

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

An Interview with Lindsay Bryan-Podvin

Lindsay Bryan-Podvin, owner and founder of Mind Money Balance, is a financial therapist who started her career in the field of mental health treatment and advocacy. She specializes in working with heterosexual couples with breadwinning women. As the first financial therapist in Michigan, she combines financial literacy with the emotional and psychological side of money. She always had an interest in mental health and found an even greater love working at the intersection of mental health and money. She has a degree in sociology from Michigan State University and her Master's in Social Work from the University of Michigan with a Certificate in Financial Social Work. She lives with her husband and their dog in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Q. Define what you do professionally.

A. I primarily see heterosexual couples in a 2:1 setting face-to-face. My clients tend to be HENRYs (high earners not rich yet) aged 35-50. I love working with couples by using money and talking about money as another form of deepening intimacy for them. I especially enjoy doing financial genograms with couples and values-based exercises. One of my favorite things in working with couples is the moment they experience the shift in thinking from "talking about money will cause a fight," to "talking about money deepens our relationship."



Q. What activities encompass your professional responsibilities?

A. Eighty percent of my time is spent in a clinical role working with clients. The other 20% of my time is jam-packed with growing my practice beyond the therapy room by hosting online workshops, collaborating with podcast hosts, and creating content for social media. My financial therapy practice has been full for some time, so I am now working on creating an online course for couples that will be a hybrid model. The educational modules will be live so attendees can ask questions, but the homework and exercises will be self-paced. It's my mission to bring financial therapy to more couples, and with the power of the internet, there is no better

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time for financial therapists to reach the clients who need them most. Additionally, I finished my first book, "The Financial Anxiety Solution," that will hit bookshelves in winter 2020.

Q. How long have you been engaged in your professional activity?

A. I've been a trained mental health social worker in the therapy space since 2011; I received my certificate in financial social work in May 2018 and am currently in the process of my FTA-I certificate.

Q. What led you to your professional calling?

A. Before my pivot to financial therapy, I worked with a lot of clients with depression and anxiety. Money issues rose not infrequently, and I felt it was a disservice to either refer them out to a financial counselor or advocate for a bill reduction as we are often trained in social work. I wanted to use the therapy space to work with my clients on their money psychology. In my personal life, I'd had an interest in personal finance and knew there had to be a way to bridge the gap. That's where the magic of google came in, and I learned of the FTA and started researching how I could ethically bridge the gap of mental health and money.

Q. How are you paid?

A. Unfortunately, until the DSM recognizes money disorders outside of gambling, I'm not able to bill for my services. Clients pay out-of-pocket for therapy services. I charge a flat fee for my online course.

Q. Do you work alone or do you have a team?

A. I am a part of a therapy collaborative, but when it comes to who is providing the financial therapy services, it's just me.

Q. What theoretical framework guides your work when dealing with clients?

A. I love integrating mindfulness-based CBT and sensorimotor work and find they work particularly well for financial therapy. Since a lot of financial anxiety leads to financial procrastination, it's imperative to do work with clients that



allows them to make behavior change, and tackling cognitive distortions with CBT works great.

Q. What needs to happen so that 10 years from now we can say that financial therapy is a respected field of study?

A. The FTA is doing amazing work by producing peer-reviewed research and by trademarking the FTA-I certificate. I think more consumers will start looking for financial therapists who have appropriate credentialing.

Q. What benefits can the financial therapy association provide to others doing work that is similar to your professional activities?

A. The FTA provides a space for professionals in this emerging field to connect and collaborate. I'd also say for practitioners debating joining, that the FTA is a great referral source for potential clients.

Q. What ethical considerations do you think financial therapists should consider when working with clients?

A. Like any other client, be mindful of where your professional scope of practice ends, and someone else's begins. While I am comfortable providing basic financial literacy with my clients, I ensure they understand that I don't advise or sell financial services. I have a strong referral base of CFPs that I can refer clients to when their financial needs are beyond my scope of practice.

Q. How do you think practitioners from your home discipline should use financial therapy?

A. I could go on and on about this! First, in Ph.D. and Master's programs, social work professors need to stop saying things like, "you don't go into this field to make money," and "social workers aren't here for the income." This type of language sets up social workers to feel guilty about earning money for highly-skilled and much-needed work. This messaging makes it difficult for social workers to advocate for a decent living wage and allows them to be one of the only mid-level healthcare providers expected not to make money. More schools of social work must start teaching their students about the value of talking about money with their clients. Financial therapy deepens dialogue in the therapy room that goes mostly untapped. Once credentialed, social workers should use financial therapy as another tool in their toolkit with clients. Understanding some of the basic tenets of financial therapy creates better, more well-rounded social workers.

Q. How do you think practitioners from a different home discipline should use financial therapy?

A. Basic financial therapy skills such as reflective listening and motivational interviewing can go a long way for financial planners. A financial planner who gives out to-dos versus one who collaborates with their clients will have vastly different success rates with their clients.

Q. If others are interested in finding out more about you personally and professionally, where can they obtain this information?

A. I'm everywhere! My website is www.mindmoneybalance.com, and I can be found on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest @mindmoneybalance. I also have a YouTube channel /lindsabryanpodvin.

