

Ep #186: Healing Foot 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 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 to *From Pain To Possibility*, a podcast that helps you to reduce and eradicate physical pain for yourself and for your clients. I am your host, Susi Hatley, and today I am so happy that you are here because today I am continuing my conversation on the feet. I've been running a mini-series, so far it's the second mini-series on the feet I've put together. The first one being in episodes 154 to 158.

In this past series I've incorporated some summer fun because that's when we've been recording this, thinking about flip-flops and going barefoot and things to consider. Particularly if you're someone who gets pain when you wear flip-flops or maybe you're considering going barefoot but you're not entirely sure.

You can find all sorts of things online about how good or how bad going barefoot is, I mean, same for flip-flops. And just considerations you can do for yourself if you're moving in that direction or you want to be really enjoying your flip flops or you're considering going barefoot. So do harken back to those episodes if you haven't listened to them.

With this episode, I'm going to complete the mini-series and I want to spend a bit of time on what I really believe are key, key factors for helping someone to reduce and eradicate physical foot pain, so ultimately this healing of foot pain. And when you can work with these principles, principles if you've been following me on this podcast, you've heard me say these a few times, but really particular in how they pertain to helping you with your or your client's foot pain.

Now, if what I'm saying really resonates with you as you go through this, I encourage you to join me in my *Power of Pure Movement: Strong And Supple Feet*, which I'm running through August, for six hours in August.

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And it will take you through some guided practices as well as some really great principles to explore in your own self.

So you'll finish the program with both some really great somatic and experiential data, as well as some scientific data and biomechanical understanding about your feet. So you can read more about that over at learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet.

When I'm thinking about helping someone to reduce and eradicate physical foot pain, much like a lot of different persistent issues of pain, there are two key areas that come to mind. One of them is the healing helix and the other one is my principles of movement.

The healing helix ultimately is a relationship model. And when I first begin teaching it, I teach it from the perspective of the relationship between client and teacher. And then as I'm teaching my clients, I'm actually sharing this model from the perspective of the relationship they have with themselves because ultimately when I am working with a client I'm helping them become their own best teacher.

So they become less and less reliant on me as the teacher per se, and it evolves into this place of me becoming their trusted advisor because they're tuning in so well and in such a nuanced way to what their body needs. They really begin to listen to it in a way that is just fundamentally supportive. And they recognize and have an idea about what sensations are really telling them. They understand that their body is their friend and there's this conversation that's being had that if they just listen and learn how to perceive and understand what's being said, they can do a lot of good for themselves, for themselves.

So when we look at the healing helix in the perspective of this episode I'm only going to address it from one half of it, and that's on the client side. And on the client side there are four key areas of the healing helix. The first one is awareness. The second one is clarity. The third is connection. And the fourth is feedback.

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And the reason for this order is because a lot of times when people show up, they are aware they have a problem and that there is pain and there's something restricting their life. They may even be aware of what's contributing to it in part. But a lot of times what's actually in the way is that which they're not aware of. And part of my job is to support them in becoming aware of the mechanical factors that are involved with why their pain is persisting.

So they start to grow into understanding the way their body moves, the compensatory strategies that they utilize and then slowly gain some clarity around how they can reduce the compensatory strategies. How they can bring on better movement patterns and create better connection with themselves. And then out of that connection, they grow better and better feedback mechanisms between their brain and their body. They have a lot more nuanced understanding of what the sensations are letting them know about.

So as someone grows awareness, they grow clarity about what's working and not working. And that can refine their overall connection with themselves and their body. And that can grow the feedback mechanisms between their brain and their body, which then only grows their awareness further. And around and around and around they go as they continue to get better.

In this process, what they start to notice is that the sensations that initially brought them to me, whether it was a group online course or whether it was a private series, they start to see that there's a lot more sensation that exists in their being. So tension or tightness or pain or strain may have been what brought them to me, even stiffness. And then as they move through the cycle of awareness, clarity, connection and feedback, they start to gain more relief.

So now they've got a new sensation, like what that relief feels like. And usually there are a number of different words that they would use to describe that. And then as they gain more and more stamina and endurance around having more relief and they tune into more of the yellow

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lights and the whispers associated or that precede the pain, strain, tightness, or stiffness, they gain even more understanding and more language to describe these sensations that exist and they're able to validate those sensations showing up.

They don't see those sensations as bad, but rather they see them as information to guide them in making the decision of what they can do next. They just gain a greater and greater vocabulary and understanding of what these sensations feel like in their system, and then what they can do about them.

And then as they do that, there's so much more confidence in terms of what they can do for their feet and what that means for the whole of their body, right? They've re-grooved new neuromuscular patterns. And that's ultimately that whole trajectory towards improving movement over and over and over again. This isn't a one shot deal, it usually takes about a three month period of time and then there's an opportunity to up-level.

So this leads me to the second part of the episode, which is the principles of movement. Now I first wrote about my principles of movement in *Anatomy and Asana: Preventing Yoga Injuries*, which I published back in 2004. And as it relates to the feet, I'm going to modify the principles just a little bit. But they begin with breathing. Nurture and relaxation, which is a way of supporting yourself and growing awareness because it's difficult to be aware when we're not in a relaxed state.

I mean we can be aware in a less relaxed state or in a not relaxed state at all, but it's just a different way of being aware. So when we can begin to breathe and settle and nurture relaxation, we can start to slow down inside. I often say how the process of becoming better is really about the turtle winning, right? The hare doesn't win, the turtle wins. Or I've been liking to say more recently, and I believe this comes from the Navy SEALs, which is fast is rough, slow is smooth and smooth is fast.

So if we try to go too quickly, it's going to be a bit messy, oftentimes. Slow, yep, it tends to be a little bit smoother. And then ultimately, the slower that

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we go, the faster we get results. I know that sounds counterintuitive sometimes, but it happens very, very consistently. And when we settle in with our breath, we can reduce that inner tempo and go more at the speed of nature without a rush, going slow and steady and true.

And that's where breathing really supports us. Tuning into our inhale and exhale, enabling us to just open our eyes to a greater and greater awareness. So that when you're doing whatever those corrective exercises you might be doing for your feet, perhaps you're using massage or you're doing some ball rolling, or doing some toe specific work, or some TheraBand work on moving your big toe in any number of directions.

It could be that you're doing calf stretches or working with the whole kinetic chain from the pelvis and hip joint down to the feet and back up again. Whatever it is that you're doing, harken back to your breathing. Try not to make the exercises a to-do item, just knocking them off kind of mindlessly. But rather tuning into what it is that you're actually noticing because as you settle in and go at a pace where you can and in a way, perhaps as an idea going at a pace that you're breathing, you'll just notice so much more.

And again, the more that you can notice in the perspective of this recovery process, the more data and more information you have, the more ability you have to know what's working and not working and then how to refine it. Which then brings me to the next point, which is noticing your whole body. So tuning into all of you.

So you might be working your feet and doing very specific exercises to your toes and to your feet, like the foot proper. And notice what goes on through your pelvic floor or your abdomen, your rib cage, your neck, your jaw. And if you are increasing tension in those areas, and what I mean by increasing tension, it's tension that you aren't actually requiring at this point.

So are you driving the movement through your feet by anticipatorily bracing or bracing reactively through other parts of your body? And then if you are, then how is that supporting your foot and the mechanics of your foot? Because if your nervous system is keeping in mind that in order for you to

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work in your foot you need to grip through your shoulder, or your armpit, or your mouth or your eyes, then that's what the habit is that's going to form. And so then just consider is that the habit that's necessary for recovery?

And then while you're doing this, tune into sensation. Like what are you feeling? And I realize this can sometimes be difficult for people to explore because we're not a society, if I dare say it that way, that tends to honor feeling. We're changing, for sure, but we more often honor the objective over the subjective. And the subjective and objective actually work really, really, really well together, especially when we can start to understand the language of that sensation.

And as I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, you might first begin to notice that there's a lot of tension and pain in your feet. And then slowly, you begin to recognize that there are other sensations that are present. So you gain some relief, and out of gaining relief you recognize that there is that sensation. So you might be familiar with having rigidity, you might be familiar with having tension. And now you can be familiar with having relief.

So you start to gain an understanding and a conscious awareness of what sensations actually exist. And then as you go along, you might notice that your back would grip in concert with your foot, that might start to change. Or you might just start to notice that there's other areas that begin to grip as you start to have tension release in other places.

And so it's not that the tension is moving to another area, but rather you're noticing how your body is responding to the exercises that you're doing. And because you're increasing tension in another area, it doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong per se, it simply means that you're increasing tension in another area. And then you get to be a detective and explore what that all actually signifies.

And all these sensations are subjective in nature. I can't see your sensation, I can simply see the movement of your leg bone in your pelvis. I can see if you're gripping with your face for sure, that's an obvious one. But

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you're the one who can feel that. So the feeling of these things is what is subjective and is really important to recognize as you're moving your body.

When you're doing that, you're also noticing tension patterns or compensatory patterns and what those patterns feel like. And as you move better, as you gain more functional awareness, then those patterns and those feelings start to shift.

The other thing that is also really important, I've touched upon this on other episodes and I do a lot more of it within my private sessions and in my certification program, is recognizing the other aspects of you, like your thoughts and your emotions related to the experiences that you're having. Because even though we're talking very much of a physical body experience, what becomes really interesting is what we think about this physical body experience.

Because we can have certain beliefs and certain thoughts showing up about the symptoms that we're experiencing, about the sensations that are present, or about our healing trajectory. We might have a belief about what the pain is that we're experiencing. And that becomes very, very, very interesting to notice what those are.

For example, I had a conversation with a client before she became a client and she was saying to me, I'm unsure about whether I want to become a private one to one client because I haven't actually done my exercises in any other rehabilitative process. And I'm like, that's kind of curious, isn't it?

And so we just started to have a conversation about what has her or what has her not doing or exercises. And then she had this sort of coming to like holy smokes moment of like, wait a second, if I get better, I'm going to have to deal with my primary relationship. I looked at her and I'm like, well, then, of course, you're not going to do your exercises. It makes total sense that you wouldn't do them, right?

So it becomes fascinating to notice. Now, what I added with her is, I can't support you with your primary relationship, but I can certainly support you

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in helping you do your movement and helping you do your exercise regimen, with helping you connect into your body and give you the support that you need. But it's interesting how our thoughts drive us, guide us, support us or not. And the information that they can provide us.

And it's so interesting watching some people in doing their movements or their program or however we want to call it and they'll do it like a to-do list where they're not actually feeling or perceiving, but they know they should be doing it. So they're kind of checking it off, like going grocery shopping and getting the apples and the pears and the bananas and the bread and the milk.

But what I've noticed over time is approaching your exercise programming from the perspective of a grocery list doesn't tend to lead to the results that we are seeking because in order to get well again, there is a consciousness and a mindfulness that is required. There's a tuning in so that we can grow this awareness, gain clarity, recognize the connection, tune into the feedback. That is what helps us progress. It's not just knocking off a bunch of exercises and then wondering why they don't work.

So the next time that you are exploring and experimenting with your feet, consider those things. Consider the healing helix, awareness, clarity, connection and feedback. Consider the principles of movement, tuning into your breath, allowing it to bring an ease and a relaxation, not only before you get into the movements, but while you're actually in them. And while you're in them, noticing your whole body, tuning into sensation, whatever that sensation is. Everything from stiffness and tension and tightness to relief, to ease, to strength.

And recognize your compensation patterns, whether those are in your movement, or whether they are in your thinking patterns. And how are those thinking patterns actually driving you into the way that you're doing your movement? How are they shifting up or contributing or supporting how you are doing the movement? And how does that make a change to your results?

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Enjoy the exploration of you and your feet and improving your function and reducing your pain. And as I mentioned at the top of the episode, if this resonates with you and you would like my help to support you in reducing and eradicating foot pain, or you're a health professional who wants to up-level your skills in supporting your clientele, I would love, love, love, love to work with you and we begin on August the 8th. You can read more at learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet. Have a really great time exploring and we'll see you next time.