

# How to run a thriving multidisciplinary clinic

Lessons from Crossroads Collective

Written by Julia Rose



The vision *makes sense*: multiple healthcare services under one roof. A place to visit for counseling, acupuncture, diet and sleep consulting, massage therapy, and the like.

After all, caring for yourself is not done in isolation.

This holistic approach is what happens when you step inside Crossroads Collective in either of their two British Columbia locations. Perhaps you started visiting for counseling services, only to discover diet was playing a significant role in your discontent. Good news! You can see a dietitian there as well. Or maybe your child has trouble focusing at school. You might have

sought out counseling for them, soon realizing the entire family would benefit from therapy, too.

Instead of googling a new practitioner when a challenge arises in your life, you'll be referred with ease at the Crossroads Collective clinic.

## The birth of Crossroads Collective

Co-Owners Lisa Moore and Marianne Cottingham are both clinical counselors by trade. Lisa specializes in play therapy and child and youth programs, while Marianne focuses on high-

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conflict separation and divorce for families. (She’s also a registered massage therapist.)

The two women first met in grad school and ended up renting a small space together. It wasn’t long before they realized they were doubling their efforts on admin, marketing, and office management. What if they combined forces?

This idea started as a way to simplify their lives and eventually grew into a much grander vision: form a



Lisa Moore (left) and Marianne Cottingham (right) of Crossroads Collective

collective with multiple practitioners from different disciplines. Lisa and Marianne could give back to their community by providing better care, and reduce the administrative burden for themselves and other practitioners. A win-win.

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### What makes a successful multidisciplinary clinic?

The co-owners define a multidisciplinary clinic as one where they can provide “wrap around care” to clients or patients. Their approach relies on their four pillars of health: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. These pillars make up the foundation of the Crossroads’ mission, and have guided Lisa and Marianne on all of their decisions — ranging from who, why, and when to hire, to how to handle financial hardships or bumps in the road.

In five years, the clinic has grown to over 80 practitioners, with a year-over-year revenue increase averaging at 40% growth. Their success speaks to the trust they’ve built in the community and the need for the services they provide.

If you’re interested in taking a multidisciplinary approach, here’s what Lisa and Marianne have learned in five years of running Crossroads.

### Structuring your organization

When it comes to the structure of the business, Lisa and Marianne divide and conquer. Lisa acts as the Director of Business Development, while Marianne plays the role of Clinical Director. In other words, one is the big picture thinker; the other executes.

“Lisa comes up with the ideas,” says Marianne with a laugh, noting that she is the one who accepts or vetoes them based on her on-the-ground knowledge of the clinic. “I’m like, yes to this, no to that, or this isn’t working, or it’s consuming way too much admin.”

At this level of growth, their partnership has become an incredible asset. “I wouldn’t want to do this job without a partner,” Marianne laments.

In addition to a tight-knit working relationship, Marianne and Lisa credit their success to having hired an amazing office manager one year into their journey. When you’re offering more services, and therefore supporting a higher volume of clients and practitioners,

you also need to make sure that you can handle the realities of a business growing in complexity.

“When should you hire an admin person? Yesterday would have been a good time,” Marianne laughs. “If you’re wondering, it’s already time!”

Today, their administrative team sits at six people; a mix of personal assistants, billing clerks, and intake coordinators. Part of their job is to help Lisa look at the numbers. “Every Monday, I have somebody that comes in and sees who didn’t rebook,” Lisa shares as an example.

Someone is at the clinic seven days a week, so if clients walk in or call, they’re always speaking to a real person. The admin staff can play just as big of a role in client education as practitioners do. At Crossroads, the intake coordinator is the client’s first introduction to all the other wellness offerings inside the clinic.

### Creating a culture built on values

The two co-founders learned that finding someone who matches their values is more important than hiring for a certain amount of previous work experience.

There are many practitioners who simply want to rent an office, practice, and leave. That’s not the culture Crossroads aims to create. After a few mistakes along the way, they now make sure that expectations are clear: they want people in the lunchroom collaborating with one another, sharing anecdotes, and building their skill sets. It’s a hands-on work environment, and one they believe is required to provide the care they promise clients.

The people who thrive most at Crossroads “are people who really enjoy that community environment,” says Lisa. “They’re the ones who love participating in our online training sessions and peer supervisions.”

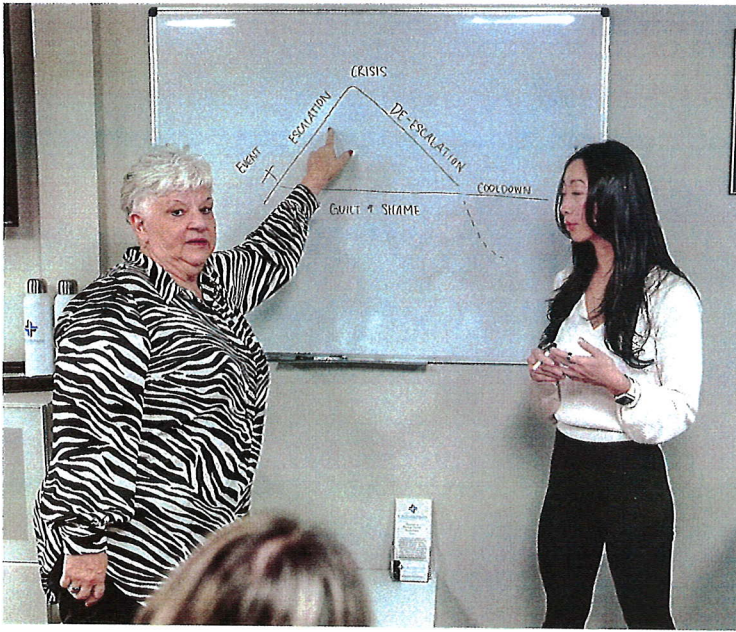
“We found we have to be clear about our belief system on the front end of hiring. When it hasn’t worked out, it’s because we weren’t rigorous enough,” adds Marianne.



**A thorough vetting process is one way to discover if someone is a values-fit.**

As part of the application process, Lisa and Marianne ask candidates to upload a professional bio to determine their commitment to the role. You’d be surprised how many people feel overwhelmed by this small ask. It’s enough, in some cases, to discourage candidates from moving forward at all — effectively filtering out those who wouldn’t enjoy the hands-on environment at Crossroads.





### Living and breathing “wrap around care”

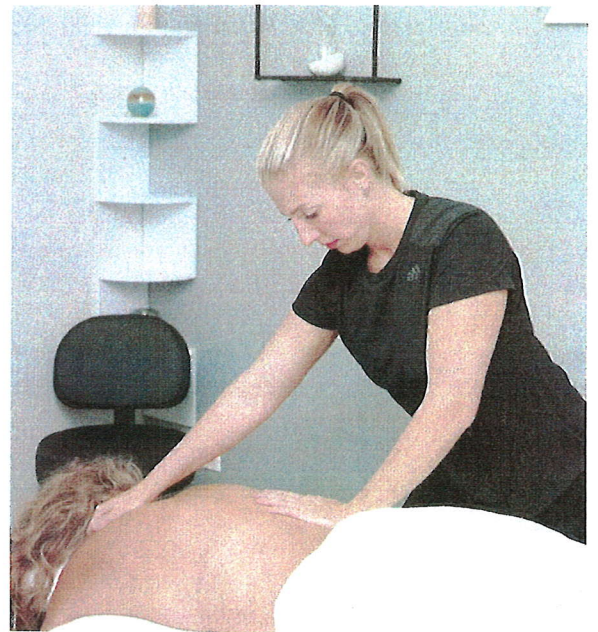
When you’ve got the right people, training your staff becomes easier and more effective. But that doesn’t mean it’s any less rigorous — especially when it comes to fresh practitioners or new grads. “The value system is there, but the execution might not be,” says Marianne. At Crossroads, new hires meet with her regularly for the first 16 weeks of their journey.

“We [work with] the LGBTQ community, neurodiversity, [and practice] gender affirming care,” says Lisa, adding that the training is so in-depth partially “because the clientele that we serve requires us to make sure that our therapists are well versed in those areas.”

Practitioners are trained on how to treat the whole person: that means noticing lifestyle factors outside of their specialty, deeply listening to the client’s experience, and finding opportunities for internal referrals when it makes sense. “When we get them to do their case conceptualization on a client, they should also be presenting what other services could benefit this client,” Marianne says. “If they can start thinking that way, they [become] better at inter-referring.”

Being observant is a key factor to their success, and that goes beyond the treatment room. If you’re a practitioner treating a client with ADHD, and you notice their parent giving them sugary snacks in the waiting room, at Crossroads, you would thoughtfully take note — understanding that the observation could be important to their overall care.

Both counselors and the admin staff are trained on how to recommend the many treatment options available



to clients, as well as emphasize the benefit of being able to “skip the line” inside Crossroads. Practitioners are also offered a referral fee when an appointment is successfully booked.

### Training the next generation

A lot of mental health practitioners come from online-only programs where they don’t get any in-person experience with clients.

Knowing this, Lisa and Marianne developed the Crossroads internship program. Not only is it a wonderful opportunity for students to learn essential practice skills — it’s also an opportunity for Crossroads to find and train new talent on their holistic approach. Interest has grown so much, they now get up to 20 applicants per month.

Beyond being a great recruitment tool, the internship curriculum also allows Crossroads to provide low-cost services to their community, reducing barriers to care.

### Giving back what you put in

Marianne and Lisa are firm believers in reinvesting back into your team. They know they ask a lot of their staff, and they want to give back to them in terms of growth and professional development.

The two put a lot of their profits back into the business, so they can do things like take their staff to multiple conferences per year, as well as host team retreats. Doing so ensures they stay competitive and keep their team engaged. Training for specialties, like ADHD, has been especially vital recently.

## Getting the word out about your clinic

In the early days, Lisa made a concerted effort to build relationships with organizations that could help them amplify their reach: employee assistance programs, insurance companies, you name it. “Any program that was out there, I would go after and create strategic partnerships with,” Lisa notes.

While offering your clients exceptional service is a great way to build word-of-mouth referrals, don't discount the influence and reach of an organization. They can spread the word even faster and further.

Consider reaching out to private assessment organizations, community clubs, non-profits, charities, local groups, and adjacent businesses.

## Focus your marketing efforts

Understand that not everyone will be familiar with the multidisciplinary approach. Oftentimes, people are just looking for a solution to a specific problem. But don't let that deter you! Lean into the unique service or specialty that you offer to get clients in the door.

Even today, most of Crossroads' clients come to them for counseling services and learn about the clinic's other offerings later on. Lisa and Marianne have put significant resources into developing and marketing their niches — play therapy and high-conflict divorce and separation, respectively. By focusing their attention and resources on one area, they don't spread themselves too thin and continue to reap the benefits.

## Marketing also means client education

Once someone contacts you for your niche service, the client should have opportunities to learn about the other work you do. It's important to have multiple education touchpoints. Think: clinic signage, wall decals, business cards, and staff who intimately understand each other's offerings.

At Crossroads, each office has a services pad where practitioners can check off other options they recommend to their client. When the appointment is over, they simply drop it at the front desk so the admin team can follow up with that individual and book their next appointment.

## Don't be afraid to play the long game

You might think that every offering you have at your clinic has to be immediately profitable, but that's not necessarily the case — at least not in the beginning.

What specialty or niche can you lean into in your own clinic? To get started, look for a gap in the market in your local area.

You can have a service that is your bread and butter. At Crossroads, a lot of the services Lisa and Marianne chose to provide outside of counseling, they did because it was a value-add to their existing clients and fit in with their greater mission.

There are some disciplines that don't make a profit. But to them, that isn't the point.

Building Crossroads Collective has been a labor of love. Lisa and Marianne do it because they're motivated to make real change in the community, to teach other practitioners how to follow their four pillars of health, and to train the next generation of clinicians.

Of course, to fulfill the mission, you still need to make money. And from a business perspective, having a discipline that doesn't make you any — could that be considered foolish? To Lisa and Marianne, each discipline is an entry way to discovering the clinic's other offerings; an opportunity to educate clients on looking at their health holistically; and finally, it's a way they can help more people.

“We have the ability to affect change from the individual to the family to even the community,” says Lisa.

Through the ups and downs, this is why they find staying the course so rewarding. ■

Find Lisa and Marianne online at [crossroadscollective.ca](http://crossroadscollective.ca)