

Ep #161: The Key Difference Maker for My Clients Getting Out of Pain



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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 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 continue my new mini-series on reducing and eradicating pain. This is a mini-series that is a lead-up to my therapeutic yoga intensive that I'm hosting this April, which is a six day, 36 hour program where you work with me from 8 o'clock to 2:30 from Saturday April 15th to Thursday April the 20th.

It's designed for health professionals and yoga teachers who want to dig in and learn the concepts that work so well for me and my trainees and grads helping clients reduce and eradicate pain more consistently with sustainable results.

If as you listen to this episode and any previous episode that I've recorded and you find that this is really, really resonating with you, then please check out learn.functionalsynergy.com/intensive. And if you have any specific questions about the program you can send us an email at health@functionalsynergy.com.

I should note too, that this program is module one of our certification program and is also stand alone. So you can take it and only it, and then even decide later if you want to continue on with our professional training.

So with that, let's dig into a key concept that I find is so fundamental and yet many professionals, many people don't address, what I have found is the most significant, most important concepts to consider for getting out of pain. In fact, I would say that it is the key difference maker for my clients from when they first struggle and then get onto the other side. And, as I first mentioned, so few people address it.

When people ask me why I get the results I do and I bring this up, they often poo-poo me and want instead to talk about biomechanics and muscle

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dynamics and the latest in nervous system down regulation. And while all those things are really quite important and are key components to the process, without what I'm going to share here, there won't be the significant or lasting change that people truly are seeking.

So what is it? Feel, feel, feel. Grow your awareness and allow feeling to be the fuel for the healing process. So what do I mean by this? People are so quick to experience a symptom and then want to get rid of it. And the focus is to get rid of the symptom, which makes a lot of sense, right? I want to make sure to distinguish this getting rid of the symptom, sometimes what I call a fix it, is very distinct from solving the problem the symptom is actually expressing.

Now I appreciate that this may sound totally nuanced, and it can be. Getting rid of a symptom is often quite temporary, whereas solving the problem is addressing the correlating factors that lead to the expression of the symptom, right? You'll notice I used correlating and not causal, right? Because we don't necessarily know specifically a cause, but we can find and really tune in to the correlating factors and see the patterns that are contributing to what's really going on and we can address the pattern and so much can change.

When people come to see me as a client, they are already so good at getting rid of symptoms. They've had tons of success at doing that. And they've grown the skill in the process that I call the skill of whack-a-mole. They can feel their pain, they go after a symptom, they get rid of that symptom. And then they start to feel their pain so-called moving to another body part, and another body part, and another body part. And they whack away trying with different stretches and healing techniques and all the things. And they're getting increasingly frustrated.

So then when I work with them, I begin with their movement. Quite literally to feel their movement, not just whether there's a stretch or a strengthening sensation, or if their pain is present, right? Because that's what they've already done when I talk about being great at whack-a-mole. They're

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already really good at feeling if something is stretching or mobilizing or strengthening. They're already noticing when their pain goes away or when their pain comes back.

What I'm talking about here is how is the movement actually feeling? Is the body part that they want to be having moving, actually moving? And when it moves, is it moving smoothly? Or has it got some ratchety-ness to it? Or is it sort of hard? Or is it difficult? Or is it easy? Or is it smooth? I've even had some people explain to me that when they feel their movement, it feels peaceful, right?

This might sound a little bit silly, how could something so feeling and quality-based be important? Well, years ago I had a series of clients come to me who had been to a host of other health professionals and trainers. And from an intellectual perspective they were given great, great exercises. I knew most of the health professionals that they had seen, I knew the trainers that they had seen, and I knew how good those people were at what they were doing.

But what was happening is the client was doing the work solely from an intellectual perspective. They were doing the exercises like a to-do. An intellectual to-doing of something. They were just doing the way that they were told. They were thinking their way through the exercise.

Here's an example to highlight this. I have a lot of clients who have adhesions in their shoulders. Some of them have been diagnosed with a frozen shoulder, some of them haven't, but you can kind of get the idea that there's adhesions in the shoulder. They've been given exercises to get their shoulder moving, and their shoulder isn't moving.

When I watch them move I ask them what they feel when they do the exercises that they've been given. And remember the exercises are good exercises. Where I'm asking them from is this idea of what are they feeling? What is the sensation that is present? Their response is often this, I'm supposed to feel it here.

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They didn't answer the question. My question was what they feel and where do they feel it? I'm supposed to feel it here, they say. Okay, so this is really important. Really, really important. I ask them if they're actually feeling it there. Oftentimes they will say, well, no, I feel strain in this other place, pointing to another part of their body, often their neck, their back, their SI joint, in any number of places, really.

So then I ask them, okay, let's do the exercise again, but only as far as you don't feel a strain in this other body part. Not surprisingly the movement becomes quite small. The range of motion becomes very, very, very small. Sometimes the smallness of the movement can be a little bit disconcerting, a bit flabbergasting. And they're only doing the movement as far as the strain in that other part of their body isn't happening, all right?

Now in the process, there can be this disconcerting feeling around the movement being small. But also there is a feeling of feeling better because a strain isn't there anymore. Also, what becomes present is that we see that there's an instability somewhere else in their body that's contributing to what this straining feeling was.

So then I offer them up a different movement or a different exercise or a technique to explore that instability. They realize that in doing this new movement or technique, that their ribcage oftentimes is feeling quite tight, or their pelvis is more wobbly than they realized, or they tend to hold their breath. Then I teach them how to bring more smoothness, more coordination, and more easeful breath to that movement or technique.

Then what they notice is how their breathing begins to change. How the coordination begins to shift and there's a new quality to their movement arising. Do you notice in all of that, that we're helping them feel and connect more with their sensation and how their body is moving? It's not simply about doing the exercise. What's the quality of that movement?

So after these things start to shift, we go back to the first exercise, the one that they were doing before they came to me. The one that they showed

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me that they didn't really feel anything except the strain in the other part of the body. It was in their mind where I'm supposed to feel it, but then they admitted that they didn't feel it really at all where they were supposed to.

But when we go back to doing that exercise, having done this other exploration, now when they do the movement they're surprised by the improvement of both quality and quantity of range. And also how they can describe the movement with greater layers of understanding and surprisingly with nuance.

Remember, when they first did the movement they were like, this is where I'm supposed to feel it. And I asked them, well do you? And now, after doing some other exploration, they can feel multiple layers and nuance to what their sensation is. This greater sense of nuance gives them new perspectives on what is actually possible.

So the reality is not only do they experience improvement, the experience is that they did the impact movement to themselves. They're the ones who sensed into themselves. They're the ones who grew the awareness. They're the ones who did the movement. And they can feel more now what's contributing to and how the whole of their body is related to this improvement.

So, again, I want to emphasize here, the fuel here to this change is feeling, of tuning in, of growing awareness, of doing something with that awareness. The client and I together, through this process of tuning in and growing awareness, can see beyond a singular muscle problem, or a joint problem, rather we can address the whole pattern that is contributing, that is correlating to the symptoms. They can see a much bigger and global view of how their body parts relate.

All right, so now, I want to take a slight 90 degree turn here because inside of this feeling conversation there's part of the conversation that is about the sensation that they are feeling, how they're doing the movement. But there's also this other piece of feeling, which is about thinking. Because

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thinking and feeling can have this intersection at different phases of the healing journey.

And in this context, feeling is not so much a sensation, it's about emotion and how emotion can resonate on a sensation level in our body. But I really want to distinguish between what I talked about in the shoulder example of feeling and feeling sensation associated with movement, and then feeling the emotional experience as a sensation as a result of what you're thinking.

So specifically, what I'm asking here is how are you thinking regarding your body and your symptoms? And this can be so revealing and, granted, a little disconcerting at times. But if you can be open to your thinking patterns, you will notice that your thoughts have this feeling, as I've mentioned, associated with them. And the feelings resonate in your body and can accentuate pain symptoms or reduce pain symptoms.

We know that. Clearly the science has shown that. That based off of if we think something is more threatening or dangerous, we're going to accentuate. If we feel more support, that's going to reduce. To be super clear, these feelings, as I mentioned, are distinct from what I was talking about in the shoulder example earlier, yet are equally as impactful given how they can influence how we experience symptoms.

But here's what's so curious, so many people don't even know how to go there. They don't know how to explore how they're thinking about their body or their symptoms. In the shoulder example earlier, and sometimes then they're unwilling to go there, right, because it can sometimes be a little bit disconcerting going into what we're thinking about or what we're feeling about our thinking. We would just rather cope or just forget about it, or just move on with life.

Okay, so knowing that this is really important and vital to the healing process, what do I do in these cases? As their teacher my job is to listen, both to what's been said or not being said. I'm tuning into what it is that they're thinking based off of what they're saying and not saying. I'm not

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correcting it because it doesn't have to be corrected. It simply is what they are thinking and what they're saying about what they're thinking.

So my job is really to simply be present. To give an example of this, to highlight it, I had a client who admitted to me that paying attention to how his body was working or not working, to paying attention to the way his thoughts were about this all was like paying attention to weaknesses. And what had brought him success was to not pay attention to his body symptoms because they were such an obstacle to his life's journey.

Those are very, very revealing thoughts. Very revealing actions, yeah? So in this example I became very specific about how I wanted him to direct his focus on his body so that he could build up the evidence for how his body moved well. I'm not being Pollyanna, or positive self-talk, or ignoring any of the negative. I'm simply asking him to place the attention on what is actually moving well. And as he continued to focus, he could feel more clearly on how the sensations of his body weren't weaknesses, but rather information to pay attention to.

In a matter of a month he had layered in this understanding of all these various sensations, both the ones that were from movement and ones that were emotional vibrations, and he was better able to know what they all meant to him. And when he could push, when he needed a rest, when he had to stop, when he needed to make a shift. It's been over 10 years that we've been working together and he has not had a flare up after having flare up upon flare up upon flare up years and years in a row.

Two different examples, both related to feeling. One being initially feeling as a sensation related to movement, another being feeling related to thoughts and how that layered into the sensations of movement. Feeling is the fuel for recovery. Subtle and powerful. This is a key component to the work that I do.

Yes, I will nerd out until the cows come home about biomechanics and muscle dynamics, neuromuscular patterning, all the things. But if you want

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to get well, if you want to make that transition from pain to possibility and be in possibility for longer and longer and longer, feeling has a huge, huge and powerful piece to your process. And if you're a health professional, if you can be present, more and more present to your client, you will blow your mind at the results that you can have.

If this resonates with you and you want to do more work with me, then do send me an email health@functionalsynergy.com. It would be an honor, a true honor to support you to move from where you are to where you really, really want to go. Whether it's working with me privately or whether it's working with me in my professional certification training, truly, it would be an honor to help you really, really realize what's available to you. 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 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.