

Ep #43: Evidence, Healing and Human Potential



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With Your Host

Susi Hatelty

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Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. You will 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 Hately.

With this episode, I want to dig into this idea of evidence as it relates to healing and human potential. I often get people asking me my opinion on certain styles of yoga, which one is better than another? Or is one just bad? I've even been asked, "Is yoga dangerous?" When it comes to exercises people will ask me about longer holds and if they're better or not. Should someone strengthen or do more mobility work? Should they do more restorative practices? And all the breathing techniques that are now out there which one is the best?

My most common answer is a combination of, "Well, what are the results? When you do this, what's working or not working? What are you feeling when you do it? And after, what's happening? What are you now aware of?" The idea here is I want to help someone create an inquiry into their own experience of what works for them. For them to recognize the evidence for their own self.

Over the years, I've really noticed how we are becoming a world more and more so reliant on formal evidence from formal research studies. And don't get me wrong, I think it's great. I love formal evidence and formal research. I've had two yoga programs studied at a university level, one on cancer recovery and one on idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, both which showed positive benefits. So I am all for research and evidence.

The only drawback, or at least one drawback, is that formal evidence will outline that X percentage of people with ABC symptoms benefited from XYZ protocol. And then it is thought to be that 100% of people then benefit, and that's the way it's spoken. But in reality, how do you know that you or your client is in the X percentage or not? Do you just try the protocol and

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hope and pray it will work? Do you throw mud against the wall and pray that it's going to stick?

I don't know, I mean, I think there's a better way. I think there is one that is less guessing and more all-encompassing, that's more meaningful and significant. But to get there, you need to do something very, very specific. To get there, you need to become your own scientist. To develop your own process of evidence gathering and then evidence sorting, so that you become aware of patterns. You can't get to that place without that process. And that process can be very challenging, right? It's labor intensive in many ways.

But a lot of people come to this place after having gone to many different healthcare professionals looking for a fix and then realizing that there isn't a fix. Not that their body is so broken, that there isn't one, it's that they are working at a superficial level. And I don't mean that to sound like they're working at not a meaningful level, it's that they're working at a top level. The problem isn't at that top level, particularly in the persistency of pain scenario. The problem is actually under their level of awareness.

And so by going to all of those other practitioners they are getting some relief, but they're not actually dealing with the issue that actually exists. They're dealing with the one that they think exists. Or exists at a certain level but it's not the level that's contributing to consistent, sustainable change. To get to that place you have to become your own best scientist, your own best detective. Your own capacity for recognizing your own patterns has to be developed, has to be.

When I spoke about this on a previous episode with Stu, my husband, about his psoriasis he outlined the process really, really clearly in an inside, outside, upstairs, downstairs model. Where, you know, he discovered what he was putting on the inside, what he was eating, and how his food was actually being a problem for him in some cases.

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He was also realizing what skin products worked and which didn't, because there's a ton of skin products out there for psoriasis. And then as he got clearer on that he was able to recognize how his mind was playing into the scenario. And as he got clearer on that, he was able to get down to the basement and root things out.

But this was a process, his process of inquiring into his own process. Of him becoming a detective, of him becoming his own scientist. Of him recognizing what was contributing, what was working, what wasn't working, really understanding what he was feeling. And then what he was then becoming aware of so he could see more and more and more data points.

This, as a result, was able to teach him and guide him in the direction of where he is today, which is clear skin. You look at his body, you have no idea that he has psoriasis. But to get there he had to get to the place of recognizing all those data points.

And I think what often happens for people is they find one data point and they want to change it. But they don't look at that data point in the context of the bigger picture. That's where this becomes meaningful. That's where it becomes significant. We can look at two people with multiple sclerosis, and we will do something different with them because they're experiencing it differently.

I mean even with psoriasis, if you look at it from an Ayurvedic perspective, you can have psoriasis that's arising out of a Kapha-like disorder. You can have psoriasis that's resulting out of a Pitta like disorder. You can have psoriasis that's resulting out of a Vata-like disorder. Each of those psoriasis's is going to be manifesting differently through someone's body.

So that's a really, really general example of how a condition is showing up differently for different people. But even to take it a step backward, I remember training a teacher who was working with people in cancer recovery. And she was working with people who all had breast cancer. And

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it was the first class she taught where all the people in the group had had breast cancer. And she was so thankful, because after about eight cycles of teaching people, finally they all had had the same treatment and the same scenario.

Then she came back after a week and she's like, "Oh my God, you know, this person has heart disease. This person has a knee problem. This person gets migraines, and this person has this." Even if it's the same condition that people are coming together about, their expression of it is so different. So again, it's a great example how just because formal evidence is outlining that X percentage of people with ABC symptoms will benefit from XYZ protocol, it doesn't mean that we interpret it as, "Okay, there's enough significance here that we're going to do this 100% of the time." It just won't work.

So then, as the yoga teacher, as the yoga therapist who is supporting my client in getting better, part of my focus is on what to pay attention to. How to support them in gathering that data. How to support them in analyzing that data. How do they figure out what is working and what isn't working? How do they pay attention to what they're feeling? If the issue is in their level of unawareness, it's what they don't see, then how do they see more clearly?

It's not uncommon for a client to come in and say that they really like a juicy stretch that they're doing, say related to their hip. And then as we watch the move, and as they perceive that movement, they're paying a lot of attention on that juicy stretch.

So this is the first place I begin with them in this case. And I'll say to them, "That juicy stretch sensation, I am so aligned with you about how amazing that feels. And it doesn't indicate that you're doing anything right or wrong. Because a juicy stretch is a sensation. How we get into the position to create that juicy stretch, there's a ton of different ways. We can

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compensate like crazy to get into a juicy sensational stretch. And so it's not the stretch that's creating the change, it's how we're moving.”

So for people who are coming to see me, they haven't made that sustainable change. And I'm acknowledging that they love the juicy stretch. And we're discovering what they weren't aware of, which is how they were moving. And more often than not how they're moving has a lot of compensatory pattern.

So if we're relating this to a hip movement, oftentimes their pelvis will be moving when they think their leg bone is moving. Or that they hold their breath when they're moving. Or they have other gripping and bracing patterns through the rib cage or their jaw or their shoulders. They didn't know that before. Then they become aware of it and they go, “Oh, interesting.”

So then I asked them, “Okay, now can you move in a range where those aren't happening? Can you move in a range where there isn't the gripping, or the bracing, or the breath holding, or the pelvis motion?” Maybe not all of them at once, but can they start that?

Then they start to realize that their movement is a lot smaller than they realized. And initially that can be a problem for them because they're thinking, “But I'm not feeling anything. I don't feel any stretch and the movement feels so small.”

And I remind them that it makes sense that the movement is small, because they have sensation and symptoms that are uncomfortable. So those two are often correlated, and that as they start to move better, their sensations and their symptoms are going to start to go down.

Sometimes their brain has a really tough time thinking that the stretch sensation is not the thing to pay attention to because it feels so yummy. And I remind them about how they came seek my services in the first

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place. Is the stretch sensation providing them the relief that they need? And then they realize, “Oh yeah, I haven't had relief for a while.”

And as they go one day at a time moving their body through the practices that I'm showing them around paying attention to how the parts are moving, things start to change. Their mobility improves, their flexibility improves, their stability improves their level of awareness of who they and what they are in space improves, they're able to do more. In some cases, they're able to do a movement like a stretch and experience a stretch sensation.

But now they're not just reliant on the stretch sensation as their measure. They're reliant on how they're actually experiencing their body in space. How they're experiencing their leg bone moving in their pelvis, or their arm bone moving in their shoulder socket. They're experiencing their understanding of their body as a barometer. They've got a much stronger and clearer inner compass. Their awareness is much broader and brighter. Their body is useful to them now. Their internal locus of control has grown, the data they have at their fingertips, they know how to utilize it now.

As someone moves along this process, as someone becomes their own best detective, their own best scientist of gathering the data, of seeing the pattern, of being more able to intervene in a way that connects their body and their mind. They improve their overall neuro developmental feedback mechanisms. They improve their motor control and their coordination. And then they have greater awareness and further clarity on what works and what doesn't work.

They become an even better scientist for themselves and they start shifting up their habits that much more easily. Their bandwidth for themselves as a human being grows, they notice that they're less belligerent on themselves. They berate themselves less, there's a lot more inner peace, there's a lot more bandwidth for their body and their mind to behave the way it behaves.

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It reminds me of a conversation I had with a yoga teacher the other day about how he has a habit of eating ice cream. And his mind kept telling them how much he loved eating ice cream. But his body really didn't like the after effect of eating ice cream. So what was happening on the front end, and what was happening on the back end were different.

So on the front end, he was really wanting the ice cream. But on the back end, he wasn't liking the stomach distress and the mucus. But because he had enough of a barometer, enough of a clarity over his body and mind, he didn't just give up the ice cream, he became more of a detective. More of a scientist around it.

So he would follow his mind and see the desire, consume the ice cream, fully enjoy it. And then experience what happened on the other end. He kept doing that, kept doing that, and kept noticing, and kept noticing. And then one day he noticed that the desire dropped him. He stopped desiring the ice cream, because something inside of them did not want the back-end experience anymore. It wasn't him having to use willpower to stop it in the ice cream, he just came to a place of like, "I don't really want to have the back-end experience anymore." So the desire on the front end faded away.

Here's what's so powerful about this, is when we can give ourselves the space to simply be aware and to connect with ourselves, and not berate ourselves, and hold I guess what we call compassion for ourselves, we give a whole lot of space to experience. And out of that experience, we gather the data and the evidence to give a greater context for who we are and how we live. And we're looking at a process of recovery and of healing that's so paramount, because it's an all of those data points that we can really customize our experience for ourselves.

And whatever the doctor, or the physio, or the craniosacral therapist, or the chiropractor, the osteopath, or the yoga teacher, or the massage therapist, or the myriad other people are saying to us about what we should do, we

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can take that information fully and with such incredible love for them, and care, and honor. We can take that into our own system and say, "All right, will this work for me?"

Because we have developed that own inner compass. We've developed the filter to be able to suss out, does this make sense for what I know about myself? And then make the best step forward based on that decision. It comes from within. It builds our own relationship with ourselves. It builds our ability to be a power with as opposed to a power over and trying to berate our body into a certain state, which doesn't work very well.

So the process of this is this, you are your own best scientist, you are your own best detective. Your job is to gather data and to see what really is working and not working for you. What are you feeling? What are you now aware of? And maybe what are you aware of that you're not aware of? Have an inquiry into your own experience and simply start to notice.

In the spirit of what Stu, my husband, was saying, "What do you notice happens when you put it on the inside? What do you notice on the outside? What do you notice in your own mindset? What are you noticing in how that supports you and covering some of the stuff in the basement that's downstairs?"

Explore all of those questions. What is working? What isn't working? What are you feeling? What are you now aware of? What are you now aware of that you may be not aware of? How does that relate to inside, outside, upstairs, downstairs? How does it relate to the overall context of who you are?

Revealing your inner compass, reconnecting you to your inner compass, that is when evidence truly, truly helps leverage your healing process and takes you up a level into really revealing your own human potential. Allowing for your illness or your injury to become an opportunity for change, an opportunity for growth.

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If this is interesting to you, if you want to take this up a level, you're a health professional and you want to have professional training, you can join me at the therapeutic yoga intensive this month. You can read more at thetherapeuticyogaintensive.com. And if you would like to have one on one sessions with me you can email us at health@functionalsynergy.com and we can have a conversation on how we can work together. Have a great time exploring