growing THERAPISTS

THE TOP 16
THERAPIST WEBSITE
MISTAKES CHECKLIST

READY TO PRESENT YOUR PRACTICE LIKE THE PRO THAT YOU ARE?

For more details,
visit **www.growingtherapists.com**

1) NICHE

Mistake = Not tailoring your therapist website around a specific niche

Solution = Niche your website

Tailoring your website around one niche is best, but it's okay to highlight up to three complementary niches on your website.

Many therapists are nervous to niche. Some feel called to serve many different kinds of people and issues. Others fear limiting themselves or becoming bored. Do you have a niche? If not, what is your belief about having a niche? Do you fear that it will limit you, that people outside of your niche won't find you, or that you will get bored? It won't, they will, and you will still have variety.

Having a niche simply establishes you as an expert in how to reduce the emotional pain of a particular demographic and/or problem. People want an expert. They don't want someone who is good at everything but great at nothing. A niche builds credibility, strengthens referral sources, and attracts your ideal client.

Facts about niching:

- A niche establishes you as an expert. People want an expert. Would you rather go to a heart surgeon if you need heart surgery or a general surgeon? Clients within your niche will flock to you because you will be seen as an expert for their particular need.

- You do not need to fear "Groundhog Day" where you are stuck with the same type of client again and again. Other clients will still find you. Having a narrow specialization draws other clients to you because you will be seen as an expert, not just in your niche, but in the field of therapy overall.

- As you establish yourself as an expert within your niche, you will gain exposure that will increase referrals. Referral sources will respect your work and reputation, not just your niche.

- Your niche may involve advanced training, certification, and/or experience which can demand premium fees. People are often willing to pay more for someone who specializes in what they are seeking.

- A niche can lead to additional marketing opportunities. Your reputation as an expert within your niche can open up additional professional opportunities such as workshops, teaching, presentations, or interviews. Professionals seek experts for quotes, to write articles, to present, or for referrals. Who is that expert? That's right. That expert could be you.

Your therapist website should speak directly to your niche to establish you as an expert and set your practice apart. Your website is a story where the logo, titles, colors, content, calls-to-action, page navigation, and images all weave together to speak to your niche's emotional pain.

Don't fear the niche. Potential clients want to know that you understand their pain, that you have expertise and specialized training in what they are experiencing, that you can help them, and that you are not a jack of all trades, master of none.

Need help identifying your niche or optimizing your website to target your niche? Consider my **Niche Consulting Services** where we can identify who you want to work with and why, the pain points of your niche to best communicate your empathy and ability to help, and how best to create a story with your website tailored to your niche.

2) IDEAL CLIENT

Mistake = Not marketing to your ideal client

Solution = Market directly to your *one* ideal client

After you have defined your niche, you can then identify your ideal client.

To identify your ideal client, close your eyes for a moment. Envision your ideal client as one specific person. Perhaps it's an actual client or just someone you're making up. Give that person a name, age, job, presenting problem, pain points, family-of-origin issues, and reason for starting therapy at this particular point in time. How do you feel when you're working with that person? Energized, excited, curious, present, and empathic? You may have found your ideal client. Now think about a different client who is not your ideal client. Do you feel as positive about working with that person?

After you have identified your ideal client within your niche, think about what that person needs to feel seen, understood, and hopeful. To maximize your website's effectiveness, use those answers to design your website around your one specific ideal client. Tailor your content to speak directly to that one particular person's pain. Keep in mind that content is not only about the words that you write but also about the tone. Does that person speak rather formally? If so, you may want to keep the tone of your content professional, factual, and conservative. If that person is more casual and speaks informally, keep it real to encourage connection.
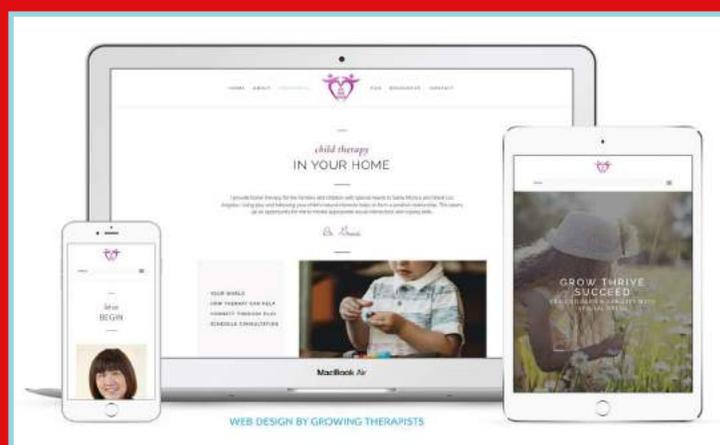
We all naturally gravitate toward certain issues, demographics, and presenting problems. Identifying and marketing to your ideal client allows you to fill your practice with the clients you enjoy most and with whom you are most effective.

3) DESIGN

Mistake = Having an outdated website design

Solution = Your therapist website should look modern, fresh, and clean

A website is your most important marketing tool, but did you know that an outdated website can actually hurt your practice? A website that looks like it's from the 90's or is hard to navigate and overly busy looks unprofessional and like you don't care enough to invest in your practice.

A user-friendly and modern website helps your practice by presenting a cohesive and professional online presence.

If you know that your current website could use a revamp, **get a website designed by a therapist for therapists** and be ready to drop the website shame.
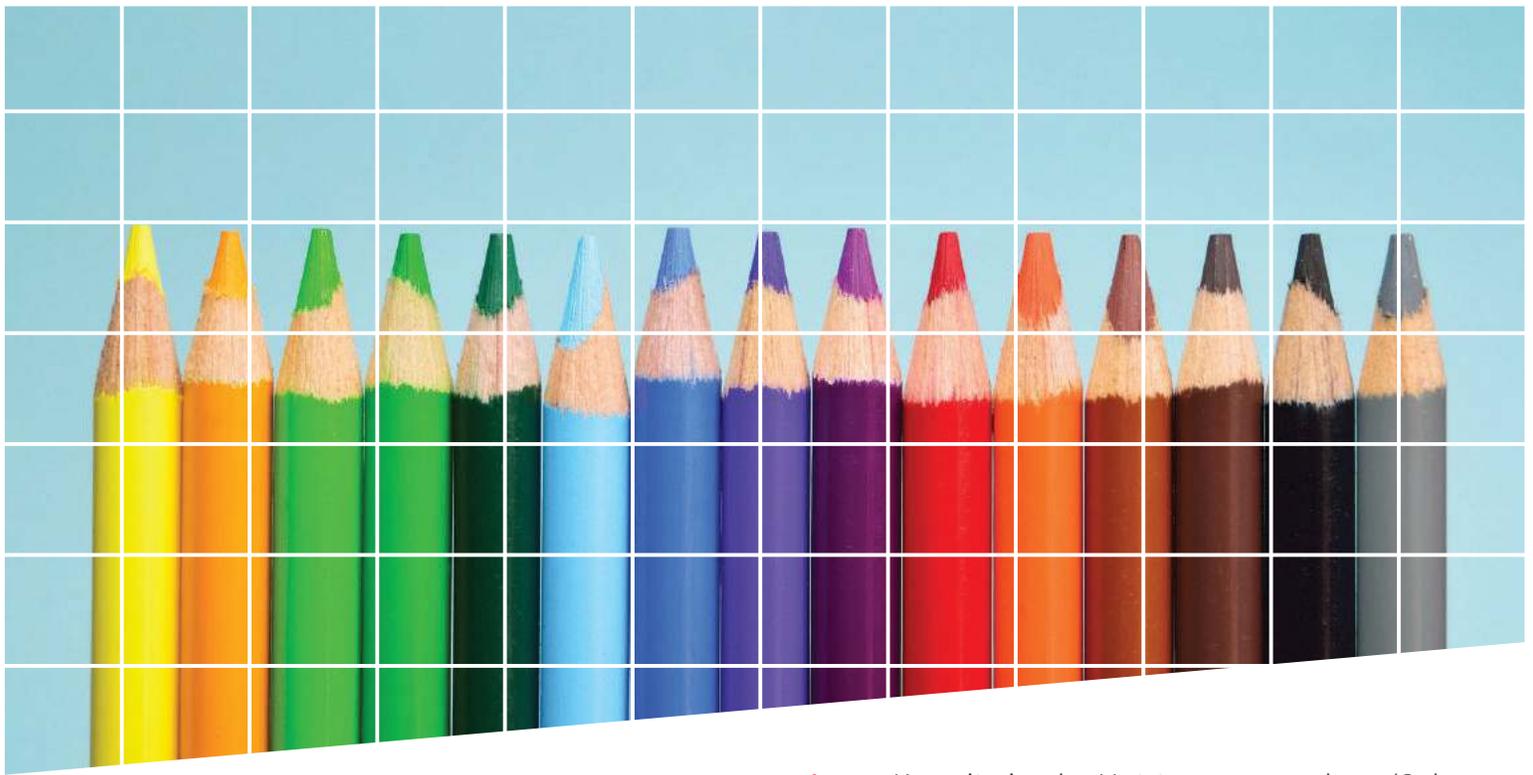
4) BRANDING

Mistake = Not using your website to build your brand

Solution = Create a website that defines your brand and will attract your ideal client

Many therapists think branding is a dirty word. Branding simply means establishing yourself as an expert to your niche by communicating how you can help them reduce their emotional pain.

You may have heard the saying: "You are your brand." That means that what you offer your clients, how you help them, and how they feel when you talk to them is your brand. That doesn't feel too sales-y now, does it?

The goal of your website is to get you clients. Your website is the face of your practice, and it needs to radiate your brand so that your ideal clients can find you.

The logo, colors, fonts, overall feel, and content of your website fit together to speak to the pain points of your ideal client. That is the secret sauce that builds the story of your brand. You want your ideal clients to feel connected to your site, to your words, and to who you are as a therapist so that they trust you can help them. They will then feel compelled to contact you.

Logo: Keep it simple. Not too many colors. (Colors can be expensive when it comes to printing business cards). If there is text, make it easy to read. Many therapists are drawn to script font which can look lovely but can also be hard to read. Remember: simple is best. More on logos in the next section.

Colors: What do you want your ideal client to feel when they are looking at your website? For example, if your ideal client is someone with anxiety, you'd want to pick soothing colors. If your ideal client is families with young kids, you might want to pick more vibrant and playful colors.

Check out these **website color schemes** for some inspiration.

Fonts: Think about your ideal client. Is your ideal client more conservative or corporate? Go for a more traditional serif font. If your ideal client is more laid-back, young, or attrac design, try out a non-serif font.

Feel: Again think about how you client to feel when visiting your v want them to feel calm and serene hopeful? Hip and modern? Pr contained? You want the overa website to make your ideal client f so they begin to know, like, and trust your website is informed by both yo what you write + your writing "vo elements.

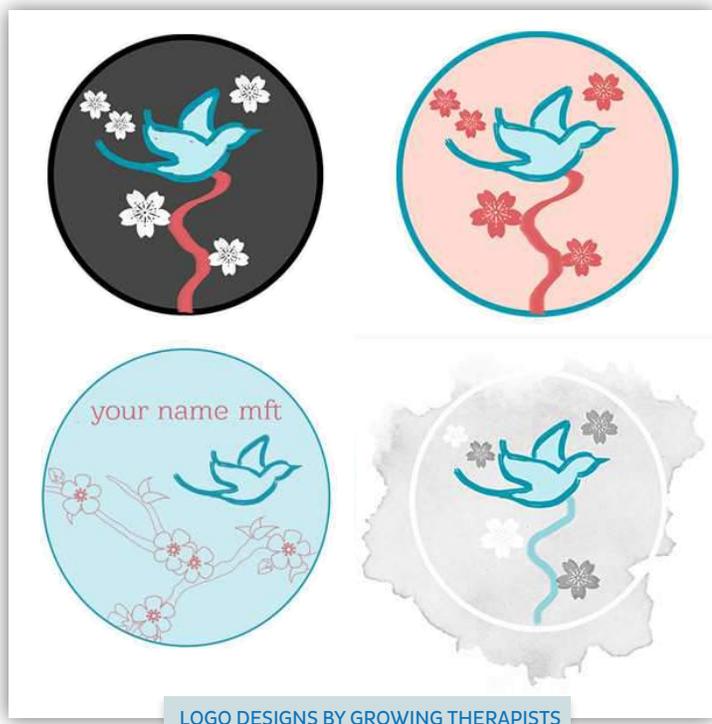LOGO DESIGNS

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5) LOGO

Mistake = Not having a logo on your website

Solution = Invest in a professionally-designed logo to best represent your practice

Many therapists make the mistake of not having a logo on their website. Every website should have a logo. A therapist website without a logo looks like that practice is in its infancy, lacks professionalism, or just feels incomplete... which all lead to a potential client leaving your website and not calling for an appointment.

Present your practice like the pro that you are with a cohesive online identity. Your private practice is a small business, and you are its brand. Your logo and website communicate your brand and who you are as a therapist. A logo can be typography-based, a logo symbol, or a combination. Whichever you choose, I recommend keeping your design simple with a maximum of 2-3 colors.

Contact me today for a **custom therapist logo** that will best represent your practice.

WEB DESIGN BY GROWING THERAPISTS

LOGO DESIGNS BY GROWING THERAPISTS

6) TAGLINE

Mistake = Not having a tagline or not branding it to your ideal client

Solution = Create a short tagline that makes your clients say "Yes – this therapist gets me and can help me."

A tagline is a short slogan that represents the vision and mission of your private practice. Your tagline should evoke emotion in your ideal client and align with their pain points. Think about what your ideal client is most seeking out of therapy, and find a way to incorporate that into your slogan.

To craft a powerful tagline for your practice, consider what you offer your clients that is unique.

- What primary benefit do you want your clients to gain from working with you?

- How will therapy with you improve your client's life?

- Why should a client choose you over another therapist down the block?

A good tagline answers these questions and communicates what you do and the value you offer.

For example, my tagline as **The Therapist's Therapist:** "It's your time on the couch."

7) DOMAIN NAME

Mistake = Not thinking long-term when picking a domain name

Solution = Think about your practice goals when picking a domain name

Picking an effective domain name for your practice is a critical component of your online marketing strategy. Your domain name should be short, easy to remember, and brand-building. Many therapists question whether they should use their name when picking a domain name.

Benefits of using your name include:

- As a therapist, you are your brand. Using your name is an effective strategy of building your brand.

- Most people will know you and refer to you by your name, not a business name.

- You have flexibility if your practice goals or niche change down the road.

Challenges of using your name include:

- You may not want to use your name if your name is hard to spell or remember.

- If you plan to grow your practice into a group practice one day, you may want to use a business name instead.

It can be helpful for SEO to have keywords in your domain name so that your site lists higher in Google rankings. For this reason, some therapists consider including their location or title in their domain name (for example, nyctherapist.com or crisroskelley mft.com).

You are building a sustainable and long-term business, so consider your practice goals. Might you ever move? Will adding your title really make you stand out re someone's keyword search? Does your title/location make your domain name too long? Pretend that someone is verbally asking you for the name of your website. Is it a mouthful? Does it contain anything that you have to spell out? Is it easy to remember?

While it is preferable to have a domain ending in .com since .com is still the most widely used and remembered top-level domains, don't be afraid to think outside the box. For example, if you solely offer online therapy, having a domain name of therapist.online could be a brilliant and memorable marketing move.

Lastly, while choosing a domain name might feel like a permanent decision, also remember that life happens and you can always forward an old domain name to a new domain name if your practice evolves in unexpected directions.

8) SEO

Mistake = Not using keywords throughout your website content

Solution = Use keywords in natural ways on each website page to optimize SEO

SEO stands for search engine optimization. Content marketing means using keywords in your website content in order to get better SEO (i.e., page ranking). The first step is identifying your keywords. Think about your niche and ideal client. When your ideal client is looking for a therapist, what keywords are they typing into Google? A woman with anxiety who lives in Manhattan might Google "New York psychotherapist anxiety women." You would then want to sprinkle those keywords throughout your titles and content on each page of your website. Just be sure to do it in a natural way so your content doesn't come off as robotic and unnatural.

If using WordPress, I recommend the plugin "All in One SEO" to optimize your website for SEO.

Here is a great resource to **learn more about SEO**.

9) IMAGES

Mistake = Using a lot of scenic imagery

Solution = Use images of people that evoke current/future emotion

If you were to look at 100 therapist websites, you would see an awful lot of scenic imagery. Therapists often feature images of mountain tops and the ocean on their websites. While an occasional scenic image is fine, using images of people that evoke emotion is more powerful. Remember that the reason you have a website is to get clients. You want your clients to feel understood by you, and the images you use on your website are a prime opportunity to convey your understanding and empathy.

In your header photos on each page of your website, feature an image showing how your client will feel **after** therapy with you. Then on each page, build a story starting with photos showing how your ideal client feels right now and concluding with a photo of how they want to feel. Instill hope.

Not sure where to get photos? I recommend the following stock libraries:

- **Pexels**

- **Pixabay**

- **Canva**

Tip: When using an image from any stock library, take a screenshot of the image download that shows the photo is licensed for free commercial use. Keep this screenshot in your files in perpetuity in case the photographer ever tries to claim that you did not have permission to use it. Using unlicensed photos can result in hefty fines (think five-figures), so protect yourself with proof.

10) ABOUT PAGE

Mistake = Not relating your About page to your ideal client

Solution = Build connection and trust through your About page

Your About page will be one of your most-visited website pages and is a great opportunity to build connection and trust. Many therapists treat the About page as an afterthought of bulleted accomplishments or therapy-speak that potential clients won't understand. While it's fine to include a short Bio blurb at the end of the page listing your educational accomplishments or professional association memberships, the focus of this very important page should relate to how you help your ideal client.

Please use "I" when writing your About page on your website. Everyone knows that you are writing it, and you will come across as stodgy and outdated if your About page is written in third person. When reading your About page, you want your potential clients to relate to you, to connect with you, and to feel like they can envision sitting in front of you opening up about their deepest pain. Potential clients need to feel like they know, like, and trust you before they will contact you. Using "I" builds transparency, connection, and trust.

Tip: I recommend Nicole Bonsol's free **email course** on writing your therapist About page.

11) THERAPIST HEADSHOT

Mistake = Using an outdated or unprofessional headshot (or no headshot at all)

Solution = Include current photos of yourself on both your Home and About pages

It's important to include 1-2 professional therapist headshots on your website. While it can feel uncomfortable or sales-y to put a photo of yourself on your website, remember that your potential clients are trying to assess whether you are the therapist for them. Seeing your photo builds trust, authenticity, and connection.

Just as with online dating sites, don't put an outdated photo of yourself on your website. Your clients will be jarred and confused when they meet you, and you want an initial therapy session to feel comfortable, safe, and contained.

Invest in your practice by getting professional headshots. You have 10 seconds to make a good first impression online. While it is possible to get a well-lit and decent photo from your cell phone, a professional headshot will put your best foot forward.

Your headshots should align with your branding and represent who you are as a therapist. I recommend dressing in your brand colors to present a cohesive online presence. Do you normally wear eyeglasses in session? Wear your glasses in at least one photo on your website. Do you work with kids or subscribe to a casual dress code? It's fine to dress casually in your photos. Be yourself, and present yourself in your website photos as you want to be seen professionally.

Color or black-and-white? Use color photos unless your entire website site is in black-and-white (which can be a great way to differentiate your site and create a particular mood depending on your ideal client).

Tip: When getting headshots, tell your photographer that you want a mixture of both horizontal and vertical image orientations and that photo compositions should allow for text overlays.

12) CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

Mistake = Not using a CTA on your website page or having too many CTAs

Solution = Use one (and only one) specific CTA per website page

A call to action is something you want your website visitor to do immediately. Examples of CTAs include:

- Call me today"

- "Download now"

- "Schedule appointment"

Create a flow that directs potential clients through your website. Do not confuse your website visitor. Keep a potential client on your site by making it very clear on each page of your website exactly what you want them to do next. If you want someone to click to your Services page from your Home page, then include a link to your Services page at the end of your Home page text. When on your Contact page, do you want them to call you, download something, or to fill out a contact form? Make it clear by including one (and only one) specific CTA per page.

Your call to action will often be in the form of a website button. This button should be designed to stand out on the page (use a color not used anywhere else on your website. All buttons should have the same color throughout your website to create consistency and to instruct a visitor that they are supposed to take a particular action (that will benefit them) when they see a button.

13) CONTACT INFORMATION

Mistake = Having your contact information only on your Contact page

Solution = Include your contact information on every website page and on your Contact page

The primary goal of your website is to have a potential client contact you. Make it easy for them. Put your contact information on every page of your website, including both email and telephone links so visitors can quickly and easily reach out when ready. It is also good SEO to have your contact information on each page.

On your Contact page:

- Go a step further to encourage your potential client to contact you. Include a short paragraph about how your potential client feels right now, how they want to feel, and how you can help. Instill hope.

- Consider including a short contact form requesting the visitor's name, phone number, email, best time to call, and additional comments. You can use an encrypted form such as **Hushmail's Hush Secure Forms** (affiliate link) if you wish to receive confidential information. Otherwise, include a warning to visitors not to send confidential information through the contact form.

- Continue building a connection by including links to your social media accounts on your contact page, and re-direct visitors who complete your contact form to a thank you page that explains when and how you will contact them plus links to helpful information (such as your blog or resources page).

Tip: Include the following disclaimer on your Contact page: "Disclaimer: The information transmitted is not considered an establishment of a therapist/client relationship."
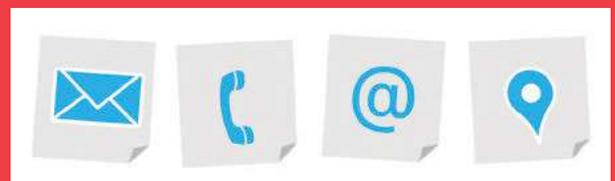
14) EMAIL LIST

Mistake = Not building an email list with your website

Solution = Build an email list with a lead magnet on your website

Many therapists don't realize the power of a website's marketing potential, and building an email list with your website is important for all therapists. What is an email list, and why is it important? An email list is a list of subscribers who have given you their permission to capture their email address on your website. An email list is important because email subscribers are more likely to be future clients. They like what they've read on your website so far, and they want more. An email list is a great way of driving traffic back to your site on a continual basis (which, in turn, helps with SEO). Take care of your email subscribers by regularly emailing them information of value. Examples include notification that you've published a new blog article or to share announcements such as an upcoming workshop or a new office location.

So how do you build an email list? You will use a lead magnet which is an incentive offered to your website visitors in exchange for their email address. Everyone likes free stuff. Visitors to your website are potential clients who are in pain, seeking help, and trying to ascertain whether you're the therapist to help them. What better way to build trust and credibility than to give potential clients something for free that will help them right now? Examples of a lead magnet are an ebook, a short video, a compilation of helpful resources, or this PDF checklist you are reading right now. Just be sure your lead magnet truly offers valuable information to your potential clients.

You will want to use an email marketing autoresponder so that your lead magnet is delivered automatically to your website visitor when they submit their email address. I recommend the following email autoresponders:

- **MailerLite**

- **MailChimp**

When building a list, I recommend a double opt-in procedure to make sure your visitors are truly interested in hearing from you in the future and so that they can't use a fake email to get your offer. When sending any message to your email list, also remember to always include an "unsubscribe" link so that your subscribers can easily opt-out of receiving future messages from you.

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15) RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Mistake = Having a beautiful website that doesn't look good on mobile devices

Solution = Make sure your website is fully responsive

"57% of users say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile site." (CMS Report)

Most people view websites on their mobile devices these days. You want a beautiful and effective website, but be sure that your new website will look just as good on mobile devices like cell phones and iPads. The average user spends 10-20 seconds on a web page, so make your first impression count.

Present your practice like the pro that you are with a modern mobile presence, or risk the chance of alienating your referral sources and losing your potential clients.

Is your current website mobile-friendly? Check Google's **Mobile Friendly Test Tool.**

16) AFTER LAUNCH

Myth = "If you build it, they will come."

Reality = Create an ongoing marketing strategy after your website launch

A therapist website should have 5 main goals:

1) To establish your professional online presence
2) To help your ideal clients find you
3) To keep potential clients returning to your site until they're ready to contact you
4) To act as a helpful resource tool for your referral sources
5) To get potential clients to contact you

To reach your website goals, here are some tips:

- Protect your website: Over 50% of all web traffic is currently spammers, bots, malware and hackers. If you don't have a security plan in place for your website, eventually you will get hacked. Learn to protect your site yourself (example: Wordfence plugin on WordPress or Sucuri) or invest in a maintenance plan through a professional web designer where someone else handles everything involved with protecting your site against security breaches, outages, and the expense required to rebuild your site if something goes wrong. Feel free to check out my **Website Security and Care Plan.**

- Install Google Analytics which acts as your own little website spy to track how a visitor interacts with your site so you know what's working and what's not.

- Spread the word about your new website!

- If you have an email list (and you should), let your subscribers know that your new site has launched. More importantly, tell your subscribers how your new site benefits them, such as a resource section or relevant blog articles.

- Use your favorite social media platform to get the word out.

- Network. Use word of mouth to tell those around

you about your new site. Get their opinion about your new online presence. This valuable feedback may come in handy when considering changes and additions to your site moving forward.

- Add a link to your new site on your email signature, Facebook business and personal pages, Psychology Today profile, your college alumni directory profile, and your business cards.

- Send an announcement to existing referral sources highlighting how your new site benefits them.

- Keep visitors coming back to your site by keeping your site fresh and updated. Occasionally swap out images, change colors, spice it up.

- The most effective way to drive traffic to your therapist website is by adding new quality content which can also impact your SEO ranking dramatically. Blogging is an effective and powerful marketing tool that increases your visibility, builds your clinical reputation as an expert, speaks to your ideal client and captures their attention, adds value, and keeps people coming back.

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