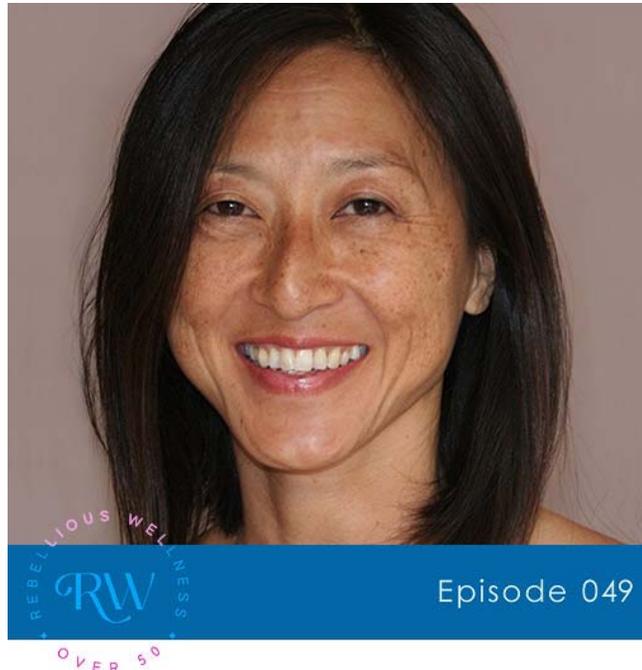


Move Better to Feel Better



Episode 49: Move Better to Feel Better with Sue Choi

Gregory Anne Welcome back everybody to another episode, you know where you are, rebellious wellness over 50. My guest today is Sue Choi of the coherent body. We are going to talk about ears and feet and fascia and all kinds of gadgets and why we don't stick with them. A really great conversation up ahead, Sue, welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

Sue Choi Thanks for having me, greg.

Gregory Anne When you first reached out and you were talking about movement and I thought, What is there to talk about, but then I read your website and I started looking into the things that you recommend.

Gregory Anne There's so much to talk about in terms of how we move and you said something interesting before we got on the call about our heads carrying our feet, and I'm thinking, how do our heads carry our feet? So give us first, a little background about you, what you do, how you came to be this expert in movement and then we'll get into some of the gadgets.

Sue Choi Okay. Sure. I've been a Bodyworker, somatic movement teacher for over 20 years. I started with yoga therapy. I did a lot of, practices like Feldenkris and Alexander technique but the bodywork piece called continual movement

that really influenced me a lot. It's like the under layer of understanding that really pulls everything together for me, in terms of bodywork. I do craniosacral, visceral myofascial type work, but all of it is in service to how the body organizes in its normal everyday movement, which is standing and walking.

Gregory Anne Tell the audience what somatic means.

Sue Choi Somatic means that you're feeling as you move, there's a feedback loop. You're paying attention to the feeling, not the performance of a movement.

Gregory Anne Okay. And hopefully that's not pain, that's speaking to you but just the actual information that your body's giving you is.

Sue Choi Yes. And if it's pain then there are different ways you're looking for that non pain, but there's an experimentation that you go through. And there's a real ownership that happens when you're able to track yourself and train yourself to be familiar with what the signals are, because we know like, that's a bad pain, that's a good pain.

And you start to just increase your vocabulary around that, by paying more attention.

Gregory Anne Now, you also stress the importance of hearing and auditory reception in terms of a whole physical wellbeing kind of thing. And it's not something that most practitioners talk about. And I know it's something that many of us aging people worry about, losing our hearing.

What is the significance of hearing loss in any age in terms of... Terms of

Sue Choi Such a big thing. When you come out of the womb, the auditory system is the only system that's fully formed. You have to learn how to see and control your eyes. You don't have full color perception. You're nearsighted when you're born, you can't obviously can't walk, but you hear.

Sue Choi And in fact, the auditory system is fully developed by the third trimester. And Dr. Alfred Tomatis was a French ENT. He was the first one who really kind of delved into that. And without any proof. It was just his intuition, given his work with people that the fetus can hear. And he was pretty much laughed out of his community, but he was right on the money.

Sue Choi Yeah. So the first thing that develops as the way we create a connection, there's also the touch perception too. So, but hearing is a type of touch. And Dr. Tomatis talked about the ear, just being a specialized type of skin. So if we let ourselves be touched and we figure out how to organize ourselves to be touched by what we hear and by our own sound production.

Sue Choi It's a different experience of how you stand in your own self. Has a lot of implications and the auditory system, the nerve, actually the auditory nerve has two branches. One goes to the cortex, which is basically like how we're understanding each other, but the other branches down into the vestibular system, which is your balancing system.

So hearing perception, particularly through the lower frequencies is deeply linked to how we organize ourselves to balance.

Gregory Anne Yeah, I've read that some of what contributes to falling often in elderly people is a loss of their low frequency hearing.

Sue Choi Hmm. Yeah.

You know, there's also eyesight limited, I have read that that's a big factor.

Sue Choi Yeah. And you can increase that because that perception happens both at that lower level of just pure passive tone perception, but then there is, how do you make sense of the sound? How do you attune? And that's a big one with the auditory system. How do you tune in? So in the landscape of noise, how do you focus in on what you want to hear?

Sue Choi And then the other aspect of attention, auditory attention is when you're paying attention to something, how do you stay connected and drown out what you don't want to hear? So there's a mechanism of dampening the noise through the eardrum that you have control over through how you attend. So if, if I'm attending to you in a relaxed, but connected way, that's a skill.

Sue Choi Because sometimes, have you ever been with somebody who's like a little bit too attentive and you feel like back off, you need a little bit less attention. Or someone who's looking at everything else obviously, and scattered attention. There's this sweet spot of I'm attending to you, but I'm giving you space and I'm holding space for myself.

Sue Choi And that's a skill that I believe like, a mature, nervous system, like past 30. Yes, because you know, now we know the central nervous system is not fully developed that prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until you get into your mid, even to your late twenties. Then on top of that, you don't have enough life experience, enough data basically to reference, right?

So you go through your thirties and your forties and, you know, at one point my husband is an advanced Rolfer. And so, we talk about business a lot because we work, in very similar ways, but I told him at one point, I don't think I'm going to take anyone who's younger than 40, because there's a depth of insight and, just a life lived.

Sue Choi I mean, I'm sure your listeners all recognize this and you recognize all those things that you heard in your twenties that you understand now in your fifties and sixties.

Gregory Anne Absolutely. I'm curious, one of the things I hear from people is, Greg, you always say, listen to your body. Well, I don't know when my body's talking to me. Is your work and what you're going to share with us a way of becoming more attuned to listen. Now that we're talking auditory to listen to the body.

Sue Choi Exactly, exactly. And so you need a framework to listen to the body because otherwise it's just a bunch of noise coming at you at once. Like how do you have some sort of structure to understand? And the way I work is through perceiving your upright body, which is basically your vestibular system, but also the balance between all of your joints and how you are supporting yourself.

Sue Choi I also use the auditory and visual system. So how you take in light, how you take in sound, the connection to that environment, that space organizes your head. And so if you practice organizing your head so that your feet support your head, that you can feel that whole support from your feet, all the way up to your head.

Sue Choi And then you have that additional organizational principle of how do your eyes operate? How do your ears operate to help you find your literal center? And that's just a physiological thing that your body wants to do already. It wants to do that, and it wants to do that efficiently, but it can do that in a really gross way because it has to do that.

Sue Choi So the better you get at that, the more refined you get at understanding the sensations that come in to your awareness the easier it is to know if you're on the right track. 'cause if you're going against some sort of abstract concept of energy or something, that's not in the language of the body, the body doesn't know what a chakra is the body doesn't even know what a bicep is.

It doesn't understand anatomical terms. It doesn't know what the, saos is it's just, those are for our communications, it's not for the communication that you have natively with your body. Your body natively has. These sensory signals that it sends you, these homeostatic signals that it sends you.

Sue Choi There's a neuroanatomist who talks about the perception of those interoceptive, perceptive signals as being pure homeostatic signals. So the body wants to conserve energy. So it's giving you signs, do this, you can conserve energy. That's the biggest thing that the deepest layer of your body wants to do.

So if we can become fluent in this understanding and practice, we should not get as fatigued?

Sue Choi Absolutely. There's a lot of heavy lifting that our body does when we're, using, let's say the second string muscles to move us,

Gregory Anne What's a second string muscle?

Sue Choi You want the A team running the show. So if you get connected with A team and you link them together, it's like a another level and you feel a huge sense of non-doing. Like in that non-doing that feeling of energy coming up through you is really a question of internal organization, internal proprioception, that feels like something's moving you.

Sue Choi That feels like there's energy moving through you, which could just be blood flow, or it could be the balance between all the joints know there are a lot of sensations that in broad terms, you'd call energy. But in specific ways you can say,

oh, this is the fascia kind of organizing itself. Like it's finally has enough data point to take over and pull you together.

Sue Choi Amazing thing to feel. And, you know, I see it in the people I work with. They're just like, what is going on? This is great. Why didn't I learn this earlier? That's a comment that I hear a lot. Why didn't I learn this earlier? And it's because I'm trained to movement and touch.

And then those two things together give me a lot of insight into the body that if you're just doing touch, you don't understand the movement dynamics as well. If you're just doing movement, you don't understand what happens in the tissue or the fluid body as well. But if you do those two together and you do it, not in a clinical I'm going to fix you way

but educational way where you're engaging the person to have the full context so that they can have the insights and they can reproduce what you produce on the table for them. That's always been my goal and it's always kind of informed the way I work with people.

Gregory Anne Okay. So I'm thinking about the spine with this heavy Boulder up at the top and those not ever paid attention enough to feet at the bottom holding us up. There's a tendency these days with social, phones, and screen and people to look down a lot. Is that damaging? I mean, is there something to correct it? I assume it's damaging. It's not great to have your head or your body trying to hold up this weight.

What can we do to correct that posture?

Sue Choi Here's a real well, I have this concept called the three keys, but one of those keys is at the base of the skull.

Show us, please.

Sue Choi So hold on, let me get, it's easier with the model, so the head's super heavy. So right here, if you think. Kind of kinking the head back just at that place. So you're kinking it back to activate these small little muscles. You're not pulling the chin forward and you're not dropping yourself back, but you're pivoting on it on yourself so that you can get those activated.

Sue Choi If you think of that, you will find that your posture changes while you're on the computer. That's a very simple thing. And another simple thing is if you swallow right now, and do that a couple of times and feel how your tongue comes up to the roof of your mouth. If you let your tongue rest there, let your tongue be wide, that creates a platform of support for the heaviest part of your, your head, which is all of this.

Sue Choi And the jaw is this one piece over here, what happens is these maciters which are the muscles that end up being too tight when you're grinding your teeth, they don't have to hold you up anymore. You're holding yourself up from this deep internal place. Do you feel that?

I do actually.

Sue Choi So that's another thing you could just think of swallowing and then let your tongue not, not be contracted up there, but let it be kind of magnetized up there or, feel it kind of suck up there and find it.

Sue Choi Yeah, that's a really good thing because the function of the tongue is another thing that starts to get lost. You don't hear as well. You don't articulate as well because there's a feedback loop. It's very under used resource. When my mom was in the hospital and she wasn't, she has dentures and she's not using her mouth as well. The occupational therapist, had her doing lip and tongue exercises.

Gregory Anne Interesting. So the other things that I mentioned, the feet, the poor feet, earlier you showed me the model of the foot and you were talking about the plantar fascia that I know people get plantar fasciitis.

Sue Choi Yes.

What is the cause of that as they age? a lot more people complain about that as we get older.

Sue Choi Yeah. It is poor use of the lower leg in particular and not getting what they call, dorsaflection right here. So it's not going into that because people are just kind of walking here and.

Sue Choi If you look at this lot of people think of their ankles, just the hinge joint, it's a pivot. If you think of, the heel being a teeter-totter, this is the way your foot can move. And because people don't get this part, they don't get this part that, that arch area gets very stiff.

It's not here getting stretched out and it's not here getting domed up is not working at its end range potentials. And so that just stiffens up. And if any of your listeners have a polished cement floors, that could be a culprit too.

Gregory Anne: Yeah. I would imagine now you have on your website, a couple of feet massagers, one is wooden and it has little balls and I guess you roll across it. And then another one is like a little rubber things?

Sue Choi: Yeah. And you can stand on that and do a lot of, it has a density to it that's nice. Yeah. I like those. Those are things. If you put them on the floor, maybe not the rolling ones, those are better when you're sitting. But if you, I think I have mats on there too, that are textured if you put those on the floor. Let's say at your bathroom sink or your kitchen sink, you get a little massage in your feet

Gregory Anne: and that's important, not just for the actual foot cushioning, all that stuff is getting work but the circulation,

Sue Choi: yeah, but ultimately the best way is to start to walk better and then your feet start to change because that's what the feet know what to do. It's getting its full exercise when you're managing the weight of your body and moving the weight of

your body through the whole of the foot, the way it was designed. You can do spot work by doing that massaging and by having foot massages,

Gregory Anne: I love when they spend time. I always say, just spend more time on my feet, fingers too. I like my fingers massage.

Sue Choi: Yeah. That's nice.

Gregory Anne: So, is it true? Proper walking is heel first midsection toes up off the balls of the foot kind of thing?

Sue Choi: That's a big topic, but there's padding in the foot. And if you follow the padding in your foot, then that, that will take you through, this is not just straight on like that. It takes.

Padding here on the side, padding across the ball of the foot, and then, the push off, but that you, it's not just like going back to front because that's where people lose the mobility in the arch. Cause they're just going like that and using toes only. It's, it's a spin.

So we have to remember the outer edge of the foot, not just these outer edge rolling across the ball of the, into the inner edge as you push it off. So there are a lot of other details, and how that plays into the hip joint in particular.

That's why, what I showed you before we started talking about. Letting the shins take your weight will help you get into the foot in a way . It's just a simple heuristic that helps you too, because when you start to micromanage your walk, funny things can happen. It's funny, you know, you, you develop a bad kind of habit on top of a bad habit when you think you're correcting it and you're producing

something that your body doesn't recognize because it already knows how to do it. There's a lot of counter rotation that happens in the lower leg and then the upper leg and the upper leg and the hip joint. And, and if you try to micromanage through the foot and do the hip joint the wrong way, then you're not helping yourself.

Gregory Anne: So it sounds like a Western medicine way of managing something, doing one specific part of the body and ignoring the rest of the day.

Sue Choi: I know. That's why I hesitated, to get too much into the weeds with that because...

Gregory Anne: No, it's good that you said what you said though. Really? Because it does remind me that we're a whole system. We're not just taking care of our feet or balancing our head where it is.

Sue Choi: Yeah, exactly. So if you, if you start out with the reference of the whole and you're feeling the whole what happens is you experience your whole body as one. So when you're doing one movement, you're impacting the whole and it feels very you're in alignment with your body.

You're not trying to micromanage it and it feels very different in partnership with your body instead of trying to be top down on it. And that's a very patriarchal Western model. Like I'm going to tell you 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, what to do, because I know. And then I call that top down versus bottom up.

And when you start to work with the sensations as a bottom up, orientation, you're working with the sensations and you're letting the sensations indicate what needs to happen. And you're giving yourself the buffer, that half beat of a moment to proceed. Before you do, you can make that feedback loop of perceiving and doing and perceiving and doing, and it's a fine tuning.

Otherwise, if you're just doing, doing, doing without the perceiving, you're going over here and you're meant to go over there .

Gregory Anne: And you're heading maybe into a painful situation or dislocation or a strain, rather than, if you took that pause that beat.

Sue Choi: Yeah. Yeah, totally. And to see all the time with, any modality.

When you have a modality and you're doing it for the doing and you're not feeling and making those adjustments, then, that's why people come see me. Right.

Because they have some sort of issue. I've been doing yoga and Pilates and you know, they do all these things and

their body's a mess.

Gregory Anne: Yeah. Do you find, we talked earlier also about techie things that we can use to hack our lives, our bodies, and we get tired of them after about six months. Some people are just dedicated, they're going to do something every day.

Would you say that you need to find a way like to fall in love. Cause we've talking about is sounds to me like it takes a consistent amount of commitment to begin, to even learn, to understand the system of the body in a different way than maybe Western, which is we get up, we brush, we walk, we'd walk the dog, we drink our coffee, right?

There's not a lot of thought unless somebody takes time to do a morning practice or something. Is it possible to really just fall in love with this because we feel so different.

Sue Choi: Yeah. Oh, absolutely. And the way I work is I want you to feel it right away. I don't want you to just cross your fingers and say in six months it's going to work.

No, because that's what keeps you doing more of it because you need that constant feedback loop. Otherwise the body doesn't wait six months to tell you something. It's been telling you something it's just after those six months, maybe you finally hear it, but the more skilled you get at listening, the less effort it is.

You're not meant to micromanage your body. It's just your body, the sub-cortical system, not the part that we're talking with. Right. The other part is fast and that's why people get locked into trauma patterns that have been kind of shoved down. Into their subconscious because the body is just responding like that.

Sue Choi: And if you understand how to give it space, if you understand how to build the trust from that felt space, then you can't let things drop into the body. And that's ultimately what, we all need. We don't need to be using this cortex to deal with something that we do all day long. You have to learn it a little bit, but it can be a lot faster than, you know, 20 years sitting in a cave and meditating.

And that's why I work with upright and walking. Cause you're doing it all day long. This is where a lot of the stuck places will happen in communication with other people, particularly family, all those things will come up when you're in the world, not necessarily isolated on your own, although that comes up too, but it's kind of, this is for me, dynamic walking meditation that is I think just is so powerful.

Sue Choi: And more practical in terms of, you know, what do you need right now, today? What makes your life better quickly? And that's what I try to teach.

Gregory Anne: I would encourage people that are listening. This is a common thing I've noticed from working with women over a certain age, we expect that something's going to hurt.

And so when it does it's okay. And we get used to having something hurt. Oh, maybe it's a lower back. It's a hip. It's an elbow. It's well, I played tennis, you know, and. Just don't think about going to get something I'm going to say different. Your kind of work is not common for many people. They might go to the doctor and, you know, hope to get some recommendation for physical therapy or surgery or they just learn to live with things.

And I'm hearing that we don't have to live with things that are out of alignment.

Sue Choi: Yeah, absolutely. Because I had someone to come to me and I've been working with him for a while, but I think at the time he was 43 or something, he said, I guess I'm just getting old. And I'm like, oh, no way, no way.

And you know, the result of his physical therapy and doctors was okay, that's just going to happen. You're going to be on your back for a week, maybe two or three times a year and take these pills , that was where he dropped off the allopathic system. He tried everything and I said, oh no.

, I'm going to give you exercises. Not that you're going to do like 10 of these three times a day. Like the PT world, these will expire, these, have an expiration date, internalize it, and then you won't have to do it anymore because I don't want you to give people another to-do list.

Sue Choi: We all have enough of those. And, so it just is it's fun. I mean, it's just fun to discover how playful you could be in your body again. Uh, how much new insight you can have that is kind of like. Discovery 2.0 like when you stand, it's a big neurological event and you see kids and they're just like, wow.

And they're experimenting and running around and having fun. And, and now that we're, we have a second chance to revisit that because most people never revisit it unless they have to do rehab or something. But to revisit it with that database of life experience with a fully cooked nervous system with a different perspective is pretty amazing.

Gregory Anne: It sounds like it. Now, can people work with the virtually or do they have to come see you?

Sue Choi: Oh no, I have online work and in fact, what I found was the online programs are powerful because people bring themselves differently to online work. When they come into my space, you know, they're expecting me to touch them.

They're expecting me to tell them how to move. And there's, sometimes, like, am I doing it right type feeling. I found and it was surprising to me how much better it worked online.

Gregory Anne: Oh, that's interesting

Sue Choi: It works really great.

And particularly the interaction. When people share something happens because we're all coming together from this deliberate embodied space and insights and changes are lighting up all over the places. It's just fun.

Gregory Anne: I agree. I love small groups when I work with people. And now of course, zoom is a thing in the old days we were on the phone.

But there is so much give and take and energetic awakenings and you know it, yeah. I agree. , so the name of your website is.

Sue Choi: Coherent body.com

Gregory Anne: coherent body.com. Do you have any, do you run classes on a regular basis or are they just every once in a while?

Sue Choi: I have membership group and we meet four times a week and you don't have to come to all of them, but all the cap classes serve a different purpose and then you have access to all the recordings.

But prior to coming into the membership cause there's a lot of techniques that I have to explain and layout because it's different. I have a program called the Unbound posture where people learn all of the fundamentals in two months, and then they got a month of membership so they can practice and see what it's like.

And then afterwards, if they want to join membership, they can. But coming through that program kind of buffers, the people who have been there for awhile and we can just continue. Cause we're exploring the vision and the auditory system on a different level now.

Gregory Anne: Do they need anything special equipment?

Sue Choi: Oh no, no. There is a Tomatis device that I'll be working specifically with that for people who have that, but for the Unbound posture program? No, not at all.

Gregory Anne: Okay. Bring what we got our bodies, our awareness and our fully formed nervous system and brain.

Sue Choi: Yeah, exactly.

Gregory Anne: This has been great.

I would recommend anybody who's feeling like this is how it's going to be, but you're not happy with your body uncomfortable or in pain, find somebody. Susan is a great example of a simple, non-techie, no equipment necessary resolution and maybe greater awareness greater.

I'm thinking that if we are aligned, we can perceive, hear or emotionally energetically other things we might miss because we're not, we're not focused on that thing.

Sue Choi: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, yeah.

Gregory Anne: Anything you want to leave our guests with today?

Sue Choi: Yeah. If you just carry your head differently. That one takeaway. Yeah, just that little pivot will really help your shoulders and back. And, I have a lot of free offerings. If you go to my website, you could sign up for.

Gregory Anne: Okay, great. Great, good to know. Thank you so much for your time.

I really appreciate it. It was really good information. Peeps, I will be back next week with another fabulous guest. Be well till then.

