

Ep #128: How To Improve Your Range of Motion with Ease and Not Force



Full Episode Transcript

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 share with you how I help clientele improve their range of motion. And the reason being is because I get this question a lot from trainees when they first start to work with me and from some clients.

So it's an important one because as you know if you've listened to this podcast is I'm a really big believer that if you want to increase your function, ease needs to be present. And when ease is present then things like better strength, better stability, and better range improve.

I'm not an improve range at all costs, but rather as we improve function something like range does arise. So that's really one of the key things to keep in mind, is I'm not typically going after improving someone's range unless they are specifically asking me, they want that. But rather I'm helping them improve function, and as they improve function oftentimes improved range emerges.

So that's an important context within which we are talking about this today because so often people are pushing themselves forcefully to try and make progress and they're not getting it and they're wondering why. And that's what we're talking about today.

Now, if you really resonate with what I'm sharing, there's two things you can do. The first is head over to my YouTube channel, Susi Hatley, take a look at the videos there and they'll give you lots of great ideas to explore for yourself and with your students/clients. The second is that you'll probably love my certification program if you're a health professional, and we dig into all the stuff and help you train up to be super amazing at working with these concepts with your clientele.

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And then if you are someone who wants to improve their range and you're struggling and you want my help, then just send us an email at health@functionalsynergy and we'd be happy and would love, love, love to work with you to get you to where you want to be.

All right, so let's dig in. When people come to see me there are two things that are often present, pain and compensation. Pain because that's what they know me as someone who can help. I can help people who have pain reduce and eradicate pain. And the second is they're human beings, which part of being a human being is to compensate.

We all compensate, that's just a human phenomenon. And when I can help my clientele reduce their compensation patterns I also help them reduce their pain. And the reason for it, I believe, is because I'm helping to improve the biomechanical efficiency. Forces move better through their body and they're better absorbed, better dissipated. And the tissue that is meant to be working is working. So now we just use way less energy and way more efficiency to get the job done.

Now one of the side effects I could call it, or one of the realizations that people have when they're doing this is that their movement becomes a lot smaller. And that's what leads to this question because they're a bit gobsmacked when they start to reduce their compensation patterns what their range actually is. And they're just surprised.

So let me give you an example. Let's say that somebody is trying to improve the range of their hips, say they have osteoarthritis or they're in the late stages of recovery from a hip surgery, for example. Or they just are really limited in their hip for whatever reason.

I'm assessing their movement patterns and what I'll typically see is that they're doing any or all of the above, which is gripping their eyes, their jaw, holding their tongue, gripping in their shoulders, or moving their neck, or moving their chin. Or gripping in their ribs, or moving their ribs about when they're meant to be moving their hip. Bracing in their abdomen, maybe

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tucking or tilting their pelvis or laterally shifting their pelvis. Or moving at their knee or gripping in their feet, or curling their toes.

Something of that sort is what we'll often see happen. And then I'll ask them to do the movement again, but to do the movement without all or some of that compensation pattern. And that's when they start to realize, "Oh, I don't have very much range here." It's like, ta-da, that's probably what's contributing to why you're feeling what you're feeling and why you're not making the progress. So now you're aware of this, now we can get going.

So that's the first big one, I help people become aware of what they're not aware of so that they can get a lot clearer on the problem that is and that actually exists, rather than the problem that they think exists. Because when you're working at the problem that you think exists, that's typically when you get into a lot of these compensation patterns, or at least don't address the compensation patterns that are.

I'm going to give you a few examples of how this plays out. So there is a movement we call figure four, I sometimes call it ankle to knee. And what I'll often see people doing in order to try and make a bigger stretch happen is they'll take one hand and they'll push their leg away from their body. So their ankle, let's say their left ankle is up onto their right knee and they take their left of right hand and put it on that left thigh and they push that thigh away.

So they're passively moving that leg. And because they're getting a stretch, in their mind they're thinking, "Aha, I'm doing something good for me." Because there's an assumption that when you get a stretch sensation that something good must be happening.

And the reality is, is that the stretch sensation doesn't actually give you an indication of whether you're doing something good or not good for yourself. It merely is a sensation, that's it. We can compensate our way, we can grip, and tuck, and hold, and move our body in any which way and get a stretch

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sensation and it doesn't mean we're doing something right or wrong, helpful or unhelpful for ourselves. It's just a sensation.

So when we can actually tune in to the actual leg bone movement in the pelvis, take the hand out of it, take the external out of it and then simply focus on that leg moving in the hip, that's when things really can start to change because now it's like, "Aha, okay, my leg isn't moving very much." And then in that case I might do one of two things.

One is that I might have them roll their hip out with a massage ball or a tennis ball so they can gain some awareness, maybe get a little bit of release inside or around that hip joint, and then bring them into the figure four movement.

Or I'll put a TheraBand around the leg, give a little more resistance to this and then they'll push against that TheraBand. And then something, because there's that awareness that they have to use a bit of extra effort, but not force, they can tune more into how their leg is moving. So they can focus their awareness much more effectively. And then they start to go, "Oh, that's how I move my leg in the hip socket."

Another thing I might do if a ball is not warranted or the TheraBand is not warranted is, let's say again the right leg is up onto the left knee. I might ask them to place their right hand down and around the right hip, so kind of touching the glutes, if that's comfortable for them. Some people can reach, depending on the length of their arm, they can actually reach the gluteal fold where the bum meets the leg so to speak. Or they can even get a whisper of their hand over there or their fingers over there.

Then I can focus their attention right in that area and they can start to get that range because their focus is there and where our focus goes so does awareness. And then where our awareness goes attention grows, energy flows and we often see the movement begin to improve. Things start to just loosen up a little bit in there and can free up.

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Whether it's actually loosening or not I can't say for sure, but we start to see a smoothness and a coordination beginning to happen because we're actually focusing on the area that needs to be focused on while breathing easy. While settling out those other compensatory patterns that aren't actually needed.

So if the intercostal muscles are not needed to move the leg bone in the hip socket, when they're settled out now we can actually focus on the hip socket. We know the jaw is not needed to move the leg bone in the hip socket, so when we can settle out the jaw then we can actually get to work on that tissue in and around that hip socket, right?

So we get to actually focus in on and give the nervous system the stimulus we really want to give it. When we give the nervous system the stimulus, it responds in kind. So if we overuse or just use our jaw to move our hip, then our nervous system says, "Oh, okay, this is what hip movement is, clench jaw, move hip." If we want to improve that we've got to give a different stimulus.

We've got to ask that jaw to relax and so then we start to change up the input, the output becomes different. And initially it can be somewhat difficult because we're not used to moving in those small ways. But when we get that movement pattern more coordinated and smoother and practice that, we get more coordination and smoothness and less compensation. And that's the progress we get.

I sometimes liken it to spending and saving money. So if you're spending money all the time, well that's the result you're going to get. If you're saving money then you're going to have a different result, right? Much like if you used to be a saver and then all of a sudden you start spending, that change will lead to a certain result. Or if you were a big spender and then you start to save, that will lead to a result.

So that's where I want you to kind of play with this idea. I recognize that in some part of our brain it seems a little strange because we've been so

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trained for so many decades about no pain no gain and to force ourselves to do something to progress. Not just in movement, but in many walks of our life.

I'm not saying to never force yourself. What I'm saying is when we're looking at improving the range of our hip joint, when we force ourselves typically there's compensatory pattern involved. Typically there's inefficient movement patterns, typically there's poor biomechanical patterns. And when we can dial that back, now we can start to make improvements because we're focused on the tissue we want to focus on.

So here are some things that you can try. The next time you are lying on your back and you're moving into a hamstring release, in yoga we call it Supta Padangusthasana. What I would love for you to notice is what happens as you bring your leg toward your belly. So bring the knee to your belly typically, and then you take the leg straight up towards the sky or moving to a straighter position.

And then notice, if you move that leg bone, does your pelvis go with it? And I want you to notice what happens when you keep your pelvis quiet and just move that leg bone. And then notice what else you're doing in your body as you do that movement, jaw tension, neck tension, any extraneous movement. And the biggie here is quieting that pelvis motion.

The second movement to pay attention to if you do happy baby, oftentimes, when people reach for their feet or their shins what they're doing is lifting their pelvis over lifting through their shoulders. So can you grasp gently your feet or your shins or your calves without tucking that pelvis, without the sacrum coming off, but also without forcing the sacrum to stay on the ground, and without reaching the shoulders way off the floor? Okay, notice if you can do that. And then notice what happens. What happens to your movement patterns?

You'll discover more about what's contributing to the range of motion that you have, and it might actually shift in the very session that you're exploring

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this. You might notice a shift in pain, you might notice a shift of range, you might notice a shift in sensation. But just tune in to what you notice and then practice this over the next week. And then let me know what occurs. Feel free to email me at health@functionalsynergy, let me know what happens when you move in a range that's much more appropriate and has more ease.

And then if you want more ideas, as I mentioned at the top of the episode, is head over to my YouTube channel at Susi Hately and see what other videos that are there and explore the way that I'm teaching and how I'm guiding people. And then focus your attention to your body in the range that actually exists and do your best to quiet some of those other compensatory patterns.

And again, I would love to know what happens. Just send me an email to health@functionalsynergy.com. I think you might be pleasantly surprised at what occurs in terms of feelings of rest, in feelings of recovery, in feelings of ease, in feelings of reduction of pain, in improvements of strength, of stability, of responsiveness, of agility, and of nimbleness. Practice for a week and let me know what happens.

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 where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.