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## Catherine Apicella, PT, PYT, PRPC

I had known I wanted to enter the medical field for as long as I can remember, but I decided on pursuing physical therapy in college when I took anatomy and physiology. I was fascinated by the human body, and I realized that I wanted to teach people how to get to know their own bodies better and how to feel better through movement.

My first job as a physical therapist was in an elementary school. I worked in pediatrics for several years, then transitioned to acute care after moving from New Jersey to North Carolina. I stepped away from full-time employment for 8 years following the birth of my first child, during which time I was introduced to the field of pelvic health by a former colleague. She had encouraged me to take the introductory training, thinking that it would align well with my treatment philosophy and point of view. She knew me well, because she was right—I was hooked!

During this time, I was also pursuing certification in Medical Therapeutic Yoga through Ginger Garner at Living Well Institute, and, as I began incorporating breathwork, meditation, and mindful movement into my daily life, they informed my treatment approach. In addition, I was fortunate to receive mentoring in the Feldenkrais Method, a movement-based therapy that encourages curiosity and friendliness toward the body.

My first job in pelvic health was in a large hospital system in North Carolina. I was there for 6 months before we moved to Pennsylvania for my husband's job. Once here, I worked at an outpatient orthopedic clinic where I specialized in pelvic health as I honed my skills in manual treatments and delegating to exercise technicians.

While I loved my coworkers and learned a tremendous amount during my time in the clinic, I knew that something was missing. For some time, I had felt like a square peg in a round hole, trying to fit my treatment philosophy into someone else's mold and feeling inadequate because I couldn't. I loved teaching and empowering my patients, but I wanted more freedom to do it in a way that felt authentic to me. Breathe and Blossom is the incarnation of my vision for pelvic health therapy.

To provide some background, pelvic health therapy is a specialty within physical (and occupational) therapy that addresses dysfunction related to the pelvic floor muscles, a sling of muscles involved in urination, defecation, childbirth, and sexual function. Common conditions addressed through pelvic floor therapy include incontinence, overactive bladder, pelvic organ prolapse, constipation, pelvic pain, painful intercourse, pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain, low back and hip pain, diastasis rectus abdominis, and coccyx pain; but this is by no means an exhaustive list.

As owner of Breathe and Blossom, I want to make pelvic floor physical therapy an accessible, non-threatening, and enjoyable experience. I do this by providing services in the privacy and comfort of my



clients' homes, using an individualized treatment approach with an emphasis on befriending the body. We cannot control what we are not aware of, and most of us are not aware of how our bodies function. When we become aware, we become empowered.

To begin the process, I offer a discovery call, which gives prospective clients and myself the chance to get to know each other and to determine whether working together would be beneficial. If this goes well, we schedule the evaluation, which is 90 minutes long in order to give me enough time to take a thorough history and perform a comprehensive physical examination. At the end of the evaluation, we discuss my recommendations for treatment frequency, and away we go!

As part of my services, I provide a written summary of every session, which includes a home exercise program. For visual and auditory learners, I provide access to an app that contains exercise videos. I also provide email or text access between sessions to enable my clients to check in with me with any questions or concerns.

While I am thrilled to start this chapter as an entrepreneur, had you asked me if I wanted to own my own business a few years ago, I would have laughed in your face. The thought of opening up my own practice never crossed my mind, until I met my friend Crystal. She has been my biggest cheerleader from the start, but I continued to lack the confidence to strike out on my own, until I found my why—Breathe and Blossom Together.

Breathe and Blossom Together is a nonprofit organization that Crystal and I founded. Our mission is to connect women in at-risk communities with social and health/wellness services for little to no cost. In order to thrive mentally and emotionally, it is vital to feel well physically. That's why we are committed to helping women receive services that might otherwise be difficult to afford in order to help them on a path to wellness.

As part of my commitment to this organization, I have resolved to donate a percentage of my profits from Breathe and Blossom to Breathe and Blossom Together. In this way, clients who enlist my services will be helping to further the mission of Breathe and Blossom Together, and I could not be more excited about it.

If you think you or someone you know might benefit from pelvic floor physical therapy, if you have interest in the profession itself, or if you would simply just like to say hi, I would love to hear from you! Feel free to reach out to me at [catherine@breathe-blossom.com](mailto:catherine@breathe-blossom.com) and join me on my journey!



Breathe & Blossom

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