

Ep #32: The Pros and Cons of People Pleasing



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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. How are you doing today? I'm recording this today at a time where our weather, or my weather, has turned a little bit colder and we're currently having a string of more cloudy days here. Now, I love the energy that sunny days bring but, to be honest, I'm also loving putting on a light sweater and not worrying about how hot it is before I go outside for my walks.

And while I hope we have a few more sunny days left, this really does feel like a subtle sign that fall is just around the corner. That being said, I'm also getting ready to go to Boise next weekend to witness my niece getting married. I'm so looking forward to it, but it's also looking like it's going to be about 35 degrees Celsius for an outdoor wedding. So please wish me luck as I go.

I wanted to talk a little about people pleasing this week because I think it's a term we often hear, especially those of us who work in the service industry and are used to taking care of people both inside and outside of work. And for many of us that desire to be of service to others is really what helped us to create the desire to be a clinician in the first place.

So this week I had a really interesting conversation about people pleasing with a clinician outside of where I work and I thought it might be of benefit to you as well. But before I start, I just want to give you a small ask, if you will. If you're

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finding this episode or other episodes of this podcast helpful, could you please help me to help other clinicians by following and rating this podcast wherever you're listening to it? It really does help other clinicians find the podcast when they need it.

And finally, if you could please share this with a colleague that you think might benefit, that would be amazing. I really do consider this kind of like my passion project right now and sort of like a love letter to the professions that I enjoy working with and working within so very much. So sharing the podcast just helps me to share that love. Thank you again in advance so much. And let's get back to the thought of people pleasing, shall we?

When you hear the word people pleasing, what thoughts come to mind for you? I know for me it usually has some kind of negative connotation. It sounds to me like some kind of flavor of someone doing something with the sole intention of making someone else feel better, and perhaps at the expense of the person providing that service.

So when I took a moment, I went to the Googles and looked up what the actual definition of people pleasing is, this is what the Cambridge dictionary defined it as. They defined it as someone who cares a lot about whether other people like them and always wants others to approve of their actions. I thought that was pretty interesting. So we use people pleasing as a term because the downside of always wanting others to approve of your actions is that there may be times that those actions actually go against your own wants, needs or values.

Now, if you want to explore a little bit more about how that could show up for you in your clinical work, I'd offer episode 22 of this podcast, When Your Client Doesn't Like You. And also episode 28, Why People Pleasing as a Clinician is Lying is a really great place to start your deep dive as to the downsides of people pleasing as I defined it earlier.

Certainly in my own clinical career, people pleasing has shown up in a negative way. For myself, I usually know that it's creeping in when I have some kind of urge to either overwork, meaning work more hours than the hours I've decided

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in advance I want to, or to maybe over defend my decisions, especially now in my role as a clinic owner or clinical director.

All that being said, I think it's really important to understand a little about why we often get to that negative downside of people pleasing. As a service-based provider, it makes total sense that we want people to benefit from our service. As I mentioned earlier, our desire to choose our clinical professions so often comes from our wish to help people and to make the world a better place.

So wanting to please people or to make people happy in and of itself is not wrong, nor is it actually right. If we look at it from the context of the model, and if you need more context of what I'm talking about when I say the model and what I'm actually talking about, you can refer to episode two. But in the context of the model, doing something with the intent to make someone happy is really just an action. I would put that on the action line of a model.

What is more important than the actual people pleasing is to look at the thought and the feeling, or what I like to call kind of the energy behind that action. The model shows us that an action is actually the result of a thought and a feeling. Now, often this can be a really unconscious thought or feeling. It's not like you're consciously thinking and then consciously feeling and then people pleasing, but yet it is still there.

So what I want to share about people pleasing is that we people please in the negative sense often because we're doing it from some kind of place of scarcity or that kind of energy. It could come from a thought like, I'm not good enough, or something like good clinicians are liked by their clients or co-workers. That sounds like a good idea, but it has that kind of sneaky undertone. Do you notice that?

Those kinds of thoughts can fuel a feeling of something like an urge to people please from a much less helpful space, which will ultimately create a less helpful result. As a clinician, for example, this can come when we choose to book a session outside of the time that we actually want to see clients.

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A clinician could be seeing the clients outside of the time they want to see someone because they might think something like a good clinician provides client-directed care. Doesn't that sound so interesting? And it sounds so right and moral, doesn't it? But when we use that thought against us, what we can do is to that clinician it could mean that the client directs when the sessions are.

But there are also times when that same activity of people pleasing could actually come from a more expansive or a more abundant space. So you could be doing the exact same action, but if it's a result or from an energy of a different thought or feeling, it can create a much different result. And it actually might not be people pleasing as the way that most people think of it in terms of like a negative connotation.

Maybe as a clinician I choose to do the session outside of my normal hours because it actually benefits me as well. I could be thinking something like, oh, this creates more time in my day on this day so I can do X. And when I think that, I feel more empowered. And then when I feel more empowered, booking that session outside of my normal hours isn't actually people pleasing in that negative connotation. It's actually a win/win solution. Do you see the difference?

Of course, as service providers we want people to feel the benefits of what we provide. And based on that feedback from our clients and our co-workers, even our supervisors, we may even decide to change our behavior. That in and of itself is not people pleasing in a negative sense. The main difference is really getting curious as to why you're doing what you're doing. And then once you have that sense of awareness, what do you want to do, if anything, about it?

So maybe you want to reclaim the people pleasing title for something more positive. The truth is people pleasing is not right, nor is it actually wrong. You just want to get curious as to why you're doing it. And then you want to like the reasons that you come up with.

So next time you're doing something that on the outside feels like in service to others, but also maybe feels a bit off to you, just notice that. Ask yourself why you're doing what you're doing. What is the energy or the thought and feeling

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that is fueling this action? And then based on that answer, what if anything do you want to do about it?

Give it a try and let me know how it goes. And if you get stuck, not a problem. Feel free to reach out to me, I am more than happy to help through a DM through my Instagram or through my email on the Abilities website. I can't wait to see the results that you create for this, not only for yourself but for the clients that you love as well. Have a great 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 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.