

Catherine Ashby

COUNSELLING

Counselling for adults who are managing, and would like to stop having to.

The practice, written down: what it is, who it is for, what it values and how it should sound. The identity and everything made with it are built from these pages, so each design decision has a reason you can read here.

Sample practice. Catherine Ashby is not a real person; every fact here is illustrative and marked, so the format can be judged. Nothing in this document is a claim about any practitioner.

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HOW TO READ THIS

Your facts, and my reading of them.

Two kinds of sentence appear in this document. Some are **facts you gave me**: your fee, your days, who you work with, the words you used in discovery. Others are **my interpretation**: what I think the practice is really offering, and what follows from that for how it should look and sound.

Please read it with a pen. Correct any fact that is wrong. Where an interpretation does not sound like you, say so; that is the most useful feedback there is, and it is the whole point of showing you this before anything is designed.

What this document does not do: it does not advise on your fees, your specialism or how to find clients, and it does not describe who you will be in ten years. It describes the practice you have now, in a form built to be updated.

THE PRACTICE, AT THREE LENGTHS

The same practice, described for the places it appears. These are drafts for you to correct, in your words rather than mine wherever you had them.

One line · directory headline, Instagram bio
Counselling for adults in Stockport and online.

Three lines · directory opening, email footer
Counselling for adults in Stockport and online. Sessions are weekly and last fifty minutes. We begin with a short conversation to see whether we might work well together.

A paragraph · website, long-form profiles
I am a counsellor working with adults in Stockport and online. People usually come when something that used to work has stopped working: a way of coping, a relationship, a job that was fine until it wasn't. I don't need you to arrive with it worked out. Sessions are weekly and last fifty minutes, and we begin with a short conversation to see whether we might work well together.

POSITIONING

A steady, practical counsellor for adults who have been coping well for a long time and are tired of it.

WHAT THIS IS

One-to-one counselling for adults, weekly, in person in Stockport or online. Open-ended, reviewed together, ended when it is finished rather than when a programme says so.

WHAT THIS IS NOT

Not crisis support, not couples work, not a short course with a workbook. Not a specialist service for any single diagnosis.

WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE

The practice treats being capable as the presenting problem rather than a sign that nothing is wrong. Most of her clients are the person other people lean on. The practice is organised so that they do not have to perform competence to get through the door: no prepared account required, practical facts published, the first conversation short and low-stakes.

WHY POSITIONING COMES BEFORE DESIGN

A wordmark cannot decide who the practice is for or what it should not claim. Those decisions are made here, and the identity carries them. If the practice changes, this page is edited first and the identity follows; the typeface does not need to change because a specialism did.

PEOPLE

Who this is for, and just as usefully, who it is not.

WHO IT IS FOR

Adults, usually between thirty and sixty, who are functioning well on paper

People who have been the capable one in a family, a team or a friendship for years

People returning to counselling after an earlier, mixed experience of it

People who would rather be told how it works than reassured that it will

WHO IT IS NOT FOR

Anyone in crisis or needing urgent support, who is signposted clearly instead

Couples, families or young people

People looking for a structured, time-limited programme with homework

Saying this plainly is a kindness to the people it does not suit, and it is what lets the identity be specific rather than general.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY WHEN THEY FIRST GET IN TOUCH

“I don't really have a reason. Everything is fine.”

“I'm the one who sorts things out, and I've run out of road.”

“I tried this before and it was a bit vague.”

These sentences decide what the first screen, the first line of a profile and the enquiry route have to do. They are the reader the identity is designed for.

CHARACTER

The part that stays the same when the practice changes.

VALUES, AND WHAT EACH ONE MEANS IN PRACTICE

Plain dealing

Say what the work is, what it costs, and what she will and won't do, before anyone has to ask.

Pace

Nothing is rushed and nothing drifts. Sessions have a shape, and the work is reviewed out loud.

Ordinary language

No jargon in the room or on the page. If a word needs explaining, a different word is used.

Respect for competence

Clients are capable adults. The practice does not talk down, soothe, or diagnose from a website.

PERSONALITY

Steady rather than warm-for-effect

Practical before reflective, then reflective

Dry, with a sense of humour that arrives late and quietly

Unimpressed by drama and unbothered by silence

HOW SOMEONE SHOULD FEEL, READING THE PAGE

Someone reading the page should feel that this person is unflustered, has done this many times, and will not need to be looked after.

WHAT IS FIXED AND WHAT IS ALLOWED TO MOVE

The personality, the values and the way she wants people to feel are the fixed part. The specialism, the fee, the days, the town and the modality are the parts allowed to change, and the identity is built so that they can.

VOICE

Direct, settled, lightly dry. Short sentences that say one thing. Facts set as facts.

HABITS OF THE WRITING

Lead with the practical: fee, length, days, where. Then the human part.

Describe situations, not conditions. "When the way you cope stops working" rather than a list of diagnoses.

Use "I" and "you". Never "clients" or "individuals" on the page.

Say what won't happen as readily as what will.

One idea per sentence. No stacked adjectives.

SOUNDS LIKE THIS

Most people don't arrive with a reason. Everything is fine, and something isn't.

Sessions are fifty minutes, weekly, at the same time. I'll tell you if I think I'm not the right person.

You don't have to explain yourself well. That is partly what the sessions are for.

WORDS AND MOVES TO AVOID

"Safe space", "journey", "holistic", "empower"

Promises of outcomes, or language implying a cure

Rhetorical questions aimed at the reader's feelings

Exclamation marks, and warmth signalled by punctuation

DOES NOT SOUND LIKE THIS

~~Welcome to a safe and nurturing space where your healing journey can begin.~~

~~Are you feeling overwhelmed, stuck, or like something is missing?~~

Not because these sentences are wrong for everyone. They are wrong for this practice, whose readers have heard them and stopped believing them.

MESSAGES

Four things the identity has to say, wherever it appears.

01 Being capable is allowed to be the problem

The practice is for the person other people rely on. That is named plainly, because it is the thing most of her clients have never heard said.

02 You don't need to arrive with it worked out

No prepared account, no form asking what the issue is. "I'm not sure" is a complete first sentence.

03 The practical facts, first

Fee, session length, days and location are on the first screen and the first line of every profile, before any feeling is asked for.

04 A short conversation before anything is decided

Twenty minutes, by telephone or video, so you can hear how she works and decide. It is not an assessment.

STILL NEEDED FROM YOU

Registration body and level, exactly as the body permits it to be stated

Fee, session length, days and times, address and contact details

Confirmation of the descriptor ("Counselling") and the town

A photograph taken to the direction in the guide, or a session arranged

Any phrases from the discovery answers the practitioner wants kept word for word

APPROVING THIS DOCUMENT

When the facts are right and the interpretation sounds like you, reply with one line to say so, or send one consolidated set of corrections. The identity and the applications are built from the approved version, and nothing is issued until it is approved.

Corrections to facts, or to anything that departs from what you told me, are never counted as a review round.

Approved by

Date