

Ep #10: Do This When You Don't Feel Good Enough as a Clinician



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Welcome to *Clinicians Creating Impact*, a show for physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists looking to take the next step in their careers and make a real difference in the lives of their clients. If you're looking to improve the lives of neurodiverse children and families with neurological-based challenges, grow your own business, or simply show up to help clients, this is the show for you.

I'm Heather Branscombe, Therapist, Certified Coach, Clinical Director, and Owner of Abilities Neurological Rehabilitation. I have over 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors, and I'm here to help you become the therapist you want to be, supporting people to work towards their dreams and live their best lives. You ready to dive in? Let's go.

Hi friend, I'm so glad you came to listen today. Episode 10 feels like a mini-milestone for me. My podcast has got to double digits of episodes, it's so exciting. At first I wondered what I could talk about on a weekly basis, and now I know that there are so many things for us to talk about as clinicians and I'm so excited to explore these topics with you.

If you're listening to this when the podcast first hits, I know that for many of you this is spring break season, which is amazing because right now I have about 20 centimeters of snow in my backyard. So just thinking of you hearing this during the last few weeks of March, it really makes me excited to know that spring is just around the corner.

This topic today is one I see so often and I have a lot of both passion and compassion for. Have you ever felt like you weren't good enough as a clinician? First off, I'm not sure if you're aware or not, but this is super, super common. Outside of our profession they even name it as imposter syndrome, although you may or may not identify with that term, and that's totally okay.

Either way, it's super common to feel at times like you aren't good enough as a clinician. You may be thinking something like I don't know enough yet. You aren't getting the results that you want fast enough yet for your clients. Or you may not feel like your sessions or that your intervention is enough.

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Now, some of this is even reinforced in our schooling. We talk about the importance of life-long learning, staying evidence informed, or at minimum keeping up to date with what's happening in our profession. You may even have continuing education credits as a requirement as part of your job.

There are even times where we think it might be more normal to think that you aren't good enough. Like when we're new to our profession or we're new to an area of practice or new to a given job. But we can add a layer of judgment if we think that we've been at our position long where we can't use the new card as an excuse.

There's also the opinions of others, of what additional credentials or education you should have to work in a given practice area, and if you believe that to be true. So when I decided to start my own private practice 15 years ago, I decided intentionally to work with both children and adults with neurodiversities and neurologically based challenges. At the time I had about 10 years experience in a variety of settings, but in truth most of that practice was really in pediatrics.

At the beginning of my private practice career there were some thoughts, some of those by former instructors I really, truly admired, about what additional training I should have to really be "qualified," even though I actually was already a qualified physical therapist according to my college, to work with adults. So those thoughts of others generated a thought in myself that I might not be good enough to serve these adult clients well without this additional training.

So, what can you do if you feel like you aren't good enough as a clinician? Well, let me tell you what I did and how it can apply to you. So, step one, I decided not to believe I wasn't good enough. Without even knowing it at the time, even though my brain was offering that thought that I might not be good enough, I simply chose not to believe it.

I decided to believe instead that I was a good clinician, even without that additional training. Now, it doesn't mean that I never sought out more tools and approaches to help me improve, but I chose those courses and that knowledge from a place of adding to my competence, rather than deciding that I needed it to be a good therapist. Can you notice the difference of how that feels?

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Second, I became more clear about what a good clinician meant to me. Now, this can be a question that can be super powerful for you to ask yourself and to really find out the why. I decided for myself that my role as a good therapist was fundamentally to be able to understand what was happening for my client and why, and then to offer an experience for them that could help them with the next step to what they were looking to create in terms of their goals.

So, as clinicians we often fall into the trap of thinking that when a client likes us it means that we are a good clinician. It's an easy trap to fall into because, I mean, let's make it straight, it feels amazing and it almost makes sense. If we're here to serve other people, then if the people we are serving like us, then we must be doing something right, right?

The problem with that thinking is that we're depending on somebody else's behavior, like their behavior of saying something good about us to feel good about ourselves. What if doing what is in the client's best interest long term means that doing something that they may not appreciate in the short term?

So for example, if I'm a physiotherapist, which I am, and I'm working with someone to be able to get their coat on, one problem for them might be that they might not have the mobility in their arm or their shoulder to get the coat on at that moment.

If I believe that I can get the mobility in their arm to do what they want, I may offer ways to increase that mobility through manual stretching, their own stretching, positioning and other activities. My client might not enjoy that. That may not sound super fun. And while I'm not a proponent of no pain, no gain, there is a space between pain and doing nothing to reach a mutually desired goal.

So as I offer these opportunities for my client to gain more mobility, the client may not appreciate that in the short term, but they could appreciate that in the long term. So to the extent that I decide that I'm a good therapist if my client likes me in any given moment means that I'm not doing my job to help them understand their body and to offer them an opportunity to experience the next step to get them to their goal.

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It's nice to hear nice things about you, I like that just as much as the next person. Just be careful what you decide to make that mean about you as a clinician.

I also realized how client results were highly influenced on what the client did or didn't do between our sessions. So what that means to me is I can't take full responsibility for the results of my clients because I decided the results of my clients are not my full responsibility.

Finally, I decided to find evidence that I was a good therapist. Knowing what I had decided was important to be a good therapist, I noticed the things like the thought and the care that went into my sessions and the results that I personally was creating.

I noticed things like how I listened to client feedback, and how I responded to that feedback, both inside and outside of our sessions. I noticed how my practice had evolved for the better over time. That evidence actually reinforced that thought that I was a good clinician.

So, when you think you aren't good enough as a clinician, do this. Number one, decide that you are a good clinician. Number two, decide what a good clinician looks like for you. And number three, find evidence that you are meeting the criteria for your own definition of success.

The actual irony is that when we decide that we are already a good clinician it opens up a lot more space to see the ways that we can improve. Judgment and shame are not motivating. Compassion and acceptance is actually the key to growth and improvement. Your brain can find evidence for almost anything you ask it to. Knowing that you get to decide if you're a good clinician or not, I'd like to invite you to the possibility that you are.

The fact that you are even listening to this podcast and are even thinking about the concept tells me that you care about what you do. That's enough for me to decide that you're good enough. How about you?

I can't wait to see the impact that you create with this. Thanks so much for listening and see you soon.

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I want to give a special thank you to those of you who participated in our podcast launch giveaway. Thank you for all of you that shared with your family, your friends, your coworkers, both online and offline and I'd like to announce the winners.

So congratulations to Beth, Christine, and to Tanya. I'll be following up with you individually so that you can get your Amazon gift card prizes.

Thanks so much.

If you enjoyed today's show and don't want to worry about missing an episode, you can follow the show wherever you listen to your podcasts. And if you haven't already, I would really appreciate it if you could leave a rating and review to let me know what you think and to help others find *Clinicians Creating Impact*. It doesn't have to be a five star rating, although I sure hope you love the show. I really want your honest feedback so I can create an awesome podcast that provides tons of value.

To learn more about me and the work that I do, visit my website at www.abilitiesrehabilitation.com/clinicianscorner to download your free getting it all done at work process and to see what I'm up to. Thanks so much.

Thanks for joining me this week on the *Clinicians Creating Impact* podcast. Want to learn more about the work I'm doing with Abilities Rehabilitation? Head on over to abilitiesrehabilitation.com. See you next week.