

## **Don't Personalize the Rejections**

By Jenn Sommermann, LCMT

*REJECTION* ... It's a topic no one likes to discuss. Unfortunately, it needs to be addressed, especially in terms of marketing. *Fear of rejection* probably is the number-one reason people are afraid to market themselves.

It's a known fact that no one likes to be rejected. Often, my students have told me they are too shy to market themselves, but I think the underlying problem is the basic fear of rejection. Whether you are outgoing or shy, no one enjoys being turned down.

If you have faced your own rejections, I know it's less than satisfying, and even can feel awful. It's often those memories and the lingering "no's" that prevent people from successful marketing. However, *fear of rejection* is valid and can be overcome. Marketing is putting yourself on the line and asking for a "yes" to an invitation, to an offer, to a massage. The important thing to understand is this: *There is a major difference between personal rejections of the past and the potential business rejections of the future.* Don't confuse the two, and your efforts will be much easier and your confidence will not be shattered.

Before I talk about the difference between personal and business rejections and how to handle them, I want to address why some people say "no" in the first place. Remember, it's never for us to judge why someone chooses not to get a massage from us. Previous experience, fear, money, time and misinformation are some of the reasons why we might be turned down when we offer our services professionally. A bad experience could have someone turned off to massage for the rest of their lives. No amount of marketing can change that person's past experience. Hopefully, you can gain that person's trust and reintroduce them to this amazing form of health care. Maybe not, as that first experience carries much weight.

Fear is a large factor in the rejections we get as massage therapists. The list of things to fear is huge. Fear of undressing, fear of the power differential, fear of being vulnerable, body image fears, and basic fear of the

unknown are just a few. Some things we can do something about by educating the potential client; others we cannot change. We can only do our best to make the potential client feel safe and trusting of us.

Money plays a factor in this business. After all, our services are to be valued - and money is one way for us to value what we do professionally. Someone might be on a tight budget and not able to afford your services. Perhaps you have a sliding scale, but the client is not comfortable mentioning their economic situation. It's up to you to bridge that gap and initiate the conversation if you choose, but money clearly doesn't have anything to do with you personally.

Time plays a role for many people, and serious time constraints can impact someone's ability to come for an appointment. When my clients don't have their calendar with them, they often have to defer making another appointment. Rather than double-book themselves, they prefer to say "no" and get back to me. I understand completely; I do the same thing. If that happens, however, ask if you can follow up with them in a week or so. Take the pressure to reschedule off of them and be the proactive one."

Information and misinformation are areas we can do something about. When I sense a potential client has been misinformed, I use it as an educational opportunity. I try to establish what the client knows about massage therapy, and educate from there. Often the misinformation is a misunderstanding or the result of assumptions.

As you can see, none of these reasons are personal in nature. It is not for us to judge what applies in our situation. We must remain objective and unattached to the outcome and continue our marketing efforts. We only can attempt to inform and convince, but at some point, the potential client needs to make their own decision, and it's out of our hands.

Now, let's look at how to make the shift so business experiences can be more productive and less debilitating. Clearly, there is a mental exercise happening in order to separate your business and personal interactions. Finding the ability and strength to ask someone if they are interested in a massage and risking the rejection is difficult for most people. If the answer is favorable, there is no problem: you booked yourself a new client and are having a good day. If the answer is less than favorable, you have two choices. You can take the rejection personally, possibly re-live old rejections, let it wear away at your self-esteem and have a bad day. Or, you can make the other choice and consider taking this particular "no" as a business rejection, nothing less, nothing more.

Remember that marketing is a numbers game. If you get a lot of rejections, there is a good chance that the "yes" you have been waiting for is right around the corner. You have to ask many potential clients before you book one client. I often say it's about planting seeds. You never know where they are going to sprout, and to that end, no marketing is wasted. You might market to one person who says "no," but they will tell someone else, who tells someone else, who calls you in a month. You never know where the roots will take.

Don't believe just because you are reading this article that rejections won't occur. They will happen, and they may or may not still be painful. The trick is to know how to handle them and not let them deter you from further attempts. When you are about to market yourself, quietly say, "This is about business and whatever the outcome, I will not take it personally. I will not let it ruin my day, and I will continue with my efforts in another way." Simple mental preparedness will go a long way.

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