

INNOVATIVE INCOME FOR MUSIC THERAPISTS

**Beyond Direct Service
& Private Practice**

{An Introductory Excerpt}

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Introduction

"YOU are a limited resource."

These are the words I wish someone would have told me early on in my music therapy career when I started a private practice in addition to my full-time direct service job, taking on so many clients that I ended up working 50+ clinical hours per week.

"There are only so many hours in a day."

This is the reality check that eluded me as I continued to say "yes" to committee leadership titles, voluntary supervision roles, and mentees on top of my aforementioned full-time direct service job and rapidly growing private practice.

"Just because you *can* do something doesn't mean you *should*."

This is the permission slip I desperately needed when I was long past due to reduce my caseload of music therapy clients, students, and groups, but felt that I couldn't because they had a need for services, and I could fill it.

I learned these lessons the hard way over the course of many years, and now I want to be that someone – the one speaking those words, providing that reality check, giving that permission slip – to you.

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As a new music therapist working in a school for children with special needs, I developed somewhat of a martyr mentality. I agreed to my starting salary without hesitation (in fact, I was prepared to accept \$10,000 *less* than what was offered), and made a habit of going well above and beyond what was expected of me. I did the same in my private practice.

After all, I was in a helping profession, and it felt wrong to expect money in return for the kind of work I was doing. I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I let that narrative guide my actions for the first few years of my life as a music therapist.

So while my martyr mentality led to a depletion of time and energy in terms of providing direct service, it also lit a fire underneath me: a fire that fueled my creativity and desire to pursue additional means of generating income.

The more successful and profitable I became in those other areas, the more I began to believe that music therapists (and all other helping professionals, for that matter) can and should be well-compensated for their work, whether it is direct service or not. My opinion

on this matter only grew stronger as I saw how many people I was able to reach and positively affect through the various kinds of work I was doing, while also earning a good living. Contrary to my original belief, there is not an incongruence between helping others and making money.

In the years since I became a music therapist, the evolution of social media has helped create a community at our fingertips, and frequent topics of conversation amongst that community are fair compensation and financial abundance for music therapists. While I'm thrilled that we're having these conversations, it is disheartening to hear from so many who are in the same boat I was as a new professional.

And that is why I decided to write this book. I know exactly what it feels like to be stretched incredibly thin by an unsustainable caseload, but still not making enough money to be completely financially independent. I know that as a music therapist, you are most likely multi-talented and multi-passionate. I know you want to make a living doing what you love most.

I learned through experience that the key to achieving my ideal career and salary was *not* taking on more clients, and it's most likely not the key to achieving yours, either. While direct service is what we were initially trained for, there are unlimited ways in which to put your music therapy skills and knowledge to use.

Over the course of a decade filled with experimentation, countless challenges, ~~failures~~ big lessons learned, and persistence, I've created a career that is almost exclusively made up of work that I love. It doesn't look like that of many other music therapists, and I've come to embrace its uniqueness. However, that is not to say I am alone in taking the unconventional route.

Along the way, I've met a number of innovative music therapists who have crafted unique and groundbreaking careers within our field. I'm honored to feature 8 of those innovators in this book, and will be sharing their experiences throughout the coming chapters.

As you read, make sure you're ready to take notes in order to capture ideas as they come to mind. Maybe the ideas are already there, or the foundation has already been built; in any case, I hope this book provides you with the validation and encouragement to start or continue building your ideal music therapy career.

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