

Ep. #362 - It Is Repetitive - That Is The Point



Full Episode Transcript

With your host:

Susi Hately

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

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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Welcome and welcome back. I'm really glad that you're here because today I want to dig into this word I like to use called repetition. Repetition is one of the fundamental concepts that helps people reduce and eliminate pain, and it's a concept that so many yoga teachers, yoga therapists, and even their clients wanna avoid.

Not because they don't want to do it, but because they think it's, I say this with a laugh, repetitive. So let's dig into this episode about repetition and why I think it is so awesome.

A big misunderstanding in the rehabilitative worlds of really any of the industries is that a lot of people believe that the intervention to help people reduce and eliminate pain is the exercise, or the sequence, or the program, or the cue, or the hands-on technique. And while all of those things can provide relief, I don't think they're the actual thing that helps facilitate fundamental change.

And here's why. Because when progress stalls, people do believe that the intervention is all about the exercise, the sequence, the program, the cue, or the hands-on technique. The instinct then is to change the stimulus, to try something new—layering complexity, upgrade the program, make it more interesting.

But what if the stimulus isn't the thing? That's actually the thing that helps facilitate fundamental change. What if the real intervention is not the movement at all, or the stimulus—whatever that stimulus is—but rather what gets repeated?

Because here's what I've seen over and over and over again: relief that happens once is an event. Relief that gets tracked becomes a pattern. And the patterns, not events, are what change people.

If something isn't measured, it fades from awareness. If it isn't repeated, it doesn't stabilize. And if it isn't stabilized, it doesn't become durable, sustainable.

So then we mistake novelty for progress. We assume more variation equals more change. But the nervous system doesn't adapt through novelty. They adapt through repetition with attention, and that's the part most people skip.

They think that tracking is administrative, that repetition is rigid and boring, and they think that asking the same questions or similar questions each session means nothing new is happening.

The repetition is not about gathering information. It's about training attention.

Most people only notice breakdown—pain spikes, flareups. They notice when something goes wrong. They don't naturally notice subtle ease, smoother transitions, or that something lasted longer this week than it did last.

So if you're not deliberately bringing attention back to those shifts, if you don't name them, if you don't measure them and repeat them, then the nervous system files them away as incidental, temporary, accidental.

An accidental change does not build clarity or confidence. You know what does? Tracked change.

When someone can say that the relief that we had this week lasted X period of time, and then the next week it lasted longer, that's not paperwork. That's capacity extending, and that's their nervous system learning, "Ooh, the state is available."

Tracking is not about proving that something is working or trying to convince someone of something. It's reinforcing the state that you wanna grow. Whatever you've repeatedly attended to, you strengthen.

So if you're chasing the next exercise without stabilizing the result of last one, you're stimulating, not adapting. And adaptation—truly deliberate, durable adaptation—is the goal.

So if repetition is the mechanism, then the next question's quite simple: what the heck are we repeating?

It's not the whole session, not some endless assessment, but rather a few anchors.

So when I begin a private series, there's a body diagram that comes out. Someone tells the story. They share what's working and what's not working in their body. I get a sense of the level of pain and tension. I get a sense of the qualities that they're describing about what they're feeling.

When they finish the session and their pain has gone down, I've given them an opportunity to tell me what that feeling feels like. And this is important because pain can have gone down, tension can have reduced, but we need to name the new state because we're still tracking tension and pain.

If it's simply, "Oh, my pain's gone down," so I give them a moment to name that. Sometimes it's smoothness, sometimes it's peace, sometimes it's integration.

The word itself actually doesn't matter to me. It's the meaningfulness for the person.

And then I have a program for them, and they take that program with the intent to help train this new state.

So then when they come back and I'm asking them how it went, I'm making reference back to the body diagram, back to the program, back to their change of state every single time.

It's not that I have this specific template that I follow, but rather those things are addressed. It's not because I forgot what happened in the last session or because they forgot, but because without returning to similar reference points, you're really just guessing about what you're gonna do next.

You're relying on memory. You're assuming compliance.

If you don't bring out that program, if you don't ask how long the gains lasted, you're measuring sort of an intensity rather than durability. And yes, intensity is seductive. It can feel dramatic and like progress, whereas deliberate durability is quieter, but it's that durability that actually matters.

So when I come back to those anchors—tuning back into their story and their body diagram and what's changed, what's shifted, their state, their program—something very practical happens. We can compare.

So it could be, as I've mentioned, that the ease, that smoothness that they felt lasted for X period of time, and it was longer than the time before. That comparison only exists because the reference point is similar.

If the anchors changed every session, there'd be no baseline. And without a baseline, there's no progression.

Repetition facilitates that baseline. It makes the baseline visible and the change visible. When change is visible, it becomes believable—not because I'm convincing them. The data simply is there.

It's also what keeps sessions from drifting because without anchors, you'll follow whatever feels interesting in the moment. And with them, you can explore but can always return: body diagram, their story about the body diagram, program review, duration.

These things prevent you from mistaking novelty for improvement. They prevent you from overvaluing how something felt in the room. They show you whether what happened in the session actually translated into real life.

And that's key. If the relief doesn't extend beyond the session, it hasn't stabilized. And if it hasn't stabilized, it hasn't adapted.

So that's why repetition's so vital. It's not rigid. It's structural, with the outcome of enabling adaptation.

And when you repeat these same anchors, patterns emerge, and you're able to repeat these and notice the trends of patterns. And then the client starts to see their own progression, again without you needing to convince them.

That's why repetition's so powerful—not for paperwork, but for clarity, comparison, and for durability.

All of these anchors—coming back to the body diagram, how they're feeling, what they're noticing receptively and proprioceptively, and also the program and the duration for how symptoms lasted.

Of the three anchors, I think the duration question is one that people often underestimate.

How long did it last?

It sounds simple, almost casual, almost like an afterthought, but it really does change the orientation of the session.

So many people measure change by intensity. Did it hurt less? Did it feel better? What was noticeable in the room?

It's dramatic. It's easy to remember. But intensity is not stability.

Something can feel dramatically better in the room and be gone by the time someone gets to their car. It doesn't mean it failed. It simply means the new pattern does not yet have stamina.

If you never ask about duration, clients can default into binary thinking—same for you as the teacher or therapist. It's gone or it's not gone. It worked or it didn't. I'm better or I'm not.

That binary framework is too crude for real change.

When you ask, “How long did it last?” you refine the metric. Now we're not chasing a dramatic drop in pain. We're tracking the lifespan of a new state.

Last week it lasted X period of time. This week it lasted longer. This is not small. That's capacity extending.

Even if symptoms return, what's changing is the nervous system's ability to be with a different state, respond to a different state, work with a different state. And that is the foundation of durability.

The duration question also moves responsibility gently, ever so gently, back to the client, right in the healing helix, which is a model that I use in the healing relationship part of the work I do.

The teacher and the client are on equal levels. So often medical relationships are not that, and so there's a tendency for that relationship, that medical relationship, to begin like that in our sessions.

But when I'm asking them about how long it lasted, when they know I'm gonna ask them how long it lasted, something shifts. They start noticing. They start tracking.

They begin paying attention to the duration of relief—when it fades, when things shift. And that is attending their awareness.

That's helping them focus on what needs to be focused on. That's them noticing the messages that lie in the sensations that are in their body.

They might think, "Ooh, I was better until I had to rush through that meeting," or "It lasted longer on the day I actually did my program."

There we go. That's awareness expanding in and beyond the session. And that's really, really critical because if change only exists inside the room, it's fragile, it's vulnerable.

If we're tracking it, measuring it outside the room, now that becomes trainable. And that trainability is what adaptation is built on.

The duration question builds that bridge. It prevents over-celebrating short-term intensity. It prevents discouragement when symptoms return. It normalizes fluctuations without normalizing stagnation because the metric is no longer, "Is it gone forever?"

The metric becomes, "Is it lasting longer than before?"

And that reframing alone changes how clients interpret their progress.

Because if it's lasting longer than before, week after week after week after week after week after week after week, and they're noticing, sort of, some of the symptoms that lead towards it returning, now it's being gone for a very, very, very long time.

That's powerful. That's them doing it to themselves. That's not me. That's them.

And that is some of the most important internal sense of support, of a locus of control that anyone can build for themselves. And it's at the core of the healing process.

Here's another reason why repetition matters.

Without those anchors, sessions can drift. It's so easy to follow what's interesting, what feels intense, what feels productive in the moment.

Sessions can feel rich, engaging, insightful. But feeling productive is not the same thing as building progression.

If you don't return to the same reference points, you can't see a through line.

It might be a beautiful sequence you did one week, something different the next, something creative the week after.

If you're not revisiting how those sequences actually had an impact by coming back to the story and the information in that body diagram, or reviewing the program that they did time to time, building off of the gains they made in doing their program between sessions—

If you're not asking about duration, then you're only relying on impression, which can seem a bit performative.

Repetition, though, prevents that drift. You're creating continuity. You're saying this is the baseline and this is what we're tracking.

When we review the program, again, we're helping to establish accountability—not in a punitive way, but in a developmental way—because what happens between sessions matters.

You're testing translation. Did what happened here in the room extend into real life, or did it remain contained to the room?

So if you're feeling resistance to repetition, if you find yourself thinking, “Oh man, we already did that. Do I really need to ask this again? Ugh, it feels so boring. Oh, redundancy.”

Then that's the moment to pause because resistance usually isn't about inefficiency. It's about discomfort.

Because repetition actually exposes reality.

When you return to the same anchors, you can't hide behind novelty. You can't distract with creativity. You can't confuse stimulation with progress.

You see what's actually changing and you see what isn't. And that level of clarity can feel confronting, but clarity also builds durability.

When you're pulling out that body diagram, when you're revisiting the story, when you're tracking the program, when you're finding out more about how those qualities lasted, you're creating consistency.

And consistency is safety.

A client knows what's being measured. They know how progress is being evaluated. They know the goal is not perfection, but extension.

You know you're not guessing.

And over time, something really subtle shifts. The client begins to answer the questions before you even ask them.

They begin to notice the duration automatically. They begin to track what helps and what doesn't.

And that's independence forming.

That's the internal locus of control that I got uber passionate about a moment ago—not because you've inspired them, not because you've motivated them, but because you repeated the structure long enough for it to become internal for them.

Repetition is not rigid. It's stabilizing.

Tracking is not administrative. It's developmental.

It trains attention. It builds comparison. It extends duration. It sharpens intuition. It can reduce drift.

And more importantly, it makes change durable.

And to summarize all this up: durable change does not look dramatic. It looks steady, measurable, and incremental.

An incremental extension repeated consistently becomes transformation.

So if this is feeling repetitive, almost too basic, it might be the sign that you're building something real—not novelty, but stability.

And stability is what allows growth to hold.

If you've stayed with me this far, you can probably feel the pattern.

Repetition isn't exciting. It isn't flashy. It doesn't look impressive from the outside, but it is what makes change hold.

When you return to the same anchors—reviewing their body diagram, understanding their story, tuning into their yellow lights, the qualities of what they're now feeling in their sensations, and also the program and the duration of what that quality and how that quality has worked over a period of time—

You're building continuity and comparison and evidence. And evidence changes how people think about their bodies.

Instead of saying, “It worked for a bit and then stopped,” they begin to say, “Hey, it lasted longer this time. I could feel it earlier. I caught it before it escalated.”

That shift in language matters because now they're not passive recipients of care. Participants in a pattern. Repetition creates that participation.

With participation, they gain stabilization.

Stabilization is the quiet mechanics of change. Change stops feeling accidental. It becomes visible, measurable, trainable, sustainable.

If this has resonated for you in all of its very deliberate repetition, and you like to train with me, become that much more skilled as a yoga therapist, your first step is the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive, which is happening this April.

And you can read more about it over at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**.

I share with you very deliberately and specifically how to build the fundamentals of an amazing, straightforward, therapeutic yoga practice that right out of the gate facilitates you to have results with your clients.

It's fundamental.

And if the intensive is what really drives you, then the next step after that is certification, where we take these concepts into a place where you can fundamentally build a great client practice that is sustainable too—whether it's part-time or in retirement.

I'd love to help you grow the thing you would love to teach the most—therapeutic yoga, being a great yoga therapist.

To read more about the intensive, check out **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**.

To dig more into certification, you can find more at **functionalsynergy.com/certification**.

I'd love to work with you. We'll see you next time.

Hey there. Did this episode resonate? Are you wanting to dig in and become that much more effective as a yoga teacher? Building your skill, developing your capacity to work with people therapeutically?

Your first step is the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive, and you can learn more over at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**.

Take care.