

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Heather Branscombe

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Episode 22, When Your Client Doesn't Like You.

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 there, friend. I am so excited because this week, other than doing this podcast and all the regular things that I'm doing at abilities, I'm actually speaking at a couple of events with clinicians just like you. And again, don't get me wrong, I love doing this podcast every week.

And I really love connecting with you as clinicians in-person. So if I did see you in the past week or two, by the time that this comes out, just know in advance how much of a pleasure it was to connect with you, to speak with you, especially about all things mindset and mindfulness when it comes to us being a clinician.

So let's talk about the topic for today. Now, I was saying it's amazing for me to connect with you guys because I get so much amazing feedback. It never feels good to have negative feedback, especially from our clients. And, of course, doesn't that really make sense? Like, ultimately, we went to school as clinicians because fundamentally we wanted to help people. And when we get that feedback that we aren't actually doing that, it can feel awful.

Now, I've seen some different approaches to that feedback over my now almost 26 year career and I want to talk to you today about a way that you might want to handle it. Again, negative feedback never feels awesome, and it really used to crush me, personally. And I want to say it still doesn't feel great, but it feels so much better for me now. And I want to show you the why and the how today.

[Clinicians Creating Impact](#) with Heather Branscombe

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You

Before we start that, first, I want to thank those of you that have rated and reviewed and given me feedback about this podcast. Again, it is so helpful to be able to spread the word. I really do want to help clinicians and I know so many of you want to help clinicians. These are your friends, these are your colleagues, and this is really a great way to help.

So I want to share one of those reviews with you today. So shout out to the person who shared this review. This is from Christine OT and she shares, "I really have enjoyed the podcast so far. They are so relevant and have made me chuckle at times at how relatable they are. I can feel the shift in my thinking already. I will likely go back and listen again just to remind myself. Thanks, Heather."

Ratings and reviews like this are really just so helpful because it feeds that algorithm. So when there's a clinician that is feeling down, maybe has gotten some negative feedback like we're going to talk about today, and they do a search to help them, this can pop up as a resource for them. So please go ahead and take the time to rate and review this podcast so that we can get the word out to other people just like us.

Now, let's get back to that feedback, shall we? So say you got some negative feedback from a client. And these days negative feedback can come from a variety of different ways. It can come from a Google review. It could come from an email from a supervisor or a colleague. Or even a direct conversation with a client, a supervisor or a colleague or something else. Think about the last time you got negative feedback from a client.

First, I want to mention that it rarely comes one on one from the client. And so I just want to offer that there's always that additional layer just because it feels public when you have a Google review or you're hearing about negative feedback from someone else. You know not only do you know that somebody isn't happy, you also know that somebody else knows that someone else isn't happy with the work that you're doing.

And again, that doesn't feel amazing. The feeling that we get from that, I just wanted to show today that that's what trips us up at first. We really have three

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You

options of how we typically deal with it as human beings with human brains. First, we ignore it. Second, we can kind of resist it. Or three, we have the opportunity to allow it.

Now, if you want to learn more about what ignoring feelings, resisting feelings or allowing feelings looks like, I would refer you to episode 10 of this podcast, which is Do This When You Don't Feel Good Enough as a Clinician. But assuming that you know kind of a general concept of what that means, often we don't allow that feeling that comes from getting negative feedback, because it can feel like it means that it's true or that the thought behind that feeling that we're feeling is true.

So what would that thought be? That thought could be something like, I'm not a great therapist. I just want to mention I have had that thought before. And in preparation for this podcast today I was thinking about the last time that I can really remember, I'm sure there's lots of other times, but one of the times that I really remember that I got negative feedback about a client.

And so I was working clinically as a therapist at Abilities and I was taking over for another therapist who had left. So remember, I am the owner of the clinic. And so I'm taking over for this therapist because I want to give continuity of service and I was the clinician at the time who could give that continuity of service.

Now, I'm not a new clinician and I certainly wasn't a new clinician at that time. So I did all the things that I had learned along the way and that I knew on how to make a transition smoothly. So I did things like I kept a similar program to the previous therapist. I really worked on building rapport with the client and their family. And I really sought to get their feedback during the session basically all along the way.

And then guess what happened? I am laughing, and I can laugh about it now, but I wasn't laughing at the time. I found out through our office manager at that time that they didn't like me. And they didn't like me and I was the owner of the company. When I found out that they didn't like me as a therapist, honestly, I felt

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You

embarrassed because I was thinking, shouldn't the owner of the company be one of the best therapists of the company?

Now, really, that's not actually true. The owner of the company does not need to be the best therapist. And even if you are the best therapist, that doesn't necessarily mean that every client is going to like you. So fundamentally, it didn't mean that I wasn't a good therapist, but noticed all the thoughts that were coming to my brain at the time with that additional level of, one, somebody else knew other than the client, which was part of my staff. And secondly, I was the owner.

So I just share that story just to say I have been there. And I probably will be there in the future. I could get a bad review on this podcast. I get bad reviews about myself as a boss, not necessarily all the time, but I do get them. So let's use that information and that opportunity to talk about what should you do.

So first, this may sound controversial, especially when we're talking about feedback from a client and we are a service based organization, meaning that we're often talking about being client centered, family centered, client directed. But I want to say the first thing that you may want to do when you get negative feedback is to take care of yourself.

You're going to have feelings and thoughts about that negative feedback. That's just because you have a human brain and that human brain is wired for connection. So notice the thoughts. Notice the feelings that are coming up when you hear about that feedback and take care of your own feelings first.

So what could that look like? You're going to find the things that work best for you, but noticing could just be actually being mindfully aware of that, taking mental note of that. That could be journaling about it. That could be talking to a trusted friend or colleague about it. That also could involve some kind of coaching or other kind of mental health kind of help, be it a therapist, a counselor, or somebody else that you know, like and trust.

You want to do that because otherwise those feelings of feeling hurt, embarrassment, frustration, or whatever else you're actually feeling, I guarantee you will come through as you move forward if you don't take care of those

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You

feelings as well. You really want to take this opportunity to soothe that more primitive side of your brain. That part of your brain that makes a quick meaning, but not necessarily a more effective and efficient meaning for your long term.

It doesn't necessarily serve you for the long term. But that primitive brain is going to give you some thoughts and some feelings that are going to come up, if nothing else, just to tell you to pay attention. To pay attention to yourself and to connect with yourself.

So some of the things that you can do to move through that as you've started to soothe your more primitive side of your brain is to ask some questions. One of the questions that I like to ask is, how is it true? How is the feedback that I'm getting actually true? It can be a really hard, but a really important question if you're going to learn from that feedback.

You're also going to ask how is it not true? And then based on those answers to those questions that only you can really answer for yourself, what can I learn from this? And how do I want to move forward?

I just want to say, as a clinical director of someone who has worked as a clinician and works with clinicians on a daily basis, you are not supposed to be perfect as a clinician. Remember back in school when we talked about lifelong learning? There really is the opportunity for this feedback for you to decide that you are either winning, and when I say winning I don't actually mean you're winning against a client. What I mean is you're delivering the kind of service that you want to deliver, that your client is also enjoying. That would be one of my definitions of winning.

Or you can think of it as failing. Failing is, and again, you can learn more about why failing, I believe, is actually amazing in Episode 18, which is Why Failure Is Amazing. But there's an opportunity, instead of deciding that you're failing as a clinician, you can decide that this is an opportunity to learn. So you're either winning or you're learning.

So if you ignore your feelings, going back to that first controversial thing that I talked about, about you needing to take care of yourself and your own feelings first. If you ignore your feelings, I guarantee you're not going to be learning.

[Clinicians Creating Impact](#) with Heather Branscombe

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You

And if you resist those feelings that you're feeling, I also guarantee that you're going to learn a lot less than if you actually lean into that feeling for the moment, process that feeling, understand the thoughts and the beliefs that you have underneath that feeling, and decide if those thoughts and those beliefs are actually serving you.

I also want to mention that allowing your feelings is a skill that takes time and it takes effort. Just like these skills that we're often teaching our clients, this is a skill that you are learning as well. And knowing that allowing my feelings is a skill, it actually ironically allowed me to feel more available to actually feel those feelings. I didn't feel like I had to be perfect. One, I am not perfect in allowing my feelings. But just allowing myself to understand that this is a skill just allows me to be more playful about it to see what is working for me and what isn't working for me.

So, to me, success looks like allowing your feelings, then allowing the truth of the feedback by looking at both sides to help you to make a plan by moving forward. That's what success looks like when you get negative feedback. Ignoring it allows similar problems or challenges to come up again.

So, one thought that I truly believe myself is our life and our work as a clinician is an amazing teacher for us. So I invite you to allow that negative feedback, as awful as it feels, allow it to teach you. You will be surprised what it does. And I want you to really give it a try and let me know how it goes. I can't wait to see the impact that you create with this. Please let me know how it goes. Connect with me and I will see you next week. Take care.

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'd 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

Ep #22: When Your Client Doesn't Like You

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.