

Ep #101: Listening to Your Body



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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.

Welcome and welcome back. With this episode I want to dig into a commonly used line in the fitness and the wellness industries, which is listen to your body. And the line comes from a really, really good place. It's meant to be helpful to clients. And what I find more often is that it's doing a disservice because the clients don't know how to listen. They don't know what they're listening for. And in turn, they don't know what to do with what they might be perceiving.

I've had teachers come to me for professional training, because of this exact sentence. Because they're utilizing it in those times where they don't know what to do for a student. Someone's come to a group class, they've got back pain or SI joint pain, shoulder issues, they have MS, they've been through cancer, any number of things. The teacher doesn't know what to do, they don't know how to help them so their go to default line is just listen to your body, follow what your body is doing.

So all from a really good place, but sometimes unhelpful. Sometimes vague because we can utilize these lines in the hope that they're serving. But I really love to come from this place of okay, it's great to hope, but let's actually get results so that we can see if what we're saying is actually landing and getting the results that are wanted and desired.

So with this episode I want to speak about how to listen and what you're listening for. And then what to do with that information and why it's important to do something. See, the context of this is that symptoms are, yes, problems to be solved, for sure. And there's a message in the symptom.

So we don't want to just obliterate the symptom, we actually want to understand what the message is. Because if we don't understand it, it's just going to come back. And often it's going to come back stronger in order to

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get you to hear it. So the classic line that can also show up around listening to your body is listen to the body when it whispers so you don't have to hear the screams.

So a lot of what I do with my clientele, both as my teachers that I'm training as well as my private client tell is to help them get to that whisper place so they can pay attention and then do something at that level. They can act on whisper, not on scream.

So let's begin here, like what do I mean by whisper and scream? I like to use the traffic light analogy to start with because it's very, very clear. Red stop, yellow warning sign, green good to go. The people who come to see me are in red, their life is constricted enough by the symptoms that they're experiencing.

Now, oftentimes they've had gains, but the gains are not sustainable. So they understand a little bit about what's contributing to the pain, but they can't quite figure out why it just does not go away completely. And so they find themselves in this cyclical pattern of pain. My job then is to support them in recognizing what the yellow is. What's that whisper that's going to lead to the red?

Now there's something I need to share about my clientele and about my professional trainees that I think is important in this dialogue. And that is that my clientele are very logical information processors, right? They know how to gather large amounts of data, find the patterns, create a solution. They're very, very good cognitively at doing that.

They're also intuitive. So there are times where information kind of comes through them, they know the answer without needing the evidence and boom, they know the solution. So for a lot of their lives, they've done a great job at staying up in their brain and out of their body. Until now, which is why they've come to seek my help, because they aren't getting the solution that they know, the data isn't working for them. And yet innately and intuitively they know there's an answer to their problem.

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So because they haven't paid so much attention to their body, coming into the space of listening to their body is difficult. So again, it's why the traffic light analogy is so great. I can show them, all right, you're at red right now. The aim is to bring you to yellow, the aim is for you to figure out what these yellows are that are contributing to red.

This leads us to the first session. In the first session I provide a lot of education on how their body objectively moves. How their leg bone moves in their pelvis, how their arm moves in their shoulder socket, how their pelvis and spine move, ribcage and pelvis move. Like how the segments of their body move.

And I'm teaching them this from an objective standpoint. How do these segments actually move? So they're on a Zoom screen, I'm on a Zoom screen, we can see the screen, they can see their body parts moving. And I'm also asking them what they feel, what they're somatically and kinesthetically experiencing. I'm helping them get language of what's going on in their body.

Helping someone how to feel to experiencing feeling sensation in their body is so incredibly vital. Particularly, particularly if there's been consistent and persistent symptoms that someone knows can get better, but they haven't figured out how. Oftentimes the missing link is somatically and kinesthetically connecting to what's going on in the body.

So in that first session we're exploring the objective nature of how their body actually moves. We both see what's going on, it's very factual. And they're subjectively telling me their experience of what's going on in their body. What's strengthening, what's stretching, what's straining, what's gripping, I'll throw bracing in there, maybe breath holding. They're tuning into what their body is doing while they're moving or not moving.

I'm also asking them a bunch of questions about what's going on in their brain. So then we start to recognize the sensation of their brain, what I like to say about it is like what they're thinking. I'm starting to learn about the texture and the content of their thinking. Because their thinking is going to

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have an impact on their feeling, and their feeling is going to have an impact on their thinking.

So the first step of this process is understanding the texture of what your sensations are and being able to name them. So it could even be that a particular sensation feels like a stretch sensation, it might even feel burning, or numbing, or straining, or gripping, or the myriad numbers of words to describe things.

If you can start that process and begin to note what those are, I've had people who write it down in a list. I've had them write it out on a body diagram. Just make a note of it in a journal. But to start to get some data about what it is that your body feels.

Now, some people will say, "Well, why would I focus my attention on these sensations that are sounding kind of pain like, like negative? Like strain, and grip, and brace, and this and that. And the reason is, is because you want to get an understanding of the lay of the land. You need to recognize what reality is because when we know what reality is, now we can shift it.

This is not something that I ask people to spend a ton of time on because what ends up happening is that as somebody moves better, as they breathe better, as they become more comfortable in stillness, those sensations often change. They change in a loudness, they change in texture, they start to shift out of being more of what we would consider negative to something that's more positive, like ease, space, lightness, less pain. They start to notice them in a different way.

But we need to set out where the reality is. And yes, it might be uncomfortable at first, and it's some process that I can help people through. But to get that sense of reality in addition to how your body is objectively moving. Because here's what's really cool, when you can start to pair between and match and connect your sensation in your body and the way that you're moving, you can get a lot of really great data.

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Most people, when they start to have compensation patterns or borrow from one area to another area to try and make their system stronger, which by the way actually makes your system weaker. When someone compensates, you often will find that there is a straining, bracing, gripping, painful sensation that goes along with it.

So when you can start to tune in to the objective movement and what the objective movement feels like and then recognize how that correlates to the sensations that I've just mentioned, then you can start to gather an understanding of the patterning of your movement and it becomes really quite powerful. So that's the first step.

The first step is to merely notice what sensations exist in your body when you move and to develop an objective understanding about how you move. How your arm bone moves in the shoulder socket. How your leg bone moves in your hip socket. What happens with your pelvis relative to your ribcage? And start to discern what those pieces are doing.

Now, if you want ideas on how to do this, what I really recommend that you do is you can either go to my Facebook page, my Facebook business page, we'll put that in the show notes. You can go to my YouTube channel, and there are lots of videos in those channels, they're the same videos in both. I created a whole bunch of Facebook Lives during the pandemic and we've moved those over to the YouTube channel now. But really, you can find them there.

And you can just go into there, just pick videos, and just explore them. I'll also put some sample videos in the show notes for you, some really basic like here is the back to basics experience of your body movement. So you can start to get some data on how your body moves. Okay? Both on Facebook Live and on YouTube, that's a place to begin.

If you find that this really resonates with you, you can reach out to us as well, for private sessions or for professional training. Just send us a note to health@functionalsynergy.com, we'd be happy to have a conversation with you to help you with wherever you are at in the process.

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Okay, so the first piece I've mentioned is just tuning into this relationship between the objective movement and the sensations that you experience. The second part to explore is noting those times when you have relief. This is really powerful by the way. Notice the times when you have relief.

Maybe it's after a yoga practice. Maybe it's after a breathing practice. Maybe it's when you've been out for a walk, or maybe it's after you've fed yourself, or drunk water, or the many other things that you've experienced. Maybe it's after you've had a rest or had a sleep. But notice the moments when your symptoms have abated or have reduced even a little bit and pay attention to what that feels like.

So often people will say, well, there is no pain, or the symptoms are down, or the symptoms don't exist. And there's a lot of negative words, like don't, they're not, they don't exist, they're not here. All good, it's good to notice it. But I want you to notice what's actually in existence when the symptoms are not there.

If the symptoms are not there, what is there? Okay, here's why this is important. The first is, is sometimes what happens is when people are experiencing the symptoms as being not there, they're actually bracing in anticipation for them coming back. So they're not really in that free place yet.

Now, one way to come into that place is to notice what is in existence there. So if the symptoms aren't there, what is there? Is it freedom? Is it ease? Is it lightness? Is it better breath? Is it clarity of mind? What are the sensations that are there? So the symptoms have abated somewhat, either a lot or a little, okay, now what exists with those symptoms that are gone or less than?

All right, now here's the next part, which is also super important. Notice, when those feelings, those sensations start to fade. So here's how I say this to my clients, when they have finished their session and they feel better I say to them, "Okay, this feeling is going to fade. I want you to notice what arises as it fades."

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Now, often they'll look at me at first and say, "What?" And I'm like this hasn't gone away yet, we need to build the neuromuscular patterns so that this does become more sustainable. So the key is, is to notice, first of all, that the symptoms have faded. They're either not there or they're less, then notice what exists in that space. What actually exists and not the negative like the symptoms are not there.

What actually exists? Is it ease? Is it lightness? Is it better breath? Is it clarity of mind? What's there? Name that and then notice when that which you've named starts to fade. Because that's going to be the signal that your yellow light is emerging. When it fades, the yellow light is emerging. The yellow light is letting you know that the red is coming. Right, you just don't have the stamina yet for it. It's all good. So when you notice that yellow light is coming on, that's now when you can intervene.

Here's why this is important, you now notice the yellow light. It's not going to be loud. It's not going to be dancing bears and disco balls. It's going to be really quiet. You may even blow right past it. Or you might say, "Ah this is not a big deal, I can keep going. I can keep working." I can keep ABC-ing, D-ing, E-ing, whatever. I can get through this thing. Oh, just one more block. One more this, one more that, right? We all do it as human beings, right? It's not getting that much in the way, this is definitely not the yellow light.

And then the red light comes. No problem, just notice that there was that yellow light. So then do the exercises, do your program, do whatever you need to do, come back to that place where you have less symptoms. And then name it again. All right, I now have less symptoms or the symptoms are not there. Okay, what now exists? I remember this feeling. Here's this ease feeling again. Here's this freedom feeling again. Here's this clarity of mind feeling again. Here's this XYZ feeling again. Name that. Okay, now you get another shot.

All right, notice when that feeling starts to fade. Now, if you're anything like my clientele or my trainees, then you'll be kind of annoyed, or agitated, or like, "Really? This thing? Are you serious? This is the yellow light? I really

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want to do more.” And then you'll cycle through that again. It's okay, you might blow by it, and then the red light will come.

And then you'll circle back, you'll intervene. And then now this time, likely, you'll go, “Oh, this is the yellow light, maybe I'll intervene here.” And then you intervene, and you come back to that good feeling again, and it's like, “Oh, okay.” Now your brain has the evidence that when you intervene earlier at the yellow light, then you start to feel better. So then that yellow light, even though it's not becoming any louder, it becomes clearer to your brain and then you start to intervene faster. So then going to red happens a lot less.

So let me recap for a moment here. So the first piece of this was to name what your experiences are. Is it breath holding? Is it strain, stretch, strengthen? What are the words that you would experience when you're doing your practice, when you're out for your walk? What are those things? Can you name them?

Then when you have those times of relief, notice what it was that contributed to the relief. Name what that relief actually feels like, not just that the symptoms are not there or that you're feeling better. Name what that feeling better is, and then start to notice when that better feeling starts to fade.

And you may miss it, it's okay. Most of my clients miss it the first time around and then they start to pick up on it. And then they gather the evidence for their brain to say, “Ah, when I intervene earlier, although I don't want to do it earlier because I really want to do this other thing. But when I do it earlier, look at the result that I get.” That provides clear evidence to your brain that this is the signal to pay attention to.

See, why this is important is because we can't keep moving in pain and get out of pain. And if we notice what the message is from the whisper, like this is now what we need to do to intervene, and we don't actually listen to it, like we don't actually take action on it, then it's just going to come back

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around louder the next time in order to get your attention because ultimately, we are more than just this physical body and a brain.

There's a consciousness inside each of us. And we call it, depending on what we believe in what we follow, we call that consciousness something different depending on our beliefs. But all of us have that and our symptoms are messengers from that consciousness. We don't need to go deep into that conversation to get better though. We simply need to understand that symptoms are something to solve and they are messengers. And when we pay attention to them and act on them, they start to fade.

And the more that we can intervene at a whisper level, the more we build up better neuromuscular patterns, the more clarity we have. The more connection we have with both our body and mind. And the better that feedback mechanisms are between our body and mind because as we know, our body and mind are one in the same, they're well connected. Our body feeds our mind and our mind feeds our body.

Sometimes this process can feel a bit difficult. But what I can say to be true is this, as you discern what these sensations are and how these sensations around the strength feeling, the stretch feeling, the bracing feeling, the gripping feeling, the burning feeling, the numb feeling, the breath holding grippy feeling, the more you can tune into those feelings, recognize them in relation to your symptoms, recognize them in relationship to your objectivity of your movement patterns, what starts to happen is that you can discern more clearly what these messages are.

You can decode the symptoms so much more clearly and you have less fight with your body. It's like your body comes on board. And when you do that, when that happens, there's so much less exhaustion. Such less tiredness and a lot more ease.

If this is of interest to you, if it's resonating with you and you want more help, send me an email, health@functionalsynergy.com. It would be a pleasure to serve you. And also circle back to those show notes to see the

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Facebook Live links and the YouTube links for you to explore your body and movement, how you're breathing, how you're feeling, and how it's all related. These are the first steps to listening to your body and supporting yourself in getting you to where you want to go. Happy exploring.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com, we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com, looking forward to hearing from you.