

You Have Helped Your Client Out of Pain, Then What? Part 1 of 2 | #392



Full Episode Transcript

With your host:

Susi Hately

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hately

Introduction (00:00.00)

You are listening to From Pain To Possibility with Susi Hatley. You'll hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain, and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hatley.

—

Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad you're here, because today I am starting a two-part series that I think will be significant for both professionals who are helping clients and the clients themselves in not only getting out of pain, but moving back to fuller activity.

This is building upon a conversation that I was having inside of my certification program, which began with the following question: "What do we do next when a client gets out of pain? Then what? Like, now what do we do? And what happens for those times when their pain flares or returns again? Now what?"

To bring context to this, I'm going to begin with a story. When I was first starting out as a therapeutic-focused yoga teacher, and based off of my results helping people out of pain and what people were coming to my classes for, I thought that I would be the "getting out of pain" girl. You know, clients would come, need—I would help them get out of pain, and then they would have the awareness, the knowledge, all the things to move on to other studios. I had started to set up referral networks to other yoga studios and have an understanding of the various classes that were offered that would be best fits.

But then when I shared this idea with my clients, they resoundingly said, "No, they did not want to leave."

So I was a bit stunned because my focus really was on helping people get out of pain. I had done this for long enough that I hadn't really thought about handstands or vinyasa flows or, you know, moving into Warrior Three or longer-hold downward dogs. It—it just hadn't really crossed my mind. But yet, here I was. It was time to build upon the practices I had already taught them: breath and meditation, along with small movements, helping them to relax, down-regulate, grow awareness, right? They had the awareness, they had better coordination capacity, and they wanted more, and they wanted me to teach them.

So I had to figure it out. I had to figure out how to teach those movement patterns. Of course, I had learned about it in TT 200, but I just hadn't thought about it for a while.

So this really builds into the models I'm talking about today and then next week. And really, it's summarized this way:

Step one (model one) is get out of pain.

Step two (model two): let's get on with the rest of your life.

So today is about model one, and I think it's important, though, before I get into it, to recognize that there are components that cross over between both models: awareness, coordinated movement patterns, paying attention to compensation patterns and other yellow lights and whispers, continuing to build upon the interoceptive and proprioceptive gains that were made. And even though they're in different models, they exist through both.

And if you've been listening to the podcast, I wanna emphasize that what I'm sharing builds upon what both Angie and Arzina talked about in the previous two episodes. So if you are new to the podcast or if you haven't listened to those, do go back to them. Each person had pain for a really long time—15 years for Arzina, 20 years for Angie. They both started in model one. They used small movements, breath, some meditation, and they grew their interoception and proprioception. They had stunning, gobsmacking moments of awareness, and they got out of pain bit by bit, step by step.

And then they began to move into the second model. Not like they graduated, like there was some moment where it's like, "Okay, you are out of model one," but rather, quite naturally and organically, they moved into more loaded, more complex activity, and they could also be deliberate about how they were training themselves, and their pain kept going down.

So again, this is why I'm breaking this two-part series into two parts. Today we're digging into model one: what happens when someone comes to me with pain, how I work with them, and also how I train teachers to work with their clients. And then next week, I will transition into model two.

So let's get into it.

When someone first comes to me, it all begins with a body diagram and listening to their story. These are the two tools that I use to take a history. My focus is to get to know the person I am working with, their symptoms, how they relate to their symptoms, and the level of possibility they have for healing and recovery. With the body diagram, it's already been filled in most of the time, and I ask them to tell me about it, to tell me the story, what happened, all the things.

Initially, I don't ask a lot of questions. I simply give them space to talk. I'm listening not only for what happened that gave me some ideas about the anatomical and biomechanical relationships, but also their relationship to them, to their symptoms. I'm listening to what they're saying and what they're not saying, and I'm also listening for hope and possibility.

This is all so vital in model number one, because getting out of a persistency of pain is more than a conversation about tissue anatomy and biomechanics. I need and want to understand what makes my client tick. And it's in understanding more about what makes my client tick that makes this process work so well. Because in the cases of persistent symptoms, at least for the clients who show up in my practice and in the practice of my trainees, there's a degree of hope that each client brings: hope that things can change, and a belief that they can actually help make them change.

And—and this is important—there is also some doubt about whether they can really have the change.

So let me restate that, because this whole notion of understanding, or at least starting to understand, what makes my client tick has to do with the degree of hope, the degree of possibility, the degree of doubt. And it's not the degree of each of these that influence whether they can or cannot or how quickly the results will come; it's just understanding the relationship between these three components.

It's the foundation of what we're about to do next: hope, possibility, and doubt. It really is a trifacta that forms this foundation, a trifacta that is fundamental to the process of getting out of pain.

This conversation also directs me where to begin. When I'm chatting with my client, I will ask them very deliberately about where we should begin, what they would like to resolve first, and what, like, their primary interest is in resolving first, and what that may give them if that was to be resolved.

So even if they say they'd like to resolve their shoulder, and I think the issue, based on our conversation and just seeing their movement patterns, is the hip, I will begin at their shoulder. And the reason for that is because I want to facilitate them building trust. I want to help them build upon what they already know to be true, what they already know in their bones, that intuitive felt sense of knowing. To build the internal trust they have in themselves, no matter how small it is, right? I come back to that trifacta again: hope, possibility, doubt. As I help them build trust, I help them build hope, possibility, and also that doubt starts to transform.

Now, it may seem strange for me to say this. I think it's important though to know that I care more about my clients trusting themselves than trusting me. Now, don't get me wrong, I recognize that their trust in me matters a lot, and there is research showing that patients who have greater trust in their doctor are more likely to take their medication as prescribed. So while that's a doctor-patient relationship, I believe that is a relationship with really so many health professionals and their client or patient base. So yes, their trust in me matters, and what I'm focusing on is on helping them grow trust in themselves, trust in what they're feeling, in their ability to notice what is working and what isn't, and to recognize the changes as they happen.

And it all begins with awareness. So often in cases of persistency of pain, the real problem is not actually something that we're aware of, right? Because if it was, we'd already be solving for it, and you can't change what you aren't aware of.

So when I'm beginning to work with people with small movements and breath, sometimes meditation or yoga nidra, my focus is on helping to build that awareness, because with awareness, we get clarity. With clarity, we can start to build connection, and we can use the feedback we get from that to know where the next steps are.

As they move, as they grow awareness, and as I see more, there's a clarity that builds about what is working in their movement patterns and what is not, what is compensating, and how all of this coordinates. We get to see their sensory motor loop between their body and their brain. We get to see how creative they are utilizing compensation patterns in an apparent unconscious or subconscious attempt at solving a problem. And in the process, they see how that creativity, as amazing as it is—and yes, it once served them—is now needing an up level because it's actually the thing that's getting in the way of their progress.

So their awareness is growing, their clarity is growing, and they begin to make more connections. They start to feel more. And when they reduce compensation, they notice more changes, whether in their body symptoms, in their breath, in their thinking patterns—they start to notice the difference.

And along with that, oftentimes it's less pain or less symptoms. And as they feel more and more less pain and less symptoms, they start to recognize what I like to call "yellow lights" or "whispers". And these are just two different metaphors to describe something similar.

When someone has recognized their pain coming down, when they can name that, and when they can see the compensatory patterns that are associated with that, they start to recognize the signals to let them know when their pain is going to come back. So yellow lights or whispers might be a compensation beginning or increasing, or a change in their breath as they move, or a shift from feeling more energized towards depletion, or a smaller change in sensation before pain becomes noticeable. So it's these smaller things that they might have ignored before or just kind of blown through, but now they're recognizing that they have significance because they are as much of a signal and messenger as the actual red light or scream of pain or other symptom that's really restrictive.

Now, what's important about this part of the process is that all of this is actually happening in the first session. And it's important to note that at the end of this session, with their pain reduced, that I say to them, "I need you to notice how long this lasts, and I will ask you when you come back for your next session, 'How long did this last?'" Because this change of symptoms is not going to last for long. It might be an hour, it might be half a day, it might be another day, it might be overnight. These are new patterns that we're recognizing and that we're rebuilding. They don't have longevity. They don't have a rootedness yet. They don't have an endurance. So they will peter out. They might fatigue out, and then signals of your pain are gonna start to come back.

And none of this is wrong because we're rebuilding patterning, and the pattern associated with the pain has a little bit more endurance and longevity than what we started with. It's like Bambi on ice; you're just getting your feet underneath you. So what you need to do is tell me just when you notice, "How long did it last?" Because when you come back the second time, we'll be able to build upon what you've noticed.

What's important here when I'm saying this to my client is when they know that they will feel better for a while, when they know that this is not a—like a fix in the moment, and they can recognize what's related to them feeling better or for worse, when they can recognize the tempo or other qualities that were related to the pain coming back, they have really important information in their hands. And that information can guide me in helping them get to the next step.

So when they come back to that second session, we begin right where we began in the first: with the body diagram and listening. And this time, I ask them some specific questions about what's new or different, what has or hasn't changed if anything, and what yellow lights or whispers have they noticed. We come back to the body diagram, talking about the body diagram, and we both see the information that is vital to knowing where to begin and whether or not or how to progress to the next step.

So I'm not shooting in the dark here; I'm building upon what's happened from last session, between last session and this one, what they're experiencing, and what changes they've noticed. I'm also noticing whether they have a growing lexicon of words to describe the sensation interoceptively or proprioceptively that they're experiencing, or a fuller understanding of when their movement patterns are compensating, what depletion or full energy feels like, and when the whisper needs addressing.

Now, I wanna emphasize, though, that I don't need them to have a whole lexicon of words to begin to feeling less pain. I've had plenty of people come through sessions with me who don't have a large lexicon, but they've got a growing lexicon, and that is what is vital: that they can recognize the smaller changes in their experience and learn what those changes mean for them. The growing vocabulary simply helps them describe the experience, which can be helpful because so many people think that pain is a binary on-and-off switch: you either have it or you don't have it. But really, it's more like a dimmer switch or a volume knob. And just like a light going dimmer or the audio going down, we can begin to notice the smaller changes along the way and what we feel as pain settles and what we notice before it starting to increase again. That's all great information.

So again, let's summarize this. This is Model One: Pattern Recognition and Pattern Retraining. It begins with a body diagram and listening to their story, getting to know them, their symptoms, and how they relate to their symptoms and their particular foundation of hope, possibility, and doubt. And that directs us where to begin.

And then through small movements, breath, meditation, and nidra, we work with awareness, clarity, connection, and feedback, building upon what they already know, growing their ability to recognize what's working and what isn't, and building that internal trust in themselves. And as they feel less pain, they begin to recognize their yellow lights or whispers.

And when they return for their next session, we can come back to the body diagram, me listening very clearly for what has changed, what they have noticed, and what that tells us about

where and how to proceed. There's a building trust inside of themselves, their body, and their symptoms as messengers.

And there's one other thing that they're building: consistency. Specifically, consistency in paying attention. As they repeat the movements, as they repeat the breath, as they repeat just tuning in, can they recognize what's working? Can they notice when compensation begins? Can they recognize when something that felt easy starting off now takes a bit more effort, or something that was effortful to begin starts to feel easier?

And each time they practice, as they come to a session, we build upon that awareness, clarity, connection, and feedback each time. That consistency matters, and that consistency grows and grows and actually helps them inside of the second model.

Remember, these are new patterns; they don't yet have longevity. We're paying attention to how long they last and what happens as they begin to change. Natural and organic consistency, not in the hardened version of "you need to be consistent." No. It's just the act of doing these things is the act of consistency.

And as a person recognizes the changes, and as they grow their ability to recognize the yellow lights and respond to them, consistency grows. And here's the kicker: alongside that consistency growing, trust grows. Hope, possibility grow. Doubt shifts. It transforms into more hope and possibility. Clarity and certainty. They're getting to know their body, what their systems are telling them, and what makes a difference.

They can recognize a change and respond to it, then notice what happens next. So when I talk about trusting themselves, this is what I mean. It's growing out of their own experience, not me telling them something. It's growing out of their experience with awareness, clarity, connection, and feedback.

There's a line that I believe is from the marines: "fast is rough, slow is smooth, and smooth is fast."

When we slow down enough to notice how we are moving, we can see things we are missing, where we are compensating, and what happens with our breath. What changes when we do just a little bit less, and what does that mean for us. We can use that information as we repeat that movement and retrain the pattern. This foundation is what we carry with us into the second model.

Body Diagram, Listening, Breathing, Moving, Trusting, Consistency: these are the foundations of model 1. And that is where we'll go next week – taking these components into model 2.

I'm looking forward to having you back next week.

If this resonates with you, and you want to learn from me in a professional level, I'm enrolling the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive that is running from October 24th to the 29th. You'll be able to explore these in a very embodied way: Body Diagram, Listening, Breathing, Moving, Trusting, Consistency.

You can learn more over at functionalsynergy.com/intensive. We'll see you next week.

—

So does this idea of the trifecta—hope, possibility, doubt—and how growing one's awareness, improving one movement helps to improve trust, hope, possibility, and lets doubt transform into something more like clarity and certainty...

If that resonates with you, come join me at the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive this October 24th to the 29th. To learn more, you can register at functionalsynergy.com/intensive.