

Ep #159: Relax Move Strengthen



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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 want to dig into three key concepts I think about from a bigger picture when I'm working with my clientele. And my clientele could be people who are reducing and eradicating persistent symptoms of pain. They could also be somebody who's managing the symptoms associated with an autoimmune condition. It could also be someone who is recuperating from surgery, like surgery from cancer, knee surgery, hip surgery, or anything like that.

And these three things relate to all these situations. And I find that when we can really steep ourselves into these three ideas, my client gets better so much quicker. And in a way, that's just got a lovely inner world sense, if I could put it that way. I know that was a bit vague. But I was talking with a client today around you know the difference when you're baking, or you're cooking, and you follow a recipe.

And then when you feel into the ingredients, and you really allow the ingredients to meld into each other, and you're just noticing the impact on the ingredients melding into each other. Which is why when I'm baking bread, and I make bread an awful lot, like almost on a weekly basis, how much flour I put into the bread changes every single time. And if I just followed the recipe, then some of my loaves of bread would be super hard.

But rather, what I'm doing is I'm feeling into the way the flour is melding in, right, which goes for really everything that I bake. I'm more of a baker than a cooker myself, but I can feel the texture of the way things work together. And then when that happens, rather than doing the recipe right, if I could put it that way, the end product is so much better.

And this is sort of similar to working with a client in that when they come into these three ideas, which I'll explain in just a second, it's a different

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result that is hard to describe. It's more that the inner texture of the person is different.

So rather than having this external thing of the right way to do an exercise, they're feeling into the internal experience of how the exercise is being done and how they're doing it. And they can tune more closely into what their yellow lights are and where they need to refine, and how they need to grow.

And so they can more easily say no, I'm not going to do this, or yes, I am going to do this. And I've had clients who do this really well who then go back to their other health professionals, like their PTs, or the massage people or whomever else they're working with, and say, you know what? I'm not going to do that thing because of this, this, and this, right?

They're just so much more clear in their own world about what their body and their mind are asking for that they can make some really, really smart decisions. And they're the people who get better faster. Not because they're taking the advice of an expert being outside of them, but they're really tuning in to the expert that's inside.

Okay, so the three concepts are we want to help someone relax. And then in that space of relaxation, to help them move. And then from good movement to then strengthen. Lots of times, I see in a rehabilitative, and even in a sports world or a fitness world, we start by, let's anticipate a movement by strengthening. So we often see bracing of the abdomen or holding the breath, then moving, and then maybe we'll relax later. That's an example of the opposite or a different way.

And so we start with the relaxing first. And sometimes, for people, this can be a bit tricky because they want to get the thing done. They want to solve the problem and get on with things. At least, that's a lot of my clientele. They're like, let's get this thing going. They're driven, they're ambitious, and they want to get back to things. Let's just get this thing going, right?

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And so, initially, I get to direct that energy into really tuning into how they are moving. We are doing movement. When I talk about relaxation, I'm not saying they need to lie about on bolsters, or do yoga nidra, or do some breath work, although they may very well do that.

It's more a state of mind about how they are approaching what we're about to do and tuning into and settling into and relaxing into. Because one thing I've seen over and over and over again is that when someone kind of comes at their practice from this, "Oh, this is the right way; I must do it this way," and there's sort of this rat a tat tat kind of feel and texture to it. Their system does not absorb that way of being, and it just doesn't work as well.

Whereas when there's this sort of curious, exploratory, receptive nature, everything changes. And that's what I'm talking about around relaxation, about tuning in. Sometimes it requires some breath. And sometimes, it requires just relaxing the mind and just feeling how the body moves. Like really noticing, can you feel your leg bone moving in your hip socket? What else is happening as you do that movement?

So then they can take this space of relaxation into the movement, right? They take the curiosity into the movement. They're in more of a parasympathetic state, right, that pedal. I like thinking of the nervous system as two pedals, sympathetic and parasympathetic. And they're less on the gas pedal of sympathetic, and they're more into that parasympathetic state. And they can just kind of settle in.

And then they start to move. And then now they can tune into, all right, how well am I moving? What's working here? What's not working here? Where am I gripping, and where am I bracing? Am I holding my eyes or my tongue really hard? Are my toes getting all involved? There's an overall greater awareness of what's actually going on through the movement. And it's not to necessarily correct the movement, but to say and notice like, all right, what's actually happening here now?

And then that provides you the data that helps improve the overall coordinated patterns. A lot of people think that when there's pain present,

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there's weakness present, and they must get strong in order for the pain to go away. I don't know why that belief still exists in our world because it's not true. Someone is often very strong, and they have pain. The key is, how well coordinated are their patterns? What's the quality of their range of motion?

And when someone simply improves the coordinated pattern, so reducing compensatory pattern, really, truly moving the bone the way it's meant to move in the joint. Now the muscles and the tissue that are meant to be involved in the movement are, and the ones that aren't aren't. So now there's a really focused area of, like, all right, we're going to use the bicep to move this arm, and not like my tongue and my bum and my foot.

And as a result, people feel like they're getting stronger. But they're simply moving better, yeah? Which then leads me to strengthen. So relaxation leading to movement leading to strength is when you're moving better, you innately get stronger. I was talking with a client the other day, and I was saying to her, you know, I'm really excited about helping you get stronger because she's developed better and better movement patterns over the time that I've seen her.

And she's lighter in her step. She's taller. She's more tuned into what's going on through the various parts of her body. She recognizes what contributes to when her pain levels go up. Her awareness is so spot on. And so she can take that spot on awareness, this new structural integrity that she's gained, and then add load to that.

So she's not jumping in and adding load too quickly. Because so often, when people do that, it might work for a few weeks, and then, mm-hmm, and then they get themselves into some trouble, right? Then they get hurt. Then they get injured.

But if we can really tune in again by allowing the relaxation to help us settle in, then as we move, we can keep that curiosity and really tune into our compensatory patterning. What's moving well? What's not moving so well? Quiet what's not moving well. Nurture what is moving well.

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Start to see that the tissue that's actually meant to do the job now does it without us hammering at it to make it happen. And then, from there, you start to feel lighter. You start to feel taller. You start to feel more grounded, more connected. And that's when we add strength. Now the strength gains can really fly, right, because you're adding load to a system that is well-coordinated. It's adaptable. It has shown that it can change.

Now, what's going to happen is that as you add more load, the body is going to shift, the body is going to change, and you're going to have to pay attention to the structural integrity again. I see this all the time, where in the early phases of recovery, they gain better movement patterns, and then they add strength. But then that strength enables them to do other things. And those other things might not be coexisting with the structural integrity that they have.

So then they need to grow the structural integrity again. And then onward they go. I see this a lot of times when the seasons change. So I live in Calgary, Canada, and we have four seasons. And so, through those seasons, different activities occur.

So as someone comes around to ski season, then oftentimes we need to help them kind of get their legs back again, whether it's cross-country skiing or whether it's downhill skiing, right? Because even if they were riding through the fall, it's still not quite the same. They might have some strength, but their coordinated patterning isn't maybe quite there. So we need to help them regain that patterning. And then, once they've got that, then their legs can move really well through the ski season.

So lots of times, as we move through the transitions of the seasons, we also come back to some basic movement patterns just to tune in. All right, where are we at? Where's our structural integrity at? How can we tune more into ourselves? So again, recommitting back to the relaxation, the movement so that we can then strengthen more.

I really, really, really believe seeing all the people that I work with, and so many of them are over 55, and they do better and better and better. And

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the greater ability I have to explain these concepts to them, the better they do. And they get stronger. They move better. Many of them say they move better at 55 and 60, and 65 than they did when they were 35 because they're able to relax in, then move, then add load, then add strength. Really, really quietly, very powerful stuff.

If this is interesting to you and you want to dig into this, whether you are a professional, whether you're a yoga teacher, whether you are a non-health professional, but you want to dig into it more for your body, I really recommend you join me for the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive.

I'm running the spring intensive from April 15th to April 20th, so from Saturday to Thursday, from 8:30 am Mountain to 2 pm Mountain. We dig into all the stuff. And so it's kind of two parts. One part is about you and your body and also being able to teach this to other people.

So I've had people come to this who really want an intensive for their own selves and their own body and really get into better movement for themselves. And then I also have people come in who are massage therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, chiropractors, yoga teachers, Pilates folks, and fitness people who want to be able to utilize my approach with our own clients. And this is a foundational training to be able to do that.

And then there is the certification program where we really dig into it. To learn more about the therapeutic yoga intensive, visit learn.functionalsynergy.com/intensive. I would love to see you there. See you next time.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back onboard, 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.

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