



All My Experience Leads to Now

My career path has been varied and psychotherapy is actually my third incarnation. I have BA in public relations, and I worked in PR/Marketing for several years out of college. Next I earned a degree in photography and worked for over a decade as a freelance writer and photographer for various magazines. Both these paths have been instrumental in my success as a psychotherapist. I know how to tell stories, to read people, to organize my workload and to run a small-business.

I specialize in sex and gender. That translates to sex therapy (both for individuals and couples), sex addiction/compulsion (issues with porn, infidelity, prostitution) and LGBT. Recently, my practice has expanded to those seeking more sexual satisfaction while also recovering from childhood sexual abuse. With these specialties, I have an interesting mix of clients. And while most of these niches are small in a town the size of Santa Barbara, collectively they create a steady, diverse client load.

I started with an interest in couples and LGBT. I soon realized sex and sexuality was a topic that was sorely underserved. Clients were hungry to unpack their confusion, frustrations and desires related to their sexuality. Today my practice serves diverse issues related to sex.

I find it most satisfying to learn, apply, then teach information. To that end, I am pursuing my PhD in Sexology through a school that offers Saturday classes. Through this program, I continue to attend my own supervision on my cases, which I find immensely helpful. I also have a thriving private practice downtown that includes three talented MFT associates. Supervision, as well as the teaching I do through Antioch's MACP track, are avenues to consolidate and articulate knowledge to and with others.

Teaching has been a rewarding outlet to deepen and reinforce my clinical work. Currently I teach the couples class, called Intimate Relationships. For this course, I present theory from the leading therapists: Gottman, Johnson, Perel, Real as well as various articles. I must re-read the material each time I teach so it is fresh. Invariably, it lands with new awareness as I synthesize what I've seen recently in the clinical chair. As I head into teaching for the third year, I'm also researching topics that are timely and likely will occur in the therapy room for these new clinicians. Examples include polyamory, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender couples, non-binary or gender-fluid couples, older couples or mixed sexual desire couples, as well as the effects of technology and porn on intimate partnerships.

I find it greatly benefits the students to also talk through actual cases. Their questions sometimes surprise me and help me see my case from a new lens. There are few quality resources that show therapy in action, so we roll play, and I present cases. Teaching demands that I can explain what

often seems so abstract with this work (mirroring, tracking, modeling, challenging the client). Through this process of cultivating others, I become a better clinician.

The past year I have given lectures on sex addiction to both CCEC and New Beginnings associates as a way to share my training and build a professional network. I also have lectured on marketing fundamentals for building a successful private practice through Santa Barbara CAMFT. I have been on the board of SBCAMFT for six years, serving most recently as president. In that role, I got to know other leaders in our community and became a familiar face to the membership.

Some days I work as a therapist. Other days I am a businesswoman—blogging, buying advertising and submitting speaker proposals. Alternately, some days I am also preparing lectures, consulting on cases and researching for my dissertation. I find it most rewarding to have a mix. It keeps my view fresh as I toggle between roles. It also means I work a lot, which sometimes limits my social life. I do try to balance my work with self-care and short getaways.

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