

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love



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. I'm so glad that you're here because today I am sharing a new tool that I have formalized, which is really effective for helping people in reducing and eradicating physical pain. It's a tool that I've been utilizing for many, many, many years, and have trained my trainees with. I mean I work with my clients all the time. The process is very clear, I just haven't named it.

And at Functional Synergy we're right now in the process of naming a lot of these processes that I utilize to help my clients to reduce and eradicate physical pain and also to help my trainees do the same thing with their clientele. It's important, I think, to be able to formalize these processes because then when it's clear on a piece of paper, when it's clear in terms of a model, it's much easier for anybody to apply it into their practice.

So my aim is to really land the legacy of what it is that I'm teaching so that more and more people can teach this notion of interoception and proprioception in a really effective manner. I mean those words are being tossed around all over the place right now, but there's still a gap that I see of really utilizing it in a way that can just accelerate the process.

Not that I'm trying to have people get out of pain super fast, it's not that. It's that a lot of people get out of pain and then they don't get out of pain. They get out of pain, they don't get out of pain. And my aim here is to really land in this world of possibility and make that possibility very clear and probable and kind of a no-brainer.

And when you have these tools, it can be really effective in partnering with your client and helping them over the line to really get into this space of tuning into their bodies and into their breath and making those fundamental

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

biomechanical changes that help them become more stable physiologically, more stable psychologically, and as an outcome their pain is down, if not gone away. They're back to the activities that they want to do in this transformed way of thinking and of being.

They're not resigned, they are more effective. They're more elevated in their understanding and their awareness of themselves, right? Because again, as I say over and over and over again, you can't change what you're not aware of. In so many scenarios with people who have a chronicity or persistence of pain symptoms, they're dealing with surface-level symptoms. They're not actually dealing with the thing that's the thing, because they're unaware of the thing that's the thing and you can't solve for what you're not aware of.

So these tools that we're naming, really being conscious about the processes and getting them down into bullet points for people is a real focus for me and for my team right now and you'll hear more in each of these episodes of what these tools are. We've also got some programs that you can purchase where I go deeper into them and have much more understanding.

And, of course, then there's the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive and the certification program where it's all about growing fluency with utilizing these tools so you too can have really, really great results.

So that's the introduction to this and the tool that I'm explaining today is the success matrix. It'd be great if I could say it, right? Success matrix, and I'll get that word down by the time I finish this episode. If anything, as I stumble over that word, you're certainly going to remember it and that is what we are talking about today.

And I utilize this tool throughout the process with my clients. I'm going to explain to you how I do that and I'm going to explain to you with an example of a client that I worked with utilizing this tool. Bottom line is this,

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

and I've said this a few times, actually not a few times, I've said it many, many, many, many times.

How I so-called created this, if I created this at all, this process that I follow, I mean I have a background from working in a pain clinic right out of school. I worked there for two or so years and so had some really good training of working with people, lots of experience, working with a lot of people with persistence of symptoms and being in a multidisciplinary clinic. And so I learned a lot around different lenses of viewing pain.

Then I went traveling for a little bit and then moved and found myself doing more yoga and then ultimately got my yoga teacher training. And now I'm in front of a group of people and I've been asked and tasked with in this eight-week series you are going to teach these poses so that people, when they finish the eight-week series, are able to do these poses. And that was the focus of the studio where I was at.

Back in the day there were no drop-in classes. It was really very teaching oriented. It was more instructional based than a lot of yoga studios and yoga programs are now. And so the focus that the director wanted me to have is to help these folks get to these groups of poses by the end of the eight weeks.

Well with the understanding I have of anatomy and biomechanics and kinesiology I looked at the list, I looked at the group and went, uh-oh, this is not going to happen. I think I was a little more crass in my uh-oh. And I just, on the fly, looked at the room, looked at the list and went, uh-oh, okay, so what am I going to do here?

And that's when I started to break down the poses into their component parts. Like what makes up a triangle? What makes up warrior two? What makes up the extended side angle? What makes up downward facing dog? What makes up headstand? What makes up all these different poses? And so I broke them down into the small component parts and I started there.

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

So we didn't start with yoga poses, we started with let's improve the mechanics of these poses, of the basis, like the foundational components, and build up. And that's what we did. And so over eight weeks they were able to do all the poses that were asked of the director.

Well lo and behold not surprisingly lots of people started coming to my classes and a lot of them had pain, which was so fascinating. And I started to see a pattern that, generally speaking, people with pain had a ton of compensation patterns, which is not really surprising because all of us humans compensate. But the key here is that as I helped those folks with pain reduce their compensation patterns, their pain went away.

And I'm like, huh, that's a cool pattern. So if I keep helping someone reduce their compensations, become more biomechanically in tune, so interoceptive in tune, and proprioceptively in tune, then I can help them continue to build back to the life they want to have, right? Because the thing with pain is that even if you can push through pain and do the life you want, it's painful, it's exhausting, it's hard.

And so I was helping people get back to their lives in this new aware space, right? They had elevated their perception of themselves and they had better tools to tune into their own bodies, right? I think in a lot of ways when we are in rehabilitation we learn all sorts of tools to externally support ourselves, like bracing patterns or breath holding patterns. Although I know a lot of people in rehab who would not want their patients to breath hold, but people do do that.

And that can provide a little bit of a stopgap. They can at least get their thing done that they want to get done. They don't really gain a lot of longevity with it and then they have to go back time and time and time again. They're not improving their motor control or coordination, but at least they're getting somewhere.

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

But I wasn't satisfied with that. My interest was let's help them tune in internally so they can feel internally what's going on, which is where the whole whispers and yellow lights stuff came around, and help them towards success. And so they have this internal world, not this external world of telling them what to do or bracing or whichever. But they can really feel into and tune into their own inner knowing, their own inner world, right?

And so that's really where the success matrix arose out of, right? Helping people with recognizing the complex movement they wanted to be able to do, which could be walking and that's it. It could be running. It could be getting on a bike. It could be playing tennis. And seeing, all right, let's break that movement into its small components, much like I did with those yoga poses. And what needs to happen in the small components that make up the complex movement? And does the person have those components or not?

And then if they don't, help them grow them. And if they do, well, then let's help them get more control, more coordination, and more stamina around them. And as we do that, they're able to get back to what it is they want to be doing with a heck of a lot less pain, way more awareness, way more tuned in, and oftentimes they're playing better or doing the task better, the activity better than they did before they got into pain because they're that much more in tune.

So as you can kind of gather, I'm thinking about this success matrix all the way through the process. So when someone comes in to see me for the first time and I'm asking them about all the things and I'm finding out about where they're limited in their life and all those things, they usually are saying something about an activity they would love to get back to.

And so when I ask them, are you doing the activity, the answer is yes or no. And if it's yes, it's often but it's in a limited way or they're in pain. They can do it, but. Or they can't do it and they want to be able to do it and their life sort of sucks not being able to do it. So we have these scenarios where

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

they might be able to do it but it's lots of pain, so it's likely very compensated. Or they would like to do it and there might be some fear involved, there might be a lot of pain involved, they don't feel like they have the confidence to be able to do it.

So there's lots of places that we can explore, but at their basis it's the same, I'm looking at their movement patterns. And in both scenarios, whether someone can do their task or activity with pain or they can't do it at all, underlining it is when we can help them improve their component part functionality and they tune in more effectively, then they know kind of where they're at on the spectrum towards success of actually being able to do it with less pain. They grow their clarity and grow their confidence.

So as an example, if we take a look at walking, I had a client who was already walking an hour a day with her dog. When I asked her like, when does the pain start, she said at 40 minutes. I started with can you only walk for 40 minutes, so that you're walking without the pain and then we can build up your functionality and then help you get to the hour? And she said yeah. All right, so then that's success. That's what success looks like for her, she wants to be able to do an hour without pain of walking with her dog.

So then I broke down the walking into component parts. And someone who is really trained with gait is probably going to roll their eyes as they listen to me in terms of what I focus on. But here's the thing, I find that when I focus on these few aspects of gait, people get better really quickly. So I know that I am making it very basic and very simple, but it works. It really does work for my clientele.

And so here's what I focus on. When we look at walking, what needs to happen? We need to move one foot in front of the other and it needs to happen in a consistent one after the other way. So then how do you get that foot in front of the other? Well, the leg bone needs to move in the pelvis.

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

Okay, so then what needs to happen for the leg bone to move in the pelvis? Well, the pelvis needs to have some level of stability, it needs to be a platform on which the leg bone moves. Okay, so what else impacts that pelvis? All right, well there's some rotation between the pelvis and the ribcage. So those things, those are fundamental to be able to get that one leg in front of the other.

We could say that the arms need to move, but the reality is they don't because if you have a broken arm or a broken collarbone and your arm doesn't move, you can still walk. So the arm movement isn't fundamental to the walking pattern. It might be fundamental if you want to be able to walk further, or with more ease, or if you're holding on to a leash. But we're simply talking about walking right now, and the key fundamental there is we need to be able to move that leg bone in the pelvis.

So then where I am now is, okay, for success to happen here are the key fundamentals, the key components. Now I can ask myself as I'm working with this person, do they have those components or not? Yes or no. And we start to really drill into what happens.

Now sometimes someone has the component, like they can swing their leg but the leg swing is very, very small and it's littered with pain. So, okay, all right, so there's some stuff happening. Or they might be littered with compensation patterns of any sort from jaw clenching to breath holding to butt clenching to any number of things.

So now I'm able to assess where the functioning is a bit off and work from there in terms of helping them improve their functionality. Bit by bit, as we improve that functionality, as we improve the control and coordination, lo and behold guess what happens? Their pain drops and they're able to walk for longer.

Another example of this is a client that I worked with who was overcoming breast cancer surgery and she had had a lumpectomy and there was a lot

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

of strain in and around that breast. She was a tennis player and wanted to get back to tennis.

And I remember really clearly, and she and I have actually had a podcast episode about this and I'll put that episode number into the show notes so you can go back and listen to her story because it really is a fantastic story of truly what's possible when you come out of a surgery and have a treatment process like that.

But she was saying to me, you know, I can't get the serve. And there was this tension kind of in and around that lateral side of the breast and there was a thought that she had of like maybe this is just as good as it gets, right? Like there's scar tissue in there, there's been radiation, maybe this is it.

And I kind of looked at her through the Zoom screen, I'm like I don't know, maybe. And truly I'm like no judgment, no euphemism. I was like, all right, that maybe is the case, let's see. Because I don't know, I mean, anything's possible and sometimes things aren't possible.

And lo and behold we get going and we help her work through some of the component parts associated with the tennis serve. And lo and behold the whole area starts to release. The energy coming down her arm becomes alive. She's standing taller, her chest is open. Like there's this radiation and like she's radiating this whole new level of joy. It was so cool.

So there we were working with these smaller component parts associated with the serve and helped her get there. So if I break down the serve, because we need to hit the ball, right? Like success with that serve is you've got to hit the ball. Like number one, if you don't hit the ball, you don't have a serve. So the first thing is how do we make contact between the ball and the racket?

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

Now, whether that ball goes into the court or hits the net or whatever, that's a whole other thing. But the fundamentals are you need to hit the ball with the racket. So if you can't get your arm overhead because there's a bunch of strain in and around that breast area, well, you've got to work with that. So how do we help get that arm overhead? What are the components that are really needed to make that happen?

Now, when someone's first starting at this, their untrained eye might say, oh, I just need to get the arm over the head in the format of the way that that movement is. And then they might just focus on working within that specific plane. But the reality is that there are other planes that are involved because the movement, whether it's walking or whether it's bringing the arm into the movement pattern that creates the serve as well as the rotation element that's involved with doing the serve, it's more than just the primary plane through which they're moving. It's also the supportive planes.

And the supportive planes are a huge part of success and then thereby being a huge part of the success matrix. So when we're looking at this, and the success matrix tool really helps people to break this down and where to work and how to work and how to kind of measure how someone's progressing so both the client and the trainer knows what's happening and sees where they're at in the process, it becomes really powerful, right? Because we can clearly see the direction that someone's going.

So when someone like my client has this whole freedom sort of born within, she has a taste of what's possible. She can feel it and we can see it, both subjectively her own feeling, and objectively her own experience. Like we can see it together, meaning objective, and subjective she has her own internal experience and those things match. It becomes really, really powerful overall.

So the idea here is taking the activity and breaking it down into component parts because something I'm not interested in doing is there are a lot of people out there in pain and are pushing through. And they're able to do

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

the activity but it's riddled and littered with compensations and pain. I've got no interest in helping someone accomplish that. My interest is, yeah, let's get you back to your activity and let's do it in a way that honors pain-free methodology. Let's do it.

And we don't have to mess with your mind or make you think differently, let's simply help your body and your breath come together so that we help improve the anatomy, we help improve the kinesiology, we help improve the biomechanics, we help improve your physiology overall so that you can do this within a bandwidth that works for you and grow that bandwidth. You're just nurturing the process, that's the whole thing that we're really trying to do here. And that's sort of the foundation of what I like to call the success matrix.

If you're interested in learning more about this, we are getting all into it at the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive and you can actually enroll in that now if you want to dig into it. You can enroll in the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive that's running for six days. You can also enroll in it as an asynchronous program where you take the training on your own time, we recommend over a period of six to eight weeks, and then you also have teaching calls directly with me.

So if that's interesting for you, then come and check us out at functionalsynergy.com. It would be such a joy to share with you the success matrix and the other tools that I have to really help you make some serious gains with your clientele, have serious confidence, really, really strong clarity about what it is you're doing and how you are working and just watch results take off. And when that happens, people want you.

And you'll find that because you have these great relationships with your clients, that you're not just doing to them but you're interacting with them, they're along the journey with you and they can feel your realness and desire to support them, not just to get out of pain but to get back to the life they want that's free and easier and more tuned in, people want that.

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

Ep #284: Success Matrix: Introducing a New Tool For Helping Clients Reduce or Eradicate Pain and Get Back to the Activities They Love

People want that kind of relationship. I know it because I have it every single day. So come check us out, functionalsynergy.com/intensive, it'd be such a joy to work with you. Take good care, we'll see you next time.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams, and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.