THRIVE NUTRITION | MENTORSHIP

Turn your passion into private practice

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About Me

Welcome! And thank you so much for purchasing my E-Book. My name is Marissa Campanella. I'm a registered dieititan and owner of my private practice Thrive Nutrition, located in Scranton, Pennsylvania. I, like you, had a passion to become a private practice RD from the moment I became a dietitian. The only problem was.....where do I begin?

If I had a mentor and guide when I first started my practice in 2014, I would have saved myself from the many headaches and sleepless nights
I experienced. Which is why I am here for you. To help you through the many questions that starting your business brings on. Because let's face it, we know nutrition, we don't really know business.

I can't say I have all the answers, but what I can tell you is that I learned A TON along the way. Someone once told me the second you stop learning, or feel bored in your business, that's it, that's the end of the road. And I couldn't agree more. My brand continues to evolve, I continue to make mistakes, and I continue to better myself as a dietitian and business woman. What keeps me going? Motivation and fearlessness. I'm okay with messing up, and you have to be too. That's where the growth is.

I'm proud to say within my second year of business I was making a profit and working full time. And the cherry on top is, it doesn't even feel like work. I am so happy doing what I love and feel blessed to go to my little office everyday. I've made it mine. My business is my brand and represents me. It's got to feel comfortable. Half the battle is finding your brand, and I'll help you discover that.

For me, my brand is about building a healthy food relationship, because I believe the best kind of health is the kind where your heart and mind are happy and you feel good about yourself. My passion is helping others overcome their food struggles, disordered eating behaviors, and diet mindset to find peace again with food and eating. This is what lights me up. You have to enjoy what you do to be good at it, right? My dad always told me "do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life." So true!

What's your passion? What aspect of nutrition do you genuinely enjoy? It's likely there's someone out there practicing what you believe in. And if there's not, you be the first. Our passions can be different, but the foundation of a strong business is all the same.

This E-Book is structured to tackle and discuss the foundational pieces of starting a private practice. There are elements of both information as well as self reflection activities. It is very common to feel EVERYTHING needs to be in place before starting a practice. I walk you through the nuts + bolts of what you need and trust that the rest can be filled in when you are "in business."

This E-book is designed to cover the following topic points:

- Getting clear on your business goals
- Office Space
- Naming your Business
- Identifying your Ideal Client
- Creating a Refferal Network
- Marketing, Website Development, and Social Media
- Insurance vs Private Pay
- HIPAA Compliance
- Materials to Get Started

Lay out your Plan + Goals

Find Your Focus
Write down all the thoughts (ideas, goals, to do's, random thoughts) that have been living in your head.

Set Goals
What personal and professional goals do you want to achieve? (Timeline: Between the next few months up to two years)

Prioritize Goals
Which category do the above goals fall in:
Next year? Next 2 years? Next 2-5 years?

What goals do you want to complete in the next year?

Now (and this may be the hardest part!), prioritize the goals you can accomplish over the next year by level of significance or importance to accomplish.

Office Space

Let's break down the choices for your practice.

Virtual
Pros: No cost of rent/overhead; ability to work anywhere
Cons: Limitations with insurances; legality if working across state lines. Technically, as dietitians we can perform 'nutrition coaching' virtually, but not 'nutrition counseling'; maintaining HIPAA compliance

Office
Pros: working in person with clients tends to lend itself to better rapport, insurance reimbursement for in-person visits
Cons: Cost of rent

Of note, a lot of people start with part-time office space. For instance, many find it helpful to find a physician who isn't using their office every day. Some may sublet with psychotherapists. Most therapists don't use their offices full time and often sublet to others.

Home Office
Pros: No cost of rent/overhead, no commute
Cons: may need increased self-discipline to get work done, can be isolating

Naming your Business

Your business name is something you want to feel connected to. Take time and think about some different options. Things to consider:

- Your name or a version of your name
- Short, sweet, and to the point
- Inspirations that represent your business model/philosophy
- Choose a name you can grow into
- Consider domains, social media handle consistency
- Avoid trademark and copyright issues - you can search used trademarked names at www.uspto.gov
- Get a logo made or create one yourself. Use colors and fonts to help brand your business. Tip: Fiverr is a company that makes logos for super cheap, like $5.00-$10.00.

If you have chosen to go with a business name, aside from just using your personal name, consider applying for a DBA (Doing Business As). This action allows your company to legally operate under a trade name, also known as an "assumed" or "fictitious" name. You can file for this online for a minimal cost. Just make sure your application is a valid one.

You may also want to consider applying for a Tax Identification Number, also know as an Employee Identification Number. This is used to identify a business entity and is used for tax filing purposes. This application can also be completed online.

It is also recomended to search for similar business names in a 60 mile radius to prevent consumer confusion.

Identify your Ideal Client + Niche

Ok - if you do anything out of this E-book, make it be this. Identifying your ideal client and who you want to work with is an invaluable step in growing a successful business. Put in the work to truly think this through. It will drive your marketing, your counseling style, and the way you grow as a practitioner. This step is crucial in starting up your practice.

Who do you want to work with? Zoning in on a specialized population sets you apart from others. You may be thinking "well, I just want to work with everyone so I can make the most money." But, if you're speaking to everyone, you're speaking to no one. Your brand will be broad and you will likely have a hard time specializing in ALL the aspects of nutrition. It's fine to take an array of clients, but you want the bulk of your clientele to be your ideal client. Choosing a niche builds trust. It solves problems for people. Your ideal client is the person that you do the best work with (and therefore grow a successful business).

Let's focus on how to identify your ideal client. Doing this step is crucial as you want to be able to communicate with and to this clientele. That's where your marketing skills come in. But first, who are we talking to? Ask yourself these questions to get brainstorming about your ideal client:

- What are some of your favorite things to help people with?

For me, it's helping people heal their relationship with food. Encourage people to recover from years of disordered behaviors and adopt a new flexible and intuitive approach to eating.

- Make a client profile of your “ideal client,” including demographics, location, etc.

For me, my ideal client is female and between the ages of 15-35 (ish). My ideal client is either a full time student or has a full/part time job. My ideal client has many goals and hobbies, but can't seem to accomplish anything because food struggles overconsume my client's life. My client tends to be a perfectionist who likes structure.

• Think about your ideal client's "pain points." What is keeping them awake at night? What is causing them to pick up the phone and call a RD or therapist?

For me, my ideal client is living in what feels like a prison. To them, their life is full of numbers, shame, and doubt. It's nearly impossible for my clients to have friendships or be in a relationship because other people turn into obstacles of their disordered habits or diet rules. My clients belong deeply to their illness and they are striving to find deeper life meaning, purpose, and feel human again with eating. They call me to seek help in overcoming the food rules that are controlling their life.

• Next, I want you to get really clear about where your ideal client might go to seek help if they were in pain. Also, where are they spending their time? Doing this will naturally guide you to the best types of referral partners.

For me, my ideal client could be a college student struggling with an eating disorder. If a college student is struggling they might reach out to the following: their college counseling center, a local therapist specializing in eating disorders, their physician, their parents, a gynecologist, or a local eating disorder support group, etc. It then becomes my job to network in those areas.

Create a Referral Network

Referral sources sending clients your way, as well as clients knowing where to find you, is key.

For your referral sources, think about WHO sees your ideal clients. Are you planning to work with expectant mothers? Perhaps WIC would be a starting point. Are you looking to help those managing diabetes? Go visit doctor offices. Is your calling to help vegetarians and vegans? Check out going to your nearest health food stores to maybe put up some flyers.

Also, think about where your ideal client 'hangs out'. Are there websites and blogs that you can interact with? Are there Facebook groups you can join? Call other professionals working with your ideal client and simply connect and learn their ways of reaching your ideal clientele.

For me, my ideal client works mainly with therapists. Therefore, thats where I started. I made a running list of the therapists in my area and called them. If they didn't answer, I left a voicemail stating who I was, what I was doing, where I was located, and that I would love to connect. I also followed up with an email. That way the therapist could respond however was most convenient for them. I also called college campus counseling centers as well as the closest eating disorder treatment centers to get put on their referral list. In addition, I also did go to doctor's offices in the very beginning because I was just looking to get my name out there. It took some time for my practice to become solely made up of my ideal client and niche and Dr. offices are always looking for dietitian referrals.

A downloadable copy of the handout that I created and distributed to referral sources, specifically doctor offices, is available in my forms & templates package on my website.

Marketing and Website Development

Now, when I started by business, I was told (by others more seasoned in business) that I really didn't need to spend much on marketing. I kept thinking, really? How are people going to find me? Nevertheless, I took this advice, and really only marketed myself in two places:

1.) I registered my office location on Google Maps.

2.) I made a very user-friendly, appealing website, which is what I am going to walk you through doing because truly, this is what drives my business. Yes refferals are super important, but a good portion of my clientele finds me via their own internet searches. Which makes sense, right? When you want to research something, Google is the place.

When making your website, you first want to check if your domain (or website name) is available. To do this, you need to go to a hosting website, such as GoDaddy. Here, you can type in the website name you want and see if it's available. The cost of this depends on how desirable your website name is and for how long you want to own it. I renew my website name (www.thrivenutrition.org) every 2 years.

Next, you want to brand your site. There are so many great platforms to do this with, but I chose to use WIX. I felt they were super easy to use and have great customer service. I have also heard great things about SquareSpace.

Your website should be functional. When it comes to your site, less is more.

When constructing your website think about FEEL, KNOW, DO.

1.) How do you want the client to feel when looking at your site?
Ex: I want my client to feel comfortable, inspired, and heard

2.) What do you want the client to know?
Ex: I want my client to know that there is a way to eat and feel peace around food.

3.) What do you want the client to do?
Ex: I want them to book an appointment

Marketing and website Development

When organizing the content on your website, consider the most important pages:

Homepage: Have a catchy tagline, display a testimonial, link to other pages/blog

About Me: Connect with your client, your story matters to show your client that a solution exists. In your About Me section, it may be helpful to organize your thoughts in a way that impacts the client. For example:

- Identify: the pain that the client is dealing with
- Validate: that you know what the pain is like.
- Announce: that you have helped tons of clients who deal with this pain and that you offer a solution.
- Tease: click here to learn more, this is how to take the next step

Consider an "opt in" page: This is optional. I don't have one because the service that I offer is counseling. Some people sell items or are more interested in doing virtual/online work. If that's the case for you then the "opt in" is important. It's the free thing that you offer people to keep them interested. For example, if someone subscribes to your mailing list you can offer a free consultation, you can provide a free handout to people that sign up for updates, you can send a link to a free mini webinar.

Services Page: Here is where you describe what are you offering, how is it offered, and why should the client choose your service. Is it easy for the client to schedule/sign up? If you are looking to obtain clients for private practice, then I highly suggest adding a button that they click to book appointments online. If you are interested in having clients book right from your website there are lots of platforms that facilitate this. The online scheduler I use is Acuity Scheduling. Another reputable brand is Calendely.

Blog: It is a nice touch to give "freebies" away in the form of information. This demonstrates your knowledge and can stimulate a potential client's appetite to learn more from you.

Marketing and Social Media

Marketing on Social Media and the common question: "What do I say?"

The Four Purposes of What to Write:
Educate: share a recipe, offer a nutrition tidbit, snack ideas, science fact

Inspire: help to discover an idea, offer a different perspective, inspire someone to seek help

Build Community: connect with others, demonstrate that together we are stronger

Show Behind the Scenes: shows how you succeed, builds connection with your audience

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When it comes to social media, it is easy to feel as though you should be on all platforms. You don't need to be. It can be hard to manage too many accounts effectively if there is too much. A good piece of advice would be to choose 1-2 platforms that you want to be active on, and attempt to be consistent in your postings.

Another thing to consider with social media is getting approached and directly messages by followers seeking advice. It can be dangerous to provide nutritional advice over social media without knowing a person's history. Having a good template response in the event this happens can be a helpful way to navigate this. A template response that I have used in the past is something to the effect of:

"Thanks for reaching out! This is a great question - unfortunately I am unable to provide 1:1 consultation via instagram. I understand this is a frustrating place to be! I promise you already have the inner knowledge within you, it often just takes healing to reach it. If you feel you need more support, I am happy to help you find a dietitian in your area!"

Taking insurance vs Private Pay

When it comes to accepting payment, there are two options:

- Have your customers privately pay by rates in which you set.

In doing this you can decide to accept cash, credit card, or checks.

Utilizing platforms such as Stripe or Square can be wonderful, secure tools in accepting credit card payment. However, be aware that processing fees do apply and whenever a card is charged, the company will take a portion. It is illegal to charge the customer the processing fee, but this is tax deductible.

- Accept Insurance and/or private pay

The biggest things your need if choosing to accept insurance is patience and perseverance.

Here is a breakdown of the steps needed to become and insurance provider:

- Apply for a National Provider Identification number (NPI). A NPI number is an individual number that all healthcare providers have and is needed when processing claims and receiving payment. You can fill out an electronic application at: http://www.apta.org/NPI/Applying/
- Set up an account with Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare - CAQH. CAQH is a platform that streamlines all your information to provide to insurance companies.
- Once you have your NPI #, consider the main insurance carriers in your area
- Call each insurance carrier and speak to someone about contract and credentialing. Not all insurance companies contract with individual dietitians, but most do.
- Request appropriate forms to complete to begin the process of becoming a credentialed provider. First you need to be contracted, then you can proceed to credentialing. In doing this, you agree to a set fee determined by the insurance company.

Taking Insurance vs Private Pay

Key things to know about insurance:

1.) Details about services are communicated via codes.

Procedure code

- This is the service that is provided
- Medical Nutrition Therapy Codes:
- 97802 – Initial Consult; 97803 – Follow up; 97804 – Group Session

Diagnosis Code

- This is why you are seeing the client
- There are various eligible codes.
- A common code used by dietitians is Z71.3 – dietary counseling

Units

- This is the amount of time you spent with the client
- 15 mins = 1 unit

2.) Understanding Eligibility + Benefits

Once you become a credentialed insurance provider, you will be able to investigate if a prospective client has coverage for nutrition counseling. It is always wise for a client to investigate this as well. Just because you accept someone's insurance, does not mean that they have benefits for nutrition counseling.

Key things to ask when checking eligibility:

- Does the plan cover outpatient nutrition counseling?
- If yes, how many how many sessions are allowed?
- Does the plan only cover visits that are “medically necessary”? – If yes, ask if there is a medical policy this applies to.
- Does the plan cover preventive services?
- Is there a deductible and/or out of pocket amount to meet first? – If yes, how much is the deductible and out of pocket?
- How much of the deductible/out of pocket has been?
- Is there a copay for outpatient nutrition counseling?
- Is a physician referral needed?

Taking Insurance vs Private Pay

Key things to know about insurance:

3.) Filing your own claims

There are three main ways to file insurance claims:

- Paper Claims

The old school way to file a claim is via a paper claim form known as a CMS-1500 form. This form would get filled out and mailed to the insurance company. CMS-1500 Forms need to be authentic, not downloaded from the internet and can be purchased in bulk at Staples.

- Electronic

Filing electronic claims is a faster and more modern method of getting paid. There are platforms that facilitate claim filing, such as NaviNet and Office Ally. Filing electronic claims allows you to check on claim status and gather information of both pending and completed claims.

- Hire a billing company

There are billing companies that will file claims for you. This is a service to consider as business grows and increased time is desired to spend doing other tasks. Be aware that billing companies make their money by taking a portion of your paid claim.

Pros and Cons of Accepting Insurance

PROS	CONS
• increased clientele • good reimbursement • free marketing via insurance companies • increased healthcare referrals	• lengthy process • dealing with miscommunications, rejected claims, etc. • 2+ week waiting period to receive payment

Ensuring HIPAA Compliance

Ensuring that your private practice is HIPAA compliant is an important safety and professional measure to take for the sake of your client's privacy and your liability. All modes of communication should be made HIPAA compliant and this is done by signing a BAA (Business Associate Agreement) with the service in which you use. We will go through some examples of communication and ways to increase the privacy of each.

- Phone

There are several companies and apps that allow you to obtain a second phone number (on your cell phone) which you can utilize for business and clients. Some apps and companies to consider are:
- Phone.com
- Spruce Health

- Email

If you are not interested in obtaining HIPAA compliant email, then it is a good idea is to at least disclose in the signature section of your email or in your informed consent form (which we will further discuss in the next section) that email is not a secure mode of communication.

Below is an example of a disclosure to use at the foot of your emails:
Confidentiality Notice: The content in this email message may contain confidential information.This information may be legally privileged, protected from disclosure by state and federal laws such as HIPAA privacy (45 C.F.R., PART 164). If you are not the intended recipient, or if this message has been addressed to you in error, please inform the sender immediately by replying to the email and deleting the message and any attachments.

Some companies to consider if you are interested in HIPAA compliant email:
- Hushmail
- Virtru

- Charting

Your charting system is where you will house all your client notes, details, and information. If you do not use or plan to use an electronic medical record then locking up your paper files is an appropriate security measure to take.

Some electronic HIPAA compliant platforms to consider are:
- Kalix
-Healthie
-Practice Better

Materials to get started: Initial Forms

When taking on a new client having written formalities in place is important for your protection, protection of the client, and to set expectations. You can write up these forms via a word document and have your client fill out forms in session.

Alternatively, you can have your client fill out form electronically via a HIPAA compliant e-form service. When I first started out, I did everything in the office and then when I felt ready I transferred all of the administrative parts of my business online. Take note that all electronic platforms cost money, even more so to make them HIPAA compliant, so it could be wise to plan to move in that direction as you see profit.

Some HIPAA compliant E-Form companies to consider:
- Jot Form
- Form Stack
- Cognito Forms

The 6 forms that I use in my practice
are outlined below:

- Informed Consent - The purpose of this form is to explain your services, your practice philosophy, information about your practice (ie: payment, scheduling, confidentiality)
- HIPAA - this is especially important if you are planning to accept insurance. HIPPA explains the client's privacy rights.
- Release of Information - I find it helpful to collaborate and network with other healthcare professionals working with the client. This form allows me to have access to medical forms or discuss a client's case with someone else.
- Insurance Information - this form is important of course if you are planning to accept insurance.
- Contact Information - this form allows you to inquire about preferred contact methods, emergency contact, phone, address, etc which is all helpful in the event you need to contact your client.
- Consent to Counsel a Minor - I use this form as an extra security measure if the client is <18 yrs old. It is not a mandatory form, but having the parent/guardian consent to services and payment I feel is a good measure to take.

A downloadable copy of these office forms that I created and use in my practice are available in my forms & templates package on my website.

you're in Business

You're set to go!

Once you have filed and received all business legality information and have your basics in place, you are essentially ready to take on client number 1.

It is normal to feel far from ready, but this where being in the throes of the work will teach you SO much. Remember that you know more than you think you know and YOU are the nutrition expert!

Check out my other E-Book "Nutrition Counseling in Private Practice" if you feel like, okay now what do I say or do?

Give yourself permission to make mistakes, learn from your mistakes, and grow within your business. Thank you again for supporting this E-book. I hope it has informed and inspired you to tackle your dreams!