

00102_ Brainspotting Your Way Through Private Practice Blocks

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Welcome back to the Abundant Practice Podcast. I'm your host Allison Puryear and we are here with Beth Medina. You can check her out at bethmedina.com and I'm really excited to talk to you, Beth, about brain spotting and private practice.

Beth: Yes. Thank you so much for having me, Allison. I'm so happy to be here.

Allison: Absolutely. So, can you talk to us as if we know zero things about brainspotting? Can you tell us a little bit about brainspotting, maybe some of your journey with it? And also, some of your journey with private practice?

Beth: Yeah. Totally. So, I've been in private practice for 12 years. And like most people, I still worked in agency work. I worked in substance abuse community, substance abuse agencies. And my transition to private practice was, of course, exciting and fun and I had experience of my practice taking off really quickly. And it was awesome in the beginning, right? Because I was full. I was more than full. Very busy. At the time I was an EMDR therapist, so I was getting a lot of referrals. I did a lot of trauma work. And, it was fabulous for the first like, I'd say maybe 7 years. And then it seemed like 35 clients a week. you know? it was kind of a rush.

Allison: Oh my gosh.

Beth: Isn't that crazy? And I thought, it's insane. And I always thought, well I love my work. So, it's perfectly fine, right? Not so much. I found out that I was having some health issues as a result of the constant stress and trying to actually have a life outside of work was a challenge. And so, like most people who have health issues, I kind of tried to ignore it for a while. And then

it got to the point where I couldn't ignore it anymore. Because I was developing some pretty significant heart issues. And so, I started doing some brainspotting training probably back in 2013. And, that's when my symptoms were starting to get pretty significant. And I remember I was recovering from one procedure that I had. And really, just looking at my life and looking at my schedule, I knew that I needed to get off insurance. And I had been planning on that for years. I'd gotten off all of the panels except for one. And, I thought that was going to help. But it didn't. I still was really overloaded. And so, I was like, you know, I need to do some self-brainspotting on this. Because obviously I've got some issues here. Some fears, about getting off this insurance panel. And so, I started that process. And it was helpful to do a lot of work myself. But I got to the point where I just couldn't get past one particular issue with getting off of insurance. And, that was that I was really afraid that I was going to totally torpedo my practice. Kind of a big thing. Because I was like 80% insurance. 20% private pay. And I was like, yeah, I just need some help. So, I called one of the brainspotting trainers and I said, I need you to help me with this. So, we did one brainspotting session. And it was fabulous. And honestly within like I'd say maybe 30 minutes, I was like, I don't even know what we're going to work on know because I'm done. I'm over it. I'm ready. And so, I left the session. I went to my office. I typed the letters to my clients. I typed a dear John letter to the insurance company and got ready to get off the insurance. And a month after that, I sent the letter to the insurance company. And then talked to my clients about getting off the insurance. And it was very successful. And obviously it wasn't just the brainspotting. But it was a lot of things. Getting to the point where I was really having to face the fact that I couldn't keep practicing the way that I was. And, also, being willing to take that leap of faith. But, honestly, I really don't believe I would have been able to do it in the time that I did without having that one brainspotting session. And so, in my practice I work a lot with business owners anyway. And so, I took it back to my practice and started working with them on their blocks. And so, I've been doing that work ever since. And then, when I started doing some coaching work with Kelly Miranda, back in 2016 I started looking at changing things a little bit. Even slowing down more. And, I realized that this is something that can be really helpful to people actually online. So, when Kelly and I started working individually, she said this is absolutely something you should be doing. She helped me with that process of doing all of the techie stuff that I have no idea how to do. And I was getting my husband to do some funnel work yesterday. And I was like, I cannot believe that I know how to do this. This is crazy. You know? it's all the investment and coaching work with Kelly and just being able to do that has been really a fulfilling, wonderful experience.

So brainspotting as a therapy and as just a performance enhancement sort of approach is a really beautiful process. And, David Grand who is the developer of brainspotting calls it a focus mindfulness process. So, we use a lot of mindfulness techniques in it. But we also use the visual field in order to locate, access and release the yucky stuff that's underneath that's stopping people from really moving forward in whatever goals that they have. So, I'm going to pause and let you ask a question. [inaudible 6:40]

Allison: it's good stuff, though. It's all good! So, brainspotting, I know that there are some comparisons to EMDR with brainspotting, and contrasting, of course. How, for people who are familiar or who are trained in EMDR, who aren't familiar with brainspotting. Can you explain the difference?

Beth: So, EMDR is of course, a body-based psychotherapy. Much like a trauma therapy. And brainspotting is as well. However, brainspotting, in a way, is more a solid container for the emotional stuff that comes up. So especially for clients who have a lot of trauma that become really overstimulated and over-reactive with EMDR, because brainspotting is what we call a dual attunement frame. So as a therapist you are working and watching the person's physiology as you're interacting with them. And staying present with them moment by moment. And so, it's the attunement with the therapist and client and also the therapist watching what's happening physiologically that really helps the client feel safe in every single moment. If you think about trauma, one of the things that happens when we are traumatized is that we have experience of feeling totally alone. And even if we're in a crowd of people it's that feeling like there's no one there for me. But with brainspotting, the client, no matter whether we are working on performance issues or on trauma, the client knows that they are being held moment by moment by moment. And sometimes with EMDR, and of course it varies with clinicians. But sometimes clients feel really kind of left out there. Because some clinicians tend to be more interested in "doing it the protocol way" so a certain number of eye movements and that sort of thing. And it's more of a therapist led therapy versus a client led therapy like brainspotting is.

Allison: Got it. Yeah. And so, I know you've worked with some people in private practice on Kelly and Miranda's crew, to help them work through some of these blocks. Can you talk about some of the blocks that you've helped folks work through? And some of the outcomes?

Beth: Yeah, definitely. So, you know, people always of course have money blocks. And the guilt blocks for charging for no-shows and those kinds of things. Feelings of being not enough. All the comparisonitis that happens. But really, when it boils down to it, for me, it seems like, there is such a problem with being uncomfortable with the uncertainty of things. You know, as clinicians, we are taught in school that we're supposed to know. we're supposed to have the answers. So, when you go into a situation that's an uncharted territory, it can become really frightening. And its wonderful that we have all this information online and all these wonderful groups in which we can get support. But sometimes there is too much information. So, it becomes just overwhelming to people. And then, sometimes we get triggered with shame because a person is doing it this way, and it is the best way, supposedly to do things. And so, clients have come to me with the issues of, I'm afraid of being seen. And I know I need to take my practice to the next level. So, I need to be able to get past my fear of maybe doing videos or writing blogs or even writing the marketing material, that sort of thing. but it just sort of depends on where the person's goals are. Some people do want to get off of insurance because they are kind of tired of dealing with all the rejections and all of the stuff that goes into it. And

they want to be able to work with their client the way that they want to, instead of how the insurance company dictates things. And so, with those types of issues, there are multi-layered things underneath that. There's the worry about, can the clients pay? Are the clients going to be mad? Is this ethical? Because when I took this client on, I was taking their insurance? There was the one that I had, will my practice totally dry up because people won't want to come to see me if I won't take their insurance? And those sort of things.

So, when I've worked with clients with those issues, it's amazing how quickly they are able to move through them. Because the answers are already within you. If you're having a desire to do something different in your practice, it's not because everyone else is doing it, necessarily. It's because there's really this driving force within that's guiding you to go in a certain direction. But when, none of us really enjoy change, necessarily. So, we have all of these defense mechanisms that flare up, that go oh no, that's too much. Or that's not going to work. Or all of these reasons why things can't happen. But with brainspotting, when a person is able to just attend to the struggle. Instead of running from it. And, be held in a space where there is somebody else present with them. That can help guide them through that process. They are able to kind of melt away so much of that yuck that we get mired in and stuck in.

Allison: Yeah. I'm really excited. Because you're doing a training for us in the party January 31st. and I'm really excited because it's going to be experiential. And we all have blocks. So, I'm excited just personally. Oh, do I have to facilitate this, or can I just participate? I got some stuff I can work on. So, I'm excited about that. Are there any techniques or any experiential pieces that you could give us a glimpse of, auditorily?

Beth: Sure. Yes! If you think about one goal that you have right now in private practice, or in your coaching business. So, you, Allison. You probably have a whole list of goals and things you are working on for the next year and beyond, I'm sure, right?

Allison: Oh yeah!

Beth: If you were to think about what's the one that totally just scares the pants off of ya? You don't have to tell us what it is. But just think about that one goal that makes you go uhhh, there's no way.

Allison: Ok. I've got it.

Beth: You do? Okay, good.

Allison: It's never very far.

Beth: Yeah. Exactly. Right? So, what does your body feel about that? What are you feeling physically in your body?

Allison: So, I get a tightness in my chest. My breath becomes short and shallow. And almost like my hamstrings tighten too.

Beth: Sweet. Okay, so what we would do in brainspotting is ask you to kind of rate on a scale of 0-10, just like they do in EMDR, the SUD scale. How activated you feel around that right now. And how much it freaks you out on that scale? And have an awareness of what's happening physically in your body. And then, I would guide you to find a place in your visual field. Now, because I can't see you, that's no problem. I'm going to ask you to pay attention to what's happening physically. And just observe it moment by moment. Without having to make it do anything or try to make it go away. Just be with it. And you're going to notice, as you're doing this, that your eyes sort of rest in a certain place. Okay? So, you're looking at something without even realize that you're looking at it. Whether your eyes are open or closed. In brainspotting we call this a gaze spot. And so, what I would do is I would invite you to allow your eyes just to stay in that one place. As you're noticing what's happening physically in your body and what thoughts might be coming up. Sensations, feelings, whatever wants to come up. And, just have an awareness of it, moment by moment. And see where it takes you. And if this is a group exercise, I'm going to check in with everybody about every 20 seconds or so, just to kind of make sure everyone's with me. This is much better when we do it live, because it's kind of a safer thing. so, in a group exercise, where its an online situation, I would do something that's not as activating. So, in brainspotting, we can pair the processing with something that's negative and activated. Or we can just focus on your best self. So instead of feeling, Allison, how you're feeling right now about it. How do you want to approach this goal?

Allison: With grace and ease. Like that's my kind of a mantra. I always come back to. It's like, am I doing this with grace and ease? Or am I forcing? Because I'm really good at forcing. Unfortunately.

Beth: Okay. So, then I'll ask you, just to sit with that grace and ease. Now, sometimes we have experiences that we can work back on. Mastery experiences where we are like, yeah, I felt grace and ease in that situation. But sometimes not. So, I might just ask you to just to bring on that feeling of grace and ease that you're looking for. Without worrying about how to get there. And then, ask you to scan your body and see where you can find a place in your body where you can feel connection. To grace and ease. Or that place in your body where you feel grace and ease the most.

Allison: I feel it in my throat. It's easy to express.

Beth: Beautiful. Yeah. So, I would just have you bring your attention to your throat. Just stay there for a moment or two. See what happens from there.

Allison: I keep getting tugged back down.

Beth: Oh. Beautiful. And so, you would notice that tug back down and bring your attention back to your throat. Just like any mindfulness practice. And I would also ask you, have your eyes settled on a certain place yet, or are you still kind of looking for your spot in your visual field?

Allison: Yeah. There's definitely a spot. If I move them, they come right back to. Like a magnet.

Beth: Yeah. Isn't that cool? So, you'll notice that when you look at the spot, it's easier to feel that grace and ease. And if you look away from it, that grace and ease will kind of go away. Does that happen?

Allison: Yeah. Yeah.

Beth: Yeah. Totally weird, right? See, the visual field holds different information. If you're looking to your left, your brain is doing something different than when you are looking to the right or you're looking at the floor. And of course, we're not really sure why this happens. But when we are focused on a place in the visual field, our brain is accessing certain information. And it can be accessing positive information and performance enhancing information. Or it can be accessing negative information that needs to be processed. Now, the best thing, what we do with brainspotting is process the yuck. Process the negative stuff first. Then we augment the positive. So, when we use it in combination together, it's extremely effective for getting past any blocks that you have.

Allison: It's cool. Just noticing. Just the experience of moving my eyes. And really appreciating this one little spot. It feels much better to look at this one little spot.

Beth: Yeah. So even when you think about, even bringing your attention back to that goal and noticing your body tensing up, just go to that spot with the grace and ease. And we can have you process from there. If we were in a session. So, if it was too overwhelming for you just to notice all the tension and all the angst that comes up when you think about that goal, we would ground you in that resource. So, there are lots of things that we can do with brainspotting that hold the container. And that make it much more comfortable for a client to experience.

Allison: Yeah. So I want to say, for people who might be exercising right now, or driving their car and are hopefully not doing this along with us, I can see how just listening to us do this might sound like yeah, okay, I want to put it out there, that come listen to this when you can sit down and just be. Because it is a really interesting experience. And I've never done brainspotting before. Yeah. This is cool.

Beth: Yeah. It doesn't take long to figure it out. Because your brain and body automatically know what to do and where to go to process and release stuff.

Allison: Yeah. Well cool! So, I'm going to continue to process and release after we end up off of the podcast, because I can feel it loosening a bit.

Beth: Cool.

Allison: And yeah, I'm going to bring a list in my head of things to work through on January 31st. Is there anything else? I do want to say, also, if you do want to work with Beth, one on one, bethmedina.com is the way to get in touch with her. But, is there anything else you want to leave people with before we go?

Beth: Yeah. You know, the struggles that we have in life a lot of times become the inspiration for how we help others. And it's certainly true with therapists. And that's sometimes how we end up in this field. But whatever struggles you are having in your private practice, instead of looking at it like it's a bad thing, there's wonderful information there. And, the goal is not to annihilate your blocks. The goal is to transform them into something that's useable. And that you can build upon. So, whatever struggles you are having, first of all, you're right, Allison. I want to point out that this is not just for the new kids on the block. Like, we all have blocks. No matter how long we've been practicing. And having a way of working through them that honors who you are as a person, is I think, the best gift that brainspotting gives people. So, I'm hoping people check it out and try to experience it themselves.

Allison: Sounds great. Thank you so much, Beth. I really appreciate it.

Beth: Thanks for having me on. You guys take care.

Allison: alright. You too.

Beth: Bye now.

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