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With Your Host

Susi Hately

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.

Susie: Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad that you're here because I've got two really special guests. You would have recognized one name if you've been following the podcast, and it's Lisa Neukomm. And also a newcomer, Angelique Canonico. And both of them are trainees in my January 2024 cohort.

And the reason I brought them on is because I was asking the group who has shifted up their feet. As we know I'm in the miniseries right now on the feet and I've been talking throughout this miniseries on where the pain is not the problem. So then what are some examples, like real-life examples, other than some of the stories I've shared about my journey with my feet and just overall in better movement.

And so both Lisa and Angelique have some great stories to share with you. So we're going to do a little bit of exploring. Some of the connections will be obvious. Some of them will be like, huh? And even before we started recording I said, Lisa, what do you think? Why do you think your thoracic spine has something to do with your feet? And her face just said it, it was like I don't know. So we're going to be exploring that in this episode.

And the reason I bring this up is because I can't tell you the number of times, whether it's on social or whether it's in a conversation where I'm talking about how a client freed something else up in one part of their body when they worked on, say, the armpit area or the thoracic spine. And I'll say, so what we just did, was that an armpit thoracic spine thing or was that actually the part of the body that actually had the release or the freedom?

So it's really interesting because we can do these things in distal parts of the body and I think we all can agree that there's something myofascial going on, exactly what we're not sure. But the idea here with this episode is

to kind of open your eyes and your heart and your mind to just what's possible to your body and to the bodies of your clients.

So welcome, Lisa and Angelique. This should be a fun conversation, yeah.

Lisa: Awesome.

Susie: So, Lisa, why don't we start with you. You've been on the podcast before. So tell me, your story about your feet is such a great one because I remember your being at the therapeutic yoga intensive and we really didn't get into the feet a whole lot at all, really. And each day your feet felt better and better and I could see your face getting more and more befuddled.

So why don't we start there? Because that was when I really met you for the first time. And my knowledge about your feet and also my knowledge of shifting things up further up the chain had an impact on your feet. So why don't you give a sort of runway on your feet and then your experience at the intensive and then we'll go from there.

Lisa: Yeah, cool. Yeah, I think as long as I can remember I've had pain in my feet from some form or another. Whether it was a bunion, whether it was just stiffness in my toes, stiffness in the top of my feet, stiffness in my heel. I don't know, you name it I felt like I had it. But I got to this place where I just thought it was normal. I was just like, I'm just going to have to deal with my feet and that's just the way it's going to be.

And I was a long-distance runner and my feet were always the limiting factor. I would push my way through it and finish the ultras, it didn't matter how much pain I was in. And we know that the feet, whatever is happening in one part of your body transfers up to other areas of your body. So I'm sure I was doing a tremendous amount of compensating just to get those things done.

And anyways, so yeah, I mean as long as I can remember I had foot pain. And I never thought of it as something that could be fixed, I think, or it could improve until I was in the therapeutic yoga intensive I think over a year ago

now. I think it was an October session. And yeah, like you said, we weren't doing anything with our feet. We were exploring the spinal strip and doing some stuff in our t-spine. And we came off of that, we were doing some things with our shoulders as well.

And we came off of that and as you're always very inquisitive to your trainees, like what are you experiencing right now? And I was like, oh my God, yeah, sure my shoulders feel great. But my feet don't hurt right now. There's something pretty amazing about this, my feet are not sore. They feel totally relaxed. My toes felt relaxed.

I was gobsmacked, like I said last time. I was just like, oh my God, my feet don't hurt. So yeah, I went away from that and kind of pondered. I'm a really kind of slow processor and try to analyze things and try to figure out what it is and I keep coming back to the spinal strip. And if you'd want me to dive in now as to what I think is happening, I can.

I feel a significant release in my pelvis when I'm on the spinal strip, a significant release in my pelvis. So it's gotten to the place now where I don't get as much of a release because I think that there's some things shifting through my pelvis with also improving how my leg bone moves in my pelvis, which then I think transfers down my leg into my feet. So when I'm running or doing anything that involves my feet, which is pretty much everything that I do in my day; standing, walking, all that. I'm just moving better so my feet aren't taking the load that they used to take.

Susie: That's really awesome. So we're going to pause there because there's a lot we can unpack and I just want to give a lens and for Angelique and then we'll bring the listener kind of into what's happening here around, we can't even say for sure what's happening, but some of the patterns that you're seeing that we can see as correlations to what's happening to sort of open the dialogue further.

So Angelique, share your story about your feet because it's a bit of a different story because there's more longevity to it because it's been for a long period of your life, yeah?

Angelique: Yeah. I would say that my feet didn't hurt, they just didn't work the right way. Like they would fall off of shoes. And I wasn't overly aware, like starting from 12 years old and I'm much more than 12 years old now. So it's been a long time of these feet that just weren't working for me.

I didn't always practice the best awareness of these kinds of things. So like I would shove the feet in the shoes and I would walk away and do the things that I had to do. I wasn't like Lisa and running and doing the things that were like, oh yeah, well of course my feet are this way because I'm doing the running and I'm doing the things. I was just living my life.

And so things just started, it went from my feet, me taking bad care of them and then kind of went up my body and went up to my hips and like my hips hurt. And then my low back hurt and then my rib cage and my thoracic spine. Like everything was just really really tight. So I started doing workarounds. And my workaround was my lumbar spine, my low back was like super, it could do anything.

Like I couldn't move anything in my rib cage, my hips wouldn't move, but boy my low back, I mean, I could bind. I've been practicing yoga for the past two decades, I could bind like nobody's business. I mean I could do these things that looked beautiful, and meanwhile it was meaningless because I was just doing like this whole big workaround.

So I started doing stuff with you last year. And when you did a thing about the feet, I was like, oh my God, the feet. So I traveled back and forth from Pennsylvania to New Jersey and when I got out of the car I'm like, oh, oh. And I turn into this like a 100 year old lady, right? Like getting out of the car like I just rode my horse there instead of driving my car.

And I did one of your feet workshops and it was the first one. It was like a four-part series and it was the first one and we did a bunch of like investigations. And I did it and then I left and got in the car and drove for three hours. I got out of the car and I'm like, oh my God, And then I did it before I went back to Pennsylvania and I went for a hike when I got back and I'm like, oh wow, my leg bones in my pelvis are just like freeing.

Like they'd been like I was like the Tin Man and that I had been oiled. And it was just like whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. I probably could have done one of Lisa's athletic activities. With these feet and these hip bones and all the tightness, I mean it probably would have been pretty pathetic but I would have at least been able to consider it.

So yeah, a very different story. Just working with those feet freed up the areas to be able to begin to do the work to free up the areas, if that makes any sense.

Susie: Yes, and so like this is really great because we have Lisa who noticed this relationship with her thoracic area to the pelvis and she did not come to the intensive for the feet per se. Or maybe you did, but we weren't actually working the feet. Whereas Angelique came to a workshop that was specifically related to the feet, it's called Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet, and it was specific to that. And we started at the feet, which is different from Lisa's story.

We actually started at the feet, but then very quickly into it we got up towards the hip and the kinetic chain between the leg bone and pelvis and then we ended up going up pelvis to rib cage and experiencing and exploring the relationships of the whole chain from about the rib cage down is where I was mostly focusing. So it's very kind of different angles and different avenues in.

So I want you to get as you're listening to this that you can be an athletic person with foot issues, you can not be an athletic person with foot issues, just like living your life thinking in both situations that feet pain is just what it is. It can be so persnickety, if that's the word to use, because whether you're super active or you're not super active there's that insidiousness to it that it's like well I massage them or I roll them out or I do whatever to the feet and nothing changes. It's just I get some relief and nothing changes.

So these are two examples of how change can happen. And what you'll notice, and what they shared is both of them talked about their leg bone moving in their pelvis, and we didn't start there, right?

So we'll go back to Lisa. And Lisa, you were saying that your first insight was working with the spinal strip. And the spinal strip is some work that we do in and around the rib cage, but it's not just the rib cage. There's some backbending and in some cases some twisting that's associated with it. And was it there that you then noticed your pelvis shifting and the tissue around your pelvis? Did it release? Did it just sort of come alive? Like how would you describe that?

Lisa: Yeah, so it was while, like I think as I grew my awareness around kind of what was actually happening in my body for all of these tools that we're learning. I was able to kind of, yeah, just really tune in more to what was happening as I was on the spinal strip. And it was, it was a release. That's the best way I can describe it, whether that's what's happening or not. It's like my pelvis was just freeing up. Like there was something letting go in my pelvis, which then, I think, really truthfully transferred into how I was moving about in all aspects, right?

When we think about just what is involved in running or walking or anything, it's your rib cage, your pelvis, your leg bones, like all of it, your whole gait is affected with that, right? And so I think that freed up something in my system to allow me to move better. Yeah, I have a lighter sense about me when I'm running.

There was a period of time that I was, I specifically remember a summer that whole training season before the snow hit I would fall probably three or four times a week. And I remember coming back to it's probably my feet because I'm probably not getting the movement that I need to with my feet.

But it actually was not my feet, it was my pelvis now that I reflect on it, right? I wasn't actually able to lift my legs properly. I wasn't moving efficiently through that entire movement pattern of running, that linear movement and being able to navigate roots which is now lateral movement and agility and all of that.

And when I go now I'm light and I'm free and I don't even think about it. I don't think about falling now. So there's something significant there that has

happened. I really feel that it was that connection to my pelvis and things are moving freer.

Susie: Did you know that your pelvis had some stuff going on in it? Or was that outside of your awareness?

Lisa: That was outside of my awareness, yeah. Yeah, I was always like I'm kind of tight. But it was outside of my awareness as to how much was going on until I started to feel the shift.

Susie: Yeah, so here's the thing that's really important, is that sometimes people will say okay well, Susie, if it's not where the feet is, then where is it? And I'm like, I don't know. I don't know where it is. It could be anywhere. But the piece of it is we get to explore your movement pattern so you discover for yourself where it is.

And this is a great example with Lisa, is that she didn't even know that her pelvis was a thing. There was some idea there was some tissue limitation there but nothing that was really blasting in your awareness of saying, oh, you better get your hips massaged or you need to roll out your hips or something that's kind of flashing at you that you should do some intervention in this area until you did something and you all of a sudden had that novel experience of, oh, my pelvis feels remarkably different.

And I call it a novel experience because those are the experiences where sometimes it's an insight or an a-ha, but it's profound enough of an experience because your brain's like what the eff just happened here? I was just doing something in my rib cage, not only do my feet feel better but my pelvis feels light. That's never happened before or in the recent past and this is just a totally new proprioceptive experience that's sitting in my body.

Now, you might not actually say the word proprioception, but it's the proprioceptive change that leads you to be thinking differently about it.

Lisa: Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah, and not knowing it before. Like I had no clue that I wasn't moving that well, right? But something was happening. Like I was falling or I would feel like I ran a marathon when I had only run a 5k. Like how come I'm putting out all this effort?

So things were just harder and my mind would go, you know Lisa, you're going to be 50 soon. But now I'm like that has nothing to do with it. That has nothing to do with it because look at, like I'm maybe not running the distance now but I'm not with as much effort, right? Or the effort I want to put into it, I can match it now with my body, which is super exciting to me. Super, super exciting.

Susie: Because you're not having to coerce yourself into running harder, it's more arising. It's more something that's naturally occurring as opposed to coercing or convincing yourself to get into that pace.

Lisa: Yeah, it's pretty amazing. And there's a sense of freedom there now. I know that there's work that will always need to be done to kind of take care. And I feel I have those tools to take care of. And there's more to learn, absolutely, about my body as we explore deeper into this, but I almost have this little bit of excitement like, yeah, I'd actually like to do another long distance run or something just to see. Just to see.

Like I'm super curious now, whereas a year and a half ago, two years ago I was like, I'm not doing it anymore. I don't know, I'm okay with that. But, man, if you ask me what lights me up, that's what lights me up, is to get out and be out in the woods and just go, right? And so to be able to even think that that's a possibility, yeah, it's a big win.

Susie: All right, you runners out there, did you catch that all? So you can run with less effort. You can run with more ease. And you can run at a pace that you don't have to force yourself into that pace. Like the pace can arise very organically and you just clip along, right?

Lisa: Yeah.

Susie: Really good. Really, really cool. And that's what can happen when things start to connect better. And I think sometimes we can get really muddled up because so much of our mechanistic approaches to recovery have to do with, oh, so the problem is in the feet so we must work with the feet. Or and, oh yeah, it's further up the chain so I'm going to have to work further up the chain. So there's always still this cause and effect thing that's happening.

And it's almost, I don't want to say it's an incomplete way of thinking. It's more that it's, which I'm probably going to say the same thing in a different way, but it's a limited view, right? It's missing out on the wholeness of how we move our bodies and just stepping back and allowing the body to show you where the limitation is.

Which when I think about Angelique, that was really your experience. You did the foot workshop or a session of the foot workshop, and that first day we did focus on the feet. And then you take a three-hour drive. Usually a three-hour drive which kind of battles you down a bit, or a lot, making you feel like an older woman. And that didn't happen when you got out of the car.

Angelique: Yes. Yeah, and I mean I'd like to say that first of all I think that maybe now that I have listened to Lisa and have all this new awareness, that maybe the reason why I never was a runner or an athlete is because these feet were holding me back. But I'm like yeah, Lisa, let's do this mini marathon.

Lisa: Let's do it.

Angelique: So I mean I was always looking for the answer. Like hip openers, you know yoga hip openers. I'm doing all the hip stuff. I'm doing all this stuff and you said at one point that your focus was kind of like from up the chain to kind of rib cage, but I felt it – My things had gone on for so long and had jammed things up that it was all the way up to my neck. Like it didn't just stop at my rib cage.

So I'm doing all this yoga, and I'm doing all this training, and I'm learning all these things and it's just like it just kept on going and going to the point like literally there was a time where I couldn't turn my head. And I'm like this is insanity. This is insanity, right? So the foot thing, like the quickest response, was getting out of the car. I didn't feel like I needed to do these hip openers. I'm like, yeah, I mean let's go. Like it's not travel day, let's go get stuff done.

Susie: So your real point of contention was your lumbar area, yeah? Or was it your feet and then as you freed up further between the pelvis and the rib cage, because the workshop itself we don't really go up to the neck although people can feel results further up into the neck area. What was the primary that freed up that then your feet freed up? Or was it the other way around?

Angelique: The feet freed up everything, the first part being the pelvis. And then as the pelvis started to function more optimally the low back wasn't the workaround anymore. The rib cage didn't have to be so like let me keep you together, and the neck didn't have to be like, all right, well you guys do everything down there and I'll keep it all together up here.

Like it was definitely the shift in the pelvis, the walking, the hiking in the woods. I hike every day, I have a bunch of trails around my house so I hike every day. And just that day I was like whoosh, whoosh. The ride in the car, getting out and not getting off of the horse.

And it freed up, like just those two experiences within 48 hours of the first foot workshop I was like, oh my God, this is the thing. And when I look back it's like, well, of course it was the thing. These feet have been the thing all along.

Susie: Interesting. So then as you've carried on, and so for you it started at the feet and the unraveling was more upwards, have you gone then back down again? Like the feet took you up, you've done some work between the pelvis and the rib cage, you've worked at improving your movement

patterns in the center of your body and between the hips and the shoulders. How has that impacted your feet further, if at all?

Angelique: I think they're just kind of a reflection of each other. Like with the improvement up above, it's reflected in my feet, in my gait, in the way I walk in my shoes, in the way my shoes wear. And because these things are reflective down there, it makes everything better coming up. So it's kind of like a palindrome, right? Like O-T-T-O, it's from the top to the bottom, the bottom to the top. I'm unable to separate them.

Like if I'm feeling a way up here, I'm like, oh, well let me just do some feet things. And if I'm feeling something down here, I'm like, oh, let me work on my rib cage. Like I'm holding here or my pelvis is just not right. There is no this or that, it's a reflection of each other. Does that make sense?

Susie: Yeah, it makes sense. If you're listening to this idea of exploring your body in this way, where it's not like here is the right way to work your feet, or if you work your thoracic spine you're going to feel freedom in your feet, because that's nothing I can guarantee.

But I can certainly provide the idea that if you're willing to explore your body and movement and your breath and movement and you've got a foot issue and you're looking to this sort of what's related to what's going on here, then you'll probably like the Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet. And you can learn more about that over at functionalsynergy.com/feet.

The piece I want to add here and really highlight is what Lisa and Angelique are really highlighting is this exploratory nature. We're not trying to fix anything, because even though there was foot pain in both of these situations and that there were other areas of tightness and other situations, which both of them were actually kind of okay with even though they were not okay with it.

Like they were living with it, like so many people do, probably because they didn't know that there was another option. They didn't know that this could change and it was just part of their daily life, that it was just what it was.

But there's nothing broken here so there isn't anything really to fix, to coerce your body to come into a place of something different. Like you don't have to get your body back on board, but rather you just need to tune in and grow your awareness of what's happening and what aren't you aware of? Because what you're not aware of you can't change, yeah?

Angelique, anything else you would add that as people are pondering, like if they're here at this podcast they're curious enough, whether they are professionals or whether they are people with foot pain, or any pain for that matter, and they are in like this exploratory thing. Do you want to say more about just the exploration piece of it?

Angelique: Well you know I always want to say lots of things. I think the key is to be willing to be curious, to do the exploration. I have clients that come and they're like, oh, yeah but that's just the way it is. That's just the way it is. And they fill out their body diagrams and their feet aren't even the thing on the body diagram. Like they're like right here on my neck. We're talking and we start moving and I'm like, oh, okay.

And I see what's going on and I'm like, what if we just get curious about what's up with these feet? Like what if we just do this? How does this make this feel and this make this feel? And I have to tell you, I have worked with people with RA, with fibromyalgia, a certain plumber that will remain nameless and these people all cite nothing with their feet.

In the beginning I was like let's just check these feet out because I'm seeing something here and they're kind of like, you know, like this during our sessions. And this is the biggest response that I get, I will receive messages, phone calls, texts, emails and they're like this has been the most profound change doing this work with the feet over anything else that they've done from like medical protocols, PT, chiro, massage. They're like this has been the thing.

Susie: Interesting. And you'll notice that the word she used earlier in this final little bit that she shared was you've got to be willing to be exploratory, to do the exploration of it. It wasn't the other E word, which is the exercises. You don't have to be willing to do the exercises because exercises and doing that is like doing a to-do item. And this process of helping your body improve, no matter what part of your body it is, is less about the exercises that you're doing and more about how you're doing it.

Yeah, the kind of exercise does matter to a degree, but you can do all the right things and do them in a way that is just like I'm going to knock them off and it won't have an impact. Whereas if you can really take on a curious exploratory mindset it really can make a difference. Like a huge, huge difference, right? Because if you're blowing past the information, like the awareness that is bubbling up, you won't be able to change them, right? You're speeding too fast.

What about you, Lisa, what else would you add?

Lisa: Yeah, I'd have to just say I echo everything that Angelique said and just be open to exploring, and that curiosity piece is huge. Huge. And I think just being willing to allow ourselves to listen and tune in and quiet ourselves down to just listen and tune in because I think the messages are there, right? Those whispers are there.

You know I reflect on myself and I reflect on my clients and those whispers are there when we really dive in and we start to ask the questions and get curious about it. So yeah, I think just quieting things down and listening to the whispers and being curious about them.

Susie: Awesome. So we have Lisa in Prince George. Angelique, you're between a couple of places. Where are you based out of?

Angelique: I'm based in Redding, Pennsylvania which is 50 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Susie: And both folks also work on Zoom. So whether you live close to these areas or not there's accessibility. So Lisa, what's the best way for people to be able to find you and reach out to you?

Lisa: Yeah, probably through my socials. My website is in the making, everyone. But Inspired Lifestyles Wellness Lisa Neukomm on Facebook or Instagram, you can find me there.

Susie: Okay, awesome. And we'll put that into the show notes if you want to track her down. And Angelique, how do people find you?

Angelique: Again, socials are like the best way. Angelique Canonico, which my name should be spelled up there in the corner in case the phonetics aren't there and It's A Feeling also on Facebook.

Susie: All right, awesome. And so this is all based on audio, we're not actually doing this in a video format, so we'll link that in the show notes so people can find that easily. And do reach out, do reach out to both Lisa and or Angelique if you're listening to the way that they're describing their experience is something that's resonating with you or how they're working with their clients is resonating with you because change can happen. It can totally happen.

Tissue can change, things can shift and they can happen in some of the most remarkable, unforeseen ways. So do reach out to them. And if you're also interested in the Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet, you can find more information on that at functionalsynergy.com/feet. Thank you again, we'll see you next time. Take care.