



The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast

What I Didn't Learn in Grad School Series

freshslp.com

Episode 94: Jenni Provda on Bringing Your A Game, and Being Okay With Not Being Perfect All The Time

In this episode medical SLP Jenni Provda speaks about the importance of being human! Yes, that's right, how to be okay with mistakes! She reflects on the emotional challenges of working in an ever-changing field. She talks about getting buy-in from other professionals. Jenni also reminds us that as 'works in progress', becoming knowledgeable in your field as an SLP takes time.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

1. How do you handle it when something doesn't go the way you had hoped or planned? Can you recognize and accept when something might not pan out?
2. How do you look after your emotional wellbeing? Do you take time for self care on a regular basis?
3. Can you adapt your written and verbal communication skills and language for different people you may interact with professionally, for example parents versus physicians?
4. Are you aware and comfortable with not only your own learning style, but also able to adapt to the learning styles of others you work with?
5. Think about how you can cultivate relationships with a system or network of professionals who may understand the challenges of being an SLP. This may include other SLPs you know, and experienced professionals in other fields.

About Jenni Provda, CCC-SLP



Jenni Provda, Acute Care Speech Language Pathologist, has worked as a medical SLP since graduating from the College of New Jersey with an MA in Speech-Language Pathology in 2008. She also has a Master's Degree in Organizational Psychology.

Based out of a hospital setting in New Jersey, her role has a neurological focus although she sees many different disorders. She also teaches in a graduate program in Philadelphia. She serves on the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey and on the board of a local school. Married with two sons, Jenni is a dog owner and volunteers at a local animal rescue.

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Quote from the Conversation

"What we do sometimes takes time, and we won't see results right away and we have to keep going at it. And putting the time in education and developing these relationships serves to build respect. I'm in a very different place with some of the physicians I work with than I was years ago because they see value in what I do now."

- Jenni Provda

Mattie Murrey Tegels, MA, CCC-SLP, L, CPC, CLSC

Medical Speech-Language Pathologist and
Founder of Fresh SLP & Badass SLP



Mattie Murrey-Tegels is the founder and SLP behind Fresh SLP, Badass SLP, and The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast. She's been "in-the-trenches" as a medical SLP around the world for over 25 years and now an Assistant Professor for 3 years. She is thrilled to be adding this dream of a podcast

because paying her experiences forward is something she is very passionate about. If you ask her patients and students, one thing they will remember is how much she loves her job!

She may not look like it but she is a huge introvert and when she is not actively working as an SLP, she is almost always reading, writing (writing over 1,000,000 words a year), or listening to amazing Chicago Blues bands. She also loves being outdoors and definitely enjoys soaking up the sun at her home in Minnesota, where warm and sunny days can be limited. She's ridden motorcycles for many years, raced sled dogs, hiked huge mountains yet she cherishes the quiet moments of climbing into a hammock to nap or timeless conversations with friends and family.

The Missing Link for SLPs podcast and Fresh SLP is her legacy, giving back to a career that has so richly rewarded her.

Quote from the Conversation

"When you're working with colleagues, don't think that everybody processes the same way you do, asks questions the same way you do, thinks the same way you do. Follow your style of learning, and asking questions."

- Mattie Murrey-Tegels

Keep the Conversation Going

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Let's make those connections. You got this!

*Do you have a question you'd like answered on the show?
Interested in sharing your experience as an SLP with our audience?*

Send a message to Mattie@FreshSLP.com!

Not a substitute for a formal SLP education or medical advice for patients/caregivers

The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast Show Notes

In this episode Jenni Provda speaks about the importance of being human! Yes, that's right, how to be okay with mistakes! She reflects on the emotional challenges of working in an ever-changing field. She talks about getting buy-in from other professionals. And reminds us that as 'works in progress', becoming knowledgeable in your field as an SLP takes time.

The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast Full Transcript

Mattie Murrey 00:03

Welcome to The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast. Have you ever wished you could go back and tell your younger self a way to do something better, or something that you've learned, or, gosh, just those words of wisdom that you would have loved to have known when you first started? That's what this series is all about. I am interviewing guests, and we reflect back on their words of wisdom, and what they didn't learn in grad school. And you'll be surprised by each one of these episodes. So, sit back, listen, and enjoy.

Welcome to this episode of The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast. I am here with a repeat guest. She's one of our top four podcasts of all time. Welcome, Jenni Provda!

Jenni Provda 00:52

Thank you. I'm happy to be back.

Mattie Murrey 00:54

Happy to have you back! You had something that everybody loved. They loved hearing your episode. And you were episode 70, for those who want to go back and look. Episode 70, posted on September 22nd 2021, and the title of your podcast was *Four Tips for Preventing Burnout*. People love that. That must be something that resonates with them.

Jenni Provda 01:21

Yeah, burnout is real for all of us at a lot of settings right now, we're under a lot of pressure. COVID hit our profession very hard. And whether you're in the hospital, whether you're working in a nursing home, in a school, we were all stretched our limits over the last almost two years now. And it really challenged us to be our best.

Mattie Murrey 01:49

And we continue to be our best, and more and more continues to be asked from us, and we give more.

But you're on because you're part of the series What I Didn't Learn in Grad School, and this is a real series where I interview experienced clinicians like you, and you pull out things, upon reflection, that you wished you had learned in grad school and can share your words of wisdom.



But before we do that, tell us a little bit about where you're working now, how long you've been in the field, what are your passions, who you work with now.

Jenni Provda 02:25

So, I've actually been working in acute care for 13 years now. I'm very fortunate that the hospital I work in also has an acute rehab. So, I get the best of both worlds. I also see outpatients for video swallow studies. This last semester, I also started teaching at a graduate program. So, I'm teaching a course at a graduate program in Philadelphia. So, I am very busy! So, that's what I've been up to for the last couple of months.

I mean, I love acute care. That's where my heart is. I love the speed of it. I love meeting new people. I love the interactions with my colleagues. It's just a really fulfilling environment. But it also has its challenges, which I don't think while I was in grad school I realized how much loss we would feel, and how difficult sometimes emotionally it is. And I think that I wish I had been prepared a little bit better emotionally for what I was going to see in the hospital. And I did have hospital placements, so it wasn't as if I didn't see it firsthand, but I think as a student you experience it very differently as when you're a professional. I think you're insulated a little bit when you are a student.

Mattie Murrey 04:06

Right. I work in the same setting you do, and in acute care, and then I'm a professor, and I do the video swallows. And I was working with a colleague the other day, who – somebody else in the SLP setting who – we had a loss. We had a big loss. And she just was crying and I went to give her a Kleenex, and I didn't have any near me and her – she said, “Well, that's all right, my mask is catching my tears”. And I think of how far we have come, and the pain that COVID has added to everything, and not always being prepared for the mental toll that it can take on us and the emotional toll.

Jenni Provda 04:57

Yeah. I say it all the time. I think that especially now, self care is so important, and really having an avenue to decompress when your emotions run so high all day long.

Last week, I had a wonderful patient. I only say I had because we're still working together. But she progressively got worse every single day I saw her, and to the point where on Friday, her daughter was seeing her for the first time like that, with hysterical crying around me. And you'd have to be very cold to not have that affect you in some way, right? Seeing that dynamic has to affect you in some way. And at some point I tried to make a little bit light of it because she was embarrassed, and I said, “Don't worry, it's me. I've been making everybody cry today! Everybody has been crying today”.

So, you try to lighten the mood a little, but at the same time, you've also been experiencing that dynamic in almost every single room you've in that day, and it's hard being there for everyone. And that's when it's important to take that time for you. And I say it all the time, you can't be there for anybody else if you're not there for yourself.

Mattie Murrey 06:34



Right, right. Working with students, I have the unique opportunity to – and I'm sure you do teaching, where the students come in, and they want to be the fixers, the savers, the let me do everything for you. You and I know that this is not our role as SLPs. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Jenni Provda 06:57

So, we – sometimes I joke about my magic wand, right?

Mattie Murrey 07:05

[crosstalk]

Jenni Provda 7:06

[crosstalk] Because I have the same joke.

Mattie Murrey 07:09

Yes.

Jenni Provda 07:11

We shop in the same store, right, for our magic wands?

Mattie Murrey 7:15

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 07:16

And I'll come out of a room, and the attending physician will ask me, "So, are we getting her on a diet today?" And I said, "Yep, I brought my magic wand, and I waved it all around the room!"

We can't always fix everything. We are not going to get every evasive patient talking. We're not going to get every patient back to eating. And sometimes that's a hard pill to swallow. We can try as hard as we can, and we can kind of pull out every trick we know, but there are going to be times where we just might not win, and that's okay. And we have to be okay with ourselves when that happens. And sometimes that just means trying as hard as we can and pulling out every stop to do what we can for our patients, and calling in all our resources. Maybe there's something I haven't thought of yet, right? Well, once we've done all that, we have to cut ourselves a little bit of slack that we've tried as hard as we can, and there's maybe just nothing else we can do.

Mattie Murrey 08:37

Well said.

So, if we go back to the title of this podcast, What I Didn't Learn in Grad School, I'm hearing from you one of the things that you didn't learn in grad school was the emotional price, working here.



Jenni Provda 8:53

Yep.

Mattie Murrey 8:54

And I'm sure our counterparts in the school system have it as well with little ones and heartaches and things like that.

Jenni Provda 09:02

Yes. And I'm sure there's things in the school systems that are very hard to see. I've spoken to friends who work in school systems, and there are hard things to see, and things that you may not going to be able to change, that you just don't have it within your power to change.

Mattie Murrey 09:20

So, let's dive a little bit deeper into the mindset then. What would you say to SLPs who are stepping into their careers, who are burned out in their careers, to manage the emotional toil that you would have wished you would have learned in grad school? What tools, resources, mindset? What would you have done differently? Or what would you have sought out? What would you teach them?

Jenni Provda 09:49

So, I think it's really important to develop a network of colleagues that you can just even vent to. And sometimes they don't necessarily even have to be other speech therapists. I know there are physicians that I work with who listen to me when I feel like I just need to unload.

Sometimes your family members can't relate to you in a way that they really understand what you're going through, as much as they try. I think at this point in my kids lives, they could probably do a dysphasia evaluation all on their own! But that doesn't mean that they can – they understand what we go through in a day, right?

Mattie Murrey 10:41

Right.

Jenni Provda 10:41

But really developing that support system of people that you can lean on when things do get a little bit hard.

Mattie Murrey 10:53

Right.

Jenni Provda 10:41



I also find that developing interests, and things that let you just kind of release from your day is also very important.

Mattie Murrey 11:07

So, those are two very good resources on helping lift, carry some of that loss, some of that load, that emotional load,

Jenni Provda 11:19

I think also remembering to take time off. That's very important, and not something we do enough of. Making sure you take your vacation days is very important because sometimes you just need a day, a mental break, right?

Mattie Murrey 11:42

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 11:42

And I think that when we're working in the hospital system it's very easy to not remember to take that break, and sometimes you just need it.

Mattie Murrey 11:57

So, you're talking about being kind to yourself, self cares.

I was listening to a podcast the other day, I'll have to go research back, but she had a guest speaker come on, and some speakers are like come up with a mantra, and say that mantra to yourself, and the speaker – the guest wrote a book called, I think it's called *The High Five*. And she said that she woke up one morning, and she looked in a mirror, and she saw just some gray hairs and wrinkles, and you know, just her body wasn't where she wanted it to be. And she looked at that woman in the mirror, and she criticized that woman in the mirror, and she said, why this and why that? And then she realized that for 40 some years, she's either been criticizing that woman or ignoring that woman. And instead of having that negative mindset, she decided to give herself a high five in the mirror. And when she reached up and she did the swing back and the 'Hey, way to go', she said something shifted within her where she was just physically lifted up.

And research has been done when you assume the Superman pose and you open, there's just some neurological or emotional changes. I'm not exactly sure what it is. But when you give yourself that high five, when you say, "I've done the best I can. I've done everything I can, and that's enough. And I've helped carry this load as far as I can". And to give yourself some grace back is a very important thing as well.

Jenni Provda 13:43

That's true.



It's funny, because I'm listening to that, and I'm thinking about a personal decision I made recently to – going into the new year, to get rid of the negativity...

Mattie Murrey 13:56

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 13:56

... and to focus on the positive going forward. And I said there's so much negative that I could look at right now, but it's only going to drag me down.

So, I made the conscious choice to get rid of the negative and to focus on the positive. And ever since I had that mind shift, I really feel like things have been different for me.

Mattie Murrey 14:24

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 14:25

Because day after day it becomes very hard being mired down in the negative.

Mattie Murrey 14:32

Right.

Jenni Provda 14:33

And even in the hospital, I try to say to my patients, "Okay, we know what you're missing, and we know where you'd like to be, but can we focus on how far you've come? Let's talk about the things that you are positive today, as compared to yesterday. So, maybe today you are not speaking in full sentences, but today you were able to do x, y, and z. And let's focus on that win for today, and we'll tackle everything else tomorrow".

Mattie Murrey 15:09

And they're taking their cues from you.

Jenni Provda 15:11

I hope so!

Mattie Murrey 15:12

Yeah.

Jenni Provda 15:14



I hope so!

Mattie Murrey 15:14

Good modeling. That's great.

What else have you felt that you didn't learn in graduate school that you wished you had learned?

Jenni Provda 15:24

So, I mean, I want to take this with a grain of salt because I think that our practice has totally changed in the last few years, but I'm going to say that not everybody I work with is totally bought into what I'm doing during my day. So, there are physicians that may not totally buy into ...

Mattie Murrey 15:48

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 15:49

... what we do as practicing clinicians. And we don't always have their buy-in, but we can show them the benefit of what we do, and the value that we bring. So how do we do that? How do we accomplish that is by bringing our A game every day ...

Mattie Murrey 16:16

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 16:16

... to what we do. And spending the extra time to educate, and explaining what we found with our patients, and then getting them over on our side, right?

Mattie Murrey 16:32

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 16:32

And sometimes it takes time to develop those relationships and educate, but I think that putting the time into that is well worth it.

Mattie Murrey 16:44

I agree.

And also using something called plain language, or SLP scripting. Something I work with where – I remember in grad school I had a professor, I wrote this incredible paper. It was so well written with lots and lots of multisyllabic words and diagnoses, and I just thought it was the best paper I'd ever written! And she looked at



it, and she said, "It's very well written. Very well written for a physician, and it's not for a physician, it's for a family member". And she sent me right back to totally scrap it, and redo the whole entire thing.

And that was one of those pivotal moments in grad school, where I'm like, 'Who am I writing to? Who am I talking to? Who am I teaching? Who am I connecting with?' And being able to take our thoughts and our communication and put them in very plain simple language. This is who I am, this is what I do, and this is why I do it, and these are the results".

Jenni Provda 17:52

Exactly. And that what we do sometimes takes time, and we won't see results right away, and we have to keep going at it. And putting the time in education and developing these relationships serves to build respect. And I'm in a very different place with some of the physicians I work with than I was years ago because they see value in what I do now.

Mattie Murrey 18:29

Mhm. Yes, well said.

So, the first lesson that you didn't learn in grad school was the emotional toll. The second lesson was not everybody loves us!

Jenni Provda 18:39

Well, if you put it that way!

Mattie Murrey 18:42

But they will by the end of their time working with us, and they'll understand us better.

One more before we end.

Jenni Provda 18:49

Okay, I'm going to need a second.

Mattie Murrey 18:52

These are going into a book, you know.

Jenni Provda 18:54

Really?

Mattie Murrey 18:55

Mhm.



Jenni Provda 18:56

Well, that's fun.

Mattie Murrey 18:58

Mhm. And you've given me two chapters

Jenni Provda 19:01

Wow.

Mattie Murrey 19:02

One chapter is on the emotional price tag. And it's fine, if I know I'm going to pay \$300 for a coat that I want, that's fine. I want to see the price tag.

Jenni Provda 19:15

Right.

Mattie Murrey 19:15

I don't want to get up to the counter, having pulled something off of a sales rack thinking I've got this great deal, and I walk up to the counter and it's way more than I anticipated spending. So, my two choices at the counter are now, do I admit that I can't pay the price and go put the coat back on the rack? Do I take the coat and return it at a later time? Or do I take the coat home and figure out a way to pay for it?

And this is a scenario that so many SLPs are in. We are asked to pay higher and higher prices, in our careers, in our jobs, in every thing that we're asked to give. And I want to know the price tag of what I'm doing, and that's what this whole series is about.

Jenni Provda 20:08

Right.

I think that one of – I want to say one of the last things I wish I had learned in grad school – not learned. I guess I would say one of the things I wish I knew going into the med SLP field was how much constant learning I would need to be doing. We do so much as medical SLPs.

Mattie Murrey 20:42

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 20.43



We have to have such a varied skill set, and we are not going to have that right away. I learn something new all the time, and our field changes all the time. People do more research, and new things evolve, and we are constantly learning.

And I never realized as a graduate student, that I'd become a quasi expert in MRIs, CAT scans, chest X-rays, abdominal scans, and what that all meant, and learning lab values, and speaking medical use, right?

Mattie Murrey 21:36

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 21:37

And on top of that – so, once we have that medical part aside, now we're applying all of these various speech diagnoses and swallowing disorders. And not only how to diagnose them, but then how to treat them. It's a lot.

Mattie Murrey 22:00

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 22:01

And you're not going to be an expert right away, and you're not going to be perfect, and we all screw up.

This is my pronouncement. I am not perfect, and sometimes I make mistakes. It's okay. And I have been doing this a very long time, and I still make mistakes, because we're human.

Mattie Murrey 22:27

Yes, exactly right.

Jenni Provda 22:30

And I try to let that go, and I remember that I'm a human.

And it's funny, because a few days ago, one of the physicians that I work with was so upset because he had missed something on an MRI for one of his patients that we were treating, and he was beating himself up over it. And this is a physician that is on my treatment team. If I ever find myself in the hospital, he's on my treatment team, and we all have them! And it was crazy to me to watch him beating himself up over this. But then I realized because – I hold him in such high regard.

But then I realized we're all human, and it happens. And we try to make it happen not all the time, right? But just realizing that becoming knowledgeable in your field takes a long time. We are works in progress, and we will continually build our skills.



And you find something you love, and then concentrate on it for a while and learn everything you can in that area. And then, you know what? Find something else you love.

Mattie Murrey 24:10

And be curious.

Jenni Provda 24:11

Ask questions, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Mattie Murrey 24:15

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 24:16

Asking questions doesn't mean that you don't know anything, it means that you want to learn more.

Mattie Murrey 24:22

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 24:22

And being comfortable to ask those questions is so important. It's so important.

Mattie Murrey 24:37

I have a comment about asking questions. I am an internal processor. So, I'm not the type of person that asks a ton of questions. What about this? What about this? What about this? I'm an internal processor. And I had someone, one time, say that, he made a negative comment that I just wasn't participating in the conversation, and I was. I was following along great. I didn't have any questions at the time.

So, when you're working with colleagues, don't think that everybody processes the same way you do, asks questions the same way you do, thinks the same way you do. Follow your style of learning, and asking questions.

Jenni Provda 25:25

So, it's really funny that you're talking about that, and I made a comment today about learning styles and realizing that different people will find what's comfortable for them.

Mattie Murrey 25:43

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 25:44



And, funny enough, I'm an internal processor as well.

Mattie Murrey 25:48

Hmm.

Jenni Provda 25:48

And I have to sit with information, and really go through it and review it and then review it again. And sometimes things hit me later that didn't hit me the first time around...

Mattie Murrey 26:02

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 26:02

... and I'll have questions about that. I always leave it open to future questions.

Mattie Murrey 26:07

Right.

Jenni Provda 26:07

If I'm having a conversation, I'll say at the end, "Do you mind if I follow up with you later, because I may have some more questions about this". I think that is a great way to open up the area for future discussion. Because you may even come across something else that relates back to your original topic, and you want to further explore it with someone else.

Mattie Murrey 26:31

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 26:31

So, we all have different learning styles, and it's important to be open to other people's way of learning. And also, that people don't all take feedback the same way.

Mattie Murrey 26:50

Mhm.

Jenni Provda 26:50

And really relating one on one to whoever you're talking to, and kind of adjusting your style to whoever you are interacting with.



Mattie Murrey 27:02

That's another topic, conflict resolution, that I didn't learn in grad school. How, when you have a conflict – maybe conflict's too strong of a word – miscommunication, whatever. Go to the person you have that miscommunication or that conflict with. Go with a very positive mindset. Have a couple of solutions. Use the sandwich method – something nice, something to work on, and something nice again.

So, these discussions are important.

Jenni Provda 27:32

Agreed.

Mattie Murrey 27:33

Thanks for coming on the podcast, again!

Jenni Provda 27:36

Thanks, Maddie.

Mattie Murrey 27:37

You're welcome. Thanks for coming on again, Jenni.

Jenni Provda 27:40

My pleasure.

Mattie Murrey 27:50

I hope today's conversation has created some aha moments for you, and motivated you to become a better SLP, continuing to connect some of those missing links between what you know and how to use that knowledge.

Thank you for downloading The Missing Link for SLP's Podcast, and if you enjoyed the show, I'd love you to subscribe, rate it, and leave a short review. Also, please share an episode with a friend. Together, we can raise awareness and help more SLPs find and connect those missing links, and get the information needed to help them feel confident in their patient care every step of the way.

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