

## Ep #257: Foot Awareness - Short Mindful Walking & Running Practice



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**With Your Host**

**Susi Hatley**

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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 a miniseries on the feet, and it's an integrative exploration of your feet to give you some experiences of how you can support your feet and also connect that much more into them from a very embodied somatic state.

Like many persistent issues of pain or strain it's very easy to get caught up in the next exercise to figure out the problem or to sort out the problem. And so often in my line of work I find the people attracted to it, they do need that and they also need a really solid amount of guidance into their bodies.

It's so easy to spend the time in that thinking mode, in that logical processing mode, which is useful, and there's a whole side of our brain that is necessary to support a really transformative, healing process. And when we can tap into body scans and mindful practices, that's when we can tap into the other parts of our being and our system to support our process forward.

Now the cool thing is relaxation and body scans have been going on for a long time. And we've known the benefits of them from a relaxation perspective. I mean back in the 80s I think it was, it was Dr. Herbert Benson who would talk about the benefits of relaxation response, and he was out of Harvard.

And now because we know so much more about brain waves we can see the impact on how body scans really can support a slowing down of brain wave frequency and how that can relate to optimal healing opportunities. So with this next practice I want to take you on a walk, just a short walk, and to give you some ideas to explore when you're on your walk and what your feet feel like as you're walking about.

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You can do this practice during any season in whatever weather. So whether you're barefoot, whether you are in mukluks, whether you've got a ton of socks on your feet, or whether you have minimal socks on your feet, it really can be a practice anytime, anywhere. Same thing for speed. You can do this walking. You can also do this running, obviously you would pick it up a little bit more when you're running.

But the idea is to tune into the connection of your feet moving through the gait cycle, the movement of your leg bone in your pelvis, and your movement of the rib cage in your pelvis, and your breath and your shoulders and your head.

And so what we'll do is we'll start by simply moving. And so I'm going to assume that you are either on a treadmill or you are walking around your space or you're out for a walk or a run, and it's simply a matter of your being out and meandering forward. And to first notice yourself moving and just notice you. Like who are you now? How was your day? How was your day with you? And how were you with your day? What's that relationship?

Maybe you're just getting up, so how were you with your sleep? How was your sleep with you? Where are you in your mind and your brain? Where are you emotionally? Where are you at from a fatigue perspective? Are you tired? Are you rested? Are you sleep deprived? Are you rest deprived? And just notice where you are at. Maybe you're a little wired. Or maybe you're calm, or you just need to shake off the day. You get the idea, see if you can tune in to whatever state you are experiencing as you continue to walk.

And then notice just where your face and your jaw are at and your abdomen, because those are good barometers for just states of is there tension? Are you breathing easy? Are you clenching anything that maybe can be released, but we're not going to do that quite yet. Just notice your baseline.

And then bring yourself down to your feet. And notice what you're wearing, if you are wearing anything on your feet. Just notice the material that is touching your skin. And if it's the air caressing the skin, then notice that.

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And then tune into the three points of your feet. Center of the heel, ball of the foot, base of the pinky toe. And as you walk or as you run, or as you climb the stairs, this is not that you land your foot on the floor or on the ground with those three points. You'll be walking through the gait pattern from heel to toe most likely, so it's just noticing where those points are in space.

Each person's going to have a slightly unique gait pattern. So it's just noticing where the base of the big toe or the ball of the foot, base of the pinky toe and the center of the heel, where they are. And notice what you can feel as you walk through that gait cycle. So what part of your foot is touching the ground and what part isn't?

I sometimes like to use this as a discernment between what is form and what is formless because the whole foot doesn't touch the ground. So what parts of your foot do you notice touching the ground? And what parts do you notice that are not touching the ground?

You can also notice your knee bending and your leg swing in the hip socket. Particularly if there's anything amiss in those joint areas, you might notice that the knee one side to the other feels a bit different or the hip joint feels a bit different. And I want to emphasize, this isn't meaning there's a problem or anything, it's simply noticing the baseline for where your movement is currently.

And then feel the spaces between your toes. Now notice your hands. The palms of your hands, the spaces between your fingers and the whole arm, left and right, from the hands to the shoulders. And notice what your legs and your feet are doing as you pay attention to your hands and your arms.

Yep, I'm asking you to pay attention to both the hands and arms and the legs and feet. Again, we're not thinking our way into this, it's a feeling experience. It's an awareness, somatic, embodied experience.

And then notice yourself breathing. And the cool thing is that you might have a very slim breath or a full breath and simply just notice what it is. The

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aim here isn't to specifically change anything, but rather something often happens when we simply place our awareness and attention onto different parts of our body.

Now, as you continue to walk along, you might come to a scenario where you need to step off of a curb or step over a root, or maybe there's another obstacle that you need to navigate and pay attention to your body.

Breathing in, breathing out. Feel the rhythm of your breath with the rhythm of your legs and the rhythm of your feet. Inhaling with ease and exhaling.

Tuning back into the three points on the bottom of your feet; center of the heel, ball of the foot, base of your pinky toe. Swing of your leg. Easy through the breath. Softness in your face.

As people practice this, sometimes they notice that in the early phases they can feel a change, like tension releasing, strain releasing, pain changing. And then as they continue to practice this or other related practices, they start to notice more and more and more duration without the tension, the pain, or the strain. And they start to recognize that these practices can be used not simply to reduce pain or strain, but to evolve into something even better.

So we can move from feeling kind of bad to feeling good. And we can also move from feeling good to feeling great. And notice how that lands in your body and your mind by tuning in, by moving mindfully, bringing together your whole brain and your movement.

Shortly, my voice is going to trail off and I'll leave you to your walk, to your run. If you want to dig deeper into these ideas, you'll probably like *Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet*, where we move and work with the feet properly and also all of the body because where the pain is is not always the problem. And when we can tune into the other parts that might be contributing to how our feet feel, that's when we move from not only bad to good, but good to great.

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You can read more over at [functionalsynergy.com/feet](https://functionalsynergy.com/feet). Have a great practice.