

5 Schedule Templates to Prevent Therapist Burnout

Sample therapist schedules to help you keep your sanity and maintain balance in your life



Your job as a therapist is so rewarding. You are changing people's lives everyday. Your job can also be exhausting, as you are showing up and being present for those who are hurting. You want to help, but you also need to take care of yourself so you can continue to support your clients from a place of clarity and compassion.

That's why I've created 5 sample schedule templates that have helped to give therapists balance in their lives and ward off burnout.

If you're feeling drained and exhausted from your work as a therapist, it may be time to give one of these schedules a spin!



Cindy Norton





4-Day Work Week

The 4-day work week is pretty popular, especially among therapists. It's nice to have a day off from the traditional 5-day work week. It's common to choose either Monday, Wednesday, or Friday for your day off. Monday is nice because it gives you a slow start to the week. Wednesday is nice because you have a mid-week break, and never work more than two days in a row. Friday is probably the most popular day to take off for a 4-day work week. We are typically looking forward to the weekend all week long, and having Friday off gets us there a day sooner. Having tried all these days off in the past for the 4-day work week, I personally liked having Wednesday off best.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Although the 4-day work week is a popular option, I don't necessarily see it helping therapists with burnout or maintaining balance in their lives. It's typical that therapists will try to cram 5 days of clients into 4 days in order to have a day off - which isn't helpful. Additionally, therapists will use their day off as a catch-all day where they end up writing notes, completing administrative tasks for their business, scheduling personal appointments, and rescheduling clients on this day. So, not only are you seeing 5 days worth of clients in 4 days, you're actually not getting a day off. If you do decide that this is the best option, take care to ensure that your 4-day work week is sustainable - and that you actually get to take that day off!





3-Day Work Week

The 3-day work week is pretty sweet, and can be quite sustainable for therapists. What's great about this option is that you can have your administrative and catch-all day AND still have a day off. As I mentioned on the 4-day work week page, one of your days off tends to be taken over by life. The 3-day work week takes this into account so that you can truly have a day off each week.

The most popular ways to implement the 3-day work week are as follows:

- Work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday - with Tuesday and Thursday off. This is a pretty sweet schedule because you never work more than 1 day in a row!
- Work Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday - with Thursday and Friday off. This provides you with the ultimate 4-day weekend every week!
- Work Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday - with Wednesday and Friday off. Personally this is my favorite option for the 3-day work week since my favorite days to take off are Wednesday and Friday.

IMPORTANT NOTE: I'll echo what I said about the 4-day work week here as well. You don't want to try to cram 5 days worth of clients into 3 days in order to have 2 days off. Ensure that you are still seeing a sustainable number of clients per day - no matter how many days you work.





2-Day Work Week

The 2-day work week is popular among therapists who have other priorities, but still want to remain active with clients. Other priorities may include spending time at home with young children, having another side business that requires your attention, or moving into retirement. Therapists may also be limited to a fewer number of days per week because of chronic illness, office space constraints, or they may not have the bandwidth to be full-time therapists.

Whatever the reason, the 2-day work week gives space for these other priorities and constraints.





Week On, Week Off

Having one week on then one week off is a favorite schedule for some therapists. No matter how difficult your week is, you always have a week to recuperate (note that this is not permission to burn the candle at both ends during your week on - you still need balance).

If you are a therapist who works with clients in crisis (where weekly - or more frequent - sessions are needed), this may not be an option for you. However, the majority of clients are able to attend sessions every other week with no problem.

If you want to try this out, but are a little concerned that your clients may need something constructive to do during their week off, you can collect a library of helpful resources and provide one helpful resource or activity to your clients that they can read/practice/complete during their week off. You can either introduce the resource to your clients at the end of their session, or have a resources library on your website that clients can visit during their week off.

Having a full week off from your business, no matter what you do during your time off can be refreshing, relaxing, and energizing. I'll talk more about the benefits of having a full week off from work in the next section.





One Week Off Per Month

Having 1 week off per month is a very appealing schedule. You can use your week off in many different ways.

- You can schedule personal appointments during your week off so they don't interfere with your work schedule.
- You can use it as a week to work 'on' your business instead of 'in' your business.
- You can use your week off to totally disconnect and recharge.
- You can do a combination of the above. For example: set aside two days for working 'on' your business, set aside one day for miscellaneous appointments and other life stuff, have a day for a hobby or project, and have a true day off.

Oftentimes, therapists will combine this schedule with the 4-day work week for optimum balance. Having 1 week off each month may not provide the balance that you are looking for if you are burning the candle at both ends the other 3 weeks of the month.

As an added bonus you will already have vacation time built into your schedule every month, so all that's left to do is decide which month(s) you are going to use for your vacation(s).





Bonus Section

Working 'On' Your Business

You may be curious about what I mean by working 'on' your business. Do you have big dreams for your business that you seem to never have time to explore - and setting aside an hour here and there isn't working? When working on big picture items you need a minimum of a 4-hour block in order to truly make the most of your time and see some forward momentum and progress. This is why the week off can be so impactful for your business. During my first monthly week off for my business I was able to finish up and launch a course that I had been working on for over a year! Try it out - you won't be disappointed.





Bonus Section

Clients Per Day

Now that you've explored the different schedule options, it's important to think about what a sustainable number of clients per day would be for the schedule you have chosen. This will vary drastically between therapists, as we are all wired differently and have different capacities for the work that we do. Some of us are energized from our sessions with clients, while others are drained - and, it's likely a mix of both.

For those of us who are Highly Sensitive Therapists, our client loads tend to be much lower. Only you know your optimal number of clients per day. When getting to this number do your best to quieten the scarcity mindset that tends to rear its ugly head and fills you with thoughts such as:

- You may have a full caseload this week, but what if you lose half of your clients next week?

While this certainly isn't impossible, we've got to move away from making fear-based decisions. When not kept in check they lead to burnout, and potential ethical considerations when our own self-neglect negatively impacts our work with clients.





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Thanks for downloading the 5 Schedule Templates to Prevent Therapist Burnout guide! I hope that you find the sample schedules helpful in creating more balance in your practice (and your life) so that you can continue to support others for years to come.

If you would like additional support on your business journey, please reach out.

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