

Ep #28: Why People Pleasing as a Clinician is Lying



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Heather Branscombe

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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.

Hello there friend. Summer is just marching along and I don't know about you, but I am really trying to soak it all up right now knowing that at least where I live this weather only lasts for so long. I was able to get away last weekend to Sun Peaks, which is our local resort, with my family and I just love remembering that going outside is an amazing way to connect with people, especially people I love, like my family.

So I hope that you are getting the kind of outside time that you enjoy most and maybe even listening to this podcast along the way. If you are enjoying the podcast I would love it if you could take 30 seconds and rate and review this podcast wherever you listen to it so that other clinicians just like you can find it when they need it. So thanks so much for doing that in advance, and let's jump into my drastic title, shall we?

I know, I know this title is dramatic. I thought about that even as I titled it this week. It's a dramatic statement and I say this as someone who considers myself a former and maybe even a recovering people pleaser. So knowing that, I really do hope that this topic resonates with you. I really do think it's super important to consider and I really hope that this episode makes you think, even if you decide something different.

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First, I love that for you. I love it when people have opposing views and diversity in thoughts. So I just want to say I want to hear about it. So at the end of this if you still feel like it's dramatic and you want to tell me all about what you are thinking, please feel free to DM me through Instagram or email me through the Abilities Rehabilitation website.

All right, so having said that, let's talk about what is people pleasing. Now, we might not all define the term people pleasing in the exact same way, so in order to help us align ourselves in what I'm talking about when I talk about people pleasing I did some research to come up with a definition that is more aligned with where I'm coming from.

So if you are a people pleaser it might mean that you're known for doing whatever it takes to make other people happy. Now, as clinicians in a service-based industry, of course this is going to be true for so many of us. So many of us are attracted to the work that we do because we enjoy helping people. We get into these kinds of professions because we want to help people.

So the definition that I want to use today comes from Kendra Cherry, who is something I've never actually heard before, but she's a psychosocial rehabilitation specialist, I love that. She states that a people pleaser is a person who puts others' needs ahead of their own. This type of person is highly attuned to others and often seen as agreeable, helpful and kind. But people pleasers can also have trouble advocating for themselves, which can lead to a harmful pattern of self-sacrifice or self-neglect.

Now, that actually was only two sentences, but there's a lot to unpack there. We are trained as a clinician to be attuned to others. And often we go into these helping professions, as I said before because we naturally are attuned to other people's feelings. So again, this could be a natural gift, or for some people, we might have got that as a survival mechanism, which again, is a whole other podcast in and of itself.

But either way, we learn to be attuned to others as part of our clinical training, no matter what discipline or form that looks like. I also want to offer that we are

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rewarded for this as clinicians. We often associate happy clients with being a good clinician.

And if you want to learn more about that and unpack that, specifically around the pros and cons of seeing yourself as a good clinician and associating that with happy clients, I would offer that you want to listen to episode 22 When Your Client Doesn't Like You. And possibly episode 10, Do This When You Don't Feel Good Enough as a Clinician.

But I want to highlight the last part of that definition. And that's the part that said people pleasers could also have trouble advocating for themselves, which can lead to a harmful pattern of self-sacrifice or self-neglect. So I want to pause here, does that sentence resonate with you at all? It did, or if I'm really being honest it does for me. For me, people pleasing as a clinician meant feeling my own internal pressure to see more clients in a day often that I wanted to or to see clients at a time that was outside of what I actually wanted to work.

And I've been aware of that for a while. So much so that the first person I hired when I started my own private practice was someone who, part of their role was to manage my schedule for me. So one way I managed that initially was to avoid it completely and to get somebody else to do it for me. Now, well, I think it was an amazing first step for me at the time, it's a little bit of a band-aid, if you will, and maybe even it was the right step for me at the time.

The thing about managing your people pleasing without managing the thoughts behind it is, fun fact, the thoughts actually remain. To me, it's like fixing the check engine light that comes up in your car by covering it with duct tape. So it worked in the moment in that I didn't have to think about people pleasing in terms of scheduling in that context anymore. But the actual problem, which was my pattern of self-sacrifice, remained.

So why do I, as an actual recovering people pleaser, think that people pleasing is a lie? Here is my evidence that I want to offer you today. First, I want to acknowledge that the thought that people pleasing is a lie is something that was pointed out to me a couple of years ago, actually by another coach. And when I heard it, it hit me so hard. I literally to this day remember where I was sitting and

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what I felt, and specifically that that sentence just felt so not in alignment with who I thought I was, and more importantly who I wanted to become.

So that felt so much so out of alignment, it forever changed how I think about people pleasing. So again, I'm offering it to you as a gift and as an option to maybe think of the same for you as well. And I think one of the reasons that it really shocked me is because deep down I think at the time I thought that being a people pleaser was somehow altruistic. That it was better to think of others than of yourself.

My brain went to that all-or-nothing thinking, meaning I needed to choose me or the other person when coming up with a solution. And that is the first lie. It's a lie that all choices are some form of a win/lose scenario. More often than not there are first, more choices available than might be considered. And second, a lot of those choices could probably be some form or more of a form of a win/win scenario.

So second, let's look at why we default, as people-pleasers, to a pattern of self-sacrifice or self-neglect. When a brain goes to consider the often more obvious win/lose scenarios, now, remember our primitive brain is efficient, not always effective. So that's the part of the brain that's offering these quick options first and so they're the first and therefore most obvious options that come to mind. Our brain goes to that quick analysis.

And this analysis goes something like this. If I win and you lose, you won't be happy and I'll know that you're not happy. Therefore it will affect my happiness. And it's harder to be happy when somebody else isn't happy, especially as a people pleaser. But if I sacrifice so that you win and I lose, I'm choosing that you will be happy. And then I can be happy because you're happy. So I count on that lesser happiness because any other quick alternative that my primitive brain is offering me in the moment doesn't sound any better.

So that's the second lie. It's a lie that you can only be happy by sacrificing your wants for someone else. And then we add to the lie when the other person says, is it okay? And we say yes. We're lying to the other person when we agree to something that doesn't meet our needs so that they can be happy.

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So let's talk a little more about the cost of people pleasing. People pleasing at the expense of meeting your wants and needs as a clinician can lead to anger and frustration because you're doing things out of obligation instead of a more empowered choice. It can cause anxiety and stress by stretching our own mental, emotional and physical resources. You show up as a less authentic clinician when your needs are never really given the option to be considered when problem solving. And all of this can lead to emotional and professional burnout.

So at this point, you might be noticing where this kind of pattern may or may not be coming up with you in your clinical work. And naturally, because you're a problem solver, you might be wondering what to do about it. Now, wouldn't that be amazing if I had some kind of quick fix? But really, the truth is, there is no quick fix. And I want to say that the first step is to really become aware of these patterns and when it's happening. And then finally the why.

Not rushing and really trying to understand the when it's happening and the why that it's happening is often 80% of what you actually need to change the pattern. It's like any other challenge where we understand that a more thorough understanding and assessment is fundamental to understanding what to do when moving forward. You can take that from your clinical knowledge and then apply that to you personally as it comes to people pleasing.

So my only homework for you today is to ask yourself, where am I people-pleasing as a clinician? Am I lying when I do that? And if so, why am I lying? I guarantee when you take the time to do that, amazing shifts will happen in your practice. And that will allow you to more authentically show up and create a massive impact both for yourself and for your clients.

So give it a try and let me know how it goes. Have an amazing week and I will see you soon. See you later.

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*.

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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 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.