

MURRIETA PIVOTS

All businesses in the City of Murrieta have felt the effects of COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders. Murrieta Pivots offers a question and answer to discuss how they have met the challenges that the pandemic has presented to their businesses.



The Zinnia Practice offers Counseling & Therapy in Murrieta both in person and online. They provide marriage counseling, therapy for anxiety and help for insomnia. The business has been here for three years and they recently shared their experiences in dealing with the COVID-19 health crisis and how it has changed their operations.

How deeply has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your business?

The pandemic caused a reduction in clients of about 40 percent. Once the lockdown guidelines went into effect, therapeutic services were moved from in person to 100 percent online. Being that most clients are seen in person, some clients were uncomfortable with online therapy and opted to stop receiving services. Others experienced a dip in financial resources and were unable to continue services.

There was also a vast reduction in new inquiries for therapy services. In fact, the business received no new inquiries for therapy in the month of April. Online searches for therapy in the Murrieta/Temecula area dropped by about 50 percent. The demand was low, thereby impacting the business negatively.

Have you applied for and/ or received funding from any of the Federal or State programs such as the SBA's Payroll Protection Program (PPP) or Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)?

No.

What changes or improvements have you made to your business model since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Intake protocols have been upgraded. All our processes are now done electronically. All clients are onboarded through the HIPAA compliant online electronic health record system. All sessions are held online through Doxy.me, which is a HIPAA compliant video conferencing software. Payments are also done through an electronic, touchless system, so that there is no physical exchange of credit cards or cash.

Clients are now able to see their therapist from the comfort of their homes, offices or whatever private location they choose. Clients have commented about how easy the system is. Many enjoy the convenience of scheduling sessions during lunch breaks and from the comfort of their homes.

It has actually increased access to therapy as virtual services allow clients from all over California to work with us. Virtual therapy is also great for clients who struggle with social anxiety, agoraphobia or health conditions that limit mobility.

While all clients are currently being seen virtually, we have a new protocol for when we begin to see clients in person:

- Clients will be asked to walk into the office lobby at the time of their appointments, to reduce traffic in the lobby.
- All magazines in the lobby will be removed to reduce the risk of infection.
- Clients will be encouraged to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer at the beginning of their sessions.
- All common areas will be sanitized between sessions.
- Social distancing will be practiced during sessions.
- There will be no handshakes between therapist and client.
- Payments will continue to be 100 percent electronic and touch free.
- Clients who display flu-like symptoms will be rescheduled.
- Clients will be strongly encouraged to continue virtual sessions when possible.

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Do you anticipate that these changes will make it easier to do business with the public going forward?

Yes, these changes will create a safe environment for clients and staff. Because current clients are already used to the electronic system, we have had the opportunity to fine tune our processes. Clients currently report that the onboarding process is simple. Some also report that they do not notice a significant difference between the outcomes of in person and virtual sessions. These changes will allow for business to flow much more efficiently.

What investments will you need to make going forward to ensure the survival and growth of your business?

It is imperative that at the Zinnia Practice we spend a lot more time educating clients about the efficacy of virtual sessions. Many individuals who reach out for services are not aware that therapy can be done online. In fact we have been providing therapy online since our opening. It will also be important to continue to educate our referral sources about the value and convenience of virtual sessions.

We have had to pivot with our marketing. Many new clients assumed that we were closed or that therapy services could no longer continue. But once they know that virtual therapy is just as effective as in person therapy, most are willing to continue with services.

Briefly, describe the immediate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on your business?

COVID-19 greatly reduced the number of clients that we were able to serve (by about 40 percent). Many clients did not want to be seen virtually- as it was a new experience. Others decided they will return after the pandemic was over, and some were unable to continue services for financial reasons. New inquiries in April dropped to zero, which is rather unusual at The Zinnia Practice.

What is the most important way the citizens of Murrieta and Southwest Riverside County can support your business?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had many emotional effects on individuals throughout the country. There is definitely a rise in anxiety, depression and stress. Many families are not getting along, people desperately need coping skills and support.

If you know someone who is struggling with anxiety, insomnia or conflicts in their relationships, simply refer them to The Zinnia Practice. By the way, anyone can benefit from therapy at this time. Sometimes a therapist can offer you tools that your loved ones can't- especially if your loved ones are also stressed. The focus at The Zinnia Practice is on women's mental health and couples therapy.

Specifically here are the three main areas we work on:

- 1) Women who struggle with anxiety: Anxiety can include panic attacks, self doubt, stress, trauma, managing a difficult family, worrying all the time, feelings of guilt and shame.
- 2) Women with Insomnia: Stress often affects sleep. Utilizing CBT for insomnia, clients can finally learn how to fall asleep and stay asleep- without medications or invasive treatments- in just 5 to 7 sessions. CBT for insomnia is not just fast, but it is the gold standard for insomnia treatment.
- 3) Couples therapy: Helping couples learn how to manage conflict, improve their friendship and admiration for each other and know how to meet each other's needs. We help you go from two ships passing in the night to being on the same page.

Christian counseling is also available for clients who want to integrate their faith into their sessions.

To schedule a free 15 minute consultation call with The Zinnia Practice, email lbi@thezinniapractice.com or call 951-905-3181.

