

Ep #70: Plantar Fasciitis



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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 Hatley. 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 Hatley.

With this episode of *From Pain to Possibility* I want to get into plantar fasciitis. Given that my clientele is increasingly over the age of 60, with many people in their 70s, I'm finding that more and more plantar fasciitis is an issue that people are coming to me with. Or they've had it for a long period of time, or it's a reoccurring issue that is showing up for any number of reasons.

So it's a topic that becomes important, particularly for someone who's had plantar fasciitis for a long time, it's not resolving, and they're a little annoyed by it. So the first thing to recognize is that plantar fasciitis is an issue on the bottom of the foot. When the tissue on the bottom of the foot like really close to the heel, that's typically where people say that a lot of strain lies in that base of the foot itself.

What I have found is that even though the pain tends to be right at the heel, I find that many people not only have that, but a real tightness through the entire plantar side of the foot towards the toes. And when they wake up in the morning and they take their first steps, it's really painful and really, really, really sore.

What I want to get into is that yes, you want to address what's going on in your foot so you don't have that painful first steps of walking in the morning. But I also want you to get that it's not only about the sole of your foot. To say it more in a humorous way, that plantar fasciitis isn't solely about the sole of your foot.

But what we typically do do is work with the bottom of the foot initially and the foot in general and the ankle, and then start working up the limb towards the hips to gain a solution. But before we actually get into what that solution might be, or at least the exploration which can lead to a solution, what that might be, let's play around a little bit first with the understanding

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of the foot itself. Because when we take a look at the foot there are muscles that are intrinsic to the foot itself, so specifically on the foot itself. And then there are muscles that attach to the calf, but also onto the bottom of the foot.

Now the reason I mention that is because a lot of solutions that you can find through YouTube or elsewhere are about like, "This is what you need to do the bottom the foot." Which is not necessarily wrong.

And because there the tissue from the calf attaches to the bottom and the top of the foot, we also need to address what's going on in through the calf and the shin. That is a really important place to continue to work because of the correlation to the tissue that's both on the calf and shin. And what goes on to the foot.

The other piece that's important to do is to understand this idea of load. And if you think about yourself standing on a scale, and there is a number that the scale reads. And if you were to move around that scale's number is going to go up because there's now more load and force being dissipated through your body.

Now, if you were to hold some groceries in your arms, and obviously that load is higher. Now, if you jump on the scale with the groceries in your arms, that number is going to go up even more. So the question that we have to ask ourselves as we're starting to consider what's going on with our feet and how to support our feet, is how are we absorbing and dissipating that load?

What is the integrity of our whole body of how that force, our body weight and gravity, how that moves from our upper body to our lower body to our feet. How it moves from the feet back up to the upper body. How do we move that load from the one side of the body to the other side of the body?

Think about when we walk, or when we run, or when we climb stairs. How is that tissue really absorbing the load and the forces? How is it transferring

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it and how is it dissipating it? So basically how are the forces moving through your body?

And we have to appreciate that there is this framework, this integrity, that's our body. And if that framework is somewhat disrupted, then where we might feel the issue is in our feet. Not necessarily, there's some people who feel or their SI joints. Others who will feel it up in the ribs. And then others, maybe like you, are feeling it in your feet.

So there is a piece that's important about understanding how the feet really do punctuate the posture. They are the piece that touch the floor. There's a lot of load when our integrity is not good that can land in the feet. And so it's important to understand how the feet are this grounding mechanism. They are a base of support for sure. And how we manage that load is a huge component to the recovery of your feet.

The bottom line though to this, before I move into the next section of this, is that we have to recognize that the pain isn't where the problem is. So where you might be having the strain in your feet could actually simply be the expression of the problem. Particularly, if you're having long-term issues with your feet, that it's likely not the foot itself. That there might be something further up the chain that is contributing to it.

So an example of this is if you take a look at the pelvis. And the pelvis, I like to call is the platform through which your leg bones swing. Think about it when you're walking, the leg bone swings through that pelvis and that foot lands. And if there's not some inherent stability through that pelvis, then how that leg bone is going to swing is not going to be as optimal. And then how that foot is going to land on the floor is also not going to be optimal.

And so then what might happen is your toes might have to clench or the tissue has to clench, just the way the load then is coming into the foot. And then the way that the forces from the ground are coming back up into the foot might be a problem.

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So a key piece here is to first become aware of these things. Become aware of what's going on with your feet. Become aware of what's going on with your hips. Noticing what's going on with your breath. And how these points all contribute to what's going on with your foot.

Now when we take a look at the foot and we get an understanding of it is we can divide the foot into three sections. Where we've got the hind part of the foot, which is where your heel is. We have the middle part of the foot, which is where the tarsals are, and then the metatarsals to the phalanges or the toes, which is the front part.

And we don't just sort of land from heel and go to toe in a one plane motion. It's just not a flexion and extension of that ankle joint. There's a rolling through of the foot. So we actually move the foot through multiple planes as we take that step. And if we don't have that ability, that suppleness through the foot, then that can also be impactful for what goes on with the foot.

So think about it when you take that first step in the morning and how that foot is moving. That could just be a whole lot of stiffness and lack of suppleness. Sometimes I like to use the word stickiness, even though it might not feel sticky to some people, it just feels just really awful.

However it is that you describe it, when we can start to improve some of that, it can be helpful. Which is one reason why a lot of people, a lot of practitioners will recommend rolling your foot out on a ball before you actually get up in the morning. Or utilizing one of those wooden rollers that have the knobbles on it to roll your foot out before you get up in the morning.

And just by massaging it out with a ball or even with your hands as you take the steps forward, it's not quite as sore. And that can at least start you on your way. But understand that's just an initial kind of fix. But it doesn't actually shift up the rest of the piece of the puzzles, right? It's one of those pieces. So it's playing around with what else you can do with that bottom of your foot to be able to bring some more suppleness to it.

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Now what's curious, before I go into some of the movements, I'm actually going to give you a link in the show notes that you can go to my YouTube channel and actually play around with some of these movements. What's interesting is that as I mentioned, I've got an older clientele who are 60 plus. And that most of the issues around plantar fasciitis occur between 40 and 60, but I've also seen them quite a bit at 70.

And what a lot of the research will say is that plantar fasciitis is related to activities that put a lot of strain on the heel, which is not untrue. But I would say that that's not always the case. Because if it really was from activities that are putting strain on the heel, a lot more people would have a lot more plantar fasciitis. But that's not the actual case.

So that's why it becomes important to look at the overall integrity of your structure and how you're bearing that load. If you can remember what I mentioned about the scale and knowing that your feet punctuate your posture and are the foundation. How are you managing the load further up the chain and through that pelvis and through your torso so that your feet don't have to bear the brunt of it. So when you can absorb the load better, then you will move better and your feet will feel better.

So when you're thinking about movements then, there are some very basic movements you can do in addition to rolling on the ball. You can get your thumbs into the bottom of your feet, you can pull your toes, you can move that forefoot or move that heel around.

And if you go to the show notes, there are links to my YouTube channel where I do talk about some of the movements you can do for your feet and create some more of that suppleness and get an experience for what your feet feel like and your body feels like when you do this.

And I'm being distinct there when I talk about feet and body because you can start moving your feet and be like, "Oh, this is so sore." So now the breath is being held, the ribs are tight, your jaw is tight, and there's a lot kind of been held up. And so when your body responds in that way, that

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becomes really interesting. And likewise, how your brain is responding and your thought pattern is responding, that becomes really interesting.

So then how you're working with that foot and the reverberation that you now feel further up in your body and your brain becomes really curious. So now you can start to work with that, what you notice, and quiet what is not working and then nurture what is working so that you can have more rest in that foot, more relief. And then just keep growing that stamina around it.

So things like I've mentioned, pulling the toes, maybe putting your fingers between each of your toes. You could even use a tool that I absolutely love called Joy-a-Toes, I'll put that in the show notes. I make absolutely not a cent off of mentioning the Joy-a-Toes, but I do think that they are really remarkable for helping to spread the toes. And they're something you can wear around the house.

They've got more than one product now. But there's one which is a flat surface that when you put them on your foot, you can easily walk around the house with them, you can even do a yoga practice with them. And work with balls and roll out on a golf ball that might be a little bit hard, but also a massage ball. Or if you want to get into a lacrosse ball or a floor hockey ball, those are kind of hard.

But if you massage that with a tennis ball even, all of those can be a way of getting some relief and just getting to know your foot. Of how that tension is in your foot. Because sometimes that in of itself can be really enlightening, just to get a sense of how much tension is there. And then as you enable some more relief, you really can shift up the experience.

You can also move into massaging out your calf, and getting into your hips and starting to move your leg bone in your hip socket. And just noticing where you want to compensate because dollars to donuts, one of my favorite sayings, is that if you've got some foot stuff, you likely have some hip stuff because of the correlation between how the leg bone moves in the pelvis and how the foot is at the bottom of that kinetic chain.

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So when we're lacking in stability in through the pelvis and the legs, we can often sometimes see an issue through that foot. And I know I said often and sometimes, because some people with pelvic instability issues have piriformis issues or bursitis or knee issues. So I wanted to correct myself there, what I will say that I consistently see is those people with foot issues like plantar fasciitis consistently have issues in their hips.

So as you explore the way your leg bones move in your pelvis, and again in the YouTube channel, you'll find some great links to that you can explore that and just start to see how these things relate. How your core and your breath relates because those can be held, like I mentioned, like when you're taking those first steps and it's really hard it's like, "Whoa!" Right? You're holding yourself up so that you don't have to bear the weight through your foot.

Now what's curious and I love talking about myofascial meridians. And Tom Myers, M-Y-E-R-S, was the structural integrator who really has popularized these meridians, has one meridian if you want to look it up on Google. And again, I'll put this one in the show notes as well, which is the superficial back line. And what really is cool about this is that you can visually see how the muscles of the bottom of the foot, the myofascial chain connects in and around the top of the head.

So issues in the back of your neck or through the back muscles, if you release up through there sometimes you can get some freedom in through the bottom of the foot, which is really interesting. And to many people it can be a bit shocking even, when they start to get some freedom in that way because their brain is like, "But wait a second, why do I have so much soreness down in my foot when one of the issues might be up in my rib cage?"

I know, it's strange. But again, if you're like holding yourself up when there is tightness, and you can't bear a load through your foot, that is a contributor, right? That's a correlating pattern. So if you just kind of start to notice the 3D structure that you are and how the integrity of your structure

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gets modified based on what's going on through your feet, it starts to make more and more and more sense of what's going on.

So the idea here is like to be able to zoom in to your feet and zoom out and just get a better feeling sense of what you're experiencing. Because each person that I've worked with, even though they often have correlating patterns elsewhere, and there's a strong correlation to the hips, how it happens at the hips is different. What we see and shows up at the hips is different, so you yourself get to explore this.

And again, I want to mention that I've got some great videos on YouTube that will highlight this and the links are in the show notes. So if you want to explore this further and take it to the next step, then it would be a great place for you to explore.

And then if you want to take this even another step further, I've recently done a course for Yoga U. And it was a two part two hour course with Yoga U where I talk a lot about this. You get a practice session to explore, I show you the meridians, I show you the muscles. I show you some of these common patterns that we see with people.

And you can get access to that through their website. And again, I'll have the link in the show notes where you can download it for yourself and have that material. And that will really complement what you also find over on YouTube.

If there's questions from this and you want to take this to the next step even and you want to explore with me what's going on with your feet and you want to work with me, whether it's in a private one on one scenario or in a group scenario, send me an email. You can reach me at health@functionalsynergy.com. Myself and my team, we'd be delighted to talk with you to support you so that you can reduce that pain and get on with your life and enjoying it without that yucky yucky foot pain.

All right, you have a great time exploring. I'd be happy to work with you further.

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