

Ep #107: What We See That You Might Not: A Day inside Abilities



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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.

Hello there friends, welcome back to *Clinicians Creating Impact*. Today, I thought I'd do something a little different. I want to take you behind the scenes, into a day inside Abilities. And when I say that, I don't mean the logistics or the policies, but what I hope you would see as the spirit of the place. The things that you might not notice at first glance, but really shapes everything that we do.

Because when someone walks into Abilities, whether they're a client, a family member, a clinician, I truly hope in my heart of hearts that they notice something immediately. And that's that relationships aren't just something we talk about. They're actually the foundation of how we work, how we hire, and how we match clients to clinicians.

So in the first 5 minutes, I really want people to feel that. That here, fit matters, not just scheduling. We don't just fill calendars of our clinicians. What we do is we create connections. That's why we don't offer instant online bookings with just anyone available. Instead, you can actually book a conversation, a real conversation with someone on our team who listens to your story and helps find the right clinician match for you. Because ultimately, we believe that care begins not with an appointment, but with understanding.

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So let's talk a little bit about the invisible effort that you might not see. What most people don't see and maybe don't even think about is everything that happens behind the scenes to make that experience possible. Every day, we are investing in our team so that they can show up fully for the people that they serve. So that means creating space for clinicians to decide what actually works best for them, in their schedules, their caseloads, and even in the way that they grow clinically.

We provide what I like to think of as a buffet of support and growth opportunities that they get to choose. It's not about one prescribed path. It's about clinicians choosing what fits with us walking alongside them. And yes, I'm going to say truthfully, that does take more time. Co-creation is slower than command and control. But I'm also here to say that the results is I see that clinicians who are more empowered, and that empowerment ripples out to their clients. And that's what matters most.

One of the things, when I think about this, and really one of many moments that defines us, is a story that stays with me, even years later. So this is way back in the day, back in 2010, during the Vancouver Winter Olympics. Maybe you were around, I don't know how old you were, but we at the time had a client who had a stroke and dreamed of running again.

And he had actually been selected to carry the Olympic torch as part of the pre-Olympic festivities, but he actually wanted to run with it. And so then together, our team got creative. We used a variety of approaches, physiotherapy, different tools, whatever it took to help him to retrain his body bit by bit. And then when that day came, he ran.

It wasn't pretty, but his family didn't even know that that was a goal, and so they were stunned and overjoyed to see him round that bend, carrying the Olympic torch, running for the first time in a very, very long time. Now, for us, that really was the real start of the Olympics. And I share that story not because it's just a happy memory, but it really does represent who we are here. At Abilities, we

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help people reach for their dreams, not just outcomes. We do that for clients and we do that for our clinicians too.

So one of the things that I really love about Abilities is the interdisciplinary spark that comes from having occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech language pathologists working together side by side every day. Now, not every client that comes to see us is going to see all three disciplines, but every clinician benefits from being in a space where diverse perspectives are shared daily.

So if you stood quietly in one of our clinics, you might overhear conversations that might even surprise you, because they're not just about clinical techniques, but they're about celebrating small client wins, brainstorming solutions, or just simply supporting one another. And those hallway conversations, they're not formal, but they make us better together.

So if you're a referrer or an external clinician listening, here is what I wish you actually knew. I wish you knew that we aren't a closed system. We value our team, but we know that no one clinic can meet every need, and we're not trying to do that.

We're actually really excited to collaborate with external professionals, either inside or outside our disciplines, because what matters most is what's best for the client. This is what we truly live every day. And if that means referring out or partnering with someone beyond our walls, we will do it gladly. And I hope as you experience us, you learn that for yourself.

A lot of thought goes into how we lead at Abilities. One of our core leadership commitments is to hold both high standards for care and high autonomy for clinicians. And that can be tension-filled, but it's a tension that we hold intentionally. Instead of rigid protocols, we really like to provide options so that clinicians can choose how they reach those standards with support.

One of the things that I'm most proud of is the compensation system that we've built around those standards. It's transparent, it's flexible, and it's designed to

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align with what a clinician actually wants most and values in their career. And that took us time, years really, but it really reflects our commitment to autonomy and sustainability.

So, what do clinicians gain here that they might not gain elsewhere? First, they gain the ability to lead. And when I say lead, I actually mean lead starting with themselves. It's really important as a leader, even if you lead no one other than yourself, to understand and discover who they serve best, how they work best, and what supports help them to thrive. And then, if they want to lead others, they can, without having to lead the clinical work behind. They can increase their impact without losing the part of the work that they love.

I would say what surprises clinicians most about when they join us, honestly, is how much choice and support they actually have. It really is a unique thing that many organizations have in small doses, but they often don't have it in the scope and in the depth that we have here. How we've invested we are in their success, not just their productivity, it really is what makes us unique. Because we believe fundamentally, when clinicians succeed as humans first and then as professionals, our clients succeed as well.

So where to go from here? If you're a clinician listening and something in this resonated, I want to leave you with this. Start by asking yourself some version of this question. What would bring you more joy, more peace, or more impact in your clinical career? What would it look like to invest not just in your clinical skills, but in yourself? So in your growth, your well-being, your leadership.

And if you're curious of what that could look like at Abilities, of course I'd love to have that conversation with you. Of course, that's confidential, no strings attached. Sometimes these conversations do lead to joining us, and sometimes it leads to insights for you to take back to your current role.

Either way, this is one of my favorite parts of my job, and we all benefit when clinicians grow, clinicians just like you. Because ultimately, I believe a rising tide lifts all ships, and I want to be part of that rising tide for you, for our clients, and for our profession and our industry.

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So thank you in advance for spending this time with me. I hope it sparks something in you, either a question, a reflection, or maybe even a next step. Until next time, keep creating that impact, and I'll talk to you soon.

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.