

Episode: 21**Title: Supporting Emotional Regulation - Collaborating with a Team****Hosts: Mahek Bansal & Larissa Ferrari****Mahek Bansal**

Hi, everyone. Welcome back to the New PossibilOTs podcast. Larissa and I are super happy to be with you again today. Today we are continuing on our series Supporting Emotional Regulation, and this is the second episode in the series. So if you haven't listened to the first episode, go back and listen, because we will just be continuing on the conversation. But in this episode, we are focusing more on how we work within a team of health professionals who are all supporting a child's emotional regulation in different capacities. So Larissa and I thought it might be good to, break down how we work with different health professionals, where the overlaps may occur, how we work in collaboration, and maybe suggest some tips or strategies of how we can ensure the best and most effective collaboration across a team of health professionals.

Larissa Ferrari

Following from our conversation, Mahek, as you said in our previous episode, we've mentioned some keywords, like, for example, communication, identifying and naming emotions and things like that, and achieving regulation to perform tasks. This already gives us a little bit of a clue of what we're going to be talking about in that episode. Because if we're talking about communication, identifying feelings, naming feelings, performance, then we are, of course, identifying how many skills are involved in emotional literacy and regulation, therefore, how many professionals can be working on similar goals, but in different skills. That's a good way to start an episode, right?

Mahek Bansal

So I think we need to start off by saying that, of course, we are occupational therapists, and we are trained as occupational therapists, so we can't sit and tell about the different scopes and roles of all the other health professions. But what we can do is share our experiences of working with other health professionals, especially in relation to clients with emotional regulation goals. So we're hoping to share a little bit of insight today on how we see each health professional can bring their skills to the table and how we can all work together super effectively.

Larissa Ferrari

Exactly. Well, just to put some name here, I think most of us are in the clinic at Occupational Therapy Helping Children, we work with psychologists, speech language pathologists, behaviour therapists, positive behaviour therapists, and in that area of emotional regulation, these are the main professionals we collaborate with. Am I leaving anyone behind? Of course, we might have other professionals like physiotherapists.

Mahek Bansal

Paediatricians, psychiatrists. There is many, you know, even potential social workers, support workers. There's a lot of people that we would work with. However, yeah, the main overlaps or, things we see collaboration. Yeah, I think we can't. We can't always name all of them, so we don't mean to leave anyone out. But we'll just be picking up the very common ones that we, probably of common because they're at the top of. Of our mind with the current caseload that we're working with.

Larissa Ferrari

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Yes. So we collaborate a lot, and that's really important to support the child, because, again, what we mentioned before is we want to ensure consistency, we want to ensure we're finding strategies and that we are having a look at the bigger picture, not only worried about what's happening in our sessions with our clients, us and the parents. Right.

Mahek Bansal

So, Larissa, it reminds me a little bit of a previous episode we've done quite a few episodes ago now about collaborating with health professionals. I think what we discussed in that episode was why it's important to understand the role and the scope of the different health professions that we work with.

And I think if you want to listen and get a better understanding of those different roles and scopes, I would recommend going back to that episode, because now is a really clear example of why it's so important. When we're supporting children with emotional regulation goals and we're working really closely with these health professions, we need to have that clarity and understanding of what the scope might be so that we can draw on the relevant skillset of each therapist without, you know, we don't want to be doing the same work, but we can really harness the unique skillset and experience that we've got to be working alongside each other consistently. And so then we're using a holistic approach for the child.

Larissa Ferrari

So maybe a good way to start that, Mahek, would be to bring some examples in our practice. And again, we are not the ones that will tell what the other professionals do. We're just sharing our experiences and then maybe trying to exemplify how that works, practically speaking.

Mahek Bansal

Definitely.

Larissa Ferrari

Can you think of any example, in your case, you'd like to share with us?

Mahek Bansal

Yeah, of course. I think I'm just going to share some examples and we can go from there. So an example might be a client who is having difficulty with emotional regulation, especially at school, and we have a team of OT, psych, and speech pathologists. So the way that we are working collaboratively is that the speech pathologist is working on the understanding and naming of the different emotions and building language and vocabulary to describe feelings, describe situations. So both, receptively understanding what does, you know, sad mean, what does happy mean, what does angry mean? But then also being able to use that in the right context and use that to be able to communicate how we're feeling. So, yeah, and that's such a brilliant role of a speech pathologist, alongside lots of other roles.

The psychologist is working on supporting the child whose dysregulation often occurs when there's a lot of demands, which is why it's happening a lot at school and because the client is experiencing anxiety in social situations or in group environments. So the psych is working really well with the client on supporting the demand avoidance and the anxiety. And in occupational therapy, we are working on being able to, identify what situations make us feel different ways and the relevant strategies that we can use in the different environments to be

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able to better communicate and express how we're feeling, but also to be better able to maintain our regulation or to de-escalate once we're dysregulated.

This is just one example, but it's how we're all working towards the same functional outcome, but we are using each other to sort of break that down and work together. Where the collaboration really comes in, even though we have sort of divided our goals, our specific goals, where the collaboration comes in, is that our goals or what we're doing individually in our therapies really impact each other. For example, if the speech pathologist is working on naming, understanding of specific emotions or specific feelings, and also the language around that, then, you know, in OT, I'm going to need to know what those feelings or what that language that they're using is so that I can use the same common language and vice versa.

You know, the psychologist would need to know from me and the speech pathologist, but what are the strategies that we're trying for the different, when we're feeling different ways so that they can, you know, have that consistency as well. And yeah, it's then whilst we are really clear on our own roles, we still need that collaboration. It doesn't mean that we can just work solo. It won't work well and I think it will just cause more confusion for the child and the family if we're not being consistent with each other.

Larissa Ferrari

I have a very similar example as well. I have the child coming and we practice some strategies to facilitate transitions. Transitions triggers a lot of feelings that's difficult for us to deal with. So we have some therapists that go at home. They work with these different feelings. With behavioural analysis, they try to understand patterns, and in session, we try the strategies and then we communicate. So I have more information about the patterns and I can share some information about the strategies. We both want to facilitate transitions, but the way we look at it might be different, and the way we collaborate might be different, but at the end, we have similar goals in that sense, but in a different scope of practice.

And because of that collaboration, we ensure consistency and we are making sure that we have, like, a wider look of what the child needs. So I think you nail it with your example and also by explaining the different roles of the different professionals in that case, Mahek. You also brought so many insights about how many things are behind an emotional dysregulation or anxious feeling. Like we said before, there's so many things involved. My ability to process what's happening, the ability to communicate what's happening, the ability to pick one strategy, and all of these are fundamental skills to solve the big picture problem.

Mahek Bansal

Yeah, definitely. I think another common way that I work with other health professionals is, you know, it's often like I will see the child one on one for intervention and work with a psychologist who does the parent coaching with the family. So I think, and in that situation, yes, it's very clear the difference, but we have to be so consistent, because if I'm recommending strategies to the family to try from what I've done with the child, then psychologists will need to know that to be able to support the family and not overwhelm the family by making other suggestions. And, you know, I need the information from the psychologist of what they're recommending and things like that.

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So I think it's just understanding you can have really clear goals, and it's important to have really clear goals that are within your scope, but you still need that consistency across everyone in terms of your approach, your communication with what's being told to the family and the child and things like that. So we've highlighted that it's really important to collaborate and it's really important to communicate. But, Larissa, maybe we can share just a few strategies on how we make that happen.

Larissa Ferrari

Yeah. Should we go to my strategy, your strategy, and we take turns?

Mahek Bansal

Yes, I think that's our favourite way to do it.

Larissa Ferrari

Yes. So my strategy, number one, is to make sure you're organizing your agenda, some quick chats and follow ups with all the professionals and parents and with the child team. Yeah, make sure it can be some quick catch ups, it doesn't have to be long meetings, but just keep that communication going.

Mahek Bansal

Yep, sounds great. My tip is as a team of health professionals, decide what form of communication and how regular is going to suit everyone the best. So, you know, it can feel like an added stress or an added load of being able to collaborate with all these people. So you need to make sure that what you're doing is effective and it works for everyone. So whether that's doing an email to the whole team, you know, at fortnightly, or emailing your notes from your session, organising like a monthly or a termly whole video call meeting, or you know, some clients teams have platforms that they use like same view or even like WhatsApp group chat or things like that. Whatever works for your client, for the team, because that's then going to be the most effective way for everyone to collaborate and communicate together.

Larissa Ferrari

Great. And then my strategy number three would be to exchange exactly what strategies you have been using that's working. Ask if they're using strategies as well that's working, and then come to an agreement to use similar strategies, if not the same strategies consistently. So again, as you said before, Mahek, it's not confusing for the child. We are providing consistency in the strategies provided; therefore we're helping the child to have consistency and a better understanding and to rely on those strategies with everyone involved.

Mahek Bansal

Definitely. Something else is, you know, considering yes, we want to communicate but we don't. What does that mean? I think it works really well. If, you know, you've had a phone call or you've had a big meeting, you've understood your plan, then maybe you just need to communicate if something changes with that plan so that the team's aware. It doesn't necessarily mean that you need to, you know, communicate every single thing that happens, but maybe if there are just changes on an agreed plan. And also to use the parent and the

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carer, if they are supporting their child with attending these different services and therapies, or meeting with the different health professionals, then using them and your time and conversation with them as well to get a little bit of an update of what's going on in their other therapies can be an easy and effective way just to stay in touch and also communicate to the parent that you are really prioritising that collaboration.

Larissa Ferrari

And if you're using any strategy that's working really well with you and then the other professional tried and it did not work with them, just continue that collaboration, because the environment factor might be a big thing in that picture but continue the collaboration. Continue identifying those patterns. Don't assume that's just not working and you shouldn't work with that strategy. It might just be that the child requires different strategies in different environments and there's still room for collaboration to find what's the best strategy for the different environments.

Mahek Bansal

Exactly. So if you have any strategies, then please share how you manage these sorts of collaboration and make it the most effective. Because I think we could all benefit from it. I think for all of us, the phone calls and the emails, some weeks are great. Some weeks can add up. So it's important how we use our own time management and prioritisation and organisation strategies to support us. So if you have anything, please share it with us. We'd love to hear from you. But we have a third episode coming in this series, so stay tuned. It will be here in the next couple weeks. And until then, Larissa and I look forward to talking to you again.

Larissa Ferrari

Yeah, bye.