

Ep #103: What to Do When You Procrastinate at Work



Full Episode Transcript

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! I hope you're doing well. If you are listening to this when it first comes out, it is spring. That's when I'm recording this, today. And I am so excited. I don't about know you, I love spring. The flowers are coming out, I can see the rain is slowly starting to slow down, and I can see a time where sun and heat will be part of our future. It's amazing. I love the springtime.

And work has also been super fun for me right now. There's a lot of exciting projects that we have here at Abilities right now, and we're in the middle of hosting a few students, specifically therapy students, which is always really great and a fun time.

So today I wanted to talk to you about an evolution that I've actually had about procrastinating at work. Now, if you don't procrastinate, you probably aren't even listening to this episode, and/or I love that for you. But to be honest, for me, procrastination has always been a part of my work. And as I get older and more seasoned in my career, I actually understand procrastination a lot better. And I've actually come to see it as a form of communication.

You may actually be a speech-language pathologist, but I have learned from amazing speech-language pathologists that behavior is actually communication. And as I've really realized that, I've come to a much better understanding and a

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much better listener to when I procrastinate, such that I actually know now what to do next when I notice that I'm procrastinating something. And so, I actually want that for you.

So today, we're going to talk about what to do next when you feel the urge to procrastinate. Before I share my perspective, I know you might already know this, but this podcast is a passion project of mine because I really want all clinicians to have the ability to use this kind of tool set and tips as a way to magnify their impact. And that's even if they never either work alongside us or even with us at Abilities. I consider myself so lucky to be able to do this as part of my work week. This is definitely one of my more fun parts of my work week. So you can help me to make this much more meaningful by helping to spread the message.

So let's work together to make that happen, shall we? You can help me in a couple of ways. First, if you follow, rate, and review this podcast, that will help to feed the algorithm. I don't know exactly how that happens, but I know that it does happen somehow. So that when a clinician just like you is searching for something just like this, this podcast will come up for them. Secondly, if you could share this podcast, or better yet, a favorite episode with a colleague, that would be even more amazing.

If you've heard this before, and maybe you've even meant to do it, and you maybe haven't even done that yet, that's okay. Let this be the sign. Today is the day that you can help other clinicians just like you. But if this is your first episode, first of all, welcome. Thank you so much for listening. And hopefully, as you listen, you can decide who of your clinical friends you 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 pretend you're supposed to be doing something at work, but you are definitely procrastinating it, and you know it. So instead of feeling some sort of shame or trying to bully yourself into doing the task at hand, there is another, kinder, and even more effective way to get the task done.

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So first, I would say you want to stop and take a moment to ask yourself why you're procrastinating. Take that moment to listen, even if your brain is telling you or asking you, is this really worth it? Is it really worth it to ask yourself why you're procrastinating? Yeah, it really is an important thing for you to ask yourself why. Just get curious.

And when I get curious, I like to kind of tease it out. I like to see if it falls into one or more of three main buckets. First, am I procrastinating because it's a knowledge issue? Meaning, I don't actually know how to complete what I want to do, or I don't know what I think I need to do next. So that could be something, maybe you're completing a report that's new to you, or some other kind of task that is new to you, or has some new level of complication.

Secondly, it may be a feeling issue. And when I talk about that, I mean that you might know what you want to do, or I think in my case, I know what I want to do, I'm just anticipating that it's not going to feel really good when I do it. So that could be something like a hard conversation, saying no to something that I feel like I should say yes to, or other kinds of ways where I'm placing a boundary in my life.

Or third, it could be some kind of action issue. Now, this is actually a newer one for me, and it's actually based on a system that involves a way of action that I don't naturally gravitate to. So this is actually something that people much smarter than me have actually identified and talked about, and it's called your conative style. And this is where an organization named Kolbe, spelled K-O-L-B-E, and their testing is actually an amazing resource for you to learn more about it.

Their premise is that there are natural ways that you, as an individual, will take action when you are problem-solving. And if the thing that we want to want or need to do involves something that goes against our natural style of problem-solving, it can feel more mentally draining than it would be for something else.

So let me give you an example of that. They have four separate areas, but one of the ways is how people do fact-finding. And so they're looking at is how much

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information you need to move forward with an action. So, some people are the kind of people that, like, read all the directions before they start something. Some will maybe read the Read Me First as the quick guide, and some might not even realize that there even are instructions in the first place because they don't actually factually care about that.

So if you are a kind of quick start and you don't really want all of those kind of instructions kind of person, and the activity you're trying to do involves a lot of step-by-step reading of instructions to complete, obviously it's going to feel much more naturally draining for you and you probably are going to procrastinate it a little bit more.

On the other hand, if you love a good instruction manual and there are little to no instructions available for a given task, it could feel much more mentally draining for you to complete a task than someone who doesn't even care if there's instructions in the first place.

So this is not an affiliate. I have no financial implications or incentive for you. But for less than \$100 Canadian, you can actually take an online test to see what your conative style is, meaning what is your style of action, and then you can actually see how that impacts the work that you do. I've done that and it is amazing.

So once you think about that task that you're procrastinating and you think about which one or more of those buckets are you, again, is it a knowledge issue, is it a feeling issue, or is it an action issue, then you can decide what that urge is, it's actually communicating to you. And you can decide, based on that assessment, what to do next.

Now, if you want to know a little bit more about that, I actually break that down in much more detail in Episode 85, How to Make Your To-Do List Easier. So feel free to deep dive there for a step-by-step on ideas to make it easier. But if nothing else, ask yourself this one question: What is the smallest possible step I can take and still make progress on this item?

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So again, often our brain likes to give us all-or-nothing thinking, right? And so it's thinking, I need to complete this task completely, or I need to procrastinate it. And that can actually stop us, I definitely can feel how it stops me from moving forward. And not about you, but I actually see this all the time with clients that I would work with. They'd all want to do either all of the exercises that I'd given them or they would do none of the exercises that I gave them.

But really the truth is small, consistent action is more often than not the key to long-term success. And the reason that that's actually true is because when you take that smallest possible step to take and still make action on that item, one or two things are going to happen. You're either going to get the momentum to keep going because it actually feels easier than you thought it was going to take, and you actually do want to move forward.

Or, as you take action, and you stop there, in doing that, in doing that very small part, you might find that missing piece of the puzzle to make the task easier overall. I know that that's true for myself. I either understand myself better, why this is so hard for me, or I understand the task better. Either way, that does get me closer to doing the goal than procrastinating it completely.

So, next time you feel yourself procrastinating in doing a task, especially at work, try something like this. Get curious to find out why is this task hard for you. Is it a knowledge issue? Is it a feeling issue? And/or is it an action issue? And with that, what is the smallest possible step that you can take to make some kind of progress on that item?

Commit to that smallest possible step, give it a try, and let me know how it goes. And when I say that, I actually mean, tell me how it goes. Yes, I'm busy. We're all busy. But I can tell you I am never too busy to talk to you. Please feel free, as always, to reach me at heather@abilitiesrehabilitation.com.

With that, I hope you have an amazing next part of your day, and I will talk to you soon.

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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.