

Becoming A Trusted Advisor: Why Clients Keep Coming Back Even When Pain is Gone | #394



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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 am so glad that you're here, because today I have added a third part to what was initially a two-part series around Model 1 and Model 2: helping people get out of pain, and then helping them—from where they're then out of pain—then they get back to the rest of their life, how to help them there.

Well, there's actually a third model, and I've been seeing this play out more specifically since recording those first two episodes and then working with clients, both privately and in my certification programs and in my group therapeutic yoga for shoulders and hips programs, who have already gotten through Model 1 and Model 2.

They're well on their way, and there's a new challenge that they want to embark on, or a new desire, or a more meaningful activity, and they don't actually have pain, or they've got very little of it. But there's something else that's stopping them. And I realized that that's stopping them, and then what I do with those folks next is not Model 1, it's not Model 2—it's actually Model 3.

So with this episode, I want to highlight some of these components in this new model. But before I get into the new model, let's recap Model 1 and Model 2.

So Model 1, which was two episodes ago, we explored pattern recognition and pattern retraining as a way of helping people to reduce and eliminate physical pain. The idea here was improving their interoception and proprioception. We began with a body diagram, listening to the person's story, really getting clear on what's going on in their world, and then grow awareness through movement, breath, and stillness. And then as they moved—as they did smaller, granular movements and recognized how their bodies moved—they were able to recognize what was contributing or correlated to their symptoms, and what helped them feel better.

And probably the most important thing: really owning the yellow lights and whispers so that they know that something is changing. And then out of all that experience, they build some really big trust in themselves, the messages of their body. No longer do they see pain as a danger; they see it as a messenger, which then kind of ungrips the desire to get rid of it. And that's a big piece of it actually starting to shift as they grow that inner locus of control.

So then we take that foundation into fuller activity with Model 2. So they're out of pain, they've got a really good understanding of whispers and yellow lights. They understand their body's full of messengers and messengers, and they can tune into it—that they have a real trust with what their body is trying to communicate.

So now it's like, "Okay, you're out of pain. You've got all this skill. Now what do you wanna do? What does that activity actually require? And how do we build toward it? Do we actually need to build some more new capability, or do we need to add complexity, load, speed, or variability? How do we guide them to the next step?"

So now we get to Model 3, which really is about self-direction. And as a teacher, this is where I become truly a trusted advisor, helping my client carry through the awareness that they've grown and trust in the choices that they're making as they live out their lives doing the activities they wanna do. Because this is a place actually in this process where people can actually fall off.

I said this in Model 2 as well, where all they built in Model 1 can kind of flutter away if they don't keep paying attention to the yellow lights. Well, there's something like that kind of obstacle here as well, and I'll get into that. But overall, my clients in this level of model have made progress.

They can feel the difference in their movement, and now they wanna get back to something that's, um, more intense than what they wanted for in Model 2. So to really highlight this, I wanna bring into this conversation a session that I was having with a client, and I'll also share a bit of my experience of lifting weights and the progress I was wanting and the goals I was wanting to attain.

So with this client of mine, she's been experiencing some clicking and clunking through her knee and her hip. And it isn't painful, but it is annoying. And she and I had worked together for a number of series a while back where she did have pain, and that cleared up, and she got a lot of great awareness. Her glutes came back online, and she was moving quite well.

But now this click and clunk is just annoying, and she wanted to build upon the gains that she had made previously. She doesn't want the click and clunk when she squats, nor does she want it when she goes up the stairs, and nor does she want it as she builds strength. And in addition to the click and clunk wanting to be gone, she also wants to have all of this outcome—squatting down to the floor, going upstairs, building strength—without feeling so fatigued after.

So as we've been working together, she's become more aware of what happens as she moves into her squat. She can feel how her feet and legs are working, what's happening through her pelvis, and what happens in her ribcage. She can sense the correlating patterns and how that contributes to the click and clunk, and then how she moves and the stability that she gains and the ease of movement that she gains, and how that contributes to a reduced or no click and clunk.

She's able to use her own hands for feedback. She's really able to recognize these relationships very, very clearly. She's also noticing that when she moves through a particular range, she feels more connected through her legs. And when she feels connected—that's the word

interoceptively that she uses—the clicking and clunking isn't there, and she feels lighter and taller.

So we know that she can have a light and tall way of being without clicking and clunking. We know it's possible. So now we get to grow her capacity to be there. And there's another piece to this, because as part of her desire to grow strength, she's going to a fitness class. And she loves the social aspect of being in the fitness class and how they're moving together, and the instructor is encouraging them to go deeper. She gets a good workout.

Now, usually at these transitional places, not just for her, but for other clients, I often will suggest that to help them stay in tune with their bodies while they're in a group, and while there's lots of music and noise, and the teacher is saying all the things—and are the cues working for them or not, and sometimes it can be just a lot of noise—I suggest that they go to the back of the room.

Except this time, with this particular fitness class, the group is in a circle. The proverbial back of the room isn't there. And what's more is sometimes they're being filmed. So it totally makes sense that she finds herself moving further into lunges than she intended, past her whispers and yellow lights and into ranges where she notices the clicking and the clunking.

Now, when we spoke about it, she described—this is interesting—needing to be brave enough to listen to her body and not push past. It's really interesting, right? And we've been talking about movement, about her legs, her pelvis, the range that she can feel, all of these very embodied feelings. And now she's telling me that choosing the range that really works for her in that particular room requires bravery.

Now, this is so common. It's so common. As I mentioned just a moment ago, when clientele wanna get back to a fitness class, I often suggest going to the back of the room so that they can kind of tame the noise of cues and encouragement, enabling them to listen within. I've even had some students say how they didn't wanna go to class and be like a dork because they can't move, or because they didn't wanna move, or because they were listening to their body.

Overall, all in all, it's so powerful, the environment around us, and how it can pull and sway our attention and influence to move us past what we're feeling in our bodies, right? It's so normal. And this client of mine can feel the difference. She knows how to move well in her body, yet in the room, acting on it means being visibly different from the group.

And then when we explored that, she spoke about feeling judged by others and also believing that because she does yoga and looks after herself, she should be able to go into the full lunge. And she also understands in some ways how absurd that actually sounds. And I say that truly with all the love in the world. All of us have these thoughts at times in our minds, and those thoughts can derail us from what we're trying to do and progress.

In this example, her choice of the range of motion has become tangled up with what she thinks that range says about her. And this is the transition here that I really want to explore. It's a place

where people can lose their footing as they bring the gains they've made into activities they enjoy, and it really gives us somewhere to work.

And you see how having Model 1 and Model 2 behind you as foundation can be really helpful, because the messages are really, really clear, and we can build from those clear messages into next steps.

So when I think about Model 3, there really are six questions that form the fundamental principles of this level of progress:

- 1) What's the intent of any given movement that you're doing?
- 2) Where are you at today?
- 3) How does your body feel today?
- 4) And as you move into your movement, what's driving your movement?
- 5) And who's on your team, and how do you talk with them?
- 6) And then after, how do you recover?

These questions are fed by the pattern recognition that we've already developed in Model 1, the yellow lights and whispers, the awareness of movement and breath, and the growing understanding of what these signals mean for each of us individually.

So let's explore each one.

The first question is: what's the intent? For this client, she wants to get stronger and be able to squat to the floor without clicking and clunking. She also shared that lifting feels really functional and enjoyable for her. And this matters to me as her teacher because I want the work we're doing together to connect with something that she wants to do.

Now we can get specific about the movement itself. At one point, she asked whether she should begin her squat by taking her hips back or by bending her knees, 'cause there's so many ways to do squats. And my answer was this: it depends on what you're intending. What are you wanting to explore more? Is it exploring through the hips more, exploring through the knees more, connecting more hips, knees, ankles? Is there a muscle group that you're wanting to target? What are you trying to accomplish?

Because again, there's no wrong way really to squat. It's: what is the intention of that movement? And she can explore the options and then feel the difference and then decide, you know? Because as she's moving into whichever option, she gets to then notice, where is the movement happening? How do her legs, pelvis, and ribs coordinate as she changes the way she squats, and what is it that she wants to do?

And so now we're actually thinking like, "Okay, what's the intent for the movement?" And then we decide on that, and then as we move, we get to notice: are we moving the way we intended,

yes or no? And that then leads into: okay, how do we either add correction, or refinement, or other exploration?

So for the teachers listening to this, when you're asking someone to do a movement—any movement from yoga to Pilates to fitness—are you clear about your intent? And then based on your intent, are your instructions or cues aligned with that intent? And then is the movement and the way they're moving actually matching what you intended? Because if not, that's where you get to work.

Because if they're moving as intended, we can look at the response, we can look at the result. And if they're doing something different, that's something they would understand too and explore. So does their proprioceptive and interoceptive feelings. What are you seeing? Where are the compensations occurring, if any?

And for the client, these become questions they can bring into any exercise: What is this helping me develop? Am I doing what I intended? Do I like the result that I'm getting?

So in my client's class, getting lower into the lunge is something she's been asked to do, and she also has her own intent. She does wanna do it. She wants to build strength, too. She wants to improve how she's moving. And so being clear about that gives her something to orient toward as she explores the movement.

Okay, the second question then is: where are you at today? So I suggested that she take this question into the class by using first a familiar movement as a check-in before going to the gym. We'd already been exploring a movement together, something that she had a lot of familiarity with in terms of how it felt, where she tended to compensate, and what changed as she became more connected. So it gave her a place to really begin.

I did something similar when I was recuperating post-delivery of my twins, and I had a bit of a diastasis. And as I was moving back into adding load with weight training, before I got into that load, I wanted to just double-check where my diastasis was at. And if my diastasis was actually becoming more closed or if I felt more connected to my abdomen, then I knew how I could proceed in terms of the amount of load that I was lifting. And if it was more split because of something that I ate, or poor sleep, or whatever, then I just shifted up the way that I approached my recovery.

Now, the end result of this is I no longer have a diastasis, and I have a pretty functional abdomen, all because I listened to what my body was saying to me.

So this is very similar to what I was asking of my client. Both scenarios give us a chance to recognize our movement and compensation patterns, our energy, our level of awareness, and really, you know, what's driving us in our movement, which will come up into the fourth question.

And recognizing that on any given day, the experience of this check-in exercise can be revealing. Maybe we had a busy morning, maybe we might be recovering from a cold, maybe we didn't sleep very well, or we did sleep very well. We can bring all of that into the workout as information, not pushing through.

So we begin with something familiar, get a sense of where we are, what feels available, what are we noticing about our breath? Are there whispers showing up earlier than we expected? So she might arrive planning to lift a certain weight and discover she wants to adjust. Or she might find she can add resistance while maintaining the coordination she's developing, and her own experience really sharpens that plan.

The third question is: what's your range today? As this client moves into a squat, there's a point at which her leg begins to fall inward and her ribcage drops toward her pelvis before the hips shift, and this gave us something to recognize and explore before a larger movement started to happen. And we could start to play around with: where in the movement did that compensatory strategy occur?

Now she's aware of that and the relationship to clicking and clunking. So from that conversation, she then started to recognize how she could improve. Maybe on a given day where the leg rolls inward and the pelvis starts to do its thing and the ribs do its thing, maybe that's not the day to add load, or maybe that's the day to add less load. It all depends on how connected she can be to her body and if the adding of load or increase in the range really is a helpful next step.

Yes, she still wants to squat to the floor, and we're building toward that by working with what's available and developing more capacity to get there. And her recognition of her coordination will help that capacity grow. But you see, I'm giving her that body autonomy, because when I give her that body autonomy rather than telling her exactly what to do, she can feel more clearly inside, interoceptively and proprioceptively.

The fourth question is: what's driving this choice? And this brings us back to her experience in the class. She could recognize the range where she felt connected. She could also recognize her concern about being judged and her expectation that because she practices yoga, looks after herself, she ought to be able to move further, and that's another layer of awareness.

At first, someone might become aware of their ribcage moving on their leg or their breath becoming held as they add load. Now they're also becoming aware of what happens when they notice the signal. Do they respond to it, yes or no? Do they bargain with it, yes or no? Do they think, "Yes, I can feel that, but I should be able to keep going"?

All really interesting information. Bodily awareness can bring an emotional response, and that response is something that we can become curious about, too.

I recognize this in myself. Earlier this summer, I had a goal for myself around my deadlift and what I wanted to reach in terms of lifting by Christmas. I was well on my way toward that, but

then I had a week that had some travel and just had some restlessness in my sleep, and I wasn't super recovered when I went to the gym one week. And even though the number that I knew I was meant to lift that day was what I was meant to lift, I looked at it and I'm like, "Nope, that's not gonna happen today."

And even so, there was a little voice in my head saying, "But yes, you wanna get to your goal by December." And I sort of smirked at myself, truly, and I'm like, "What's December about anyway? I don't have the energy to actually pull this weight." And so I didn't. I actually dropped the weight that particular week significantly.

And interestingly, when I came back the following week after a solid, restful week of sleep and recovery, I lifted more than the weight that I needed to lift, or I thought that I needed to lift the week before.

So the key here is all of these points of recognition of what drives us, how we're moving, tuning into that inner knowing, recognizing information both about recovery, recognizing information about ambition, and pulling that all together. This connects to something fundamental in Model 1: you can't change what you aren't aware of.

So allow for all that stuff to come up. Give yourself a proverbial hug and say, "It's okay." Just listen closely and clearly. Your body doesn't lie.

And with my client, we could explore what choosing a smaller range meant to her in that room. With me, I could explore what changing the amount that I was lifting meant. I got to explore the way I responded to that. I got to explore what happened the following week. We just get to know more about what influences our movement choices.

The fifth question is: who's on your team and how do you talk to them? Our clients might work with a personal trainer, attend a fitness class, see a physical therapist, or practice with other yoga teachers, and they're taking what they learn into those relationships.

This client also works with a trainer, and she describes how confusing the different approaches can sometimes feel. I offered to look at the exercises in her program and explore what I understood they're intended to be and where I'd focus based on what we've been discovering together, and then she could bring that understanding into a conversation with her trainer. And that gives them something really specific to discuss: what she's working toward, what she's noticing, and how the exercises might support her.

And with the fitness class where she says she needs to be brave enough, I want to understand what that feeling is asking of her and what different choices might make available. And that becomes interesting. We know the back of the room isn't an option. We also know she enjoys the social aspect of being there.

If we're going to explore changing something, we need to understand what she values about the class as well as what makes participation difficult. And we came up with practical options for responding to both bodily signals and the emotional responses they brought up. You see, to me, the emotional response that comes up is as much of a signal as the bodily signals. They're all whispers and yellow lights. They all give us information and guidance towards something to pay attention to.

So it's not trying to run over "I need to be brave." It's not meant to be stopped by "I need to be brave." It's to listen to what "I need to be brave" is actually asking for. And when we have the awareness that we've built from Model 1 and we've honed in Model 2, it becomes really curious.

Which leads to the sixth question: how to recover? And the information continues after the workout. And it becomes really important because a lot of people, when they finish a workout, will feel sore. And especially if they've been coming off of a period of time of feeling pain, or depletion, or tension, or strain, sometimes discerning between a delayed onset muscle soreness and pain can be difficult.

So this is where paying attention to what happened in the workout, right after the workout, and if they feel good after the workout, how long did that last for? And then if they feel a little sore the next day, the question becomes: all right, does that feel like a workout-y soreness, or a pain soreness? Does it feel like it's similar to any of the yellow lights indicating that something might happen? Is it more of an indication of a depletion or a fatigue?

Because remember, these questions are ones that are coming after Model 1 and 2. And I have a firm belief with all of my clients—they've been living in their bodies for a lot longer than I've known them—that they might not be able to name all of the sensations that they feel, but they have an intimate experience with themselves.

When we help someone feel more connected or move with greater ease, they know it. As they add load and complexity, and new unfamiliar or different familiar feelings arise interoceptively and proprioceptively, we can help them bring those into the equation. They're building upon their understanding of their patterns.

What amount of activity do they need to recover from? What do they notice when they've done more? What helps them feel ready for the next session? When I come back to the idea of my deadlifting and my restless sleeps when I was doing a lot of traveling, those restless sleeps are part of what I brought into my decision about the deadlift and how much weight I was gonna lift.

For somebody else, their familiar whispers might show up earlier in their next workout, or they might notice a change in their energy or breath. Recovery becomes a part of the conversation about progression. We can consider the amount of work, the spacing between sessions, the practice they found supportive—whether they need smaller movements, breathing, rest, or yoga nidra, or massage, or a bath, or fill in the blank.

The key is that we keep learning from their experience, and that really is the essence of Model 3.

These six questions of:

- 1) What's the intent?
- 2) Where are you at today?
- 3) What's your range today?
- 4) What's driving your choices?
- 5) Who's on your team, and how do you talk with them?
- 6) How do you recover?

Think back to my client in the circle of her fitness class. She's bringing her movement awareness into a setting she enjoys with an instructor, other participants, and her own hopes and expectations. These questions give her a way to work with all of that. They help her take what she's learned about herself into class, into the gym, and into the activities she wants to do.

Pattern recognition from Model 1 comes with her. The yellow lights and whispers come with her. The awareness, trust, and consistency come with her. And the capacity she's developing through Model 2—that gives her more possibilities to explore. That's what we're building with self-direction: a growing ability to use what we know about ourselves as we participate in our lives doing the things that we love to do, and even stepping into things we would want to do more of.

If this is interesting to you, if you are a teacher who wants to develop this level of trusted advisorship with your clientele, I would love to help you grow this skill. And we're doing it all at the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive on October 24th to 29th. You can read more and register at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**.