

# HOLDING THE WORK ALONE

*A reflective workbook for  
Occupational Therapists in  
independent practice*



# Welcome!

Thank you for downloading this workbook.

Independent practice is often spoken about in terms of freedom, flexibility and autonomy. And whilst those things can absolutely be true, they are rarely the whole story.

Alongside the opportunities can come responsibility, uncertainty, visibility, self-doubt, isolation, and the feeling that you should somehow be carrying all of it well.

Over the years, through my own journey in independent practice, conversations with colleagues, supervision work, and supporting other Occupational Therapists, I have become increasingly aware that many of us carry far more than we realise.

Not just clinical work.

- But decisions.
- Responsibility.
- Professional identity.
- Questions about legitimacy.
- The emotional weight of sitting with complexity.

**And often, we carry much of it alone.**

This workbook is not designed to provide answers or tell you what to do.

Instead, it offers an opportunity to pause, reflect and become curious about what you might currently be carrying, how you respond when the weight shows up, and what might help you carry it differently.

You may find that confidence is part of the picture.

You may also discover that what feels like a confidence problem is actually a need for greater support, connection, structure, reflection, or permission to do things differently.

There are no right or wrong answers.

Just an invitation to notice.

I hope you find it helpful.

*Lucinda*



# About Me

Lumina Springs & emOTive therapy

## LUCINDA POLLARD

My name is Lucinda Pollard and I am a Mental Health Occupational Therapist, EMDR Practitioner, supervisor, trainer and the founder of emOTive Therapy and Lumina Springs.

I have worked within mental health services for over twenty years and now work independently, providing therapy, supervision, training and support to individuals and Occupational Therapists.

My work is informed by Occupational Therapy, Occupational Science, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), trauma-informed practice and psychotherapeutic approaches. Across all of these perspectives sits a shared belief that people make sense within the context of their lives, relationships, environments, values and occupations.

The ideas within this workbook grew from my conference presentation and workshop, Holding the Work Alone: Confidence and Doubt in Independent OT Practice, which explores the emotional, professional and occupational realities of working independently.

Wherever you are in your independent practice journey, whether you're considering taking the leap, newly self-employed, or many years into running your own service, I hope this workbook offers a useful space to pause, reflect and reconnect with what matters.

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The idea of independent practice often begins as a quiet whisper. It might be born from a desire for greater clinical freedom, a need for better work-life balance, or a growing frustration with the constraints of your current system.

But stepping out on your own also comes with uncertainty, vulnerability, and the heavy feeling that you need to have it all figured out before you even begin.

This workbook isn't designed to tell you whether you should or shouldn't make the leap. Instead, it offers a space to pause and explore:

- What is drawing you toward independent practice?
- What fears are holding you back?
- What matters enough that you are considering this?
- What support might you need to take the first step?

Questions?

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# PART ONE: THE PUSH AND THE PULL

Usually, the desire to transition into private practice is a mixture of things pushing you away from your current role, and things pulling you toward a new way of working.

Looking at the list below, place a tick next to anything that currently resonates.

## THE PUSH (LEAVING BEHIND)

- I feel restricted by the systems or funding in my current role.
- I am stretched too thin and my workload feels unsustainable.
- I feel disconnected from the reasons I became an OT.
- I am tired of workplace politics and heavy bureaucracy.
- I feel unable to provide the level of person-centered care I want to.

## THE PULL (MOVING TOWARDS)

- I want autonomy over my diary and my time.
- I want the freedom to work with clients in a more creative, holistic way.
- I want to choose the clinical specialisms I focus on.
- I want a better balance between my work and my personal life.
- I want my income to reflect the value of the work I do.

Is your desire for independent practice currently driven more by the push of your current situation, or the pull of a new one?

What surprised you?

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# PART TWO: WHAT FEELS HEAVY BEFORE YOU EVEN START?

When you think about making the leap, what worries weigh on your mind? Tick any that apply.

## CLINICAL CONFIDENCE & IDENTITY

- I worry about practicing without a team immediately down the hall.
- I question whether my clinical skills are "specialist" enough.
- I fear making a mistake when the ultimate responsibility is mine alone.
- I worry I will suffer from imposter syndrome.

## BUSINESS & ADMIN

- The thought of marketing myself makes me feel uncomfortable.
- I feel overwhelmed by the legal, insurance, and tax requirements.
- I don't know how to price my services or ask people for money.
- I worry I lack the "business mindset" needed to succeed.



## SECURITY & SUSTAINABILITY

- I am afraid of the financial unpredictability.
- I worry I won't get enough referrals to sustain myself.
- I fear that the boundary between "work" and "home" will blur.
- I worry about missing out on sick pay, holiday pay, or a steady pension.

## PAUSE & NOTICE

Which category of worries feels the heaviest to you right now?

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# PART THREE: WHEN THE "WHAT IFS" SHOW UP

When the uncertainty of starting an independent practice feels overwhelming, what do you notice yourself doing? Tick any that apply.

- Endlessly researching business structures without taking action
- Waiting until I feel "100% ready" or "expert enough"
- Comparing my Chapter 1 to someone else's Chapter 20 on social media
- Seeking permission or validation from others
- Procrastinating on the practical steps (like registering a name or buying insurance)
- Signing up for just one more clinical course before I start
- Telling myself "now isn't the right time"
- Avoiding talking about my plans out loud
- Something else:

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## PAUSE & NOTICE

What are these responses trying to protect you from?

Are they keeping you safe, or are they keeping you stuck?

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# PART FOUR: WHAT MATTERS ENOUGH TO TAKE THE LEAP?

Despite the fears, the admin, and the uncertainty... Why are you still thinking about doing this?

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When you picture your ideal week as an independent practitioner, what does it look like?

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If you knew you could not fail, what kind of occupational therapy business would you be providing?

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# PART FIVE: THE OCCUPATIONS YOU WANT TO PROTECT

Often, we seek independent practice to reclaim our own occupational balance. What personal occupations, roles, or routines are you hoping to protect—or gain—by changing how you work?

- School runs
- Hobbies
- Uninterrupted lunch breaks
- Creative pursuits
- Time for your own health
- Rest and recovery
- Slow mornings
- Something else:

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## PAUSE & NOTICE

Which of these matter most to you?

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How might independent practice help you participate in these more fully?

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# PART SIX: PREPARING THE GROUND

Many OTs assume the answer to their hesitation is: "I just need to know more about business first," or "I need more clinical experience."

Sometimes that is true. Often, however, the need sits somewhere else. What else might you need?

Tick any that feel true for you right now:

- A mentor to demystify the process
- A peer network of other independent OTs
- Permission to start small (e.g., as a side hustle)
- A clear boundary around what you won't do
- Greater self-compassion for being a beginner
- Trust in your foundational clinical reasoning
- Something else:

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# PART SEVEN: BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Looking back over everything you've written...

What is the biggest barrier standing between you and independent practice right now?

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What support or structure would help you navigate that barrier?

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What is one small, manageable step you could take this month to explore this further? e.g., reaching out to an independent OT, joining a network, or writing a draft business vision (your why document).

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# A Final Thought!

You do not need to be a business expert to start. You do not need to have a perfect website, a packed caseload, or an absence of fear.

The question is not always: "How do I become completely fearless about independent practice?"

Sometimes it is: "How can I gather enough support, clarity, and courage to take the very first step?"

Because building a practice is not about leaping perfectly into the unknown. It is about laying one brick at a time, and trusting that you have the skills to figure it out as you go.

# Thank You!

If you've reached this point, thank you for taking the time to pause and reflect.

Independent practice can be rewarding, meaningful, creative and deeply fulfilling.

It can also be challenging, exposing, uncertain and, at times, surprisingly lonely.

One of the things I have learnt over the years is that many of the struggles independent Occupational Therapists experience are not necessarily signs that something is wrong.

Often they are signs that we are carrying a lot.

- Responsibility.
- Decisions.
- Visibility.
- Professional identity.
- The emotional weight of holding complex work.

And perhaps one of the most important reminders is this:

**You were never meant to carry it all alone.**

Whether your next step is:

- strengthening your support network,
- revisiting your boundaries,
- creating better systems,
- making space for reflection,
- reconnecting with your OT identity,
- or simply recognising that what you're experiencing is understandable,

I hope this workbook has helped you pause long enough to notice what you are carrying and what might help you carry it differently.

*Thank You!*



# If You'd Like To Explore This Further

The ideas within this workbook are explored in more depth in my workshop:

## **Holding the Work Alone:**

*Confidence and Doubt in Independent OT Practice*

Together we'll explore:

- Why independent practice can feel emotionally heavy
- Confidence, self-doubt and professional identity
- The hidden impact of visibility and responsibility
- What happens when OT roles become narrowed by services
- Why the problem isn't always confidence
- Practical ways to reduce the weight of holding the work alone
- Reflective tools and structures that support sustainable practice

For details about upcoming live workshops, on-demand training, supervision, resources and events, please visit:

[BOOK NOW](#)



PROMO CODE

**HTWAOFFER26**

# Stay Connected!

You can find me at:

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# Thank You!