

Ep. #375 - Becoming a Movement Detective 2/7: Forcing Outcomes



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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 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 so glad that you're here, because today I wanna dig into an idea that I've been, been really pondering for a while, which is called forcing outcomes, and how incessantly and perhaps surreptitiously it can show up in healing, recovery, movement work, and even therapeutic practice.

And more importantly, how forcing outcomes can actually slow the very process we're trying to support. With this episode, I want to talk about what I mean by forcing outcomes, what forcing can look like, the distinction between challenge and forcing, why people perhaps force outcomes, the distinction between structure and forcing, and really at the core of this, which is what I'm really about at the, at my deepest philosophy, is how this leads us into becoming movement detectives.

So let's get into it. What do I actually mean by forcing outcomes? Most people, I would say, don't experience themselves as forcing, but rather they experience themselves as trying to heal, to improve, to succeed, trying to do it correctly, to not regress, to be disciplined, to be a good student or patient, which is why this can be hard to see. Forcing outcomes happens when someone becomes attached to a result and starts overriding feedback in order to achieve it.

And this really is the heart of it. The person stops being in relationship with the process and starts trying to control it toward a predetermined outcome. Now, as I mentioned about what I'm talking on this episode, I do need to state something which I will get into momentarily. Healthy challenge is not the same as forcing outcomes.

Healthy challenge still includes responsiveness. Forcing overrides that responsiveness, and that's the distinction. And as I mentioned, we'll talk more about this in a moment. First, let's look at what forcing can look like. Forcing can look like ignoring tension because you want the stretch, continuing despite breath holding because you want that next rep, trying harder instead of sensing more clearly, pushing toward relief instead of listening to what changed.

And what makes this tricky is that forcing often can feel productive, responsible, committed, disciplined. But underneath it all, the desired outcome slowly becomes more important than the information arising from the process. So then what's the distinction there here between challenge and forcing?

This is important because I think this is where people can get confused, because if people don't clearly distinguish between healthy challenge and forcing outcomes, then they think that what

I'm saying is don't force outcomes. I mean avoid discomfort, avoid structure, avoid intensity, avoid expectations, avoid challenge.

But none of those things are inherently forcing. The bridge to this is really that forcing outcomes is not the presence of challenge. It's when the desired result becomes more important than the information, feedback, adaptation emerging during the process. A person can be deeply challenged and responsive.

A person can feel uncertain and still remain in relationship with themselves. And this is really the point we wanna build upon, because sometimes growth requires uncertainty. Sometimes healing requires staying connected while things resolve. And that really is a distinction, because forcing outcomes is not a challenge, discomfort, uncertainty, discipline, structure, progressive loading, accountability.

Forcing outcomes is not the same thing as maintaining structure, staying committed to a process even if you're feeling uncomfortable with it. Structure can absolutely support healing and growth when it remains responsive. So let's move into why people can tend to force outcomes.

Once we begin seeing forcing outcomes more clearly, the next question can become, why do people do this? And honestly, I think it's significant because most people that I've worked with, I would say they don't think that they're forcing outcomes. And I don't want this next bit to come across as me suggesting that people are bad students or bad practitioners. Not, not at all.

Most people are doing it because it's what they've been taught. Modern culture rewards control. Many are taught that harder work gets results. Discipline fixes problems. Control equals safety. Effort equals value. So people bring that same orientation to their movement and even healing practices.

If something's not improving fast enough, push harder. If something feels uncertain, gain control. If something is uncomfortable, fix it quickly. And this becomes especially important in therapeutic work because healing is not always linear. Sometimes the body can change quickly, sometimes it plateaus, sometimes symptoms return, sometimes awareness increases before the relief arrives sustainably.

And that uncertainty can feel deeply uncomfortable.

Observation requires patience, being with ambiguity, being with curiosity, and not knowing immediately.

And many people don't realize how uncomfortable not knowing actually is for them. Forcing then creates an illusion of certainty. At least if I'm doing something, controlling something, fixing something, pushing something, then it can feel like I'm moving towards safety.

So underneath a lot of this forcing might be fear—fear of pain, degeneration, of things getting worse, of losing function, of failing, wasting time, not being good enough. So oftentimes forcing

is not aggression, it's protection. And I think this is why the body as machine model can become so limiting, because if the body is viewed mechanically, like parts are broken, muscles are off, and tissue needs fixing, then forcing does make sense, right?

You correct it, you strengthen, you stretch, you stabilize, you override. But the reality is, is that living systems are adaptive. They respond, protect, compensate, perceive, and so many people don't trust that. So many people have spent years disconnecting from their subtle feedback through stress, athletics, pain, productivity culture, perfectionism.

So the sensation itself can start feeling unreliable, which is when people then default to external control. Tell me what to do. Tell me the right answer. Tell me the corrective exercise. Tell me what muscle to activate. I also think that many professionals are not immune to this either.

They can feel enormous pressure to produce results, to help quickly, to appear knowledgeable. They can have a pressure to fix, and that pressure can unconsciously pull a professional into forcing as well, to try to get the client better, to produce visible outcomes, to prove effectiveness.

So the dynamic really does exist everywhere.

Clients do it, students do it, professionals do it. In this context, forcing outcomes is often an attempt to create certainty in systems that are actually adaptive, relational, and far more complex than simple control.

I want to dig a bit more now into structure versus forcing, because I think this is a very, very, very important distinction. Holding structure is not the same thing as forcing an outcome.

Let me say that again, 'cause this is really important. Holding structure is not the same thing as forcing an outcome.

Without structure, many people don't stay with a process long enough for awareness, creativity, adaptation, or deeper learning to emerge. Structure creates a containment, an opportunity for repetition, consistency, a place to observe patterns, a place to notice change over time.

Without structure, many people will simply follow preference, avoidance, or immediate comfort, and that is important, because discomfort alone is not evidence of harm. Confusion is not evidence of harm. Uncertainty is not evidence of harm. Feeling unfinished is not evidence of harm, especially in learning environments, especially in therapeutic movement work where old strategies are being interrupted.

So the distinction is not did challenge exist. The distinction is what is the relationship to feedback inside the challenge? Forcing outcomes says get to the result no matter what. Structure says stay engaged with the process to notice what emerges. And those are two completely different orientations.

But many people don't experience structure that was responsive. They see performative structure or perfectionistic structure. So when then they encounter a healthy challenge, uncertainty, or accountability, it can be immediately interpreted through that lens.

But therapeutic structure, in the way that I teach it anyway, is meant to support awareness, not override it. It's meant to create enough continuity that patterns can actually be seen.

And I know this can be so tough, because we have to remember that persistency of pain is persistent because often it's what lies under our awareness that's actually the problem. But there's a reason why things are under our awareness, right?

So when they come on up, it can be uncomfortable. But we need the structure to have the continuity so that that pattern can be seen.

Ultimately, creativity, adaptation, and deeper sensing often do not emerge all at once. They emerge through relationship with constraint, with repetition, observation, and process.

This leads me into this idea of becoming a movement detective. I want you to imagine some of the great detectives that we have seen on screen walking into a scene. Sherlock Holmes, Adrian Monk, Patrick Jane, Hercule Poirot, Miss Marple, Jessica Fletcher.

None of them walked into a room trying to force an outcome. They didn't burst in demanding certainty immediately. They do not look at the first clue and decide, "I already know what happened."

They observe. They slow down enough to notice what other people miss: relationships, patterns, timing, contradictions, what changed, what does not fit, what appeared before something else happened.

And importantly, they can tolerate not knowing for a while or even for some time, and that is huge. Forcing outcomes hates not knowing. Forcing wants immediate certainty, relief, answers, resolution.

But detectives understand something important. If you rush to the conclusion too quickly, you stop seeing clearly.

And this is what happens in movement, pain, healing, and therapeutic work. Someone sees tight hamstrings and immediately stretches them. They see a valgus knee and want to strengthen the glutes. They feel pain and want to immediately eliminate it.

A movement detective, though, pauses long enough to ask, "What is this body, body mind trying to accomplish? This compensation strategy, this, an amazing creative strategy, what are we really trying to solve for? As relief happens, what's this new state actually?"

What happens just before the body starts gripping? Because where the pain is, is not the problem. It's a sign for sure. It's letting us know stuff for sure.

And this is why forcing outcomes can actually bind us and even blind us.

Because once we become attached to getting a particular result, we stop observing what is actually happening. We start controlling instead of listening, correcting instead of noticing, performing instead of sensing.

But detectives do not force the evidence to fit their theory. They let the evidence reveal the pattern.

And what is interesting about so many great detectives is that other people often think they're rigid, too detailed, too methodical, too particular, too structured, too focused on process. People around them often want to help. People around them often want them to hurry up, jump to conclusions, make quick decisions, move on.

But the detective keeps observing.

Not because they're forcing the outcome, but because they understand that good observation requires staying with the process long enough for the pattern to reveal itself.

And that is such an important distinction.

Because from the outside, structure and careful observation can sometimes look rigid.

Repetition can look rigid. Returning to the fundamentals can look rigid. Asking someone to stay with the process can look rigid.

Rigidity, though, is not the same thing as consistency. Rigidity overrides information. Consistency allows information to emerge, and that really is the difference.

A rigid person says, "I don't care what's happening. Follow the plan."

A movement detective says, "Stay with the process long enough that we can actually see what's happening."

These are very different orientations, and honestly, it's why some people struggle with observational work, because observational work often delays certainty.

You cannot rush pattern recognition. You cannot force awareness. You cannot skip relationship and jump straight to resolution.

The detective knows this.

The detective understands that if you force the conclusion too early, you may completely miss what the system has been trying to communicate all along, and that really is the shift to becoming a movement detective.

Not what do I force to make the body comply, or what e- other exercises, or what muscle do I need to engage, but rather tuning into your self as you watch and see what's happening with your client.

Noticing the patterns, communicating them, communicating what relationships are emerging, what changes what, what happens before a symptom.

And that really is a completely different orientation.

And really, it changes everything. It moves you from being someone who just follows sequences to really, truly being able to see and connect with the people in front of you.

I'll be running a Foundations for Becoming a Movement Detective beginning this July. I would love for you to join me, and you can read more over at **functionalsynergy.com/detective**.

This is the second part of a multi-session series talking about this notion of becoming a movement detective. In the next episode, you will be hearing from a trainee of mine and her shift, her change from being a 200-hour teacher to her becoming a movement detective.

It's a great episode, so do come back next week and listen to that one.

Again, Movement Detective, the foundations for it this July. You can read more at **functionalsynergy.com/detective**.

Hope to see you there, and see you next week.

Hey there. Have you been following this podcast for a while, or maybe even this is your very, very first episode, and you're interested and curious more about how it is that I help people reduce and eliminate pain and how I help my professional yoga teachers to do the same?

Well, my next program is the Foundations for Becoming a Movement Detective, and that is where you get all of the goods.

You can read more at **functionalsynergy.com/detective**.