

Ep. #356 - Sensation Is Not Movement: Why Feeling More Isn't Always the Answer



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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 Hatelly. 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 Hatelly.

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Welcome and welcome back. I'm really glad that you're here today because I wanna dig into an idea that sounds simple on the surface, but is actually quite profound. Sensation is not the same as movement. Now, at first glance, that might seem obvious, and I chuckle a little because, well, yeah, duh. Movement is movement. Sensation is sensation.

I wanna address this today though, because the relationship between interoception, proprioception, and real change in pain and function has everything to do with that statement. Sensation is not the same as movement. You see, many of the people I work with, whether they come to group classes, private sessions, even inside of certification trainings, these people are very good feelers.

They're excellent at sensing their bodies. Some are so sensitive, especially those with hypermobility, that sensation can become overwhelming. But over and over again, what I see is the missing piece. The real difference maker, when it clicks, is the capacity to be proprioceptive. I've talked about ent, interoception, and proprioception at different points in this podcast since really, episode number one, and today I wanna take this to the next step.

For some, this might sound subtle, but in reality, it's not so much that it's subtle, it's different. And it's that difference that helps guide awareness to a far more foundational and effective place, especially if you're already very good at feeling. And this matters because it's one of the main reasons people will stay stuck.

So let's break it down. Many people who come to my classes or sensations are highly attuned to sensation. They have a rich sensation vocabulary. They can describe tightness, pulling, numbness, heaviness, burning, tingling. They can tell me where it starts, where it travels, what makes it worse, and what makes it better.

All of this is valuable information, and there's also a trap, because sensation described this way is not the same as mechanics. Sensation is not the same as movement. So if you've been listening to your body, and you really are listening, you can describe all of that very, very clearly, and you're still stuck in pain.

This episode really is for you. What I wanna do is help you separate two things: what you feel and what is actually moving. When you can separate those, the what you feel and what's actually moving, longstanding patterns that have felt rigid or static can finally begin to change.

Before I go further, I wanna orient us, because I will say very often we can't change or we're not aware of. And many people assume that awareness means feeling more, and that's not untrue.

Awareness also means noticing how you are paying attention.

Some of you listening right now are incredibly aware, and the awareness is very effortful. It's vigilant. It's like monitoring your system all day long. And if your system is already working hard to monitor, fix, and to get it right, whatever movement we layer on top of that is shaped by that tone. So I wanna be clear that I'm not asking you to pay attention harder.

Not at all. I am asking you to pay attention differently. A bit like a detective solvent, a case, a bit like learning a new language. Because what we're tracking here is not relaxation. Even though many people initially come to me wanting relief or release, because you can be relaxed and still highly vigilant, you can be active and regulated at the same time.

What I want to support is responsiveness.

This is a different way of attending to how your body works. Most pain patterns, most stuck patterns, most tingling or escalating sensations are not about weakness. There's strategies that have become rigid, limited, or stuck. So let's get into it. Many of the clients I work with have multiple things going on in their bodies, but they usually identify one to four key areas that flare with activity.

Those often include things like walking on a regular level, walking upstairs, walking uphill, walking downhill. They can describe with incredible interoceptive sensitivity how tightness escalates quickly. The language of sensation is often really rich, and yet where capacity is often limited: in mechanical differentiation.

So, for example, they might say it tightens here, it pulls there, it grabs, it burns, it goes numb. But they can't yet describe what's happening between their ribs and pelvis, how the femur is moving in the hip socket, what the neck is doing while the shoulder moves. And it's not a failure, not by any stretch of the imagination.

The reality is, is so few people are taught to sense movement in this way. The issue really is what happens next, though. Because when sensation is the only data source, people are assuming that tightness equals a tight muscle, pain equals damage, and numbness means that something is out of place. But here is the key distinction.

Sensation is information. It's an output. It's a message. It's not necessarily structural truth or a map of mechanics. Let me say that again, just because it's really important. Sensation is a result. It's information, it's a message. It's not automatically a map of how you're moving.

Mechanics, on the other hand, are relationships between segments—ribs to pelvis, pelvis to femur, as examples—and how load transfers through those relationships during movement. And here's the irony: you can feel a lot and still not know how you're moving. I see this all the time, and it's where people get stuck.

They try to fix sensation with sensation. So if the belief is I'm tight, then tightness is treated as the cause. So they stretch and mobilize, release, they breathe to reduce tightness. And many of these things do help temporarily, but then the person returns to the activity they care about and the symptoms escalate.

Again, when I hear clients describing sensation, what's important here is I'm not trying to reduce tightness. I'm curious about what happens before the tightness. What's actually moving? Because tightness is a reaction. It's a response. It's not the first or even second domino. So when someone says, it tightens when I do X, a powerful question becomes, well, what happens just before that tightening?

What else is correlated to it? It keeps sensation in the picture, which is important, and it opens the door to mechanics. Rarely is the answer to this tightening question that the hamstring is too tight, for example. Rather, an answer might include breath holding, ribcage bracing, spine extending when it doesn't need to.

Pelvis anteriorly tilting when it doesn't need to. Load shifting unnecessarily. All valid movements, unless they're happening instead of what the movement actually requires. So if the goal is to lift an arm overhead, the pelvis and ribs don't need to lead the movement. The arm does, especially if what follows is tightness.

So again, tightness isn't the first domino. It's actually not a domino at all. It's the result of several dominoes already falling.

We need to address the dominoes, not the result. Right? Do you get that? We need to address the dominoes, not the result. Now, I realize people are not walking into class saying, hey, this is because of my rib pelvis relationship. But here's the thing: as people work with me, that is exactly what they say to me.

As they grow proprioceptive awareness, as they reconnect body and brain, this is the kind of stuff they can tune into in addition to sensation and perceptibly.

They're noticing whispers before strain, and that is a fundamental difference from when they first walked in for my help. Not only has pain decreased, strength improved, mobility improving, and they feel calmer.

Their interoception has been integrated. It was never wrong. It was always a strength. But when it was the only thing they had and their awareness stayed there, that interoceptive awareness was misleading. And when we began to blend interoception with proprioception, when sensation and mechanics began to inform each other, that's when the change fundamentally happened.

That's when efficiency began to improve. That's when patterns became more coordinated. So if you're thinking, I feel everything, but I don't notice my ribs bracing or the spinal movement, that's exactly the point. Sensation can grab our attention. It can also be highly seductive, right? That juiciness of a stretch sensation. But that doesn't tell you how you're moving, and that's what's really, really important.

It's why in my therapeutic yoga for shoulders and hips classes, and also my therapeutic yoga intensive, I begin with very simple joint movements. It's not to stretch or strengthen or mobilize, but to learn. To learn how the femur moves in the pelvis, how the humerus moves in the shoulder socket. People can really tune in and feel and see movement.

And when that connection comes together, when someone can actually sense joint motion, mechanics become really clear. Compensations quiet. Those borrowing patterns show themselves, not because they're wrong. It was actually a very creative way to do a workaround, but now they're no longer needed. Movement becomes quieter, more precise, and new sensations emerge not as tightness, not as alarm signals, but as feedback.

And this can change everything. You stop negotiating with sensation, and you start addressing precursors. And when you do that, ease—fundamental ease in the system—shows up. Not because we forced it, but because the system no longer needs to compensate. So if you've been stuck in a loop of feeling, feeling, feeling, maybe feeling better and then doing more, and then flaring, then resting, then repeating, this might be a reason why.

And if you're curious, you now have a place where you can look. If this conversation is resonating, if you are realizing that you've been really good at feeling but not yet supported in learning how your body actually coordinates movement, you're in the right place. And this is what I do inside of my therapeutic yoga classes and in my professional training programs, helping people to integrate interoception and proprioception so movement becomes clearer, quieter, and more efficient.

Without forcing change. And if you wanna explore this in a guided way, then you'll probably be really interested in the therapeutic yoga for shoulders and hips class that just began. You can find more at **functionalsynergy.com/shoulderships**. And if you're a teacher, a professional who wants to dig into this further and do this for your own clients.

You will love the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive, and you can read more about that over at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**. And whether you work with me or not, just remember this: sensation is information and important information. And when you combine that with mechanics, that is where we can really fundamentally shift patterns. And it's in shifting patterns that change happens.

Have a great rest of your day, and we'll see you next time. Hey, are you a yoga professional or a body worker professional who wants to dig in and really get great at being a therapeutic yoga instructor or yoga therapist? Well, you will love the therapeutic yoga intensive that's coming up in April. You can learn more over at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**.