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# 3 Tips For Building a Sustainable Mental Health Care Practice

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Providers



If you're a mental health provider like me, you probably think back fondly on your days in school. You learned about a wide range of theoretical perspectives and therapeutic techniques specific to the field. However, you probably didn't learn how to make your practice sustainable — that you can only learn with time, experience, and experimentation.

Over the years of working in the mental health field and being the CEO of a successful practice, three things have proven necessary for my practice's longevity. One, I've realized the importance of prioritizing my own health and well-being. Two, I've also recognized that my practice must be flexible, so it can adapt to change. And three, I've partnered with a care coordination service to lighten some of my professional load. I believe these tips can help you build a sustainable practice, too.

## 1. Learn to Prioritize Your Own Well-Being as a Mental Health Provider

Many people in the mental health profession have been directly or indirectly affected by mental health issues. I am no different; I struggled with anxiety as a teenager, and my family didn't know how to help me. My personal experience led to my practice specialty: kids. I have the unique privilege of helping them see the world and themselves in new ways.

In order to help the kids I care so much about, I have to prioritize my own mental health. This is counterintuitive for those of us drawn to the field; we tend to put others first. For example, I used to be extremely accommodating with client scheduling requests. But prioritizing what was best for clients instead of what was healthy for me was exhausting. I recognized that I need time with my family, my friends, and even my dog! If you're a provider, you need to guard your own boundaries and do things that are enlivening for you — otherwise, burnout may be headed your way.

## 2. Always Be Willing to Adapt Your Practice to Changing Times

The more rigid things are, the more likely they'll break. Real staying power requires flexibility. As a mental health professional, I have tried to embody that truth. When things change, I find ways to change with them.

As a mental health provider during the pandemic, I had to understand and adapt to sweeping, global changes. But not all providers did — I watched colleagues of mine end their practices. While it was deeply challenging to change the way my practice delivered therapy, I found a way to thrive in this new environment.

Of course, patience is required for successful transitions, whether personal or professional. I also found that I needed to:

- **Adjust expectations.** During the pandemic, we had to really become a family-friendly agency and let clients know a toddler might walk in during their sessions! You can't predict what changes you'll need to make over the lifetime of your practice. But you can decide how to make them — and then adjust your expectations (and your client's) accordingly.
- **Form a support group.** I formed what I called a "Consultation Group" for my team of therapists. It was voluntary and designed to help them decompress and discuss the challenges of providing therapy from home. I strongly believe that a group like ours — a place for understanding, support, and camaraderie — is essential for practice longevity.

Post-pandemic, the support group is still valuable to my team. If you don't have something similar in real life, find a place online. We need each other!

## 3. Partner With a Care Coordination Service You Trust

Mental health providers are still inundated with post-pandemic, higher-level needs. There's little doubt that managing more difficult cases has the potential to lead to provider burnout. When you decide to use a care coordination service like Care Solace, though, you have an additional team on your side who can ease many of the administrative burdens that come along with these cases.

I initially learned about Care Solace because I wanted to work with students in schools; the school superintendents and vice principals I talked with highly recommended them. I found their services tremendously helpful because:

- **Care Solace matches providers to clients** who meet their specialties and accepted insurance. That's a win-win: Clients don't have to start over with a new provider due to poor fit or insurance issues, and providers can share their expertise with the clients who will most benefit from it.
- **Providers can build up an online presence.** Whether you're just starting your practice or you're a seasoned practitioner, having an accurate, up-to-date, accessible profile is more important than ever. Care Solace makes it easy to do that in their provider portal.
- **Providers save time, phone calls, and emails.** It's a real relief to do far fewer calls and make far fewer emails with new clients. Care Solace streamlines the process. When we get a referral, we can be sure they're a good fit, and that shortens the time to the first session.

Providers may assume that care coordination is expensive or full of more red tape. Actually, the opposite is true at Care Solace: it costs providers nothing and supports both providers and clients through the tricky world of mental health care.

While it's inevitable that mental health providers will run into times that are stressful and exhausting, I'm confident that proactive measures and the right mindset can make the difference between burnout and a sustainable career. Always take care of yourself first; as they say, you can't pour from an empty cup. Be flexible and willing to adapt, even if that means doing something uncomfortable. And finally, embrace the partnership of Care Solace, so you're freed up to concentrate on the part of your practice you care about the most: your clients.

## Martha Wethey

Martha Wethey is a Licensed Marriage And Family Therapist and Owner of Spring To Autumn Family Counseling. With over 18 years in the Mental Health field, she has used her experience to create the type of agency she would want to work at. By focusing on self-care and work-life balance, Martha has grown her company from a private practice to a group practice with around 50 employees and growing. She often presents at community events with the goal of building mental health awareness within the schools and community and as a result has been given the San Bernardino County Education Metal Of Honor (2019). When she is not running her company, Martha enjoys vacationing with her husband and 2 children.

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Care Solace is not a mental health services provider. For life threatening emergencies, call 911 or the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.