

Ep #30: When You or Your Client Lacks Motivation



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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.

Hi there friend. I hope you are having an amazing summer if you're listening to this when this episode comes out, or whatever season you're in if you're listening to this episode later. One of the things that I chose to do to bring more joy into my summer this year was to purchase some books. Like real, actual books. Not Kindle books, not Audible books, to actually open and read.

I did that because reading an actual book brings me so much joy and it allows me to slow down and to relax. I love the feel of books and I love that I can't multitask. And finally, I love the opportunity that it really just gives me to intentionally slow down. What I've also noticed is that I'm often late to the cultural narrative of what is popular at the time.

So, for example, my husband and I just started watching Ted Lasso this week, even though I've learned it's recently ended as a series. And newsflash for those of you who are also often late to the party like I am, it is so good. So, naturally, the books that I chose are probably also a little bit later.

So one of the books that I'm currently reading is Atomic Habits by James Clear, it was actually published in 2018. So I'm literally talking about this five years later. But when I picked it up I already knew that I was going to love it. And that has been true.

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One of the strategies he talks about resonated with me so deeply that I just needed to share this with you on the podcast. Have you ever been to a course where you've learned something so cool that you just had to share it with a colleague? This is me, this is me doing that, sharing it with you and how I think it applies to your clinical and work life.

But before I dive into it I want to ask a tiny favor. I love sharing things like this with clinicians just like you, and I love the little community that we can create together. Can you help me share this with other clinicians by helping me out?

First, if you could just take 30 seconds to rate and review this podcast, that would be very helpful to the algorithm gods. And second, if you could share this with a colleague that could benefit, that would make the time and the effort that I'm putting into this podcast feel so much more useful. Thank you so much in advance for doing that.

So, having said that, let's talk about this strategy. So James Clear talks about a study about motivation where they looked at 248 people, and the goal of this was to help these 248 people build better exercise habits over two weeks. This is what intrigued me, don't we look to build new or different habits with our clients all day long?

I thought about how as clinicians, we're often asking our clients to change some kind of habit or create some kind of new habit all the time. It could be we're asking them to do some kind of home program that we've provided to them. We're asking them to record or notice some kind of behavior at home or in the community. We're asking them to try new things at home or in the community, or just in general we're asking them to try or to do something different.

And then also if we turn inward, often we're trying to change our own work habits. We're looking at things like getting to work when we want to, leaving work when we want to, completing the documentation or the planning that we want at work, integrating new clinical skills into our practice, staying up to date with evidence or what's happening in your own clinical profession. All of that to just show and notice that habits are an important part of our work as a clinician.

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So let's go back to the study. In this study of 248 people, there were three groups. First, there was a control group, where they just tracked how much they exercised in general. Second, they had a motivation group. So they asked this group to track their exercise plus read some information about how beneficial the exercise was to them.

And then for the third group, they asked them to track their exercise and to read the same material, so assuming by then that we have the same level of motivation. And then finally, they were asked to complete the following sentence. And the sentence goes like this. During the next week I will partake in at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise on insert day here, at insert time here, at insert place here.

So how do you think those three groups did? Well, I'm here to tell you group one and group two were pretty similar in that they had a 35 and 38% respectively, in terms of following through on the exercise that they actually wanted to do. Group three was something different. In that group 91% of the group exercised at least once per week.

So the difference between group two and group three is what the researchers called an implementation intention, which really if you zoom out for a moment is really just a plan beforehand of when and where you will act. Isn't that fascinating? And yet, it makes so much sense from a brain perspective.

When we use our prefrontal cortex to decide in advance how we want to accomplish something, it makes total sense that it's going to be much more likely to happen than if we don't. When we fail to plan in advance, it means we're much more likely to allow that more primitive part of our brain to run the show on a daily basis. And because the primitive brain prefers things that feel easy, that feel safe and feel comfortable, no wonder why a new or a change of habit won't be the preferred choice of the primitive brain.

So James Clear goes on to what I think is one of the most profound sentences that I've seen so far in the book. He says, "Many people think that they lack motivation, when what they actually lack is clarity." So if we were to take that as a thought that we might want to believe, what could that look like for our clients?

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For our clients, we might think that they aren't motivated, when the truth is they may lack the clarity that they need to create the habit we're looking to create. That clarity could be, one, the clarity of what they have been asked to do. Number two, the clarity of when they will or can make that happen. And then number three, the clarity of where to make that new change or habit happen.

So knowing that, there's a real opportunity for us as clinicians to be clear on what we're asking by checking in with the client for understanding. We can also check in with them to see what the client thinks or feels about our ask. And then finally, we can check in on where and when the client feels like this new habit could work for them.

We can also use this to our own work habits. We can take documentation, for example, have you decided when you want to do it as well as where you want to do it? Does it sound better to you to document for 10 minutes directly after or during a session in the room where you had the session? Or would you rather document at the end of the day in a quiet office space? What feels more successful to you?

And then if it doesn't work out, you have a much clearer understanding of what needs to change. Do you need to change the habit? Do you need to change the time? Or maybe it is changing the place? Notice that the clarity of these three parts have the potential to help you and your clients change the habits that they want to change for the better.

So if you like the strategy, I highly recommend the book *Atomic Habits*. But give it a try and see what happens. I cannot wait to hear what you create with this. Have an amazing week and I will talk to you soon.

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 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.