

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition



**Full Episode Transcript**

With Your Host

**Heather Branscombe**

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

Episode 40, Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition.

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. How's your week going this week? Today, I'm actually recording in the middle of back-to-back long weekends, so this week for me feels super fast and also super fun. Part of my weekend last weekend in this long weekend was reading some parts of Dr. Gabor Maté's newest book, which is called *The Gift of Normal*.

Now, just to warn you, if you're a book nerd like I am and you like book recommendations, I am here to recommend it to you. And also I want to warn you, it's big. But I'm really enjoying his perspective. And one of the things that he brings up in his book made me think about the topic I want to talk about today. So Dr. Maté talks about intuition and it got me to start to think about the role of intuition as a clinical skill.

So let's check in with you, when I use that term clinical intuition, what does that mean to you? Whatever it means to you right now, today I want to talk about one definition of what it is and why I actually think it's so important in our clinical practice.

But before I do that, I just wanted to talk to you about an opportunity that I have. We at Abilities have some limited job listings that I really want to share with you.

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

Now, these listings aren't just ordinary job openings, they're really opportunities to join me in helping move our industry forward, where you can really make a real impact and grow your career.

So to explore these listings and to find the perfect job match for you, all you really need to do is visit our website. So you can simply go to the show notes and find the URL, and you will find a curated list of job openings that hopefully align perfectly with your skills and interests. But remember, these opportunities won't last long.

Now, I don't really believe in competing against other clinicians, so I really don't want to get to the scarcity part. And the truth is there are really only so many spaces in our clinic and we are very methodical in how and why we hire. So you want to make sure to check out those listings today. And if you're ready, make that first step towards your next exciting career move.

If you have any questions or you need assistance with those listings, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. You can do that directly and you can do that before you create any resume or do anything like that. As a listener of the podcast, I want to let you know you don't have to do all of those other things, just contact me directly via email at [heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com](mailto:heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com) and set up that confidential, casual conversation and let's learn more and talk about it.

So getting back to intuition, when I think about clinical intuition, what I'm referring to is really that ability to perceive and understand those subtle, nonverbal cues, and often but not always it's based on clinical experience and knowledge. And we use that to make informed and empathetic decisions in the assessment, the treatment and the care of our clients or patients.

So I want to specifically mention that intuition doesn't always just come from our clinical experience and knowledge because long before we became clinicians, we were and we also remain human beings with our own lived experience. And I like to think of this kind of experience in and of itself as a way to have a deep understanding of a client's needs, emotions and progress that goes beyond

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

what can be directly measured or quantified through our more traditional assessments and objective data.

So all that to say is you do not need to wait to rely on your clinical intuition. So intuition in these kinds of clinical fields can manifest as some kind of innate sense or some kind of gut feeling about maybe the most appropriate therapeutic approach, the kind of intervention that you want to try or any kind of adjustments in your treatment planning.

It often develops over time, I know it does, and you don't need to wait for it. But it does develop over time through an exposure of a variety of cases and a variety of situations, which really can allow therapists to draw upon your accumulated knowledge and expertise to confidently make decisions that have a positive impact on the wellbeing and progress of your clients or patients.

So meaning, if you've had the intuitive sense early in your career, as you gain experience, you also gain the confidence to rely on that intuition as part of the assessment process. So it's important to note that while intuition is a valuable clinical skill, and that's my whole thesis today, is to convince you of that, but of course, of course, it should be used in conjunction with evidence-based practice and critical thinking to ensure that you're going to have the best possible outcomes for your clients or patients.

The goal really here isn't to rely too much on one side or the other, the goal is to aim to strike that balance between intuitive insights and data-driven decision making in our professional practice. So for example, really early on in my clinical career and in my practice, and I was working at a child development center at the time, I noticed how I could use singing as a clinical tool.

Now, let's be clear, I am no Taylor Swift. You will not really catch me singing on this podcast. There will be no concerts. And I have no songwriting ability, I do not claim to do that. But I intuitively decided early on that I could create a really simple walking song as I worked with some of my young clients on learning to walk that would help them to create rhythm, to engage them by using their name

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

in the song and to help them to see this activity as just more fun by singing a little walking tune.

And it's funny that that came to my recollection because I have not sung that song, really, in years. But one of my colleagues just recently mentioned how she still remembers that song that I created. And either she uses that same song to this day or she uses a version of it. Of course, I like to think that she's the same song, but that's probably not true.

So today, I can actually give you a lot of clinical reasoning why singing along with the walking practice worked now. But at that time, it really just came from my lived experience as a child and enjoying singing as part of my childhood experience. And also working with children before I became a clinical professional in a non clinical environment. So it really just was my intuition.

As I tried that intuition, and as I got good feedback from it, I was able to refine it to what it became today. So much so that if I was to jump back into clinical practice, I would definitely use singing as part of my practice, no matter how bad I actually am at it. In fact, there really actually is both a cognitive and a neurological basis for our clinical intuition.

Clinical intuition involves complex processes within the brain, and they enable professionals to make quick and informed decisions based on your accumulated knowledge and your clinical experience. So some of those mechanisms that underpin that intuition include things like pattern recognition. It includes the brain's ability to create mental shortcuts to simplify complex decision making. It includes the mechanism of neuroplasticity, of emotional intelligence, of experience-based learning and that limbic system activation of all of those pieces coming together.

So while for some people intuition can sound really woo woo and less than evidence-based, and I was probably one of those people at the beginning. There really are mechanisms that explain what is happening when we rely on that part of our brain in our decision making. I would actually argue that by tapping into our intuition as well as our more evidence-based and critical

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

thinking side, we open more opportunities to help our clients or patients find success by using more parts of our own intelligence.

So, have I convinced you yet? What can you do if you want to develop your intuition as part of your practice? I made a non exhaustive list of where you can start.

So step one is all around reflective practice. So there is always this opportunity to regularly review your client cases and experiences. And when you do that, you can analyze the outcomes of your interventions and your decisions, and then reflect on what worked well and maybe what you could have done differently.

Secondly, mentorship and collaboration can be huge in developing your intuition. You can seek guidance and mentorship from experienced colleagues, and even less experienced colleagues. Collaborate with other professionals to gain different perspectives, especially different disciplines. This is really where I have learned so much more as a clinician. And then you can discuss those challenging cases and share your own insights with peers.

And for us at Abilities, we do that in a monthly collaboration meeting. But you could also do that if you aren't able to do that on a regular basis in your own professional thing, it could be in a Facebook group, you could find or even build a network to do that. And then you want to learn from others who have honed their intuitive skills over time.

Next, you can consider continuing education. When you stay updated with the latest research and development in your field by attending workshops, conferences, training programs, that can really help you to explore your intuition.

And I would also invite you to explore courses that may or may not be part of your own clinical practice, but may actually help you. So those are areas such as psychology, communication, and interpersonal skills, because they really can help to enhance your own understanding of patient or client behavior.

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

Next, you can think about active listening. And when I think about active listening, I think about paying really close attention to both the verbal and the nonverbal cues of our patients or clients. I think about practicing empathetic listening to better understand their needs and concerns, and really using open-ended questions to encourage my patient or client to express themselves fully.

And then, finally, you know because of this podcast this would not be a list without me highlighting the importance of mindfulness and self-awareness in intuition. When you practice mindfulness techniques, that's really going to help you to stay present in the moment. And when you develop self-awareness by reflecting on your own emotional responses to your client or patient interactions, that's really going to help you to tap into your own intuition.

Finally, you really want to look and seek to understand how your own biases and how your own emotions may actually influence your intuition. Your ability to be present in the moment is really one of the largest pieces in cultivating your own intuition.

So, think about an outstanding clinician that you know. You might either know them personally, or you might admire them from afar. But I just want to invite you to picture them in your mind, I would guess more often than not that that kind of clinician has done the work to be present. And they have done the work above to not be afraid to take a chance, especially if that intuitive chance that they're willing to take could be of benefit to the client.

Now, that level of clinical intuition is available to you as well, no matter how long or how short you have practiced clinically. And I'm here to tell you, your clients really do hope that you are willing to develop it. Not only will it help your clients, I guarantee and I would argue to my dying day that it's going to make your own work a lot more enjoyable.

So give it a try and let me know how it goes. I cannot wait to see what you do with it. Connect with me if you get stuck and let's figure it out together. If you enjoyed today's episode, please subscribe, rate and share this podcast so that

## Ep #40: Empathy Unleashed: The Power of Therapeutic Intuition

other clinicians just like you can also benefit. Thank you so much. Have a great week and I'll 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](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.