

*Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is **your** professional massage association.
We support you through education, information, and advocacy.*

Career Path: Private Practice

In each issue of Knead to Know, a different career path is explored. In this issue, we look at massage therapists who start private practices.

Starting and managing a private massage business is an exciting and sizeable undertaking. **If you choose this career path, you must be willing and eager to be a businessperson as well as a therapist.**

Private practices vary a great deal in scope. On one end of the spectrum is the therapist who practices out of his or her home part-time. On the other end is the therapist who runs a bustling clinic and employs or contracts a number of other therapists. Some therapists rent an office, some buy office space, and some share office space with other therapists. People start their own practices to enjoy the freedom to define their own hours and work environment, and to select the clients they work with. There are many benefits to starting a private practice, as long as the therapist/businessperson pays attention to some key areas.

Goal Setting

Good businesspeople plan everything and set clearly defined goals. They know how many clients they need to work with each week, each month, and each year. They know how much money they want to make, and they have compared their financial goals to the expenses of running the business. Students can begin honing these skills now, so they are prepared when entering the business world. (For more information on goal setting, review Topic 2 in ABMP's *Student Success Guide*.)

Market Demand and Business Location

The location of the private practice will be a factor in the success of the business. Conduct a market assessment to determine if there is a demand for massage in the area where your business will be located. Do professional massage therapists already serve the needs of the clients in the area adequately? If you find that the therapists already in practice can't meet the needs of all the potential clients in the area, the location is more likely to be successful. If the business is located in your home, pay careful attention to zoning laws, and state and local regulations that apply to home-based businesses.

Marketing Plan

Marketing refers to all of the activities you do to attract new clients or retain your existing clients. Some therapists choose to target particular client types for their businesses. Perhaps you enjoy working with pregnant women, infants, and children. Your marketing plan may outline a number of activities to ensure that your clientele will be formed predominantly of this group.

For example, you might send brochures to all of the midwives in your area and provide each with a free massage in order to form relationships with them.

As a therapist/businessperson, **define key activities in the areas of promotion, advertising, publicity, customer relations, and client education to best meet your specific goals.**



Rosemary for Remembrance

It's true: rosemary is particularly useful for creating memory links to information.

In ancient times, Greek and Roman scholars would attach rosemary to their lapels while studying. To use rosemary for study, place a drop of the essential oil in your study area (the aroma should be very faint). Before an exam, inhale a small amount of rosemary oil from a tissue to stimulate your memory centers. Don't use too much—it works best when the aroma is faint.



- ☺ **Promotion** refers to the activities you engage in to increase visibility in the marketplace and attract the attention of potential clients. A booth rented at a community event where you offer seated massage is a good example of a promotional activity.
- ☺ **Advertising** requires the payment of a fee in order to obtain public notice. Classified ads, display ads in a local community magazine, and phone book ads are examples of advertising.
- ☺ **Publicity** is media exposure that usually arises from an event held at the business, or from an interview, news coverage of participation in a community event, or a feature story in a local magazine.
- ☺ **Customer relations** describe the activities a business undertakes to keep or build client loyalty. Sending a birthday card to each client and offering \$15 off a birthday session is an example.
- ☺ **Client education** refers to activities the therapist undertakes to raise awareness of the benefits of massage in the local community. Presenting an informational lecture on the benefits of massage at a local health club is one way therapists educate people about massage.

Financial Projection

A financial projection is based on start-up costs and monthly expenses. Start-up costs include activities like printing

brochures, purchasing equipment, and setting up the office space. Monthly expenses include marketing costs, rent or mortgage, supplies, taxes, phone and electric bills, and paying employees. List all of these expenses and review your goals. Will you have the clientele to pay your expenses and still make money? Revenue will come from massage sessions, sales of retail products, or from therapists who rent space from you.

Policies and Records

As the business owner, you will be responsible for organizing all of the policies and procedures of the business. How will clients who don't show up for appointments be charged for the missed session? Who will answer the phone on Saturdays? How will client records and files be managed to meet federal HIPAA regulations and maintain client confidentiality? Who will track revenue and expenses to keep good tax records?

As you can see, there is a lot more to starting your own practice than setting up a massage table and hoping clients show up. **Educate yourself now about business practices, and pay attention in your business classes.** Some new graduates plan to work as an employee in an established business to learn the ropes before going it alone. When you upgrade to professional membership after graduation, you'll receive ABMP's *Successful Business Handbook*, which provides additional valuable tips that can help you and your business thrive. ☘

"Don't get discouraged by negativity, whether from friends, relatives, strangers, or that rare client who might be moody."

—William Vogel, ABMP Member Since 1989

Campus Calm

To keep your cool on campus, focus on healthy snacks.

Foods to Avoid

Avoid stress elevators that are high in fat, sugar, and caffeine, or that contain alcohol. Fats make blood more viscous, lessening the speed that oxygen gets to the brain. Sugar sets you up for a crash, and caffeine increases anxiety. Alcohol is converted to a stimulant called acetaldehyde, which causes interrupted sleep.



Foods to Embrace

Drink plenty of water, as the body feels more rundown when it is dehydrated. Eat foods like blueberries (a rich source of antioxidants that can boost the immune system), oatmeal (packed with soluble fiber, which prevents volatile blood sugar and leads to even energy levels), dark chocolate (full of antioxidants and containing methylxanthines, a component that leads to feelings of satisfaction), and apples (loaded with vitamin C and a satisfying replacement for fatty, sugary snacks). ☘



"Take care of yourself first!...The best way to burnout or hurt yourself is not paying attention to your body or your intuition."

—Karen Cappa, ABMP Member Since 1989

A-itis Why Getting the A Isn't Always the Answer

Amy struggled to block out the sound of the instructor's voice. She had an exam in her anatomy and physiology class later that day, and this lecture on pathology interrupted her concentration. She stole a glance down at the anatomy flashcards in her hands. Her throat tightened; her palms started to perspire; she felt a headache come on. When class ended, Amy gathered her books and changed classrooms. With her stomach twisting and churning, she sat down and read her notes one last time. Why did she feel like crying? She had studied all night. **She was a good student! She worked hard! She deserved this grade! She had to get an A!** The room started to spin as the instructor placed the test in front of her.

Are you an "Amy"?

Society, family members, friends, other students, and internal voices may tell students that high grades equal success. In fact, some students trade sleep, personal care, time with loved ones, and general enjoyment of life for perfect grades. Some students will be so driven to achieve an A that they argue every missed point with the instructor, believe every test is unfair or poorly

written, or become sick with anxiety-fed stomach and nervous system disorders. **These students might earn the As they are seeking, but at what price?**

Meaningful learning is a difficult thing to define, often happening in the moments when ideas are exchanged in a relaxed and happy classroom environment. Amy's A-itis prevented her from fully experiencing meaningful learning. She became so obsessed with perfect grades that she couldn't savor the unique environment of massage school. Instead of enjoying the feel of muscle tension releasing during a massage exchange, she thought through medical terms. Instead of joining the classroom discussion about the ethics of selling retail products, she thought about how much study time next week's kinesiology exam required. While Amy's mind was solely on the A, she missed experiences that would enrich her abilities as a massage professional.

Students who develop A-itis often lose sight that grades alone don't ensure a graduate's success in the massage profession. Some students who get the best grades don't demonstrate the best hands-on skills. Your clients will never

know your grades. Employers may be less interested in your grades than in your hands-on abilities and your professional communication skills. In massage school, part of your education is dedicated to learning how to communicate effectively and manage your own wellness, while helping clients find the wellness they seek through massage. Students are rarely graded on personal wellness because it's hard to quantify. Your ability to remain injury-free; mentally, emotionally, and spiritually well; and to model wellness and self-care for clients will form a primary part of your career's success.

Getting a good grade feels fantastic, but can it compare to feeling the emotional energy you need to embrace all of the different learning opportunities at massage school? Students who focus on the grade alone miss the big picture and often feel more stressed. Students who focus on gathering, processing, and integrating all of the specialized skills learned at massage school have the opportunity to understand and experience success on a multitude of levels. ☘

Is an A the only way your personal best can be defined?

If you see Amy in yourself, it might be time to reevaluate what it means to be successful. While achieving your personal best is desirable, ask yourself the following questions, and journal about your findings.

- What are the most important skills I am learning for my career as a massage therapist?
- Which of these skills can be qualified by a letter grade?
- What are the attributes of a successful human (i.e., kindness, helpfulness, happiness, etc)? Can these be qualified by a letter grade?
- Have I spent time this week taking care of my body? How?
- Have I spent time this week taking care of my relationships with friends and family? How?
- Is life enjoyable? Why? Why not?
- How stressed am I? What stressors impact me the most right now?
- Am I pleased with my school experience? How can I change my behaviors to have a more meaningful educational experience?

Student Resources @ ABMP.com

ABMP Student members have access to a variety of study tools that promote active learning. Access them by logging on to www.abmp.com, using your member ID and, as your password, your last name. Download fun graphic organizers for note-taking, or use

flash cards for review before a test. Materials like resume and cover letter samples help students in advanced stages of their training program.

Log on and browse the dynamic tools, including the following and much more.

Goal Setting Resources: Worksheets to use along with the

information included in the *Student Success Guide*.

Time Management Resources: Tools to efficiently plan schedules and keep track of study sessions, due dates, and personal life. Post these easy-to-print, attractive forms in your study area to support better personal organization.

General Study Aids: Graphic organization forms to use during lectures, demonstrations, and study sessions. Use the “An Important Person” form to gather relevant information about a significant figure in massage history. Try the “Compare and Contrast Attributes Chart” to evaluate massage modalities. The “Sun Map” and “Cluster Map” are great for organizing notes.

Homework and Exams: User-friendly forms that help you take control of your educational process. Plan for an important quiz or test with the “Exam Preparation Form.” Get organized with forms like the “Homework Tracker,” the “Grade Tracking Sheet,” and the “Single Topic Study Form.”

Anatomy & Physiology and Kinesiology Reviews: Flash cards (presented through PowerPoint presentations) about systems of the body and muscle groups. Download and print the cards to test your knowledge and to prepare for a quiz or exam.

Resources for Writing a Research Paper: Tools to help with the process of writing research papers. Link to *Massage & Bodywork* magazine articles and other useful resources for easy and efficient access to clinical studies and industry information. ☘



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PO Box 1869
Evergreen, Colorado 80437
800-458-2267
www.abmp.com
expectmore@abmp.com

