SWELL COUNTRY

PRACTICE GROWTH GUIDE FOR CLINICIANS

The Psychology Today profile tune-up

Psychology Today does not rank you. It **rotates** you. Once you understand that, the work of getting referrals from your profile changes completely.

FREE RESOURCE

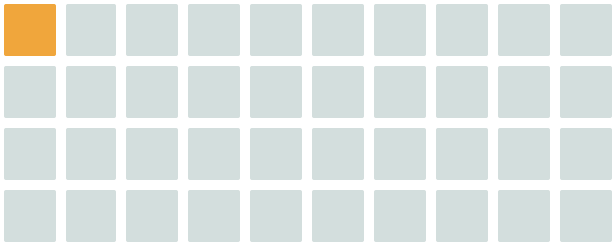
20 minutes with your dashboard open

Swell Country · Growth systems for clinics

What you are actually optimizing

Most therapists assume Psychology Today works like Google, where a better profile earns a higher ranking. It does not, and that misunderstanding quietly wastes a lot of effort.

PT uses a rotation system. Within a given geographic area, profiles cycle through the results so that everyone gets a turn near the top. You cannot buy placement and you cannot earn a permanent spot.



Roughly one view in forty. In an area with 200 listed therapists, that is about how often your profile lands in the top handful of results. Everything below is about making that one view count.

So you are not optimizing to rank. You are optimizing three separate things:

1. **Eligibility.** Appearing in the filtered searches that matter: insurance, issue, modality, population, location.
2. **Click-through.** Earning the click during the brief window when you do appear.
3. **Conversion.** Turning that click into an inquiry, and that inquiry into a booked consult.

> **Almost every therapist spends all their effort on the bio, which is only part of number three. The biggest untapped gains are usually in one and two.**

PART 1 Show up in the right searches

Your checkbox and dropdown settings, not your writing, determine which filtered searches you appear in. A beautifully written profile that is misconfigured will never reach the people looking for exactly what you do.

Specialties and issues

- These are checkbox lists using PT's fixed vocabulary. You cannot paste a paragraph here.
- Star your **top three**. These get visual priority and signal your actual focus.
- A working range of roughly 10 to 15 selected issues balances discoverability against looking like a generalist. Checking 40 boxes does not help you.
- Only select what you would genuinely take on. Every box is a promise.

The "other issues" free-text fields

At the bottom of the specialties editor, PT gives you space to type in focus areas that are not on their list. This is one of the most underused features in the directory. Terms like caregiver burnout, perfectionism in high achievers, post-graduate transition, or first-generation professional stress do not map cleanly to PT's standard categories. If someone searches that language and you are one of the few profiles using it, that is a real advantage. Do not leave these blank.

Location and telehealth

- Each location accepts up to three zip codes, which meaningfully widens your reach. Choose deliberately: your office zip, plus the two nearby areas where your ideal clients live or work.
- If you offer telehealth, the online service type must be **checked**, not assumed. Many therapists offer virtual sessions and never turn this on.
- If you are licensed in more than one state, make sure each is reflected.

Insurance

Keep this list scrupulously current. Listing a panel you have left generates inquiries you have to turn away. An out-of-date list that omits a panel you joined last quarter is invisible referrals.

PART 2 Earn the click

When your profile appears in results, a prospective client sees roughly four things: your photo, your name and credentials, and the opening line of your statement. That is the entire audition.

Your photo

This is the single biggest driver of whether someone clicks.

- Face clearly visible and filling a good portion of the frame. No full-body shots from across a room.
- Direct eye contact with the camera.

- Warm, natural expression. A soft smile beats both a stiff grin and a somber clinician look.
- Even light, ideally natural light near a window. Uncluttered background.
- Current. If the photo is eight years old, replace it.

A phone camera in decent light plus a friend who will take fifty shots will outperform a dated professional headshot almost every time.

Your opening line

PT retired the standalone tagline field. The first line of your personal statement now sits directly under your name in search results, doing the job a headline used to do. It is the highest-value sentence on your entire profile.

Most therapists waste it on credentials: *"I am a licensed clinical social worker with twelve years of experience."* The reader already sees your credentials next to your name. Answer the question they are actually asking, which is whether you are for someone like them.

[Who you help] + [what they are struggling with] + [what becomes possible]

> *"You have been holding it together at work for months, and it is starting to cost you at home."*

> *"Parents of anxious kids often arrive here exhausted, having tried everything the internet suggested."*

> *"If a recent loss has made ordinary days feel impossible, you are not doing grief wrong."*

Write to one person, not to a category.

PART 3 Convert the click

The three personal statement boxes

PT's editor gives you three narrative boxes, each with a different job and a hard character limit.

PERSONAL STATEMENT FIELDS

BOX AND PURPOSE	LIMIT	SAFE TARGET
Box 1 · What can I help you with?	640	560
Box 2 · What's my approach?	360	300
Box 3 · The human moment	360	290
Total capacity, about 220 words	**1,360**	**1,150**

Verify these in your own editor first

PT changes its interface periodically and enforces limits silently. Copy that exceeds a limit may be truncated mid-sentence or rejected on save without a clear error. Draft to the safe target, since character counts in a word processor do not always match PT's counter.

Box 1 should describe the client's experience before it describes you. Lead with what they are living through, in their language rather than diagnostic language. Someone searching at 11pm is typing "can't stop worrying," not "generalized anxiety disorder."

Box 2 is where your training goes. Name your orientation, then translate it. "I use EMDR" means nothing to most readers. "We will work on the memories that still hijack your body, using a method that does not require you to talk through every detail" means something.

Box 3 is the one almost everyone fills with filler. This is where you become a person rather than a credential list. Specificity lands; abstraction does not. "I am a distance runner and a genuinely terrible cook" works better than "I believe in treating the whole person."

The five note fields

Beside the checkbox sections sit five short free-text notes. Most profiles leave them empty, which is free ground to take.

SHORT NOTE FIELDS

FIELD	LIMIT	SAFE TARGET
Intro to new clients	140	112
Note on finance	300	240
Note on credentials	300	240
Note on top specialties	400	320
Note on therapy types	400	320

Use the **finance note** to reduce friction, not just to state a number. Mention sliding scale availability, superbills for out-of-network reimbursement, or your cancellation policy in plain terms. Money is the most common silent objection.

The video introduction

If your listing tier includes it, a short video meaningfully increases the odds someone reaches out, because they self-select on whether your manner fits them. PT states a 15-second limit, and short is genuinely fine. A plain clip of you speaking to camera about one or two things you help with will outperform a polished but impersonal production.

PART 4 Remove friction from first contact

This is where a meaningful number of referrals quietly disappear.

- **Check which phone number is displayed.** If PT shows a forwarding or tracking number rather than your real line, that number can get scraped onto listings you did not create and cannot easily fix. Consistency across the web matters more than PT's call statistics.
- **Test every link and email address** yourself, from your phone, today.
- **Respond fast.** Most people contact several therapists at once, and the first to reply often gets the client. A same-day reply offering two consult times beats a thoughtful reply three days later.
- **Give a real next step.** "Contact me to learn more" is weaker than "Reply here or book a free 15-minute call, and I will tell you honestly whether I am the right fit."
- **Align your other listings.** If you also appear on Headway, Alma, Rula, Grow Therapy, TherapyDen, or Zencare, keep name, credentials, photo, phone, and specialties consistent. Mismatches read as carelessness.

PART 5 Keep it alive

A profile set up once and never touched is the norm, which is exactly why maintenance is an edge.

Monthly, 15 minutes

Open the traffic report PT emails you. Look at three numbers: searches in your area, profile views, and contacts. Those three tell you which stage is leaking.

- Many searches, few profile views: your photo and opening line are the problem.
- Many views, few contacts: your statement, fees, or availability are the problem.
- Few searches: your location and filter settings are too narrow.

Quarterly, 45 minutes

Refresh the opening line, confirm insurance panels and fees are current, and update availability. Nothing burns goodwill like a client reaching out to a full practice.

Annually

New photo. Read the whole thing out loud. Ask whether it still describes the practice you actually want.

Two honest caveats

This is advertising, and your board treats it that way. Your profile is public-facing professional communication. NASW standards on solicitation and misrepresentation apply to social workers. LPC, LMHC, LMFT, and psychology licensees should check their specific state board's advertising rules. Do not claim specializations you cannot substantiate, do not imply outcomes, and do not use client material of any kind.

Psychology Today is one channel, not a practice. It is a high-return use of a few hours, and for many early-career clinicians it is the single largest source of inquiries. It is also a platform you do not own, with rising competition and an algorithm you cannot control. Treat a strong profile as the low-hanging fruit it is, then build the things you do own: your website, your local search presence, and your relationships with referring providers.

WORK THROUGH THIS WITH YOUR DASHBOARD OPEN

The 20-minute checklist

FINDABILITY

- [ ] Top three specialties starred, total selections in the 10 to 15 range
- [ ] Both "other issues" custom fields filled with niche language
- [ ] Therapy types reflect actual training
- [ ] All three zip codes used per location, chosen deliberately
- [ ] Telehealth service type explicitly checked
- [ ] Insurance panels current and complete
- [ ] Age ranges, communities, and languages filled in

CLICK-THROUGH

- [ ] Photo is current, well lit, face forward, warm
- [ ] Opening line names the client's experience, not your credentials
- [ ] Opening line reads well on a phone screen

CONVERSION

- [ ] Box 1 uses close to its full 640 characters
- [ ] Box 2 translates your modality into plain English
- [ ] Box 3 contains one specific human detail
- [ ] All five note fields filled, none left empty
- [ ] Finance note addresses cost, sliding scale, and superbills
- [ ] Video posted, or scheduled to record this month
- [ ] Character counts verified against the live editor

FIRST CONTACT

- [ ] Displayed phone number verified
- [ ] Every link and email tested from a phone
- [ ] Availability status accurate
- [ ] A same-day response habit in place
- [ ] Other directory profiles match this one

WORKSHEET

Draft your opening line

The single highest-value sentence on your profile. Work through these four, then write the fifth.

1. Who, specifically, do you most want to work with?

2. What are they living through in the week before they search for a therapist?

3. In their words, not clinical ones, what would they type into the search bar?

4. What becomes possible for them after good work with you?

5. Now write it as one sentence, under about 100 characters, addressed to that one person.

Your profile is one leak. We find the rest.

Swell Country builds growth systems for clinics: local search, retention, and follow-up that turn first inquiries into booked, returning clients. If this checklist was useful, the free audit goes considerably deeper.

GET YOUR FREE GROWTH AUDIT

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