

Ep #138: Exploring Your Neck (Part 4)



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With Your Host

Susi Hatelty

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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. With this episode I continue my mini-series on exploring the neck. And specifically today we're going to look at the relationship between the pelvis and the neck. This is such a fun exploration because when I'm sharing this with my clients, they're often so excited that their neck is settling out when they settle out through their pelvis and improve the function around their pelvis.

But they're also somewhat gobsmacked because even though we all know that we arose out of this combination of cells and we are all connected, we forget that we are all connected, right? That the pelvis isn't so far away from the neck through all sorts of different connections.

So with this episode it's sort of fun to explore because we get to explore some of the anatomy and biomechanics around the pelvis. And then how to bring that into practice so you can see the relationship for yourself and discover for you, you've got a relationship between your pelvis and your neck that could improve.

So again, what I'm going to be talking about is a couple of the biomechanical principles that I utilize when I'm looking at this relationship and then some ideas for you to explore in your own practice. Now, this is only a short episode, I can't get into all of it. And if you resonate with what I'm offering here, then I really, really encourage you to come to *Power of Pure Movement: Unwinding and Unraveling Your Neck*.

It's happening on November 14th, 15th, and 16th, that's a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, from 12:15 until 1:45. Mountain Time. You don't have to attend live, you can register knowing that you might not be able to make it or you know you won't be able to make it and the recording will be available to you for you to enjoy in your account forever. Yes, forever.

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So, by all means, if you're curious, if you're resonating with what I'm saying, then please, please, please. I have this like desire around people understanding that they can reduce and eradicate pain as they move better and as they get quieter, and as they tune into who they are. And we start at the body.

And how you move in your body has such patterning elsewhere in your being and in your life. And it's remarkable the change can happen. So I invite you for the opportunity to perhaps be gobsmacked about the relationship and what you discover about your neck and as it relates to other parts of your body and your being.

Okay, so let's dig in. When I look at the pelvis, I think about it in two key ways. The first is that the pelvis is a bridge between the upper body and the lower body. So when that pelvis is not functioning well, or imbalanced, or strained, or fill in whatever word you want to fill in, then a compensatory pattern is going to happen elsewhere. And for some people, that pattern is up in the neck.

Think about yourself standing. If you stand still you've got the body weight and gravity coming through your body, through your pelvis to the feet, and ground reaction force from the floor up through to your body. Think about people who stand for a living at their jobs, think like cashiers, right? Or if you've ever worked a trade show on a cement floor, right, and how your feet experience the floor and that's translated up through your body.

And then what happens through your back? Or what happens through your neck, right? So the floor and the ground reaction force from the earth up through your body has an impact. And the ability for you to absorb and dissipate and transfer that load, there's a huge piece of it that comes around the pelvis and how functional or balanced that pelvis is.

So when we can improve that, we improve a big, big, big piece to our whole body. And it's why I like to talk about the pelvis as being the second root of neck function, where last episode I talked about the shoulder girdle or the

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primary stabilizing structure being the first root of neck function. This is now the second root.

So when we can really get this pelvis to leg to spine area working well, so much can change up through to the neck if that's a relationship or a key relationship for you. So that's the first piece, is consider that pelvis as being a bridge between the upper and the lower body. And the balance and stability that's there can have such a far reaching effect.

The second is a theory of form and force closure. Now, form and force closure is a concept I learned way, way back early in my days of being in the chronic pain world. So this idea I've played with and I've noodled through and I've chewed around for many, many, many, many years.

Anatomically, every joint has form and force closure. The reason why a lot of the research or what we often hear about when you kind of think about form and force closure, why the focus tends to be around the SI is because there is so much pain and discomfort in that area and its neighbor, the back. And when we can improve the form and force closure around the SI joint, so much can change.

What form closure is, is the skeletal and ligamentous support around a joint. Force closure is the muscular support. In my mind, as a kinesiologist and as a yoga therapist, the whole idea of form closure is not something I believe that I can directly impact. I might be wrong about that, but it's just my belief.

I let the folks who do like hands-on adjustments like the chiro's, the osteos, the PTs, those guys and all the other body workers who do that hands-on specific adjustment type of work. They are dealing more with that form closure in my mind. And again, I could be wrong, but that's just the way that I see it.

I work more on the level of force closure and how the muscles interact together to create that balance and stability. And when we actually have professionals doing both of them together, so we've got the amazing chiro's

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and osteopaths and PTs and all the other body workers who do that kind of work. Then combine it with people like me, yes, it is so, it's like soprano lovely voices. It's like amazing stuff happens.

So if we dig in more to force closure then, we're looking at some key muscular areas around the legs and the pelvis and the spine. And how I want you to imagine this in your mind is that when form and force closure are working together, and then the way that I work, when force closure is working really well, there's this embrace around your pelvis and your SI.

There's this hug of the legs into the pelvis. The way the pelvic floor works and the transversus works. That there is this conversation, this nurturing conversation if I could say it, right? This responsivity that grows between these structures and the relationship to their myofascial energies.

So we're looking at our hip adductors and abductors, the rotator, hip rotators, those deep six muscles, the pelvic floor or the transversus abdominus. Those are key muscular areas that contribute to the idea of force closure between the legs and the pelvis and the spine.

Okay, now let's kind of play with this a bit more from a practical standpoint. I want you to consider a really common movement that we see in all areas of fitness, Pilates, yoga, all across the board. And that is a movement that we often call figure four, or ankle to knee. So you're on your back, you raise one foot up, and you place it on the knee.

Now, the movement itself is raising the leg in flexion, so the knee is coming towards your belly. It's flexion at the hip, and then there's rotation of the same leg bone as that same ankle comes onto the knee. Now, often what you'll see with people is when they start the flexion motion of that leg, the pelvis will rock or it will tuck.

The other thing it will do is as the leg bone rotates, oftentimes it will tuck even more, it will go left and right even more, or it will even hike. So it can shift dramatically. The movement itself though, here's what's interesting, is

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really only a leg bone going into flexion and then rotation. But so many people have the pelvis doing so many more things than is actually required.

This, to me, is an example of where force closure is lacking or limited. When we're wanting the leg bone, simply the leg bone to do a movement, flexion and rotation, simple as that. And yet the pelvis is wobbling all over the place, right?

And when we can start to quiet that pelvis down from doing that and then start to add in other types of stimulus exercises or yoga movements or you name it. Ball work, massage work, any kind of work there to help bring more stability to that pelvis. Then we have more force closure and the way that leg bone will move will be better and there will be more balanced to this piece of our body that is a bridge between the upper and the lower parts of the body.

You've got better infrastructure, you've got better basic structure, like the functional pieces are working better together. There's a more all-encompassing hug. Think about wearing an SI joint belt and the stability that can come from that external pressure. And how it can feel so much freer further up the body and up in through the neck.

That's what we're creating, but we're creating on the inside and not needing an external belt, not that I've got a problem with external belts. But the idea is to work with your myofascial structure so you create that stability yourself.

So a key way to do this is to look at the movement that you're doing, so let's call it ankle to knee or figure four. And as you're raising that leg up into the movement, be certain that your pelvis is quiet. Now, don't brace your pelvis while you're doing this because then you're just adding more compensatory strategy on top of compensatory strategy. Really begin to start working with taking the leg up with the pelvis quiet.

Now, what you might need to do to start with with this movement just like this, is to raise your foot up on a couple of blocks. So you make the

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trajectory of that hip flexion a little bit less. And then as your brain and your hip kind of get together going, “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, this is what's supposed to happen,” then you can start to lower the block one at a time, one at a time, one at a time, one at a time, and then you'll start to get it.

The other thing you can do is you can move the whole exercise itself over towards the wall to legs up the wall. And then at legs up the wall, start to lift one leg into flexion and then rotate that leg, even slide the leg into abduction adduction, only moving the leg bone in the hip socket and that's it.

And then when you cross the ankles, and then slide that top ankle down, so now you're moving into a figure four with legs up the wall, keeping that pelvis quiet, quiet. The word here is quiet. Not anchored, not cemented, not braced, not gripping in the orifices of your pelvic floor, but just moving that leg bone. And then working through that leg bone in the hip socket.

So you're working at this component level, helping the brain and this area of the body to reconnect. You're growing your awareness, you're understanding clearly what components are working and not working, and then helping to reconnect them. Because here's the thing, even though I use these words, working and not working, what we're playing with here is improving the tissue.

Tissue can change, no matter your age. Tissue can change, we just need to give it the right stimulus. So you're working and playing with how this body part is moving. Now, some people might say, but this sounds like it's just mobility work. Uh-huh, I can see how one would think that.

But when you're keeping that pelvis quiet and you're relearning this movement pattern, you're asking for these deeper muscles to be responsive to the mobility work of that leg bone. And then as a result, you start to gain some basic strength.

That strength and that mobility start to turn into better stability, which in my mind is control, small c control, and very coordinated movement, right?

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When you've got that control and that coordination, you have greater stability. And from that foundation, you can then build upon that and better strength.

Now, one thing to pay attention to while you're doing this, and I've made reference to this in the previous episodes of this mini-series, is to pay attention to what's going on to your neck and your jaw while you're doing it. Because so often some will begin to move their leg bone in their pelvis and their neck will get involved.

So you might want to take your hands up to your neck. Or if you are a health professional working with a client in-person, you might want to place your hands on their neck while they move their like bone. Now, because 100% of my work now is on Zoom, I'll ask someone to put their hand on their neck and for them to feel.

And then I'm also tuning in to what I'm seeing up in that area. So if I start to see breath holding or shoulder tension, I'll just bring that to their awareness so that they can tune into it if they're not aware. And then as they're moving their hip, to only move it as far as that tension further up, the chain stays settled out. That's when we can start to better, and better, and better improve these relationships between what's going on in the lower part of the body and what's going on up in the neck.

So then, if we circle back now to the anatomical conversation I had in the middle of this episode is, can you see how now that pelvis, we're helping it to improve its capacity as being a bridge? And by improving some of these basic, basic movement components, we start to improve the force closure ability or capability. And by doing that, it's not surprising to start to experience less pain or strain at the neck.

I was working with a client a few weeks ago and we were doing this movement, plus we were doing a few other movements that involved the relationship between the pelvis and the ribcage. And as she was coming out of them her neck started to feel a lot longer.

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So once you build upon this very basic ankle to knee exercise and you have the understanding of how your parts work here, then you can start to take it into other exercises and movements that impact the neighbor. So between the pelvis and the ribs, between the pelvis and the foot.

And then you get more and more coordinated patterns and you build out that force closure, you build out the neuromuscular functioning in such a more coordinated functional way. And that is what contributes, in part, to your neck starting to settle out when we have the pelvis in mind.

So what I encourage you to do is this, to play around with ankle to knee, whether you are doing it straight on the floor or whether you're doing it with legs up the wall. And start to notice where you compensate. And can you just reduce the compensation? You don't have to have zero compensation, I mean, that's kind of silly in a way because none of us move purely, purely purely.

It's just that for what I've noticed in my line of work, for the people who have pain, when I can help them reduce their compensations, so much of their pain goes away. Like goes away, like is eradicated or significantly reduces. So that's why I speak to this so often, because it's a way to come into your body, to listen to your body, to not have to cajole your body, to pay close attention and get clear and then reconnect and get better connection between brain and the other parts of your body.

Okay, so have a play with that. If you resonate with this, if you want more, if you're hungry for more, join me in November. That's November 14, 15, and 16. Power of Pure Movement: Unwinding and Unraveling your neck. You don't have to attend live. You can find all the details at learn.functionalsynergy.com/neck. I would love, love, love to see you. And in the meantime, I will catch you on the next episode. Take good care.

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

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at health@functionalsynergy.com where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.