

Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice



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 launch into a new mini-series on the feet. And the reason I'm doing this is because, over the past year, I've seen a lot of clientele come to see me for feet issues. And what we've discovered is that in the working of their feet, there's all sorts of other patterning that we need to resolve further up the chain. And as you resolve that patterning, the feet will really start to shift.

This is not surprising, given the work that we do where the pain is, is not the problem. But it's really, really evident in the feet. And what I've come to kind of decide in my own head is that the feet are incredible compensators. And they often are key strategists for when we have hip instability issues or other functional limitations up in through the hips, even up through the shoulder girdle.

The feet will take the brunt because if we're not absorbing and dissipating load really well through our body, whether it's through the ribcage, the shoulder girdle, or through the pelvis, then where is it going to be taken? For some people, it will be in the feet, right?

And so when we can start to resolve a lot of that patterning, much magic can occur. So I want to share with you over these next series of segments, ideas that I have seen really work for me. And then you can try them for your own self if you've got feet issues. And if you're a health professional, Pilates, yoga, or yoga therapist, you can try these with your own clients and see what happens.

And if what you find really resonates with you and you want to dig in more, I'm running a Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet in February. And I'd love, love, love, love, love for you to join me. It's a brand-spanking new program. You can read more about that at learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet.

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Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice

So for today, let's dig into the feet and hip connection. The reason I'm starting here is because if we aren't stable through the pelvis, if we're not aware of what's going on in the pelvis, we miss out on a huge opportunity to help the feet because the leg bone swings in the pelvis. The pelvis is the platform. And if it's not stable, that leg bone is not going to swing well.

And so if the leg bone is not swinging well, then the foot is not going to place well. If the foot is not going to place well, then how are we going to shift and transfer load left to right, forward to back, down to up, up to down, right?

So then we start to see, well, if we're not doing that well, then where do we end up bracing and gripping and compensating and holding? And where does the pain start to manifest, right? So when we can let our eye gaze around the pelvis and see this connection between the pelvis and the foot, it can really open the door to change.

So there are a couple of things I'd like to do with you on this episode specifically. One of them is going to require standing on a yoga block or standing on a step or a ledge. So if you need to find the yoga block or the ledge and you need to pause me, then go ahead and pause me. And then, when you've got your stuff, just press play again.

So that when you have your block or your step, you're going to step onto it and let your leg dangle. And then, start to move your dangling leg in your hip socket in a rotation. And can you, first of all, can you do that? And if you can do that or can't do that, is your pelvis moving as well? Like when you rotate your leg bone in the socket, is your pelvis going as well?

Or when you're trying to move the leg bone in the hip socket, are you actually generating it from your knee? Or, and I saw this this morning with one of my clients, when you're moving your leg bone in your hip socket, are you actually using your foot? Like, are you gripping with that free foot, or even are you gripping with the toes of the foot that's on the block or the stair?

Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice

So notice all the things that you might be doing to enable you to move that light bone in the hip socket. Because the only thing you need to do is move the leg out and the hip socket. That's it.

So if you were to reduce the extraneous movement patterns you're utilizing right now, what would happen? How much rotation is in that socket? And can you see how the foot follows where that leg bone moves? Because the foot is at the bottom of the chain, right? The chain being the foot, the lower leg, the knee, the upper leg, the hip, and the pelvis.

Now take a moment and come back to standing off the block. And you might notice a difference now, standing left to right, having done this. You might feel freer. You might feel more strain. Just notice what the experience is.

And then, switch to the other side and notice if there's any difference or any distinction with how this leg bone is moving in the socket versus the other one. Notice how your foot shifts or changes. Notice if there's any other compensatory patterning.

So this one can be a real eye-opener because so many people can think that, well, the foot problem is my foot. But then when they see the foot is the bottom of the chain, it's like, okay, so maybe what's going on up in the hip has an impact on the way my feet feel. That can be a start.

Okay, so then coming into the second one, another one that can be really useful. And I'm going to talk about this one in two parts. Starting in standing, also known in yoga as Tadasana, can you feel three points at the bottom of your feet? The center of the heel. The ball of the foot. And the base of the pinky toe.

So it's three points. It's like you're standing on a tripod. Now, you might not feel this tripod equally. You might notice more weight is over onto the pinky side, or more weight is over onto the ball of the foot. You might feel more weight forward or back. At this moment, just notice what you notice.

Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice

Maybe if you want to play around with where the weight is, and you start shifting your foot specifically, do you feel any change further up the chain in terms of sensation or muscle or movement dynamic?

And then lift your toes. So, first of all, can you? And then, second, what do you notice happens as you lift your toes? What's the result either in your feet or further up the leg?

Okay, so now let the toes come down. We're going to come into a very, very, very, very small squat. So just a micro bend or a little bit more of a bend in the knee. Really teeny, tiny chair. A micro bend, or a teeny tiny squat, or a chair, it's all the same thing.

But tiny bend in the knee and place your hands on the outside of your leg. And you're going to push your leg into your hands. So right hand on the outside of the right leg left hand on the outside of the left. Press the legs out into the hands.

So you're moving the leg bones in the hip socket wide, abduction, into your hands. And then look down at your feet and notice what happens at your feet. For those of you who tend towards a flatter foot or an overpronated foot, you'll likely notice that the arch of your foot starts to lift. Now notice you didn't actively lift the arch. But the foot is changing its position by way of what's going on with the hip.

Another way you can do this is to do a mini-wall sit. So to be in standing with your back against the wall, small squat. And place a strap around the legs or your hands. Both will do the same thing. And then, press the legs into the strap or into your hands. And again, you can see the same thing.

That becomes really, really interesting. And then also notice as you do it, are you doing any compensatory bracing or gripping strategy further up the chain in your ribcage or in your shoulder or in your jaw, your face, or your breath? So you start to see all the things that we do, or you do, to support yourself in doing the movement, which could be contributory to how your feet are feeling.

Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice

Okay, then, come back to standing. Again, now notice what's going on with your feet. And the next movement we'll do is we'll come wide, taking the legs wide as if we're going to step into warrior two or triangle. So legs go wide, so legs abduct wide.

And typically, in yoga, the instruction is to move your feet wide, but we have to remember the feet are at the bottom of the chain, right? So we're actually moving the leg bones in the hip sockets wide. So I like to use that as an instruction because that's the actual joint that's doing the movement.

When the cueing tends to focus on the feet, then we focus on the feet. And I like to bring people's attention to the area in which I want them to work. So let's take the legs wide. We're moving them at the hip socket, and the feet are going to place.

And now notice where the feet are placed. And we're now going to rotate the leg bones in the hip sockets. We're now going to rotate them externally. And as you rotate them externally, the feet are going to move with that rotation.

So do you notice I didn't say turn your feet wide or point your toes out because I want to focus on the leg bone motion in that hip socket? Very similar to what I offered up when you were standing on the block or the stair. So you're rotating that leg bone in the hip socket. Where did the feet go?

Now, sometimes what people notice here is that the ability for them to move their feet is better than their ability to move their leg bone in the hip socket. Not uncommon at all, particularly if you are an avid yoga practitioner who has had a lot of cueing or instruction at the feet. And that might be an area that's just gotten a little bit tighter or a little bit less functional.

But when we can start to bring the focus up through to the hip, which is where the movement is really deriving from, then some change can begin to happen.

Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice

Okay, so then unrotate those leg bones, and then rotate the leg bones again in the hip sockets. And now, come back to the bottom of the feet and just notice the center of the heel, the ball of the foot, and the base of the pinky toe. And we'll move into a slight squat.

So in the yoga world, we often call this a goddess, or a Horseman's, or a wide Horseman's. So now, start to bend through the knee, the ankle, and the hip. And then just notice how this feels between your feet, your knees, and your hips. And just notice what you notice, okay?

And then come back up. This time, bring your hands to the outside of the thighs. So it's much like we did in the mini, mini squat. Press the legs wide into the hands. Notice what happens to the feet. And then start to do that mini squat again.

Okay, and then come back up. And then come back to Tadasana. And now notice what you're noticing between your feet, your knees, your hips. Notice the sensations that are present, whether it's through your feet, whether it's through any part of the leg, through the back, the SI, or further up the chain.

So between now and the next episode, what I offer up to you is maybe notice when you're walking about the three points on the bottom of your feet, and be aware of the center of the heel, ball, the foot base of your pinky toe as an option.

Also, maybe notice, as you are walking about, even though walking has a lot of moving parts to it, simply notice how that leg bone is moving in your socket. And just notice where that foot is placed. There's nothing that you need to do with it right about yet, but just simply notice and be aware of what's what.

Or notice if when you are standing, if you kind of push your weight over onto one hip, like a lot of people, do. Just notice the dynamic between your hip, your knee, and your foot. It's not that it's a wrong posture. It's not. Just notice the dynamic of movement that happens between the pelvis, the knee, and the hip. And get a sense and a feel of what that is because all

Ep #154: Exploring Your Feet Part 1 - Your Feet-Hip Connection: An Embodied Practice

movement in our body is movement. It's neither really good nor bad. It's all basically neutral.

And so we can see what the mechanics are, we can start to understand the way we ourselves are embodying them and utilizing them, as opposed to labeling them bad, wrong, good, or great. So tune into just what you tend to do and see if you can step away, zoom out a little bit and just recognize what you're doing. And see how that just contributes to what you're feeling.

It can become super interesting and very eye-opening. And also, it can contribute so much more information in terms of what you might do next in terms of supporting yourself.

And if this has been interesting for you and you want to dig in more, I'd love for you to join me at Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet. You can learn more at learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet. I would love, love, love to see you there. Happy exploring, and we'll 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.