

Ep #108: 3 Engagement Hacks You Can Use in Any Session



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. Welcome back. I hope you have had an amazing summer. I know that I sure have, and this summer at Abilities, we've really been leaning into the theme of engagement.

We've done a lot of things with this theme. We've done in-services, we've done team discussions, and even had some multidisciplinary conversations about it. We've dove into the evidence and we've talked about valid and reliable ways to measure it. And what's been so powerful is really noticing that engagement really isn't just a nice-to-have thing; it's actually foundational. It drives whether our clients are really learning, whether therapy sticks, and whether outcomes ultimately improve.

It's been kind of a fun place to really build. So now that summer is coming to a close, we have this kind of toolset in our back pockets to create a bigger impact this fall. And because I want all clinicians to win, including you, I thought I'd share a sample of what we've talked about and give you some specific hacks as well.

One of the crucial things that we've talked about is that engagement actually has layers to it. There's a thinking part, a feeling part, and a behaving part to it. And

[Clinicians Creating Impact](#) with Heather Branscombe

Ep #108: 3 Engagement Hacks You Can Use in Any Session

what we notice is the more that we look at it through that lens, the more practical it actually becomes. So today, I want to give you three really simple hacks, things that you can do in 5 minutes or less that build engagement in any session.

But before I dive back in, I want to pause and share something. This podcast, as you may know, is a passion project for me. My hope is that every clinician, whether you work alongside us at Abilities or you never do, that you walk away with tools that help you magnify your impact. I honestly feel that this is the best part of my work. I feel so lucky that recording something like this is part of my work week and to share ideas just like this. And this is where you come in. Here is literally my call for engagement for you.

The truth is that the more people that hear these conversations, the more clinicians and clients can benefit. So if you find value here, there are two simple ways that you can help spread the word. First, I'd ask you to follow, rate, and review the podcast. You've heard that before, right? Pretty much every podcast you listen to says that. The reason that we're all saying that is that that little boost helps the algorithm so that when a clinician just like you is searching for support just like this, this podcast will pop up for them.

And secondly, my ask is that you share this. Share this episode or your favorite one to a colleague. Maybe you've thought about doing that before and you've never quite got around to it. That's okay. No worries. Take this as your nudge that today is the day to do that. And I also want to say, if you're brand new here, welcome. I'm so glad that you're listening. And as you get into the episode, you can think about one person who would love this kind of content to help them in their work.

Either way, thank you so much in advance for helping to grow this. More engagement means better outcomes for clients, and ultimately that's what it's all about. So with that, let's get back to the episode.

So here's my hack number one. Hack number one is mini engagement check-ins. What I would share with you is at the beginning of a session, midway

[Clinicians Creating Impact](#) with Heather Branscombe

Ep #108: 3 Engagement Hacks You Can Use in Any Session

through, and again near the end - you can do more or less - but do a quick mental scan. Ask yourself, what is my client thinking right now, or what do I think that my client is thinking right now? What do I think they're feeling right now, and how are they behaving?

What I notice is that experienced therapists actually, or experienced clinicians, often do this without even naming it themselves. But when you put words to it, it really does change the game. It helps you to catch some kind of disengagement earlier, adapt before you lose momentum in the session, and then end the session on a stronger note. So think of it as like tiny course corrections to keep the plane flying straight instead of veering off track.

My hack number two is positive first feedback. Early in the session, it's really beneficial if you can catch the client doing something right, even if it's really small, and naming it. Something like, "I like how you started that movement," or "I noticed you kept trying even when it was tricky."

That quick positive loop hits that feeling side of engagement. It helps the client to feel encouraged, and it also can influence their thinking to shift to something like, "I can do this," which then can help them to follow up with behavior that follows more effort. Something like that one sentence early on can really change the energy for the entire session.

Hack number three is for yourself. There's an opportunity for a therapist self-check. And here's the part that we sometimes forget: engagement isn't just about the client; it's actually about us too. It's about the connection. So if you're feeling rushed, frustrated, or distracted, I guarantee you the client picks up on that instantly.

Here's an opportunity to give yourself permission to pause. Notice what you're thinking, what you're feeling, and what you're doing in the moment, and maybe even take a breath before moving forward. That tiny little reset helps you to re-enter with a different tone, and often it changes how the client responds as well.

Ep #108: 3 Engagement Hacks You Can Use in Any Session

So those are the three hacks. One, mini check-ins with your client. Two, positive first feedback, and three, a self-check for yourself. They're simple, but they have the opportunity to shift the whole session.

So I'd love for you to try one of those this week. Pick the one that feels the most natural, use it in a session, and just notice what happens. Engagement really is the multiplier in therapy, and it's what makes all the rest of our work stick.

Thank you so much for listening, and I'm excited to keep exploring engagement and other things just like that in the weeks ahead. Until the next episode.

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.