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# FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

THE PRIVATE PRACTICE TOOLKIT

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# TAMFT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: PRIVATE PRACTICE DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN ISOLATED PRACTICE

JASON MARTIN, PH.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S

I teach in a master's degree program that prepares students for careers as LMFTs and LPCs, and I am privileged to witness and mentor students as they consider the many options for their careers. One of the first questions I always ask students is, "What do you want to be doing 5 years after you graduate?" The most common answer I receive is something related to operating their own private practice. That's understandable. I've had my own private practice for 8 ½ years now, and I love it. I can set my rates and hours, determine how I want my processes to work, and generally choose when I want to take new clients and when I don't.

But my experience didn't emerge out of thin air, and it may not match the experiences others may have in private practice. For one thing, my private practice is not my sole or primary source of income. I teach at a university, so the income from my private practice is mostly supplemental. For another, I don't take insurance. Insurance adds a layer of complication that I don't need, but most clinicians in private practice may need to work with insurance. Finally, I only chose to open a private practice after years of working intimately in large group practice in Houston.

I had the benefit of learning many of the business and ethical aspects of clinical work by observing and working with others early in my career.

Private practices are romanticized as the ideal position for therapists because of the flexibility and autonomy they can create. While that can be possible, it also takes a lot of work, some risk, and mistakes can be quite costly. Anyone pursuing a private practice should carefully research their decisions but understand that mistakes will be inevitable for those who work in isolation. The risk of ethical violations and legal trouble increases significantly when therapists practice in isolation. You secure your therapy space, you set up your practice, and you make decisions you believe are best, but if you do not also create a network of mentors, advisors, and other trusted professionals, you may inadvertently step into a hornet's nest of trouble.

Private practice does not have to mean isolated practice. I am excited that this newsletter highlights the different perspectives and resources for private practices that TAMFT may have to offer.

I will add that anyone pursuing a private practice is wise to create a close, personal network. Current or former supervisors; colleagues who have been in the field for a few weeks or a few years; people who may see you and your practice from a different perspective from your own.

Consult with them. Seek guidance from them. Engage with them regularly and often, even if you believe you know the right decision to make. You never know when they will point you in a better direction that you may not have seen yourself.

Thank you all for the work you do.

Jason Martin, Ph.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S  
President, TAMFT





# WILL MY PRIVATE PRACTICE TOOLKIT PUT THE “WHY” BEFORE THE “HOW”?

By Margaret Pinder Ed.D., LMFT  
TAMFT Professional Member

Before you start answering the questions about how you will work with clients, there is one essential question to ask that requires full attention, deep listening, and soulful discernment to fully grasp how being in private practice squares with your life’s purpose, core values, and personal dream or vision. The inner work involved in answering this special question gives meaning and focus to your outer work and can function like a ship’s rudder, ever steering you true north. It springs from your depth, itself the point of contact with infinite potentialities that exceed any and all external circumstances or conditions. It is the basis for trusting that, no matter how messy life can get, there is a way through. With it, you see yourself opening doors to reveal wisdom for this time, place, and person. The question is, “Why?”

As a marriage and family therapist who considers private practice, you will likely first run the option through your inner grid to determine if this is your life’s purpose, your soul’s contract. If so, it will be consistent with your core values, it will resonate with your vision. You will see yourself doing this work. It will stir your longings and offer relief from your discontents. And, because you know that you were made for this work, you will want to honor it by seeking to learn how to be the best that you can be. Gratitude and generosity, humility and bold courage will define your approach. Your rewards will come when those you serve with your gifts and preparation choose to live their lives characterized by a similar humble audacity, fulfilling their dreams, experiencing plenty not poverty, joy not despair. Your community of fellow travelers will continue to expand because the person you have become is the person you dreamed of. Your life as a marriage and family therapist in private practice is not something that you achieve but something that you manifest from your deepest longings. So equipped, you act with integrity, seeking to provide full measure as you fulfill your accepted roles as a marriage and family therapist. This is who you are. To do any less harms everyone, yourself included.

Once envisioned, each choice matters. A choice to love energetically vibrates at a much higher level than shame or doubt, literally evoking the universal law of circulation and producing generosity (Hawkins, 2014).

It is an amazing time for us as marriage and family therapists. Dr. Jean Houston (2004) has called this a period when the momentum behind the world’s drama is breaking down and breaking through in all ways of being, knowing, relating, governing, and believing. It is a time for whole system transition. Interactive changes are impacting all life as we know it. No better field exists than marriage and family therapy to respond to these rumblings. Houston quotes Archimedes, “Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand, and I will move the Earth,” and goes on to say that this metaphor is particularly relevant for us today. We are called to do just what Archimedes said, stand in the place of our own truth and hold the lever that is the highest expression of our individual destiny.

For marriage and family therapists, this is very good news. As we individually and collectively live our dreams, visions, and life purposes, we become transformative agents for our clients, client systems, and beyond. We now live at levels only dreamed about in previous generations of marriage and family therapists. Paradoxically, we do this standing on the shoulders of giants who have gone before us.

## REFERENCES

- Hawkins, D. R. (2014). *Power vs. force: The hidden determinants of human behavior*. Hay House, Inc.
- Houston, J. (2004). *Jump time: Shaping your future in a world of radical change*. Sentient Publications.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**LUKE O'STEEN, CHAIR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**



The irony is not lost on me that I've been tasked to write about private practice as someone who is still finishing my degree. With this being the case, I of course have infinitely more questions to ask than answers to give – but that's where you come in! With this goal of owning your own therapy business being such a common one, I would hate for our discussion to end with this quarter's newsletter. There's so much more to consider than what a few short articles can cover, so let's continue our conversation on social media, shall we?

In the same spirit of Dr. Martin's letter, the Communications Committee will be posting on social media over the next few weeks with the intention of facilitating conversation around running your own private practice. Indeed, none of us need go it alone in the many processes involved in creating and sustaining your business. So, what questions do you have? Maybe you have some advice to give from learning something the hard way? What's something you feel not enough people consider as [future] owners of a private practice? Whether it's a question or an answer we've all got something to contribute, so be on the look-out for our social media discussion questions!

**[You can also get more information on private practice by visiting our Private Practice Q&A page!](#)**



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# COMPASSION CORNER

**VIOLETA KADIEVA, PH.D., LMFT-S, AAMFT, FOUNDING MEMBER**

I started practicing mindfulness when I was a master's student. I was actively looking for ways to be more present in the moment, release stress, and take better care of myself. We have all heard the expressions, "Secure your own mask before assisting others" and "fill up your own cup before pouring into others." I can honestly say that in the midst of working part-time, completing numerous homework assignments, and seeing clients at my internship site, I was not the best at doing this. This is when I discovered the wonderful magic of mindfulness practices.

I would like you to try it with me for a moment. Please take a moment for yourself, pause whatever you are doing, and just sit in the moment.

Were you able to do it? How was this experience for you?

This type of mental break, pause, or self-care is essential for those of us who care for others. Unfortunately, we all tend to engage in poor self-care sometimes, and this can lead to burnout in our personal or professional life. However, we can always reach for the "oxygen mask" that helps us prevent burnout by caring for ourselves before (and while) assisting others: mindfulness. Although the exact causes of burnout are unknown, we all know that perceived social support, caseload satisfaction, job stress, lack of support from co-workers and supervisors, work overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity all relate to burnout. When faced with uncontrollable factors, self-care can make the difference between effectiveness and fatigue.

Mindfulness is one tool for alleviating burnout and enhancing therapists' well-being. Often confused with relaxing or de-stressing (potential by-products of mindfulness), they are not the main goals of this practice. Rather, mindfulness is about being more fully present. It is a "moment-by-moment awareness" of bodily sensations, mental processes, emotions, and the world around us. It is a practice that is cultivated through formal and informal meditations and awareness-building attitudes.

I believe that practicing mindfulness helped me take better care of myself and graduate without experiencing burnout. For me, it is essential to my well-being to practice mindfulness every morning; I love how it makes me feel so relaxed and at peace with myself! After my mindfulness morning routine, I feel ready and fully prepared to face the challenges of the day.

So, I would like to ask you to try one mindfulness activity. It can be as simple as taking a couple of deep breaths between clients, walking outside during your lunch break, sitting in peace with yourself for a few minutes, etc. I hope you can find what works best for you and that it helps you take good care of yourself, as well as alleviate burnout.

# COMMITTEE UPDATES

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members: Diana Reinhart, *Committee Chair*, Carlos Perez, *Board Liaison*, Marion Vickerman, *Board Liaison*, Sommer Greer, Gabrielle Dean, Tim White, Beth Andrea Jackson, Tara Roper, Hannah McKinnies, Jaida Pryor

The Legislative Committee is very busy this time of year. With the help of its lobbyist, Tris Castaneda, the Committee drafted a proposed legislative agenda for the 2023 legislative session that met with the TAMFT Board's approval. A copy of the agenda can be found [here](#).



Between now and the start of the session in January 2023, the committee will be meeting with its lobbyist regularly to work on pushing forward the agenda items. The Committee is also planning the next Day at the Dome event, scheduled for March 1 and 2, 2023. The event occurs every two years when the legislature meets and is included as part of the TAMFT annual conference. The Day at the Dome includes a Wednesday night session with a legislator followed by a Thursday visiting legislators at the Capitol. The committee will circulate more details as the date approaches. The event is an opportunity for TAMFT members to visit the capitol, meet with legislators, and advocate for our interests. It is sure to be a dynamic and interesting day.

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Kelsey Austin, *Committee Co-Chair*, Emily Esail, *Committee Co-Chair*, Samantha Boubel, Sofia Georgiadou, Adam Jones, Regina Tate, Rebekah Torres

The Conference Committee is meeting every two weeks as planning for the 2023 annual conference ramps up. The committee is conducting final votes on next year's conference theme, and we hope members will love it! We've brainstormed a wonderful list of potential speakers who are being contacted to see if they'd like to join us in Austin for the conference. The committee is so excited about the fun activities we have planned to engage our members at next year's conference. We've processed feedback and strategized how we can continue to best meet our members' needs. Be on the lookout in the coming months for calls for poster and workshop proposals. We can't wait to see what our talented field has to offer for the coming conference!

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Angela Hayes, *Committee Chair*, Linda Metcalf, *Board Liaison*, Jason Martin, *Board Liaison*, Layla Scott, Joanna Mendez-Pounds

We are working on creating committee volunteer packets to help volunteers make a smooth transition when joining a committee.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Katie Keith, *Committee Chair*, Layla Scott, *Board Liaison*, Anna Thomison, Sara Walker, Erik Salwen, Heather Austin-Robillard, Patricia Adams, JoAnn Travis-Evans, Heather Lucero

TAMFT membership continues to grow with the most recent total at 1060 members! Most recently, the Membership Committee has been hard at work coordinating the TAMFT Fall Student Membership Drive. The committee had the opportunity to collaborate with TSAMFT leadership to gather feedback and gain insight on student member needs going into the Drive, which is scheduled to run from September 6 to October 31. Based on our collaboration, our two major goals going into the Drive are to increase TAMFT student membership and increase direct student engagement with TAMFT. TAMFT is offering a 20% discount on student membership as well as prizes for students purchasing new memberships, including student conference passes! The student winners will be announced via social media so we encourage all new student members to follow TAMFT on Facebook (TAMFT) and Instagram (@thetamft). We are also offering TAMFT annual conference passes as a prize to the University program with the highest percentage of new student membership! Upcoming plans for the Membership Committee include developing a member satisfaction survey to gather meaningful information about member needs that will better inform future committee projects. The committee has also been in active discussion about new recruitment strategies such as fostering partnerships with local MFT organizations and the reestablishing of local networking groups.



## SOCIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

**Members:** Angela Hayes, Felicia Holloway, Jaida Pryor

The Social Justice task force is working to identify ways to support social justice initiatives within TAMFT. We currently plan to meet with each committee to explore how social justice can be promoted within each committee's mandate.

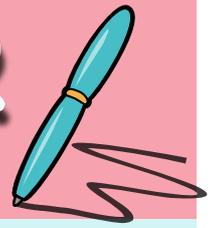
## EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Members:** Nelliana Acuna, *Committee Chair*, Wen Mei Chou, *Board Liaison*, Kat (Mary) Schultz, Benita Madison, Skeetz Edinger, Susan Henderson, Hannah McKinnies

The Education Committee continues to work hard, scheduling great educational content for all our members. This past quarter, we offered webinars on AI and telehealth, integrating play therapy into your practice, and most recently, a webinar on the complexities of working with immigrant clients in therapy. Don't forget to register for our next webinar, "Hope and Love: Identifying and Utilizing our Clients' Spiritual Resources While Developing Our Own" taking place Friday, October 28th. Remember the monthly webinar is free for members and provides you with CEUs!



# STUDENT CORNER



## TSAMFT BOARD UPDATE

Members: Hannah McKinnies, *President*, Jaida Pryor, *President-Elect*, Kat Schultz, *Treasurer*, Becca Trujillo, *Secretary*, Sydney Jeffrey, *Social Media Manager*

With the start of the school year, the TSAMFT board wishes those in school a great fall semester! We also want to shout out our Associate members and wish them well on whatever they are currently pursuing! The student board is also looking to hear from you! We welcome all students and associates to attend our next meeting, on November 5, 2022 at 9am. Please email [sjeffrey@twu.edu](mailto:sjeffrey@twu.edu) for the zoom link to attend. Also please be sure to follow @tsamft on all platforms for giveaways, notices, and helpful information!

Private practice may seem daunting to students and associates leaving many confused. The student board works to plan networking opportunities to help both students and associates meet with peers in the field to answer questions. Attending events both from TSAMFT and TAMFT are important ways to make connections. Many of the events involve members from a variety of licensure, backgrounds, education, jobs, etc. These events are going to conferences, attending a webinar or seminar, or just going to a general meet-up of peers. The student board aims to provide opportunities for students and associates alike to network and make lasting connections.

TSAMFT will be hosting “How to think through the financial basics of starting a private practice” with David Frank, CFP, on November 2nd at 10am! David Frank works to help therapists feel great about their finances. He’s a financial planner for therapists! Email [sjeffrey@twu.edu](mailto:sjeffrey@twu.edu) to attend!

## COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members: Luke O’Steen, *Committee Chair*, Felicia Holloway, *Board Liaison*, Sydney Jeffrey

It’s been another productive quarter for the Communications Committee! We were very excited about this quarter’s newsletter theme and received a lot of positive feedback about the ideas presented. We continue to make plans for future newsletter topics, including a special issue on legislation at the start of the year to get us ready for the Day at the Dome in March. We are also looking to recruit more volunteers to join, especially to help with social media, including monthly themes and posting.





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## Marriage and Family Therapy National Exam Prep

TAMFT has put together a suite of resources to help students prepare for the national licensure exam, including recordings of our Exam Prep Workshop, a Practice Exam & Answer Explanations, and an MFT Terms Glossary.



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# THE SECRET TO A THRIVING PRIVATE PRACTICE

By Nicholas Wilkens, Ph.D., LMFT,  
TAMFT Professional Member



More often than not, the smart thing to do is also the right thing to do. As an illustration, the biggest secret to building an effective practice is doing what one should be doing as a mental health professional regardless of whether or not they're trying to build their practice: coordinating care. Coordinating care is the right thing to do, particularly as a systems-informed therapist. It is also the smart thing to do for a private practice therapist seeking to build a reliable referral base toward a thriving practice.

So many therapists fail to take the crucial step of having their clients sign the appropriate releases that allow them to speak to the relevant other individuals in their clients' lives, such as physicians, probation officers, teachers, and key family members. This task is critical in getting the full picture of the client's context and how their behaviors make sense. We know coordination of care makes sense clinically and ethically. It doesn't happen nearly as much as it should.

Building a private practice has traditionally required "extroverted" marketing techniques

like setting up meetings with potential referral sources. This essentially demands "cold calls" to various offices to try talking prospective referral sources into giving up their valuable time to discuss what you might be able to do for them and their patients/clients/students. But you are not "cold calling" the doctor's office if you have legitimate business to carry out with them, and they are likely to be interested in, and grateful for, your perspective if you are already helping improve their patients' lives. Instead of suggesting to them what you might be able to do with their potential patients, you can showcase to them what you are doing with their current patients (or clients, parolees, students, or family members, as the case may be). If they are impressed by the care and professionalism that you have shown, the next time that they have a patient with a similar issue, guess where they refer?

Suppose that you have put together the mechanics of a practice-furnished office, accounting procedures, insurance, and the hundred other things. Not much left in the budget for marketing, but you have somehow been able to find and schedule two new clients, perhaps one on a Tuesday morning and one on a Friday afternoon. You will ideally work as if

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**

your schedule is full and your services are in great demand. Your Tuesday client is a teenaged boy whose mother came to a free workshop you gave at her son's school on depression in adolescence, and your Friday client is an elderly woman who just happened to see your shingle outside the building.

You find within the first two meetings that your teenaged client is indeed showing symptoms of a major depressive disorder, and you get releases signed by his mother, with his blessing, to speak with his physician, his school counselor, and his most trusted teacher. In the first meeting with your elderly client, you assess that she is suffering the recent loss of her husband and not sure what to do. You ascertain that she is seeing a psychiatrist, and you are able to get a release from your client to talk to the psychiatrist, as well as a release to speak with her daughter, who happens to be a local community leader.

Because of your competence as a therapist and your abiding concern for your clients, these two clients do, in fact, get better. And it isn't long before you get a call from another mother concerned about her teenage daughter who she feels is getting "out of control." She got your number from the counselor at school that you coordinated with previously. Also, you receive a call from a couple having marital difficulties who got your number from a pastor who said that you were incredibly helpful with a congregant (the elderly woman who lost her husband) and found out that you also do couple's counseling. You continue to coordinate care. Within three months, you have 15 out of the 30 hours you have made available to see clients filled. At six months, you are full. And within a year, you are considering bringing another therapist on board, or perhaps an intern from a nearby graduate program in counseling, to help you handle the demand for your services that has legitimately developed. You rightfully consider increasing your fees!



**FamilyPAC**

Texas Association for Marriage & Family Therapy

Your support of TAMFT and Family PAC before the November elections and the start of the upcoming session has never been so important! Please consider donating to Family PAC now and on Giving Tuesday, November 29th!

**[Read about how your donations help TAMFT protect your license.](#)**