
A WORKBOOK FOR EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONERS

Market Recognition Sprint

A one-hour exercise that looks for the evidence of a method already operating beneath your work, using nothing but your own client stories.

If you have ever privately suspected that you don't really have a process, that you have simply been improvising well for a very long time, and that one day someone will notice, this workbook was written for you.

By the end, you will know whether your results are improvisation or something repeatable. In your own handwriting.

Declan Connolly · Courses Into Clients

Before you start

This workbook has one job: to show you the evidence.

Not to teach you anything. Not to give you a framework to adopt. You don't need one. That's rather the point.

I have sat down with 241 experienced practitioners at the time of this writing, therapists, coaches, counsellors, healers, facilitators, mediators, for a recorded, one-to-one hour each, and asked them to describe how they work.

Most of them opened the conversation the same way:

I'm not sure I have a method, really. I think I just... respond to what's in front of me.

Most of them turned out to be describing something that had a structure underneath it.

A set of moves they made again and again, across very different clients, without ever noticing they were making them.

Whether that is true of you is what the next hour is for. You are going to test it against three of your own client stories rather than take my word for it.

You may feel there is nothing there to name, that when you look for a method, you find only instinct and improvisation.

Or you may feel the opposite: that there is far too much. Several modalities, several kinds of client, a dozen things you are good at and no thread you could point to.

Both can make a method impossible to see. Neither, on its own, tells you whether there is one.

TWO THINGS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

One. This will take about an hour, and you should do it in one sitting, somewhere quiet. It doesn't work if you skim it. The value is in the writing, not the reading.

Two, and this is the honest part. This workbook will help you establish whether a repeatable method is operating beneath your work. It will not name or map it for you.

It answers one question: is there something here worth mapping?

Everything you find here is yours to keep, whatever you decide to do afterwards.

Part One — The Evidence

Three clients. About thirty minutes. Don't polish. Nobody is reading this.

Pick three recent clients from the same general kind of work or offer.

Choose people whose circumstances and presenting problems were different enough to test the pattern, but not three people who received completely different services.

Three ordinary ones, not your best or most dramatic.

ONE DISTINCTION MATTERS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE

The technique versus the move.

Technique: breathwork.

Move: slowing the client down enough to notice what they had been overriding.

Technique: asking questions.

Move: separating the problem they arrived with from the deeper pattern keeping it in place.

The technique is what you would list on a website.

The move is what you were actually doing underneath it.

Answer for the move.

CLIENT ONE

1a. What did they walk in carrying? What was actually going on for them?

Write here:

1b. What was the first thing you actually did?

Not the technique you would name on a website. The move. What did you do before anything else?

Most people find this one easier to recognise than to write from scratch. Tick anything that was part of it, then put it in your own words underneath.

- ☐ Creating enough safety that something could finally be said
- ☐ Slowing them down enough to notice what they had been overriding
- ☐ Locating the real problem underneath the one they arrived with
- ☐ Restoring a sense of agency, or returning a choice to them
- ☐ Widening the frame, putting the problem in a larger context
- ☐ Naming something they had not let themselves name
- ☐ Taking something off them, permission to stop carrying it
- ☐ Separating what they actually want from what they think they should want
- ☐ Settling the body first, before anything else could be worked with
- ☐ Interrupting a story they had told many times before

☐ Something else —

Write here:

Before you go on, read back what you just wrote. If it is the name of a technique, something you could put on a website, or something you were trained in, ask one more question: what was that for? Write that instead. That is the move. This is the single place this exercise most often goes wrong, and it takes twenty seconds to correct.

1c. Where did it turn? Name the moment something shifted for them.

Write here:

1d. At some point they said or did something that changed what you chose to do next. What was it, and what did you change?

Write here:

1e. What did you deliberately not do, even though another practitioner in your field might have?

Write here:

You separated a technique from a move. On paper that looks like a small thing. In practice it is the distinction most practitioners cannot make about their own work on request. It is the single most common place this exercise stalls, and you have just cleared it on the first client. One client proves nothing yet. That is what the next two are for. But you now know you can do the part this depends on.

CLIENT TWO

2a. What did they walk in carrying? What was actually going on for them?

Write here:

2b. What was the first thing you actually did?

Not the technique you would name on a website. The move. What did you do before anything else? The list under question 1b is there if you need it.

Write here:

2c. Where did it turn? Name the moment something shifted for them.

Write here:

2d. At some point they said or did something that changed what you chose to do next. What was it, and what did you change?

Write here:

2e. What did you deliberately not do, even though another practitioner in your field might have?

Write here:

CLIENT THREE

3a. What did they walk in carrying? What was actually going on for them?

Write here:

3b. What was the first thing you actually did?

Not the technique you would name on a website. The move. What did you do before anything else? The list under question 1b is there if you need it.

Write here:

3c. Where did it turn? Name the moment something shifted for them.

Write here:

3d. At some point they said or did something that changed what you chose to do next. What was it, and what did you change?

Write here:

3e. What did you deliberately not do, even though another practitioner in your field might have?

Write here:

Three clients. Three sets of answers. On their own they are just notes.

Whatever they have in common is the next twenty minutes, and you will not find it by remembering. Only by reading them beside each other.

Part Two — The Clues

Now read your own answers back. Slowly. This is the part that does the work.

Look at 1b, 2b and 3b, the three “first things you did”. Read them one after another.

Look beneath the words. Not at the technique. At what you were actually doing.

Three different people, three different problems. Were these three different expressions of one move?

THREE THINGS CAN HAPPEN HERE. ALL THREE ARE HONEST RESULTS.

One move clearly repeats. Write it down and move on.

Two connect and the third looks different. Also common. Note the two. The third may be the exception that reveals the rule, or it may belong somewhere else in the process.

Nothing obvious repeats. This does not prove there is no pattern. By far the most common cause is that you described techniques rather than moves. Go back to 1b, 2b and 3b and ask of each one: what was that for? Rewrite at that level, then read the three again.

If a second honest attempt still shows nothing, don't force one, and don't make your examples agree. That is a useful result, not a failure, and there is a short note about what to do with it on the last page. Turn to "If no pattern surfaced", then come back and read the rest of this workbook for what fits.

4. Write the recurring move once, as one move.

Don't worry about making it sound good.

Write here:

Now do the same with 1c, 2c and 3c, the three turns.

5. What kind of turn appears repeatedly?

What are you doing, or making possible, when that shift occurs?

Write here:

THE DECISION YOU KEEP MAKING

Read 1d, 2d and 3d, the moments a client said or did something that changed what you chose next.

6. What did you repeatedly notice before changing direction?

Do you wait for a particular phrase, an emotional shift, a contradiction, a bodily response, a sign of readiness?

Write here:

THE MOVE YOU KEEP REFUSING

Now read 1e, 2e and 3e, the things you deliberately didn't do.

7. Is there something you repeatedly choose not to do, even when it would be standard in your field?

Your method often lives as much in what you refuse as in what you reach for.

Write here:

These are still clues, not architecture. You are gathering them, not assembling them.

What you have just done

You have identified two recurring points in the work: a move that often appears near the beginning, and a shift you repeatedly help create. You may never have placed those two beside each other before, or documented them across several different clients rather than relying on a general impression.

This doesn't mean the intuition isn't real. It means your intuition isn't random. Beneath the moment-to-moment responsiveness is accumulated judgment, years of it, that keeps directing you toward particular moves at particular moments, without ever asking your permission.

That is evidence of a method. Enough to stop calling the results improvisation.

In most of the practitioners I have mapped, something did repeat. If it repeated for you too, you are now looking at the first evidence of it, in your own handwriting.

A practitioner I worked with put it better than I ever have. She said:

I'm not just winging it. There's a structure that I'm winging it in.

That's it exactly. The responsiveness is real. The improvisation is real. And there is a structure holding both, part of why the work stays effective across very different clients.

But notice carefully what you have, and what you don't.

You now know that something is there. You still don't know what it is. Those are two different pieces of knowledge, and only one of them can be said out loud to a stranger.

There is also one piece you have almost certainly left out, and it tends to be the one that matters. That's the next page.

Part Three — The Move You Dismiss

The part you are most likely to overlook.

Somewhere in your answers may be a move you instinctively dismiss because it feels ordinary to you. It may prove to be genuinely distinctive, or it may be one expression of something deeper. For now, don't try to decide which. Just mark it as evidence worth examining.

8. Is there a move in your answers that feels so ordinary to you that you have always assumed everyone does it?

Mark it.

Write here:

9. What do your clients say about you?

Not what you would like them to say. What they actually say, in their words, when they are trying to describe you to someone else.

Write here:

10. Read back what you just wrote. Is it specific, or is it warm, and slightly vague?

Either answer is useful. Hold onto it; we come back to it shortly.

Write here:

One more thing, before you turn the page

You may have written down the move that actually does the work, and then heard yourself think:

"But that's just what I do." "That sounds a bit much." "Anyone would do that."

Notice that. It is one of the most reliable patterns I see: experienced practitioners describe something important accurately, then dismiss it in the same breath.

I have watched people lay out a precise, repeatable process in four sentences, and then apologise for it. Say it sounds mad. Say it's probably nothing.

The part you are quietest about, the one that doesn't sound professional enough to say out loud, is very often the part that is actually doing the work.

You are allowed to take the evidence seriously. That is not arrogance. It is accuracy.

Part Four — Say it out loud

Here is what you have found evidence of, in your own handwriting:

- certain professional decisions repeat across very different clients;
- a recurring opening move may be present;
- a particular kind of client shift appears more than once;
- you habitually dismiss parts of your own judgment that may matter.

You have not mapped the complete method. But you have established there is enough repetition here to take the possibility seriously, and to stop calling years of consistent results a lucky knack.

So let's finish the job.

In one sentence, explain the whole pattern.

Don't try to make it sound impressive. Try to include what repeatedly happens, what changes for the client, and what seems characteristic about the way you work. One sentence that holds all three.

Write here:

Take as long as you need.

Write your sentence before you turn the page. The next page is about what just happened when you tried. Reading it first changes what happens, and the whole point of this exercise is what you find out by attempting it cold.

After you turn the page, there is one further two-minute test. Do not read it yet. The cold attempt has to come first.

What just happened

One of four things.

You left it blank. You sat there. You knew the thing was real. You had just proved it, and no sentence came.

You wrote something and immediately disliked it. It came out generic. "I help people find clarity." "I work with the whole person." You read it back and thought: that's not it, that could be anybody.

You wrote a paragraph. Because one sentence wouldn't hold it, and every time you cut something, the thing stopped being true.

Or you wrote a sentence that feels close. Good. Keep it. It is a useful working hypothesis. But notice what it rests on: two recurring points, a decision cue, and a move you may normally dismiss. You still don't know which of those clues are foundational, what lies between them, or whether the sentence holds across the full range of your work.

Whichever it was, sit with it, but be careful about what you conclude from it.

One more test before you decide what the sentence means

This takes two minutes, and it is the part most people skip when the sentence felt close.

Read the sentence you wrote (or the best fragment you have, if the page is still blank) to someone who has never seen your work. A friend, a colleague, a partner. Not a client. Not someone who already knows what you do.

Ask them one question only:

If a friend of yours needed this, what would you tell them I do?

Write down what they said, in their words.

Their words, not yours:

Then look at what came back.

If it was warm and slightly vague ("she helps people," "she's really good with that kind of thing," "you'd like her"), that is the same sentence your clients already use about you. The work is being praised. It is not yet being made understandable.

If they could name a problem, a process, and who it is for, keep that. It is rare, and it still does not mean the architecture is mapped. It means one sentence travelled further than most.

If you cannot do this test today, write the question at the top of the page and run it before the week is out. Do not skip it because the sentence felt finished. The sentence that feels closest from inside is often the one that travels least from outside.

Where the difficulty actually sits

It is tempting to read what just happened as a limitation in you. That you couldn't find the words. That other people would have managed it.

That isn't what happened.

You were asked to recite, in one sentence and from memory, a document that has never been written. Nobody can quote a thing that doesn't exist yet.

What is missing is not your ability to describe your work. It is the description itself, an actual object, with a name and a shape and an order, that could be written down, handed to someone else, and repeated accurately by a person who has never met you.

You don't have one. That is not a fact about your competence. It is a fact about your possessions.

The evidence is now clearer than the architecture. You can see several parts. What you cannot yet reliably see is the structure they form.

That gap doesn't close by trying harder from the same position. You have just proved you can gather the pieces. Which ones matter, and how they connect, is a different kind of work.

Description is not mapping

This is worth naming plainly, because it is where years of effort usually go.

Clearer wording from the same position is still description. You are still the one supplying the view from inside. A better paragraph, a tighter bio, a cleaner website line: all of that starts from asking you to say what you do more clearly. That is why the rewrites never quite hold. They rearrange what you can already see. They do not reach the structure underneath it.

Mapping is a different job. It starts from what you actually did with real clients, tests which decisions repeat, and builds the architecture from the outside. Same material. Different position. Different result.

If you have already tried coaches, branding work, positioning exercises, or long conversations with AI about "how to explain what I do," you were not failing at the work. You were being asked to describe. Description cannot produce what only an outside mapping produces.

Why fragments don't automatically become architecture

The deeper you master something, the further it drops below the level you can consciously see. This is one of the most established findings about expertise: experts know more than they can tell. Not because they explain badly, but because mastery,

by its nature, runs below language. The procedure becomes automatic, and automatic processes are precisely the ones that stop being available for inspection.

Which produces a genuinely cruel result: the more automatic the expertise becomes, the harder its important parts are to describe from inside.

You didn't fail to explain your method. You reached the limit of what isolated fragments can tell you.

It is the same reason you can't read the label from inside the jar. Not impossible, just unreliable, and disproportionately hard, from where you are standing. It is not a question of ability. It is a question of position.

An AI tool can organise the fragments you feed it. What it cannot do, from a worksheet alone, is tell which fragments are foundational, test them against the decisions you make live, or notice what never made it into your answers in the first place. That is the same position problem in a different form. The tool still only has the view you can give it from inside.

Now go back to question 9

The one where you wrote down what your clients actually say about you.

"She's amazing." "She just gets it." "I always feel better afterwards."

Here is what those sentences really are.

They are your clients standing outside your method, seeing that something powerful and specific is happening, and having no language to describe it either. So they reach for the warmest word they have.

And here is the expensive part, the part almost nobody notices:

"She's wonderful" travels warmly, but very little of the actual value survives the journey.

When your client tries to refer you, that is the sentence she has. And the person hearing it has almost nothing to act on, no problem named, no process to trust, no specific reason to move. The referral arrives warm and dies quietly, and neither of them ever knows why.

The generic website. The first conversation that ends in "let me think about it". The referral that never followed through. The difficulty beneath all three is the same: the work is being praised without being made understandable.

The problem sits beneath the marketing, which is why more marketing, on its own, hasn't fixed it.

If you ran the two-minute test above, you may already have heard the same warm sentence from someone who has never been your client. That is not a coincidence. It is the same gap, measured twice.

What it has already cost

Not a guilt exercise. A count, and the answers are already in your own records. Both of these have happened. The only question is how often.

11a. Roughly how many referrals in the last year arrived warm (someone had clearly recommended you) and then never booked?

Write here:

11b. Roughly how many enquiries or first conversations ended in "let me think about it", and then nothing?

Write here:

Whatever those two numbers are, they are not a verdict on your work. Every one of those people had already heard that you were good. Warmth was never what was missing.

What none of them received was anything they could act on.

Your Method Evidence Summary

Copy your answers across. This is what you found, and it is exactly what to bring to the session.

PART ONE — THE EVIDENCE

The recurring opening move

From question 4, what you reach for first, across all three

Write here:

The recurring turn

From question 5, the shift that repeatedly appears, and what you make possible when it occurs

Write here:

The recurring decision cue

From question 6, what you notice before you change direction

Write here:

The deliberate non-move

From question 7, what you repeatedly choose not to do

Write here:

The move you dismiss

From question 8, the one that feels too ordinary to mention

Write here:

PART TWO — THE ARTICULATION GAP

What your clients actually say about you

From question 9, in their words

Write here:

Your current one-sentence explanation

Even if it feels incomplete

Write here:

What the sentence leaves out or unresolved

Which part of the work disappeared, went generic, or still doesn't fit

Write here:

What a stranger said you do

From the two-minute test: their words, not yours. If you have not run it yet, leave this blank and come back to it.

Write here:

What it has already cost

From question 11, the two numbers

Write here:

Where the cases diverge

Only if no pattern surfaced: what appears different across the examples, and what you can't yet connect

Write here:

Whatever your sentence looks like, and whatever it leaves out, that unresolved part is not a gap in you. It is the part that needs another set of eyes.

What a stated method actually is

This is worth being precise about, because almost nobody is. "Methodology" gets used to mean a philosophy, a set of values, a list of qualifications, or a description of how someone likes to work. None of those are what I mean.

A stated method is an object. It meets five tests.

1 It has a name that is not your job title.

"Counsellor" is a category you share with thousands of people. A name belongs to the work, not the profession.

2 It has stages, in a fixed order, and a reason for that order.

Not a list of things you might do. A sequence in which each stage is only possible because the one before it happened.

3 It says who it is for, and, by implication, who it is not for.

A method that suits everyone describes nothing.

4 It names the move you make that others in your field do not.

Usually the one you have been quietest about. Method lives in the distinctive move, not the shared technique.

5 It survives being repeated by a stranger.

Someone who has never met you can say it in one breath, to someone else, and still be accurate. This is the test that matters most, and the one "she's wonderful" fails.

Read those five back against what you currently have. Not against what you can do. Against what exists, in writing, that you could hand to another person today.

What one looks like

An example, so this stops being abstract. Patricia has been a grief counsellor for twenty-two years.

HOW SHE DESCRIBED HER WORK WHEN SHE ARRIVED

It's not like I'm following steps. It depends on the client, really. Every bereavement is different, so it's moment by moment. I've done some CBT, some somatic work, a grief certification. I'm not sure I'd call it a method. I think I just respond to what's in front of me.

Warm, honest, and completely unusable by anyone who hasn't already met her. It fails four of the five tests.

WHAT THE MAPPING PRODUCED

The Grief Integration Framework

A four-stage method for people carrying a grief that has stopped moving.

1 Before anything else, Patricia finds what the person believes they still owe the person who died: an apology, a defence, a promise never kept. Grief that has stopped moving is nearly always an unpaid debt.

Establishing what is still owed.

2 Most people arrive carrying two things at once: what happened, and what they have decided it proved about them. She takes those apart before working with either.

Separating the loss from the verdict.

3 The stage her clients remember. She has the person say the unsaid thing out loud, in the room, in the third person. She had never named this. She had been doing it for two decades.

Returning the conversation.

4 Grief holds on because letting go feels like a betrayal. The work ends by moving the loyalty onto something the person can carry forward, rather than asking them to put it down.

Reassigning the loyalty.

Nothing in that list was new to Patricia. She had made every one of those moves, in that order, hundreds of times. What she did not have, for twenty-two years, was the four sentences.

That is the difference between doing the work and having the method. And it is the only difference. She did not learn a technique, adopt a framework, or change her practice by a single degree.

What having one changes

Where a coherent methodology is present, making it clear and nameable changes what can travel beyond the room.

FIRST, THE REFERRAL CHANGES

Picture the actual moment, because it is happening somewhere this month.

Your client is having dinner with a friend who has been struggling. The friend asks what you do.

Today, she says:

She's amazing. Honestly. You should see her.

Afterwards, she says:

She does this thing called the Grief Integration Framework. It's for grief that's got stuck. Four stages. It's what got me through the year after my mother.

The second friend books. The first one doesn't.

Both women were recommending her just as warmly. The difference is that one of them had something to hand over and the other only had a feeling. There are people who need precisely what you do and cannot yet tell that your work is for them, and the only thing standing between them and you is a sentence somebody else can say.

The method carries the explaining, the justifying, the proving. By the time she arrives, the only thing left is the part that was ever only yours.

THEN THE FIRST CONVERSATION STOPS BEING AN AUDITION

You are no longer performing depth and hoping they sense it. You are describing a process, and they are recognising themselves in it. The conversation moves from "convince me" toward the more useful question: "is this the right process for me?"

THEN THE FEE GETS EASIER TO EXPLAIN

A fee attached to a named method is harder to compare against every other person using the same job title. It doesn't remove the question. It changes what the question is about. And when you answer it, you are describing a process rather than defending yourself.

AND THEN, ONLY IF YOU WANT IT, THE WORK STARTS TO CARRY ITSELF

A named method makes a book easier to organise, a signature programme easier to build, a training easier to teach. People build all of those without one. All of it becomes easier to organise, communicate and build around once the method has a name and a shape.

If you have spent a long time being needed for everything, this is what it looks like to be needed only for the part that was ever really yours.

Take whichever of these matters to you. You may want only one. That is a perfectly good answer.

If you want the next step

Nothing that happened today changed what you do. You did all of it before you opened this workbook, and you will do it again next week with the next client.

What changed is that you can now see there is something there, and that you still cannot say what it is cleanly enough for it to travel.

That is as far as this workbook goes. And that is a complete result.

If you want help from outside, mapping what the evidence forms and giving it language someone else can recognise, that is a separate hour: **the Methodology Mapping Session**.

The details, the price, and how it works are here:

<https://coursesintoclients.com/sp/methodology-mapping-session/>

If no pattern surfaced

A note for the small number of people who need it.

You went back, rewrote 1b, 2b and 3b at the level of the move rather than the technique, read them again, and still nothing obvious repeats. Don't force one. Do not make your examples agree.

One of three things may be true:

- you are combining several genuinely different bodies of work;
- your methodology is still forming;
- the repeated judgment sits at a level that is difficult to reach without outside questioning.

That is a useful result, not a failure. You have established that these cases don't currently support one obvious pattern, which is a real finding, not an empty one.

It is also worth checking one thing before you conclude anything: whether the three cases were simply too unlike. If the work felt very different in each, choose three clients whose work felt closer to one another and run Part One again.

Record four things while they are fresh:

Where the examples diverge

Write here:

Whether they belong to different services, audiences, or stages of your work

Write here:

Anything that nevertheless appears common across all three

Write here:

What you would need to understand before deciding whether there is one method here or several

Write here:

Take those four notes to the Method Evidence Summary, use the field marked "Where the cases diverge", and read the rest of this workbook for what fits, leaving the rest. Don't complete questions 4 to 7 as though the cases matched.

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