

Insights from a Seasoned Physical Therapist

1) Don't go solo or do home health right out of the gate. What you learn in PT school is only the tip of the iceberg. Every clinician needs opportunities to work with and learn from other practitioners. That is not possible when you're working alone in a home health setting or trying to "get rich" setting up your own practice as soon as you graduate.

2) Consider every experience a learning experience... no matter how big or small or how short in duration the exposure may be, whether positive or negative in nature. Every experience can provide you with insight and wisdom to help you navigate through a difficult situation at a later point in your career.

3) Don't assume that the way everyone else is doing it is the right way or the best way. This applies to both clinical practice patterns as well as billing practices. Experienced clinicians can be great assets and mentors but can also sometimes be recalcitrant to change. And the easy way is not always the best way either. Never compromise your ethics.

4) Keep your interests diverse even if you think you know the area that you want to specialize in. Try to attend a broad range of continuing education courses for the first several years you are practicing. This will help you to become a more well rounded practitioner and help to better define your areas of interest, which may ultimately be different than you initially thought.

5) Be a life long learner. Don't get stuck in a rut or function on autopilot. Strive to learn something new every day, either through interaction with your colleagues or through personal research. Not only will this keep you up-to-date with evidence in the field, it will help you to be a better and more confident clinician.

6) Be an advocate for the profession. You will likely learn pretty quickly that the majority of the public has no idea how much we know or understands the value of our profession... and that's on us.

7) Commit to keeping a work-life balance. Being a PT is usually not a punch-the-clock 9 to 5 job. We take work home, either physically or emotionally. We research ways to provide the best care to our patients; we go the extra mile. This can be rewarding yet exhausting. Work to live, don't live to work. Living by this philosophy will do more than anything to prevent burn out and keep your passion for your career and your profession alive.