



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hatley**

**Male Announcer:** You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hatley. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hatley.

Welcome and welcome back. I'm glad that you're here because today is one of those episodes where I've been pondering different and novel ideas of explaining the way that I work, reasons why I think I get results that I do, which also play into why my grads and even my trainees get results that they do. And how it also leads to some really remarkable conversations with my clientele as they are tuning more and more into themselves.

So I mean, it's awesome. My job is awesome. I've got the greatest job in the world. And sometimes it can be befuddling to other people who are watching what I do or who are listening to the podcast or are watching the videos I've got on Facebook or YouTube and they're befuddled. And so they'll ask me different questions like what the best cues are or how do I connect with the core or, you know, very common anatomical and biomechanical questions.

So I often find myself in spaces like I'm describing right now where I ponder different ways of explaining because what is clear is that how I can think about the concepts of biomechanics and anatomy, how I apply that with my clientele is sometimes different than other people have learned in their 200 hours and 500 hours teacher training and what they have learned in their healthcare training if they are a physical therapist or an occupational therapist or a medical doctor or a chiro or a massage therapist.

And so that's what today is about. Today is exploring the notion of core stability from the lens of being an anatomy architect. And this idea of being an anatomy architect really is a powerful one because as you've heard me say, if you've been following this podcast for a while you've heard me say many, many times over that where the pain is, isn't the problem. And one key thing that I do to help my clients reduce and eradicate pain is help them to reduce their compensation patterns.

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hatley

Time and time again when I help a client reduce compensation patterns, their pain reduces. And then as we continue to help them hone those new neuromuscular patterns, they have more and more periods of time without pain to the point where many of them then stop having pain. And even more importantly, they understand the correlating pieces associated with pain coming back on.

So they're very well versed in the language and their bodies, they're fluent in their body's sensations. Like they understand what their sensations are indicating to them. They see and perceive their sensations as messengers and have just great agency with themselves, and their body really is their friend.

And with that, to get to that place, there's an understanding of what compensatory strategies are and how amazing they are. And when we're looking at biomechanics and wanting to help improve neuromuscular communication, it's understanding the granularity of those movements, like at the small level of like one joint level.

And I've spoken quite a bit about that and it's this next piece that I want to chat a bit more about on this episode, which is really, okay, well then what do you do with that? Okay, great. So I get that we can look at single joint movement and I get that we can look at the quality of that single joint movement, but then what? Like, what do you do with that?

And so that's what I'm going to dig into today and give some ideas about how I think, what I watch for in particular related to core stability. And the reason I'm going to do it this way is because I think when I share this beyond just a theoretical "here's how I think about things," but actually apply it to a concept like core stability, it might land that much more effectively and it can give you some really good ideas for working with your clientele and with your own body.

So there's a few pieces that I want to lay out in terms of a bit of a map that I'll take you on in this episode. The first is I want to first chat about how I think about what core stability is. So I think that understanding that

definition of how I define core stability is important. And what I typically see when core stability is not really quite working so well, where I think some of the thinking about core stability can lead us into trouble and what I have seen work really well.

So let's walk through this process of being an anatomy architect as it relates to core stability. So the first piece is how I define core stability. And there's a couple of ways that I like to think about core stability. The first is that core stability enables us to change speed and tempo and orientation very quickly and with nimbleness.

So we can go from fast to slow, slow to fast, change direction, get down to the floor, back up again. There's nimbleness and agility. There's a responsiveness in whatever load is coming our way. And core stability isn't a kind of one and done kind of thing. You might have good core stability for when you do backbends. You might have better core stability when you do forward bends. Then when you put ice in the mix and you're walking out on the street, for example, your core stability might falter when you get onto ice.

So there's different nuances and a spectrum because, again, you can have great core stability in some arenas of your life or some activities of your life or some subtasks of those activities in your life, and then you might not in others. So that's the first piece of it, is that core stability is not a one and done and it enables this agility, this responsivity, this change of tempo, this nimbleness to have us feel light and tall and connected.

A great definition that I read about stability years ago, which is that stability, and I'm then going to relate it back to core stability, is control and coordination over a range of motion. So there's motor control and coordination over a range of motion.

So when we have great core stability, then we've got great control and coordination over a range of motion. So I like to play with that in the work that I do in the sense of if you're compensating, then your control and

coordination isn't awesome. Or said another way, it could be better. It could be more refined. There could be improvement there.

So when I see someone who is compensating, I have an assumption that their core could improve. It's not that their core is bad. It's that there's an opportunity for improvement because when I can improve control and coordination over a range of motion, they're going to have more stability. So if I can tie that into their core, they're going to have better core stability.

The other thing I noticed when someone's got a core that is working, like core stability that is working well for them in the activity or the subtask of an activity that they're doing, they look like they are floating. Like there's a lightness in their movement patterns. There's an easefulness in their movement patterns. There's less of a grip in their movement patterns.

And they will often respond back to me saying that they feel taller, lighter, more at ease, even younger. That lightness and that tallness is very, very common. Those are probably the most common terms. And I remember Tom Myers referring to this years and years ago when I took, I think I took one course with him years and years ago. And he would say, the idea is not to engage the core, it's to evoke the core.

And I thought that was so great because it blends into the next idea, which is core stability is often covered up by a whole lot of tension. And I was first introduced to this idea by a biomechanics teacher I had post grad who suggested that we actually all have great core stability, we just have layers and layers of tension over top of it. And what he said just sort of stuck with me. And people could argue that comment if they would like, which is fine, it's someone else's opinion.

But what's interesting is as I help someone move better and move more purely, and as I help them reduce their compensation patterns, this idea of being more nimble and more agile and moving from fast to slow and slow to fast, getting down to the floor and back up again, that all comes alive. The tension holding patterns that they've been utilizing, when those have settled out or have been removed or have integrated in another more

strong, supportive way, oftentimes again this idea of nimbleness and agility show up. Their core is evoked.

So it becomes really curious as we think about core in this way or core stability in this way, what it is, how it functions, how it can support. It then leads to this idea, which then starts to make sense that when someone says, “I’ve got great core, I just have some back pain,” to me, that actually doesn’t quite match because when people have better core stability, they have reduced pain or no pain.

They might have something strong. People can be strong and have pain, but I question whether someone can say I have good core stability, I just have back pain. I think that when they start to use our anatomy architect state of mind and really understand how they are moving and seeing where compensatory patterns show up, because with people with pain there’s an opportunity there to reduce the compensation patterns.

And as those settle out, then they come to that place of being nimble and agile and responsive and change direction and up and down and all the things, go from stop to start quickly.

So as a summary of this first part here, when I’m thinking about helping someone reducing and eradicating pain and I’m thinking about it with the context of core stability, the aim is that I want to help improve the control and coordination over the range of motion. So I want to help reduce the compensatory strategy to improve the neuromuscular patterning, to improve the neuromuscular habits.

And as I do that, pain goes down and feelings of lightness and tallness and abilities to move with more ease go up. The nimbleness goes up. The agility goes up. The feeling of safety in the world goes up.

So then how do I go about using this anatomy architect idea to support someone with improving their core stability? So I think that the first place to begin is what I don’t do. So what I don’t do is I don’t tend to utilize cues that create some static sort of state of bracing.

Now, bracing can be a precursor in the learning process of improving core. I mean, I remember when I was postpartum and I had no stability. It was just this big vacuous middle piece of my body between ribs and pelvis and my legs were so swollen that I really didn't have any movement. Like all of me was just kind of a big old blob of empty space.

And so for me to lift my kids, whether together or one at a time, required some very intelligent bracing patterns because I had zero control and coordination. So there can be this space of just reconnecting with where the space is. And so by helping to connect to those ribs and to the pelvis and to how my torso sits over top of my feet, where my legs are in space, that's a great place to begin, along with tuning into the breath.

So that kind of bracing strategy and just tuning into where our body parts are, that can work in initial phases for some people when they're in scenarios like the one I described for myself when I was early, early stages postpartum. But I don't work with a lot of those folks.

Most of the folks that I work with are far enough beyond having their kids that that's not, like a postpartum experience is not something that we're working with. I do work with people who are post knee and hip surgery when they're working alongside their medical team. So post surgery does exist. And the majority of people that I'm working with are past those situations and they are having persistent pain for a period of time.

So with that, they already have developed a lot of bracing strategies. So my aim then is to think about how, for them, can I support them in finding ease? That's my first thought. How can I help them find ease? So that doesn't typically involve pulling the navel to the spine. And that doesn't typically involve pulling the ribs down. And it doesn't typically involve engaging the pelvic floor or zipping up from the pubic bone up to the navel.

Those, I find, as strategies for the crowd that I work with tends to add more tension and tends to create more of a bracing pattern, which they already are really good at doing. So I'm just adding more patterning on top of what

they're already doing really, really well. However, it's not helping them reduce or eradicate pain.

So I tend not to do that, but rather what I tend to do is like, how can I help cultivate that ease and how can I help someone move their shoulders and their hips, their largest joints, in a range that doesn't have as much compensation pattern? Because remember, I'm defining core stability as control and coordination over a range of motion.

So how can I enable someone to move through their shoulders and hips with less compensation? Because when there's less compensation, there is more often than not more control and coordination. There's a better neuromuscular habit that's grown.

The other thing I'm thinking about is what's preventing a client from connecting to their core. So I could flip the cueing conversation again, like in reverse, or like I can mirror it if I could put it that way. So someone can prevent themselves from feeling connected to their inner or deep core when they've put bracing patterns on top.

So when they've pulled the navel to the spine, which is more of an oblique engagement typically, or when they've gotten into their pelvic floor and pulled up through their pelvic floor, or they've zipped up and they've created more bracing patterns, that can help them to prevent feeling something more internal and something more responsive. That can prevent them from breathing easily.

So breathing easily is a necessary part of developing a responsive core and a responsive core stability because the diaphragm interweaves with the transverse abdominis and the diaphragm is at the top of the container and the pelvic floor is at the bottom and the two of them work together. And in part the two of them work together to create a better sense of core stability.

So we're playing with this notion of helping to cultivate ease and helping to reduce tension and resistance. So consider a couple of things as you go



about your practice. Consider the range of motion that you already have. Consider the activities that you're already doing. Maybe it's your yoga practice. Maybe it's a weightlifting practice. Maybe it's a quilting hobby. Maybe it's CrossFit. And consider what your breath is doing while you're doing that activity. And are you bracing? And can you do that movement with less bracing? That's one way to think about it.

And can you do that movement with less bracing and still have the same result? Because we can all do something with less of something just by reducing what it is that we're doing. Lifting less weight, lifting less groceries, not moving ourselves through a full range of motion, doing a different full expression of a pose. But what I'm offering up is, can you do this movement with less bracing and have the same result?

Said another way is, can you do the movement or the activity with 5 to 10% more ease and have the same result? Said another way is, can you do the movement or the task with 5 or 10% less effort and have the same result? That key is the same result. Can you be that much more aware? Can you simplify to the place, to that final point where all that needs to be done is done and nothing more?

So you're not utilizing extraneous movement to do an activity, but you're still doing the activity. It requires a certain amount of sort of settling back in one's self and being aware and being curious, yeah? Of tuning in, of recognizing your granular movement patterns and the tendencies that you have with your movement. That is a necessary first piece to this.

And you start to bring those pieces, those component parts into this like figuring out-ness as you start to move with less effort, as you start to move with less brace, as you start to move with more easy breath and still have the same result. And as you do that, just notice, is there greater height, tallness, and responsiveness? Are you lighter on your feet? Give it a whirl and let me know what happens. Let me know your experience.

If this idea, this sense of curiosity starts to pique your interest of being able to tune into yourself and to help your client tune into themselves. If you

really want to have some amazing conversations with clients about what they're feeling and sensing and how to put those puzzle pieces together where you're having empowering conversations with clientele, where you are in a power with relationship and how you solve the problems that they're experiencing through their bodies, you're doing it together and you're getting fantastic results in a short period of time.

If this is something that interests you, you'll probably love Healing In Synergy. And we're just getting rolling, like literally just getting rolling now, for this cohort. So if this is something that strikes your fancy and you want to be a part of this cohort, I would love, love, love, love to teach you. And all you need to do is head over to [functionalsynergy.com/healing](https://functionalsynergy.com/healing). It would be an honor. Take good care.