

Ep. #308 - Precision That Lands - The Art of Guiding Change Without Force



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With your host:
Susi Hately

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

Introduction 00:00:01 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.

Susi 00:00:23 Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here, because today I'm digging into a concept that's been arising recently in my practice, more like emerging, and it's quietly transformative. And that wouldn't surprise you, given what I talk about all the time on this podcast. And whether it's with my trainees who I'm helping really hone their craft at helping people to reduce and eradicate physical pain, or whether it's with my private one on one clients, these three words come up all the time lately: Precision that lands. It's a phrase I've been using more and more in my teaching and mentoring because in so many client cases and even amongst very experienced professionals, what's missing isn't knowledge or technique, it's the ability to apply what we know in a way that the body can actually receive.

Susi 00:01:15 Oh so important. Let me say it again: It's the ability to apply what we already know in a way that the body can actually receive. And that body can be ours, it can be our clients. This is true whether we're talking about glute activation, shoulder tension, breath, or strength development. We are often asking for more effort, but what's actually needed is more clarity. So today we're going to explore what "precision that lands" actually means and I'm going to use the glutes and the shoulders as examples. So if we begin with the glutes and this is such an obvious place because so often with so many people with glutes that aren't engaging, they're told that "your glutes aren't firing so guess what? You need to work them harder." Right? The go-to response is let's do more bridges, more band work, more squeezing. But when clients keep doing the work and nothing changes, when they're still feeling pain in the knees or their back, then we have to ask another question, perhaps a deeper question.

Susi 00:02:17 Is it that the glutes are truly weak, or is it that the system is compensating? Because often it's not about adding more effort, it's about removing interference. And as I say that it's the Rumi quotation that comes to mind. I'm going to totally get this wrong but the essence will be what I mean, and that is Rumi was saying: it's not that we want to seek love, but we want to seek the walls or the boundaries we have against experiencing love. Right? So the aim here is it's not about adding effort necessarily. It's about removing interference. So when someone says their glutes aren't engaging, it might not be a strength issue. It might be that hip flexors are over-dominant or hamstrings are doing the heavy lifting, or the pelvic floor is bracing where the breath is disconnected or the ribcage is really, really gripped. And all of these can create a protective strategy that blocks glute integration, even when the movement looks right or the alignment is perfect. And that's really where the magic of precision comes in.

Susi 00:03:24 Because even though I've used the word that these can all be protective strategies, I also liken them to just simple compensation patterns that highlight how creative somebody is in getting the job done. I mean, really think about it. If someone's glutes aren't engaging, but the hip flexors are, or the hamstrings are, or the pelvic floor is, or the breath is disconnected or the ribcage is gripped, at least our system is doing something to get the job

done, which is great. It's fabulous. However, there might be problems associated with it. Problems that we can solve. And this is where the magic of the phrase "precision that lands" really comes in. I'll often say to my trainees: you don't need to fire the glutes per se, but you can clear the path so that they can arrive. When we remove the interference, the engagement returns not because we have forced it, because the body finally could. Let me highlight a story from a client of mine who gave me permission to share this. Her name is Darlene, and she came to me after seeing a variety of other rehab professionals who were all getting her to do more band work, more monster work, more monster band work, more glute engagement, more squeeze.

Susi 00:04:50 They had told her that she had lazy glutes and that they were weak. So onward she went, squeezing and activating more. But no matter how hard she tried, nothing really happened. The hamstrings would cramp, the lower back would tighten, and the glutes? Nada. Nothing. Zilch. In her words, it was that they just didn't "turn on." Which led her to question herself that maybe the glutes were actually broken. When we started working together, knowing that the previous one wasn't really working, I decided to take a different approach. So instead of forcing her glutes to work, we explored how the rest of her body was moving. What was going on with her breath and her ribcage? Her pelvis? And the "a-ha" moment was that her glutes never really had the chance to do their job because of all this really creative work the rest of her body was doing. And as we refined her movement, as we targeted her glutes more effectively and helped her ribcage settle, her breath recalibrate, something shifted. And without overthinking, the glutes woke up.

Susi 00:05:56 The hip pain started to ease and her pelvis felt more stable and she stood taller. She was able to get back to her yoga practice and lift weights more easily, and she can now walk without that familiar discomfort creeping in. So the reality was her glutes weren't lazy after all. They just needed the right coordination and the conditions to do their job. Precision that lands. Now, if you're interested in more of what I specifically did with her, I run a program called power of the glutes. And we dig into all of what I did, a lot of other exercises that I didn't do, the ways that I think about the glutes. I share a lot of science about glute engagement and activation, and you can learn more about that over at functionalsynergy.com/glutes. This leads me into shoulders and load shift. So when we look at the shoulders, this is a classic site of tension, especially in yoga and strength work, and daily load-bearing patterns. A client is in plank or in downward dog, or they're holding a weight overhead.

Susi 00:07:13 And you notice: looks like the upper traps are tightening up or the breath is locking down or the jaws tightening or the scapula seem to be inching their way more and more up the ribcage or just stopping completely. Frozen. Your client might say that their shoulders are tight or weak, but what you might be actually seeing is this load shift, this redistribution upward into an area that might already be carrying too much load. So, so often the next set of cues are, okay, well, we better pull those shoulders down and set the shoulder blades, engage the serratus. But very often those cues don't actually solve the issue because the issue is not about weakness. It's about coordination. When there's not enough support in the system, when there's not enough trust in the support in the system, the load gets shifted. And in this case, we're

seeing it getting pushed up. I'll highlight this with the story of a teacher that I was working with, Leigh, who came to me with shoulder pain. And what we found is that her scapula weren't moving very well on her ribcage.

Susi 00:08:28 Her glutes, the upper glutes, particularly, were clenched like crazy, especially during upper body load. And her breath froze mid exhale. We could have just gone after her shoulder blades and get them moving better and get those glutes to unclench and to get that breath to move better. I could have done all of that but instead I stood back a little bit and I asked myself: why is her system wanting to do this? And then we did some bit by bit, piece by piece work that ultimately helped her bring awareness to her scapula, or shoulder blades, that as a response, the glutes began to soften and we found through it that the breath started to recalibrate. I didn't go after the scapula, though. I didn't go after the glutes, though. I didn't go after the breath. What we did enabled her to feel stronger, though. And her words were, this feels stronger because it feels easier. That's the result of precision that lands. So when you're working with your clients or your students and you're starting to see these things occur in their shoulders, maybe in their neck, step back and ask yourself: okay so what's happening here?

Susi 00:09:48 Is the breath still moving? Are the ribs and scapula moving together? Is there gripping? Jaw, glutes, hands? When we have this as the staging ground, and we don't jump into changing a cue or changing a movement pattern, we can move from trying to force something to change toward coordination. So then what do "lazy glutes" or overloaded shoulders and neck have in common? Both signals or signs that the person that you're working with, and maybe this is you, that your body or their body is doing its job. It's being uber creative in finding ways to get the job done. And perhaps that's through protecting or bracing or adapting or trying to hold it all together. My point here is that pain, tension, or fatigue in these areas doesn't necessarily mean that there's a local dysfunction. Sometimes, yes. Especially though in chronicity or persistent issues, it's system wide. It's a system wide mismatch where a load might be expected, but it's not truly integrated.

Susi 00:11:12 It's not being absorbed or dissipated very well. So then it's not about adding more load or throwing more exercises at this, but rather awareness and clarity and then connection. And through awareness and clarity, we just give space to address where is the support coming from. And out of simply asking that question, we start to bring in the seeds of trust again. And I realize I'm humanizing parts of our body and I'm personifying that. But it's as if our body needs to trust again. And when we provide these seeds, I'm not forcing. Of stopping with awareness and helping bring clarity. Those are the steps towards more trust. And when more trust is present, that's when we see the breath moving better, when we see load shifting to distributing better, and when compensation patterns fall away. And then when that happens, strength returns. Now, this isn't a magical movement. It's just not stepping back and not doing anything. It's more addressing the idea, "precision lands," that the fuel is not force. It's observation. It's presence.

Susi 00:12:45 And that's when effort becomes efficient. Movement becomes fluid and healing begins to stick. And it all begins with you. Whether it's you as the practitioner working with your

client and noticing what's really, really, really happening and then guiding the shift. Or whether it's you with your own body and stepping back, being aware. I know, I know, I know just wanting to get better and having the pain go away. "Just fix this already." It's so, so, so present in so many people's minds, maybe even yours. And the fastest way that I know of to help that change occur, and to have that change be sustainable is to not rush it, but to step back and observe and be aware and get clear on what the actual problem is. Because when you have that clarity, that's where precision can land. We move from just simply cueing to observing. We move from correcting to repatterning. From doing something to having something truly land. And this is what I do in all of my programs, whether it's my on demand series of 2 to 6 to 10 hour programs, whether it's in my therapeutic yoga intensive programs or whether it's in the certification program. In the therapeutic yoga intensive specifically, this is where you learn the language and you practice the presence, and you become really good at being able to see and apply.

Susi 00:14:34 And in the certification program, you really deepen. So that presence becomes your method, your fuel. That change in your clients and yourself become sustainable. And your clients feel supported throughout their whole system because it's not about becoming more impressive, it's about becoming more impactful. When you teach from this place of precision that's landing. So when something's not working and when you feel stuck, try not to push harder. As the teacher, ask: is my cue landing? It's "precision that lands" that changes everything. And if you want my help to go deeper with this; if you want to gain mastery; get really, really, really good at helping both yourself and your clients reduce and eradicate physical pain: Join me at the intensive and in my certification program. You can learn more over at functionalsynergy.com/intensive. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time.