

5 minutes with...Geraldine Headley

[Jacqui Fahey](#) | Educator

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5 minutes with Geraldine Headley; *Adv. Dip Naturopathy, BHSc (Comp Med), PostGradDip Hypnotherapy, Registered Nurse*

What is your background and what led you to studying naturopathy?

This might sound a bit odd – but as a child I loved the nurse’s uniform and so I trained as a nurse! When I had children, I couldn’t continue with the night shift, weekends etc. and so I decided to study massage instead. However, when I got to my local college, they told me that they were not running the massage course but they did have *another* class which was very popular with other nurses! It was a herbal medicine class. I loved it! For me, there was no illness or life altering experience with Naturopathy that converted me, it was just where I ended up!

I completed three advanced diplomas across Naturopathy, Nutrition and Western Herbal Medicine. As I entered clinical practice, I found providing preventative care and ongoing support to my clients incredibly fulfilling. As a nurse, you might save a life in the acute sense and then never see your client again! Fostering long term relationships with my naturopathic clients, sometimes from preconception through to young adulthood is extremely rewarding for me! As my career progressed, I upgraded my qualification to a Bachelor of Health Science (Comp Med) at Charles Sturt University.

What led you to mentoring and running a private Facebook group?

Looking back, I was in a mentoring role long before I realised that I was a mentor! Sharing knowledge comes naturally to me and with my background in nursing I have always been one to

answer questions and provide support to others. One evening on retreat in Bali, I was fielding clinical questions from practitioner's and it just clicked! I had been wanting to shake things up in my business and I realised that I could facilitate clinical discussions and create a space for others to bounce ideas off each other as a mentor. So now I run group mentoring sessions for graduates, who are mainly in their first three to five years of practice, as well as one-to-one mentoring for people in all stages of their practice journey.

Prior to this I had already been running Strictly Practitioners which is a Facebook group specific to supporting natural medicine practitioners in their clinical journey. After Bali, I designed a new group called Strictly Education and Support which provides weekly education to naturopaths, nutritionists and herbalists so that they could have their questions answered on an ongoing basis.

What are some of the main points you share with students and graduates that are so vital for clinical practice?

As a mentor I believe that my role is to bridge the experience gap between supervised student clinic and clinical practice. The nature of supervised student clinic means that there is high turnover of both clients and students, which results in many graduates lacking skills in providing ongoing, long term client care.

I like to focus on sharing tools that enable graduates to feel confident in their clinical decision making. This means encouraging practitioners to break down the case, to see the different angles and simplify complex health issues into digestible parts!

Some new practitioners may overcomplicate cases and get stuck in research. So, to encompass this within one main point? Less is more! Take it back to basics. Get the nutrition right. You don't need to create a prescription that is a mile long, you can send them away with the dietary changes first. This is still a naturopathic prescription. I find that helping my mentees take it back to the beginning with the old naturopathic principles helps to relieve stress and reduce burnout in clinical practice.

Of course, you can't have a booming clinical practice without clients and so I make it a priority to mentor graduates on the business and marketing aspect of practice as well as the treatment side.

Did you have a mentor during your time as a student and or practitioner? If so, what helped you?

As a nurse, you are automatically mentored. In that field, I was mentored and a mentor to others by default! I knew from nursing that I needed to have a mentor on the naturopathic path and so I was mentored by one of my former lecturers.

I would drive an hour each way, with my paper files in hand and we would work through the trickier cases together. This continued for a couple of years after I graduated until I really found my feet.

Having a mentor meant that I had a second brain; it helped me to see cases from another perspective. It also helped to feel reassured that I was on the right track and supported with other



options and ideas for treatment avenues that I hadn't thought of! This greatly improved my confidence with my clients which in turn improved their results. The clinical pearls gained in mentorship are often applied across hundreds of cases and so many of my clients, decades later, have benefited from my receiving that initial mentoring.

Thank you Geraldine for sharing about your journey in working within the mentoring space.

You can learn more about Geraldine at [Mentoring with Geraldine.](#)