



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hatley**

**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. We are in the middle of a foot miniseries. And this is a fun miniseries because it really highlights the way that we can look at our body in a very zoomed in way, which happens a lot when people are thinking about the feet. I mean, you can just Google feet anywhere and people will talk about the importance of the feet as being this foundation on which our whole body lives. And if you don't get that right, then a lot of problems can happen.

And they're not wrong about that, but there's also so much more to the conversation. I see a lot of trainers who are fabulous when it comes to working with the foot locally and very specifically. But then when it looks at the larger chain and the bigger picture and the whole body, there can sometimes be a miss.

And that's really what I want to be contributing to the conversation about, yes, we can zoom in on the feet themselves, but then zoom out to more of the body because the reality is, as I say over and over and over again, is yes, the foot definitely is the foundation. I like to say it punctuates our posture. And how that leg bone swings in the pelvis and how that pelvis moves relative to the ribcage, because we do rotate through our body when we walk, that can have an impact on the way that the leg bone swings and the foot is placed.

So if we don't address those aspects in a deliberate way, then we might not get all the gains that we could out of doing that specific footwork, right? Like we can really squeeze the fruit, so to speak, and get more juice out of it if we can really work more holistically with our whole system, including the specific area of the feet themselves.

So this episode I want to give you some ideas to play with the kinetic chain from hip to foot. You can explore these with your clientele, and if you're

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someone who's got foot issues, you can explore them with your feet. And this is really me talking to the professionals here in the group of taking some of the exploration and just having fun with how our whole body contributes to our feet.

Now, I've already shared a story, my own story, about my bike riding and my running and how I've been riding my bike a lot through the winter and doing a lot more strength training than I have previously, and I'm also a lover of flip-flops. And how my riding and my flip-flop habit in the summertime anyway, don't necessarily mesh, but they do now mesh because of the work that I've done. So I shared a bit of personal story around that.

And I've also gone through working with the ball and exploring and getting awareness through your feet and I've interweaved some body scans and some yoga nidra so you can down regulate and really tune into a restful space in your being so that you can do the work that you need to do. Because this is not just a mechanical game, it's a nervous system game, it's a breath game. It's a whole body mind game.

So with this today, we're going to play around with the kinetic chain. Just a few exercises that you can explore and support your clients as they improve the function of their feet.

So when I see a client who has foot issues, whether it's a first session or whether it's a 10th session, I don't necessarily begin at the feet. I don't have a specific starting spot every single time, it really depends on what the person is coming in with.

Like typically if they're a first time client with foot issues, I don't typically begin there. I usually begin at the leg bone and the pelvis and seeing the way the pelvis and the leg bone function because that is a place that we can make a huge amount of gains right off the bat, especially if they can feel the change in their hip function to how the tissue feels in their feet, it really can open the door to possibility.

As we keep moving along though, I might start at the feet, but my choice for doing that would depend on a person's interest and desire when they're coming in for that session. So just to give some context for this, when I run my private series, they're a three-month series, and I see my clients nine times over the course of those three months.

And then between those sessions we have time on Slack, a messaging app, where there's more conversation, there's questions about their programs, or I add more to their program because they tend to get better a lot quicker when there's that contact. And so there's this ongoing relationship that we have of collaboration, of supporting them and their function and what they're noticing and what they're sensing and the patterns that they're noticing and what's changing.

So again, why I may or may not start at the feet would depend on that. But for this particular episode, the reason why I went through all that is because today I will begin at the feet. And where I'd like you to begin, whether you're sitting or whether you are standing, is to simply notice the three points of your feet. The center of the heel, the ball of the foot and the base of the pinky toe. Like just notice those points.

And it's not about being equal through those points. It's just about noticing them and feeling the sensation of the floor against your feet and the feet against the floor. And then working yourself upwards your chain and just noticing how your pelvis and your legs and your knees are being experienced.

And if you take a moment to simply breathe and exhale, soften your breath maybe, soften your eyes, and recognize what that begins to feel like. And then you can move into doing some ball work on the bottom of your feet or simply doing some gentle massage through the toes, the bottom of the feet, through the dorsal side of the foot, around the ankle.

Maybe even up the outside of the calf and the inside of the calf. That can be a really sticky, sticky point for a lot of people who have foot issues. That's where many people borrow from in their body to try to create more

stability through an unstable ankle or an unstable connection between the hind foot and the forefoot or the hind foot and the mid foot.

And then as you do that, as you take that time to explore that with your client, make sure to take time to then let the foot rest and have them notice what the foot feels like. Taking that pause between stimuli is important so that they can recognize any new sensation that they're experiencing. They're kind of open to more of their system and it helps them collect data.

So rather than this becoming sort of a to-do list of exercises to do, they are able to perceive the change, right? Because a big piece of improving mechanics is both improving one's interoception as well as one's proprioception, so where their body is in space, and then being able to do something with that information that they gather. But you've got to at least gather it. You've got to at least tune into it to begin with.

It can also help open up this understanding of this highway, I like to call it, between their hip and their foot. And once they've played around with the three points of the feet and some basic massages of the foot and the heel and up through the calf, maybe even around the Achilles tendon, to then explore walking and notice if their walking pattern has shifted.

And it might be that the mechanics of their walking pattern has shifted, or that the way they're sensing has shifted. Because again, it's not just the mechanics of this, it's what they feel. Because people can make sizable changes in the way that they feel, but their mechanics haven't changed, which can really boggle some people's minds because we've been really trained in our culture to believe that posture is the problem and structure is a problem.

But just because there's a structural so-called problem, or because there's a so-called posture problem doesn't impact pain per se, I have found. But rather we can improve our function, which can improve the way that we sense interoceptively and proprioceptively, which can change up the way that we feel, and sometimes it changes the mechanics and sometimes it doesn't.

And when I started to really see that many, many moons ago, that's when I really recognized we don't have to change the mechanics. We don't have to change the structure for someone to feel better, right? As an aside, I don't need to shift someone's scoliosis for them to feel better. I'm aiming to help them feel better in the body that they have. Do you see that distinction?

So someone's foot shape or foot posture might be something, and it's easy to go, oh look, that's not normal anatomically. That must be why you're feeling the way you're feeling. But I have helped a lot of people feel better without changing the mechanics. I've helped them improve their compensation patterns, I've helped them improve their loading patterns, but that doesn't rely on them changing the mechanical patterns, right?

So this is why it's important to be able to sense and to perceive proprioceptively what's going on, and where and how this changes through your hip to your feet, right? You're getting to understand how the whole thing functions.

So then where you can be is you can be in sitting, your client can be in sitting or your client can be in standing, and then just ask them to lift the toes. And as they lift the toes, what else are they doing? Are they using their mouth or their eyes or their levator scapula or their rib cage? Like what else are they using to lift their toes? Or can they even lift their toes? And exploring just how that changes the orientation of their foot.

Now I just mentioned mechanics not needing to change, it doesn't mean I'm not interested if mechanics do change. It's just not my go-to, go-to, this must change in order for foot pain to change. No, but it'd be interesting to notice as you lift those toes, as your client lifts their toes, what starts to happen? Where do they feel this? How do they feel in their body?

And it may simply be that you ask them, what are they noticing? What are they recognizing? And you notice the change in their demeanor or their skin tone, or in the overall tissue resiliency. What are you seeing? Maybe there's some other postural change that just naturally starts to happen.

The thing is, when a body starts to feel more at ease, it can't lie, right? You can see the sparkle. You can see sort of this lightness arise in a person's system as they start to feel better. Same thing when they start to grip more, you can see that as well. So trust what you see. And even if they're not feeling it, just trust what they see and keep on rolling.

So then where you can play is coming into something like tree pose or even a baby tree pose. And as they're bringing one foot off the floor, whether it's a baby tree or into a tree, what happens with that standing ankle? Like does the orientation of the foot change dramatically? Do they need to compensate further up into their pelvis?

And what I love to say with my clients if I'm exploring tree with them is they might be able to do the full tree, but with a lot of compensation through that foot and through the hip. So then instead it's like a baby tree, but only move as far as you can perceive what's going on your ankle. And that becomes really fun for them to recognize what's actually happening as they transfer a load from being from two feet to one foot.

And what happens with that standing leg kinetic chain? But also the influence between the free leg kinetic chain and the standing leg kinetic chain. Because as we move through the hip on the free leg, that can have an impact on the hip on the standing leg, which can have an impact through the knee down to the ankle. And that can be really interesting.

Now people will then say, well, I better push through this part or, suck in in this part, or hold this other part together, but try not to do that. Simply find the function that you do have without needing to grip or brace and then notice what occurs.

And this can then lead us into an exploration coming into warrior one or even warrior two. As you step back into warrior one and as the heel comes down, there might be a point as you're bringing that heel down where the hips change where there's an overpronation or an oversupination or the toes splay in or splay out. And what is it that happens for your client's foot?



And can you place a block underneath their foot just at that point before the deviation in their ankle happens? Or maybe use the baseboard on the wall at the bottom of the wall as some support, or even a small, little bolster.

Same thing when we're coming into warrior two, we take the legs wide, rotate that leg bone. And as the forefoot and the toes come down, what happens through the mechanics of that foot? How does the foot posture change? What happens through the hip and the knee? What happens with the pelvis?

And you start to see these deviations arise and start to see the whole kinetic chain of what occurs as that foot comes down. Because if there's a lot of disconnect or limitation between the hind and mid foot or hindfoot and forefoot, or even a lot of limitation in through that calf or Achilles tendon, that can have an impact on how that foot comes down in the back leg in warrior one or the front foot in warrior two. And then what that deviates up into your pelvis or the client's pelvis.

And allow yourself to see that deviation. And it may be you let go of warrior two for a moment and say, okay, we're going to move towards warrior two, but not exactly warrior two. When someone takes their leg wide and then rotates it, we're asking more of the hip. We're asking more of the tissue between the hip and the foot. So it may be that you need to take the legs less wide, or you don't rotate that leg bone in the hip socket as much, and you just explore.

Forget about the pose name and just explore the function of legs in abduction, leg in rotation, foot comes down to the floor. And just explore where you're at through that pattern, where your client is at through that pattern. And that can be really, really revealing if you're willing to stay within that range just to be exploratory and curious.

It doesn't mean that the next time you practice or the client practices yoga that they can't do warrior two as we know it. But rather it helps them recognize why they might be feeling what they're feeling. What their range is without the compensation pattern versus what the range is with the



compensation pattern, which then gives them that much more power to choose and explore the function between their feet and their hips and even further up the chain.

And then coming back from warrior two or warrior one, you can also explore with goddess pose. So again, taking those legs wide and rotating the leg bones in the sockets. Then gently sliding your hands to the outside of the thighs and pressing those thighs wide into your hands. And just look down at your feet.

Those of you who tend to pronate, you'll find that as you press the legs wide into the hands you might notice an arch lift without actually needing to lift the arches. But it's just that when you press your legs wide into your hands in an abduction, or even in a rotation and focusing more on the deep rotators, you'll find that the arches of your feet start to lift, which is really, really, really curious, right? And you start to be able to see this connection between what is or is not happening.

I see this so often with people who have lazy glutes or have been told they have lazy glutes or glutes that aren't firing. There tends to be a correlation to what is or is not happening through their feet. And when they can improve this highway connection between the foot function and their hip function, their glutes start to fire. But there's some level of tension holding pattern or just a misfiring of communication between their brain and their body that gets cleared up, gets cleaned up, and then all of a sudden those glutes start to fire more effectively. It becomes really, really fascinating to be able to explore.

Now, if you want to take yourself through those movements again, we played around with some massaging through the feet and up the calf. And then began to play with some three points of the feet, then lifting the toes. And then coming into a warrior one or two. And then when you're back into goddess and then coming back to standing, then just notice what the result is.

Notice the result of what's happening through your breathing, what's happening through your jaw, the rootedness through your feet and anything else. Because again, we're playing around with these mechanics, we're playing with the kinetic chain, but I'm guiding you in a very sensory exploration.

And you can do this with any series of foot exercises or kinetic chain exercises that you know of with your clientele. Bring them into a sensory experience, sensing what's happening and also the mechanics. And you'll be able to meet them on more than just one level, right? We're bringing more of the Koshic model into the healing process which enables, I find, just greater results in a faster period of time. Not that I'm needing speed, but it's certainly lovely for a client to see the possibility of results quicker. And that makes it a little bit more sustainable for them and more willing to continue on doing what they need to do.

So if questions arise from that, by all means, send us a note through [functionalsynergy.com](http://functionalsynergy.com). I'd love to hear from you. And if you want to dig into this further, come join me with the Power of Pure Movement: Strong And Supple Feet. You can find it over at [functionalsynergy.com/feet](http://functionalsynergy.com/feet).