

Ep. #368 - How Change Happens: Client Case Study



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.

--

Welcome, and welcome back. I'm really glad that you're here, because today I'm going through a case study, and the reason I wanna share this case study with you is that over the over 300 episodes inside of this podcast, I talk a lot about concepts. And yes, while I interview a number of my clients and trainees,

I want this episode to highlight many of the concepts that I share. I also want this to be somewhat of a mirror for the previous three episodes around how change happens. This case study, like many of the clients that I work with, is a great example of how somebody came with a lot of underlying conditions.

Had a relatively functional body, could do lots of stuff, but didn't feel free in her body. There was a lot of controlling in her body, a lot of thinking through things to make sure she was doing things right, but therein lies that whole feeling of not being free. We've worked together for a long period of time, and she's moved from this place of having this pain and strain and kind of dealing with it and not wanting to, to a place where she's really tuned into her performance.

Where sometimes, within our industry of yoga and even in other forms of rehabilitative exercise, we can collapse the worlds of pain management and performance. To me, I see them as very separate things, and she truly has moved out of pain and into performance. Right? She's got the inner scaffolding we were able to help build with her to support her in the reducing and eradication of pain, and also became the functional undercurrent to her performing that much better in her yoga practice, with her strength training, and the other activities that she wants to do.

So let me walk you through this case to give you a feel of how things went through overall, the arc of the initial period of time that she has worked with me. I think the important piece for me to reiterate is that she didn't come because of one clean problem. And I would say that that is the case for every person who comes to see me for private one-to-one sessions. They come in just like her with a cluster, and in her case, an old right shoulder rotator cuff history that still felt stuck, prior SI joint issues, a left tendon strain affecting lunging and push off.

Also, a noticeable right-sided pattern where her foot turned out, and she collapsed into her hip and lunge pose. Yes, she could still function, as I mentioned. She could still train and teach and move, but she kept finding places where things weren't fully resolved. It's the—I like using the

metaphor in this case—of like that pebble in your shoes, just kind of like digging and digging and digging and digging.

It's annoying. Yeah, you can walk, but it's just annoying. It's agitating. I wanna emphasize that she wasn't inactive or deconditioned. She was strength training, doing yoga, working out with a personal trainer, experimenting on her own, and she had a good amount of attention and awareness. And truly, like many of the people that I work with who are very attentive, that attention, the way it was directed, was a bit of the problem, right?

Because she had the strength, the effort, the discipline, yet the patterns were still there. So in an already high level of sophistication, which again is very similar for many of my clientele, she was, in a sense, kind of trapped in how she was attending her awareness, because the way she was doing that wasn't giving her more clarity, it wasn't giving her more connection, and it was messing with the feedback loops between her brain and the rest of her body.

This happens a lot with many of my clients who have a high level of awareness, is that awareness is actually clouding their clarity, and that's where we often begin. One of the clearest and cleanest moments is when we begin. And we started with doing some lunging, because that was the movement where she was feeling the sort of the most obvious annoyances, and she wanted to be able to get back to lunging.

With her working out, she wanted to get back to lunging and warriors within her yoga practice. And when we moved into the lunge, she also had a collapse. Now, what was curious about this is she was very much thinking her way through the lunge. You could see how much she was thinking in the level of control that she had in her body.

She was thinking her way through the process rather than somatically engaging with the process. She wasn't embodying the movement. She was thinking about the movement, and this is really common amongst a lot of people who are very cognitively dominant. They over utilize their cognitive bandwidth to do the movement, right?

And then, yes, they have awareness, but they're not attending their awareness to actually feeling the way the mechanics are moving.

And so what we did in that moment is I had her pay attention, as she stepped back, to where that pelvis started to collapse. And then, when she noticed where it started to collapse, I didn't then say to her, okay, well that's the range that you've got. What I said to her is, okay, so now you can feel where the pelvis collapses.

So now notice the moment before the pelvis collapses and what happens there, because the reality with movement patterns is that body parts respond to forces at play. Body parts don't wake up in the morning and say, we're gonna give this person a run for their money today. No, things happen. Movements happen.

And tissue responds to the movement that's happening, the way forces move and dissipate, how they're absorbed, transfer into one's body. Body and brain respond. So I wanted to see if

she could notice what happened before that point at the pelvis wanted to collapse, and she noticed a number of things that happened there.

And so then I asked her, okay, let's see what happens before those things occur. She was able to notice when things happened there, and she started to laugh 'cause she's like, why am I even doing that? I'm like, I don't know. But it's kind of curious to watch how your body parts respond to the way things are moving in your body.

And from that point, she had a whole bunch of what I like to call data about how she moves. And some of you might be listening, saying, holy smokes. That's a lot to think about. And you're right. In many cases, it is. But remember, this client was very cognitively dominant. Yes, she had some feeling capacity, but her tendency was to overthink the way that she was moving and control her movement through that cognitive awareness, not the somatic awareness.

So what I decided to do is utilize that skill of cognitive dominance and directed in the direction that we needed her to go. So what makes us unique, perhaps, is that some people would say just stop thinking about it. Don't just stop thinking so hard and just feel. But what we have to understand is that whatever way or process that we utilize to do whatever it is that we do is the way that we choose to do it.

We can call it it's the safest way. We can say that it's the most supportive way. We could use whatever word description to describe why we do what we do, but the reality is, is it's the choice that we're making. So let's just use that inherent way, but utilize it better, and let's see what then occurs.

And so I was able to help her name and notice, utilizing that great cognitive dominance that she had, but kind of like hiding the vegetables inside of the whatever, I was able to nurture this idea of feeling, and for her to really tune into where her body did a pelvis collapse, and what happened before that, and what happened before that, and what happened before that.

And then, as a result, in a matter of 15 or 20 minutes, she had somatic awareness of what was going on in her body, and she had cognitive ability to name that somatic awareness. She was able to grow her awareness, the clarity of what was going on, and as a result, grow her overall connection with her body and had better feedback between her brain and the rest of her body.

And as she stood there, after playing around for 15 or 20 minutes with lunch, she's like, Hey, you know what? I feel more free. I feel more grounded in my feet, and surprisingly, my breath feels easier. It's like I just don't have to think so hard. Bingo. So that was the first 15 minutes or 20 minutes of our first session.

And so it's easy and sort of fun to think about, because again, the way that we move, the posture that we hold, the way that we think, is simply the way that we do it, and we can utilize that as a skill. And so often I hear not only yoga teachers, but also other healthcare practitioners saying, well, you know what?

I can't really help this person, 'cause they think the way they think. You know, they're like, type A, type A, type A, type A, or they're this, this, this, this, this, this, this, as if to say there's no way that they can change. But to me, let's utilize that as their strength. So for the deeply ambitious and determined,

let's use their ambition and determination as the fuel source for getting them to where they wanna go. That's what makes change so remarkable, 'cause we're not actually trying to change the person, but we're utilizing their greatest skill to facilitate the change that they want, just directing that energy in a new way.

So here's what happened between sessions over through that first series of us working together is, in between those sessions, she was able to take that data that she discovered, not only about how her pelvis collapsed, but the moments before that pelvis collapsed and the moments before the moment of the pelvis collapsed into going into lunge.

And she could feel those sensations in other aspects of her life. When she was washing dishes, when she was cleaning up, when she was at the gym, she was able to feel a quieter sense of herself. She was able to perceive the inner workings of herself, knowing that all of it was sensation. All of it was messenger.

All of it was letting her know where she was in space, how her body was utilizing energy, and what it was indicating to her. And from this point, the story really opened up, because as she was able to feel a pattern sooner,

she was able to notice the yellow light sooner, the whisper sooner, and these are the points.

So when I mentioned that her pelvis collapsed and then she was able to notice the moment before the pelvis collapsed and the moment before the moment the pelvis collapsed, those moments are yellow lights or whispers. So the pelvis collapsing, that could be considered a yellow light as well, but sometimes that was associated with pain, so that was more of a red light or a screen.

So as she was noticing these yellow lights or the whispers sooner, she was having fewer and fewer moments of collapsing into the hip. She was noticing more and more moments of subtle sways, side differences, and nervous system shifts before they became the bigger problem. She was becoming more inwardly quiet.

And this is really the distinction between her managing pain, the pain reducing, and then eliminating, and then the opportunity shifting towards greater performance and refinement. Because now, because she can notice subtle sways and side differences and nervous system shifts, those now became the moments of her interest.

How could she support herself to not have those subtle sways, to not have the side to side differences, to not have the nervous system shifts? How could she provide more support, more scaffolding, more deeper sense of calmness?

So I sometimes like to say the yellow lights become the red lights, or the whispers now become the screams, not because they've become worse, but because the clarity of them is so much stronger, and knowing that there's always a quieter whisper, knowing that there's even a yellower light.

Her sense of tuning in just became that much more refined. She's noticing things earlier and earlier and earlier, is able to respond sooner and sooner and sooner, and then as a result, she becomes more agile, more nimble, able to shift quicker, because her internal sense of self, that internal sense of control, is not this capital C,

Oh my gosh, when is something gonna go awry kind of control, but just being nimble and agile kind of control.

As an example of this, when she was in strength training, she was describing exercises now feeling easeful. Sure, they were still effortful, but it was almost like an effortless effort, that the right muscles were working without her needing to think about them.

She could just enjoy the movement, and she could just enjoy the strength gains. She felt more easeful in the power and the strength that she was developing. No longer was she utilizing an extensive amount of effort trying to get it right, and this is where the story opens up even more,

because now she was gaining that much of a better understanding of the dynamic between her nervous system and her tissue.

Her overall motor control and coordination was improving. The nervous system dynamics were improving. Movements in yoga, like headstands, handstands, and triangle pose, crow pose, plank chata, movements and capacities that she had written off because of her shoulder SI joint and the stuckness that she carried in her system, were no longer limiting ideas.

No longer did she have to write them off, but rather the possibility opened up.

That for her was really, really exciting, because she loved those movements, but she also didn't wanna have to push into them. She wanted them to come to her with ease, and as she grew that internal stability, that internal scaffolding through her developed proprioceptive awareness, her developed interoceptive awareness of how she was attending her attention, her intention, and her level of awareness,

she was stepping towards those movements that she really loved.

She described herself as being more useful, stable, noticing things earlier, being curious earlier, shifting from being scared to truly being, Hmm, I wonder what's gonna happen when I do this. I wonder how my body's gonna respond to that.

It's a story really of being able to go from unresolved, partially managed issues to increasing clarity, better sensing, less cognitive forcing, to new possibilities. Overall, it's not a story of fixing

her shoulder or her hip, although her shoulder and hip are much, much, much, much, much better.

But it's really about a capable practitioner who could feel that something wasn't adding up, that wasn't working, and over time was able to read her compensation patterns, the way that her pelvis moved, its relationship to the ribs, to her breath, to her jaw, where her cognitive over-functioning, over efforting was not so much a limitation,

but there was an opportunity to direct it in a way that really served her a lot more effectively, to get clearer on yellow lights and whispers so that she didn't have to have a body that was needing to shout.

You'll notice throughout this description, I haven't mentioned one muscle or one fascial line, that this is an example, like so many examples, of someone with a persistent, low level drumbeat of pain. Someone who's capable, who can do a lot of stuff, but there's that metaphorical pebble. Mm. Niggling, niggling.

Niggling. It's not that the anatomy needs to change. It's not that the muscles need to engage or activate, but there is a way to focus our attention, honoring the way that we process data, the way that we learn, the way that we direct our attention, and utilizing the very skills that we have to facilitate change.

And that's the core, I believe, of truly helping someone out of pain and into an entirely new possibility. If this is something that is of interest to you and you wanna explore what this might be like for you,

you'd probably really like my therapeutic yoga for shoulders and hips program. Now, the great thing about this program is it's, it's a group program, so it's less expensive than my private one-to-ones, and because it's multiple weeks, there's a progression inherent in it, and you've got an opportunity to connect with me, ask me questions, and have a program customized for yourself.

You keep coming back to these ideas of how is it that you're processing your way of feeling, of how you cognitively work through something, so that not only do you reduce your need to manage pain, but then begin to improve your overall performance.

So if that's curious to you, you can check out the Therapeutic Yoga for shoulders and hips over at **functionalsynergy.com/shoulderships**. Until next time, have a great time exploring.

--

Hey there. Are you enjoying this podcast? Are the ideas resonating with you as ways to reduce pain and truly improve function, and not just function, but overall performance without having to manage pain?

If you are, and you wanna work with me a little bit more, then come and join me at The Therapeutic Yoga for our Shoulders and Hips program.

12 weeks, beginning in April 9th. I'd love to work with you and support you in helping your body move from pain or strain, that low level of drumbeat aggravation, into something that feels much more free. Check it out over at **functionalsynergy.com/shoulderships**.