

Ep. #332 - The Mechanics of Real Change - From Pain to Possibility Part 3 of 3



Full Episode Transcript

With your host:

Susi Hatelly

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

Introduction (00:00.00)

You are listening to From Pain To Possibility with Susi Hatley. You'll 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.

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Susi (00:22.606)

Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad you're here because we are in episode three, the final episode of this mini podcast series. So far, what we have spoken about is initially in episode one about mechanical integrity as the foundation of true strength, healing and resilience. In that episode, I shared insights about a cycling trip I had in Italy where clean mechanics, not just cardio or grid, made the difference on my long climbs. I explored how compensation patterns like bracing, gripping, or substituting one joint for another can limit capacity, and how building real strength starts with moving better and not harder. I also unpacked why the moment pain goes down matters more than we think. That's not just relief, it's evidence. It's neurological opening when named and felt begins to rewire belief, shifting identity, and reorienting the nervous system towards ease instead of protection. And then I spoke about the deeper why, because without meaning, even the best mechanics won't hold. Healing sticks when people know what they're healing for. Which then led into episode two about pain going down and what does that mean? It's not the end. It's the beginning of real change. And this episode explored how that moment of relief opens the door to sensory clarity, nervous system repatterning, and identity shift. Learning why pausing to ask what's here now helps clients to map ease, not just escape pain, and how naming even subtle sensation builds the foundation of lasting transformation. Ultimately, pain relief isn't just a result. It's a starting point. So now we arrive at this episode, perhaps at a more complex and maybe even a more emotionally charged situation. What do you do when someone doesn't want to talk? When they're shut down, resistant, flat, or even angry? This could be a client, a student, and yes, even a loved one. And if you're someone who's trained to help, to guide, to ask the right questions, this can feel

Susi (02:49.014)

uncomfortable. There's a temptation to want to lean in, to ask them again, to explain, to get through. But here's what I've learned over almost three decades of helping people through therapeutic yoga and somatic awareness. You don't have to fix the silence. You just need to be in the field. Silence isn't failure, it's information. So when someone doesn't speak, it doesn't mean nothing's happening. In fact, it might mean that a lot is happening. Sometimes the person is processing. Sometimes they're trying to feel something new. Sometimes they're overwhelmed and trying to not spin out. And sometimes they've never been in a space that didn't require them to perform. Silence then, in a sense, becomes sacred, not awkward. It's a sign perhaps that the system might be shifting out of defense and into safety, or at least testing whether safety is available. So the goal isn't to interrupt the silence with more questions. It's to widen your capacity to stay steady, calm, and clear in the unknown. That's really the ground or the

foundation of co-regulation. And still, there can be this urge to rescue. And so I want to talk about why that urge to rescue can backfire. If you're a caregiver teacher or an intuitive, this part really is for you. When someone's quiet or visibly struggling, your instinct might be to ask again, are you okay? Try a new technique, offer suggestions, soften your voice even more thinking that that will create connection. And all of this comes from love. And even all of those actions might be helpful. But often, especially with people who are used to being misunderstood, it can feel like pressure. And even gentle pressure can feel like a demand. And if their nervous system is already on high alert, trying to please or figure out what you want, then even your softest question might send them further inward. So instead of more input, try less.

Susi (05:34.734)

Try steadying your breath, feeling your own sit bones. And this might be the embodied invitation to safety, not, you okay? But rather facing yourself, turning the intention towards you, I'm okay and I'm not going anywhere. What it means to mirror then because that's what we're doing here. And there's a difference between mirroring and mentoring. Mentoring is when you're actively guiding someone, or at least that's the way I'm thinking about it. Giving input, shaping direction, and teaching skills. Mirroring is when you're essentially holding up a nonverbal reflection. I see you. I'm not afraid of what you're holding. I'm here. Sometimes early on in a healing or an unwinding process, what most people need, or I should say many people need, is not so much a solution. What they need is a nervous system to calibrate against. Someone who's not anxious about their silence. Someone who doesn't interpret discomfort as danger. Essentially, you become a tuning fork. your regulated system signals you don't need to perform for me to stay connected. And that's when trust, real trust, starts to emerge. Consider this as a cue, then, whether you're working with someone who won't talk or you're finding yourself in that space, try not to fill the silence. Recognize your own presence. Watch your urge to ask, your urge to explain, or your need to fix. And can you be with that? Can you be with your capacity to simply be with what is, even if it's unclear, even if it's unspoken. Because the quiet is not a void. It's a place where old patterns start to dissolve, where the body begins to feel itself without commentary, where something new, which is often unnamed, can emerge.

Susi (08:06.242)

Where we'll go next is tracking these subtle shifts and what to do when a client does start to, in a sense, come online and how to respond without hijacking the moment and how to build trust slowly and skillfully in the space between words. The idea here is we want to see and experience just how powerful it can be not to push. To be in the space when a client won't talk. To feel your own ground, your own self and be present to both so that their space can feel safe. Where we're moving now is that moment when the client does begin to engage more, when their breath changes, perhaps their shoulders drop, or they offer one small phrase or even a word or two. It can be a precious moment, truly. A threshold. And what you do next does matter. Because when energy begins to move again, often the first sign or shift isn't words, it's energy. You might notice their eyes shift or refocused, maybe their breath lengthens, their body softens or twitches. Their tone changes, perhaps even slightly. They might say something like, I don't know, I just feel kind of, I don't know, weird. Or, Something's different, but I can't really explain it. I think I feel something. I'm not sure. So here's the challenge. This is the moment most teachers and practitioners will jump in. They wanna help make meaning to this. They want to affirm or

explain or say, yes, that's good, you're softening. That's interoception coming online. But here's the truth. Naming the shift for the client interrupts their ability to feel it fully. Even helpful language can pull them into the mental and out of the embodied experience. There's power in being able to stay with their pace. So then with that idea in mind, what can you do? You can slow down. You can follow their timing, not yours. You let your breath settle lower in your belly. You can let their nervous system unfold at its own pace. Allow yourself to notice, to be curious. Allow for the inquiry. Allow them to not need to name it and to feel it. To be there for another breath or two. It's not about ignoring or resigning or waiting. You're creating a non-interruptive presence, which has nothing to do with being passive or ignoring. Rather, it's a presence that helps them stay and be in the experience longer. And this is what builds familiarity, ownership, and internal trust.

Susi (11:45.144)

So here's why this works. When someone is coming out of a shutdown, dorsal vagal, braced, collapsed, or frozen, they're re-entering a zone of engagement and their system is scanning for safety. And the first few signals they get really matter. If those signals say, hey, you're doing it wrong, you need to explain this now, or even here's what's happening to you, dot, dot, dot, their system might scurry back or even snap back into a protection mode but if signals are, you're allowed to be here, you don't have to perform or explain, you can stay in your own rhythm, then a new neural pattern has a chance to emerge. And this can be the difference between co-regulation and override. Essentially, we are allowing for the client to lead, even in silence. It's not that we've stepped to the side. We're actually in what I like to call a healing helix. There's a back and a forth. In other words, if we're inexperienced, you as the professional don't need to narrate it. Sometimes the most powerful thing that you can do is to simply be is to acknowledge that you, as a practitioner, you are here. You are doing fine. And in that, you allow them to emerge. You let them name sensations. You let them take ownership of the shift.

Susi (13:44.246)

It's how a system, how a human learns not just to feel, but to trust what it feels and to stay with it without needing to check if it's right. So let's land here. The goal isn't to wake somebody up. It's to create an environment where waking up feels safe enough to happen. And when it does happen, when the client shifts from collapse to curiosity, from shutdown to slight softening, from silence to presence, let it be theirs. Let it arrive through their own timing, their words, their own awareness. That's what builds resilience. It's what grows self-leadership. And it's what creates sustainable, nervous system-driven change. So from this, let's explore what integration really looks like and how to know when a client is ready to move forward, how to support the ebb and the flow without panic, and how to become what I love to talk about, a lighthouse instead of a life raft. Because ultimately, your job isn't to rescue or even to fix. It's to stand steady so your clients can find their way even when the waters are rough. We've been on a powerful journey across these three episodes. You've seen what happens when pain goes down. And really, that's not the finish line, but a doorway into sensing. You've learned how to grow that awareness through naming, repetition, and state-to-trait integration. And you've explored how to stay steady when someone won't talk or when their system is just starting to come back online. So now in this final bit, we're talking about the long game. What does real integration look like? How do you support the clients return to self without over-correcting or over-helping? And how do you

stay steady in yourself even when their path gets bumpy again? And that's what it means to be a lighthouse. Because clients will rise and fall and rise again. That's the reality. Progress isn't linear. Even when a client has a beautiful breakthrough, even when they start to feel more sensation, more ease, more possibility, the nervous system will test that new experience. It's normal for someone to come in feeling amazing one day and then arrive the next week a bit braced or a lot braced skeptical or self-critical again. That doesn't mean the work didn't stick. It means that their system, their way of being, is trying to stabilize this new way. And because someone feels better, typically more load arrives. And can this new state hold or absorb or dissipate this new load? And this is where many practitioners, even well-meaning ones, begin to wobble. They think, hmm, did I do something wrong? Should I go back to the old approach? Maybe they're regressing. But what if this isn't regression? What if this is just part of the rewiring. What if the nervous system is saying, I feel safe and seen in your studio? Now I can feel safe when I'm on my own when I'm stressed, when I'm tired. Can I do that? And this is where you really shift from being a facilitator or a guide to a lighthouse. Where the facilitator or guide might try to redirect, adjust, or help the client back into ease. Where a lighthouse holds presence and stays visible no matter what weather rolls in. It doesn't mean that you ignore what's happening. It means you don't over identify with it. You see the client in the storm. But you don't become the storm, and you don't have to be in the storm either. You can reflect the steadiness back to them, even when they can't feel it yet. So in a sense, your nervous system does become an anchor. Your breath becomes a rhythm, and your belief, more than anything, becomes the mirror.

Susi (18:43.468)

It can feel hard some days for sure and it's our interaction with our client that can make co-regulation so subtle and also so profound. Now what happens when you're the one who's wobbling? Let's flip the lens. What happens when you get discouraged, when you're wondering if it's working, when you hit the edges of your own nervous system? You may not always feel like the lighthouse. You might feel like a candle in the wind some days. So here is an invitation. Come back to your body, your breath. Come back to your own capacity. You aren't responsible for other people's timelines.

You're only responsible for your presence. And when your presence is grounded, honest, and regulated, you give your clients the best possible conditions to do their own work, even if they don't use words, even if it takes longer than expected, even if the change is quiet. One of the biggest shifts that you can make as a practitioner and as a human is learning that you don't have to fix to be effective you can sit with someone in silence. You can watch their shoulder drop and simply say, yes, that. You can trust that one thread of sensation, even a subtle one, is enough to begin. This isn't passive. It's not doing nothing. This is nervous system-based leadership. It's somatic attunement. This is how healing actually sticks. Because when someone feels met and not managed, their system begins to trust to trust themselves more wholly. And that trust is what transforms everything.

Susi (20:57.07)

So as we close this series, here is what I'd like to leave you with. You don't need perfect cues. You don't need to talk someone into healing. You don't need to hold all the answers. You just

need to hold the space where their system can remember. Remember how to feel, how to move, how to soften. Remember what it's like to be them. Underneath the tension, the silence, the compensation. Whether you're a yoga teacher, health professional, coach, or someone walking your own healing path, this is the work. To create the conditions for trust, to witness not rescue, to be a lighthouse so others can find their way home. If this episode and the previous two resonate with you, if you're wanting to learn about how to do this work with others.

I recommend that you check out my Therapeutic Yoga Intensive as your next step. And you can learn more over at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**. Now, if you've just come onto this podcast and you're only listening to me for the first time, then I highly recommend that you first begin over at our on-demand catalog, which is at functionalsynergy.com forward slash learn, where you'll start to get a feel about how I work how I look at different parts, but the focus being on reducing compensatory patterns and helping people to connect with themselves and ultimately to find their way home. You'll learn a lot in those on-demand courses, and you could start with one of the simpler ones, like Power of the Glutes or Power of the Tongue. And if you've been listening to me for a while and you feel the call, then I invite you to join me in the Yoga Therapy Certification Program. And you can learn more about that at **functionalsynergy.com/certification**. We are now open for enrollment. Thank you for being here and thank you for the work that you do, seen and unseen. That makes healing possible for so many people.

Susi (23:35.32)

Hey, have you enjoyed this episode? I would love for you to join me in this October's Therapeutic Yoga Intensive. You can learn more over at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**, where we'll dig in deeper to all these concepts and really set your track off into becoming a very skilled yoga therapist. See you there.