

## Ep. #319 - Do I Need a Kinesiology Degree?



Full Episode Transcript

With your host:  
Susi Hatelly

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

Introduction 00:00:01 You're listening to From Pain to Possibility with Susi Hatelly. 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 Hatelly.

Susi 00:00:24 Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad that you're here, because today I'm digging into why my program "I Love Kinesiology" goes beyond a university degree, and I'm super pumped to be sharing this with you because if you've been following me for any length of time, you know that I've got a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology. That was my university training, and when I graduated from that training, I started working at a clinic we called back in the day, we called it Chronic Pain. We worked with people with a persistent state of pain, and they'd come out of car accidents or work related accidents, there was a whole process that we were following around helping someone return back to work. Back in the day, though, it was really not about reducing pain or even eliminating pain.

Susi 00:01:13 It was just getting them back to work. So the general state in the clinic, the general state just in the rehabilitation field, as it related to these particular folks, was more about getting them to work than anything else. So as a new grad and someone who's quite passionate about helping people, it never really sat right for me. So when I'd found yoga by happenstance and started integrating the concepts of yoga into the clinic and seeing the results get better, I knew I was onto something, even though I didn't quite know how I was going to make a living at doing it. But nonetheless, I carried on with the yoga because I loved it. I became a teacher. I started running teacher trainings because people knew of my background and I ran anatomy trainings and actually called something "I Love Anatomy," that was my first online training I ran but I traveled all over the globe teaching about anatomy and how it applied to yoga and then got into teaching therapeutic aspects. The reason I bring that all in is that I'm really coming full circle now to this place where it's like, alright, let's make kinesiology very easy to understand and to apply.

Susi 00:02:27 Back in 2004, I wrote my first book called Anatomy and Asana: Preventing Yoga Injuries, and it was a great book. It was the second anatomy yoga book that was ever produced. Now we've got millions of them, but at the time it was the second one and very few yoga people knew what a psoas was, or a glute or a hamstring. Now people know all sorts of things about muscles and muscle names, but there's a real gap that still remains between really understanding what those muscle dynamics are and healing. And that's what I want to bridge with I Love Kinesiology. So this episode is for the yoga teacher or the movement educator, the movement therapist who loves yoga, because I Love Kinesiology does have a yoga focus, and you've completed foundational training, whether it's a 200 hour or a 500 hour; you've likely done other trainings too, especially if you're finding yourself interested in helping people to reduce pain or your own pain; there's a feeling you probably have that you've got the poses down, you can guide breath, you know how to offer modifications, but you're still feeling like something's missing.

Susi 00:03:36 That as you learn anatomy, you've got lots of knowledge. You can feel gaps. You might be even wondering if you should do a kinesiology degree. And the key here is I really want to emphasize like I mention in a lot of my episodes is that your training, 200 hour or 500 hour or anything else that you're taking, has not been bad. It's that now that you're working with real bodies; bodies with complexity, history and nuance. The tools that you learned don't quite reach where your students need support. So you've perhaps found yourself thinking, I'm confident until someone says their hip hurts. I want to help people who have persistent pain, but I don't want to become a physical therapist. Should I just go get a kinesiology degree so I can do this properly? And I hear yoga teachers asking me those questions all of the time. And so today I want to answer them clearly and I want to clearly state: you don't need to become a kinesiologist but you do need to understand the body differently than most 200 or 500 hour trainings allow.

Susi 00:04:39 You need to see movement with clarity; to cue from principles, not from prescriptions; and you need to work with the nervous system, not around it. And that's really where I Love Kinesiology comes in. And this episode is a real walkthrough of the difference between a university kinesiology degree and what we offer through the Functional Synergy approach, and more importantly, why this difference matters if you're a yoga teacher who wants to help people move out of pain and into possibility. So if you've ever felt like your cues aren't quite landing or you're second guessing how to adapt a class when a student walks in limping, or you simply don't want to answer, when someone says I'm sore or I've got this problem, you don't want to answer "well just listen to your body." It's just not working for you anymore. Meaning like that cue, that instruction, is not working for you anymore. You don't want to say to someone "oh, just listen to your body." You want the much, much better tools and ideas and techniques.

Susi 00:05:35 So let's talk about the education that actually supports this next step. So we'll dig into what a university kinesiology degree offers and also what it misses. Let's start with what a kinesiology degree offers because there's a lot of good there, I know. University kinesiology covers biomechanics, anatomy, motor learning, muscle physiology, movement assessments, and sometimes strength and conditioning. It's detailed, data driven and structured. If your goal is sports performance or clinical rehab, a kinesiology degree is a really, really, really great route. But yoga teachers aren't trying to train Olympians. You're trying to help people feel better, move more freely, understand their own bodies. And that's where things start to fall apart. Because traditional kinesiology often prioritizes control over cooperation, efficiency over sensitivity. It analyses the body, but it doesn't relate to it. You learn where the rotator muscles attach, for sure, but not how to support someone who's afraid to lift their arm after surgery. You learn about gait phases, but not how to recognize the bracing that happens before someone even takes a step, or even how to facilitate retraining the limp post knee surgery.

Susi 00:06:52 In other words, you learn about what moves, but not why it's moving that way or what's in the way of it moving better. And that was what most yoga teachers need help with. Because your students don't walk into class as clean slates; they come in with compensation, pain, fear, history. They don't need more academic facts, you need a way to see what's really

happening: what "I Love Kinesiology" teaches with yoga at its center. "I Love Kinesiology," the way I built it, was exactly for this gap. We start with foundational sciences: anatomy, biomechanics, and motor control but I teach them through the lens of yoga. So instead of memorizing every origin and insertion, you'll learn how muscles interact as part of a moving system. Instead of textbook gait phases, though you will learn some of those, you are going to understand the gait pattern and how history shows up in their movement. And we begin with one key premise: I have to see it before we can help it, and that's our first phase of pose based pattern recognition.

Susi 00:07:58 We're going to look at about 25 of the most common yoga poses not to fix them, but to really observe. To understand how these movements break down into the key and core biomechanical parts so that when you understand what is required to move into these positions, you start to be able to see really clearly what's overworking, what's compensating, where the deviations are. Where does load transfer get a little messed up? How do they get into this shape? Not just what this shape looks like, right? And this comes from this place of: me being told way back when I was teaching my first class that my students because we taught eight week series or seven week series at the time and I was told, by the director of the studio, "you need to have your students being able to do these poses by the end of the series." And I'm looking at the list, I'm looking at my students, I'm going, "uh-oh, how's that going to happen?" And this is what I did exactly. I just broke the posies down to small component parts, and what I found is that the small component parts is what the students couldn't do.

Susi 00:08:58 So then that's where I started to work. And lo and behold, by the end of the series, they could do all the poses because we built it in a very stepwise way. As a result, you're going to learn to read transitions and spot holding patterns and understand movement as a story, not a shape. This work is rooted in self-study, but also the study of "other" with clarity and compassion. We're not here to impose ideal alignment; we're here to notice what's real, because awareness is the beginning of healing. Let's talk a bit about biomechanical foundations, granularity and principle-based movement. Once your observation muscles are awake, we move into biomechanical granularity. This is where most movement education skips ahead: they want to tell you what to correct, we want to show you how to see. You'll learn what micro movements reveal about compensation; how load gets transferred and sometimes gets dumped, deviated, across joints; how fatigue patterns tell you where the body is struggling. It's subtle, but it's also powerful because most injuries don't happen in the big movements.

Susi 00:10:05 They happen when the small stuff goes unnoticed. And from there we begin to explore principles of movement. This is where we teach the functional synergy principles and introduce concepts like boxes and triangles and cylinders, and how important this is, before we start digging into muscles, which we will do too. We'll get into support before change and how this is a really important guiding, cueing strategy; and clarity before complexity, in both movement and teaching. Rather than rigid cue scripts, you begin cueing system based on what you see and feel, what you're perceiving. This isn't about fixing a pose. No, it's about creating conditions for capacity to emerge, for support to emerge. And that's what yoga therapy, in my mind, really is. So now we get into nervous system integration and three really key questions.

This part of this episode and really about the program is what makes "I Love Kinesiology" truly different, and it's about the nervous system integration because your students just aren't bodies, they're bodies with brains, with histories; which means bracing and freezing, overriding and protection show up in movement all of the time.

Susi 00:11:20 This phase is about helping you see what's driving that movement before it ever becomes a compensation pattern. And so we dive into the sensory motor loop: how interoception and proprioception shape how someone moves; why most compensations aren't bad form, they're safety strategies; and how to use breath and subtle movement to retrain clarity. And we introduce the three questions. Really simple. What's working? What's not? And what can I try to facilitate and nurture what's working, and help quiet what's not? Not specifically trying to change something. We are trying to retrain. The subtle, nuanced difference when it comes to not fixing, but facilitating. And I'm not saying that euphemistically. The way I'm putting this is more than a tool. It really is a mindset, and it's a way of thinking about processing through a scenario that's in front of you. It gives you a framework to adopt on the fly. Teach from observation and work with the student's nervous system rather than against it. It's where cueing, rather than being some list of words and things to memorize, becomes relational.

Susi 00:12:39 Where the science meets compassionate discernment. Where yoga becomes something that's not just done but felt, which takes us into gait and strength and transitioning patterns. This is where it really starts to come together. We take what we've learned so far from anatomy, from neuromechanics and motor control, and apply it to the patterns that show up in real bodies in real life. Gait analysis, for example: walking is one of the most telling assessments you'll ever use. You'll see gait as a movement report card, what the foot-pelvis-core coordination actually looks like, and how you might see a gait pattern show up in other ways. It becomes a really interesting entry point into someone's compensation strategy. But again, it's not about "fixing" it, although someone will feel things change. We're not trying to say that what someone's doing is wrong. What someone is doing is perfectly fine. It's a creative masterpiece, this compensation pattern that they've got. There's nothing wrong. We just get to rechannel that creativity. And when we learn how to see and we learn how to relate, and we learn how to speak in a way that is grounded in anatomy, biomechanics, kinesiology, neuro mechanics, that dynamics between all those features, we come up with cues that really land for somebody.

Susi 00:14:16 And then this leads us towards rest and recovery. Not just resting to rest, but really strategic because we need rest in order to facilitate strength and facilitate retraining and healing. There was a line in Malcolm Gladwell's book which was talked a lot about, and it was: you need 10,000 hours of practice in order to reach mastery and it was based off of a study. Now here's the piece that was missed in the book. It was the book was called Outliers here's a piece in the book that was missing. In that study, it wasn't just about 10,000 hours of practice; it was 10,000 hours of deliberate practice, but also about 13,600 hours of deliberate rest I believe that's the right number and 30,000 hours of sleep. That "rest" piece is really important, that deliberate rest is essential to the process. So then how do you do it? Because today, rest still is considered to be very much a luxury, that well, people will get to rest when they've got the time,

right? But we get into it from the science, the neuroscience, the kinesiological, physiological impact, and then frame it in a way that just makes sense to do.

Susi 00:15:45 Which then leads us to strengthening for real. And this isn't about pushing harder, it's not about activating the glutes, it's about building actual tissue resilience. So you'll learn how to use bands and blocks and load with nuance, how to strengthen without recruiting bracing, how to build capacity in a way that's sustainable. It's really where brahmacharya comes in, using effort wisely and not excessively. I like to think about this section really about like your personal training process, but like not from that personal training "fitness" lens, from this yoga mindful lens so you can work with your people to help them get back to the gym in a very mindful, specific way. The trajectory of movement is also really important. Poses are static snapshots. Movement tells the story. You'll train your eyes to see what happens before a pose, what lingers after the pose, and where the nervous system reveals itself in transitions. And that can change how you teach in such a significant, fundamental way. Because once you can see movement as a story, you don't need to force an ending.

Susi 00:16:55 You can guide the next chapter with clarity and care. So let's play with this in a side by side sort of way of thinking. In university based kinesiology, we talk a lot about muscles and mechanics. In "I Love Kinesiology," we will be getting into muscle mechanics, but through the context of poses and planes of movement and patterns. University kinesiology is all about performance focus, oftentimes. Whereas in "I Love Kinesiology," we are talking about presence and nervous system safety, which so fascinatingly can fundamentally improve performance in a sustainable way. In university kinesiology, they like to use tests and protocols. In "I Love Kinesiology," we use movement as the assessment, along with breath and stillness. In university kinesiology, corrective exercise is a big piece. In "I Love Kinesiology," it's not so much about corrective exercise because there's nothing to fix but the cues and the direction we provide are based on relationship, and understanding that compensation is a strategy, it's a very creative option that someone has chosen in order to get a job done. We don't need to correct that.

Susi 00:18:14 We do need to facilitate a change of how we use that energy. And that's very, very different than saying that something is broken or needs fixing. In university kinesiology, we focus a lot on objective evaluation. And through "I Love Kinesiology," yes, you are building this capacity to truly be objective but we are also digging into subjective and embodied clarity. In university kinesiology, we have dissection based gross anatomy that really guides the picture. In "I Love Kinesiology," we are talking about biomechanical granularity and also myofascial chains. In university kinesiology there is a memorization and in "I Love Kinesiology" there is an embodiment. Plus we have yoga philosophy, Sthira-Sukham, Ahimsa, interoception and sensory motor loops, movement as a dialogue not directive, and support before change. This isn't about discrediting university kinesiology. Not at all. In fact, I would love to have more kinesiologists and kinesiology departments looking at this program to support their kinesiology focus. It's really about re-weaving it with the intelligence of yoga. So what this means for you, especially if you're on a journey towards more understanding of therapeutic aspects of yoga, and you want to help people more therapeutically.

Susi 00:19:51 Perhaps you want to build classes or workshops, have one on one sessions or programs. You might be someone who has completed your 200 or 500 hour training, and you've got loads of training supporting you, but you're also feeling like you're hitting a wall. Maybe your students are bringing in more pain to your classes, more complexity, more nervous system flare. If you're ready to stop memorizing and truly start to see, this is your next step. "I Love Kinesiology" gives you that education to match the complexity of people that you're teaching. And the interesting thing is, is that the people who've already registered for this program, many of them have already completed the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive and my certification program. So why are they here? Because there's always more to see. And they also want to give back to people like yourself, people who are moving their way through. Because in the 200, 500 hour levels, it's just not often taught. So this becomes a community to really help grow and to meet people who've been where you were and when you are ready, when your clarity and confidence have settled into your bones and your breath and your blood, that's when the therapeutic yoga intensive will feel like a very, very natural next step.

Susi 00:21:09 Thank you for being here, truly. Thank you for listening to this new way of approaching kinesiology, for showing up for this conversation, and for the hunger you have to teach with more clarity, for your curiosity to move beyond the pose. And if this resonates, if what I'm sharing here lands in your body as a full yes, "I Love Kinesiology" is available and early bird registration is currently open and you can join. It's self-paced and I've got live labs happening through the month, we've got regular modular pre-recorded material, regular practice labs, Q&A's, weekly connection. It's an ongoing process of support. If you're already feeling the pull towards deeper therapeutic work, know that the door is open for you and you can learn more over at [functionalsynergy.com/ILK](https://functionalsynergy.com/ILK) for "I Love Kinesiology." Let your seeing be soft and your cueing be clear and your teaching be a conversation that heals. We'll see you next time.