

“Collaborating with other CAM professionals is an absolute must”

How long did it take for you to qualify?

5 years.

Where do you practise?

I practice with personal training and Pilates one-to-one clients at The St Pancras Hotel, and at a few other London studios as well as clients' homes. My corporate wellness and video development workshops take place in businesses offices, as well as their offsite event locations.

I also practise online to a wider world audience through interactive health and fitness programmes, as well as wellness mastermind groups to support individuals in a group setting.

What's your main therapy/modality and why?

I love variety, and as you can see I work in different settings within health and fitness, but I would say my main therapy or modality now which overlays all of these is teaching and guiding healthy lifestyles.

Why did you decide to become a practitioner?

I have always loved moving, so becoming a PE teacher at the start of my career plus personal training back in the '90s to help individuals become fit and healthy was logical. This is what I was meant to do ever since learning to ice skate in Canada at the age of 3!

How long have you been in practice?

24 years.

Who or what has been the main influence/inspiration on your practice?

In university, along with degrees I took an extra-curricular certification called Athletic Therapy, where we worked with sports teams during matches, in a rehab clinic setting and also took extra anatomy, modalities and massage classes. My mentor and professor Dr Glen Bergeron was a supportive, driving force in my early career. He was a fine example of having passion for a profession. I loved his anecdotal teachings in anatomy class and the cadaver labs. He had a way of explaining the human body as he



demonstrated rehab techniques on patients that made learning compelling. We still check in with each other now and then.

What conditions or types of client do you see most of?

People with low energy, stress or back injuries.

What do you find the easiest to work with?

I have always been a natural at assessing, observing and teaching movement patterns, whether this is in weight training, Pilates or general movement. This was definitely born out of my love of anatomy and biomechanics classes at uni. It really floats my boat when a client and I collaborate on their exercises and they have an “Aha!” moment on how they can move. Teaching and guiding have always come easily to me, whether I am with one person or guiding a large group.

What is your favourite type of client?

I love clients who have taken an interest in how their bodies

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work as well as the mind-body connection. I also love those who take responsibility for themselves by choosing daily practices that help them feel healthy.

What is the most challenging type of symptom/illness/problem that you get presented with?

There are two. I find an expression of lack of time by my one-to-one or corporate clients in London my biggest challenge. There is always something that comes higher on people's priority list than taking care of themselves. The beauty of working with clients every week or sending out





regular social media messages is that I can make an impact by continually reminding them to implement their new healthy practices until they become habits. People do have choices in life, but need to be ready and willing to change.

The second challenging issues are adrenal fatigue and chronic stress.

Clients may understand their adrenal fatigue diagnosis or know they are chronically stressed, but some want to jump back into intense exercise or a heavy workload too soon. I personally understand the need to have a measured and staged approach to recovery, as I ended up in hospital in 2010 with viral meningitis. After having this experience I see these three issues as having similar recovery protocols. It is my job to continue informing and educating these clients on the importance of a mindful, balanced and planned approach to living.

What one thing is absolutely essential to you in your practice?

Collaborating with complementary professionals is an absolute must!

None of us can be a jack of all trades, it is exhausting. As much as I love nutrition, as an example, I am not a qualified nutritional therapist, so I have developed a strong, trustworthy list of specialist nutritionists I can call upon to support me with clients. I am a firm believer in working with integrity and professionalism, so having certified professionals in areas where I am not qualified to work is very important to me and my clients.



Do you enhance your business with any projects outside of your clinic?

Oh yes! There are so many people in the world to share inspiration and information with. I write for the *Huffington Post UK*, *Psychologies Magazine* – Life Labs blog, my own blog and my current favourite *Passport* – Monarch Airlines’ in-flight magazine – where I have a regular “Holiday Fitness” column. I am also on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (@positivelyslim) daily, sharing tips, tools, inspiration and videos on how to move and nurture our bodies.

The past two years I have been collaborating with corporations to make bespoke employee health and fitness videos that are then on tap on company intranet systems. This way people can use the workouts and tips when convenient for them. These are also supported by

wellness workshops in-house. I love the process of working with the HR teams to discover what employees really want and need and then tailoring the programmes from there.

I volunteer every year to organise a community summer street party on our estate in south London to bring the residents together. I integrate games and general play to get the children moving out in the sunshine. I was quite shocked when last year I won a Mayor of London Volunteer award for these efforts.

Which CAM book has helped or inspired you most?

I have three that really got me! *Anatomy Trains*, by Thomas Myers. *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle: this one came at the right time in my life to really start being in the moment and mindful of my body at work and in workouts.

And a recent one – *Wholesome Nutrition for You*, by Ian Craig and Rachel Jesson. I love the way the authors have made this an accessible read for people who aren’t nutritionists.

Why do you do what you do?

I do what I do because human beings are meant to move. I know our bodies feel better when we are active, and I feel we all have a capacity somewhere in us for self-care. Helping my clients and readers to discover this pleases me greatly.

If money, time and effort were no object, what one thing would you change about your practice or complementary and alternative medicine in general?

I would focus on the online side of my business more, because it allows me to inspire and guide more people than I can on my



own in London. Selfishly this would allow me to spend a bit more time with my family in Canada each year, as I can be online with people from anywhere.

What piece of advice would you give to newly-qualified CAM practitioners who are just setting up a business?

Start meeting and collaborating with other complementary professionals who can round out and bring a depth of value to your clients' experience. Find other practitioners in your area to share ideas, new research and business tips with. When you work for yourself these connections are real assets and take away feelings of isolation.

And finally, plan your weeks: prepare like an elite athlete! Have a timed structure that includes working with clients, writing up their programmes, marketing and social media, accounts/admin, networking/growing professional relationships, reading (add in any other important weekly tasks for you) and, most importantly, time for your own self-care.

I have seen so many health professionals spinning their wheels running the basics of their business, taking care of everyone else and forgetting about themselves and then burning out. My list may sound like a lot, but the devil is in the detail of planning your weeks so

you feel great, offer an excellent service and your business grows.

Learn about and embrace new technologies. Platforms such as Skype and Zoom can really open up your practice to clients who may not be in your immediate location, and the overheads are lower than being in a physical space. And of course social media. It is such a strong way to build relationships with clients and colleagues... and it is free!"

What is the biggest challenge you face as a practitioner?

Definitely keeping up on the latest research! Every week something new comes out in health, fitness and nutrition. Obviously these results are important, though I do believe a blended approach to client care based on their individuality, research and practitioner experience is essential.

Working in isolation can sometimes be tough, but I now have a complementary professional who I check in with every Monday on our planned tasks. We also bounce business and marketing ideas off each other via Skype throughout the week.

Getting clients, well that is tricky for everyone! My Dad used to say, "It is all about who you know." I never used to like it when he said that, but he was right! Genuine relationship building is important for enjoyment and growth in your business. ☺

Complementary skills: this is how it works...



Ian Craig, BSc, MSc, CSCS, editor *Functional Sports Nutrition*

"Based on years of close client interaction, Charlene has an extremely evolved approach to physical movement, stress management and the lifestyle approaches that will ultimately

bring balance to an individual's life. To broaden her scope of practice, she networks with other professionals in a very respectful way, showing understanding of where her contributions end and theirs begin.

"I have worked alongside Charlene for 15 years now, initially as a fellow personal trainer, but latterly as a nutritional therapist who supports her and her clients when she needs a more specialised approach. It's clear that her clients benefit from an extremely integrative movement, health and lifestyle approach."

• www.iancraig.net.



Charlotte Stirling-Reed, BSc (Hons), MSc, RNutr (Public Health)

"I first worked with Charlene on a project for a company called Simply Great, alongside Victoria Pendleton and Dr Christian Jessen. This was one of my first big projects as a freelance

nutrition consultant with my company SR Nutrition, and Charlene was so great to work with. She was very warm and welcoming and really helped to put me at ease straight away. I was even lucky enough to get some top tips off of her and still to this day I try and include more stretch/Pilates into my exercise routine due to recommendations she gave me.

Since Charlene and I worked together, we have kept in touch in social media and I love watching Charlene inspire others and seeing how well she's doing in her work. She's a true role model and inspiration to many!"

• www.srnutrition.co.uk.



Angelique Panagos, Dip ION, AFMCP™-UK graduate

"I really enjoy collaborating with Charlene - it's a totally natural, organic process, and her passion for creating a healthy lifestyle is infectious! There is strength in numbers, and creating a ripple effect in sharing the same message of healthy living has proven to be valuable to both of us in spreading our message further.

We draw on each other's strengths to share accessible and valuable tips, tools and recommendations with our clients and social media followings. All of this is done with a common ethos; to help people reach their health and wellness goals. One practitioner cannot always cover every area that a client needs help with, so recommending people we trust helps the client make the best decisions for their own health.

We collaborate in many ways including social media post sharing, interviews on "Charlene's Wellness Bites" (which have proven to be really popular), and informing our clients and followers of each other's services in our newsletters."

• <https://angeliquepanagos.com>.



Charlotte Watts, Nutritional Therapist, Senior Yoga Teacher and 2012 winner of the CAM Award for Outstanding Practice

"I have worked with Charlene in many capacities since we met teaching on a retreat together in 2007. I have always turned to her first for any fitness advice for my clients and writing, including as the fitness consultant for my last book *The De-Stress Effect*. Her researched, considered and mindful approach to exercise and training is always intelligent, targeted and effective without burning out or overtraining."

• www.charlottewattshealth.com.



The CAM Awards are hugely successful, but we're aware they only reward and recognise a handful of practitioners and clinics each year. Meanwhile, we know that CAM practitioners are quietly getting on with changing people's lives, every day - and we want to celebrate and share the inspiration. So we've re-vamped our popular In Practice series. It is coordinated by regular CAM contributor Rebecca Smith, who runs a successful practice of her own, established 20 years ago. Contact her direct to be part of the feature: rebecca@newportcomplementaryhealthclinic.co.uk, and follow her on Twitter: @NCHHealthClinic.