

## Ep #79: Improving Relations with Colleagues



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**With Your Host**

**Heather Branscombe**

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Episode 79, Improving Relations with Colleagues.

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're doing well today. Today I'm recording this podcast episode from Sun Peaks. For those of you who might not be aware, this is a resort here in BC, and I'm trying my hand at my first week of actually working remotely.

I am so lucky to have this amazing cousin who has a beautiful townhouse up here, and he offered it to myself and my husband to be able to use for the week. Now, this week, unfortunately or fortunately, we both have work to do, but it's been fun to have all the fun that the resort has to offer, both before and after work, and even just to work in a new place.

So today I wanted to offer you a part of a conversation I had actually earlier this week with some of the clinicians that I work with. As part of the support that I offer, we talk about some of the non-clinical yet challenging parts of working as a clinician. A lot of the similar things that I talk about on this podcast. This week, we talked about how to easily improve relations with your colleagues, and I thought that might be helpful to share with you today as well.

I just want to start by saying when I'm talking about relationships with colleagues, it could be any kind of administrative support we have, other clinicians, or any kind of clinical assistants. They all are going to fall under this

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kind of relationship. And I just want to acknowledge, of course, they're so important to us.

They're important to us because, ultimately, I know so many of us, we love people. That's why we work in the industry that we do. We love helping people. So when a relationship isn't easy, it can be super impactful to our overall working experience. More so, I would say, than other people in different experiences.

I'll just share, my husband also is working remotely this week. We don't often work as closely as we are this week, and so as I hear some of the challenges and the conversations that they have in the construction industry, I just want to say the way that they relate to each other, it's not right or wrong, but it's certainly very different than what I notice how we relate in this kind of industry.

So I have a strategy that works for me, and it may be helpful for you to navigate this kind of situation in terms of relating with colleagues when it feels difficult, including some tips on how to actually put this into practice.

Before I share about this though, this is something not new in me sharing, but this podcast is a passion project of mine because I really do want all clinicians to have the ability to use this kind of tool set and these kind of tips as a way to magnify their impact, even if they never work alongside us or with us at Abilities. I consider myself so lucky to be able to do this and to share this as part of my work week. The ability for me to do this, I'm still so excited every single week. It's really part of my fun at work.

You can help me to make this kind of project more meaningful by helping to spread the message. More clicks will ultimately help more clients and more clinicians, so let's work together to make that happen. So you can help me to do that in a couple of concrete ways.

First, if you could really just take a moment to follow, rate, and review this podcast. It'll probably take you 30 seconds or less, and the impact that it has is it really helps feed the algorithm of where you are listening to this podcast. So then when there is a clinician just like you searching for something just like this, this podcast will come up for them so much easier. Secondly, if you could please

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share this podcast, or even better yet a favorite episode, with a colleague that you think would really benefit, that would be amazing.

Again, if you've heard this before, I share this a lot on many podcast episodes, and you meant to do it and you haven't done it yet, it's okay. It's totally okay. Please let this be the sign, today's the day that you can help other clinicians.

And if this is your first episode, welcome, first of all. Thank you so much for listening. And hopefully, as you listen, you can decide who of your clinical friends would love to hear more of this kind of information to help them at work as well. Thank you again so much in advance for your action here. And with that, let's get back to the episode.

So let's say you have a work colleague that you want to improve your relationship with. Maybe they're saying or doing something that doesn't really sit right with you. How do you improve relations with your colleagues? I want to offer that you can try this, give clear and kind feedback.

Now, I just want to say most of us are naturally really good at being kind, especially those of us that work in this kind of industry. We naturally assume good intentions. We assume behavior is communication, especially when we've processed any negative emotions we have and are in a more regulated state. So if you aren't there yet, meaning if you're having a hard time being kind, that's okay. That's just a sign to turn inwards first and do what you need to do to regulate your own nervous system.

But assuming that you are regulated and ready to move forward, let's talk about being clear while also being kind. Clear means, to me, that you are willing to give direct feedback to another person, be that being in person, over email, a text, or a phone call.

To give your colleague credit, they really can't fix a problem they don't know about. You could assume that they know how it's affecting you, but we really don't know that. So we have the opportunity to give them an opportunity to change their own behavior when we offer feedback that is both clear and kind.

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So when we give feedback, here are a few strategies to make that as impactful as possible. First, use specific examples when possible when giving that kind of feedback. Using statements like, you always or you never, first, aren't actually factually true because very rarely are people always doing something or never doing something. And second, it isn't very clear.

So second, be clear about what you're actually asking for. It's really okay to make a request for the kind of behavior you're looking to see, even if you have no direct work authority over that person. They may or may not choose to honor that request, but you give them the opportunity to change their behavior when you are being clear on what you want exactly.

Third, I would say be clear about how their behavior impacts your work. So again, they may not be either aware or actively thinking about how their behavior at work impacts you and your work. This can help your colleague better to understand how your work is affected by their work. I like to think of it kind of like informed consent. They are better informed to make more informed decisions, knowing the impact of their decisions affects you directly. And they know that by getting that directly from you.

And fourth, I just offer to get help if you need it. This all could sound easy, especially in a podcast where we're itemizing it one by one, when in reality it can actually feel really hard to do and to execute. This is a skill. And it's okay if you don't have a great mastery in this skill just yet. I would offer to ask a trusted person in your support system to help you if being clear doesn't feel safe to do so.

I say that because this is a skill that I work on myself to this day. I share this, I share this episode because I myself have not yet mastered it and because as I've worked on it, I've seen how it's helped not only myself to be more impactful, but it's helped me to empower other people to be more impactful as well.

I also want to just pause here and acknowledge my privilege of being the leader of a company. It can be very easy to say, "Oh, sure. Of course, you can say that, Heather, you're the CEO of the company. Of course, you feel powerful and safe

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enough to be clear and kind.” But I want to share a story where I’ve done this recently where I actually am not the leader, and where it actually was helpful.

So outside of my work, I’m a volunteer in an organization that I have a lot of passion for. It’s not related to our industry at all, but it’s something that I’m very passionate about. And at the time of this story, I was not the leader in any capacity, and actually had some responsibility to be accountable to a couple of other people in the volunteer role that I was playing.

So in this volunteer role, I went to a meeting where I met as part of a few groups that were meeting and we were talking about something that, again, I was very passionate about. If you don’t know this about me yet, when I’m passionate I definitely speak my mind. And I definitely had some opposing views to some of the opinions that were being shared in this meeting. It doesn’t mean that I was necessarily right or wrong in that meeting, just that my opinions were different.

And now looking back, I can actually see the value in those differences. Not just my differences, but the other differences that were coming to that meeting. But if I’m being honest, I didn’t actually see the value of that at the time. I wasn’t rude, but I am passionate. And I can see how that can come across as being something different to someone who feels very differently than what I was thinking at the time.

So not unexpectedly, someone at that meeting was offended by my words. But instead of giving me direct feedback and coming to me to speak about it, they went to my “supervisor,” for lack of a better term, to give her feedback with the instruction to give me feedback.

Now, this wasn’t super effective because, first, my supervisor wasn’t at that meeting and so she had no context in which to talk to me about it. I also didn’t like the feeling of being reported. And so after some time to regulate my nervous system, and I did need some time, I decided that I wanted to show up as being kind, but clear.

So for me in this situation, being kind but clear was to give this person a request that if he wanted to talk to me about my behavior, he should come to me directly. So I used the example of how it was less helpful to go to my supervisor because



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she didn't have the context to fully understand where he was coming from. That was my specific example.

I was clear in that I offered to converse with him over email or by phone or in person. I was clear in what that conversation could look like for me. And it allowed him space to choose one of those options on whatever felt best for him as well.

I was clear that by going to my supervisor, I knew that there was some kind of disconnect between myself and this person who was in the meeting, but I didn't have enough information to do anything about it without his direct input. So it impacted me in terms of it actually limited my opportunity to do things differently if they were warranted.

And I will say, again, before I sent him this message, I actually did get help first. I gave myself time and space to regulate myself before I acted. I talked to a trusted friend who helped me to decide how I wanted to behave in this situation. And I checked in with myself all along the way to make sure what I was doing felt good for me.

So again, it's easy for me to share this story. Isn't it great to hear great examples? But I also want to offer there are lots of stories that I could share where I didn't use clear and kind as my north star in terms of my values, and that's totally okay as well.

This is a skill, and I want to offer that to you, this is a skill that we all get to work on for the rest of our careers, even in our life. And it's okay to go at your own pace. So if this resonated with you at all, give it a try and let me know how it goes. Yes, I'm busy. We're all busy, but I promise you I am never too busy to talk to you. Please feel free to email me [Heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com](mailto:Heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com) and let's talk about it.

With that, I hope you have an amazing rest of your 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

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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.