

Ep. #379 - Becoming a Movement Detective 6 of 7:
How Barb Eliminated 90–95% of Her Pain by
Becoming a Movement Detective



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 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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Susi: Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad that you're here because I've got another special guest, and it's Barb Morin. She comes from California, and she and I worked together in a private series to help her reduce and eliminate pain. I'm gonna let Barb tell her story, but it's a pretty great movement detective story and really aligns with what this whole series has been about: not only understanding what it is to be a movement detective, but also hearing the stories from trainees and private clients and how they're becoming their own movement detectives.

So I'm excited for Barb to bring her own story to life and share a real before-and-after, along with the throughline of the process. Barb, welcome. I'm so glad you're here.

Barb: Thank you. Glad to be here.

Susi: So why don't we just get right into it? Why did you even sign up? Tell the before story.

Barb: Okay. Well, I have been working out for years. My mother passed away when I was 42. At 45, I started to work out. I did a marathon, and then I got into the gym and all kinds of exercise. I come from a family of athletes, and I was probably the only one who was not considered an athlete, but now I'm absolutely an athlete.

So my ability to move and work out is really important to me. Then, 10 years ago, I learned to swim. I had lessons, and then the pandemic hit, and I had to swim without a coach for years. For what? Three years. With bad technique, I ended up with a bad shoulder, a bad hip, and a really super-tight flexor, and I could not get over any of those things without help.

So I was with chiropractors, and from chiropractors I went and had shots of all kinds from the medical profession. Then I did active release therapy and shockwave therapy. Even though I got relief, the pain never went away. Then one day, you came on my Instagram feed talking about all kinds of stuff, and I'm like, "She's sort of making sense, and maybe she's the key."

So I kept listening to you. I listened to all your podcasts.

Susi: Yes.

Barb: And then I finally called you because you said, "You might be having chronic pain in one area, but that pain may not be coming from that one area."

I always knew that my shoulder and hip pain were connected, but nobody could help me with that. Not down to the root, and that's what's been happening with you since I started working with you, yeah.

Susi: Interesting. So before we get into the journey of it, where are you now?

Barb: Well, I am sitting in my brand-new apartment, and I am almost pain-free, Susi. I would say I'm 90 to 95% pain-free. I do not wake up in pain. I do not have pain in my normal activities anymore. This last shoulder issue that I had, which was in the other shoulder, is also finally going away with that shoulder and hip intensive that I've been in with you.

Susi: And you're back to the gym again.

Barb: You know what? Because I have been paying attention to my body, I'm not ready to go back to the gym. So I don't want to push it and then start to have my pain come back.

Susi: Got it.

Barb: But I think it's gone for good, honestly, because I've never felt this kind of lasting relief.

Susi: Okay. All right.

Barb: So slowly, slowly, I'm getting back.

Susi: All right. Awesome. We'll actually talk about that because I think that piece around getting from what I like to call bad to good—if we could put it as bad, although it's probably not the best word—is easier in many ways, even though it's difficult, than going from good to great, right?

Once you kind of figure out some of the pieces that we'll talk about next, you grabbed onto that and ran with it really, really well. It's then taking that to the next level, which we can also get into.

So let's first chat about that. You took a couple of classes and then did you... or did you? Or did you just listen to the podcast and say, "I'm just gonna go straight into the private series?"

Barb: That was probably it.

Susi: Okay.

Barb: I emailed you that really long email about all my issues. I'm surprised you didn't tell me you didn't want me as a client, but I just knew. I've had practitioners come into my sphere, if you will, when I needed them, and they've all helped me in one small way or another to get me here to you, honestly.

Susi: And that's interesting because Marian, who's the other private client who spoke, said the same thing. It's similar to almost every other private client—they just knew. Intuitively, they knew.

Barb: Mm-hmm.

Susi: And that's what led people to say, "Okay, I'm just gonna do it."

So then you came straight into the private series. Just so people know, the private series is a three-month process where people meet with me for nine weeks, one hour at a time. In between those sessions, they have access to me to ask questions, whether it's to verify some movement, give me an update on what they're doing, or tell me about a backslide, great progress, or whatever.

I find that kind of connection can help people in the white space because I think a lot of change actually happens in the white space. The relief that someone has in a session can start to fade, and when it does, sometimes it can be like, "Well, what do I do now?" Having that access can be helpful as someone moves through the process.

So if you can remember, when did you start to feel relief and think, "Ah, this time is different?"

Barb: I would say by the time we got to the third of our nine sessions, I started to feel relief, but it was only because almost every single day I was doing the things you were teaching me.

Susi: Yeah.

Barb: And the thing that I loved the most was that every night I put on my headphones, put on some meditative music, and just sat and did my small movements. I heeded every yellow light. I never went past that point of beginning to recognize that my pain was starting. Oftentimes I'd take a yoga block, be on my back with my knees up, put that yoga block between my legs, strap my legs with a strap, and just lie there. I took all the pressure off my hips.

And slowly, slowly, everything started to release. Everything started to unwind. I just kept doing it until I could move more. Then, with all the additional trainings and all the additional moves you were showing me, every one of them helped. It took until the third session, and then by the sixth, seventh, or eighth, I was at a plateau.

Then my other shoulder started to hurt, and I thought, "Oh, this is because all these other things that I've been compensating for are now releasing, and maybe I'm finally at the root cause of why I was having all this pain."

I've been dealing with that for the last several months, and then I joined your most recent intensive, and that has put me over the top.

Susi: Very cool. So what I want people to really get in what Barb is saying, but also not saying, is this. She talks about yellow lights, and I've talked about yellow lights throughout this whole podcast and all the hundreds of episodes that I've done.

The idea of yellow lights is this: when someone has chronic symptoms like pain, ache, strain, or whatever it is that's limiting them in their world and their life, the way that I work with people is

that when I can help them reduce compensatory patterns, I see that their pain, strain, ache, whatever it is, also goes down.

So a big first step is identifying the experience of compensation because a lot of people, like Barb, can be very driven to push through and not hear the yellow lights. Sometimes people will say, "Well, the person is so determined they just blow through them. They just push through."

But I think more people don't even notice they're there because they're so quiet.

So the first step is to notice that they're there. I'm not looking for a specific muscle, and I'm not looking for a particular thing, but I do have a series of movements that are super simple and super small that I begin with. I just go, "Okay, Barb, let's see how you move. Let's see what is going on in your movement patterns."

What you have to get is that, just like Marian, Barb worked with me online. We were on Zoom. We were doing this all through Zoom, and I was helping guide her awareness to the way she was moving. Then, her gaining that sense of, "Oh, this is how my leg bone is moving in my pelvis. Ah, this is how my arm bone is or is not moving in my shoulder girdle," and, "Oh, interesting when I..."

Do you actually remember one of the first yellow lights that you noticed?

Barb: Yeah. I mean, I was doing butterfly, and I could barely move my legs past about 25 degrees. Before, I could get my legs all the way to the ground, but no.

Susi: Right. Because when you moved your legs, you held your breath.

Barb: I did. Yeah, I held my breath. I forced through it. I figured it wasn't that bad because I could do it.

Susi: Yeah.

Barb: I was kind of trying to prove to you that I was somewhat of an accomplished athlete of some sort.

Susi: Which you are. Which you are and were, right?

Barb: Yes. Yeah.

Susi: And the key here is that the fact that Barb did that demonstrated, number one, that she is very determined. Number two, that she had the range. It's just that the range was full of compensation.

So when I worked with her, I was saying, "All right. We know you've got the range, and the range is filled with pain and strain. It's also filled with bracing patterns, and it's filled with all this extra stuff that's not needed. So let's just start in the place where you can move in a range of motion that's not increasing pain and a range of motion where you can breathe."

Initially, I actually remember you were like, "You have got to be kidding me."

And sometimes, as a teacher, it's like, "Yeah, no, I am not kidding you."

A lot of times, what you have to get is that this is not your actual range. Your actual range is bigger, which you already demonstrated. The difference is that this is the range without the compensation, or with a lot less compensation.

So if we're wanting to retrain the pattern where your output and your experience are less pain and less compensation, then how about we move that way?

It's difficult to build a habit of less compensation and less pain if you move with more compensation and more pain. I don't know many things out there where you do the opposite in order to get the outcome you want.

Barb: Yeah, that's why I was a little bit of an unbeliever at the beginning.

Susi: Right, because we tend to think we have to force through the stuff in order to make progress.

Barb: Yeah.

Susi: Yet forcing through is the thing that actually helps facilitate the tension building.

Barb: Yeah. Yeah.

You know what you told me once? I was starting to walk again because I wasn't really walking. I was a very good walker. I'd walk three or four miles, no problem, at an 18-minute pace per mile.

Then I tried to walk around the block, and it hurt. I saw you, and you said, "Barb, just walk to the corner. Just see if you can walk to the corner without feeling any pain."

That made me stop. It's like you cannot just go back to where you were. You're going to have to make some changes.

That's why I really haven't gone back to the gym, because my vitality does not come from going to the gym five days a week and working out. That is part of it, for sure, but my vitality comes from many other things, including reconciling the issues of my life and getting rid of my pain.

And I'm 70 now. I'm not 45 anymore. I cannot keep that pace up. That has been a really hard thing for me to accept, but at the same time, it's really working for me. It gave me back my life.

Susi: Yeah. This is interesting because there's another person in the Therapeutic Yoga for Shoulders and Hips program, and she was sharing about how what she had to reconcile was this whole notion that if you want to get fit, you have to do your cardio. If you want to get fit, you've got to walk further. If you want to get fit, you've got to do these things.

She was realizing that by doing those things that she keeps hearing she should do, she was just continuing to build the habitual patterns of more pain, more strain, and more compensation.

Barb: Yeah.

Susi: So I get it. It's a bit of a mind thing, right?

Barb: Yeah. Totally.

Susi: Right? Because we hear all these things. Our prefrontal cortex, the logical part of us, is like, "Oh, I should do it this way." Then another part of our brain goes, "Uh-oh, we better do it or we're going to lose out. Oh my gosh, I'm 70, and I really have to do these things. I have to get stronger."

It's very easy to fall into that trap and make the assumption, "Well, I'm just getting older. I'm just going to be in pain."

Whereas the piece that really started to shift is Barb's capacity to recognize the pattern output being pain or the pattern output being relief, and then recognize the pattern that led to that output. That's really what it was here.

What I've been saying over and over again recently is that this is the work of being a detective.

When you're a detective, it's like you walk into a room and you're seeing the vase knocked over, the window broken, this over here, that over there. You're seeing the anomalies in the scene.

You don't go straight to the answer.

Think about all the fictional detectives we know. Whether it's Monk, The Mentalist, Jessica Fletcher, or an Agatha Christie detective, they're not going straight at the answer. They're taking it all in, and they're ultimately seeing the patterns.

That's what I'm ultimately teaching Barb. I'm working myself out of a job, really. That's my aim.

It's not that she gets a list of exercises. She gets a way of perceiving her body so she can feel it, and the sensations become information. They're not just symptoms to get rid of.

And so now, and this is a big piece around not feeling so threatened or in danger when pain starts to come back, it's, "Oh, okay. I missed something," or, "There's a signal here that's letting me know something is up."

So you've done a really, really, really good job at that, Barb.

The next piece I want to go to, though, is the idea of where you then go when you want to get back to the gym, because you ultimately do want to get back there, right?

Barb: I do. I do.

Susi: And so where you can play—and the strengthening bit is really interesting—because sometimes when we think about strengthening, we think about, "I've got to add load. I've got to go to fatigue, and I've got to do X number of reps or X number of sets."

And there's just this kind of drumbeat or thought process about the way to get more fit that we absorb, whether we see it on social media, hear it from someone, or whatever the trend of the day is.

And the reality is, if Barb lifts something heavier once, she's gaining strength. If she's lifting something heavier twice, she's gaining strength. Even if it's not one rep to fatigue, if she's lifting something heavier, she's getting stronger.

Sometimes we start off with lifting one thing heavier and noticing what happens when that load is added. So it could simply be a bag of rice. It could be a can of food. It could be a frozen bag of fruit. It could be a bottle of water—a big bottle or a small bottle, whatever.

The key is thinking about what is a more increased load, but also thinking about what you already know about your movement pattern and where it is already easy and super clear how you're moving.

So when you think about that, Barb, what kind of shows up for you? Not to say that you need to go back to the gym this week, but what do you think would be the easiest entry point to add one rep?

Barb: That's a really tough question.

Susi: Ah, good.

Barb: But honestly, it's a tough question. But I can say this. Okay, I have been distraught because I have seen a change in my body where I don't have the muscles that I used to.

Susi: Yeah.

Barb: But I'll tell you, just by getting back to normal activity—because I had to even reduce my daily living activity because of pain—I actually am gaining my strength back.

Susi: There we go.

Barb: And I can walk a mile, and I can feel the muscles in my legs coming back.

Susi: There you go.

Barb: You know?

Susi: So that's the load. It's not the gym yet.

Barb: Yes.

Susi: That's the load for you right now. It's not the gym yet.

Barb: I tried to swim one day. I tried to swim across the pool. My shoulder—I could start to feel it—so I ended up water walking. Then I couldn't water walk because I could feel it a little bit, and so I said, "Okay, no more pool. Go back to walking."

And so slowly—I mean, I use the lightest TheraBand. I use two-pound weights, and I might do a couple of sets of five to seven reps.

Susi: Great.

Barb: And I can feel the difference.

Susi: Yeah.

Barb: But it's moving properly now that is just allowing my body to do a thing.

Susi: That's right.

Barb: And to get better because I was so right-side dominant that I have started to realize that my left side, a lot of my hip, was asleep. My calf was kind of asleep.

And now I'm starting to see, oh, both sides are more equal now. So just sharing the load in my daily movements because now my whole body is working has been huge.

Susi: Interesting.

So what I want you to hear is that she has been able to take the awareness she gained around the patterns that contributed to pain and then patterns that helped reduce the pain, and she's now able to take that insight into more complex activity.

Barb: Yeah.

Susi: So you're able to walk further. You're playing around a bit with weights. You've noticed that you're not quite there with swimming, but it's not that she's never going to swim again, and it's not that she's never going to lift heavier weights again.

She's taking the awareness of what patterns contribute to how she is feeling when she's lifting.

So the yellow light idea—tuning into body awareness—hasn't left.

And I think that's where people can—I'm not sure I want to use the phrase "going backwards," but that's the only one coming to me—people can get out of pain, think, "All right, I'm done with this," and then go back to whatever the thing is, whether it's back to the gym or doing a whole 18 rounds of golf, or whatever it is, and do it without awareness.

It's like they haven't taken what they've already gained into the next level of activity. They've forgotten all about it.

Then they might be surprised, annoyed, agitated, or irritated that their pain comes back.

A big piece of what Barb is demonstrating is the bridge of awareness to that more complex activity, right? And that's what's going to grow your ability and your capacity.

Barb: Yeah. And you know, I had to relax my expectations, right?

It's like, yes, you're going to go back, and I know it. I will be back at the gym, and I will be swimming, and I will be joining the masters team again. But I had to let all those things go and take the pressure off myself because that pressure alone was causing pain.

Susi: Mm-hmm. Interesting. Interesting.

Barb: Yeah.

Susi: So if you had advice for someone who has pain and is listening, what would you say to them?

Barb: If you want to get back to what you were doing before, it's possible, but you're not going to get there the way you've tried in the past.

So you have to let all those things go, and you have to find the right practitioner for you.

In my case, it was you.

Susi: Mm-hmm.

Barb: I was ready to be your client and learn from you because I've gone through all these other things.

Susi: Mm-hmm.

Barb: And so I would tell other people: don't limit yourself to what the medical profession is saying or what you might learn in yoga class or any of those things because everybody is there to try to help you get out of pain and move better.

But unless you find the right practitioner who is going to take you back to the root cause and support you all the way, you've got to keep looking for someone who can help because someone does exist out there.

Susi: Mm.

Barb: And they will pop up into your awareness somehow. I don't know. Maybe by the grace of God and all the wisdom beings out there, they sent me you. So keep looking.

Susi: And I think the piece that's also important is the frame of Marian and your frame, which is that you just knew.

When there's been—and you haven't specifically said this, although Marian did—something that can happen with people who have chronic symptoms is that we're looking for people outside ourselves to give us the answer because we're somewhat trained to think that the answer is outside ourselves.

While a practitioner can be helpful, ultimately, the help is helping you tune into yourself.

So if you're an intuitive type of person, as Marian said in a previous episode, what she actually did was give away that internal locus of control to another expert. Part of her process was bringing that back to herself.

She was able to tune more and more into herself, and in that process, that's how part of what got her out of pain.

In some ways, that awareness of yourself is also similar for you. It's different, but there's a similar intuitive following and growing of one's own internal locus of control.

That's why I think there's an element of making sure the practitioner you work with has good merit. There are a lot of great practitioners out there with great merit who won't be the right fit, just like I'm not the right fit for every person.

Barb: True.

Susi: But if you can intuitively feel, "Aha, this is the person," and it's not just about them fixing you but also about an opportunity to learn about yourself in the process, then I think you're going to find the right fit. Would you say that?

Barb: Yeah, for sure. And I think the whole thing about regaining control is really important because I didn't have any control. I could be fine today, and tomorrow I could be in so much pain, and I had no idea what happened or how it happened.

Susi: Mm.

Barb: Right? And so now, just from what you taught me and all that I know from my years of working out and trying different things, I know what I can do now.

Susi: Mm-hmm.

Barb: I don't need you to tell me every single week. Even though I am still in classes with you, there are six or eight days in between, or sometimes two weeks if you're not teaching every single week, where I don't have you telling me anything.

And I'm not a big person to write a lot of stuff in Circle to get your daily feedback on what I'm doing. I keep trying. I do the things that work for me. Sometimes I just don't do anything. I decide, "Okay, I don't need to do anything today. I'm just going to do what I do today."

Susi: Cool.

Barb: So yeah, it's amazing to be in control and in charge of my body again.

I love my body, and for the longest time I was like, "Oh man, this body of mine. I don't know what to do. I'm so lost."

And now I don't feel that way anymore.

Susi: That's so amazing. That's so amazing, and that's a great summary of this: not being lost and having that internal locus of control back again, which is awesome.

Barb: Yeah.

Susi: Barb, thank you so much for sharing your story, and I look forward to seeing you back on.