

# Jennifer Browning of Family Counseling Services: “You need a team around you”



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*As a part of our interview series with prominent medical professionals called “5 Things You Need To Know To Create a Highly Successful Private Practice” I had the pleasure of interviewing Jennifer Browning.*

*Jennifer is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor in Idaho and the sole owner of Family Counseling Services which has been in business since 2009. She graduated with her Masters degree in Marriage and Family Counseling in 2006 from Northwest Nazarene University.*

**Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Before we dive in, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your ‘backstory’ and how you ended up where you are?**

I began my journey working for a church youth group and while I was trying to help the students I was working with, I realized that I did not have the skills to help to a deeper degree—that led me to higher education, becoming a mental health counselor, and eventually becoming an agency owner.

I’m a huge fan of mentorship throughout one’s career. None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Who has been your biggest mentor? What was the most valuable lesson you learned from them?

I have had several mentors each at different stages of my life: Jim Putman, Jamie Lambert, Dr. Todd Frye—each of these mentors taught me different aspects of both caring for people, and making sure logistics also get completed.

**What made you want to start your own practice? Can you tell us the story of how you started it?**

I started my practice with my partner, at the time, who eventually stepped out of the business and my life. In the beginning the drive to start my own practice was around being successful in life and helping others to do the same. I started this agency with 700 dollars hoping that success would eventually come, and through hard work, mistakes, and a lot of trial and error—success did finally come.

**Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began your career?**

The most interesting thing that happened to me since beginning my career relates to the quote—the harder I work, the more luck I seem to find. Each situation and struggle has been different. There were many struggles that I did not think I, or the business would get through, but with enough ethics and determination, I was able to make it and thrive.

**Because it is a “helping profession”, some healthcare providers struggle with the idea of “monetization.” How do you address the business aspect of running a medical practice? Can you share a story or example?**

I talked with some of my mentors about this exact thing and the feedback I received revolved around the notion that we get paid for our work so that we can continue to work. Like everyone else, we have bills, and things we would like to save fund for—but there is none of that if we offer our services for free. Charging for our services allows us to continue to offer services.

**Managing being a provider and a business owner is a constant balancing act. How do you manage both roles?**

This was a struggle for me until I came to the realization that I had to back off seeing clients. The way I worked through this was to understand that as the owner, it was now my job to not inspire clients directly, but to keep my staff inspired so then they can inspire their clients. When I came to that purpose, it became a lot easier to really focus on the business side of things without too much regret for having to let my client hours decrease.

From completing your degree to opening a practice and becoming a business owner, your path was most likely challenging. Can you share a story about one of your greatest struggles? Can you share what you did to overcome it?

My two biggest struggles involved working with people who were not following the rules. One of them was doing this intentionally, and the other was just naively neglectful. Either way, both of these situations became public—meaning, my staff knew what was going on and I had to act quickly to prove to the staff we would get through each situation in a very ethical way and each deficiency would be properly addressed.

**Ok, thank you. Here is the main question of our interview. What are the 5 things you need to know to create a thriving practice, and why? (Please share a story or example for each.)**

1. You need a team around you. What I mean by this, is there is no way to open an agency alone. I would highly recommend having an accountant, a lawyer, and someone who just has your back so you can run ideas by them, vent, and they will give you honest feedback.
2. You need a high level of ethics—without this, your business will eventually crumble. There is just no getting around this at all. It is so much easier to do this right from the beginning. One of my mentors would say that if they ever got accused of anything, their reputation would speak for itself. This has been my approach from day 1.
3. Thirdly, you need to be humble. If you are concerned with being right all the time—owning a business is not for you. You must be able to take feedback from your staff (and of course, enforce when it is time to do that as well). Know that you will make mistakes... get comfortable with this. Be ready to move, fix the mistake, make it right, and then move on.
4. You have to constantly be looking for ways to improve and inspire. Never let yourself get stagnant—stay creative. Be ready to inspire yourself and make sure that you are putting in enough time for self-care so that you can stay inspired also.
5. Lastly, remember—really... your staff does not work for you, rather you work for your staff. If you are a leader in your organization, your job is to make sure everyone else that you lead, has the things they need to be the most successful at their own job. If they are not doing good... what do they need? More training? New equipment? Some accountability? Some inspiration? Remember, it is your job to help them be successful.

**As a business owner you spend most of your time working IN your practice, seeing patients. When and how do you shift to working ON your practice? (Marketing, upgrading systems, growing your practice, etc.) How much time do you spend on the business elements?**

I have made the transition to only seeing my returning clients—clients that I have seen in the past. It goes back to that realization stated above, that I know understand as the business owner—my job is to inspire and care for my staff to make sure they can provide the best client care possible.

**I understand that the healthcare industry has unique stresses and hazards that other industries don't have. What specific practices would you recommend to other healthcare leaders to improve their physical or mental wellness? Can you share a story or example?**

Self-care. Whatever healthy thing that would look like for you—do that. For me it involves spending time with my family, friends, and myself alone at times.

**Can you please give us your favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Can you share a story about how that was relevant in your own life?**

As stated above—one of my favorites is—it seems the harder I work, the more luck I seem to find. Another good one: everything is possible... even the work impossible says “I’m possible”. Keep your outlook optimistic. You will get to where you will find happiness.

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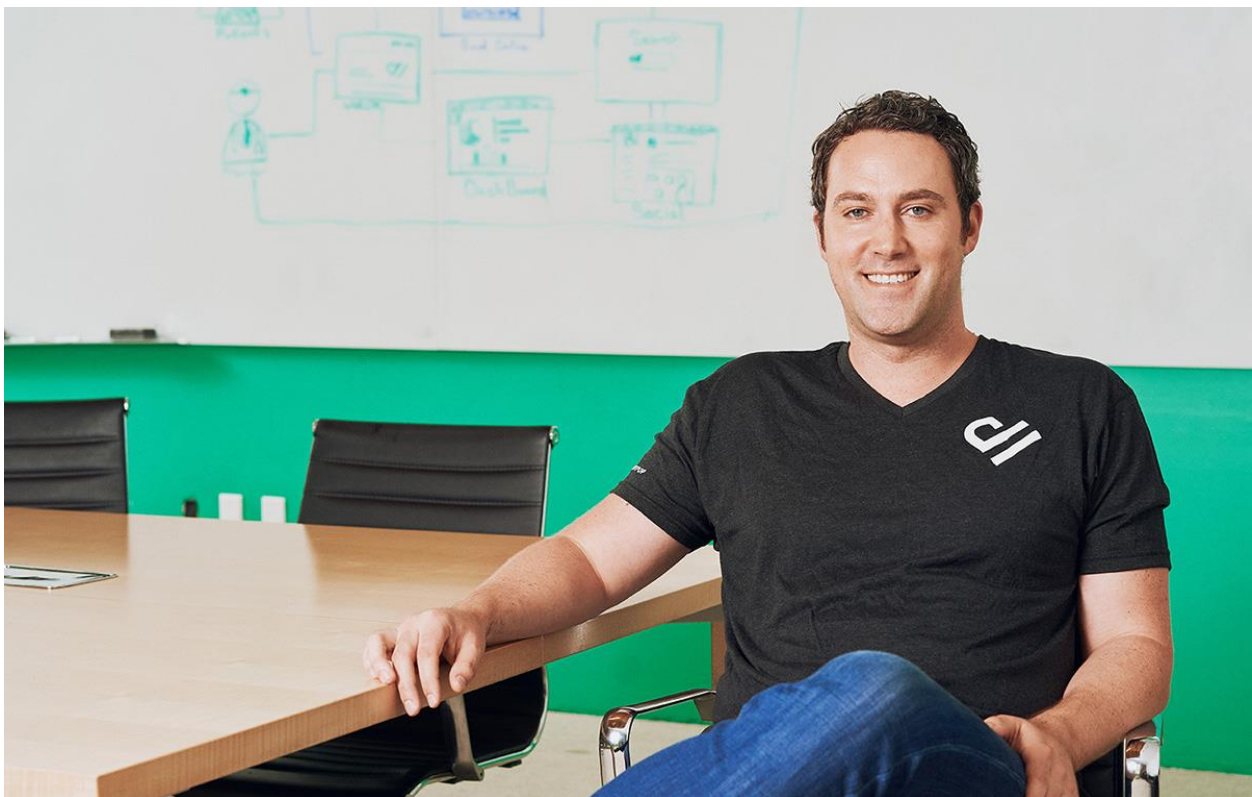
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**Thank you for these great insights! We wish you continued success and good health!**



### **Luke Kervin, Co-Founder and Co-CEO at PatientPop**

Luke Kervin is the Co-Founder and Co-CEO of PatientPop, an award-winning practice growth technology platform. PatientPop is Kervin's third successful business venture. Prior to co-founding PatientPop, Kervin co-founded and was President of ShopNation (acquired by Meredith Corporation) and was the first executive hire at StarBrand Media (acquired by POPSUGAR).