

On learning about yourself through your practice



Astrologer and writer Alice Sparkly Kat discusses pushing your vocation forward, figuring things out as you go along, and earning what you deserve.

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As told to Michelle Hyun Kim, 2356 words.

Tags: [Magic](#), [Writing](#), [Beginnings](#), [Money](#), [Process](#), [Success](#).

I read that you got into astrology about seven years ago and then you started doing paid readings with clients maybe one or two years later. When did you realize that astrology was something beyond an interest, something that could help support you financially?

I don't remember my first reading. I was like, "Why would anyone pay to talk to me?" I think it was my friend, too, and they tipped me or something and I was like, "What?" It was like I was trying to psych myself out. Sometimes it still is like that.

I wasn't able to support myself with astrology until this [fifth] year, actually. People always say if you start a business practice, it takes five years to support yourself, and I found that to be true. I kind of supported myself with it in 2017 and 2018. I was doing freelance teaching jobs those years. Before that I worked retail and sales, so it was a big part of my income. I just lived on very little because it was important for me to be able to be creative and actually make money through the creation part. I've never gotten a grant or anything like that, I wasn't able to get those things.

In one of your other interviews, you mentioned that doing client work was an important part of learning how to be an astrologer, because you had to collect peoples' responses about how they were experiencing their charts to be able to bring that knowledge to future readings. I feel like a lot of people have this misconception that you have to have mastered a skill before making your services available.

Yeah, astrology is one of those practices where you interact with people in a really focused and intense way. No one can really teach you how to do that. You just have to learn as you go, then you learn about people and how to talk with people. And you learn about yourself, too.

I don't delineate during my sessions, I never say *this* placement means *this*. It's like... if I'm seeing a therapist, I don't want to walk into a therapist office, and have them tell me, "Here's the definition of this anxiety disorder." You want to be able to talk about yourself and have a person guide the conversation, so that's what I try to do. So I've learned not just about astrology from clients but about organizing, about being a person.

What's something that you've learned from running an astrology business or doing your astrology practice that you think that people in different fields could benefit from?

Something I've learned is that the field that you're working in, that's maybe just 30% of [your practice] and then the rest is what you bring to the table. It's not just about being an astrologer or writer, you have to ask yourself, "Well, why [am I doing this]?" I think that is more important, actually. How you change the thing that

you are practicing matters more than what the thing already is.

I learned that from astrology. [The Italian philosopher] [Giorgio Agamben](#) said that astrology is the language of signatures. That's very different from signs because signs represent things, but signatures are how images are practiced. So then when you practice astrology, you have to change the interpretation every time. So as an astrologer, you have to bring yourself to the signs.

Yes. Since your work is based on having such personal exchanges where you're learning from each other, does it make it more difficult to set rates?

Well, the rates thing really comes down to this. If I have to do this full time to really take it seriously and make it into something that is serious and substantial, then how much do I need to live? And I got to buy my own healthcare. Before, I didn't have healthcare, my rent's pretty cheap, I live with four people, and then I was eating two meals a day. Now I'm almost 30, so I'm like, "Okay, I got to think about how to feed myself in a different way, too."

And was that something you knew right away or did it take time?

When I started out, I was charging like \$30 for a session. I was into bartering and stuff. Now I can't really do that because my landlord doesn't take a barter, the insurance company doesn't take a barter. I was charging a sliding scale for years and then after a while I was like, "You know what, this doesn't actually work, because I'm not able to budget. I'm not able to predict my income." And honestly, people who should have paid at the lower end were paying at the higher end. The range of the skill I'm able to offer just isn't worth it. So I talked to other astrologers who do this and they tell me, "Here's how much I think you should charge." I actually charge way under that, but I'm going to raise my rates because of the high inflation this year, but also because I'm going to do one less reading a week too. So it's a work in progress honestly, just trying to be paid.

What's something else that you wish you knew when you first started out?

I wish I knew to start an email list. I really only started gathering emails this year. It's important because then you don't rely on social media and that's such a corporate space—it really freaks me the fuck out. A mailing list, it's just how you keep in touch with people. It's not about visibility. You don't have to think about your identity. I think it's really hard for trans people to think about their identity online.

Yeah, I see many people who run self-employed businesses using social media to both advertise their services and share personal life updates. How do you manage that balance in marketing your personal and professional aspects?

Well, I don't really share about myself. A lot of my writing, there's me in it, I'm the person who did the writing, but I don't include facts about myself. I made one zine about my hometown recently, but yeah, there's very little information about myself in it. I'm a little uncomfortable sharing things. I think listening to other people [as an astrologer] is really vulnerable and just based on what you say back, the questions you ask, people [read into it]. So you're having this heart[felt] connection already, so I don't really want to [show more of that online]. Yeah. I share pictures of my cat, but that's just because she's really cute. I haven't taken a single selfie this year, but I take 10 pictures of my cat every day.

You've been running a blog since 2018 where you post lots of great astrology-related resources, but also musings on being a working creative, capitalism and politics, and fan content about BTS and anime. Why is it important for you to publish on your own website?

Because I didn't study English or anything like that, the literary world is something I just never had access to. I've been writing fan fiction since I was 12, and then when I was [doing that] I was writing every day, I was posting chapters every day. That type of writing is really high pressure because you're trying to write a 40-chapter story about werewolves and then if you don't post the next chapter, people are like, where's the next chapter?

So when I was thinking of writing, that's the kind of practice I was continuing. I was like, "Okay, I'll get my own website." Usually with fan fiction, you post on [Archive Of Our Own] or fanfiction.net, things like that, but people also build their own geocities or a website where they can design the reading style and everything too. So that's literally what I was thinking, like, "Okay, time to write, I'm going to build a website." I guess it didn't occur to me that publishing was an option.

Do you have a certain goal with your blog?

No, maybe I need to think about that. Sometimes I write things that are a little bit "Hey, here's like a delineation, let me have fun with this," but sometimes I'll do like a random article, not astrology-related at all. I have three places where I have ideas for articles: on the notes app in my computer, on the notes app in my phone, and then on this sketchbook I have. So if I think of something that I just feel like I want to write about, then I'll just write it down somewhere, and then if I have time, I'll look through the ideas and see which ones I want to start on.

Well, that's the nice thing about a blog, you can write about whatever you want.

Yeah, one time someone was like, "Why do you have this [random article hating on Andrew Yang](#) on your blog?" I was like, "I don't know. I felt like I really wanted to shit on him." [laughs] So no, I have no goal. The only categories [on my website] are "learn" and then "read."

Right, it feels like blog posts are all the things that don't really fit in a book, but also help supplement your research for something like a book-length project. What works for you in terms of research?

If I read through a book, then I highlight the sections I want to remember. Just whatever stood out to me, whatever really moved my heart, and then I put a little bookmark or stickies on it to remember that part. I'll read a bunch of books that I think might be relevant to what I'm researching and then I go through and then I type up—I used to hand write—the sections that I found interesting, and I put them on one document and decide what I'm going to write about. Then if I need to use anything, it's all just in the same Google Drive, just in another document.

Right now, how do you organize your days and your work?

Well, I see two clients every day. I eat three meals a day. I try to get to my emails every day so I'm not feeling like I'm playing catch up but sometimes that doesn't happen. Then on Sunday is usually when I do my writing and then I'll just write for the whole day. So I do all my writing for the week in one day.

This is going to change. Next year, I'm gonna see one more person each day, but only for three days a week, because I realize I can't talk to people every day. The recovery from the sessions takes a while. I want to be able to have two-day weekends and work on other things too, because I want to redo [my [Astrology and Storytelling workbooks](#)]. I also want to be able to teach more classes. I think a big part of my goal now is not just to "practice astrology," but to be able to have these channels, whether that's teaching or client work, of helping people take [a language] and use it in their own way—like how fan fiction does with the canon. So I'm wondering, "How else can that happen, too?" But I don't know, maybe it's mostly astrology for a while.

It seems like the helping others part is key in all of this.

Because I don't want to do this alone. The point of it is to do it with other people.

Alice Sparkly Kat Recommends:

Sope: not the food but the ship between Min Yoongi (Suga) and Jung Hoseok (J-hope). I've been really into this one ever since Hobi started exploring his shadow side more publicly. I've always been a Yoongi bias and my main ships are anyone x Yoongi but I used to be a little scared of Hobi because of his auntie energy until this year. I think I am overcoming something relating to mothers emotionally through this ship.

Agamben and the Signature of Astrology by Paul Collili: I've been really enjoying this book because it looks at what Agamben and Walter Benjamin wrote about astrology. People usually think about Adorno when they think of the Frankfurt School and astrology but there were actually people in that school who were into astrology. Reading this book helps me piece together the connection between astrology in the modern era and the contemporary and I like that so that I can more clearly situate to what I see today.

Origin of Symmetry by zetaophiuchi (ryuujiitsu): This is my favorite fan fiction of all time. It's a story set in space, a love story about a lone disillusioned ex-soldier hunting an anarchist. The world building is incredible because everything is suggested but so real. The hunting nature of the story makes the romantic parts very spicy, also. I think this story is really appealing to Aries Venus because the love object that needs to be captured and can only be seen in small glimpses is always running away.

"Ben Xiao Hai" by Andy Lau: Been listening to this song a lot lately because there's a part where he says "dumb kids are named NB" and that's actually my partner's name! We think it's really funny that their name is in this song even though it's such an uncommon name. The song is really deep also because it's about the Cultural Revolution generation and how playing dumb is a survival strategy. My mom taught me to always play dumb when in doubt. I like how he says that God loves dumb kids in the song.

@foodwiththreateningauras on IG: My best friend and partner run this account as a family business. They have changed how I think about food forever.

Name

Alice Sparkly Kat

Vocation

astrologer and writer

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