

## Ep #29: When Life Outside of Work Makes Work Harder



### **Full Episode Transcript**

With Your Host

**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.

Hi there, friend. This week's podcast is potentially a little bit heavier, but as I've been connecting with clinicians just like you, both inside and outside my role at Abilities, it's been a topic that I thought could be best addressed in a podcast episode.

So, first I just want to say it is such an honor to hear both the successes and the struggles of you and of my fellow clinicians. It's so amazing to know that this podcast is already helping some of you out. I love those anecdotal comments that you share as I connect with you, thank you so much. And it reminds me, if you could please take the time to help your fellow clinicians out by rating and reviewing the podcast, or by sharing it with a colleague that you know, like and trust.

This helps our fellow clinicians find this resource when they need it by feeding that all-present algorithm that I don't really even understand. I just know this is something that we want to feed, right? So thank you in advance so much for helping me to help others, it means so much to me.

Now, let's talk about when life outside of work makes work harder. There are factually times when outside circumstances of life really does make it harder in our work, especially our work as a clinician, than it would normally. And when I've been thinking about this the two areas that really come to mind, and again,

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this list is not exhaustive. But I think about trauma and I think about pressure. And these can be from family issues, financial issues, relationship challenges or something else.

Now, I want to start off by saying of course, we are not robots as clinicians. No one should expect you to be one when you come to work. We have human brains that deliver us a variety of thoughts and feelings all day, every day. However, I think some of us think that being a professional, especially as a clinician, often means not bringing your outside life into work. And I would agree that actually does sound ideal, and the truth is that sometimes our outside life does come into our work life.

And when I've thought about that for myself and my own experience, I automatically think about this time, which is now if I think about it, it's now 2023 when I'm recording this. This is a time around 2004 to 2006 where my sister suddenly died at 28 and then my dad passed away at 61 all in that space of two years.

At that same time we had grown our family through adoption. And so we went from being a family of three to a family of five. And at one point we literally had three children under the age of five years. So, needless to say, there were a lot of outside circumstances happening in my life, and the impact of that is it really was tough on me mentally and emotionally.

And I specifically remember to this day an outburst, and I say outburst because it was my outburst. It was an outburst at work where I said something that, while it was accurately true, it definitely was not delivered in an ideal way if I really actually wanted the message to be delivered. More than 15 years later, there's really no guilt for the words that I said, but there is definite guilt for the way that I said it.

It's a work challenge that happened because of outside circumstances. Those outside circumstances colored my thoughts and ultimately enhanced how I felt in a negative way. Basically, I was super insensitive in that moment and kind of a mean girl, if I'm being honest.

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Now, interacting with amazing clinicians, both inside and outside of Abilities, there are times where I have seen where outside circumstances to our clinical work may actually be playing out negatively at work for other people as well. And my first clue that this might be true is when I notice a reaction to a given situation isn't actually proportional, or what I think might be proportional to the given challenge.

So, remember that insensitive outburst I talked about earlier? That could have been a clue to others that there was something else going on. And that probably was a clue to others, to be honest. When I notice it in others, it does show up or it can show up sometimes, like mine did, such as being much more reactive to that situation than I would expect. Or other times, it's actually the opposite. It's avoiding the situation much more than I would expect.

So remember, when there are outside circumstances that are generating a thought or a feeling of trauma or that feeling of extra pressure, that feeling is being generated by the primitive part of our brain through our thoughts. I like to think of that part of the brain, actually, that primitive part of the brain getting activated.

And we can see that in our clients as well. That fight, flight, freeze, or fawn is a response from that more primitive part of our brain and can then color other thoughts and feelings at work, when the truth is the strength of the thoughts and the feelings that you're having to a certain work situation have less to do with what's happening at work, and more to do with the trauma response or the pressure that is being felt from outside of work.

So without diagnosing anyone else at work, which I don't know about you, that's where I would go initially. And clearly, that's outside of at least my scope of practice and generally outside of our scope of practice as co-workers, let's think about what if you notice that for yourself.

Now, while I love the idea of formal or informal coaching, clearly, I've done a lot of work. I'm doing this podcast about that for colleagues. And whether you're getting that coaching or support from colleagues, team leads, supervisors, there's also a place where you actually might need more professional help. And

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that could look like outside coaching, counseling, or some other kind of mental health support.

If I were to give advice to myself in that 2004 to 2006 time where I was being minimally insensitive and maybe a mean girl, it really was a red flag that I was struggling and I needed more support. So when outside circumstances make work harder, you might need more support. And I'm not saying this as an employer who wants staff to show up differently at work.

What I'm saying is, don't do it so that you can show up better at work. Don't get support so that you can show up better at work. Do it so that you can show up better for yourself. If things outside of work are impacting the way you work, support yourself, not for work's sake, but for your own sake. Because the truth is you are much more important than any work that you do.

Work is just another circumstance in your life. Work is just allowing you another way to see how your brain is currently thinking. And if you need help with that to be able to adjust your thinking, nothing has gone wrong. Sometimes we just need support to help to make that happen. You just have a human brain that has done its best and done everything it could to problem solve for circumstances, and it might need some more help to problem solve in a way that better meets your needs.

There is absolutely no shame in that. Asking for help can be the most impactful thing that you can do, both for yourself and for your clients. And if you need resources on that, feel free to reach out and I'd be happy to point you in the right direction. I hope you've learned from today, take care and have the best week. Bye for now.

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

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website at [www.abilitiesrehabilitation.com/clinicianscorner](http://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](http://abilitiesrehabilitation.com). See you next week.