

# COUNSELING TODAY

April 2011 • Volume 53/Number 10

An American Counseling Association Publication

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## Also inside:

- Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling
- Sensory processing disorders among adults
- The dynamics behind hoarding behaviors



## Helping other counselors build their practice

Anthony Centore



I met Anthony Centore when he contacted me about becoming a blogger for the American Counseling Association blog project. He is a working counselor with a truly entrepreneurial spirit. Here is his story.

**Rebecca Daniel-Burke:** What is your current counseling position?

**Anthony Centore:** I am a counselor at Thrive Boston Counseling and clinical director of Thriveworks, a company that helps counselors build private practices.

**RDB:** What led you toward a career in counseling?

**AC:** I took my first psychology course in high school and knew then that I wanted to work in the field. When it came to choosing a career path, counseling felt like a better fit for me than research.

**RDB:** When did you know you wanted to be a private practitioner?

**AC:** Almost every counselor wants to be in private practice! The problem is that it's difficult to execute. So many great counselors end up working multiple agency jobs with a small practice on the side, if at all. That's why after building my group private practice, which now has 14 clinicians, I started helping others build their private practices.

**RDB:** How is it different for you working in a private practice setting as opposed to, say, an agency?

**AC:** In Massachusetts, changing from a private group practice to a "community mental health center" involves an unbelievable amount of bureaucratic regulation, and the practice can lose control of its own destiny. We applied a few years ago to be a center, and after about 40 man-hours of site reviews, we were basically approved. But we decided at the 11th hour, "Thanks, but no thanks," and we're really happy with our

decision to remain a private practice.

**RDB:** Is there one theoretical orientation that you gravitate toward more than others? Why?

**AC:** Much of what I do is cognitive therapy, with motivational interviewing and existential philosophy. Lately I've been using more storytelling in sessions, which is getting good results. These approaches seem to fit with my personality.

**RDB:** Is there a particular group that responds well to the type of therapy you practice? Is there a particular group that does not?

**AC:** Thrive is based in Cambridge, Mass., so the practice gets a lot of really sophisticated people and couples — Harvard and MIT grads, doctors, lawyers, etc. These groups respond well to my counseling approach. I would definitely need to change the delivery if the population was different, but I think the underlying philosophy is adaptable for most client populations.

**RDB:** As you look back on your career in counseling, what was your favorite position, and why was it your favorite?

**AC:** I love what I'm doing now. Clinical work, supervising new clinicians and even the business of building a practice is a lot of fun — and a lot of work.

**RDB:** Was there someone in your life who saw something special in you early on? Who valued you as a unique individual? Who is your hero?

**AC:** There are many people who have believed in me over the years and whom I've been able to learn from. I don't know if I have a hero, but I have a list of friends, colleagues, mentors, coaches and counselors who would come pretty close.

**RDB:** What mistakes have you made along your career path? What lessons have you learned from those mistakes?

**AC:** There's an adage, "If you want to succeed, double your rate of failure." I make plenty of mistakes and sometimes need to eat some humble pie. Thankfully, my team is a forgiving bunch. When I really mess up, I'll quote Gob from *Arrested Development* and say, "Michael, I've made a huge mistake." Really, I've needed to learn that mistakes are OK and that if I'm going to do anything really unique or special, mistakes and failure are going to be in the mix. This, of course, is advice I also give to my clients and staff.

**RDB:** Is there a saying, a book or a quote that you think about when you need to be inspired regarding your work?

**AC:** There's a quote by Erich Fromm that I like. It sounds a bit pessimistic, but I've always found it encouraging because it reminds me that everything is a process and we're always growing. "It requires productive activity to give life to the emotional and intellectual potentialities of man, to give birth to his self. ... Development of the self is never completed. Even under the best conditions, only part of man's potentialities is realized. Man always dies before he is fully born."

**RDB:** It is actually more true than pessimistic. I remember my father, dying at 87, saying, "I want to do so many more things — more fishing, more gardening, and I would like your daughter to teach me to kickbox." He knew he wasn't complete. He wanted to learn more, do more.

**AC:** Yes.

**RDB:** What do you try to think about or remember when the going gets tough?

**AC:** I try to remember that in any situation, I get to choose how I feel. Even

if the ship I'm on is sinking, I can enjoy the ride down and say, "How fascinating!" I don't always live up to this ideal, but I practice it as much as possible.

**RDB:** That is at the heart of Viktor Frankl's work. Even in the concentration camp, he said he had a choice. He could choose what to think about.

**AC:** Yes.

**RDB:** Your work is intense at times. What ways do you find to take care of yourself, to fill yourself back up?

**AC:** Spending quality time with friends is No. 1. I also feel recharged when traveling into Boston and also, ironically, when getting out of Boston. I force myself to make time for exercise and for eating healthy. I also watch a lot of comedy. After a long day at the practice, I have no emotional energy left for drama.

**RDB:** Is there anything else you want our readers to know about you and your work?

**AC:** Just this: I see many good counselors who dream of having a full private practice, but to do that they struggle to reinvent the wheel — getting on insurance, advertising for new clients, the admin work of the practice, etc. We've been getting the word out that we can help counselors with the back-end business of building a practice so they can focus on what they love — client care.



To learn more about Thriveworks, visit [thriveworks.com](http://thriveworks.com). ♦

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