



CREATIVE CLINICIAN'S CORNER

DREAM PRACTICE PRE-LAUNCH QUESTIONNAIRE

BEFORE YOU LAUNCH, DREAM BIG!



Get your journal ready and use these prompts to visualize a killer plan for your DREAM practice.

LOOK BEFORE YOU LAUNCH

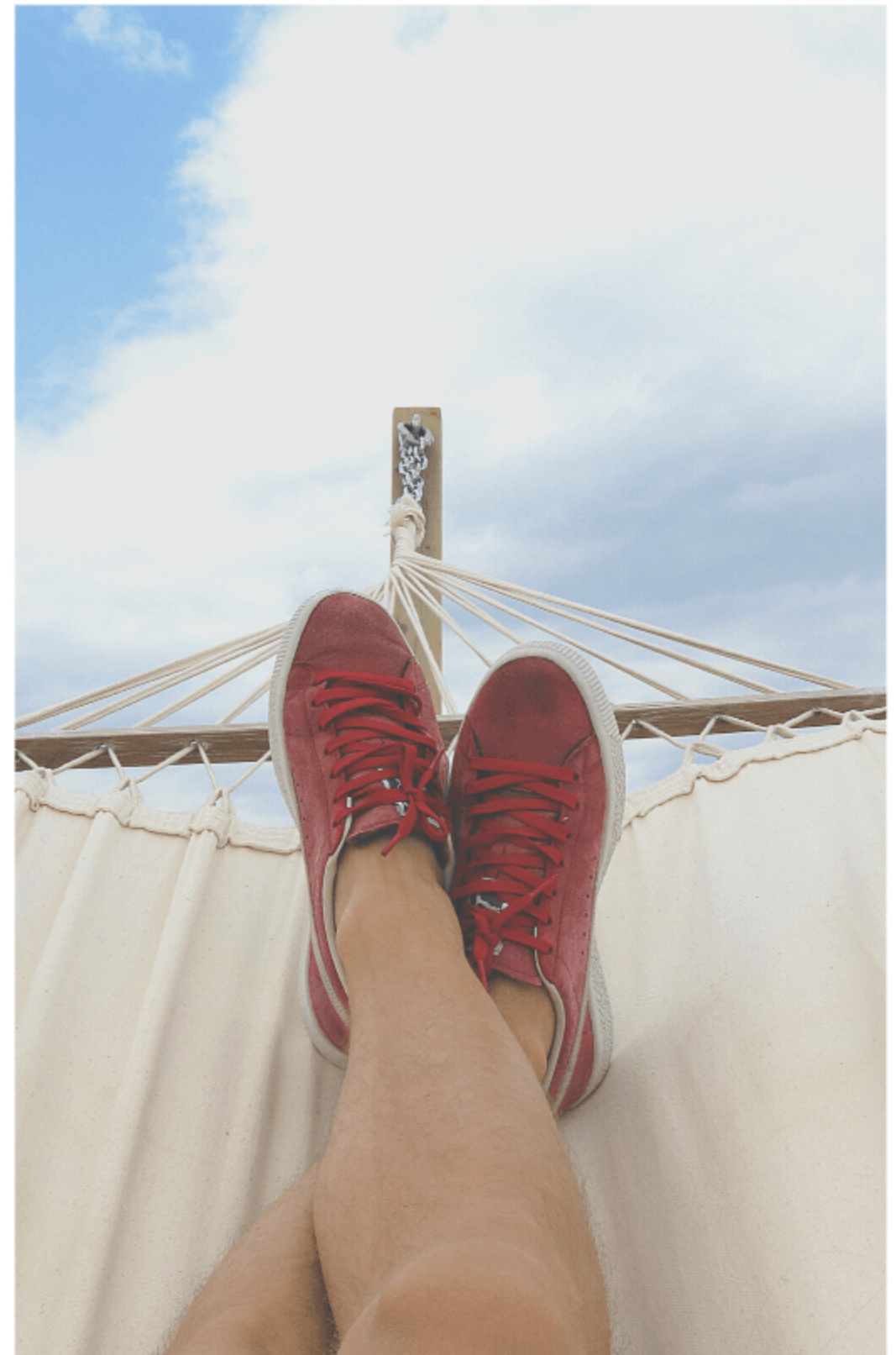
By Reina Lombardi, ATR-BC, ATCS, LMHC-QS

How much money do you need to bring home to cover your current expenses and lifestyle? If you haven't evaluated this accurately, you definitely want to make sure you do NOW. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Not next month. NOW! This number is an essential part of the 'how much should I charge' equation. If you need help with that equation, we've got you covered!



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Is there anything, in addition, to your current lifestyle that you would like to be able to afford? I mean ANYTHING & EVERYTHING. A new bed, perhaps? Those of you who are still sleeping on the same one from college (you know who you are), it is time to upgrade! You are going to need to sleep like a baby when you are hustling to realize your dream. Maybe you need a more reliable car, but it hasn't really been in the budget? Sure the old Civic is well loved, still sputtering down the road and it's paid off. AND it's in the shop every other month. You know it's bad when your friends are afraid to ride with you for fear the bumper might fall off driving down the highway. Or what about a proper vacation? You know the kind where you go on a wild, exciting adventure for 10 days and completely unwind. You return feeling refreshed, inspired and ready to tackle all your big goals and dreams. And, NO MORE trying to rationalize that work conference into your "vacation" because you booked days off in the conference locale. That isn't going to cut it anymore and for that matter, it never cut it in the first place! We are talking a real vacation where you stay at the NICE hotel and treat yourself, check something huge off your bucket-list, and genuinely enjoy life to the fullest. You are going to need these now more than ever because you are going to be the lead therapist, accountant, insurance biller, receptionist, copywriter, website developer, human resource officer, networker extraordinaire, and all around head honcho. At least, until you can afford an assistant or two. You will also need some mini-vacations. So, you might want to budget in a couple of those a year, too.



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Speaking of needing time to care for you, is there a membership to a gym, yoga studio, dance class, theatre class, ceramics studio, etc. that you know by participating in on the regular will help you to perform your best? Yes? GOOD! That expense needs to be accounted for in your DREAM, too.

How much time off do you need to function at your optimal performance? Sure, we are accounting for those awesome vacations, but also just regular old time off to do whatever your heart desires. Time by the pool with friends, mental health days, birthday celebrations, or just a Netflix and nap kind of afternoon on your cozy couch.

How much do you need to save for retirement each month? If you are like me, you likely had a few community mental health or non-profit jobs where they either gave you no benefits related to retirement, you had to be with them forever before they would contribute, or the contributions offered were laughable. And let's be honest, the lowly salary they offered barely cover the minimum monthly expenses and leaving you with a measly \$25.00 a month to contribute yourself.

When I set out on the journey of building my practice I had a few thousand in retirement investments, and tens of thousands in student loan debt. That means my practice had to cover both of these expenses. Yours might, too. So set that appointment with a financial planner and figure out the monthly contribution amount needed so you can retire by your DREAM retirement age.

What is the lifestyle you truly envision for yourself and your family? What are the costs for that vision? Maybe you want to convert an old school bus into a tiny home and travel the country three months of the year (or all year for that matter, it is possible if you are offering telehealth services). Or maybe, you want to own a small cabin in the mountains so you can get away and relish some peace and quiet in nature. And, possibly use that cabin for mini-retreats for your business in the future. Gotta dream big, right? Perhaps, you want your schedule to flow around your children's school schedule. Whatever it is, write it down. You will need this for your design, otherwise your practice can easily start to design your life.





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Your mission and vision should be so compelling that you are excited to run towards them at all costs.

How many face-to-face client hours are you able to complete giving your full attention, care, and energy? You know, without going home and having zip left for the people you love and who love you.

How many hours a day/week are you able to work while providing your full efforts and attention? Your dream requires your attention and focus for the long haul. We don't want you feeling burned out after a year in your new business.

How much money is needed to invest in your continuing education endeavors? Is there a specific credential or modality you'd like to add to your repertoire? In order to keep your credentials you will need to do some, but I am not talking about the bare minimum requirements I am talking about the training you have been coveting. The one you've been postponing indefinitely. Heck, you may even want to set aside money and time for practice building training while you are at it;)

How much time would you like to spend working directly with clients? Completing admin? Working on side projects? This ratio is going to be super helpful in figuring out your fees, so do spend some time mapping it out.

When you envision your office space, what does it smell like, what colors do you see, what is the feeling you experience thinking about being in the space? How large is it and where is it located? How far of a commute will you have? Is it online? All these questions about space will help determine your overhead costs, the amount that you have to pay in order to do business. I truly encourage you to consider commuting costs, as these may be more than what you have been accustomed to in your current job.



What are the basic AND must-have tools needed to practice within your modality (art materials, books, toys, games, instruments, mirrored dance studio, technology, etc...) to open the doors of your practice? You will likely have a bunch of stuff in you've been toting around with you from job to job, but you know you will want and need more SHINY HAPPY NEW creative materials.

Do you need to continually invest in supplies or materials for your specialty? How much per month/year do you want to be able to spend on such an expense? Don't skimp out! You aren't on that \$100 a year therapy supply budget anymore and if you can only afford \$100 per year on supplies, we need to have a serious look at how much you are charging and adjust that. Like, yesterday!

Would you like to have an electronic health record (EHR) and online scheduling program or old-fashioned paper chart system? There are costs with both, but I encourage you to think about the option which will make your life easier. I, personally, LOVE using an EHR. It has helped me to work smarter not harder in many ways. That said, it has its challenges, too.

There are multiple on the market. Make some time to take advantage of their free trials to see which one works best for you.

What is your mission that you would like to accomplish through your work? WHY are you doing what you are doing? What is the purpose of creating a practice for you? How is that WHY woven through every aspect of your practice? Once you know what your why is, then ask yourself regarding every decision you make about your business: Does this answer the question to my why? Why would you do this, you ask? Because, as you start to develop your brand and your community learns about the AWESOME CREATIVE work you are doing they are going to start reaching out to you. They will ask you to do this, speak on that, donate this, and develop that. It is easy to find yourself saying "YES" to all these exciting opportunities, but then you quickly realize all the time you have been putting into those "YESSES" doesn't actually align with your why or has taken time away from your ability to actual work on your why. Okay, in this example you were actually me. Saying no was a huge lesson I have had to learn. It's one I am still working on.

What is the vision you have for this practice? Think BIG picture here. Your mission and vision should be so compelling that you are excited to run towards them at all costs. If you have to push yourself to align with the mission and vision, resistance is likely present. You may need to consider revising them.

**TRUST THE PROCESS.
LOVE THE JOURNEY.**



What dreams and goals do you have beyond your practice which align with the bigger vision of what you want to accomplish? I'll just throw some ideas out there to get your wheels spinning: hosting a conference, writing a book, facilitating theatre of witness performances, selling your own artwork, being a TED Talk speaker or a Keynote speaker at a professional conference, creating a coping skills app, or hosting a retreat (hmm, that has come up twice in this list, maybe that is part of my dream).

**NOW THAT YOU HAVE TACKLED
THAT LONG LIST OF TOUGH
QUESTIONS, YOU CAN START
DRAFTING YOUR PLAN FOR YOUR
DREAM PRACTICE. WHEN YOU
LAUNCH, LET US KNOW SO WE CAN
CHEER YOU ON AND SHARE WITH
OTHERS LOOKING TO DO THE
SAME.**



All the Best!

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