

Ep #222: Mechanics of Breathing Part 8 – Full-Body Breathing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hately

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with 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. We are in the middle of the Mechanics of Breathing miniseries, and this is a conversation around the importance of our breathing when it comes to sleep, sleep apnea, TMJ issues and a whole host of other scenarios that are related to chronic pain or persistency of pain symptoms.

This is also a lead up to my Mechanics of Breathing 4.0 program that I'm leading this January through March, where we're really digging into the impact of breath and sleep and sleep apnea and TMJ. I've got a dentist coming in, an Ayurvedic doctor, as well as a hypermobility doctor, and we're just going to talk about it all and really set you up, and your clients, to support you in making a lot of headway if you're someone who you know has some issues with breathing or some issues with sleeping and you get kind of have a feeling that they have a relationship.

Now, you may have already listened to the episode with Dr. Larry Stanleigh. If you haven't, then please do. Please go back to that episode, it is episode 220. And the reason why I recommend it is because Dr. Larry really outlines and highlights the integrative approach to supporting people with improving their airway.

And he, of course, as a dentist, works at it from a mouth-jaw perspective, but yet when he evaluates somebody, he evaluates their whole body. And he integrates with people like myself and PTs and fitness folks and osteopaths and a whole host of other practitioners who he feels could be helpful and beneficial for his patients in getting well again.

So the reason I bring that up is because when we're looking at something like sleep apnea or TMJ issues, so much can be done, there's such a great possibility that's out there. And the reality is that I've been in this game now

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for almost 30 years and sleep apnea really has taken an upward trend like nobody's business. And it's getting to the point, and I've said this before, where it starts to become normal just because of the sheer number of people who are having this issue.

And as I and Dr. Larry were talking about, it doesn't have to be a normal part of life. And so one way to think about this is what's happening with our breathing? This is where I work, breathing and movement and stillness and self-awareness. Knowing that there's a trajectory toward sleep apnea, there's a trajectory often towards TMJ issues that most of the time, or much of the time I should say, they're not just arising out of nowhere.

And the benefit and the beauty of that is because there's often a trajectory, which most of the time we're not aware of, right? We just keep living our life. But the unwinding of those patterns is very, very possible. And that's really the gist of this entire podcast and all of the over 200 episodes that I share, is that we can unwind tissue. And we can do it through movement, we can do it through breath, we can do it through stillness, we can do it through integrative practices with other practitioners to help the process along.

So with this episode, I want to welcome you into a breathing exercise that really looks at whole body breathing. So it's not just one exercise I'll be teaching you, it's going to be a few. And again, this is a taste of what's inside of the Mechanics of Breathing program.

So if what I'm saying and sharing here resonates, then please go and visit www.functionalsynergy.com/breathing. And I would love, love, love to share with you what I and my team of speakers have to say to support you and or your clients.

And again, this program is for practitioners as well as for people who aren't practitioners, both will get a lot of benefit. And the reality is, most of the professionals who come and learn from me, have issues as well. And when

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they recover and they get better, they just have that much more experience to be able to share with their clientele.

Okay, so let's get into it. It's so interesting when I think about breathing and belly breathing for one, because it's commonly taught out there that we should belly breathe. And I understand why, because they don't want someone just breathing with secondary breathing muscles high up into their chest or their neck.

But the difficulty with that is that it becomes this sort of unconscious understanding that we should belly breathe. And then people push their belly out and think that they're breathing well. And they might be, I'm not going to say they're not.

However, when we can really integrate full body breathing, a lot of things can change from how someone feels from a relaxed or a calm or a peaceful standpoint to truly how their breathing happens, the way that their airway functions and many other components physiologically that can happen.

So today I want to go through a couple of ideas. And the first we're going to begin with is a three-part breathing just to get a feel of the various parts and pieces of what make up your breath. And three-part breathing can be done in a number of ways. The way I'm going to show it today is from the lower belly, upper belly, chest.

And what will happen is as you breathe in I want you to think about it, and you can even bring your hand down to just below your navel and feel as you breathe in, the movement of the breath in your belly against your hand. Now, this is not pushing your belly out into your hand. It's as you breathe in, can you with your intention and awareness allow for that breath to come into that lower part of your belly and feel it into your hand?

Do you see that distinction? There's one that's pushing your belly out and there's another of getting just a little quiet and can you direct the breath so

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the breath itself is moving the lower abdomen. Now the movement might not be very big because a lot of times this is tissue that's very limited for a whole host of reasons. But see what you can feel by just feeling and being aware of and intending the breath into the lower part of your belly.

And after a few repetitions here, then bring your intention and attention to your upper belly, the solar plexus, just at the base of the breastbone. You might also want to bring your hand to that area just for an added bit of feedback. And allow for the breath to move your belly into your hand. Again, we're not pushing the belly out. This is more of a conversation between your belly, your breath and your hand. Really try not to force this to happen.

And again, you might notice that there's some limitation here simply because the tissue might be a bit shortened or might feel tight or limited. Or you might not have really thought about your breathing in this way.

I was having a conversation on one of my social channels the other day with a bodyworker who does a lot of deep tissue massage. And I was asking him about how he breathes. And he said, "I've never really thought about it, I just do my work."

And when I've worked with body workers in my programs and we've been more specific about awareness and about movement, and then they become kind of tuned into how they're holding themselves with whatever massage technique they're utilizing, when they can feel themselves breathing better, the whole massage works better for them on their body, as well as what is felt or received by their client.

So allow this to be easy and then allow, if you want to use your hands, allow one hand to linger on your lower belly and one hand to linger just below the breastbone. And as you breathe, can you feel the movement of the lower belly? And can you feel the movement of the upper belly against your hand if you're using the hand as a feedback?

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And an idea here is, again, we're not trying to push the belly out, but can you perceive, using your intention, the movement of the air, the pressure change that's happening, the belly expands. You might feel one hand or one part of your belly moving more than the other. And be aware of what's happening as you inhale and as you exhale.

And then bring your intention and attention and your hands up to the upper part of your rib cage, just below your collarbones, and feel the movement of your breath in your rib cage.

Now, I spoke more about the rib cage in episode 217 and did a couple of other rib cage techniques there. So if you're following along and you've been practicing, this might be really straightforward for you. Or it might be sort of new thinking, huh, my rib cage doesn't move very much. Or you might feel those ribs moving very smoothly and coordinated.

So next, you can leave your hands if you're using your hands as feedback, one on the belly or one on the chest, or both on the belly. And now think about as you breathe in, feeling that lower part of the belly and then the upper part of the belly and then the upper part of the chest.

And that's on your inhale, of course. So now as you play with the exhale, there's two ways you can play with it. And I find that my clients will notice one way is better or feels more comfortable than the other. So one way is that as you're exhaling out, you can think about emptying from the top down; chest, upper belly, lower belly. Or you can empty out by feeling the breath sort of move out of the lower belly, out of the upper belly, out of the chest area.

So notice which one feels more easeful for you. So the idea is that on the inhale, you're feeling lower, upper, chest. And then on exhale, notice if the movement in your mind's eye is better from chest, upper belly, lower belly, or lower belly, upper belly and chest. Whichever way is the easiest, whichever one provides you the most ease, less tension, less anxiety, more calm and peace, work with that for the next few cycles.

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All right, so now I'd like to draw your attention to the back part of your body. And if we come to the lower part of your belly again, can you imagine or bring the intention to allowing for the lower part of your back to move posteriorly?

Now this is a bit trickier because we don't tend to think about breathing into the back of ourselves. But it's very fascinating when we can get there, not only from a tissue perspective, some people feel a pain relief perspective. They also can sometimes feel a change in, it sounds crazy, but the bottom of their feet, their neck, top of the head, even in and around the eyes. Lots of tension can start to shift and a lot of correlations and relationships between the parts can kind of come to the surface, which you might not have been aware of before.

And then can you allow that intention or attention to come to the back part of the upper belly? So this will be more like the back part of the lower ribs. Okay, and then the upper chest, but the posterior side of that upper chest. So letting those posterior ribs move backward, move posteriorly.

Okay, so now let's play with the three-part from the lower back, upper back, and then back of the rib cage. So the lower part of your back and the posterior lower ribs, and then the upper ribs, which are opposite the front of the chest. And can you feel the three parts as you inhale and the three parts as you exhale?

Okay, lovely. So now we're going to take this to the next step. So we've started on the front side with the front of the lower belly and the upper belly and just below the collarbones. And then I moved you to the back part, the posterior side of you, lower back, and then just in behind those ribs, the lower ribs and then the upper ribs.

So now we're going to do this in a 3D kind of way. Moving in the lower belly, go lower belly and lower back, upper belly, and then the upper part of your back and then chest below the collarbones and then right in behind that. So

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we're allowing for the breath to come both anteriorly and posteriorly into this container that is our torso.

So can you allow for that filling out? Can you allow for the intention without pushing, but allow for the intention of your breath to come into these areas? So it's like there's this expansion forward and back in the lower part of your abdomen and then in that mid part of the abdomen and then in the upper part of the rib cage.

And it becomes really interesting, especially if you're feeling limited and not trying to push the limitation, just allow yourself to notice what's what. And notice what else arises out of the noticing. So much lies in our noticing because we can't change anything we're not aware of.

Now, what can happen is we notice something and then we want to change it like yesterday. Can you just be present now to what is? And if you try not to change it really, really quick, sometimes it just automatically, or automagically I like to say, shifts just because we've been gentle and kind and present to the process.

All right, and then let go of the technique entirely and just allow for the breath to move however it moves in your body and notice what you notice.

A lot of times when I teach this to my clients or to the professionals who are new to breathing practice, a common question will be, when can I practice this? Is it all right to do this in bed? Can I do this really anywhere? And the answer is absolutely. Just, obviously, when you're driving keep your eyes open.

But it can be a great technique for when you're in bed. It can be really helpful for down regulation and relaxation. You've just got to notice what this feels like in your body.

For some people, when they do relaxing techniques, they actually can become more anxious. So if that's what you are noticing, then this

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particular technique is not for you. Or if you find that with a client as they become quieter, they become more anxious, then this is not the specific technique that will be helpful.

But if you're noticing that, A, your breathing is improving, maybe some tissue is softening out or becoming a bit more supple or you're feeling more grounded or anything of that sort of feeling, then you're likely on a good track.

Now, in terms of how long to practice, I'm more of a fan of asking people to practice according to how their body feels. So if their body starts to feel really in a good place, then that might be where you end. Or if you want to keep it going, so long as you can still stay clear in your mind and you feel grounded, then keep on rolling with it.

If you're starting out and need a little bit more direction, you can do 10 breaths per piece. You can even put a timer on if you want. The only thing that is a downside about using a timer is that then you're focused on the clock rather than on your actual breath. However, if having a timer allows you to focus on your breath, then that could be a really great addition.

I'm going to be teaching more techniques similar to this in terms of helping you to connect with your breath, helping you connect to your body and the relationship between that, TMJ and your airway and sleep all during the Mechanics of Breathing 4.0 program that I begin in January. You can read more about that at functionalsynergy.com/breathing.

It would be so lovely, so lovely to have you on board. It would be an honor to teach you.