

# Ep #231: Building Strength and Getting Stronger



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hately**

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hately

## Ep #231: Building Strength and Getting Stronger

**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. I'm so glad that you're here because today I want to review and return back to the principles of movement. And these are the foundational principles that I wrote down and published back in my *Anatomy and Asana: Preventing Yoga Injuries* book that really helped people to find more ease and less pain within their yoga practice.

And then as I got more into helping people reduce and eradicate pain the principles really showed themselves very clearly in how I support people to get out of pain. And they are coming back again today because there are a lot of people who have utilized these principles to get themselves out of pain. They've taken programs with me through the Power of Pure Movement series, they've watched videos of mine on YouTube or Facebook, and they themselves have reduced or eradicated their physical pain.

And they are sort of lurking around wanting to get stronger, but are a bit scared. They don't want to hurt themselves, they're not exactly sure what to do. There is a lot of competing or conflicting information out there around how to apply the theory of getting stronger, and they just don't want to hurt themselves.

So this episode is how you can utilize the principles of movement that I have been talking about in a way to support yourself in staying out of pain while getting stronger and really helping yourselves to get to that place that I call real strength.

And what I mean by real strength is like there's strength we need to grow when we're in a rehabilitative process, but it's a very different kind of strength. This is like you're now out of pain, you've made some great progression, you've got a great understanding more so about how your

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body functions, there's a lot more curiosity in your body and now you're like, yeah, I want to get stronger.

And yes, there's some hesitation. But yes, I want to get stronger. And that's really what this episode focused on here, is how you can then apply these principles towards that end.

Now, you might find that you really resonate with what I say here today, and that might lead you to want to take another program with me or take your first program with me. And I've got my next new program called Building Strength And Getting Stronger, which we're running in March. And I've opened up registration so you can read all about that over at [functionalsynergy.com/strength](http://functionalsynergy.com/strength).

It would be so much fun to work with you because while it is a lot of fun helping people get out of pain, there's not a lot of highs that I get that are much like watching people unravel and unwind to get to that place that they didn't quite think was possible, and then they experience it. There's just this added bonus when I get to help people really develop some strength, however they want to do that, whether it's lifting weights, whether it is using TheraBands or resistance bands, maybe it's getting back onto the pickleball court.

Whatever that is, it's just such a joy to see someone really come to life and alive within those activities they love to do. So if that makes sense for you as you listen to this, then please join me over at [functionalsynergy.com/strength](http://functionalsynergy.com/strength), it would be a real joy to work with you.

So let's get into this. I think what's really important for me to start out with is that these are principles of movement that I've been working with for almost 30 years. There's a real longevity to them. I've morphed them over the years, but really the underlying principles have a lot of classic longevity. It's sort of like those classic pieces of clothing that don't go out of style. These principles really have stood the test of time.

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I use them over and over and over. I share them with my certification trainees. My grads use them. It's not just me, there's people in different cultures speaking different languages, utilizing these principles for a lot of benefit. So I'm thinking that if you're new to listening to this, or if you have listened to this but have kind of forgotten about the principles of movement, having a refresh of them or just introducing them to you, I think, will be a lot of fun for you to explore and experience.

As we get into them, I'm also going to integrate a little bit more yoga language to them. I tend to have a way of teaching that speaks and has you experience movement and growing your awareness and really taking you inside to that felt sense inside. And the reason I'm doing that is because I want this to be less of a thinking process and thinking your way to feeling, and much more of an interoceptive embodied process. So you really can feel what's happening.

And along with that, there's some interesting things I can pull from yogic texts that really highlight what we're talking about. And I mean, at my core, I absolutely adore yoga. I think it's some of the greatest exercise programming, if we look at it from just a movement perspective, that we've got out there.

And then when you start to tie in the other aspects and the other limbs of yoga and the Koshic model of yoga, so much can be utilized to support yourself in whatever part of the healing, recovery and strengthening place or process or journey that you're on. So I'm going to sprinkle more of that through this episode and in the upcoming episodes as we go because I think it's important to recognize how this really ties in to support yourself in this mind-body way.

The eight principles, as I like to call them, are found in fields of body mechanics; movement, science, physiology, anatomy. I didn't come up with them. They've evolved over my learning and education. And how I've morphed them over time or tweaked them over time still comes from that modern understanding of kinesiology, anatomy, biomechanics.

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When you understand the principles and blend them with your knowledge of muscle function and movement, really and truly your practice, wherever you are at, whether you're a teacher and you're in a full-blown yoga practice, whether you're thinking about adding strength, however you're working with your clientele, you'll just become more aware, more mobile, stable and strong. Your pain will drop, performance will dramatically rise, and you'll experience a lot more freedom.

And yes, I realize saying all that I just said there is one heck of a promise. And I'm really comfortable sharing that, truly, because I've got decades of experience to show and the clientele that tells me over and over again that this is their experience.

And as you'll notice as you move through them, there's specific things that you need to do and to be, to feel, and there's that word feeling, that's all part of it. And I know most people are not walking around saying, I could get stronger or I could get out of pain so much more effectively if I could feel more. Nobody is saying that, I understand that.

But the reality is, if people were, they would get out of pain a lot faster and they would get stronger a lot faster. If they could keep that idea of tuning into themselves over and over and over again in a way that really serves, yeah, the results just become so much better.

So I'm kind of bringing you along on this journey with me as I go through these principles with the hope that, if I can say it this way, that I can sort of seduce you into feeling more, feeling more than maybe you were thinking that you might feel.

So let's just start right from the top when we think about nourish and relaxation. And while this is number one, as I go through these it doesn't mean you get to number two and then you leave number one aside. I think of them more like the Olympic rings, they all kind of work together, right? It's not that you go through them in a linear fashion, but that as you nurture and nourish relaxation, you're nurturing that all the way through.

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It's a time to come into yourself, to get in touch with just where you are and where your day has been and what's really driving you to do whatever it is you're going to do. Like, can you tune into the space that is you? And this awareness will really help you cultivate a steadiness.

And there is a really common yoga sutra that's often talked about in yoga, which is *sthira-sukham asanam*, and it's often translated as finding a steadiness and an ease within movement. And when you look at the word *asanam* or *asana*, often that is translated as being a pose or a posture. It's very much of a noun, whereas I like it when you think about *sthira-sukham asanam*, there's steadiness in that language. There's a beingness. There's a process that's happening there.

And so to me, when we're nurturing relaxation, when we're cultivating this idea of awareness, we are at the footstep of *sthira-sukham asanam*. This idea of steadiness, of cultivating a sense of being while we're about to get into our movement. So we're not just going to do a bunch of things. We need to be able to tune into where our baseline is at, what's driving us, where are we at, and can we meet ourselves where we are at from this space of relaxation?

And then as we move, and the reality is that sometimes, like any of us, we're all human, we're having a crappy day. Or like there are times I've just gone for a workout because I need to move energy and I might be on sort of an annoyed, irritated side of the emotional spectrum. I just want to freaking move.

And so to know that I'm in that state is really helpful because I can be in that state and then maybe lift too much or do too much, which would not be helpful. But if I simply know that I'm in that state, or those times when I've been in a grieving mode, if I can just know that I'm in that state, and then move from there and meet myself, the process just works so much better.

And that really comes from this place of nurturing and nourishing relaxation, that we're tuning into whatever our state is. We don't need to change our mindset or change any of that stuff, we just get to recognize

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where we're at now. That's really the essence of this idea of nourishing relaxation, which then leads us into beginning with the spine in mind.

And sometimes the way that I say that and the way that's worded can create some confusion. It doesn't mean that I want you to move your spine first, it's more that I want you to keep it in mind. So once you're settled in your body and you can tune into your breath and where you're at, understanding that the spine is the central hub from which movement occurs, right?

We've got the spine as this area that if our shoulders aren't functioning well, then that spine can go into extension or into flexion or into rotation when it's not necessarily needed to. So when we can tune into where that spine is in space, before we get into the movement from our other joints, again, we can settle into, all right, what's happening in this movement? Am I compensating or am I not compensating?

So when we can have that initial space of, all right, spine, where are you in space just before I get moving? Then it can lead me into some solid awareness of how my movement is, which then connects us to connecting to the spinal movement with movement at the largest joints first.

And this is a space that I spent a lot of time in because when we can improve the movement and function of our shoulder girdle and our pelvic girdle, and namely how our arm bone moves in the socket along with the blade, as well as how that femur moves into the hip socket, so much can change, right?

When we can free and really stabilize and get coordinated effort between those two junctions, so much can shift through the torso, down the limbs, towards the wrist and ankles and knees, up through the neck and the head.

And I could say that, well, when you sort out what's going on in the shoulder girdle, all sorts of stuff in the neck and the upper limb changes, but the reality is there's such a codependence between the shoulders and the hips that we can shift what's going on at the hips, make that much more



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steady and stable, and so much can change in the neck. There's a really strong correlation between jaw and pelvis, for example.

So when people get into a strengthening practice, like think about lunges and deadlifts and adding more load, if they don't have this undercurrent of relaxation, of understanding where their spine is in mind, and they're compensating even just enough that they're effectively borrowing from another area to make the movement happen, then they start to build tension on top of tension and things start to go a little bit sideways.

I trained with a fellow who's no longer with us, his name is Dr. Karandikar, and he ran a yoga space in Pune called Kabir Bagh, and he was one of Iyengar's medical physicians who helped him create the therapeutic work that Iyengar is known for. He was part of that team. And then he went on his way and left the Iyengar Institute and went to and created the Kabir Bagh space.

And so I trained with him for a period of time way back in 2000. And he often liked to say, you know, yoga is a high-tech space science. And what we're wanting to do is helping ourselves move – He didn't quite say it this way, but how I interpreted it was helping our bodies move better. And then as we create more space, then we are reducing pain. And when you look at some interpretations of yogic theory, when there is more space, prana arises. And David Frawley, who's an Ayurvedic practitioner, said that.

And it's really interesting, you know, so as we move better, as we create more space, this vital essence that is ourselves can move that much more fluidly and easily through our body. Like there's an energy that starts to shift. And what I often see is people move better and move more fluidly as they add more load, whether that's through deadlifts or lunges or adding whatever weighted exercise you want, and even chin-ups, other body weight exercise.

There's not this depletion or tension-building state. Their tissue remains soft and supple, their body remains responsive, and they really grow a



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nimbleness and agility in their movement, which then leads nicely into this idea of moving joints in their optimum range of motion.

And this really can be at a core of helping you to think about how far you're moving. So many times when I see clients, they've got great range of motion, but the range is quite compensated or it's full of pain. So initially, what I'm doing is helping them find that optimum range where they can feel what they're doing without compensation. They can feel what they're doing without pain. So ultimately, they're feeling good.

They build upon that feeling good range, and then that feeling good range grows. Now, some people are like, but how? Don't you have to push and force? And the answer is no, because as you move better, the tissue naturally starts to shift and change. At least that's been my experience with my clientele, is that if they move in the range that doesn't increase pain, if they move in a range that is optimal, that doesn't have a lot of compensation, things change rather quickly because the tissue is doing what it's meant to be doing.

Which then nicely moves into this idea of core stability and how core stability really and truly arises out of better control and coordination over a range of motion, right? So often when people are doing core work, they tend to get into a really braced state. A state that is grippy and kind of creates what a colleague of mine once called an iron balloon, right, it's hardened.

When we're in that place, it makes it very difficult to be nimble and be agile and have variability in our movement, which really at the essence of core enables us to do. So if there's a lot of bracing and heldness, there's also a likelihood that breath is being held. So now if we go back to point one, we're not really nurturing relaxation anymore, there's not an easy breath anymore. And the likelihood of moving through the primary big joints is also probably getting a bit circumspect.

So when you can find the space where, what I like to call your core becomes more responsive, you develop that out of better control and

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coordination. And you develop that control and coordination from better movement through your shoulder girdle and pelvic girdle, keeping your spine in mind. So you see how these all continue to weave together and work together, right?

So it comes in a very organic and logical way that's quite embodied, which then leads us to this idea of effortless effort. Sometimes I refer to this as relaxed resilience. So when we get those foundational pieces of relaxation and awareness and where your spine is in space and moving well through those largest joints and allowing that core to become responsive and responding to how you are moving and where you are moving and developing better control and coordination, you'll be able to do more.

And can you do more with this idea of effortless effort? So not a strained effort that only builds up more tension and strain in your system. There's a depth here that starts to be cultivated. Like you're able to be in your legs for longer. The suppleness of your tissue becomes stronger.

So it's like, again, this idea of *sthira-sukham asanam*. There's a beingness that is both steady and strong. There's a softness. There's a responsiveness. It's not intense in the way of like, roar, like that kind. The best word I can use is there's a responsiveness.

That then takes us into this notion of moving in a range that doesn't increase pain. I probably could have put this particular principle further up. And I did mention that a couple of times in speaking about the other principles.

But I've placed it here because all the way through this process, whether you are in a place of just starting to learn how to reduce physical pain, or whether you have gotten to a place where your pain is either considerably lower or has been eradicated and you're taking that transition to adding more strength, you still want to move in this range that doesn't increase pain because we want to keep that communication going back to the nervous system that this is the way we want to move.

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If you move in pain, we're letting the nervous system know that that's normal, and then oftentimes pain will remain. Whereas when you can move in that space, which is cultivating all the principles that came before this, then you start to create that as a space.

And it's not to say that pain is bad, not at all. Pain is an amazing communication strategy to let you know that something's going on. Exactly what, I have no idea. That depends on what's going on in your system, but it's an indicator that something's up and something can let us know. Like it can guide us.

And when we can move in a range that doesn't increase pain, then we get to build a range that's not painful. We build a range that feels good and we build a bigger range that feels good. So more and more, you move more feeling good. You're able to lift more feeling good. And then feeling good becomes your thing, and less pain or no pain also becomes your thing.

So along with that then, there's a notion of doing all that you need to do and nothing more. Now, this can be tricky, especially for those of you who are the pushers and the drivers and you really like to go hard, right? If I was to say to you, less is more, you're like, ugh. You'd scoff at me. And I used to say that. Plenty of people scoff at me.

And I recognize that that's just a terminology that there's not an appetite for it really. Whereas if I say, do all that you need to do and nothing more, or go less is more, but have the exact same result. So it's taking this notion of effortless effort and still having the same result.

So, I mean, anyone can do less and they can lie on the couch and not do anything. That's not the point here, it's can you get to this place of simplification where you're only needing to do and put in the effort that's required when you're doing the lift that you're doing?

So you don't have to use extraneous work that will end up being depleting, which then will not be sthira-sukham asanam, which won't really help with the cultivation of prana. Your vital energy will be challenged. If you play in

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this space, you'll have more energy and more vitality. You'll be able to do things more effectively, right?

So if we say this in another way, when I'm working with people and they want to do lunges, what I want to make sure of is that they've got the range and the stability through their hips and through their knees. And so I might start, for example, with wall sits.

And once I'm familiar through the process that I take them through with wall sits, then I might start taking them into a squat without the wall and then into lunges, right? Because lunges are more complex than squats or wall sit. One leg is going in front of the other leg. There's something different happening in one joint versus the other joint.

So when something's becoming more complex, it's becoming less simple, we're being required to do more. But can we do that in a way that cultivates more ease and not more complexity, not more tension?

So there's two phases to this. The first one is, can you simply use less effort in doing what you need to do? And can you think about moving in a simple way, not in a complex way first, so you are sure and you're clear that you've got the movement patterns through the joint structures that are required for the more complex movement before you get there.

And when you do that, then you make much more sustainable gains that stick. And there's less tension that is being added layer upon layer upon layer.

Eight principles of movement. They are very useful for supporting someone who already has a yoga practice and they want to move better in their yoga practice. They're fantastic for supporting people in reducing and eradicating physical pain from this perspective of moving better. And they can be terrific at supporting you in growing your strength and in growing stamina around that strength in a way that is easeful, that is steady, that cultivates more prana and vitality and less depletion and tightness.

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If what I've shared here today really has resonated with you and you would like to work with me, I am running Power of Pure Movement: Building Strength and Getting Stronger where we utilize these principles to support you in developing the strength with an undercurrent of ease with a whole lot less tension so that you can feel good getting stronger. And you can read all about it over at [functionalsynergy.com/strength](http://functionalsynergy.com/strength). I'd love to see you. Take good care.