

3 Newbie Therapist Mistakes *and how to conquer them!*

Mistake #1 - The Generalist Tendencies

New therapists are often caught up in trying to fill their caseload as quickly as possible (I get it!). With that comes trying to be everything for everyone. We'll enroll in a whole slew of different trainings and read every book on the market, all in an effort to be able to support as many different populations and present problems as possible. The problem is that generalist therapists are everywhere, and it's hard to give 100% to every presenting problem and clientele when you're trying to cover all the bases. This can also lead to you being unfulfilled by your caseload, burnout, and even more imposter syndrome than you already have.

Solution:

Start with what you're best at. What clients are you having the most success with? What clients do you feel confident with, what clients fill you up? Start here! Market to those clients, and focus your training, experience and education on those populations. Time and time again, marketing experts will tell you to be specific, instead of broad. In turn, clients will benefit greatly, and you'll become known in your field for the work you do with specific clientele. This doesn't mean you're stuck here forever, over time broaden your scope as it makes sense for you!

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Mistake #2 - Lack of Confidence in Converting

We know the consult call is the key to converting clients, but what we're not taught in grad school is the sales aspect of being a therapist in private practice (ew!!!). This doesn't mean we should be cheesy salespeople trying to convince the wrong clients that we're right for them. Not at all. However, when presented with clients that we are the best fit for, it's your job to instill confidence in your clients. The client needs to know why you're the right fit for them and feel confident that you know what you're doing in order to trust you with their vulnerability.

Solution:

Be sure to share with the client how you are going to help them. The focus should always remain on the client and how we are going to help resolve their problems and pains. It's rare that a client wants to hear all about your fancy trainings and years of experience. Instead, once you've gotten to know your clients' struggles, share with them how you plan to help them experience relief from their struggles. Imagining relief from their symptoms will have them building confidence that you're the one to offer it. Notice the focus isn't on you but on helping the client! Once the client knows how you're going to help them, you want to book them while they are in that state of wanting change. Book with confidence using sure phrases instead of flippant questions. "My recommendation is to get booked in sometime next week so we can get this process started." Instead of "Do you want to email me if you'd like to move forward?"

There's no need to be salesy or pushy, but speak with confidence and surety.

*Pro tip - create a script for yourself and practice BEFORE your consultations. Get used to the sounds of your own voice being confident.

For more help on this topic, check out our therapist toolkit where we give you the full confident conversion consultation script that is sure to convert clients!

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Mistake #3 - Not being helpful!

This may sound funny, as we're in the helping profession and are in this to help people, but not all therapists are actually helping their clients! New therapists are inundated with theory, ethical guidelines, soft skills, and loads of knowledge from grad school, but when it comes to sitting in a session and helping clients, we don't always know what we're supposed to be doing. In fact, the number one complaint we get from clients who have worked with novice therapists at other practices is "My therapist didn't really do anything, they just validated, empathized, and offered me a space to talk." Now don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with validation, empathizing, and providing a safe place, in fact, those things are necessary! But one of the keys to retaining clients is ensuring we're giving them what they need from us. Sometimes, these soft skills are enough, but other times, clients need and want more from us.

Solution:

The first step to retaining clients and being the therapist they need is asking for regular feedback. Incorporating regular questions of feedback into your sessions is the key to knowing what our clients need and want "What do you want more of," "What would you like less of from me?" "What are the most helpful things for you in session?"

Beyond just providing safe space, validation, and empathy, you want to look for other ways to support your clients. Are you doing any of the following:

- Setting clear goals, collaboratively
- Providing psychoeducation on different topics, themes, or interventions to help them understand what's going on,
- Practicing an intervention or skill in session together
- Providing them with helpful tools, tips, and techniques to reduce their symptoms.
- Reviewing progress together in session, so the client can see the wins, even if they don't always recognize them themselves!
- Creating plans together
- Asking for feedback about the therapy process and how the client is feeling about reaching their goals.

Retaining clients is a massive topic that is another thing we don't learn in grad school. If you're looking for all the tools to help retain your clients and build the caseload of your dreams, check out our newbie therapist offerings!

Check out our newbie therapist offerings and www.privatepracticepowerhouse.com