



Useful Strategies Stepping into the Psychology Profession

Transcript

Hello, it is my pleasure to be able to present this small little training on **Azz-ert Urself! Inc.**, and its founder, **Dr. Danita Morales, Ramos, PhD**, yours truly. I'm going to take just a few moments to be able to answer questions that were submitted to me regarding Just my journey in this particular field or what have you.

First, I would like to start with the question of what it was like to be able to start my own practice, which is to Azz-ert Urself! Inc.

It has been extremely challenging as well as rewarding. As you can imagine, starting any new venture can be daunting especially if you don't have a roadmap on how to do that. **Starting a private practice** is not just about starting a practice in your industry it's also about starting an enterprise or business. I came into this segment of my career, not really knowing a lot about business. In addition to building my practice, I also needed to build my skill sets as a business owner. I began to network with other business owners, not necessarily just in the mental health field, but those individuals who had successful businesses and also had built a global brand.

I was able to do that through using social media. It definitely initially was more difficult than what I imagined. My first six weeks, I was very stressed out. I had this irrational belief that I would work less hours because I owned the practice as opposed to working for someone else.

And I quickly had to use some of the same skill sets that I give to clients to reframe my thought process that if I could invest many hours for another corporation, then I can certainly invest the time needed to build and develop my own dreams. Some of the people questioned the pros and cons.

I call them costs and benefits. Many of the hours I'm going to work.

I decide what populations that I'm going to work with. And what I mean by population, you have to be careful that you're not discriminating against anyone, but population meaning which clients am I most competent and passionate to work with. And I found that I am most passionate about working with individuals who have had challenges overcoming belief systems related to past trauma and individuals that struggle with relationships.

As you can imagine, that is a wide audience. However, having the competence to be able to work with individuals that meet those specific criteria, as well as being able to work with individuals that have various cultural dynamics, be it ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, religion, all of those cultural factors. The benefit of having your own practice is that you design a practice curtailed to a specific audience.

One of the costs that I've been able to do, though, is to be able to expand this and to be able to start an internship program to be able to help up -and -coming other mental health professionals.

What do you wish you had known about psychology during college? If there is a class you wish you had taken or a book you wish you had had?

I chose this question specifically to follow up with about starting a business. I think what most programs lack when teaching people to become a counselor or a therapist or a psychologist is they don't teach you about business and finance, which is very important. As a matter of fact, many educational programs do not teach people financial literacy, which is important in any industry.

And particularly here, the psychology program, we didn't discuss anything about, in my psychology program, we didn't discuss anything regarding financial literacy and how that might impact you as a person who is practicing on their own.

I also wish that there had not been a class, but more a requirement that individual therapy was a requirement, not necessarily an option. My program did require you to go to three sessions as a part of your program just to see what it was like. I think that universities and colleges should be much more intentional in having, especially at the latter part of the program, that their practitioners have at least monthly therapy. The reason why I say that is because I share with people, I listen to people's scary, just to address anything that can come up from working with challenging cases. I think it is very important.

In regards to having conducted any research projects, my doctoral research was one of my largest research projects. Then the second research project has been through my affiliation, as well as my instruction at the Institute of Cellular Wellness, where we focus more on natural and holistic forms of care. We have conducted research, a lot of case studies in particular at that institute. We don't really share a lot of that information publicly because our research is dedicated to our members. It is a private membership through the Institute. We do that for multiple reasons: to protect the interests of our participants, as well as to protect the sanctity of our studies. We do this research at the Institute of Cellular Wellness. It is not for profit. It is more for the health of our community.

How has it been being a Psi Chi member? How has it helped my college experience, research, and career? If I'm honest, I received an offer to be a member early on in my career, and it was actually a steam booster to be acknowledged in that way initially. Then it is recognized in most places, you know, as a symbol of commitment to our field, and it also gives that designation to show that we've taken our studies very seriously.

Could I share more about the Candela Award? In my practice, I often do contract work for different organizations.

You will find that in this field, working in partnership and collaborating with other organizations, you will extend your brand and promote yourself. Honestly, it helps me to act as a corporate citizen. One company that I am affiliated with called Spring Health, I provide services and I've been providing services for this organization since about a year after their inception. They were very new when I started (*with them*). And I've gotten this award throughout my time and service with them since they've started this. I see one of the highest levels of clients through that particular platform.

This organization is an employee assistance program that provides individual family and couples therapy to individuals who are in the corporate space. They're usually mid-level and higher. As of recently, we have had a few entry-level, but most of the individuals are high achieving, high performance in their career mid-level and higher. It has a certain formula where they look at, you know, you completing your notes in a timely fashion, how well you engage initially with the client, your commitment each week as far as how much availability you have in assistant clients with therapy appointments, your therapeutic alliance, your ability to track the client's progress through outcome measures such as the patient and health questionnaire 9, the generalizing anxiety disorder 7, different outcome measures such as that. You may hear them referred to as the PHQ 9 or the GAD-7 outcome measures and to see if we've really helped the client to progress. In addition, they use those to see if they've had any improvement in mood disorders such as anxiety and depression, and then their overall

improvement. We receive a monthly score, but it is averaged out over six months. And after that average, they determine if you would, one, receive a bonus, and they compare you to the other practitioners on their platform. I've, again, one, not every single time in this most recent, I had over 302 appointments where I serviced over 59 patients.

What types of extracurricular activities? Multiple different activities, depending on what it is that you're trying to accomplish in your career. I share this with my students in my internship program, and I share this with clients, and I also live by this. I focus my life on value-based living. I don't set goals until I first have the value, right? What is important to me, why it's important to me. Do your research on Dr. Russ Harris. He is an expert in acceptance and commitment therapy. He talks very much about values. I follow a lot of his content. I use a lot of his free resources with my clients and things of that nature. Dr. Russ Harris has a values list that I recommend every student listening to me, access to a Google search and access that list, and find three to five values that are important to you. Now, keep in mind that your values will evolve over time. The values that I had as a young mother are not the values that I have now as a mother of adult children. Okay. The values that I had as a married woman are not the same values that I have now as a divorcee. I'm sharing that because you're going to want to do this periodically, especially when there's changes in your life, especially when there's challenges in your life, to do a check in and reflect, hey, have my values changed in any way? It also helps you decide who you want to align with as you continue to grow your professional career.

In terms of books? One book that I recommend that you read, I already shared, which was the Purple Cowell. Seth Godin is a very good author in helping you to see yourself in a very esteeming way. Extracurricular activity, I recommend that weekly you participate in at least one networking event, especially if you're going to go into private practice. But don't just wait to do that. Do that as a student. It is not about who you know. It is about who knows you. Getting out by participating in a networking activity helps others to get to know you, even if you're a student, *right*? I will tell you that they say it's a small world. That world becomes smaller, the more you network. Every week, I participate in at least one networking activity. That networking activity ranges anywhere from a business networking activity to something that I like as a hobby, but it constantly has me in front of a set of people that align with my values, and it increases my net worth or my network, *right*? I recommend that as well.

I also recommend getting involved in any type of programs your local jurisdiction, whether it's the city or county, may offer for business owners. Here in Hampton Roads, where I'm located, various cities have business classes and courses for new business owners, and oftentimes they're either free or at a nominal fee. These are excellent ways to connect with other new business owners in your area. It's also

an opportunity to find out other resources that are in your community to be able to help you to get underway. And attending different job fairs in your area as well.

I saved this last question, which is, **can I tell more about our internship program and Azz-ert Urself! Inc. and what are the qualifications and what do you hope students will learn during their time with you?** I'm so passionate about the internship program. The reason why I developed this program was out of necessity because when I was seeking an internship program, there was really almost next to nothing available. Many practitioners do not want to assume any liability for students and quite honestly do not have the time to be able to train students and often will turn students down. That can be very disheartening for a student, especially when you're going through your program and, you know, you're doing all your studies and then you're ready to get in the game.

In the medical profession, there's lots of residency programs for individuals to be able to get that, but not necessarily anything like that in a psychology and counseling field. I charged myself at that time when I found out how difficult it was for me to find myself, I realized that other people may have that same challenge. I committed to myself, which is one of my values, commitment, to be able to start a program to be able to do that. This program is bare minimum, a two year program. It starts from practicum, internship, and then if the students desire can go into their residency when they're seeking hours for licensure after they complete their coursework.

In this program, what it is designed to do is to see the student from start to finish in their professional development, giving them a structured way to obtain the necessary skills not only to get their degree and their license, but ultimately to be competent in this field. What I found more often than not, is that while many professionals complete the requirements to obtain their licenses, they often are not necessarily competent to practice. And that creates an ethical limbo. I find it part of my responsibility to protect our field to help other professionals to become qualified.

What are the qualifications? The qualifications to be a part of this program is that the individual must be about to enter their practicum and or internship at their university and completed whatever coursework or whatever requirements are required by their school to be able to enter into an internship program.

The person must also be open and willing to commit to a minimum of 20 hours a week to be able to not only get the direct hours that are needed, but additional ancillary hours to learn the other skills that are necessary, a lot of administrative skills such as clinical documentation, case conceptualization, treatment planning, and things of that sort. Additionally, the person must be willing to work in a team

environment as our program is a comprehensive program in that each time a student meets a step, like from practicum to internship, once they get to internship, they would be partnered with a practicum student to be able to provide some mentorship and guidance as well, because as a private practitioner, the individual also must be able to supervise other professionals. We have that as well.

Lastly, what I would just like to share with any of the students watching this training is to just allow yourself to dream again.

You know, being in your coursework can get daunting and trying to check all the boxes can get daunting that you forget your why you forget your dream whenever i feel that level of burnout approaching that compassion fatigue frustration i remind myself of why i started in the first place and I encourage who's ever listening and watching this to be able to remind yourself why you started this in the first place. It is incredibly important to remember to dream. Remember why you started this in the first place. And the remainder of this training is going to give you an opportunity to watch a short video clip. just for that event or they could be an ongoing client. These individuals all got together for an event to promote mental health awareness.

I wanted to share this video in particular because anyone interested in our internship program has to be passionate about giving back to their community. We really want to promote community wellness. Anyone who is interested in being a part of our internship program would reach out directly to us by either one visiting our website **www.azzerturself.com** and clicking on the contact form and submitting your request for an internship application packet and or you can just email directly at **admin@azzertu.com** and request an **'Internship Application Packet'**. You will hear back from our admin within about 48 hours with an internship packet, and you do want to make sure that you complete all components of the packet in order to be considered.

Thank you so much for watching. I wish you the best in your career.