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Welcome to the SLP Happy Hour Podcast. I'm Sarah, a private practice SLP here in Oregon. I'm also a materials designer as SLP. Happy hour on teachers pay teachers and I speak on Burnout. You can find me@slphyour.com or on instagram as SLP happy

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hour. And I'm Rachel. I am a speech language program specialist in South Florida, and I also run an Instagram page called PTSD SLP, where I discuss traumainformed care and mental health. I'm also a co host on the Speech Science Podcast,

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and if you're a regular listener, please take a moment to rate and review this podcast wherever you're listening to help other SLPs, SLPAs and students find the podcast. You can also connect with what's happening with Slphyour by signing up for our monthly or so updates@slphyour.com newsletter. Up today, we talk about five things not to say to someone going through a difficult situation and what to say instead. And we're also going to talk about what's going well and not so well in our lives. And I'll share a heartwarming story of communicating emotions through AAC. First up, we discuss what's up, what's down, what's going well, and not so well in our lives as SLPs and outside the world of being an SLP. How are you doing, Rachel?

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I'm not going to lie. My job is pretty tough right now, and I hate seeing people struggle due to systemic issues that SLPs face. Other than that, I've been attending a lot of weddings recently four, to be exact, from November to April. I'm a bridesmaid in one of them, and I am officiating my brother's wedding in April, so I'm part of the bridal party there, as well. I'm super excited for that. I've never officiated before. I'm also very excited with the instagram growth in the past just over a month since my presentation on the SLP summit, I've been getting offers to speak so much, which is incredible. And really my goal of all this is I want to get the information out there on trauma informed

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care, and I'm really happy for you as I'm seeing you do speaking gigs. You have been researching trauma and working hard to understand how it impacts us as SLPs and our students for years, and you're getting your due, so congratulations. Thank you. What's up for me is I went to Atia this year that's a yearly AAC conference in Orlando, Florida. I feel like I really benefited from being around other SLPs who care about AAC, and I came back feeling intellectually stimulated and interested in the profession again, which is so important. Otherwise, I'll get bored, and I'll start to feel very, like, blah about being in the profession. What's down is that to save money, I commuted from about 45 minutes away each day of the conference. I was driving an hour and a half each day in rush hour traffic on multiple freeways in Florida to get to the conference, plus about 9 hours a day at the conference. So. It was exhausting in addition to the time change and the travel there and back, and there was a medical emergency on the airplane when we were trying to get there. So there was a lot happening. So I think if I go again, I need to budget to stay at the hotel where the conference is happening because I do feel like I missed out on a lot of social

opportunities with SLPs that I don't get to see very often, and that made me sad. Overall, it was a huge win, and I have so many notes, pages and pages of notes of things that I'm interested in and want to look into to improve my practice and spark my interest. So I am glad that we went.

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Sarah and I, we discussed the driving in Florida, and I have apologized to her profusely on behalf of All Floridians. It is awful. And I actually met Sarah in 2019 in Orlando at Asha in person, and it really is a very difficult place to drive. So I'm sorry. I've heard great things about Atia. My coworkers went and they had nothing but good things to say about it. And I truly think that conferences are great for that morale boost. When a bunch of SLPs get together and they talk about the common issues that we have and the common wins that we have, it really is such a positive thing. When you get out of that conference, you're like, I'm going to be the best SLP there ever was, and it's really great for morale boost.

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Yeah. I came home and at first I was so tired, I was just like, should I have even gone? Like, very dramatic. But once I slept, I was like, wow, I'm getting excited about the profession again. And there are things I want to research and try out in my sessions, so I have that sense of purpose and agency. And I'm really thankful there are conferences to go to so that I can feel more connected to being an SLP, because I have been feeling pretty disconnected for the last few years. So speaking of disconnection, another time we as humans can feel pretty separated from each other is going through grief and loss. It can be pretty isolating. So if you're listening, do you know someone going through trauma, grief and loss? It can be easy to say nothing or to say something and feel like you put your foot in your mouth when you talk about sensitive topics. I know I have. So today we'll share five things not to say and five things to say instead. If you know someone going through trauma right now, of course,

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what we recommend someone might say, oh, I actually like that phrase and that is totally okay for you. But these are suggestions to help reduce risk of unintentional harm. And that is the tenet of traumainformed care is most harm is done unintentionally and if we can help reduce the risk of that, then we are in the right place. Number

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one. What not to say? 1s Which is a vague offer of help. Let me know if you need help. Here's what to say instead. I can leave dinner on your doorstep Wednesday or Thursday this week. Let me know if you have a day preference or any dietary restrictions or food preferences. So you want to do the thinking and problem solving. Don't make someone grieving do it. And don't make the person grieving initiate because they often don't even know what they need. That is

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truly so important. And I am very public about having experienced trauma, and with the grief that surrounded that, I remember being asked constantly, let me know what you need. Let me know what you need. And I responded, I don't know what I need. I can't even form a complete sentence. So it really is helpful to have that action of, I will provide you dinner Wednesday or Thursday. Which day is better for you? I totally love that. Another thing of what not to say nothing. Never talking about that grief, loss or trauma. You could say, I've been thinking about you and Blank, whether that's a situation, the person lost,

and would you like to talk about it or should we talk about Blank? Another subject there. You want to talk about movies, you want to talk about a book, you want to talk about anything else. That's a very personal thing that the person going through grief can help direct how the conversation is going.

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Right. Because you don't want to talk about the topic all the time. And like for myself, I've gone through some grief and loss related to trying to adopt a child, and 2s I don't want it to be the only thing people ask me about. Did that happen to you when you were going through trauma for a while? At first,

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yeah. The first year, I would say, because mine was so public, 1s everyone wanted to know specifics. And I know that people are curious, especially when it's a national issue, but at the same time it was, I don't want to talk about this right now. I just want to be a normal friend and sitting with friends and doing friend things and not talking about it. But it's also like, we be said, it's not helpful to just ignore it completely.

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I think that's a good point. And I've even had people ask me, and I really appreciated it, like, hey, I have a question about your adoption. Is it okay to talk about it? And that's what they start with, and I really appreciate that because I can say, not right now.

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I've loved. Some of my followers on Instagram gave me this language of saying, do you have the mental bandwidth to discuss this topic right now? And that's such a content warning that they have a question for me or whatever they want to do to talk about it, whether it's a positive thing or negative thing, that gives me a warning of what the content is going to be. And I can say, you know what? Not at this time. It's a bad week, a bad day, a bad whatever. Let's pick this up in a couple of days, or I'll reach out to you when I'm ready to talk about it. I love saying that.

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And do you have the bandwidth as kind of like, I don't know, there's one piece of bread left in the loaf and it's like, is there a piece of bread left in the bag? And you can say yes or no. It's not like, are you dealing with this poorly so you can't talk about it? It makes it less personal. It makes it like a fact.

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It does. And it just gives me the ability to have choice in the conversation rather than saying, I want to talk about blank right now, and me going, oh, okay, we're going to talk about this right now, it gives me a choice.

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Yeah, I like that. Here's what not say, which is to try to fix the problem for the person. So often, especially when we're going through very difficult times, there's a problem that can't be solved or doesn't have an easy answer. So if you're saying something like, have you tried to do this to solve this problem?

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For example, let's say someone is dealing with infertility, and you say, have you tried acupuncture supplements, et cetera, et cetera. ^{2s} It's very judgmental and it's also like, dude, this is something that that person is dealing with all day, every day. Of course they've done everything they can. Exactly. Why do you think that because you've heard about this for less than 30 seconds, you can solve the problem. So what's happening there when someone tries to solve a problem for you is they are uncomfortable ambiguity with not knowing and with loss. And because they are uncomfortable with the fact that you are hurting, they want the problem to go away. So do not say, have you tried such and such to solve the problem. What you can say instead is, that sounds hard. I'm sorry. So each person has a specific situation. They have a lot going on under the surface that you have no idea about. So be there with them without solving the problem, unless they specifically ask for help solving the problem. If they directly ask you for that, that is the only time we're going to solve that problem or give advice, which, of course, I've done this the wrong way. I've put my own foot in my mouth. If you're unsure, you can ask what would be helpful? Do you want to vent? Do you want to be listened to? Do you want me to help you problem solve? Maybe you don't like the word venting, but I love the word venting. I love to vent and sometimes I'll say, yeah, I just need to complain. So someone asked me that recently and I was really glad to be asked. So again, we're not going to try to solve the problem. Say, have you tried this and that? Because we're going to respect that. This person is living with something that is very painful and there is so much you don't know about that they've already

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worked through. Instead, we're just going to say, that sounds so hard. I am so sorry.

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That's such a big one for me. I've seen that conversation play out in real time with my family members that have dealt with infertility. And you will sometimes get a not so great response from that person that it is a triggering thing to say, you know what? No, I didn't think of all these things that consume my entire life. ^{1s} It's

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just.

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The reason that we suggest these things is to avoid those situations. Another thing of what not to say is intrusive questions that ask the person to relive the experience. So how did they die? What was it like? What to say instead? I know this person was important to you. Can I share a memory of that person sending a text saying, I'm thinking of you on the anniversary, or of the traumatic event or situation? I mentioned this a bit earlier, but those questions are really tough. And I can't tell you how many times I'm on social media and someone posts, hey, someone died and their funeral is this. And then you scroll in the comments, and people are like, oh, my God, how did this happen? And all this stuff. And they didn't put it in the caption. It's not for everyone. You can see if that person is ready to talk about that on a

personal level, but there's a reason it wasn't posted in the announcement of it. So it just can become very overwhelming when people say this in person. And for me, for a year, a lot of people would say very uncomfortable questions that they just wanted to know, but at the same time, it's not an appropriate setting. I don't know who these people are. I don't have a connection to these people. It's not

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helpful. Here's another one not. ^{1s} What not to do. So this isn't to say, but what not to do. Don't ghost the person when they need you, especially if it's someone you're close to. So I have actually lost a lot of friends going through my own grief and that's really sad to me. So what to do if you can, again, if you have the bandwidth and capacity, check in on Anniversaries birthdays or important events of that person in a low pressure way, like text or a card. So sometimes that person might not want to answer the phone on their anniversary with a husband that died or something like that. They would love a text or a card. I have felt lonely in my own grief and I felt like a lot of people who could have moved closer, moved further away, or dropped off the face of the planet when I was having a hard time. And so if you can just sit with uncomfortable emotions, I think most people can't, to be honest. I think we're a very forced positivity culture. But if you have the capacity, don't make someone going through a difficult time which is already isolating enough. Go at it alone. So show up if this is someone close to you, if you're able to. ^{1s} I love that. And I would also avoid toxic positivity and avoid religious phrases. For me, that was extremely triggering after trauma and during my grief period, especially due to my trauma being a very graphic public nature, there are a ton of people who experience the same experience as me, and we all have different beliefs about it. And just for some of the

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affirmations that we got, I was like, that doesn't really make sense to me here. They're in a better place or everything happens for a reason, was one that was really tough for me. I

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hate that one.

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That was a very difficult one, because especially with the trauma that I do talk about, how can you say that was meant to happen? Is how we internalize it. And that would be a huge source of stress for the staff, for the students and everything, and it gets internalized in a way that's not healthy. So avoid any toxic positivity. Like Sarah just said, a lot of us are uncomfortable with when someone is not happy. It seems that that's the only emotion that's able to be had. And we are allowed to be sad, we are allowed to be angry. And it's very validating to be able to say, you know what? Those are valid emotions. You're able to feel that way and just let them have those emotions.

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Can we talk about anger and grief? Yes. ^{1s} Anger was the emotion that surprised me the most. I knew I would feel sad. I suspected I might feel isolated. I was more isolated than I expected, but I did not expect anger. So can you just talk to me a little bit about anger and grief? Kind of wherever you want to take it? Sure. I also agree with you that anger came very naturally for me as well. And I don't know why, but I know our bodies are dysregulated. So that can show up as sadness, that can show up as anger. And ^{2s} there's a graphic that I'm thinking of in my head that shows kind of the wavy healing of grief, and it's

different for everyone. And just in the beginning, it was pure sadness. And then once you get through that wave of sadness, it then goes to anger. And that is now how, when I am triggered that's anger, I would yell, or I would just be like, oh, my God. That is the way it shows up for me. And to be honest, I don't get sad anymore, which is not a healthy thing either, that I don't cry. And I think that is a dissociation, a coping strategy of some sort that may or may not be healthy. But my dysregulation shows up as anger, and it's

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a valid emotion.

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Yeah. And there are a lot of feelings adjacent to anger and words we use that are anger. So words that I used to use were like frustration. I'm not angry. I'm frustrated. ^{1s} Frustration is anger. Yeah. And I'm thinking now of a graphic in my head that is a circle, and it has, like, anger, and you have all these other words that are part of that pie chart that shows up in there. And that's really helpful, too, because as a nation in schools, we have social emotional learning curriculum, and we're teaching it earlier and earlier. And actually, when I present, I talk about three year olds saying I'm frustrated. And to adults, that's funny. But why is it funny? They're expressing themselves in a way that we didn't have the language for. We should be able, as an adult, to say, I'm frustrated versus I'm angry versus I'm sad versus I'm hurt. It's helpful to have those words and understand the difference in them because there's different ways to cope with those things and there's different reasons behind those words. So I think it's helpful that we're teaching it earlier and earlier. And

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just seeing how what happened during my trauma to see adults who were so dysregulated and didn't know how to express themselves and their emotions was hindering their healing journey because they couldn't communicate it.

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To wrap up this segment, I want to go back to ah, toxic Positivity just to kind of revisit it, because I have heard everything happens for a reason. Every cloud has a silver lining. What happened to me? I've lost a parent. I've also had a very complicated adoption situation in which there is no silver lining. ^{1s} It's not happening for a reason. It's not all working out for the best. It's not going to be all right in the end. And sometimes that happens with grief and loss. Another example is God has a plan. It feels to the person grieving and having a hard time. It feels like they're minimizing your personal experience. It also feels emotionally manipulative, like, don't be sad because it's okay. Yes. But you know what? Sometimes it's not okay. It's just sad. And we need to be sad.

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Yeah. And I think these phrases have been used

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ages to comfort someone as an explanation that's there and some of these phrases do give comfort to people. The problem is when you use this just to anyone, there might be religious people who don't like these things or if they've experienced a traumatic event or grief, that it doesn't really fit for that situation. So I just say, stay away from those positivity phrases. And instead what Sarah and I discussed in this episode about offering help validating emotions like, yes, this is a really tough time and Can I bring you dinner? Can I help with your kids one day? Something like that that's so much more productive, I think would help even people that like these phrases in a way. But again, we are trying to reduce harm. And for many, many people that have experienced trauma and grief, these are very triggering phrases. So we just want to stay away from them.

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Let's maybe share think of a time you've gone through any grief or loss and a few things someone could have said to you that would have been affirming. I can start just to give you a second to think. So it would have been affirming to be like. *1s* Wow, that is a big deal. I am so sorry that happened. Or that is so unfair. Something else that I enjoyed was a friend actually brought a card and said, hey, my child drew a card for the person that you lost. If you'd like to keep it, it's on your doorstep, right? So I didn't have to go through the social, like opening the door. So those were two really lovely things. So one that comes to mind for me that I've been using recently and that I've received has been just a text of like, people know the anniversary of mine. It's Valentine's Day. A very memorable day. So I get a lot of text on that day. And the most helpful thing is it does get overwhelming to get all those texts that people know what day it is. So my favorite line is when people say, no need to respond. Just wanted to say I'm thinking of you. That takes the burden off me. Who. I'm already a pretty bad texter. Like, I don't get back right away, or I get distracted and I forget that text existed. So just to take the burden off by saying no need to text back was

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so helpful, and I didn't feel the need to get back, but just to know that they are thinking about me is validation and helpful. So instead of texting, hey, can I call you? Can we have a conversation that might put me into a bad head space that I can't really have at that time? It also, again, gives me that choice to participate. I could say, no, I'm good to talk right now. So anytime someone is going through grief, trauma, a hard time in general, can say no. No need to respond. I just wanted to let you know I'm thinking of. *1s* So moving from our personal world to our speech world. Next up, we have our segment from the Speech Room of where we share what's going on in our speech rooms. And I wanted to share a story about AAC and emotions that I think you are going to love, Rachel, and I think our listeners will enjoy, too. So here's the story. I have an artistic early elementary student I work with, and he's great at expressing himself, usually even in moments of distress. And he is a spoken language for a variety of thoughts and needs. And he came in one day wearing headphones, which was unusual. He wears them for school sometimes when he's overstimulated, but he takes them off after school, and he had worn them in the car ride from school to speech. And he entered the doorway into the speech room and he said, no. And he went back into the lobby to take a break first. And I didn't know what was going on, but I was like, wow, something is up. Like, this kid usually bounces and smiling and is like, I'm here, Miss Sarah. So I went out to the lobby after a few minutes, and I was encouraging him, come on in. We can talk about what you need. I'm here to help you. I'm not going to make you do anything today. And so he came in, he sat down on the couch next to his mom, and he started crying. Like, not just a few tears, just like a crying breakdown, like these strong emotions, and it tugged at my heartstrings. And he seemed like he didn't really have the words, or maybe he wasn't ready to say what he wanted. So although this child didn't have experience with AAC, I opened the Lamp Words for Life AAC app since I have it on my iPad. And I started writing and I put I and then I put feel so on lamp. When you hit Feel, the Feelings

page opens up. And he looked at it really interestingly, and he told me, he said, Touch sad. So I touched sad. And so the message was, I feel sad. So just seeing the words and symbols helped him access what he wanted to say. So next, something I do for social emotional learning and for my students is after I feel statement. We work on a I want statement or I need statement. So, I mean, I do this in my life at home. So, for example, at home, I might tell my husband, like, I feel overwhelmed, I need ten minutes alone, or I feel sad, I need a hug, or I feel tired, I need to rest for 30 minutes. So those are just examples. So from there, we're in the session with the student. Lamp Words for Life went ahead and modeled I Want, and then touched the Feelings icon again. So it opened the Feelings page, and he told me what to press, which is feel and then happy. So the entire message was this in the message window I feel sad. I want feel happy.

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So my SLP heart grew three sizes bigger. This is one of the sweetest and most connected SLP moments in recent memory, and it's hard to even talk about it. I was starting to tear up. So after expressing his message, the student took a breath. I saw him, and I saw how having that support and being able to verbalize his feelings really helped with his own regulation. He also let me know he needed time to play his favorite up on the iPad, so we did that. I was glad I had it on my iPad. So, overall, this really highlighted several things for me. Number one, we will have part time AAC users who may use AAC for technical language, for situations with high language demands, or in times of sensory overwhelm. And then number two, every classroom, every classroom, especially every special education classroom, should have access to robust AAC, so students have the option to express themselves.

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I loved this story, Sarah. Thank you so much for sharing. I feel like I'm hearing so much more about SLPs, working on emotions and prioritizing them, and that makes me so happy.

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Me too. And it's something many of us weren't trained to do. But emotions and feelings impact communication and relationships. We can't ignore this. So how do we address emotions during sessions? I'm still figuring that out, but it's something I want to learn more. [Is This](#)

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year. I love that. I think you did a great job with it. Thank you. And before we go, Sarah let me know that listeners love to read. So here's what I'm reading. Now, I mainly do audiobooks because that allows me to multitask. I do it on my commute. I'm in a book club for a trauma related book, and I love my TikTok books, and those are the spicy books that they recommend. I read a bunch of Colleen Hoover books, which I was actually not super thrilled about, and I don't know if that comes from a trauma informed mindset. I do love Sarah J. Maass books and reread those as a comfort read. And Sarah and I have talked about those books before, too, but she read them in the wrong order,

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so I had to stop. But I still send you all the oh, yes. [Is Any reels about that.](#) Echo tar a court of thorn and roses. So, do you have trouble getting through nonfiction books? Because I sometimes do, especially on audio.





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It depends what kind. I do like nonfiction books. I listen to a lot of World War II kind of stuff. But I have to be in a mindset for it. And it's mostly if the book is interesting to me. So it doesn't matter if it's a fantasy or is nonfiction. If I'm not interested in the book, I have trouble focusing and getting through it. Let's see. I actually don't have some great recommendations because I've been traveling. So what I've done this is like a sleep pack, really more than a book recommendation is to go to your library app, find a cozy mystery audiobook and listen to it. Like if you're traveling and you're in a plane and I get really motion sick, so I can't really concentrate on anything, just find a good mystery book and listen to it. And I've also started putting it on the sleep timer and listening to it before bed, which has been great. So my let's see, my library has the hoopla app, so I just found *The Diva Runs Out of Time* by Krista Davis, and then I just finished that and started *Death by Committee* by Alex Alexis Morgan. So in a Cozy Mystery, there's usually like a community event, a small town, a murder happens, but there's no blood and no gore. And then this band of misfits who becomes friends, solves the mystery and everything ends well. So that's my recommendation. 4s So for this episode, we discuss five things to say and not to say to someone going through a difficult stretch and a story about addressing emotional states in speech therapy sessions and what we're reading. That's it for this episode of the SLP Happy Art podcast. I hope you enjoyed listening in as much as Rachel and I enjoy recording it, and that this was a little slice of an SLP Happy hour for you. Until next time.