5 MISTAKES NEW GRADS MAKE (& HOW TO AVOID THEM)

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR GRADUATES STARTING A PRACTICE

Whether you're just starting your practice or building your business from the ground up, this short guide will help you avoid common pitfalls — and set yourself up for success with clarity and confidence.

Mistake 1: Delaying Professional Setup (ABN, Insurance, Systems)

What Happens:
Many grads wait too long to officially register their business, secure insurance, or create streamlined systems. This can lead to missed opportunities, compliance issues, and unnecessary overwhelm when clients finally roll in.

How to Avoid It:

- Register your ABN and business name early
- Get professional indemnity and public liability insurance
- Use a booking and payment system (e.g. Cliniko, Square, Stripe) from Day 1
- Start small but start clean

Start with what you have, even if it's simple or minimal — no need for a fancy website, a huge dispensary, or a full calendar of clients right away. Focus on the essentials: one space, one service, one system at a time.

Start clean by putting solid foundations in place — like having your ABN, insurance, privacy policy, consent forms, and a simple booking/payment system. These create clarity, confidence, and professionalism from the very beginning, even if your business is still small.

Mistake 2: Waiting for Confidence Before Seeing Clients

What Happens: The "I'm Not Ready" Trap

New practitioners often stall because they're afraid they're not "ready." They doubt their skills, worry they'll make mistakes, and hesitate to start consultations—waiting until they've done one more course, gained one more mentor, or feel completely confident. But the truth? Confidence doesn't come before you act—it comes through action.

How to Avoid It: Practical Steps to Start Now
Book real clients—even if it's friends or family at first

- Start by offering consultations to a few trusted people. Let them know you're practicing and that you'd love honest feedback.
- Use these early cases to test your systems, timing, paperwork, and communication style.

- Treat them professionally—send reminders, take notes, and follow up—as if they were paying clients.

Reflect and debrief every case

- After each session, jot down: What went well? What felt unclear or clunky? What would I do differently next time?
- This reflective practice builds self-awareness and helps you improve faster than passive learning.

Seek supervision and peer support

- You don't need to know *everything*. Surround yourself with a community of peers, mentors, or supervisors who you can turn to with questions or tough cases.
- Join a clinical mentoring group, or schedule monthly check-ins with a trusted practitioner to talk through real scenarios.

Use supportive tools to stay on track

- Prepare checklists and templates (case history, treatment planning, follow-up email scripts).
- Create a "first consult flow" map so you don't feel lost partway through a session.
- Have some pre-written phrases for setting boundaries or explaining your process if nerves get the better of you.

Start before you feel 100% ready—because no one ever is

- Readiness grows as you build experience, not before.
- Action reduces fear—so take one small brave step today.

Mistake 3: Under-pricing or Giving Away Too Much

What Happens:
Imposter syndrome makes you second-guess your worth, so you over give to 'make up for it.' But this can lead to burnout, blurred boundaries, and financial strain.
Let's replace over giving with confidence and clarity. Imposter syndrome leads to setting fees too low, over giving in consults, or offering endless free chats. While generous, this erodes your perceived value and business sustainability.

Set Confident, Research-Based Fees

- Look at what experienced AND entry-level practitioners charge locally.
- Position your price as fair, not "cheap." Undervaluing sends the wrong message about the quality of your care.
- Choose a price you feel proud to say out loud. Practice saying it confidently:
  "The investment for our initial consultation is $135, which includes a follow-up summary and next-step recommendations."

Define What's Included—and What Isn't

- Outline what's included in each consult: time, follow-up email, brief resource, but not ongoing email support or extra research.
- Avoid sending multiple follow-up emails or free extras. Create a template or checklist to standardise post-consult support.
- Put boundaries into writing and share them during your first session or in your welcome pack.

Use Empowering Language to Set Limits

- Try these phrases:
    - "That's a great question—let's add it to your next session so we have time to explore it properly."
    - "Let's keep our focus today on the top priorities, so you get the most from this session."
    - "Outside of consult time, I'm not able to provide advice by email—but we can absolutely cover that next time."

Stick to Time—Always

- Start and finish on time, even if clients are late.
- Use a timer or visual cue to help pace your session, especially in the first few months.
- Respecting your own time teaches your clients to do the same—and builds trust.

Develop a "Support, Not Solve" Mindset

- You don't need all the answers in one consult. Your job is to guide, not rescue.
- Say: *"Together we'll work through this over time. This is a journey, not a one-time fix."*

Reflect After Each Consult

- Ask yourself: Did I over give because I felt unsure? Or because the client actually needed it?
- Journaling one line after consults like "What went well?" or "What did I give that was outside scope?" builds awareness.

Have a Peer or Mentor Review Your Fee Structure

- A second opinion from a mentor (like you!) can validate that your pricing and boundaries are aligned with industry standards—and your self-worth.

Write and Review Your Professional Identity Statement

- Reaffirm your value with a personal mantra or mission statement.
  "I offer grounded, compassionate, evidence-based care that empowers clients to take charge of their health. My time and expertise are worthy of fair compensation."

Avoid:

- Offering free "discovery calls" that turn into full consults
- Sending supplements/plan suggestions without full assessment
- Discounting without purpose (e.g. guilt, not gratitude)

Reframe Your Generosity:

Being generous doesn't mean being *boundless*.
Be generous with your presence, but be wise with your time and resources.

Mistake 4: Not Having a Clear Niche or Message

What Happens:
Trying to help "everyone with everything" causes messaging overwhelm and dilutes your visibility. Clients may not understand what you do—or how you can help them. When you choose a niche, you're saying: "This is who I help and how I help them." It becomes the cornerstone of your messaging, your marketing, and your method of care.

How to Avoid It:

- Choose 1–2 client types or health concerns you're passionate about
- Create a 1-sentence message that describes who you help and how
- Build content (blog, email, socials that your client frequents) that speaks to *that* person
- Remember: Niche now doesn't mean niche forever—it evolves with you.

Remember: Niche now doesn't mean niche forever—it evolves with you.
As a practitioner, your niche is simply your current focus, not a life sentence. It reflects your interests, strengths, lived experience, and the type of clients you're best equipped to help *right now*. But as you grow—both personally and professionally—so does your clinical wisdom, confidence, and curiosity. You may find yourself shifting direction as you:

- Learn more about specific conditions or treatment modalities
- Attract certain types of clients organically
- Experience new life stages (e.g., motherhood, menopause, burnout recovery)
- Discover what really lights you up in practice—or what drains you
- Expand your skills through supervision, postgraduate study, or business mentoring

This evolution is a sign of professional maturity. It's perfectly natural for your niche to deepen, refine, or even change altogether. Starting with a focused niche helps you get traction and build trust, but you'll never be boxed in—you're creating a practice that grows with you.

Remember: A niche isn't just about symptoms—it's about people. Choose people you care about.

A Niche is a compass, not a cage.

Mistake 5: Going It Alone Without Mentorship or Support

What Happens:
Without feedback, encouragement, or peer guidance, burnout and isolation creep in. Business decisions feel harder. Confidence stagnates. You start to question if you should keep going.

How to Avoid It:

- Join a graduate mentoring group or business mastermind
- Schedule monthly check-ins with a peer or mentor
- Invest in ongoing learning—but do it strategically
- Ask for help when you're stuck—it's a strength, not a weakness

BONUS SUPPORT:

Want a supportive roadmap to avoid these mistakes and *actually thrive* as a practitioner?

Explore our Handcrafted Health Graduate Mentoring, Bach Flower Course, and Pathology webinars at https://handcraftedhealth.com.au/course-page-1/

Downloads Include:

- More Practical checklists
- Suggested tools and platforms, for all aspects of clinical set-up
- Links to further marketing, education and pathology resources
- Bonus: 10% of all income from mentoring is donated to support Nepal-based project, via the Nepal Social Impact Association. For more information https://handcraftedhealth.com.au/nepal-social-impact-association/

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