



Working at Home

by Joan Tweed, HHP, HTP

I have had a home-based holistic practice since 1989, and have been asked to describe how I accomplished that and what it is like.

The first thing that comes to mind is that it is great! Having clients come to you means - no traffic jams, no money spent on gas, no need to transport a table, no gaps between clients, and no office rent. Plus you can claim part of your home expenses on your income tax return.

But that is now. When I first started it took a little more effort.

So, how does one go about establishing a home-based private practice?

Well, first of all you have to **let people know that you are in business**. Let them know you will be charging for your services

- and **how much you will be charging**. Contact other Healing Touch practitioners and massage therapists in your community and surrounding communities to know what they are charging. Then **make a fee for services list** for ½ hour, 1 hour, and 1½ hour appointments. People will be more responsive to fees that are similar to other comparable therapies.

It is important to get the word out there. Put flyers describing your practice everywhere you possibly can – such as drug stores, beauty shops, barber shops, health food stores, doctors offices, etc. Anywhere health-conscious people might see them and take them. Just the act of passing them out produces clients and lets people know about you. Be friendly but professional while doing this, first impressions are important. You can also ask friends to tell people about your new business and give them some of your business cards to distribute for you.

It helps to include a description of the different modalities you practice and what the benefits are, because not everyone

knows that our kind of help is available to them. Remember, western society has been taught to eliminate the symptom rather than fix the problem. So we have to educate people about healing. We need to enlighten the community about the alternative therapies that are available. We often assume that people know about Healing Touch, but it has been my experience that they either do not know, or they have doubts about it. So spread the word!

After quitting my full-time job and starting my own business, I approached the local acupuncturist to speak with her about offering treatments to her patients which resulted in my presenting classes on the energy system to them. We charged \$15 for a two-hour class and split the money. This was a real win-win situation, as Dr. Weng preferred seeing clients to teaching and it gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of prospective clients. Her clients learned that the meridians are only a portion of their energy system, and ten years later I am still seeing some of her clients. So don't be afraid to approach other holistic practitioners, it could easily work in your favor. You will also want to have a list of other therapists to whom you can refer people, and give the other therapists some of your cards so they can refer clients to you.

This brings us to the professional image of business cards, brochures, and the all-important gift certificate. It is crucial to present yourself professionally and this is one of the easiest ways. Take the time to develop attractive and professional business cards, brochures, and gift certificates. It will pay dividends.

Your appearance is also very important. If you look like the lady next door, you'll be treated like the lady next door. I wear scrubs with my business name and motto screen-printed on the shirt. CHOICES IN HOLISTIC THERAPY – "Dedicated to helping you regain and maintain your health." The scrubs remind people that I am in the health care field - and - I am advertising my business wherever I go. I have had people ask me about my business and ask for my card while standing in line at the bank and the grocery store. Always have business cards with you, even if you are just out for the evening!

You never know when an opportunity to book an appointment on the spot will happen.

It also pays to join organizations like the local Chamber of Commerce and business networking groups; volunteer at events like Earth Day; get together with other practitioners and sponsor a booth at a health fair; offer Introduction to Healing Touch presentations and donate gift certificates to church and community service organizations especially for their fund raising events. The more you are seen as a professional member of the community and the more clients you attract -- the more people will know about Healing Touch and the other holistic ways you can help them achieve healing and improved health.

Then, of course, there are the yellow pages and the Internet, which I did early in my practice. But in the end, word-of-mouth and the other methods listed above are the best ways to advertise when you are working from home.

Remember, one happy client can easily refer ten friends. I've had it happen!

I learned a variety of hands-on techniques before becoming certified in Healing Touch, so my business consists of an assortment of healing modalities. I find it very useful to combine things like ear coning with energy work, or adding other techniques taught by other disciplines while doing a Healing Touch session.

Ending a session with recommendations and words of encouragement to help your clients change old patterns are referred to as "wellness coaching" in my brochure. I am not a licensed counselor, but I feel it is important to teach clients how they can avoid sliding backward after they leave.

Expand your knowledge to enlarge your practice. People are eager to learn more about alternative/complementary healing methods and they expect you to know about them. So gather all the information you can and share it with your clients. You can also learn from your clients. Most importantly - be sure to listen to your clients. It is incredible just how much stress a person is able to release just by having a caring person listen to them.

It is also extremely important to **always have your room ready for the next client**. That intention will keep them coming. It is also helpful to keep all your paperwork in the same room, so you can easily find any form or handout you may need.

There are a wide variety of zoning laws in different parts of the country, so you may want to learn about them before you decide just how public you will go, and sometimes it is better not to advertise too broadly. I personally have a home business clause written into my homeowner's insurance policy and carry professional liability insurance, but these are individual choices. Now that I'm semi-retired I no longer advertise, no longer teach or give presentations, and take new clients only by referral - I will probably eliminate the insurance expense, as I no longer need it.

Once you are established you too will be able to do just as much as you wish to keep just as many clients as you would like to have. This is a wonderful way to earn a living, especially if you **schedule clients in clusters**, i.e., just in the morning or just in the afternoon, so the rest of your day is free - or - only four days a week so you have a three-day weekend every week. **You are in charge of your own schedule.** At \$55 to \$60 an hour you can easily make over \$1200 a week seeing just a few clients. So why are you hesitating? **Get busy – and – just do the work!**

Actually it's not really work – it is a privilege. Enjoy it! 🍷

About the author:

Joan is a Holistic Health Practitioner living in Spring Valley, California, which is an unincorporated area of San Diego County. She was certified in Healing Touch from 1997 to 2007, when she decided to semi-retire. And even though she's now 66, she enjoys her work so much she's not willing to give it up completely, so she still works part time.