

Unconventional Dietetics Practice—Alexia Lewis



Alexia Lewis, MS, RD, LD/N

How did you become interested in nutrition?

My interest in nutrition goes back to when I was an overweight young adult who looked to food and exercise to lose 50 pounds. I came to nutrition as a career, however, after surviving a heart attack in 2007. This experience made me look at my health habits and the mark I would leave on the world. I decided to leave my career to become a dietitian. I think my reason for making this change was partially to help others and partially to keep myself honest about my health.

I know you like to stay busy with a lot of jobs, tell me what positions you hold.

I have three jobs! I am a half-time instructor at the University of North Florida (UNF). I work part-time in the UNF Department of Health Promotion as the wellness dietitian where I do one-on-one counseling, lead group sessions, give cooking demonstrations and educational work-

shops, mentor nutrition students, and promote a healthy community. I am also writing a continuing education course on Celiac Disease.

What other activities are you involved in?

I am the president of the Jacksonville Dietetic Association. I am working on my own Web site (alexialewisrd.com) and doing more public speaking. I strive to promote heart-health and on "Go Red for Women" day I spoke to 100 people about my experience with heart disease. I write and have been published in 904 Fitness and on LiveStrong.com.

How did your career evolve into your current professional positions?

It took time for me to find my niche. One goal I had was to get away from the 40-hours-under-fluorescent-lights environment so I did not want a typical job. My first year as an RD, I taught at UNF, worked for a continuing education company, a bariatric surgeon, and a private practice RD. I learned of a wellness dietitian position and jumped at it since it focuses on prevention. I am still trying to find balance and will soon narrow my focus to my wellness dietitian job and nurturing my fledgling writing and speaker career.

Do you seek opportunities for one-on-one client interaction?

I do and I love it! I have 1-6 one-on-one appointments weekly.

This is one of my favorite aspects of dietetics as I get to build a relationship with clients and help them on their health journeys.

What do you recommend to "traditional" dietitians to expand their careers into "non-traditional" areas?

Be flexible, honest, and take any opportunities you find!

Stepping away from a traditional job is scary! I know - I left a career of 13 years! My advice is to become comfortable with the uncertainty that this change can bring and to have funds set aside to carry you through. After that, be flexible, honest, and take any opportunities you find - you never know what could be your next job! Dietetics is a small field so nurture your relationships with colleagues, students, and other health professionals.

What are your goals for the future? In what ways do you hope your career will continue to evolve?

My goal is to be a writer and speaker for consumers (living a healthy lifestyle) and for health professionals (science of nutrition, nutrition education and counseling). My other goals are to travel with my husband, get my dog Canine Good Citizen certified, and beat a knee injury so I can run again!