

HOLISTIC COUNSELLING PRACTICE



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For All Counselling & Psychotherapy Trainees & Potential Trainees

Having worked with many Supervisees and Colleagues, I have come to realise that there is some really important information which is rarely provided, in sufficient detail, to potential students or students on Counselling or Psychotherapy training courses. This information is about the financial commitment involved and the future potential for earning a living.

There are of course many reasons why people decide to train as a Counsellor or Psychotherapist, and a new career with a reasonable income may not be the main driving factor. But for those of you for whom it is important, here is a list of those useful bits of missing information!

1. Any course worth its salt (in my view) will require you to experience your own personal therapy. So, in addition to the cost of the training course and other incidental fees set by the College, you will need to find money for regular weekly therapy. This can cost anywhere from £40 - £80 for a 50-60 minute hour if you live outside of London. You would expect to pay more in London. In all cases this is higher or lower depending on the therapist's qualifications and experience. This therapy can last for 2-4 years.
2. Once you start seeing clients, usually in your second year, you normally have to find your own clinical placement. If you live outside of a major city, this can be a momentously difficult task. You may find yourself applying, re-applying and chasing 20-30 organisations or more up to a 25 mile radius or more, if you're lucky to have that many available!

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3. You will then also have to start paying for 1-2-1 clinical Supervision for which, outside of London, depending on qualifications and experience, a Supervisor will charge £40-£70 an hour for 2-4 hours a month, depending on the number of clients you are seeing. The BACP specify a bare minimum of 1.5 hours a month once you are fully qualified, so expect to have more if a student.
4. Once you have qualified and you need to earn a living, you will find that there are very few paid jobs in this field and those that pay well are few and far between. This is a reality, particularly with cutbacks and the emphasis on CBT in the NHS. However, someone has to get the jobs which are available, and it could be you! Consider looking out for work in Schools, Colleges, Universities, Providers of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP's), some Charities, Private Hospitals, the NHS or GP Surgeries. Ultimately, setting up in Private Practice may be the answer for paid work but you would need to invest time and energy to ensure that you got referrals from the above sources.
5. Many of the aforementioned jobs will require that you have been through the extra hoop, in addition to your training, of gaining Accreditation or Registration via your professional body, notably BACP or UKCP or equivalent. Accreditation requires that you have more Counselling or Psychotherapy hours' experience than is usually (but not always the case) attained throughout your training. Therefore you will need to continue with voluntary work – usually with your clinical placement – until you have attained those hours within a specified time frame as dictated by your chosen professional body. (The latter is often recommended by or linked to your training course). Accreditation is not necessarily easy to obtain; it is not a 'given' just for achieving the specified hours. It requires a level of depth of

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reflective practice which only experience can bring. This experience must be linked to your theoretical training in some way and it will be necessary to prove that you can link it through writing detailed responses to several pages of questions! These are all laid down by your professional body. This costs time and money.

6. It may not be necessary for you to go the extra mile to get yourself accredited, but it does limit your options. Some employers are still happy to employ Counsellors in this position. Many however, are not. Also, if you are not interested in applying for a job and are happy to work in Private Practice or continue voluntarily, accreditation may be unnecessary. However, it can be a very useful personal measure of 'where you are' in your vocation and to think this through by describing how you work and explaining this to others (your professional body) in a considered fashion.
7. So now you're qualified AND accredited and the field is open to you, and still the job opportunities are few. But you could still decide to set up in Private Practice. The potential advantages of this are several, such as flexibility and convenience if you practice from home. However, there are many things to consider if you have a family, particularly with regard to having a private, comfortable, clean and confidential space, where there are no interruptions. Further, there are also many more costs involved once full professional status is obtained and these are often not spelt out on training courses. If you are employed then often an employer will pick up some of the costs below but if you are going down the self-employed route, it is essential to be aware of the following hefty expenses. These include:

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- Membership fee payment to your professional body. Sometimes you may wish to join more than one. Membership is important to maintain accredited and registered status. The latter reassures clients that you have attained a certain standard of competence and that they can complain to this body if they feel badly treated.
- Your professional body will also require that you attend a minimum amount of regular clinical Supervision per month, which you must pay for. Peer Supervision with a colleague, which is free, is really only suitable when you've gathered considerable experience.
- Continuous Professional Development costs. (A number of hours' CPD is always required by your professional body each year). And at some point you may wish to add to your qualifications and do further training which also costs money - from your own pocket of course.
- If you chose to continue in your own Personal Therapy for a while, this will obviously continue to cost money.
- Although some personal issues can be explored briefly in your Supervision, it is vital to continue in therapy if you believe that some of your own issues are interfering with your client work on a regular basis.
- You will need to keep up-to-date in other ways through buying books and journals or paying to go to conferences.
- Liability Insurance costs (minimum of 2 million pounds cover for EAP work is usual).

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- Remember to keep money aside to pay your self-employed tax bill and National Insurance Contributions!
 - Last but far from least, promoting your practice through suitable, effective advertising and marketing strategies can be very costly. (Note that often clients who attend Counselling want to keep it private and contrary to popular belief, do not always tell others about you and so relying on 'word of mouth' to get referrals is not always the best way forward.)! Marketing is essential. You want to consider building a website or paying other online directories to list you in order to get found. Professional bodies usually advertise your services on their websites.
8. And if clients don't turn up for all sorts of reasons, do you charge? I believe it is completely reasonable to charge the full fee if you do not have a realistic amount of notice (several days even up to a week) in order to have a fair chance to fill the slot. This is because you will **STILL** have to pay most of the aforementioned costs. The parties concerned are not going to take pity on **you** if your client doesn't show! But this must be made clear in your initial assessment session, and in writing, so that there is no misunderstanding.
9. Most importantly, remember that throughput of clients is neither regular nor predictable. In other words, if someone ends, a new client may not be waiting in the wings, so a good amount of trust in your qualities and abilities may be necessary to attract the necessary energetic flow of clients from the Universe! In other words, be willing to "hang on in there" sometimes, for quite a long time, maybe years, to build up a decent practice may be required, especially if you do not live in or near a large town! Perhaps another part-time job may be necessary for a while.

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If it is your calling to do this work to help others then none of the above will concern you greatly I hope. But being prepared and being realistic goes a long way towards success.

Good luck!

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