

# Ep #191: Neck Mini Series: Your Neck to Rib Cage to Pelvis Connection



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hately**

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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 back to this mini series on the neck. And this is a continuation from our last episode where I walked you through an exploration of some common neck stretches. And truly, I don't love that term stretch because it often will lead people to thinking that they need to have a stretch sensation in order to know if they're doing something correctly.

And the reality is, a stretch sensation really is a stretch sensation and we can compensate our way into a stretch sensation. So really a stretch sensation doesn't let us know if we're doing anything correctly or incorrectly or if we're doing something good for ourselves or not good for ourselves. I like to say the stretch sensation simply is that, a stretch sensation.

And when we can pay attention to objectively what is happening and become aware of the other sensations that exist, we can have a more full experience of what a movement is offering and if a movement is available or helpful to us or not.

So with this episode I want to take this to the next step and take you through another exploration utilizing a twist which you can do in sitting. And then I'll bring you into legs up the wall. Now, if you would rather just listen and not explore, that's totally cool. The idea is for you to embody the information and just notice what you feel in your body, what subjectively becomes aware to you and how that can correspond to the objective nature of movement.

So subjective is what you feel, and objective is what is actually happening with your parts that are moving. So let's begin. To set ourselves up for this experience I'd like you to first bring your hands to your neck. And just notice what your neck feels like today. The front of the neck, sides, the back of your neck. Notice if there's any tension or tightness patterns.

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And where do those exist? Are they closer up towards the jaw or the face? Are they more around the front or the sides or the back? Are they closer down towards your rib cage or along towards your shoulders? Become aware of what your tendencies and your habitual patterns are displaying right now.

And if it's comfortable, allow your hands to linger here as I guide you into a twist to your left. Now, to move into a twist I like to have people focus on two parts of their body initially. One being their pelvis and the other one being their ribcage. And if I can add a third for fun it's the space between the ribcage and the pelvis because it's in that space where the obliques are. That's the engine of your twist.

And the obliques will be moving your rib cage and your pelvis will stay quiet. Not anchored, but quiet. So, if you can, keep your nose in line with your breastbone and allow yourself to come into this twist thinking about those obliques as being the driver of the movement of your ribs toward the left, a rotation to the left. And then coming back to center and moving to the other side.

Just check in. What are you feeling through your rib cage? And come back. And on the second repetition, as you move to the left, feel what's happening through the neck. If there's anything changing in the neck as you twist. Anything happening through the rib cage? Meaning anything increasing in terms of tension or tightness. Are your eyes getting tighter or your tongue getting tighter or your jaw becoming tighter?

And then moving back and then going to the right and noticing again what's happening through the neck underneath your hands. What's happening with your breath? Any sensations in your rib cage, in the tissue there? And then coming on back.

And take a moment and notice, what are you feeling in your body now having twisted, rotated? What are you feeling through your neck, your jaw, the back of your head, TMJ, upper ribs? Sometimes what can happen

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when people move into a twist is they have all the intention in the world to move through these obliques as being the driver which is moving the rib cage, but they hit up against tension patterns and that tension starts to weasel its way up surreptitiously into the neck and perhaps the TMJ, the jaw or the skull.

And it can be quite surreptitious, it's not that you really notice it. Other times it's very, very loud. But a lot of times it's quite quiet and one doesn't actually recognize it until after the movement or even later. So it's why I have asked you to place your hands in this area, because sometimes it's our hands that pick up on the signals before our mind actually knows that those signals are there.

So we might feel like a flicker of something underneath our hands in terms of the tissue response. But the tissue response doesn't actually have a sensation feeling without the hands there. It's our hands that are feeling the thickening or the bracing or the gripping or the flicker of something. But there's not a palpable sensation that our brain could pick up on without the neck. So the hands can be helpful.

Let's do it one more time, taking a twist over to the left. And this time, can you move with five to 10% more ease and still have the same result? Less effort, same result. And then move over to the other side, to the right. And then come back to center. And now notice again what you feel and what you're noticing.

Now, you might have words that come up like I'm fine, I'm good, that's great, no pain. You may also be saying, wow, I could feel the tension shifting between my ribs and up through the neck and my jaw getting tighter and my eyes getting grippy. My tongue flattening against the roof of the mouth or flattening down to the floor of the jaw.

There might be other sensations of qualities of how you are moving showing up. Either works. The key is to tune in to what the experience is.

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Because that subjective experience of what you're feeling really is paramount and important and significant to the whole process.

So from here, let's come down to the floor with legs up the wall. And setting yourself up so that your pelvis isn't right up against the wall, you want to be more than just comfortable. I remember teaching this to a client years ago, she had some neck issues which we discovered were actually pelvis and leg bone issues.

And we set her up against the wall and she initially wanted to go straight up with her butt and her pelvis right next to the wall and her hips at 90 degrees. And immediately I could see how the tension in her eyes was growing and she said to me, I'm fine. I'm like well, let's just actually pull you back from the wall two inches. And very, very, very obviously her body just did one of these, ahh.

And she sort of smirked and smiled and then said, I think I should go back one more inch. And then, again, we saw this letting go, this settling in. Sometimes, particularly within the yoga world, we can tend to move into these positions that we've been told are the right position and sometimes we miss out on what it actually feels like.

So my guidance here is, what does this feel like? If we want to be cultivating less tension, if we want to be cultivating more effortless effort, then what position would you be in? And if a thought goes through your head like, is this enough? Am I doing this right? Then try for the next little bit in the position you are and see what it all experiences as.

So with your legs up the wall now, with your hands at your neck, gently cross one ankle over the other ankle and watch what happens in your neck as you lift the foot off the wall and then cross it over the ankle. And then uncross the ankles and rest them back to start.

And then cross the opposite ankle over, noticing what's going on at your neck. And then uncross. Let's do that one more time and this time focus on

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the hips. So as you lift the first leg off of the wall, can you do that lift without your pelvis moving? Or does your pelvis move just because your leg is moving? I don't want you to brace or hold or any of that, but if your pelvis wiggles, then leave your foot where it is.

Same for the other side. Can your pelvis stay quiet as the leg bone comes off the wall, as the foot comes off the wall because the leg bone is moving in the pelvis, and then the leg crosses over and the ankles cross. And then uncross.

Now, if your neck did get involved with that movement, which it doesn't need to because the movement itself is a leg bone in pelvis motion. The muscles of the legs and the pelvis can do that movement entirely on its own. So if the neck is getting involved, there's a short, brief, loving conversation we get to have with the neck that goes something like this. Hey, neck, I know you want to help my hips out right now. And you know what? Let's practice not doing.

And this time as you can perceive the weight of your heel coming off the wall, notice at what point that neck wants to get involved. And can you bring yourself to your hip joint and say, leg bone, it's your turn to move in the hip socket. Neck, I love you dearly and you don't need to be involved. And then the other side. Same thing, connecting in with your neck.

Now, a moment ago I was mentioning that if you couldn't move your leg without your pelvis moving, I would offer you something else and that's what this is here now. And this same exercise is also helpful when you're doing this movement and your neck just can't not be involved. And that is simply this, can you rotate your leg bone in your pelvis? So allowing your heel to rest on the wall, rotate your leg bone in the pelvis.

Notice how far you can rotate without your neck needing to get involved because, again, guess what? Your neck does not rotate your leg bone. I realize your neck might not believe that, but your neck does not rotate your

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leg bone. Slow it down, make it smaller, and then take a break and over to the other side.

Moving that leg bone in the socket, easy, easy rotation. Small, only as far as that neck doesn't have to be involved. And after a few of these, rest back and notice what you feel. You can stay here or you can finish up and have all the information that you need.

You can also continue on by taking the legs wide or coming back and playing with crossing the ankles again and sliding the top ankle down toward the knee. And noticing every way along that movement, how does your neck respond? What happens with your breath, or your jaw, or your face, or your tongue? And can you move in a range where that does not happen?

See, this is where you start to really recognize the relationship of compensatory strategies, where you are inadvertently and so successfully using other parts of your body to do a job that they're not designed to do, which its utilizing of resources is extraordinarily depleting. And while it may have provided stability and coordination on some level at one time, it's not designed this way. And it will be depleting for you and it could very well contribute to a persistency of issues.

And simply by taking the time to unravel this pattern and moving the way that you are actually designed to move, so much can change. So much can be separated. And it leads to more strength, more ease, more suppleness, more receptivity. So much change.

So I encourage you to explore and to play with this idea. And if you want to even go further with it, consider what happens when you are washing the dishes in the sink. Now you're getting your arms more involved now, but just watch yourself. Watch yourself as you're climbing up the stairs, as you're pushing the shopping cart, what's starting to get involved that doesn't need to?



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How can you move and still have the same result, going at the same speed, but your neck is not as involved? Less effort, same result. More ease, same result. See what happens as you explore the idea.

And if what I'm sharing here resonates with you and you would like to have six hours of my support where we walk through many, many, many different exercises to support you in retraining your body so that your neck doesn't have to be the go-to patterning, then join me at Power of Pure Movement: Unwinding and Unraveling Your Neck. We're playing this September and you can learn more and register at [Learn.FunctionalSynergy.com/Neck](https://Learn.FunctionalSynergy.com/Neck). See you next time.