It's not always possible (see "wellness-institute.org"), but if you can avoid using dashes, numbers, or unconventional spellings, do so.



Should You Get a .com Extension?

Every domain name ends with an extension such as .com, .org, or .biz. Domain names ending in .com are considered the most trustworthy and easy to remember. The .org and .net extensions are considered reliable, as well. Avoid any other extension.



2. Choose a Website Platform

The days of hand-coding your website in HTML are long gone. Most businesses now rely on web-based content management systems that handle the technical coding work behind the scenes, allowing you to focus on the look and messaging of your site.

WordPress

One of the most popular content management systems is **WordPress**. Because it's open source and free, WordPress is infinitely customizable. A thriving economy of add-ons and templates has sprung up around it.

But because the possibilities are so vast, WordPress can be overwhelming if this is your first website. Plus, unlike other website platforms, WordPress does not reside in any single location. If you choose to work in WordPress, you must also find a web host that will set up your WordPress software on its servers.

HostGator, **SiteGround**, and **Bluehost** are all popular web hosts configured to work smoothly with WordPress.

Other Website Platforms for Therapists

Other website platforms will allow you to design and launch an attractive, professional site without having to find a separate web host. These tools are closed systems, lacking some of the flexibility of WordPress. But for the beginner, they offer all the options you'll need, including dozens or hundreds of professionally-designed templates from which to choose.

Each of these platforms charges a monthly fee that depends on the options you choose:

- **Squarespace**
- **Wix**
- **Weebly**



Daniel Fava, a web designer married to a therapist, offers a **comprehensive rundown of the web platforms available for therapy websites**. He also notes that a few platforms exist specifically for therapists, including **Brighter Vision** and **TherapySites**. While these may be the quickest options to get your website up and running, you may balk at their price tag and lack of flexibility.

3. Design Your Site

Design, and web design, in particular, is a full-time discipline that people study for years to master. We don't have the space, and you don't have the time, to take you through all the principles and practices of web design here.

Luckily, any of the web platforms listed above come pre-loaded with professionally-designed templates well-suited to a therapy website.

Before you settle on a template, however, it's a good idea to surf through the sites of the other therapists in your area, especially those who serve similar clientele. You don't want to choose the same template as a competitor and end up looking like a copycat.

Once you choose your template, it's simply a matter of tweaking the design (usually using a simple drag-and-drop interface) to suit your tastes and goals.



Expert Web Design Tips for Therapists

Make sure it's "mobile friendly."

"Smartphones and other mobile devices now outnumber 'traditional' computers like desktops and laptops. If your website is not mobile-friendly, it might be almost impossible to use on these devices." — [TherapySites.com](#)

Make the navigation crystal clear.

"There's something frustrating about wandering around a website and not being able to find the information I'm looking for." — [Goodman Creatives](#)

Include a professional photo of yourself.

"Seriously. Hire a professional photographer to get a headshot. Don't use your iPhone and don't grab an old vacation photo from Facebook. Hire a pro." — [Marketing for Therapists](#)

Don't make your visitors scroll. Keep the good stuff "above the fold."

"Users spend 80% of their time looking at the content above the fold, so you need to grab their attention right away." — [Marketing for Therapists](#)

Include a contact form that is easy to find.

"Your clients want to contact you, so make it easy for them with a built-in contact form." — [Brighter Vision](#)

4. Add Content to Your Site

Now you have a website for your private therapy practice. What should it say?

There is an entire branch of online marketing dedicated to attracting search engines like Google with written content. It's called search engine optimization or SEO. Later in this guide, we'll look at the practice of blogging, the easiest way to attract search engines to your site. For now, we'll focus on your human visitors.



When you visit the site of a business, what do you want to know? As you write the content for your therapy practice website, start with the basics.

- **Who are you?** Include a short bio (with a photo) describing your education, professional experiences, and relevant interests. Think about the tone you want to strike with potential clients. If you're either too familiar or too clinical, it may turn some people off.
- **What services do you offer?** Remember, **you can't be all things to all people**. Who are your services best suited for? What treatment methods do you offer? What challenges do you help with?
- **How can clients schedule an appointment?** Some therapists allow clients to schedule appointments online. Others prefer a phone call. Make it clear and include easy-to-find contact information.
- **How much do you charge?** And do you accept insurance? There's no good reason not to be upfront about your costs.
- **Where are you located?** Sometimes, clients just want a map to your door.

Tip: When writing for the web, brevity is your friend. Website readers have notoriously short attention spans and will lose interest if you go on too long. Provide the information they're looking for, keep your sentences and paragraphs short, and get out of the way.

Review: 4 Steps for Setting Up Your Private Therapy Practice Website

- Choose and buy a domain name.
- Choose a website platform.
- Design your site.
- Add content to your site.



CHAPTER 4

Social Media

Should You Use Social Media to Market Your Private Therapy Practice?

For most businesses, social media is a no-brainer.

When **68 percent of the U.S. adult population uses Facebook**, social media marketing becomes a necessity. Yet, for some therapists, it's not simply a question of maximum reach. Networking online with clients and potential clients introduces some ethical dilemmas.



In the therapy world, the line between personal and professional is sacrosanct. What does it mean to “friend” a client?

Some therapy marketing experts advise steering clear of social media:



“Getting hauled before an ethics board because you accidentally tweeted personally identifiable information about a client is not anybody’s idea of a good time.”

Daniel Wendler, **Marketing for Therapists**



Others believe therapists should embrace social media wholeheartedly:

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“With every tweet and post, you can inspire and help someone that you would otherwise never see in your office...Beyond our couches, we can reach into the hearts of others, educate, dialogue and influence common cultural issues that impact the lives of our clients and that keep people from getting our kind of help.”

Kelly Higdon, LMFT, Business School Bootcamp for Therapists

Social media is undoubtedly a powerful marketing tool, but if you're uncomfortable connecting with clients or potential clients online, you don't have to use it. As you're learning in this guide, there are other marketing techniques that present fewer ethical quandaries.

If you do choose to use social media, here are a few ethical guidelines:

- **Maintain separate social media accounts** for your practice and your personal relationships. Don't admit clients or potential clients to your personal accounts.
- **Develop a written social media policy** and share it with your clients and anyone else connected with your practice. Your policy should include rules on how you respond to friend requests and following from clients, former clients, and potential clients. For inspiration, psychologist Keely Kolmes offers [a free-to-use-and-adapt social media policy](#) on her website.



- **Never share private information about your clients or their sessions** on social media. Most will see this as a violation.
- **Never demand, ask, or even suggest** your clients follow you on social media. Clients may feel your treatment is dependent on their following you online. And many of them won't want to hint to their followers the fact they're seeing a therapist.

Popular social media sites include Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. But to get you started on social media marketing, we'll focus on the biggest whale in the social media ocean: Facebook.

For further reading: A social media policy is just one of the 10 documents all new private practice therapists need in their office, says experienced hypnotherapist David Hartman. [Find out what the other nine are.](#)

Spark Engagement on Facebook

Facebook is a massive online destination with a staggering base of users. Most people you know, most of your clients, and most people in your target audience — of all ages — are on Facebook. How do you reach them?

There are two basic ways to use Facebook to promote your therapy practice:



1. Your Facebook business page is essentially a second website for your practice. You provide the same kind of information on your Facebook page as you do on your site: bio, contact information, services offered, pricing, and so on.
2. You use Facebook to attract and interact with users. You post thoughts and links that may appear in your followers' news feeds, you comment on content posted by others, and you may even purchase Facebook advertising.

Most therapists who choose the second option also choose the first. Indeed, it's a good idea to create a basic Facebook business page to give potential clients another way to find you online.

There are numerous [online guides](#) and [videos](#) that walk you through the steps of creating a Facebook business page. Facebook makes it easy and claims [you can complete the process in a matter of minutes](#).

As you create your Facebook page, keep in mind the same guidelines you used when creating your website:

- Use clear, readable language.
- Include all the important information clients search for (contact information, address, payment types accepted, and so on).
- Invest in professional photography.

How to Attract New Clients on Facebook

If you want to use Facebook to grow your private therapy practice, the key is **engagement**.

Think about your own Facebook news feed. If you have more than a few friends and follow a few businesses and media sites, you'll notice it's constantly updating with new content. This is why Facebook is so addicting;



But this is also why Facebook marketing is challenging. You have to make an effort to stand out and not get buried in your followers' feeds.

Facebook chooses what to show its users based on what it thinks will interest them the most. It determines this partly through the content they engage with. Engagement means:

- Liking or reacting to a post.
- Commenting on a post.
- Responding to a comment on a post.
- Sharing a post, picture, or video.
- Clicking on a link within a post.



“Engagement is posting content on Facebook that your target audience is interested in. It’s content that catches their attention in their newsfeed and makes them want to read more.”

Thriving Therapy Practice

So it’s not enough to merely attract Facebook followers. To maintain a regular presence in their news feeds, you have to regularly post content your followers will want to engage with. What might that be?

Brian Dear, of iCouch, suggests a **kitchen-sink approach**: “Post any content that is potentially useful and loosely related to therapy, wellness and your area of expertise.”



The content needn't be your own, Dear says. Social media is all about sharing. If you read an interesting article, stumbled across an inspiring quote, or learned from a useful video, it's only natural you would want to share it with your community of followers. Be aware of what it says about you and your practice, however.

"You are what you post," say the experts at Therapy Everywhere.

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“Create and share content that will get you noticed in the way that will help you build your business. Think about what you want to be known for, and post about those topics.”

Therapy Everywhere

Facebook is also a great venue for posting content you've written or recorded yourself. Later in this guide, we'll cover **blogging**. When you post new blog articles on your website, you can use Facebook to promote them, driving visitors to your site.

Finally, if all this seems like a lot to stay on top of, it is. Facebook marketing skeptic Daniel Wendler warns that social media marketing can consume a lot of hours that may be better spent working on your website, improving your therapy skills, or taking time for yourself.

“You need to follow lots of other people, you need to participate in lots of discussions, and you need to aggressively encourage people to follow you,” Wendler writes.

If you decide to try your hand at Facebook marketing, be ready to work at it. On the world's busiest social network, it takes a lot to rise above the commotion.



CHAPTER 5

Content Marketing/Blogging

What if you could help people before they even set foot in your office? What if you could help people before they picked up the phone to schedule an appointment? What if you could help people you've never met?

By publishing helpful information online and making it available for free, you can help people understand and start dealing with their mental health challenges. Of course, there's no substitute for psychotherapy. So when they're ready, some of those who've benefited from your helpful, free information, will want to take the next step and meet with you in person.

That's the idea behind **content marketing**. Nowadays, when people have a problem of any kind, they usually start looking for answers online. As a trained, licensed therapist — an expert in your field — you have the answers; you can use them to help people and attract visitors to your website.

Content marketing pioneer HubSpot often talks about **creating marketing people love**.

The modern internet user is put off by pushy advertising and empty slogans. When they search online, they search for content that provides genuine value.



Thriving Therapy Practice named content marketing its **number-one online marketing trend for psychotherapists:**

“What exactly is ‘content marketing’? Well, it’s providing great FREE content (like articles, podcasts, and videos) so that your potential clients fall in love with you before they even meet you in person. Your content positions you as a trusted authority, and you stand out from the crowd with your marketing.”

Content marketing has the power to:

- Demonstrate your expertise to potential clients before they contact you.
- Establish your authority in your area of expertise — with potential clients and other healthcare providers.
- Teach you about your local market and your potential clients by revealing the topics they’re interested in.
- Increase your standing in Google search results.

You can apply the philosophy of content marketing — always creating value — to everything you do, online and off.



“Always look for ways to deliver value to anyone and everyone you come across. You don’t know if your neighbor or dentist may refer you to one of their friends.”

Jesse Hartman, The Wellness Institute



Content is a broad term that describes anything you can publish online that someone might read, listen to, watch, or otherwise experience. It can include everything from YouTube videos, to podcasts, to PowerPoint presentations, to social media posts, to exhaustive guides, such as the one you're reading right now.

But for starters, we'll focus on the easiest way to turn your expertise into valuable content that will attract new clients and search engines to your therapy practice website: blogging.

Blogging 101 for Mental Health Therapists

From a technical standpoint, blogging is easy because blogging tools are built into most content management systems. WordPress began as a blogging tool. Squarespace, Weebly, and Wix all allow blogging.

A **blog** is a website — often a subsection of a larger website — where individuals, organizations, or companies publish articles. Traditionally, blogs display articles in reverse chronological order, with the most recent article at the top of the page. (For example, [here is what our blog looks like.](#))

Some people follow their favorite blogs regularly, checking in from time to time for new content or subscribing to updates by email. More often, though, people stumble across blog articles while searching for answers with Google or another search engine. If they like the answers they find, they may become followers of the blog, share the article with friends, or leave a comment on the article.



How Search Engines (Like Google) Find Blog Articles

Google and other search engines use automated bots to comb the web continuously, discovering and cataloging as much content as they possibly can. Using advanced algorithms, they match content to search queries, aiming to connect users to the best answers to their questions.

The more helpful your content, the more likely it will be to be highly ranked by search engines.

Search engines also factor social shares and links from other sites into their rankings. So networking with other experts and promoting your articles on social media can help you climb the search engine results pages.

An essential practice of content marketing is **the next step**. Once a visitor has read your article and found it helpful, what do you want them to do? **If you haven't planned the next step, you will miss opportunities.**

Next steps could include:

- Subscribing to updates from your blog.
- Reading another of your articles.
- Downloading a more in-depth piece of content in exchange for contact information such as an email address or phone number.
- Contacting your practice to schedule an appointment or an introductory phone call.



What Should You Write About?

Resist the temptation to fill your blog with any thought that crosses your mind. Your blog is a marketing tool and a way to provide value to potential clients. It's not your diary, and it's not your pulpit.

If you've sat down to write your first blog post and found yourself suffering from writer's block, start by answering these questions:

- **What are the common problems with which clients come to you every day?**
- **What pieces of advice do you find yourself offering clients most often?**
- **When you meet with clients for the first time, what questions do they usually ask?**
- **When you meet with clients for the first time, what don't they usually know that you wish they already knew?**

Your answers to these questions are all good blog post prompts.

Kelly Higdon, of Business School Bootcamp for Therapists, writes that, when blogging, you should **always keep your niche in mind**.

"When you 'get' your niche, then you understand their pain points and their aspirations. Those are the things you speak to in your blogs. Have a conversation and share some of your knowledge about what they are going through."

Online readers respond most to articles that are practical, actionable, and that answer questions. Here are a few examples:

- "5 Tips for Depressed Parents"
- "What Does the Latest Research Say About Anxiety?"
- "What to Expect When You See A Hypnotherapist"



How Often Should You Blog?

Search engines and humans mistrust content that has gotten stale.

Therefore, if you're going to blog, keep it up-to-date with new articles.

You don't have to blog every day, but you should carve out a couple of hours in your weekly schedule for writing. If you can publish at least two or three new articles per month, you'll be in good shape.

If you make writing a regular habit, you'll find it gets easier over time, and you'll be able to increase your blogging frequency.

Expert Blog Writing Tips for Beginners

Focus on your opening.

"Even if the rest of your post hits the mark dead on, without a captivating opening, your audience may never even click on the article or be interested in reading it in the first place."

— [Jayson DeMers, AudienceBloom](#)

Don't be sloppy. Have a second pair of eyes check for grammar mistakes, factual errors, and typos.

"Asking a friend or colleague to check your work isn't an admission of weakness or a sign of failure – it's a commitment to making your work as strong as it possibly can be." — [WordStream](#)

Tell the truth. Be accurate. Back up your claims with links and data.

"As marketers, we don't just have to convince people to be on our side about an issue — we need to convince them to take action. Data-driven content catches people's attention in a way that fluffy arguments do not." — [HubSpot](#)



Avoid big blocks of copy.

“Writing short paragraphs is a basic blog post writing law. Just like simple words and short sentences. Resort to long blocks of copy and you are stacking the deck against your blog post.” — **Neil Patel**

Choose specific topics you can handle in the space of a single blog post.

“When people start blogging, they generally want to write on really big topics...Because there are so many details and nuances in these [broad] topics, it’s really hard to do a good job answering them.”

— **HubSpot**

Be patient. Keep at it.

“The web is a big, noisy place and unless you’re willing to invest more over a greater period of time than others, you’ll find success nearly impossible.” — **Rand Fishkin, CEO of Moz**



CHAPTER 6

Networking/Generating Referrals

For **the introverted therapist**, the thought of networking is one marketing step too far. You'll happily publish your thoughts and helpful ideas online or interact with followers behind the safety of a Facebook page, but your stomach churns at the idea of making one-on-one contact with potential referral sources.

For better or for worse, of all the marketing methods covered in this guide, networking and generating referrals is by far the fastest way to build up to a sustainable therapy business.

Online marketing is a long game. You lay the groundwork with your website, slowly assemble an active social media community, and over time, create a body of online content that attracts site visitors and search engines. It will all pay off, but not right away.

By reaching out to your existing network, and by working to expand your network, you can find clients who are ready to start therapy now.

Blogging 101 for Mental Health Therapists

If you're nervous about putting yourself out there, don't be. We're not going to suggest you go knocking on doors or cold calling strangers. There are plenty of ways to expand your professional network without putting yourself in awkward situations.

Plus, if you've already **done your market research** and **found your niche**, you know there's a market for your type of therapy. Networking doesn't have to be about bothering people. It can be about letting people know a valuable resource — you — is now available in their community.



5 Steps for Building a Solid Referral Base for Your Private Therapy Practice

A steady stream of referrals will sustain your therapy practice through good times and bad. Here are a few tips for building a stronger referral base:

1. Be Confident With What You Offer

When you're building your network — especially when you're starting out — it can be very tempting to take any client that comes your way. But not every client is a good fit for your practice and not every referral source will know that.

Miranda Palmer writes about meeting a local physician who was delighted to find a new referral for trauma patients. The calls came rolling in, but to Palmer's dismay, every client was covered by Medicare, which Palmer didn't and couldn't accept. She was forced to clarify her practice with the physician.



When you tell others about your practice, make sure you're specific about:

- The kind of clients you see.
- The issues you treat.
- The methods you use.
- The payments you accept.

It may seem like you're limiting your opportunities by narrowing your focus. But what you're really doing is developing your niche.

2. Start With Your 'Base Relationships'

You know more people than you think who are in positions to recommend your services to others.

On her website, Miranda Palmer (who writes about networking often) suggests starting with people with whom you already have a relationship.

She offers a "non-exhaustive" list of potential referral sources. It includes everyone from your own doctor, lawyer, or dentist, to hair stylists, neighbors, teachers, and church friends.

You never know who might lead to a good referral. Be prepared to talk about your practice a lot.

"The biggest thing has been learning to network in everyday life," **one therapist writes.** "[T]here are millions of opportunities to mention what I do and that I'm expanding my practice, and educating friends and non-therapist professionals about how to refer their friend, colleague, or patient to me."

3. Diversify Your Referrals

Relying on a single referral source can imperil your practice.

Allison Puryear, LCSW, writes that **she has seen practices "tank"** simply because an agency case manager who was funneling clients to the therapist moved on to a new job. She says she became worried about a psychologist friend who stopped building his practice because almost all his business was coming from a single testing agency.

"No one referral source will be able to maintain your practice for the long haul," Puryear writes.

You went into private practice to work independently. In the spirit of independence, make sure you're not reliant on anyone but yourself to keep your practice going.



4. Make Networking a Daily Habit

Relying on a single referral source can imperil your practice.

The way to keep your referral stream diverse is to never stop networking. Casey Truffo, founder of Be a Wealthy Therapist, suggests a radical approach: **daily networking time**.

Start with a list of 20 to 90 potential referral sources, Truffo writes. Then carve out time to contact three to five of them each day, by phone, email, handwritten note, or whatever method works for you. (Email might be the best method if you're an introvert.)

Truffo suggests not overthinking it. After two months, you'll have reached 120 people, she says.

5. Join a Professional Networking Group

You probably already know that fellow therapists and medical doctors are good referral sources, but what about the local dog groomer, auto mechanic, or massage therapist? If you or your business are new to your area, joining a business referral network is a great way to plug into a community of professionals-helping-professionals.

join a professional networking groupA business referral network, such as **Business Network International (BNI)**, typically admits one person per profession per region (making finding your niche even more critical). But once you're in, you can find yourself handling referrals from the most unexpected sources.



Casey Truffo, of Be a Wealthy Therapist, [writes that she has spoken with therapists](#) who have earned between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per year from professional networking groups.

“Each member acts as a sales force for the other members,” Truffo writes. “...The group members learn about each other’s services and keep their eyes and ears open for openings to make referrals to group members.

Review: 5 Steps for Building a Strong Base of Referrals for Your Private Therapy Practice

- Clarify what your offer.
- Start with your existing relationships.
- Diversify your referral stream.
- Make networking a daily habit.
- Join a local professional group.

For further reading: The rarer your services are in your area, the more referrals you’ll receive — if there’s a demand. Hypnotherapy is an underserved specialty with high demand.

First, learn how to grow your private practice with hypnotherapy in our free guide, [“13 Ways Hypnotherapy Certification Can Jumpstart and Improve Your Practice.”](#)

Then, learn [How to Get More Hypnotherapy Referrals From Other Professionals](#) in an article by successful hypnotherapist Diane Zimmeroff.

