



HOW TO KEEP LEARNING IN DIETETICS

The intent of this document is to help shed light on the constant growth and development we, as dietitians, must undertake.

Outside of formalised professional development, practitioners must continue learning and developing their skills in order to provide the best treatment and care of their clients as possible. So, we hope that this resource creates a roadmap for your future learning.

DECIDING WHICH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATH IS FOR YOU

As part of our accreditation requirements as dietitians, we must complete a minimum of thirty hours of professional development per year and report it to [Dietitians Australia](#) through the APD program.

So you have no choice in the matter, you need to keep learning (and most of us love that!). However, a more common concern that we are asked is, “what professional development is most valuable?”.

While your professional development is a completely individual choice and is heavily dependent on your own goals, here are our top tips for guiding that decision.

In order of importance, choose professional development courses that:

1. Are focussed and specific to areas that you are currently working
2. Help you improve your counselling, communication, and motivation techniques
3. Are focussed and specific to areas that you want to work in
4. Give you an understanding of a medical field outside of dietetics and nutrition
5. Delve into different aspects or present different perspectives on the information you already know (for example – purchasing an alternative medicine textbook so that you can level with clients that present those ideas during consults)
6. Is something you have not done before, that reignites your interest in dietetics!

It is really important to focus on what you are currently working in first, get great at that. Then and only then should you start to focus on other aspects of your development. Remember to be patient, life is long, there will be opportunities in the future but what you do today, the mark you leave today, will help you achieve things in the future.

HOW TO TURN DAILY PRACTICE INTO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Outside of professional development requirements, the dietitians that truly succeed are the ones that are able to use their initiative in day to day practice to learn more. As a new grad, you may feel like you are shooting in the dark with what to learn and where to go next... This is where Dietitian Life come in.

Our clinical mastermind, Peta, has around eleven years of experience as an Accredited Practising Dietitian treating complex conditions. In that time, she has developed her own step by step method for learning through daily practice and it is this exact method that has helped train her brain for clinical success.

The following breakdown is a sure-fire method for any new grads or dietitians who want to push themselves further, be more curious and learn every single day.



PETA'S STEP BY STEP LEARNING METHOD

1. **LISTEN.** Actively listen. Be interested in what your clients have to say. Write notes down as you go if you need to and try and soak up as much of what your client's say (and don't say) from the get-go. Too often do we see dietitians miss the small nuances of a client's communication – tone, pitch, words used, body language and more. You need to see it all to really listen. This takes skill.
2. **CALM DOWN.** Stop, take a second, breathe it in and calm yourself down. The worst thing you can do in these situations is start freaking out that you don't know enough. You need to be able to think in a complex manner, and you will not be able to do that in a stressed state of mind.
3. **ASK CURIOUS QUESTIONS.** Bring in bits of knowledge from what the client is saying and send questions back their way. For example, "I've noticed that you're saying you're getting regular reflux symptoms... Have you been getting these for long? Were these problems there before? Is it more painful than the previous symptom?"
4. **IDENTIFY WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW.** If you're not completely knowledgeable on the client's symptoms, that's okay. Explain and provide an overview of what you can do, and what you can do NOW to try and minimise or prevent negative symptoms.
5. **OWN IT.** Own the fact that you don't know what something is, or that there may not be a life-long fix for a problem. Be upfront and honest about the fact that you are going to do further research or that the client may need to undergo further testing to find the root of the issue.
6. **CONTINUE THINKING.** After the consult, keep thinking about the problem in the background while you are treating the symptoms in the foreground. Identify what you do and don't know, and what you might need to do further research into.
7. **TALK THROUGH CHALLENGES.** Be able to talk through these challenges with someone who is more practised at the skill. Maybe they are a better clinician in that particular area, or maybe they are simply a more organised, more knowledgeable mentor. If you don't have a mentor or a support person to go to, remember that Dietitian Life's inbox is always open, and we are here to help you.
8. **TEST THE THEORY.** Have the client come back and test out your theories. Make sure your last recommendation has actually improved their problem and either change or add further modifications to the diet.

Complete these eight steps every single time you are faced with a condition you are not familiar with and over time, your clinical knowledge and understanding of complex clients will improve dramatically. Remember, if you have any further questions or want to reach out for support, you can contact us at any time of the day or night.

WHERE TO FIND DIETITIAN LIFE

- Dietitian Life Instagram – [@dietitian.life](https://www.instagram.com/dietitian.life)
- Dietitian Life Facebook – [Dietitian Life](https://www.facebook.com/dietitian.life)
- Dietitian Life Podcast – [Apple Music](https://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts?id=1444444444) or [Spotify](https://www.spotify.com/au/podcast/1444444444)
- Dietitian Life LinkedIn – [Dietitian Life](https://www.linkedin.com/company/dietitian-life)
- Dietitian Life TikTok – [dietitian.life](https://www.tiktok.com/@dietitian.life)
- Dietitian Life YouTube – [Dietitian Life](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1234567890)
- Dietitian Life Website – www.dietitianlife.com.au
- Peta Cullis LinkedIn – [Peta Cullis](https://www.linkedin.com/in/peta-cullis)
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