

# Ep #171: Fundamentals of Getting Out of Pain - What Do I Mean By Healing is Possible?



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hatelty**

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## Ep #171: Fundamentals of Getting Out of Pain - What Do I Mean By Healing is Possible?

**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.

Welcome and welcome back. With this episode I'm exploring the healing process and what it is that I mean by healing being possible. There are a couple of reasons for this particular episode, and the first is that I'm on my way to finishing a book, *From Pain to Possibility*, which I will admit has been one heck of a journey. Which that journey will be a subject of another episode down the road.

But it's been a book that's been a combination of just difficult and a struggle and hitting up against a lot of walls. Part of why it's been so tough is that putting language to a process that is very non cookie cutter, that's very nonlinear is challenging. But I've come into different ways of exploring this and it's starting to open up a little bit more and I'm finding more attraction.

I think a key reason for this is because it's one thing to teach someone how to reduce and eradicate physical symptoms of pain, and to experience autoimmune flares a whole lot less, it's a whole other thing to teach someone about what it is that I'm doing.

So in the first, when I'm teaching my client they are experiencing the process. I'm guiding them through a process. Whereas the latter is teaching someone about the process, which really ultimately has to be experienced. It's one of the reasons why my intensive trainings, the Therapeutic Yoga intensive that I ran just a couple weeks ago, when I was offering it up on the podcast and explaining it I was saying this is a somatic embodied experience, it has to be experienced.

Because if you're helping people reduce or eradicate persistent symptoms of pain, you have to understand the process from a somatic, embodied place. It can't just be a cognitive experience. I mentioned this to one of my clients really recently when I was sharing a bit of my struggle. His words to

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me were, “It’s a little like trying to explain falling in love to someone who hasn’t fallen in love or been in love,” and I’ll even add fallen out of love.

It’s a difficult thing to explain when you haven’t had the lived experience. You can’t fake something you haven’t experienced. So how do you explain something that hasn’t been experienced? How do you explain something to somebody else who hasn’t experienced it? How do you explain something to somebody else when they haven’t experienced it?

So the first step in my mind then is when I train my teachers, as an example, is that they need to experience the process. It has to be coming from a body place combined with cognitive understanding. So you can imagine then how I’ve hit up against what I’m now seeing as perceived limitations in the writing of a process that truly has to be experienced.

And it’s something that I’m working through over the next few months of really being able to bring words to the experience through the use of story, through the use of metaphor and other ways of being able to have a reader be able to experience what it is that I’m sharing so that they can have those moments of like clunk, those positive clunk moments.

Which leads to the second reason for this episode. A lot of people ask me what do I specifically mean by healing? Do I mean curing, or something else? Do the symptoms go away and never come back? This is what I want to explore in this episode. And as a caveat, or an additive depending on how you want to see it, as I get into the words here as I share this process with you, as I share this episode with you, I have an invitation or an offer.

And that is to notice what you are feeling within as you listen. Notice if what I’m offering and speaking about resonates with you. Feel for the experience. Because I find that people who benefit from what I share, whether they’re the client who has persistent physical pain, whether they have autoimmune flares that they would really love to get a handle on, or whether they’re the health professional who are looking for certification training.

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These folks that it really resonates with, they innately know that this is right for them. They just know. There's this connection, the vibe, what I like to call the round peg in the round hole. Those moments that we've all experienced that I even mentioned a few sentences ago that are just right. They're like, "Ah, yes, this is it." Where there's no forcing, no imposing.

And I'll say that we've all had those moments. Those aha moments like, "Yes, this is it." There's just a fundamental knowing, even when you have no idea how or why. So that's what I want you to pay attention to. Notice the resonance inside of yourself. So with that, let's go.

I'll begin with that healing is often not experienced as a linear journey, though when we look back in hindsight, we may very well see some very significant milestones that do indeed look linear. But that's all hindsight. Sometimes it can feel circular, spiral, or even a bit all over the place, perhaps even messy. And I will offer up that it's not any of those things sometimes.

So my invitation to you is to leave those images aside. The images of linearity, circular, spiral, messiness, just leave those aside for a moment. It's not that they're wrong, it's more that I want to offer a different idea. The idea is that healing is often invisible. The process of recovery from moving from a state of persistent physical pain or other persistent state of symptoms often cannot be seen.

And I believe there are at least two reasons for this, and I'll talk about these two reasons, I'm sure there are more. The first one is due to what we've been taught to pay attention to. The reality is that most of us have not been taught to pay attention to the symptoms or sensations of our body. In fact, we've been taught to minimize them or even ignore them, that they're not important.

Even the other day during a pranayama class that I'm a student in, the teacher, a really smart, amazing teacher who I love, said to the group as a

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whole, “Ignore what your body is saying. There are all sorts of sensations that are in your body, and they don’t mean anything.”

Now, in truth he’s not entirely wrong. And we’ll dig into this comment in an upcoming episode. There is something to what he is offering. And yet, here’s where we get into trouble, if I could call it that, or where it’s really tricky, is that so many people will take those words, “ignore what your body is saying,” and they will take those words literally. And if I could add in an aside, we’ll put little brackets here, it’s a key reason why pain has been so rampant in the yoga practice.

And yet here’s the thing, when I teach my clients how to pay attention to and what to pay attention to regarding the sensations and symptoms that show up in their body, there is a clarity and a connection and a confidence that arises. They start to see that their body has a language and these sensations are indicators and guideposts. They are significant. They are important. And they do have meaning.

The second is what many of us are taught to focus on, especially for those folks who have persistent symptoms of physical pain. And they’re taught to manage the pain. And whether intentional or not, this covertly or maybe overtly, suggests that the pain is not going to go away.

So here are some exercises to focus on to get stronger and more mobile because, heck, you might as well be stronger and more mobile even with the pain, which is not necessarily a bad thing. That’s great, be more so-called functional in your day to day life, even with the pain.

And yet here’s what I’ve noticed, when my clients come in with those sets of exercises, they’re doing them with such poor foundational support because they haven’t been taught what to focus on. They’ve got such braced patterns of breathing and movement. And they’re holding themselves together like they’re gluing themselves together or duct taping themselves together.

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And yes, they're being so successful with managing their symptoms. And yet they are feeling drained and depleted and potentially super exhausted by the process. So I offer up a solution to these two reasons I've just mentioned.

The first is to recognize that healing is invisible. And we can learn to guide our attention to tuning into the sensations of our body and listening to what they are suggesting to us. Not forcing, not imposing, just listening.

So from this perspective, healing then is all about self-awareness and growing your ability to tune in, and dare I say it offers the opportunity to innately and organically slow down. How I like to say in the Power of the Pits workshop that I run, to tune in to the speed of nature, to slow down, to perceive, and to feel.

Now to bring these ideas to life, I'm going to give you a couple of examples. And these examples are coming from people who I've interviewed on this podcast on previous episodes. And I will link their episodes in the show notes so you can go back to them and listen more closely. And again, as I mentioned earlier in this episode, as you listen to their stories I'd love for you to notice what happens for you.

Again, feel for what resonates. Not every process is going to be helpful for every person. So it's clear that for what I offer, there is a slice of the population of people who have persistent issues with pain, physical pain, persistent issues around autoimmune flares where they would love to have fewer flares. There's a certain segment of that population that really resonates and benefits from what I have to offer.

So that's what I'm hoping for you to tune into, is this for you? Is this idea of growing awareness, and of tuning in, of listening more closely for you? Because at the core of the approach that I share is this idea of growing awareness and of tuning in to what's inside. The reason for this, I believe, is that when pain is persistent and someone has tried and tried and tried

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many things, they've even maybe had some gains. But those gains aren't sustainable.

It isn't that what that person is doing is wrong. It's more likely that you're not putting your attention where it needs to be. Added to that is that most of the issues that we need to resolve lie under our awareness and we can't change anything that we are not aware of, right? That's really tricky. So being able to tune in has a certain process, and sometimes requires a guide of sorts.

So the first story is about Amy. And Amy, when she first met me, did not have a diagnosis of hypermobility syndrome or what ended up being EDS. But rather she had a whole lot of pain. She had suspicions that there was a hypermobility issue at play. And while we were working together, she did actually discover and dig into this diagnosis that she does have.

What was interesting, though, is how much compensatory patterning she did have. How when she moved, she was unaware of a lot about how she actually moved. And as we began to work with her and how we tune in, her movement became a lot smaller, which was very, very challenging for her because she had had a whole lifetime of moving so far.

And like so many people who have hypermobility, they need to or feel the need to go far in order to feel because their ability to feel happens at such, such far end ranges, beyond what is actually stable for their system. So working with Amy was being able to tune into where she was in space.

Another issue that often arises with people with hypermobility syndrome is their ability to perceive their body parts in space. Proprioception is not highly tuned, but it can grow. And this was a big piece of working with Amy, was to grow her ability to perceive her body and her joints and her tissue in space.

As she was able to do that, she was able to feel more confidently, with greater clarity. She was more tuned in about the relationships of the

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various parts of her body and what was contributing to the various sensations and feelings that were showing up for her, whether they were pain or strain, or something that she was unable to name specifically, but was starting to tune in. It was either a sensation to be a yellow light or a whisper, something to pay attention to, or whether it was something that was more like a relief or a release or a strengthening.

She was able to discern the distinction between these sensations. Then no longer was it something about adding in exercise to try to create stability, but the tuning into how our body parts moved and increasing that proprioceptive more at these component level parts, building up the inherent structure for herself.

That is what gained her that foundational infrastructure for which she was then able to add movement and then add stability and then add strength. So her hypermobility was no longer a limiting factor because so many people who are diagnosed with hypermobility, they're also told or it's suggested that this is a life sentence, that it's kind of the end of things.

When in fact, it doesn't have to be at all. It's an opportunity to tune in for how body parts connect, what those sensations actually mean. Because hypermobility is more than just joints and tissue from a musculoskeletal perspective. It goes deeper into organs and to other functionalities of one's system.

And as you're able to tune in to that inner language, it's remarkable what you can then bring to your health care providers in terms of what support you need and what you feel is going on. Because the reality is that even though hypermobility and its understanding are growing, there's still some work to be done within various aspects of medicine of really caring for people with this scenario.

It's not simply just about adding exercises and strength, it's tuning in to the patterns of movement, which ultimately help you open your mind to the



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patterns of thinking around the condition. And as these come into play together, it's remarkable what then can happen.

Not dissimilar to Carolyn. And when she and I started to work together she had a suspicion through a potential diagnosis from a physician that she had stenosis. She needed to still have an MRI to be able to confirm this. And this was going to take a little bit of time and we began to work together and her pain started to go down.

She was able to tune in to how her leg bones in her pelvis were working, what was going on with her ribcage, and how these were connecting. Not just where she was compensating, although that was an important part, but it was about connecting her again.

Now, I want to emphasize the way that I look at compensatory patterns. I don't tend to go down the rabbit hole of what muscle is strong? What muscle is weak? What's locked long. Which muscle is at fault? Because ultimately compensatory patterns, they just didn't show up one day. There was a slow movement towards more and more and more.

So to say that a muscle, a particular muscle or two are the problem is only scratching the surface. The question we get to ask is well, why? Why does that particular muscle feel the need to hang on? And so that's what we were playing around with with Carolyn, is not so much figuring out the specific muscle, but tuning in to that which was objectively clear to both of us, her pelvis and her leg bone movement.

Notice I'm speaking in segments, much the same way I spoke with Amy. What's her ribcage doing relative to her pelvis? When she moves her arm bone what goes on with that pelvis? Because the reality is we can do things up in our shoulder girdle and have a whole bunch of muscle change down in the hamstring area.

So when we move that shoulder girdle, do we just do a hamstring exercise or what? This happens all of the time with people. We can't just attempt to

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release a muscle per se and expect to have long standing results because we need to then ask the question, well, what's contributing to why that muscle feels it needs to be that gripped out?

Which is why when I was working with Caroline, it was really about focusing on her segments and how her segments were relating to each other. And what were those sensations coming up that would inform her about when she started to brace and when she started to grip.

Now, what's interesting is that before we got her MRI results back around the stenosis, her pain was on its way down. She was having more and more moments without pain or even reduced pain. And then she got her MRI results back and was like, "Oh, no," she said, "I have stenosis." And I said, "Yes."

I remember seeing her face and how her face somewhat dropped. And I said, "Does that negate all of the gains that you've made to date?" Because here is one reality that I've seen over and over and over again, and what's cool is the formal research actually supports this, is that people can have structural limitations in their body. It can be stenosis, disc protrusion, facet joint deteriorations, and many more.

And those deteriorations, those limitations might not be related to the pain or the strain that someone experiences. Because what we do know is that people can have structural limitations in their body and have a lot of pain, and people can have structural limitations or anomalies in their body and have no pain. Much like people can have no structural anomalies in their body and have a ton of pain.

So this is a great example of how structure does not dictate what you're experiencing from a pain perspective, nor does it dictate function. I mean look at what we were doing with Carolyn, look what we've done with Amy. They have actually improved their function even with these diagnoses, even with the structural things anatomical, very real anatomical experiences.

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The reality is, it is a great example of where the pain is isn't the problem. Each story here is about tuning in. Now, I'm sure you're imagining that if there's a person who really wants or likes a cookie cutter approach, they want the binary approach to do this, do that, do this, do that, they want that black and white approach. Well, this can be a tricky process, particularly because there isn't one.

Even in the last episode with Dr. Corinne Menn, breast cancer has a unique fingerprint for each person. Even with breast cancer it is unique. That means the treatment process will be unique. There is no cookie cutter, try as so many people might. But rather, as I work with my folks, my clients, my trainees, it's not about doing a series of exercises for a set of symptoms. The key is to tune in to become aware to your unique process.

So your unique process delivers your unique result. And you are a player in this, as opposed to a health professional or some technique or treatment being done to you. As an aside I'm just thinking, I'm going to go off script here for a moment, I think about people who are coming off of hip replacement surgery or knee replacement surgery and they need to relearn how to walk.

And some are so stunned by that because they think, well, I've got my new knee, I've got my new hip, I should just be able to walk again. But the walking process is a neuromuscular process. So just because the new joint is there and the pain is gone does not mean the walking changes, it has to be retrained.

So to come back on script, to come back to my notes here. To the person who likes or wants the cookie cutter binary approach, it can be a tricky process. I mean, even in this last episode where I really gave the mic over to Dr. Corinne Menn who works with people post breast cancer treatment and even during breast cancer treatment, is that breast cancer itself has its unique fingerprint and it's unique to each person.

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So even something like breast cancer has its own unique treatment process. And that at the core is what healing is. In my books it's about recognizing the uniqueness of the individual. It's recognizing that it's not a cookie cutter approach. It's recognizing that there is a tuning in that needs to happen and a growing and awareness.

And even in that tuning in and growing and awareness is not a cookie cutter approach. It's your own way in. And the pace at which you go is uniquely your own.

So let me give a summary of this episode. The first piece here is that when I speak about healing being possible, I'm not speaking about a cure. Not at all. I am speaking about an awareness process of tuning in and of recognizing that your body has something to say. And the process is one of recognizing what it is, of slowing down enough to pay attention. To recognize that it's more than just physical structure that we're working with.

And if it's more than just physical structure, what is it? Well, that's your process. That's your process of tuning in and becoming aware of, and then acting on the awareness.

What I can say is that if this resonates for you, and for the people who it's resonated for, the results are remarkable. And that is the part that's healing. Pain and symptoms going down, pain symptoms eradicating, the experiencing of autoimmune flares reducing dramatically because of what one is able to tune into now, of where their attention goes.

To use a probably very cliched line, where attention goes, energy flows, and awareness continues to grow. So with that, thanks for listening. And tune in next week as we continue to dig into the idea of healing, healing being possible. What it means to be aware and really connect. I'd love for you to join me back again.

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

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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](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com) where we can customize your learning path. That's [health@functionalsynergy.com](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com). Looking forward to hearing from you.