



SETTING CLEAR BOUNDARIES FOR CLARITY AND WISDOM THROUGH

When I qualified as a homeopath, I felt proud and excited to begin my practice. My first career was in teaching, which I very much enjoyed, but homeopathy was different; it was my passion. As a teacher, I worked long hours, planning, teaching, marking and attending meetings. Most weekends I took work home with me and I often spent time in school during the holidays.

Being a teacher was definitely hard work, but it was very secure. I had a job description and career structure with opportunities for promotion. I received a monthly salary, holiday pay, maternity leave and a pension.

Pros and cons of self-employment

As a homeopath I am self-employed, which is quite different. While there are professional guidelines to follow, there is so much freedom that it often does not feel like a job. It is more like a calling and part of my identity. Self-employment offers a lot of flexibility, allowing me to choose where to work, set my own schedule and hourly rate.

The flip side of this is that there is no job security, which can make it hard to be clear about where my work begins and ends.

Perfectionist/workaholic

A decade ago, I picked up a copy of *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron.

I was a new mother for the second time and had returned to working as a teacher after maternity leave. I had begun my homeopathy practice alongside the teaching, but felt that my life was quite dull and lacked creativity, so I hoped *The Artist's Way* would help me find more

enjoyment in my life.

The book suggested a daily journal practice and weekly exercises. As I completed them, I realised I had perfectionist and workaholic tendencies. This is still true and, despite self-awareness, I still have unhealthy tendencies in my attitude towards work at times.

On any given work-day, at any given moment, I could tick at least one of these boxes:

- perfectionist
- workaholic
- people-pleaser
- rescuer

None of them is healthy and not one of them is something that I aspire to, although I can see where they come from.

What do these words mean for me?

Perfectionist: a desire to be good at what I do; to go the extra mile for my clients; to uphold my own standards, or the perceived standards of others; and to 'prove' that homeopathy works.

Workaholic: allowing work to inhabit a grey area that feels like a hobby; not knowing how to draw a line between work time and personal time.

People-pleaser: to make sure that I have 'enough' bookings; fear that prospective clients may go elsewhere; and wanting to be responsive and reliable.

Rescuer: being averse to conflict; caring about people and wanting to



About the author

Tracy Karkut-Law MARH graduated from the Centre for Homeopathic Education (CHE) in 2007 and has been practising in east London ever since. She is passionate about women's health and well-being. Your Radiant Business has been her side-project since 2015, where she offers inspiration and courses on the business side of homeopathy – see: homeopathywithtracy.co.uk – and – yourradiantbusiness.com. She teaches for the Southern College of Homeopathy and is currently writing a book on Practice Wisdom.



Tracy Karkut-Law shares some of her practice wisdom, helping us create and sustain balance both in our practices and in our lives.

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help; and being willing to drop everything and be heroic.

With an awareness of my tendencies towards each of these, I realise that I do not want my work as a homeopath to result in me neglecting my other roles and that I want to have a life for myself, as well as have a successful work-life.

As a result of completing *The Artist's Way*, I realised I wanted to write. Five years ago, I set up a blog on the business of being a homeopath with: yourradiantbusiness.com. I do not blog so often now, but I write a regular newsletter, which I enjoy; the most popular part of my newsletter is the part where I reflect on my practice.

These are some of the areas I have reflected on:

Clarity about my time

How many hours per week is it realistic for me to work? How much of that time can be client hours?

Clarity about finance

What are my overheads? How much do I need to earn per month? What do I need to charge? How many concessions can I accommodate? How is it best for me to receive payment?

Clarity about my terms

How do I arrange bookings and send reminders? What is the best way to set expectations for communication with my clients? How can I minimise no-shows and late cancellations?

This process of self-reflection is on-going. As a result, I have built up

layers of self-belief that allow me to trust that I can earn a decent living from homeopathy.

Client-therapist agreement

I set clear boundaries through my client-therapist agreement. This is something that I review on an annual basis, in light of my on-going practice reflection. I am particular about working with the right clients. I do not have to work with everyone who asks. I also know that my practice is not going to collapse and die on me if I do not fit in around my clients' schedules, or respond to queries 24/7. In fact, I've found the opposite to be true.

I value my skills and my time, and I am clear about my priorities. This helps me feel good about my work and I find that my clients value and respect what I do. This is an on-going journey. It is not always easy to find the courage to make small changes each time I uncover a new truth.

Exercises

Pen and paper exercises provide a structure to help the reflection process. There is no 'one size fits all' here. Each of us needs to find our own wisdom and, from that, create a new framework for our own practice. When you make time to reflect, it is easier to accept, let go, make new decisions and draw a line in the sand.

Here are some of the processes and exercises you may find helpful:

Create a Practice Wisdom notebook

I encourage you to do these exercises in writing and not with a

keyboard. Pen and paper make things real, in a way that screens do not.

Do you already have a journal or notebook that you've been saving for something special? This could be your 'Practice Wisdom' notebook. Use it to complete the exercises and collect insights and inspiration as you go along. The act of writing will help you embed your insights into your practice and daily life.

Our short-term memories are not that big. New information replaces old information when we run out of space in our minds, but if we read something over and over again, it will stay with us.

A 'Practice Wisdom' notebook will help you do that.

Exercise 1 – Where you are now?

Take two facing pages in your notebook. On one side, write things that you are happy with in your practice, right now, today. On the other side, write things that you are struggling with.

The lists do not have to be long. This is a way to notice and acknowledge where you are at. There is no need to analyse yet. This is where you are right now.

Exercise 2 – Collect inspiration

Copy out a quote or something that inspires you. Here's one I like:

"Don't get so busy making a living, that you forget to make a life," by Dolly Parton

Start to pay attention to messages you see around you, perhaps in a book or magazine, or in a café.

Exercise 3 – Define your work

When you love something, it is hard to know when you are working and when you are not working. This exercise will help you to get clear about this.

Take two facing pages in your notebook. On one side write all the things you do that are your work. On the other side write things that are not your work. What do you notice? Do any insights occur to you?

Write down anything you feel is important or useful.

Exercise 4 – Set your priorities

Work, or overwork, or constant work, can be a means of escape. It covers anxiety about what would happen if we were to stop. The importance you give to work can mean that life gets squeezed.

Take a page in your notebook and draw a circle. Inside this circle write your name, and around it, all the things that are central to your life. Your top priorities, if you like. This could include people, faith, hobbies, animals, anything at all, so long as it is important to you.

Draw another circle around this circle. Write down the things that are nice to do; they may be not as important, but are still a feature of your life.

What do you notice? What insights occur to you?

Write down anything you feel is important or useful.

Exercise 5 – Identify your values

Our values help make you who you are, as a homeopath and as a person. When you are clear about them, they can help you be true to yourself.

On a new page, draw a new circle. Inside that circle, write down three or four values that are important to you. Some examples are: inspiration, trust, intuition, commitment, excellence, self-care, simplicity, honesty, generosity, beauty. When you have connected with your values, take some time to consider how they reflect in your life as a whole.

What insights occur to you?

Write down anything you feel is important or useful.

Exercise 6 – Set your schedule

Having a clear schedule allows me to know when I am working and when

I am not. When I have a theme for my day, I am more focused and I do not lose time through multitasking.

Take a new page and write the days of the week down the side. What does your week look like? Which days are clinic days? Which days are admin days? What are your other commitments?

Then take a new page and repeat the exercise, but this time, consider how you would like your ideal week to look. What would that look like? How about an ideal day? Do you have anything that you like to do at the start and end of your day? Make sure you include time for that.

Now compare the two. Make a list of changes you can make so your schedule feels more balanced. Small adjustments can make a big difference here.

Exercise 7 – Find your 'true north'

These exercises have focused on defining your work, priorities, values and schedule. This might be all you need to help you reflect and reset your practice boundaries.

Here are some suggestions if you would like to explore further.

When you look inside yourself, you find clarity, strength and wisdom. You need to know exactly who you are, otherwise you will be what other people want you to be.

Take a page and choose one of these lists to help you acknowledge yourself:

- Things about me that are unique
- The value that I bring to the world
- Things I am proud of
- What other people appreciate about me
- A list of people who value me

Take a new page and choose one of these lists to help you consider your boundaries:

- Things I am responsible for
- Things I am not responsible for
- Things I no longer want to be responsible for
- Things that waste my time

Take a new page and choose one of these lists to help you re-imagine your practice:

- How I want my practice to be
- The type of client I want to work with
- The type of client I want to avoid

Last of all, take a new page, and make some powerful decisions for yourself:

- Things I will no longer say
- Things I will no longer do
- Things I am going to do instead

Create more balance

I encourage you to see the work you have done through these exercises as your personal manifesto. By making time to reflect on your practice, you will have found your own clarity and wisdom. If you found these exercises useful, you might like to include them as a regular part of your practice.

A daily journal habit helps me bring awareness to my work and my life as a whole. It gives me a sense of where I am with my priorities. When things feel too busy, I scale back. As homeopaths, we have to walk our talk. I only have a certain number of hours in the day and so do you.

When we have clear boundaries, we give our clients permission to set boundaries too.

I'm happy to share my client-therapist agreement and you can contact me directly at hello@yourradiantbusiness.com ●