

Continuing Professional Development

Its Importance and relevance to you!

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*Continuing Professional Development or CPD for short has been defined as 'a structured approach to learning to help ensure competence to practice, taking in knowledge, skills and practical experience. CPD can involve any relevant learning activity, whether formal and structured or informal and self-directed.'**



For some practitioners CPD may be seen to be onerous and time consuming without any tangible benefits. Others may embrace this ethos and enjoy the expansion of knowledge and potential opportunities for personal development. Whatever the attitude, there is no doubt that there are intangible benefits involving a reinforcement of ones' professionalism by embracing and including CPD in a busy practitioner's life.

For some Health and Wellbeing practitioners CPD is a requirement of membership to their governing body, for others it is not. These days in the world of professionals, it is widely considered good practice and as such must be strongly recommended. Have you practised everything you were taught since qualifying? Are you a little rusty on any techniques or understanding of any topics? Are there subjects you would like to know more about? Have you got complete confidence in your listening and feedback skills? Do you want to learn more about the psychology of illness or psychological issues? Are there some conditions you may have learned about but didn't get the chance to work with after qualification? And so on..... CPD will not only help you as an individual with your own self and professional development, help to keep you abreast of current good practice for your chosen career, but can also help with the development of your business itself- a point sometimes overlooked.

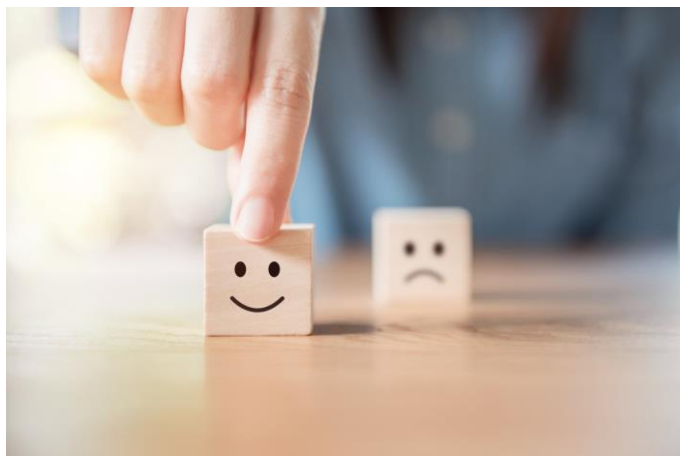
Whilst most individuals who enter the world of Complementary Therapy likely do so because of a genuine desire to be of help and service to their clients, some of you may need to earn a living from your therapy, so you need also to be very practical in order to look after the business side of your practice. In this current economic climate, clients



are increasingly conscious of where and with whom they spend their money, and any areas in which you can increase your knowledge, both directly related to your chosen practice, and more generally towards your business development – for example, marketing, financial and business planning, communication skills and complaint avoidance or management– can only help to give you a competitive advantage that may ultimately make the difference between the success and failure of your business.

Various organisations that require CPD to be completed will have different methods of rating this, but often there will be a split between learning that relates specifically to the chosen therapy or discipline and learning that relates more generally to personal

development of you or your business. You may want to learn a new or auxiliary therapy to expand your palette of possibilities, and/or make what you have to offer even more helpful and attractive to existing and potential clients. This split ensures a balanced approach to CPD, which reflects the importance of maintaining the balance between running a practice and running a business - the two run alongside each other, sometimes aligned, but sometimes quite different.



You may think you are the best therapist in the area, but if you make claims in your marketing that fall foul of the Advertising Standards Agency rules, if you don't manage your money or capital well, you do not keep suitable records of your treatments to defend yourself in the event of a claim being made against you, or if you contravene HMRC Tax requirements for record keeping you may not be in practice for very long. If you don't have the experience or skills don't muddle through, learn what to do and get information and support.

Continuing Professional Development as the name suggests and noted in the definition above relates to *you* increasing *your* learning and skills on a regular and on-going basis. This may take the form of group learning i.e. attending structured courses, workshops or conferences. These can be expensive, but do have the advantage of giving the opportunity to meet with peers and colleagues. Often we gain a huge amount of support and confidence in our own abilities by recognising that situations we face in our practice are common to many. However, CPD may equally take the form of individual learning - reading (magazines, books or online information), individual research into new practices or distance learning courses, the sorts of things that any good therapist would be doing as a normal part of their everyday practice. You may be surprised at how much you actually do in the normal run of your life. Very often the key to this is to record what you do in a CPD Folder, so the activities are logged and described with a date, length of time, and also, if possible, a learning outcome derived.

Whether a requirement of your Association or not, CPD is something to be embraced as an important asset and investment rather than something to be fearful or disdainful of. None of us are perfect, and we all have something to learn, so try and treat it as an enjoyable aspect of your practice and business journey.

Balens are a *Specialist Insurance Broker* for Health, Well-being, Fitness and Beauty Professionals. Further articles and information regarding insurance and risk management may be found on Balens website at www.balens.co.uk

* Sources: Wikipedia.org