



Nuts & Bolts of How to Tell Clients About Pregnancy/Maternity Leave

I told my clients at about 12 weeks. I basically had to because my body was very clearly pregnant looking. I work with clients with eating disorders. They know how my body looks more than I know how my body looks; it's often a part of the disorder.

Waiting until you're past the most high risk times for miscarriage is probably best. Around that 12 week mark is kind of the go-to for announcements in general. Making sure you give at least two month's notice so your client can prepare for your departure is probably helpful as well. If you're obviously crazy pregnant looking at that point, don't just let that elephant hang out in the room, tell your clients.

Another thing to consider is how long- or short-term your typical clients are. Mine are pretty long-term. I wanted to give them plenty of time to process what my absence would mean, get them comfortable with a transition plan, and if possible finish up any work before my leave. So, I told my clients early on. **I had them sign a limited Releases of Information** for my friend, Allison, in case I went into a quick dramatic labor before my official maternity leave started. I wrote an email for Allison to send them, provided the contact info my clients preferred, and gave her access to my schedule (which wasn't linked to my records) so she would know who to get in touch with first.

I stopped taking new clients somewhere around the 6 month mark. I told every potential client who inquired that I was pregnant from 12 weeks on. Many people expect therapy to be a short process so if a slot opened up and a potential client was ok with me leaving for 3 months, I would take him/her on.

As for referrals: **I got my caseload, and I got my handy dandy networking spreadsheet, and I played polyamorous matchmaker.** I found 3 clinicians for each client. I begged a couple clinicians to make room for specific clients because I knew that was who they needed to go to. Many of my clients were in a place that they weren't going to need therapy while I was gone, but I gave them referrals anyway since a lot can happen in 3 months. I was very clear and consistent with the message to both my clients and these clinicians that if the fit was good between them and the client preferred to stay with them, I was totally fine with that. I told my clients that I wouldn't take it personally and that I would actually be proud of them for not sacrificing their well-being by trying to save my feelings. I meant it, too. Two clients chose to stay with the clinicians I referred them to and I was grateful that they were doing great work with clinician I knew were awesome. Abundance, baby.

The Abundance Party includes scripts/templates for the following:

- **Maternity ROI**
- **Short, Sweet Maternity Email from Other Clinician** (aka my friend, Allison, in this example)
- **I'm in Labor Email:** I wrote an email as well because if I did go into labor before my official maternity leave, I knew it was likely that I could at least send an email. I had a separate document with everyone's email addresses so I could BCC them. I considered putting it on the bottom of the document my email was on, but decided not to just in case I accidentally hit send, like a contraction made me or something.
- **Returning from Maternity Leave Email**