



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hately**

**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. I'm so glad that you're here because today we're continuing on with the foot mini series. And this is a lead up to the Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet. So if you find yourself inspired by these episodes, go check that out, it's over at [functionalsynergy.com/feet](http://functionalsynergy.com/feet).

And with this episode specifically, I'm going to share a little bit about my own story because sometimes when I give my own story about how I've been supporting my body, it can open up an understanding for yourself and give you ideas of working with your clients, or if you've got foot issues working with your own issues and just giving some insights to areas of your body that you might be unaware of.

So let's get into this experience. So I've already spoken about wearing flip-flops in a previous episode, and you can find that over at episode number 186. And I talk about healing foot pain, sharing ideas about flip-flops, as well as for people who have hesitancy about going barefoot, things to consider. Because barefoot, even though it's spoken about as being really, really great, it's not for everybody. Just like wearing flip-flops is not for everybody. I mean the experts out there would say that flip-flops are not for anybody.

But the reality is that some people like to wear shoes or do things like going barefoot and it might not be the very best thing for them, but they love it. I'm someone who lives in Canada, I live in Calgary, the summers are really short here. I love maximizing my time in my flip-flops and I recognized even before this episode that I have to work with my feet and I have to work with my hips and I have to work with my body during the summer when I'm wearing them.

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It's not unlike during the winter when I'm skiing quite a bit and there's a lot of hoofing and climbing of trails to get to the areas that I like to ski. To me, I don't see it as anything different. Same for when I think about my winter where I was doing a lot of strength training, I was on my bike a lot, I had increased my ride time to four days a week.

I was riding for at least an hour a day, sometimes an hour and a half to two hours. So that was more than I had been, so that has a shift in the way that my body functions. And so to me, I don't see wearing flip-flops as being any different, they're all stimuluses or stimuli that are occurring to my body and if I want to help maintain and improve the way my body functions, then I get to keep that in mind.

Now, some people would say, just get rid of the flip-flops and I could, but I also really like them and I know that if I work with and manage and get really curious about the way that I am walking, things not only are managed, but they actually improve. And I get that much more insight and awareness to the way that my system responds and activates.

So again, I've done episodes on the feet before. If you're interested in another flip-flop episode, that's 186. If you're interested in another episode, which had to do with, yes, you can have happy feet and wear sexy boots, that was inspired by clientele who came to me because they wanted to wear sexy boots, but they were hard on their backs and their necks and they knew it was the way that they were on their feet. And I'm like, sure, let's work on it. Let's help you wear those sexy boots so that you don't feel horrible in your body. And that's episode number 158 that I think you'll also really enjoy.

So let's get into this one and explore this notion of flip-flops and my own experience and how I'm working with my body. And it's also a reason why in this mini series I've included body scans and sleep meditations, because a big piece of this is not just the mechanics of improving function. It's about down-regulating your nervous system and resting and relaxing and being able to feel, like for real, what's going on.

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I think sometimes what people can do, certainly I've seen it when clients sometimes first start working with me, is that they're like, what is the mechanical issue here? Because they know that I work with compensation patterns and they want to dig into, okay, what's this compensation pattern I need to resolve? And it's like, well, hold on a second here. Many times what's getting in the way is what we're not aware of. So first of all, we need to tune into that.

And becoming aware requires us to slow down a little bit, which can be a little tricky to do. So coming into body scans and yoga nidras are a way to be able to do that and to gently bring someone down to a place of really being able to see and connect and feel and start to notice some of the sensations that exist in their body and their being. So that's why I've included more of these sleep meditations overall through this podcast, but also specifically in this particular mini series.

So when you're thinking about working with clientele who have foot issues, there's two ways to think about it. First we need to look at the foot proper and the mechanics of the foot proper. We also need to look at the bigger chain. I've shared a lot of my opinions around the whole chain. Like a lot of people focus, when they focus in on their feet, they focus just on the feet. But they fail to look further up the chain to the way the hip moves, because let's face it, the way the leg bone moves in the pelvis is going to impact the way the foot plants on the ground.

And the pelvis also has a relationship to the rib cage when we're walking and running or climbing stairs. There's a rotation element that happens between the ribs and the pelvis. And again, there's a pelvis there. So there's a pelvis that is part of the relationship of the leg bone swing, and there's a pelvis in the relationship of torso rotation when we're moving about.

So the pelvis is a key platform on which these things are occurring. So if the pelvis isn't stable, if the hip joint is not stable, if there's not great stability between the pelvis and the rib cage, that's going to have an impact on the way the foot lands. So we can look at the foot itself, which is important, and

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we still need to go up the chain. So this episode is going to share a little bit more about what I've been doing and how I've been doing it and things that I've been considering.

So yes, I've been playing around with my foot itself, as well as what's going on further up the chain, particularly since I've been doing so much bike riding, which has created other kind of tightnesses, shortnesses, tension holding patterns in through different parts of my body that I've just simply noticed. My hips have become a little bit more limited. And I've been working with them, and as I do, I'm able to wear my flip flops more easily and, fun enough, I get more power with more effortless effort on my ride.

So this is why I like to say that when we get into exploring these things, it's not just about managing your body and being able to utilize things like a flip flop or whatever other activity or boot or shoe or sexy sandal you want to wear. It's not just about managing that, but you really can elevate your game. You can really elevate your function in other aspects of what you are doing in your life.

So let's get into the flip flop side of things. And a lot of times when we are wearing shoes that don't have a lot of heel support, there can be a real lack of coordination between the hind foot and the mid foot and the forefoot. So when we've got our feet into flip flops, we've got the thong, which goes between the big toe, the first toe and the second toe. And we can tend to clench around that area. That's something I do.

And I also clench between the fourth and the fifth toe. And that can lead to some tension in the forefoot. And then I find that my heel to the mid foot can get very wobbly. And I have had a tendency in the past of more pronation than I guess I could say is needed. It's something that arose out of many, many sprained ankles when I was younger. And it's been something that I have worked on and has improved quite a bit in relationship to my feet and my hips.

But also as my hips have become a little bit more, the tissue around them has become a little bit shorter or a little bit more, I don't know, I'm just going

to use it feels a little bit more tense. Then I've actually noticed my ankle movement has become a bit more disconnected, I could say, to the forefoot. And I've had to bring better connection between not only the foot, but also the connection between the heel and my hip. And I'll share more, as I said, about how I've been working with that.

But the key here is that with flip-flops, because there is not that heel support, if you don't have great connection between that heel and mid foot, and heel and forefoot, and mid foot and forefoot, things can go awry, which you'll need to borrow from other areas or compensate in order to try to facilitate some way of creating stability, which isn't real stability. But it's our way of trying to make a form of stability happen.

A gripping pattern, a bracing pattern, a holding pattern, which can happen locally. Like you might feel it as plantar fasciitis. You might feel it as extraordinary calf tightness. You might feel it as tightness along those peroneal muscles. You might feel it as shin splints. You might feel it as tightness through the hamstrings, or knee pain, or SI joint pain or like pinpointed issues around the rib cage.

Or even I've also noticed some up into my levator scapula, that as I've been working on the connection between my hind foot and my mid foot, that there's been some releasing happen in my levator scapula, which is super cool.

So the key is that notice, like if you've got a client, or yourself, they're wearing flip-flops, ask them to notice how they are actually holding that flip-flop on. And offer up, like, are you utilizing anything else to do that? Because think about it, if you're moving yourself through a gait pattern and you're using your toes or the bottom of your foot or somewhere else in and around the foot to kind of hold onto that shoe, how are you actually moving through your gait pattern, right?

There's a tension and then some sort of release, but it's only for a moment because then you need to grip around that flip-flop in order to go through the gait cycle again. And it's not only the free leg, but it's also the standing

leg because that standing leg, you're on an unstable platform, being the flip-flop. So if that's unstable, then where are you grabbing stability from or an attempt at grabbing stability from?

So it's really happening on both sides. It's happening through the swing phase, then the heel plants, and then you push off. But it's also the standing leg phase that all the way through, there's a greater instability. And if you have inherent stability locally between that ankle and mid or forefoot, that can be additive in terms of the challenge that you get to work with.

Now, it's a challenge that if you're game, you can certainly support and you can certainly up-level. I have. But it's a challenge and it does take some time to work with to be able to support you in moving forward.

So let me highlight a few things that I've been pondering and playing with around my flip-flops. And also I'm doing some really cool and fun rides this summer and I'll be riding longer and I'll be riding in more challenging environments and I'm looking forward to being able to do that and wear my flip-flops too.

So I've got a very compelling reason to be able to support myself and to really grow my function. And that's really the first piece to this, is working at improving your foot function takes patience and it takes a certain amount of endurance. I mean, we're on our feet enough during our day, even if we're someone who works in front of a computer, we get around by being on our feet.

So there's an element to this that can sometimes be frustrating for people in the length of time that it might take and the kind of care you need to have to support your feet. So having a compelling reason for why you want to go about doing it, whether it's something like wearing flip-flops or whether it's something like improving a bunion or reducing plantar fasciitis or eradicating plantar fasciitis, there's a consistency to the work that needs to happen.

It can't just be like one week and then another week and then two months later or like, oh, I've got more freedom in my feet, I can stop. There really is a consistency to the process that's required in order for you to get to really where you want to go.

And I find that more so with the feet, and that could be my own experience with my feet. But I've also seen it with my clientele that with feet, there's more consistency in the work that someone does. And they get there, I think it's because we spend so much time on our feet that it's a requirement and the feet have such a strong correlation to the hips.

I mean, I could go down that rabbit hole, but the bottom line is what's the compelling reason here? What's your why? And then what's the readiness? Why now? How ready are you to actually go after this? And so, for me, the why now is I've got some great rides coming up this summer. The summer here is really short. I really enjoy wearing my flip-flops and I just like it.

And I also know that if I spend the time on it, I will get the benefit. So I'm ready. I believe in the methods and I've got a compelling enough reason that will keep me moving forward when I don't necessarily want to move forward and I might want to do something different. So I've got the compelling reason of why I want what I want. And I've got the why now, the readiness to learn and explore.

So that leads me to playing around with the movement and the anatomy. So it becomes interesting to me about how my feet move. And I'm not going to get specifically into muscles or tendons or the way that the arches are in the foot, but rather giving you some ideas to explore in your feet and just really simple stuff like taking your toes and gently pulling them and gently giving a massage to them. Bringing your fingers between your toes. And can you even bring them to where the toes meet the forefoot? Do you have that suppleness there?

And then to massage in and around the dorsal side or the top side of the foot and the bottom side of the foot. And what does it feel like in between the tarsal bones? And what does it feel on the plantar side of the foot? And



then as you move the heel, then what do you notice through the heel and how does the connectivity between the hind foot and the mid foot and the toes, what is that? How is that? And can you get a sense of it for yourself?

It's also fun to start off the process by drawing the outline of your foot on a piece of paper. Or even putting your foot into like washable paint or water and placing your foot onto a surface that you can actually see the imprint of your foot on the surface and then compare it in four months or in six months or a year later to see the change. To see how your foot function or your foot structure in a particular phase of your gait has changed. And that becomes really interesting to explore.

You can even do that with, like do the imprint first, then do some of these massage movement types of techniques, then do the imprint again and notice if there's any difference. And it becomes really cool to see how quickly the mechanics of your foot can change. And that can help fuel or provide more spark to your compelling reason and also the readiness, because if you're seeing change, that nurtures the initial inspiration along to keep following the path.

So those are a few ideas just to start to play with how your parts of the foot work. And that's something that I've been doing and playing with, of how those toes are, what happens with the forefoot and the mid foot and the heel, and how those pieces connect or where there's a lack of connection.

When I've played around with yoga nidras or body scans or I've settled into some breath practice and I bring my attention down to the feet, it's like, all right, what part of the feet can I actually perceive? Is there sort of a quasi numbness? Not numb, like numb as in a neuropathy numb. Not that kind of numbness, but is there an amnesia where I can't feel a part of my foot in my mind's eye?

Is there anything that's just outside of my radar that's like, yep, I can feel the toes. If I was to draw the foot on a piece of paper right now, just in my mind's eye, like what part of the foot could I draw and what part of the foot

could I not draw? Like what shows up in an embodied way and what does not show up?

And that can be really revealing as you explore that. And it's something that I play with because intellectually, I know the foot. I know the bones of the foot, I know the structure of the foot, but it's different to feel and sense the foot versus knowing it intellectually. So if you're someone who tends towards that intellectual understanding, also take the time to get quiet enough to just to sense, like to feel into what you actually notice for your foot.

And that goes for not only when you're just lying about and sitting about, but also when you're walking. Like what parts of your foot can you feel or not feel? And you can guide your clients into this process as well. And then bring in this idea of the three points of the feet; the center of the heel, the ball of the foot and the base of the pinky toe and what can be perceived or not be perceived.

And when you're starting to work with clients or yourself in doing this, you can use this as a baseline of really connecting into, and again, like sensing into what are you noticing and then allowing that to travel up through the leg into the hip. And that's a lot of the work that I've been playing with, especially when I'm on my bike or I'm out for a run of tuning into, A, how that leg bone moves through that hip socket and how that heel lands.

And on days where I'm a little bit tired or my legs are feeling a bit not quite on, then I notice that there can be a difference in the way that gait pattern happens or the way that, especially the last phase of the way the roll through of the foot happens. And that can be really, really great data, right?

And as you start to notice it and then start to play with some of the granular movements that I share on my Facebook videos or on my YouTube videos, things start to open up in terms of how your feet feel and function and how you continue to move through and improving the way that you move and the way that your feet feel.

And that's how I've been playing with it for myself, especially when I'm on my bike, because as I mentioned in other episodes, my feet are clipped into the pedals and I'm utilizing the gaming app Zwift. And that's how I've been riding through the winter. And my feet are clipped in, so my heel is free, but it's in a shoe. But I can feel the ball of my foot and the base of my pinky toe.

And as I've been playing around with flip-flops, I've been really paying attention to my feet in my bike shoes of not using my toes or gripping with my toes, which has been a tendency of mine when I get tired, but really tuning into what are the steps that happen before I get tired? Kind of what leads me to use my toes as a choice, to then start to try and pedal, which sounds so funny, but I do it and other people do it too, right?

So I start to see what that pattern of movement is, is my leg bones. And one of the things I noticed is that kind of amnesia starts to settle in around my hip movement on the bike. So then I started to play with about the 20 minute mark of my rides to tune into how are my legs moving in my hip socket and what's going on with my forefoot or my toes?

And then I could draw a line from my outer hip down to my ankle bone and notice this outer line of my leg moving, right, as I do the push down. And then I move to the inner leg line, do the same thing from the inner leg up by the pelvis down to the ankle bone and feel that movement pattern. And then when I'm pulling up through my leg, as I pull up through the pedal stroke, again, noticing the outer line, then noticing the inner line.

And then I can play around with that visual mechanics, if I could call it that, of playing with the movement of my pedal stroke. Noticing the outer line, both push down and pull up, and the inner leg line, push down and pull up. And interestingly, my feet then just sort of free up.

So there was something that was happening in that 20 minute mark, 30 minute mark, where once I was able to connect more to that pedal pattern, my toes and my feet started to free up even more. And curiously, when I was out for my runs, my stride was stronger and more fluid. And not

surprisingly, when I slid those flip-flops on, I had less of a need to grip through my toes to hold onto the flip-flop.

And my standing leg, as I would swing through my gait pattern wearing the flip-flops, was a lot more solid without me thinking, oh, I better be solid through my leg or, oh, where is my foot in space? There was a much more unconscious fluid motion through the whole gait pattern with the extra work that I was doing on the bike.

I also played around with the connection between my pelvis and my rib cage and how the obliques were working, how the QL was working, but overall just how connected I was between the ribs and the pelvis. A lot of times people can focus in on this area of the abdomen between the ribs and pelvis and focus solely on core and then pull in the navel to the spine or do other things around like pulling the ribs in or tucking the tail in an attempt to kind of create some stability there.

And what I have found when people do that is that they tend to get more braced and less connected. So some of the things that I've taught on this podcast that I was doing for myself in this process was taking a lot of twists, both in sitting and on my side, as well as coming into revolved triangle in standing and playing with the control of my pelvis motion if my rib cage was quiet as it came into the twist.

Or say for example I'm on my side and I start to go into a rotation, but I leave my pelvis quiet and I move through my rib cage. So something I commonly call a sunrise and sunset. And could I do that? Or did I find myself flaring my ribs or moving my pelvis instead or getting grippy or bracing anywhere? And then tuning into only moving as far as I could keep that really smooth and coordinated.

Same with coming into revolved triangle. So coming into a pyramid pose to begin with and then from the pyramid pose starting to take a rotation and then noticing what would happen. Did I want to clench through my feet or hyperextend through my knees or brace through my rib cage? I did all of those things initially.

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And then being able to, bit by bit, refine the movement so none of those things were happening. And then lo and behold, I became more and more fluid, more and more connected, more light and just generally like, you know, when you feel like plugged in? Like I just felt more plugged in of like connected overall. And not surprisingly, my pedal stroke improved, my running gait improved, and sliding on those flip flops was even easier.

So it becomes really interesting to see this overarching connection between the foot itself, the connection between the foot and the hip, and the connection between the pelvis and the ribs.

Now, if you're interested in this, this is a curious exploration. I've got some links to YouTube videos in the show notes. And these are videos that were recorded during the pandemic. They're still great, great videos that you can explore where I get into the feet and also play around with the sunrise and sunset and other aspects.

And you can explore it for yourself and just get a sense and a feel for how this plays out with your own feet, with the feet of your clients and how changing the mechanics, changing the lens with which you view the body can make a real difference. So give those a whirl.

And again, if this is inspiring and you're interested in improving your function and really up-leveling your game so you can wear the footwear that you want to wear, you'll love the Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet, and you can find it over at [functionalsynergy.com/feet](http://functionalsynergy.com/feet).