

Ep #117: How To Get the Most Out of Your Therapeutic Movement Program



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hately

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Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. 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 Hately.

Welcome and welcome back. With this episode I want to talk about the three key things I teach my clientele to really optimize and make their therapeutic movement practices really, really effective.

Most clientele who come to see me for private sessions are people who have had some success already in their rehabilitation experience. They've made some gains, their pain levels have dropped, but they haven't been able to make these consistent.

And they have these occasional or more than occasional backslides or flare ups and they innately know deep inside that something can be different. And they're frustrated that they can't actually make the gains that they want to make. And no one seems to be able to help them.

So this is really where my talent shines because I can pull together a lot of the things that they've been doing and see the patterns that exist and then provide interventions that address all of what they've been doing. So maybe they've been to multiple physical therapists, maybe they've been to other yoga therapists, maybe they've been to other practitioners. And I can bring all that information together and then provide a summary for them like, okay, here are your next steps.

That's what this episode is a basic summary of, of these three key points that I'll often share with people to help them get to the next level. Because in these situations people have all of the answers, the trouble is is that they can't see them because they are in the picture frame, so to speak. They are the fish that's in the fishbowl so to speak, they can't see themselves.

So I can and when they're giving me all of the information from all of the practitioners that they've worked with, as well as all of the things that have

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worked and all of the things that haven't worked, I can just bring that together and then show them what it is that they have told me and then see, again, like I said, those patterns and then they can get those next steps going.

It's really quite a straightforward process in many ways when you can have someone in your corner who can pull together all of that information and then frame it in a way that provides forward progress. The result here that occurs is there's a way out, there's possibility, there becomes a plan for progress.

A lot of times practitioners out there, I mean, we all have our biases, right? Mine is possibility, so that's what I tend to see. Other practitioners, they tend to see, well, this is not working, it hasn't worked for a period of time. Well, maybe this person, just it won't work for them and they just have to live with their condition, right?

So different practitioners have different biases and so you'll bump up against those walls of bias. And because, again, you're the fish in the fishbowl, you're the image in the picture frame, you can't quite see it. So again, that's what this episode is about, is really these three key things that I will often start with when people come to me as ways for them to consider their next steps forward.

Now, if you are a health professional and you're hearing what I'm saying and going, "Oh man, this is the gap that I need to fill in order to help my clientele," then do reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com because we are right now in the process of enrolling for our next cohort of yoga therapy certification and we're almost half full. And that cohort begins this fall.

So if you're interested in connecting do reach out and have a conversation with Kiya about how the product program works. We'd love to have a chat with you to see if what we offer is what would benefit you the most. So do

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send an email to health@functionalsynergy.com. All right? Awesome. Okay, so let's get into it.

When we think about movement practices, whether it's flexibility, or mobility, or strengthening, or some people use the word stretching or gaining flexibility, what we tend to fall into the trap of is here is the exercise program.

I took my first plane trip since before the pandemic and I was in the bookstore picking out some magazines to read while I was on the plane and I found this magazine called Stretching and Flexibility. And inside of it was exactly that, here is the stretching protocol for if you sit for a long period of time. Or if you want here's the strength exercise protocol for regaining balance. And they had it step by step by step.

And I'm not suggesting this as a bad thing, but that is typically what we see. And we follow these protocols and processes like here's the checklist, kind of like here's the grocery list, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this. But there's very little conversation about how to do the thing.

So if I can call the protocol or the exercise process as the what, as the thing, there's very little talk about the how to do the thing. So that's really where I begin with the people who work with me, is let's look at the how. There's lots of what out there, lots of what out there. And a lot of the what, a lot of the things, a lot of the protocols, a lot of the techniques, all of them, like a lot of them are really awesome when they are utilized appropriately.

And to determine appropriateness or to really emphasize and raise up the appropriateness we've got to pay attention to the how, or you just will not get the gains that you are seeking and you will spin around in that frustrating space of, can't I get better already?

All right, so let's get into it. So the first step of this is awareness. Awareness, awareness, awareness, not surprising. With awareness you start to understand what you're not aware of, right? Because we can't fix

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anything, we can't improve anything that we're not aware of. So we need to begin with this space of awareness to really tune into what's actually going on.

And I focus in on two key areas when I'm talking about awareness and when I'm teaching awareness to my clients, and the first one is their breath. Just tuning into when you do this exercise, when you do this series, are you breathing? Like are you breathing or are you moving into it with a held breath? Are you changing your breathing? What's happening with your breath as you do the movement?

And I'm not a yoga teacher who tends to subscribe to the notion of breathe in on this phase of movement and breathe out on this phase of movement, although that can be helpful. There are styles of yoga that do do that and those can be really effective when someone's not breathing at all. But my tendency is to train people to breathe and not to marry it to a phase of movement. It's just where, again, my bias is because I simply want people to tune in to their breath.

So if I can have someone tune into recognizing what the breath is doing, like is it actually moving on an inhale and exhale? Does it stop partway through? What's the quality of it? Is it ratchety? Is it smooth? Is it supple? Is it full? Is it warm? Is it cool?

I mean, there's bazillions of qualities of breath to pay attention to, the key is just to begin to notice your own. And what also becomes interesting is as you're doing the exercise does your breath change compared to when you started? Now, ultimately, we would love to see the breath settle out. And that will often be coupled with feelings of relaxation and of ease, which would be tremendous to have the experience of.

You also want to notice if your breathing is changing dramatically the opposite direction from when you started because that can be a really good indicator that you are not going in the direction that would best serve you.

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So really tuning into the quality of your breath as an awareness tool becomes very, very, very effective.

The other piece that I like to teach around awareness is to tune into how you're actually doing the movement. So a lot of times when people are given sheets of exercises to do, whether it's from their physical therapist or their physician or other health practitioner, they are literally given a sheet of exercises and are not often taught how to do them.

And this makes a lot of sense because practitioners only have so much time for an appointment. And it leaves the person kind of left to their own devices. So many of them will go into YouTube and start to look at how to do them. And some videos on YouTube can be really, really tremendous to break down the movement into the component parts and to really understand how to do the movement.

So when a client comes to me with their exercise sheets, I want them to show me what has been prescribed to them so that I can follow along with what that professional is asking of them to do. And really, again, it's not the exercises that are right or wrong, it's often how they do them. And then I can teach them about the way that their body is moving, again another how piece, right?

So I'm tuning into where are they compensating? Where are they moving well? And tuning into both of those items. So I pay attention to like if the movement is coming into a twist. So imagine that you're on your back, the leg is coming to your belly. And then let's say it's your right leg, and then you bring your left hand onto that right leg and you bring that leg across your body, your shoulders stay on the ground, and you come into a twist, we often call it a supine twist.

So there's a number of things that I'm looking for. The first is can they actually do it? Does the leg come to their belly? Does the leg come across the belly? Do they go into a twist, yes or no? Pretty straightforward, can they actually do the movement?

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And then I'm looking at the compensatory patterning as an opportunity for refinements. So as an example, when that leg bone comes toward their belly, does the pelvis go with it? So does the pelvis lift? When the knee comes toward their belly and they gently grab it with their opposite hand, is it a gentle grab or is it like a tug? Do their shoulders lift up? Does their head lift up? Does their chest get tight? Do they get tight? Do they get more tense? Does their breath stop?

Those are all compensations for doing that movement. And the same thing happens as they bring that leg across, is there like a heaving and a hoing? Does their breath start to change? Does the opposite shoulder begin to lift? So these are all components that I get to refine.

Now, the reason why this is so important and why I speak ad nauseam about this is because truly, truly, truly other than breathing, if someone can do the movements the way that they're designed to be done and the way that the body moves, I mean, so much changes because when you compensate you utilize muscle and myofascial areas that are not designed for the movement. So then your brain creates these neurophysiological or neuromechanical patterns that are not actually meant for the movement.

So if you keep doing that, you've got muscle areas that are doing things that they're not designed to do so they're going to become fatigued. And they are likely going to have some other types of hindrances, whether it's shortening, or feelings of tightness, or grippyness, or something. So then they're going to poop themselves out, if I can use a very technical term, and then other groups will need to compensate for that.

Whereas if we can just tune into the movement the way it's designed to move and move the joint the way it's designed to move, then the muscle areas are actually doing what they're supposed to do. And we can free up a ton of extraneous tension and extraneous movement patterns that's not even needed for the movement. And that creates so much less tension, way more clarity of mind, and then just like areas that were holding that don't need to hold.

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So those are two areas that I spend a lot of time and focus on of breathing and on what is the movement pattern actually? And not me simply teaching these to the my client, but having the client become aware of this. Because again, as I mentioned at the beginning of this, you can't change anything that you're not aware of. And if I can take it to the next step, when you grow your awareness of something, now you've gained clarity on what the problem actually is.

So when my client is between sessions and they're on their own doing their thing outside of our session, I need for them to grow their own clarity of what's working and what's not working. They need to pay attention to this themselves because when they gain that, then they grow greater connection with their own sense of their body, their own sense of self, they tune into what's driving them, what might be pushing them further than needs to be pushed, because that's a very common trait when people have persistency of symptoms.

So when they figure that out, then they've got better feedback between all of their parts. Between how their brain is functioning, the rest of their body is responding to that neurological tonality and feedback. And then they grow their awareness again. So it becomes this amazing experience of someone really up-leveling their own inner world and tuning into their own inner world is really terrific. So that's the first one, is their awareness.

The second one, which goes along with the awareness is this idea of ease and relaxation. When we can tune into cultivating ease or relaxation while we do the movements, we start to down regulate. And what I mean by down regulate is we can move from this like fight or flight response sympathetic drive of doing something the right way.

And I'm saying right in a very bolded, caps lock kind of way, not that I'm screaming, but I'm been very emphatic about that. Because the research has shown that when we get really righteous about the right way to do something, we are actually in a sympathetic drive.

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And for a long, long time, I mean I think it started off with when I read the work of Herbert Benson when I was at university and he was out of Harvard and coined the term the relaxation response. We know all the benefits of the relaxation response and how vital it is to the healing process.

And early in my career I would often just tout this whole notion of when we're relaxed we get to heal, when we're relaxed we get to heal, when we're relaxed we get to heal. And that really starts the process of it.

And when we think about the sympathetic response and the parasympathetic response, it's not like it's a switch, one that's on or off. It's more like a gas and a brake pedal and there is a tendency for a lot of people to be a bit heavy on that gas, that sympathetic side. And so if we can bring that more of a calmer, easeful process to our movement, we really start to hone in a healing process inside of ourselves.

And we can settle in, down regulate, and then really experience the benefits of what comes from the exercise practice, the movement practice. Whether that is a strengthening practice, or a stabilizing practice, or a mobility practice, or a flexibility practice, really any or a combination really of any of those all benefit from just tuning in and settling into more of this relaxation response, this parasympathetic side of things and honing that and really cultivating that.

The third piece of this is to really pay attention to your largest joints. And I speak about the largest joints in the first book that I wrote, called *Anatomy and Asana: Preventing Yoga Injuries*. I still love the book that was published in 2004. All my principles still stand very, very true for today, which is so lovely.

But the idea is really pay attention to these large joints being your hips and your shoulders. And when we can focus our attention on these large joints we can clear up so much stuff elsewhere in our body. If you think about it, the largest joints, they have the most degrees of movement, in biomechanics we call it the degrees of freedom.

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So when you look at that leg bone, it's got six different ways to move. It can go flexion and extension, so forward and back, out and in, abduction, adduction, and then rotation. And when we look at the arm bone and the shoulder socket, same thing, but it also has circumduction, when it can go right around in a circle. So lots of availability for range of motion.

And when you look at the elbow, or at the wrist, or the fingers, or the knee, or the ankles, they just don't have that availability. So when we also look up the chain and there's issues, say in the wrist, or the elbow, or in the foot, ankle, or knee, we will often, dare I say always? Can I say always? I will say always because I know it's a dangerous word, but I will say it anyway.

We will find stuff in those largest joints. So we can clear that up and then, this is important, and then tie it together and connect it with the periphery, with the knees, and the ankles, with the elbows and the wrist, then that's when we can make tremendous gains. But we tend to step away from really paying attention to truly good, good, good joint movement in those joint areas.

And like I said, when you can clear up what's going on at your hips, the change in piriformis bursitis, SI joint issues, quadratus lumborum, psoas, all sorts of knee stuff, plantar fasciitis. Like the ease that you can create is extraordinary, much like repetitive strain injury, wrist issues, palmer issues, like so much.

Plus up through the neck and the head. Because I like to think about neck issues, the first root of them sits between the shoulder blades and the shoulder girdle. The second root sits at the pelvis. So when we can clear up those joint areas, we have such a shift elsewhere in the body.

Which is why when you see what I do on YouTube, you will see me talking a lot about leg bone in the hip socket, like bone in the hip socket, this is your arm bone in your shoulder socket. Like I will speak to those. I don't have very fancy cues, it's just really specific, find the arm bone, move it in the arm socket. Find the leg bone move it in hip socket.

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And it's really, really fun. Maybe fun is not the right word, but it can become fun when people realize how limited they are in those areas. And it's fun because once they realize that they're limited, they grow that awareness, they can now improve it. And when they learn this ease and relaxation piece, which was the second point that I made, the change happens very, very, very, very, very, very, very fast. Really, really fast.

And it's amazing because now we're starting to give the body and the mind the stimulus that it actually needs. And like I said, change happens very fast when we give our systems the stimulus that they need.

So those are three key things that I speak about with my clients, helping them grow their awareness, both in their breath and in their movement. What they're actually moving, what's working, what's not. Where things are moving well, where things are compensating. Helping them cultivate that ease and relaxation, helping them to really, truly improve their largest joints.

And then those three things can transform all the exercise programs that I've seen out there. It makes all the exercise programs out there golden. Like you can open any book that has, whether it's stability, strength, flexibility, stretching, you name it, you name the practice, if you bring in those three things, just those three things, you will see a significant shift in how you move through and the results that you get from those practices.

Now, if you would like to get a taste of the way that I teach with these three ideas in mind, then head over to my YouTube channel. This is something we're just starting to grow again and you can find it at Yoga With Susi Hately.

If you happen to be more of a Facebook user, I recorded just a bazillion videos during the pandemic and you can find those all on our feed on my Facebook business page, which is at [facebook.com/susi](https://www.facebook.com/susi), S-U-S-I, dot hately dot capital F capital S. So you can find them all there.

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And if you'd like to subscribe though and make sure that you get weekly drops, then do go to the YouTube channel because I'm teaching concepts on the YouTube channel plus offering sequences that you can explore and really, really enjoy. All right.

Have fun with this, and as I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, if you are a health professional and you would like to dig into the way that I teach, you think that it would be beneficial to and additive to your practice, send us an email to health@functionalsynergy.com. It would be such, such, such a pleasure to work with you. See you next time.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.