



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hatley

Ep #239: Healing & Synergy: Becoming An Integrative Personal Trainer

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.

Susi: All right, welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here because I have another guest with me today, and it's one of my trainees who joined the certification program back in January of this year. So she's been in this part of the program for, gosh goodness, just at the time of recording it's what, two months? And I'm really delighted.

So Lisa Neukomm is a personal trainer and you're having some great results right now with your clients, like already this soon into the process. And the reason I've brought Lisa on is to provide a personal trainer viewpoint on integrating the concepts and principles that I've been sharing.

We're in the middle of the mini series on healing and synergy, and there have been other folks that I've been interviewing that have been talking about the way they've integrated the concepts they're learning. And I don't think I've ever had a personal trainer on this podcast, I don't think. I could be wrong, but in all the time I don't think so.

So I'm delighted to be interviewing Lisa to have her share what she has learned and to listen to her words about how this can be beneficial for you, whether you yourself are a personal trainer, whether you're a massage therapist, whether you're another healthcare professional. And even if you're someone who is not a professional. I know there's all of the above that are listening to this podcast, and I think you are going to find some fun stuff listening to her. And maybe when you hire a personal trainer, it just might give you some food for thought.

And if it resonates and you're curious about the certification program, I really, really, really encourage you to come and visit me over at functionalsynergy.com/certification. Our next cohort is beginning this spring.

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So, Lisa, welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome. I'm so glad that you're here.

Lisa: Yeah, thank you. Happy to be here.

Susi: So let's start just by giving some context. How long have you been a personal trainer and any sort of important bullet points that I think will help people get a feel for who you are? And then how did you come across the work that I do and how have you integrated it so far?

Lisa: Yeah, thank you. So I have worked in the health and wellness industry for over 30 years, which sounds like a crazy long amount of time. But I'm super proud of that because I think of all of the, you know, everything that I've learned along the way, which I think has landed me here today and where I am today.

I've worked as a personal trainer one on one with clients for about 20 years. My son was just born and he just turned 20, so it's about 20 years that I've been working one on one with clients. I have worked with all different demographics.

I've worked with young kids. I've worked with athletes. I've worked with ultra marathoners, marathoners, Fondo, like the cyclists. I've worked with the aging population, which is kind of more my demographic that I see a little bit more now as of late. I also work with a couple of different cancer demographics, cancer and exercise rehabilitation.

And yeah, how did I land with you, Susi? A professional in my community who I very much respect, I think, passed your name on to me. And it was before I started teaching yoga, before I even did my yoga teacher training I was kind of put into your greatness and started following some of your stuff and took a few of your courses. And it really landed with me and resonated on so many different levels.

I think of the idea of what's actually happening in the body. What is actually happening? What are we seeing in the body? What is actually happening

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and what is it taking for people to get to where they want to go and all of the things that come into play that are stopping them, that are limiting them, that are really, really getting in the way. And I don't know that I'm really putting it into words.

Your stuff really lands and resonates with me. And I think that when we talk about compensatory strategies, we talk about bracing and we talk about just getting the work done in my field, in personal training, that's what people want to do. They just want to get it done. They want to get to the goal. They don't care what the end result is. But then we end up with a ton of injuries and we end up with possibly the plan being stopped because there's an injury along the way. And then they can't get to that goal. So what is happening?

So it gave me those tools to kind of go, okay, this is actually what's happening. And let's dive into this a little bit more. And it just really helped me to kind of refine what I was doing at that time.

Susi: So I think when I have seen personal trainers work and when I've listened to personal trainers, and I mean there are so many styles. I mean, it's just a huge industry of people with a variety of training. And you can serve people in so many different ways, really.

And what I often see is more of a desire to lift heavier weights and continue to progress, whether that is driven by the personal trainer or whether that is driven by the client. Like in order to get stronger you've got to lift something heavier. If you want to get stronger, you need to go to fatigue.

And I'm not saying that's all personal trainers. So I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is I do see that. And then what's not looked at as much is how someone's actually doing the movement.

Lisa: Yeah, totally. I 100% agree with you. I think part of that is also society driven and what we're reading in these magazines, right? That this is the way we can get healthier. This is the way we can get fitter. And certainly there are some aspects of that that are true. And certain clientele probably

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should be lifting a little bit heavier. But is it about the sets and the reps and all of that? Absolutely not. It's the way that they are doing it. And that's how they're going to get the benefits, right?

And lifting heavier is not great if you're compensating and using other areas of your body to get to the end result of lifting the weight.

Susi: Now, something that you had said when you took the intensive, and I remember this because your face was really quite surprised when your feet started to feel better, and yet we hadn't done anything with the feet. Do you remember that?

Lisa: Oh, I absolutely remember that. Yeah, and I hold that, I hold that and I tell that story often. Yeah. I mean, it was a really kind of eye-opening, almost jaw dropping moment for me, because I was somebody who came into your training with the notion to learn more to help my clients. Like to assist in my teachings to clients. And what I was learning about myself was like, yeah, it was eye opening.

I didn't actually ever think that I lived with pain. I felt like I was somebody who was pretty active, pretty healthy. I didn't really have any of these limitations. But in fact, I really did have a limitation, and it was my feet. And they were always there. And when I experienced the free or the freshness or whatever, I don't even know, I can't even name it. But the fact that my feet didn't hurt from something we did in our upper body, I was just gobsmacked. I was like, what just happened?

That experience really kind of opened my eyes to what was possible. And yeah, I was hooked, totally hooked then.

Susi: And that makes sense, right? Because you did a bunch of things inside of that training. There was a result that your feet felt better, although we didn't touch the feet per se in any of what we did during that training.

And so your body doesn't lie, the experience is the experience. You can't fake an experience you haven't had. And yet, how did you make it make

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sense to yourself? Because was there a part of your brain – You said it was a bit jaw dropping, a bit gobsmacking. Did you have to make it make sense to your logical, linear part of your brain?

Lisa: You know, that's an interesting question coming from our session earlier today, our training session earlier today. I wanted to make sense of it. And I still do want to make sense of it. And do I really, really, truly know? No, not really. Not really, other than I know that everything is connected in our body and everything has an impact, right? Everything we do to one end of our body has an impact on the other end of the body. Everything we pull into our body has an impact on what we do in our body or what our body does.

So do I really know the answer? Absolutely not. And do I have all the answers? Absolutely not.

Susi: It's so good. And so just in case people –

Lisa: But I felt it, so that's important.

Susi: But you felt it and that's important. And so there's two pieces where I want to go with that. The first one is you recognized there was a relationship to how your shoulders moved or your upper body moved and what your feet felt. And then you were able to follow that by listening to your body and kind of tuning into what I like to call the whispers.

So you were able to use that as a measure, right? You were able to use it as an indicator so that if you started to feel things occurring in your upper body, the likelihood of you feeling the result of that in your feet was more likely, right? Like you were now kind of tuned in, right? To the point where recently you were saying, I went out for another run and my feet are feeling great.

And I think it's important for people to know that you're not just like a 5k runner. You've had a history of quite a long distance. You know what it's like

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to be on your feet and putting in some serious miles, right? You come from an ultramarathon background, yeah?

Lisa: Yeah, absolutely. And the thing about this, and I was thinking just the other day when I was out for a run, there was a period of time in my running life only a year ago, I think, where I was like, I'm never going to run those distances again because my feet won't allow me to run them. And I'm just going to accept that.

I actually had this excitement inside of me about a week ago, like I actually feel like possibly it's an option again because I am making that connection and I'm taking care of those whispers. And I also know kind of possibly what to do after a run to take care so that I can continue to progress with my runs. And that's huge. And that is, for me to feel that in myself is just so valuable as myself as a trainer to my clients, or to assist them and to help them to believe in themselves as well, right, and believe that they can do it on the right path, right?

Susi: Yeah. Let's unpack that because there's something I mentioned, I said there were two things that were important about what you said about not knowing what was going on. We could map out myofascial and we could map out some biomechanical relationships and we could uncover some mechanisms that we'd probably be like, yeah, that's probably what's going on.

But really, we don't really know. We could map something out and say, yep, logically speaking, cognitively speaking, here's a great relationship and there's some evidence to prove it to be so. And that might be true, but we don't actually know. And so that's kind of tying into that you don't know and we can see that there is some evidence out there to show that there is some sense-making around why this is working.

But where I want to go with that is how does that experience, because you mentioned it makes you a better trainer or something to that effect, and I'm wondering, can you articulate a little bit more? Can you unpack that a little bit more about what it is that actually makes you a better trainer?

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Lisa: I really think it's just that experience that I had myself. And so I have a better understanding and I have more compassion and have the ability to really kind of connect with somebody who's struggling with pain or discomfort or niggles in their body that is limiting them. And just the idea that the possibility is there, we just have to find the right avenue and the right stimuli to maybe get them there.

That in itself is just me working with them, getting to know them more and getting to know their story, watching them move, watching how they're moving, identifying what's working, what's not working as a whole. Not just in a movement, but other areas of their life coming into the play, what they're bringing to the session, what they're bringing to the whole package. And understanding that, I think, is kind of where I'm going with that, in that it just makes me understand a little bit more. I have more compassion for it.

Susi: So here's something I'm curious about, and it's truly coming from a curious space. When you think about meeting a client where they're at, I think a lot of professionals would say that they do that, like they do that themselves. There's something different, though, when we have this felt experience of change, right?

And when it's myself as a yoga therapist/kinesiologist, biomechanics specialist, or whether it's you, personal trainer, whether it's in training to become a yoga therapist, whether it's other people in your cohort who have a health professional background, I think we would all say that over the course of our career, we did our very, very best to meet people where they're at.

But then something becomes a little bit more refined. Like there's something more – I want to use the word elegant. That's not quite the right word. There's just something where it becomes less about a logical process, even though there's logic to the process, when you start to meet someone and start to really see all of who they are, and then you're programming for that.

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After you've had an experience where you can see these connections between your upper body and your feet, which made no sense on some level to you, that changes something in how you meet people.

Lisa: Yeah.

Susi: Right? Because you now know, and it's something we've talked about in one of the certification training, which is you might know that they've got glutes that are weak. And you might know that you could give them whatever exercises to strengthen their glutes, or they've been given exercises to strengthen their glutes. But then the exercises, so-called exercises, don't work.

And then the question is, what's really the problem here? Do we need to find other glute exercises? But it could be that the exercises are perfectly fine, but it's how they're actually doing the movement. And how they're doing the movement can come into all these other layers, like truly mechanically how they're doing the movement. But it could also be how they're thinking about how they're doing the movement or if they're feeling afraid of doing the movement, or if they are nervous about doing the movement. You know what I mean?

So what's your perception here around how that change at the intensive made that felt different for you and your clients? How do you think that changed the relationship? Because I would say you're still, like to a fly on the wall you're still doing the same thing. You're still meeting them where they're at. You're still doing all your stuff, but there's something uniquely nuanced and different about it, which is what you've been saying.

Lisa: Yeah. And really, Susi, can I pinpoint what it is? I'm not exactly sure that I can pinpoint what it is, but there's a difference. Possibly I'm helping them to grow their awareness at a deeper level about themselves, right? Because I've had that experience myself and just understanding that it's possible to have that awareness and to – Yeah, I don't know if that's even it.

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I think, yeah, there's a different connection within that session. There's a different connection within the relationship. And I don't know if I even know how to explain it, but it comes down to that understanding and that compassion that it's possible that they can feel better if they are able to feel it within themselves and to be able to grow their own awareness with possibly my assistance and helping them to grow their awareness, which is really what this is all about, right?

Susi: Yeah. And when you have felt that awareness in yourself, then that's where you can come from, right? It's like I mentioned.

Lisa: Yeah, and I believe in it. Yeah.

Susi: Yeah, you can't fake the experience you haven't had. It reminds me too when I went to a meditation retreat and people would have these experiences that are sometimes called direct experiences. Like there's something that is profoundly different as a result of doing the experience of meditation, which most people cannot describe, right? Because we can't describe it, necessarily, with the logical state of our mind, right?

But there is this felt sense experience that once you've had it, you can't unhave it. And so then what you're speaking from is a different space.

Lisa: Mm-hmm, and I truly believe that my lens is different as a whole. Like even as I'm coming to a client or they're coming to me, there's just a different presence about those sessions. And possibly it's just me looking at the session through a different lens. I'm seeing things that I never was able to pick up on before, which is just super curious to me. I'm like, how come I couldn't see that before? But all of a sudden I have this zoom in, zoom out capability, which is just amazing.

And what I'm learning from it and what I'm learning from my clients and then what I'm able to help them learn is just, yeah, it's incredible. And I think that's why I'm seeing results with the clients, is because I'm able to zoom in, zoom out, and then help them to learn how to do that and feel that

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within themselves. And part of that is me also feeling it within myself and being able to help them along that journey.

Susi: Yeah, really, really good. And you had actually made a comment earlier in the season around being an integrative personal trainer. And I really love that term. Like you're also enabling, like you're teaching your client to become their own best trainer, right?

So I would say, because as a yoga teacher I would say to my clients that I'm helping them become their own best teacher, which you might be doing too. But you're the trainer, because you're helping them figure it out. You're helping them feel into it, as opposed to giving them the glute exercises, which you might even still give them the glute exercise.

Lisa: Yeah, if that's right for them.

Susi: But it might not be about the glute exercise, even though it's the glute exercise that they're doing.

Lisa: Yeah, yeah, totally, totally. Yeah, yeah. And the whole comment around meeting somebody where they're at, like I think in this industry of personal training, and just even the fitness industry, there's always been this like, okay, here's the plan. You follow the plan, and if you don't follow the plan, well, then you failed or whatever, right? But that's not the case. And I kind of let that go.

And I don't know if it was pre-training with you or shortly after I did some trainings with you, but the idea of just really meeting them where they're at, still holding their compelling reason, still holding their goal or their compelling reason there to the level that it needed to be held to, but meeting them where they were at and working with that and allowing them kind of the freedom to choose where they're going next and giving them the resources to do that.

And I think within this training, it's really kind of opened that and broadened that a little bit more for me. It's given me a little more, I don't know,

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confidence in that aspect of just meeting them where they're at. Not feeling like I need to have a plan every single time I go to see a client. I can just go and I can go, okay, I know what your compelling reason is. But where are you at today? Okay, well, we can't do that, let's do this, right? And we're still working towards the same thing, but it's just possibly a different plan. And that's okay.

So this has really given me that confidence to do that.

Susi: Oh, that's really cool. That's really cool because that can be different than some of what happens in the training world where the focus is on the goal and you're just moving towards the goal, and what you feel on a given day really doesn't matter. It's just go, go, go. There can be, some of the motivational personal trainers that are out there can be just like, just leave it at the door and come on in and lift some weights, right?

Lisa: Yeah. And I'm sure back 20 years ago, I was probably just like that. And even to myself, I would go into those sessions and be like, let's just get it done. And having an ultra marathon background, that was a lot of that. It was like, just get it done. You fight through the pain. It doesn't really matter.

And in that context, it was okay to do it then, right? It was okay to do it then. Yeah, but it's not always the right path for most people. Let's be honest, right? It's not the right path for most people. So yeah, meet them where they're at and continue to work towards their compelling reason. And help them to be successful.

Susi: That's really great. Really great. So I think what's important for people to understand is that Lisa, she did her intensive earlier in 2023 and then joined the module for certification this January. And so she's only a couple of months into this process and is already getting traction, right? Like solid traction.

And that's what's really, really important. And part of it is I'm watching their videos of them working with their clients right out of the gate. And so I'm able to, even in the small amount that I've taught her, we're able to help her

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grow her skill. So it's not that we do a bunch of intellectual training at the front end, oh, and then at the end do a practicum. We're integrating the practicum all the way. So she's learning things and able to apply them, learning things and being able to apply them, learning things, being able to apply them. Oops. Uh, oh, what do I do? I got this client with, uh – Right? And it's not just for you, it's for everybody in the group, right?

So we're there, me and my team are right alongside them as they're moving. So you grow your skill, not just mentally and intellectually, but all the way through. And what I think is also so fun is that like many as well, your feet are feeling even better. You're consistently getting better. Again, it's not just you're coming in and doing this for your own brain and helping your clients. Your body is improving out of this process.

Lisa: Absolutely. Yeah, and not just my feet, other areas of my body as well. And even to the point where while I'm running or on my bike, I'm like, wow, I feel like I got wicked air going on here. Like wicked oxygen. Like I can breathe. And possibly that's from doing some of the upper body spinal strip stuff. Who knows? I don't really know what the answer is, but there's something that's happening that is having a positive effect on my own training.

And so yeah, that's huge. Huge for me to feel and then offer that idea like, hey, this is what I'm experiencing. Wouldn't it be cool for you to experience something amazing like this? And it's possible. It's totally possible.

I think the other thing that I just wanted to add was I think a couple of weeks ago, it was prior to submitting the first video, I think I was asking you questions around, well, do I just do these therapeutic exercises? Do I just do those in my sessions?

And it took me, I think, a little bit to kind of really connect to your answer because you're like, no, Lisa, they apply to everything. They apply to everything that you're doing. And you didn't really give me the specifics on that, but you were just saying they apply. They apply. These principles apply to everything, to every movement really in the big picture.

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And I couldn't make that connection until one day I was with a client and this client is a post knee replacement and at the point where he's free to go and do the exercises. And I thought, this is exactly what she means. Like, what are you seeing happening? What's supposed to be moving? What's not moving? What's pulling in that shouldn't be pulling in? And I was like, this is what she means.

So somebody even doing a bicep curl, what's supposed to be happening, right? Like what joint is supposed to be moving? What else is happening while they're doing that? And how can you improve upon that? And so, yeah, the possibilities for people to improve their strength and their stamina, all those goals that people come to me for are just there because of this as a whole.

Susi: Just to emphasize what Lisa was saying, so she's been learning a number of different, what I sometimes called therapeutic movements or granular movements and helping to really hone in on helping joint areas not have to compensate. And she also does bigger movements within the training world. And so that was what her question was. Like, do I only do these therapeutic things I'm learning from you? And I'm like, no, no, no, no. Take the principles of it, because it's not the exercise that I'm teaching, it's the principle behind the exercise that I'm teaching.

So if you take the idea of what's behind, what's informing the smaller movement, and then take that into the bicep curl, take that into the lunge, take that into whatever the exercises the medical team has provided the person out of knee replacement, like as they'd graduated that person out and they're moving them on and they may have given some suggestions on what to do. You're utilizing all of that in this idea of, okay, so where is the compensation pattern?

Because especially coming out of something like a knee replacement, there are a ton of compensation patterns from before they went in for the knee replacement, partly because those compensation patterns were correlated to what was happening at the knee, whether it was before or after or whatever, who knows. But they need to be cleaned up if we want to

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improve the overall function, if they want to get back to doing things that they wanted to do.

And so you were able to take those principles and apply them to those bigger movements, right?

Lisa: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, and with this particular client, I worked with them pre knee replacement. And so I was able to kind of go, hey, you never used to do that. So why are you doing that now? That kind of thing. Let's refine that and just bring it to their awareness that that's what was happening.

And so, yeah, it's super cool. The principles along with this are just so incredible. And I would recommend any personal trainer, anybody who's working with people and watching them move and teaching them how to move to do this. It's not just therapeutic yoga. And yeah that's where I'll leave that.

Susi: Yeah, no, thank you. That's great. That's really, really great. If you're listening to this and you want to work with Lisa, she works online as well as where she lives in Prince George, which is in Canada. But she does work online. How do people find you, Lisa?

Lisa: Yeah, they can email me at inspiredlifestyles@shaw.ca. And I also have a Facebook page, Inspired Lifestyles Wellness, Lisa Neukomm, so they can look me up on that too.

Susi: Perfect. Okay, we'll have all that in the show notes. So do reach out to her if you're interested in pursuing anything with her. Lisa, thank you so much. I'm so glad that you came on.

Lisa: Yeah, thank you so much, Susi, it was an honor.

Susi: If elements of this episode or the whole episode really resonated with you and you are a personal trainer or another health professional or a yoga teacher, and you're looking for integrative ways to apply yoga therapeutically with your clients, help them get stronger with a whole lot

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less pain or help them to reduce and eradicate pain, consider my certification program over at functionalsynergy.com/certification.

We have our next entry coming up this spring. The Therapeutic Yoga Intensive, which is the prerequisite, runs April the 20th to the 25th. And then the next cohort for cert is in June. It would be an honor to work with you. Take good care.