



Transitioning From Practicum to Internship A Practical Skills Guide for Emerging Therapists

The move from practicum to internship is often the first big leap in training. Suddenly, you may have a larger caseload, more complex presentations, and increased expectations for independence. Even if you're excited, this transition can feel like stepping onto less solid ground.

Feeling stretched during this transition is expected. It doesn't mean you are in over your head by default.

What Actually Changes Between Practicum and Internship

In practicum, you're typically closely supervised, working with fewer clients, and often with carefully selected or less acute cases. Internship usually brings higher volume, broader diagnostic range, more documentation, and more direct involvement in the clinical system (treatment teams, coordination, etc.).

The work starts to feel less like "practice" and more like "this is my job."

The Emotional Impact of Increased Responsibility

With added responsibility often comes added anxiety. You may feel pressure not to make mistakes, to keep up with documentation, to retain multiple cases in mind, and to manage your own emotional response to the work. This can be invigorating and draining at the same time.

It is normal if you feel more tired, more aware of limits, and more emotionally full after your days.

Building Practical Routines to Support Yourself

Internship requires stronger systems: for time management, note-writing, supervision prep, and emotional decompression. Simple structures like blocking time for notes, keeping a supervision journal, or having brief rituals before and after clinical days can make this transition significantly more sustainable.

Systems are not about rigidity; they are about supporting your nervous system and your ethics.

Keeping Supervision Central

Internship can create the illusion that you "should" need less help. In reality, this stage often benefits even more from ongoing supervision and consultation. Bringing your confusion,

emotional reactions, and decision points to supervision is not a sign that practicum somehow “didn’t work.” It is how you continue to grow.

You have more responsibility, not less right to support.

Reflection Questions for Emerging Therapists

What feels most different emotionally and practically between practicum and internship?

Where do I feel most stretched right now? Where do I feel more confident than before?

What systems or routines could help me feel more contained and organized?

How can I use supervision intentionally to support this transition?

Closing Thoughts

Transitioning from practicum to internship is not about proving you can handle everything. It’s about expanding your capacity while staying honest about your needs, your limits, and your learning edges. Feeling challenged is part of growth. You’re allowed to seek structure and support while you adapt.