

## Ep #83: Working with Your Conative Style



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**With Your Host**

**Heather Branscombe**

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Episode 83, Working with Your Conative Style.

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 things going for you? If you're listening to this when it's first coming out, I recorded this at the very, very end of July. And I have to say I've had an amazing time here in July where I've both worked really hard and also rested really hard, if that makes sense. If not, let me tell you a little bit about it.

This month I've done a lot of internal work with the support team that I work with most, and that's involved a lot of hard conversation as team members to ultimately be a stronger team. I've also done a lot of work internally on my end. And so that's where I feel like I've actually worked really hard, but I've actually had a lot of rest as well.

I know most of us who work clinically have some kind of seasonality to our work, meaning that there are times where you are working but the intensity feels objectively less than other times. And I just want to say if this is one of those times for you, it really is a natural time to work on your mindset about work specifically. And what that can do is help you to prepare for the more intense periods of work that will ultimately come. That's what's happened for me, and I've loved it and I would love that for you as well.

So today, I wanted to share something that I actually came across in some education that I'm doing, and it's around conative styles. And I have to say,

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when I came across it, the first thing that I thought of other than, ooh, this is really cool, is that I really wanted to share it with you.

Now, I want to preface this by saying that there ultimately can be limitations with labels of any kind, and we can see that, especially those of us who work with people with neurodiversities. And also, I think that there really is a benefit from understanding how your brain naturally works, and then using that kind of knowledge to help to set yourself up for success.

So it's with that kind of mindset that I really think that there's something here. And there are some applications here, both for you and for your clients. So let's talk about conative styles, what those different styles are, and how I see this helping you in your work.

Now, before I share these styles and how I think it will help you, I know that you may already know this, but again, I just want to share that this podcast is such a passion project of mine, because I really do want all clinicians to have the ability to use this kind of tool set and tips as a way to magnify their impact, even if they never work alongside us or with us at Abilities.

And again, I say this again and again because it really is true, I do consider myself so lucky to be able to do this every week and to share this as part of my work week. This kind of work, I will say in advance, it definitely aligns with my conative style. And after this, you may be able to guess why and how later in the podcast episode.

But you can help me to make this podcast episode and the podcast in general more meaningful by helping to spread the message. More and better clicks help more clinicians, which ultimately helps more clients. So let's work together to make that happen.

So you can help me to do that in a couple of ways. First, if you can follow, rate, and review this podcast wherever you're listening to it, that helps feed the algorithm so that when a clinician is searching for something like this, this podcast will come up for them. And second, if you can share this podcast, or really even better yet, a favorite episode with a colleague that you know, like and trust, that can be the most helpful thing.

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If you've heard this before and you meant to do it before, and you haven't done it yet, I say this again, but I'm going to say it this time as well. It is okay. Let this be the sign, today's the day. Think about your clinical bestie and think about which episode might be helpful for them. This is your way to help other clinicians just like yourself.

And if this is your first episode, again, welcome. 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. Thank you so much in advance for your action here. And with that, let's get back to the episode.

So let's start at the beginning, shall we? What is a conative style? It's not a cognitive style. It is conative style. Basically, your conative style is the way that you as a person prefer to take action. So especially when you are looking to do things like solve problems, to meet a goal, or to overcome a challenge. Now, again, I want to say this at the beginning, it should be said here that there is no better or worse style. It's really a description. There's no judgment about that.

What I initially found super interesting about this is that it was popularized by a woman named Kathy Kolbe, whose father designed intelligent tests in the early 20th century. So Kathy herself was born brilliant, but she had also had severe dyslexia, and she didn't learn, because of this, in the same way that other children learned. And because of this, her father was aware of it, she was aware of it, and ultimately she spent her whole life studying the way children and adults, ultimately people of all ages, approach anything that they undertake.

So given the areas that we as clinicians tend to work with, especially as a listener of this podcast, that definitely piqued my interest for sure. I then heard an actual beautiful metaphor, I think it's a beautiful metaphor by Martha Beck, who was also talking about these styles. And this metaphor really resonated with me. So she shared the importance of this kind of style by relating the following metaphor.

So imagine that you hid a pallet of delicious animal food. And you have four animals; a mouse, a squirrel, an otter, and a mole. You line up those four

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animals, and then you race them to see who would find the food first. So the question is, who would win and why?

Now, if you think about that, it really actually depends on where the food is hidden. Doesn't that make sense? Because if it's something like under a haystack, then ultimately the mouse is more likely to find it first. If that food pallet is up in a tree, the squirrel is going to find it a lot faster. If it's underwater, the otter is probably going to get it best. And if it's underground, I bet you that mole is going to dig it out first.

So the point of this is to say that there's no one way of approaching anything that's ultimately better or worse. It's just that in this metaphor of the animals, they're going to approach finding food differently. Also, you can also notice all four of those animals can actually swim, it's just the otter swims best. All four of those animals can dig, but the mole actually digs best.

So relating that back to us and conative styles, conative styles and all of the conative styles actually exist in all of us, it's just that we innately tend to prefer and use some of those styles more than others.

So without further ado, what are those conative styles? So Kathy Kolbe defined or labeled these four conative styles as the following. Fact finder, follow through, quick start, and implementer. Now, this is not an exhaustive test, but what I want to share is, again, these labels will define how you like to take action.

So depending on the one that you're kind of most naturally endowed with, it's just like all the animals. You probably can do all four, but you're going to prefer to start with one or maybe two of these styles, and you may be a little more resistant or find the other one or two a little more challenging. It really is going to vary from person to person.

So let's talk about those a little bit more. So again, this is not a test, this is not a way, but as you hear them, I bet you're going to find one or two of these styles that innately sound more aligned to you.

So first with a fact finder, fact finders like to work with information. So they're going to do things, if they have an action, they're going to look up the rules of

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that action before they take action themselves. Or maybe they're going to find a teacher to teach them how to do the action. So the important thing about fact finding is that before acting, they like to get facts first.

Whereas someone who is stronger in the follow through really likes to work with systems. So they'd like to have that list of tasks, of steps for them to move forward. And these kinds of people tend to be very attentive to detail.

Now, before I go through the next two, what's interesting is that most schools and most education systems are really strong in either the fact finder or the follow through. So I just want to offer that many clinicians, because we also needed to be strong in school to do the work that we do, are often really strong in one of those first two, either fact finder or follow through. It's really kind of part of our strengths.

The next two that I want to talk about are quick start and implementers. So next are the quick starters. So they tend to figure it out by doing. They like to act first and then get information or get feedback after. So you might be thinking of people that may be you or you might know people that kind of act first and then get information after.

And then the final style is implementer. And those are the people that like to work with physical objects. So they might like to, it's really more of a kinesthetic thing. They like to take things apart. They tend to be more technical. They like the machinery. All of those kinds of things are people that are more naturally strong in that implementer style.

So you may prefer some ways of acting and not others. And truthfully, all of us are going to have ways to interact with all of these styles. And ultimately, at some point we are going to be required to take action in all four of these ways. But just notice as I talked about them, which of those sounded more appealing to you than others?

Now, again, this is a very brief introduction. If you are interested in learning more, I would go to the Kolbe website. Kolbe is spelled K-O-L-B-E. I'll link the website in the show notes. And you can actually take a quick online test. It's not

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free, but it's a pretty nominal cost, and you can find out a whole lot of information about the styles and how those styles specifically apply to you.

But in this general area, let's talk about it in general and why it might be useful to yourself and to your clients. So first of all, I just want to offer for yourself, knowing more about who you are as a clinician and how you naturally like to work is an amazing first step to set yourself up for success. You're going to be much more successful with your clients when you set yourself up for success as well first.

So if you have some kind of goal at work, notice how you might naturally want to approach it. And then also you can think about what you actually might need to actually get your goal. If what you need to actually get to your goal aligns with your style, that's amazing. If not, that's not necessarily a problem, but you might need to get some help in some other areas to help you to get that goal.

So one of the things as I was thinking about that is thinking about growing Abilities. So when I first started to start Abilities and then to grow Abilities, I knew instinctively, long before I knew about these styles, I needed someone who would help me do some of the back end implementing because I wasn't strong in that area and I really didn't want to do it. So those were things like doing the billing, doing the payroll, doing the bookkeeping. And so what I chose to do is to hire that out really quickly.

Now, I don't know if you can tell already, but I naturally identify as a quick start. So as a quick start, I wanted to act first and then use facts to help me with the next steps. So that's again why I wanted to start the business and hire some of those things, hire people that could help me with systems, and then get some of those facts after to be able to help me to give feedback to be able to modify my actions moving forward.

I love systems, but I don't actually love setting them up. I like analyzing them and getting them better. And now when I think about it today, remember that support team that I was talking about and the hard conversations I was talking about at the beginning of the podcast episode today? When I think about that

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team that I work with, I actually can see the variety of strengths and the variety of styles that we have strengths in.

I can see how people are more of systems people, they are the follow through people. I can see who on my team is stronger as a quick start. I can see the people on my team that are stronger as implementers, and again, with that follow through in those systems. So what I like about that is that each of us brings our complementary strengths, and then together we are so much more than what we are individually.

Now again, I realize you as a clinician, depending on where you work, you may not have a huge team at your disposal and you may not have the ability to hire that team. And that's totally okay. What I want you to say, a more empowering question might be who at work or in your network can help you with your work goals?

So it may not be your supervisor or any admin support that you have right now. You may not even have any of those, but even talking to someone who has a more naturally different approach from you can be super helpful to get a perspective that you might not already have to help you to achieve your goals.

I want to share finally, I know that for myself, I'm using this knowledge of the strengths that I have to change how I structure my work day to better meet my strengths. So if you have questions on how you might do that, that might be a little outside of the scope of this episode, but reach out to me and I would be happy to brainstorm some ideas with you, because remember, I'm a quick start. Brainstorming and action are things that I love to do.

Finally, you may want to notice how your clients work when you work with them. If you were to make a guess, how do you think that they seem to approach tasks and how is that similar or different to you? How might you want to modify your approach with the work that you do with your clients to better align with their cognitive style? Do they potentially need more information before trying things? Do they need to have the step-by-step system before they start? Or do they really just want to try things out? Or finally, do they need to physically manipulate things to help them to understand the tasks?



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These are some of the things that you can think about your existing sessions and decide if you want to modify to help to meet your clients where you're at. So take a guess and try it out. And this is what I would say for all of this, this style is just interesting information that you can take or leave as it resonates with you.

So give it a try for the things that work out well or align with you and let me know how it goes because again, yes, I'm busy. We are all busy as clinicians, but I guarantee you, I am never too busy to talk to you. You can feel free to email me, [Heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com](mailto:Heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com) and I can't wait to find out what you do with this. With that, thank you so much for listening. Have an amazing rest of your 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](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.