

0116 Can My Area Handle Private Pay with Michelle Croyle

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This podcast is sponsored by the Abundance Party, where for only \$39 a month you get courses on honing your niche and marketing your practice, scripts for the business side of things, monthly trainings, a chance for a one on one with me, and a much more intimate Facebook group. Where I currently respond to every post. You can check that out at Abundanceparty.com. Alright, onto the show.

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Welcome back to the Abundant Practice Podcast. I'm your host, Allison Puryear of AbundanceParty.com and AbundancePracticeBuilding.com. And today I'm here with Michelle Croyle who is an Abundance Party member. Michelle, how can I help?

Michelle: I have been working with a group practice that was paying me 60% from insurance. And they no longer are doing that. they want to give me 60% of cash pay. And, I decided if they were going to do that, I would just branch out on my own. Because that's where I was going anyhow. I'm in the Pittsburgh area, so it's very blue collar, very insurance loving, where the hub for Blue Cross/Blue Shield and UPMC Insurances. And, they pay, I know, around \$90-\$98, something like that in general. I'm asking, I start April 1st, just got the lease signed and I'm all excited. But I'm not thrilled with the fact that I'm only asking \$75 per hour. And the reason I am is because in this area and with the clients that I'm taking with me, they are not able to even do that. so, I have this cognitive dissonance between I want to be accessible to as many people as possible. Ideally, I'd like to charge \$125 and make \$120,000 a year for 20 hours a week. You know, so I've done the calculations. I know my people aren't there yet. I don't want to just leave them, because I'm transferring. Ideally, I'd like to get up there, but I also don't want to price myself out. Additionally, my husband and I do marriage coaching, where the question was that I want to kind of grow both businesses. Especially now that I have an office space. But I want to know how to, I guess, at this point, how do I get the most bang for my buck? I'd love to stay off of insurance. But in this area, I'm concerned, if I want to make a decent wage,

eventually I'll have to go on it. But I don't want to let myself have my sights too low. So, I'm just I need Allison.

Allison: So, I have a couple thoughts. First, I want you to build one of the businesses first. Not both at once.

Michelle: Okay.

Allison: And so, it is choosing which one you want to invest in right now. You will have both if you want both but choosing the one first will make it a lot easier to build the second later. Because you will have learned from the first about what's working. And also, if you're trying to build both at the same time, your attention is split. And you'll just build so much faster with one if you give it all your attention.

Michelle: So, I think, see we had done the marriage coaching, we had done it, its been on the side for years. And that's actually what gave me the courage to be able to do it for the counseling. But this is my time for the counseling building. So, I think that will be my focus. We still have some work on the side, but I'm fine with just focusing on the one right now. And then, going back to the other. So, counseling would be my focus then, if that's what you recommend.

Allison: Okay, cool. So, I'm going to hop online real quick and look at and this is something, folks, who are listening or watching can do. Pittsburgh median income. The median family income in Pittsburgh is \$77,460. So, that's a significant amount of money. So, to put it into some context, let me get out of the internet now. To put it into some context, I charge significantly more, I'm at \$225 now. And the median income from my city is in the 40s.

Michelle: Oh, wow. Okay. Well that gives me hope.

Allison: Yeah. So, it might be that the clients you are working with now, what you charge new people doesn't have to be what you charge old people. You know? So, you can find the rate that works with the people that are coming with you from the group practice, that you want to continue working with. You can find that rate with them. And as they graduate from therapy, you'll be taking on people in their place who are paying your full rate. Whatever you decide that can be. So, and I hear this from most people of like, yeah, but my city...like I don't hear it in San Francisco and New York. Those folks I don't hear it from.

Michelle: And that was my thing, I was like, am I just not believing it? Is it a mindset thing for me? And I figured probably some of that is. But I also know many people, when they tell me what they can afford, they kind of go, ooh, that's a lot. Even at the \$75 rate. So, but they want to stay with me. But I just, yeah.

Allison: Yeah. So, you get to make up the rules since its your business. Like, you're allowed to make up this rule of what you charge.

Michelle: And that's scary.

Allison: Yeah. there's no container for us, really. We have to create our own container. So, you're creating your own container and figuring out what's going to work in your business. And, also, when we think about higher rates, sometimes we get overwhelmed with, oh, I've got to get all these clients who can pay this. But, like, we don't need that many clients. How many people do you want to see a week?

Michelle: Yeah, 20 would be my ideal.

Allison: Yeah, so you need, at most, 20 people a week for a full fee, full practice, who can pay this at any one time, which I promise you is available in Pittsburgh.

Michelle: Okay, okay. I love that.

Allison: Yeah. So, then it's just getting in front of them and having a really solid marketing plan.

Michelle: Yes, okay, so now, that's where my next question is. I understand, like I've listened to your stuff. And I understand network with doctors. I understand network with everybody that is with my niche. And my niche is women, trauma, abuse, recovery, anxiety and relationship issues. So, that's where I thrive. But I didn't know if you could recommend where you would start if you had to start with that niche, which referrals you would cultivate first.

Allison: Yeah. So, I would get to know your local therapists. So, developing really strong relationships with both people who also specialize in trauma work and people who don't. Because the people who do specialize in trauma work are going to get full. The people who don't, are going to be like I need help. I need to refer this to somebody that can handle this. I would go to any trauma-based CEO's in your area. And be friendly and chatty.

Michelle: [unknown 7:54]

Allison: Perfect. Bring cards, take cards. Follow up with the people who's cards you take. So, shoot them an email using the template in the what to say when.

Michelle: I do have your scripts. It would, you have a script that says, no, I don't take insurance, but here's...I thought I saw that. okay.

Allison: Yeah. there are all sorts of scripts. The one I'm talking about right now is shooting an email to somebody whose card you took. Just say like, hey, you want to grab lunch. Great meeting you at this conference. Blah Blah. But then, the one you are talking about of how to train people who take insurance to refer to you if you don't, there is a script for that. and it works with doctor's offices, it works with hairdressers. It works with other therapists that take insurance. So, it makes it a little bit easier. It at least gives you the language. So, you're not like ahhh...in the way a lot of us feel we are sometimes with those kinds of conversations. So, I would definitely spend some time networking. I would make sure that your website is screaming hello! I'm here to help this specific person. So that when they land on it, they are like, oh, obviously, its her. Like, I've got to see this woman.

Michelle: Right. Hopefully I'm doing that. So, if I choose to go that route, and that really is where I'd like to go. It almost seems to easy. Like you said, I'm putting my own container out there. I really don't have to worry about how the insurance wants it done. Its like so foreign to me. My treatment plans are according to what's best for the client. Best for me. Staying on top of things. But the documentation is less nerve racking. Is that right?

Allison: For the most part, I mean, you can get audited if you are doing out of network. So, if they are getting reimbursed by their insurance. If there are people, and that's something for your folks to look into that have been using their insurance, is what is their out of network deductible like? Does it make sense for them to pay the full fee, and then they'll get more money back potentially than the \$75 they paid out of pocket. Like its worth exploring.

Michelle: Right.

Allison: Exploring the out of network opportunity and if you are doing out of network, you can get audited by the insurance company. And if they find your paperwork lacking, you or your client could have to pay them back. Which would suck.

Michelle: Okay. Do you recommend doing out of network? Or just cash?

Allison: Total personal preference. Honestly. It does make it easier in some states with some insurance. I know some people who, their insurance pays them almost everything back that they've paid. So, it's almost like, it's just a little bit more than paying a co-pay for some people. Our major insurer here where I am, it is not like that. our out of network deductibles are in the thousands and thousands of dollars. You're pretty much never going to reach it. So, we've given them a super bill so that they can file it that way if they've got other out of network stuff going on. There's a possibility something will get paid for some day. But, we're really clear with them that they pay us the full fee. And we'll give them the paper.

Michelle: Gotchya.

Allison: So, yeah.

Michelle: Okay. And then, my other question is, I'm doing simple practice for my EHR. And so, I want to do telemental health as well as in the office. I know I can send and have them do the e signatures. But the other part is, the clients that I see in the office, I would rather kind of go over things with them and such and then have them sign, but not have to send them the stuff. Would you recommend a signature pad in the office? Or how do they sign off on things?

Allison: So, for mine, I always just have them sign off on it, and then I talk about it in that first session. So, they've signed off on it before they come to me. But I make the assumption that they didn't read it. Because like, very few of our clients read that. I don't read that. and I'm pretty conscientious. So, I do have them sign it ahead of time, but then I go over it with them in that first session. And that way, I figure I'd covered my comfort bases, my ethical bases, yeah.

Michelle: Now, let's say we update a treatment plan let's say 3 months or 6 months in, and then, I want them to sign off that we're agreeing on the same goals. Would you just recommend doing that as well by sending it in? And they send it back? Or can they do it in the office?

Allison: I think that you could say a client gave verbal consent to these at the end of each treatment plan.

Michelle: Oh, okay.

Allison: As far as I know. my board does not require that our clients sign it. So, it may be an insurance thing.

Michelle: I see. Okay. That sounds great then. Those were my questions. Anything else you would suggest in this? I'm so proud of you for doing three businesses three different times. I'm going, okay, she gives me hope.

Allison: It's all doable. It's all doable. Not all at once. But, yeah. its, I think as long as you're working a plan. Have you gone through the marketing fundamentals course yet?

Michelle: I started it; I haven't had a chance from working so much. But now that I decided to branch out on my own, I'm definitely going to.

Allison: Dive into there. Choose no more than 5, two of which are kind of chosen for you, so to speak. Like having a great website and networking. Feel free to put your website into the party Facebook group. That way folks can give you some feedback if you're ready for feedback on it. Because I feel like, you may end up having some of your ideal clients who happen to be therapists in the party. And they can be like, this sentence really landed for me. Or, this scared me off. So, I think that's a benefit to having people who have learned about marketing, a good bit, through the party, giving feedback on it.

Michelle: okay. That's awesome. Well those will be in my plan to do.

Allison: Awesome.

Michelle: thank you so much, Allison. I really appreciate it.

Allison: Absolutely. Take care.

Michelle: Thank you, take care. Bye bye.

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checklist you need to get started at Abundancepracticebuilding.com/checklist. And if you need more support, check out the Abundance Party at abundanceparty.com. See you next week!