

**Lisette R. Lahana, MSW, LCSW (CA), LICSW (CA)**  
**Consultation, Psychotherapy and Training**  
609 Kearney Street, second floor, El Cerrito, CA 94530  
Phone: (800) 928-9085  
Email: [LisetteLahana@yahoo.com](mailto:LisetteLahana@yahoo.com) Website: [www.LisetteLahana.com](http://www.LisetteLahana.com)

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## **Networking Strategies for a Thriving Private Practice**

### **Hand Out Cards EVERYWHERE and Develop a 20 Second Speech**

Name recognition is key! Keep your cards handy wherever you go. If you are taking a walk have cards in your pocket. When going to any social events use your business cards, rather than a piece of paper, to write your home number down. You want as many people as possible to see and hear your name associated with your practice. When your friends, colleagues, doctors, lawyer or acquaintances ask “How are you?”, try to make a positive, brief statement about your private practice. Practice saying your three sentence statement in the mirror and to friends. For example: “I’m doing great! I am really excited about the work I am doing in my private practice. I’m helping people who are afraid of flying overcome their fears.” Or “I’m well, thanks. My private practice has been really rewarding lately. I’ve been seeing a number of men who are recovering from high conflict divorces. These short statements can vary depending on if you are talking to another healthcare provider or a friend in the community. (for information about how to come up with these statements and other tips read Building Your Ideal Private Practice by Lynn Grodzki

### **Relationships Building with Doctors and Other Providers**

If you have worked with doctors, psychotherapists, psychiatrists or clinical nurse specialists in your previous jobs or in your current practice, use your existing relationship to network about your practice. Contact those providers to let them know that you have room in your private practice. Be sure to let them know the particular areas of your practice you would like to build (example: recovering from midlife depression, stress management on the job, adolescent drug abuse). **Tip:** Let providers know a specific area of interest rather than being too broad. So rather than say “I treat depression, anxiety and trauma.” let providers know “I enjoy working with women coping with life transitions such as going back to school, changing careers or those who are newly single.”

### **Schedule Lunch Dates**

Make a date with providers who may come into contact with new referrals. When calling or asking a provider out to lunch you can make the invitation more attractive by telling them you want to expand your knowledge of local resources when making referrals. Let them know you are interested in learning more about their practice and wanting to share info about your own work with them. Networking lunches usually develop a sense of community rather than competition with others. Depending on how fast you want your practice to grow, attempt to meet with at least one new provider weekly or monthly. Be sure to bring your business cards with you and any handouts or information about services you provide.

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**Tip:** Who pays?? If you feel you will be gaining information or “picking their brain,” rather than having a mutual sharing, you should offer to pay for the meal.

### **Join a Peer or Paid Supervision Group or Professional Association**

Meeting with other therapists or providers in your field, is a wonderful way of networking regularly. While the perception is that everyone is looking for new clients, most providers do turn away a number of clients they cannot see. Group supervision gives other therapists the opportunity to know you and your work at a deeper level. Those therapists will make more appropriate referrals that will be likely to stick. Your practice or personal style often fills a gap that others in your group cannot serve. You may also find that you provide therapy for certain insurance panels that others are not on.

### **Attend Local and National Events Related to Specialty Area**

Attend local events or conferences related to your specialty area. Be friendly with those who are sitting near you or sit with people you do not know at lunch time. Spend time talking to people about the work you do and don't be shy about offering them cards. Develop relationships with people who have connections to your client base. For instance, if you provide therapy for adolescents you may want to attend a conference on adolescent health care and STD prevention. Talk with nurses, doctors and case workers who might be a referral source. Think about where your clients might be spending time. For instance, if you enjoy working with parents you might attend a PTO meeting at a local school and introduce yourself & the free workshop on parenting you offer. If you work with women around body image you might have a conversation with a local gym manager or personal trainer. What is important is getting your name (and face) out into (1) the public realm and (2) the consciousness of other local providers.

### **Gratitude is Key**

Track where you are getting most of your client referrals from and call each person to thank them either after each referral, each month, or with a yearly thank you note. **Tip:** Whenever *you* refer a client to another provider you can call or email them and let them know you thought to refer someone to them. These small steps keep your name and practice in the forefront of other's minds.

### **Consultation to Build a Strong and Rewarding Practice**

Schedule consultation with a consultant or coach who can give you further direction around practice building. Choose someone whose practice you admire. Consultation can help you develop the mission of your practice, marketing strategies, networking skills and office organization. For more specific ideas, tailored to your practice, I welcome your calls to schedule a consult by phone or in person.