

Ep #123: From Covid Shutdown to 100K as a Yoga Therapist



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With Your Host

Susi Hatelty

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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: Welcome, and welcome back. I am tickled pink for this particular episode because I have one of my grads from the yoga therapy certification program that I run with me here today, Pat Parsons. And I'm going to let Pat introduce herself.

But as much as I love biomechanics, as much as I love teaching about the possibility of living in reduced or eradicated pain and really managing a lot of symptoms. The other thing I love talking about is helping yoga teachers and yoga therapists earn a living, like for real. Like for real.

And there's such a belief out there in the yoga industry and in the yoga therapy industry that it's not possible, and I just love to share otherwise, right? I like to prove that is a myth. So with this episode I've got Pat, and she's going to talk about her pathway, her journey towards 100K. And it's possible, absolutely. And she's got some really, really great things to share.

And the thing too, is that she had some other stuff going on in her life and she's still doing great, great work and building out a great studio. Pat, welcome. Pat is based in South Surrey in a community called Panorama. Pat, share a little bit more about yourself and then we'll get right into it.

Pat: Thank you, Susi. And thank you for having me, I really appreciate being able to share a little bit of my story and my journey. My background actually is not yoga, I've only been doing yoga since 2008. My whole life basically has been in the airline industry and travel and tourism. And I got laid off in 2008 when the economic downturn happened.

And I was looking for something to do on a volunteer basis, rather than just being idle sitting at home. And my sister suggested that I contact our local YMCA and do some volunteer teaching there. So they put me through the

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basic yoga courses and I started teaching yoga, and I loved it. And from there, instead of looking for a job, I started cultivating my own business.

I started as a sole proprietor and I went around and rented space in other studios, I ran my own programs, I put out flyers, I marketed out to all the friends that I could muster to come in and take my class. And then I kind of went down the rabbit hole and took my first 500 hour teacher training from there.

And my project that I did was yoga for larger bodies, or every body. I'm not a small person and never, never physically fit. But yoga was never that about me. Yeah, so I started marketing for larger bodies. And it was great because I started with two or three people. And by the time I ended up owning a studio with my sister in 2013, I would fill a room of, you know, it wouldn't be uncommon for 24 people to be in my class.

So I knew that I found my peeps, and the way and the style that I taught yoga was very similar to my sisters and it just grew from there. So continually every year we've made money. I'm not in it really to make money. I mean, I am in it to make money, but I am in it for the love of the game. And I think really strongly when you love it and you're doing it and you have a good head on your shoulders to rework things so that people are always connecting to you, that the money will come in.

Susi: Yes, I love that because I've said this many times, that in the past when I took business trainings and there was a real focus on money. And so then I made it all about the money, it never worked for me. Because what worked is I just want to help people get better. And so when I'm focusing on that, then it all works because that's where my true alignment is.

Pat: So true. That's so true.

Susi: Although what's important is that you still need to understand the structure of business. So let's have a little chat about that because we both

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have this agreement around the alignment of like heart and soul in a sense, but you still need that structure. Because I call that alignment and that skill that you have cultivated, and how good you are at what you do, same for me, like that's kind of our artistry. That's like our craft.

But you can be good at your craft, but still not make money. So there's still this structural piece around business. So talk more about what you've learned about the structure of business and how your craft and business aren't like oil and water.

Pat: Yeah, it really is, for me, two mindsets. It's two hats that you wear. Sometimes in business you need to be a little bit more ruthless when things aren't working. You need to let go of things that maybe you're attached to that maybe thought might be working or you feel so gravitated to because you love what you do and you love this offering. But if it's not bringing in money and not sustainable, then there's no point in keeping it. Or you may need to rework it.

So what I mean by that is when we first got our studio there was not a whole lot of people coming in. We purchased the studio off of an owner and her fiscal year, her profit was 13,000. And she was giving lots of offerings, lots of offerings, lots of offerings.

We came in, we low balled our one year membership, we added classes in, so we added more in which brought up our expenses. And then basically our offering for the year was 365 days of Yoga for \$365. \$1 a day, how can you not do that? You know, what's that worth to you? It's less than a cup of coffee, way less than a cup of coffee.

And we started getting people in. And we did that for a year, we brought in that and we started to build up our client base. And then from there with the offerings that we had, because there was no morning classes, and you need to know the area that you're living in, your demographic. You know, there's working moms, there's stay at home moms that put their kids in school and then have nothing to do afterwards.

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So knowing your market of who's in your community, what they're looking for, and then going after that. And that's a little bit different than just saying, "I like to teach Tuesday evenings and I want to offer a yin class because I love that," and just sitting back and waiting for people to come in through the door. You need to be a little bit more aggressive and know the area of where you are and target that.

Susi: Mm-hmm. Now, let's talk a little bit about Covid. And you guys were shut down during 2020, we were all shut down for a lengthy period of time. In Canada, what was it? We were shut down from what March until May?

Pat: Till May, yeah.

Susi: Yeah, and you're in BC, so then after that initial shutdown, then things got different. Because I'm in Alberta, I'm in Canada, but what happened here was different than what happened for you. So kind of give the lowdown. So we had that first like global shutdown, right, that everyone remembers. Then you had a few more though, because BC had big numbers.

Pat: We had big numbers. And so I think in total, we were shut down four times.

Susi: In 2020, or 2020 to 2021?

Pat: 2020 to 2021. We were shut down in in the spring, right when Covid had hit in March, when everybody else was. And when things started opening back up, we continued to stay shut. There were certain industries that were considered super spreaders, and we opened up for the summer and then in the fall we were shut down again for another six weeks.

And then through the new year we were shut down again. So I think in total we were shut down possibly three or four times.

Susi: It sounds like you had three months, two or three months of reprieve and then you were shut down again.

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Pat: That's right. In that reprieve people were not coming to the studio.

Susi: That's what I was going to ask.

Pat: Yeah. You know, Covid has been so tricky that we have loyal students that have been with us for years that are still not comfortable doing yoga in person. And when Covid hit, we knew pretty quickly that we needed to pivot our business model and go to online, just like the rest of the world.

Again, it was an expense that we went out and we bought the equipment, we bought all the lighting. We still have access to our studio so our teachers could still either teach from their home if they had that ability. Or they can go into the studio and teach on their own and just set it up.

And then when we started opening back up, there was lots of people that didn't want to come back into the studio in close quarters with everybody else, or practice with a mask on. And so we had pivoted once again to a hybrid where we had classes that you could register for in the studio, as well as online.

And I must say, prior to Covid the location that we were in was a fairly large studio, we could fit probably about 25 mats in that location. And we never had anybody register for it, we just opened up the class and anybody was welcome to come. It didn't matter if you were a student that was already coming or if you were somebody that walked in off the street, we would always accommodate and make room for anybody. And we never had a problem with fitting people in.

And one of the things with Covid is now we were limited to the spacing that we had to have and how many people we could have in the studio. So again, we pivoted to online registration and, again, an added expense of going into a model where we were having to register people as well.

So it was definitely a challenging time. And I would say for anybody that goes through things like this, you have to be forward thinking. You have to

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think, what would I do if I was in the situation of somebody coming that is immunocompromised, because most of our clients are dealing with, you know, we have cancer survivors. We have people that are dealing with lupus, and arthritis and all kinds of different things, as well as people that are just physically fit.

So you need to put yourself in the mindset of those clients and then move from there. It's not what I want, it's what the market is going to bear and how we can move forward for these people in the best way possible do that they feel safe.

Susi: Yeah, like how you really serve your clientele.

Pat: Yeah, for me it's really, really important in my studio to, the number one rule in the studio is to create the safe container for people that are walking in through the door. It doesn't matter what I'm going through in my life, they're my focus. They walk in the door, it's always, "Hi, welcome." You know, your first time to the studio, introducing them to the other people, let me show you where the props are. Making sure that they're feeling comfortable and included and that it really is a safe space for them.

That is what's going to be your conversion. You can draw them in by a two week trial or a free class, but how you respond to them once they are there is really your conversion.

Susi: And that's really the consistency too.

Pat: Correct.

Susi: There's a consistency that's needed. So here's what's really interesting, is before we started recording you were talking like some numbers when you first got the studio, the previous revenue, like from the previous owner was about 13k. You, in short time, turned it to 37. Then as you're getting through all the Covid mess and you're like steps, literally steps away from 100k.

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Pat: Right.

Susi: So what I want the yoga folks to be hearing right now, and what Pat has not shared is she has had a whole bunch of family stuff happen as well in the background where she is a key caregiver for her dad who has not been well. And so it's not like Pat's got a ton of time on her hands, right?

And I want people to get that it's possible. And I would love for you to share more about like, you came into the yoga therapy certification program in like the final module in January 2021. And you were pooped out.

Pat: I was totally pooped out.

Susi: And when I even offered up like, "Hey, who wants to earn 100k? Like where are you at?" And I think you raised your hand and said, "Yeah, but..."

Pat: Yeah, no, I'm all in.

Susi: But there was a but, there was a but, right, because you were so tired and you didn't want to be tired.

Pat: Yeah.

Susi: So that's been a key transformation as well. So here you are earning more, you're navigating all the stuff around your dad, and you're earning more money, and you're not nearly as depleted as you were back in January. So what was the change there?

Pat: The change there for me was the self-care piece, really. And that self-care piece being grounding myself when I'm feeling like I'm squirreling out, especially when my partner is in the same position. My partner is my sister, so she's going through exactly the same dynamic with the family as I am. And she's going through the growing pains of the studio just like I am.

So for me, I really felt like to put more on my plate would have just broken me. And doing the training, I could see where I could make small

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adjustments to myself to become more clear on where I'm going. To be clearer on my communication.

To be clearer on what I want in the studio, where I want to get to, sit down and have a look at, okay, where are the gaps? And what can I do to fill in those gaps? And does it need to be me? Can I take something off of my plate so I can get back to something that I love?

And that's what has transpired in the studio. The expenses have gone up, but so has the revenue. I've added more classes in, since we've come out of the last shutdown of Covid we've added more classes in. We've added more diversification. I sat down with my sister and partner and we said, what do we love? What's our moneymakers? Where can we make more money and work less so that we've got more time for ourselves? And what can we get off of our plate?

And that's what we did. We also run a teacher training program and we have, you know, we've really fine-tuned it over the years that we've been running it. And we have decided that we meet once a month for a 12 month period with our peeps that are in the teacher training. And we've decided that you know what? We could do two weekends a month, and we're adding a second one in.

Susi: Nice.

Pat: So we'll have a program running in the fall and we'll have a program running in the new year, continually. And we'll see how that goes. And it may not work and it may work. And if it doesn't work, then we will adjust and figure something else out.

Susi: And that's the piece, I think, that's also really key, is that we're all figuring it out. And how we're figuring out is what's key. We're not just throwing stuff against the wall, though at the beginning we certainly throw stuff against the wall and see what sticks.

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But then we get to this place as you start to realize and recognize the data of like you had mentioned you're familiar about the community that you have your studio space in. There's things that you love about teaching and you've learned more about who the people are who would come to your studio and what really serves them and aligns with what you love to teach.

And then you've been learning how to optimize this even further to really serve you so that your battery doesn't drain, right? Because in many ways there's no point in having a business if you're just going to be pooped out all the time, right?

And I think what's key here is she said, it might not work, because of course, we can't predict the future. Like I mean who could have predicted Covid, right? We can't predict if it will work, but we can make a really good decision based off of what we desire and what our community is asking for. And when you bring those two together, you start to see the trajectory to where you're going and you know the actions that you need to take to actually make it so.

Pat: That's correct, yeah. And we never had any intention of doing a teacher training program. But a lot of our students that had come in and were taking our classes wanted to learn how to do yoga in the style that we were doing, which is really individual and unique.

Each yoga instructor that teaches has their own style, they have their own voice that you've cultivated. And over the years, our studio because we're family and we want people to feel like they're welcome in our home, you know? And that they're respected as a guest in our home. And we teach in that style, in a gentle manner. If you don't feel like doing yoga today, if the physical piece isn't there for you, then just lay down on your mat and just breathe, just take it in by osmosis.

And that resonated with a lot of our students. And they were asking us to put in a teacher training program and we thought, okay, well, let's just develop something. You know, we kind of put a little bit of effort into it and I

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said, okay, we'll put together a manual and we'll just put it out there. And that first year we thought, oh, if we get one person, then that would be kind of fun. We had seven people register and it was fantastic.

And the next year we had eight. And then of course Covid hit and, you know, but we're continually running it and it's still a go. So like I said, if one person is interested then it's worth my time to come in and be with them. So yeah,

Susi: Yeah, and so there you hear her commitment to students. And I like to say that if you're going to be in this, you need to love your students, right? Especially in the healing process. You've got to believe that it's possible for people to get well. And you've got to love your students, you've got to love what you do, you've got to love to teach, and it's amazing what will come of it from there.

So when you think about what you gained out of the therapeutic certification program, the yoga therapy certification program, what was sort of a key takeaway that helped you grow your business? Because we incorporate business throughout the training, and then we have a business portion when you're finished, the technical training. And then there's availability for more business coaching, which you're involved in right now.

So at whatever phase through that, what have you found to be the most supportive around the business component that enabled you to grow?

Pat: I think, for me, because I am the business it was the self-work. Finding the little tips and tricks again of growing my capacity and my capability and all of that. You know, knowing when I need to take a break, scheduling time for myself. Because really, you are your business.

You are your business and just like we say that we can't help others unless we help ourselves, or you can't, you know, we're not fixing other people, but we really can't grow our business if we're not growing as an individual as well. And I truly believe that when you are feeling like you are depleted

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and so constricted, like I was coming into the program, there was no fluidity. And there was a really hard line as I have this product, this is the way things are done.

And there was no capacity for me to be fluid in the business. I didn't have time in my busy schedule. If people aren't coming I don't have time to rework the schedule, I don't have time to work on the pricing structure, I don't have time to work on the marketing piece.

And I feel that as I came into your program I've really felt that by scheduling time for myself and really taking a step back and knowing how I'm feeling when I'm starting to get anxious about stuff, and grounding myself and taking a few breaths, and then reworking so that I can come in and I can actually schedule stuff in for the business and not feel overwhelmed by that.

That was a really big piece for me, is the scheduling piece of it. And knowing that I need to be in that space. Otherwise, A, I am not serving my clients for sure because I'm not with them, I'm not in the headspace to be with them. And, B, I'm not in the headspace to be in my business. You know, it's all an inward thing. So I found that that, for me, was a big piece of it.

Now I come from a sales and marketing kind of background, but it was crunching numbers. So I'm really good at pulling reports and seeing where the numbers are going and what products are working well and how many people are booked into what and do we continue with this or do we make another offer to something else?

But I was finding that because my life was so busy and I was feeling so overwhelmed with everything, and on top of it going into your program which was, oh my god, a year. I had to commit a year, oh, what am I doing? But it was so transforming. Really so transforming.

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And I just can't even explain how much gratitude I have for actually stepping into the program and feeling like I was being held the whole way and allowing myself to be me. And from here it's, yeah, I mean, it wasn't even a question, of course I'm going to be continuing on with the business courses because they are changing my business. They're changing my focus on where I need to go. They're giving me a new drive to do things.

Susi: So good. So good. It just goes to show that business is a skill, there's a bunch of tools that go along with it. And it's totally learnable, tight?

Pat: It is.

Susi: Yeah, I love it. And you're looking at doubling your revenue in the next fiscal year, aren't you?

Pat: I'd like to, you bet. That's the plan and I'm sticking to it.

Susi: Really, really good. So even, like just think about that, there's so much opportunity when you can learn those skills and hone your craft and really blend these two mindsets between your ability to work and teach and make a big difference for people, and this structural component of building and run your business.

Pat, it's so much fun working with you and I'm so glad that you're continuing on the business training.

Pat: Me too.

Susi: I mean I'm looking so forward to seeing what happens and where you grow next. So thank you again. If people want to find you, because you are doing hybrid sessions, right?

Pat: Yes, yes.

Susi: If people want to find you, what's the best way for them to find your studio?

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Pat: The best way would be to go to our website, which is healingmovements, with an S, dot ca. And there's several ways that you can contact us or you can just register for a class if you so choose. So that would be the best way.

Susi: There you go. So do reach out to Pat if you're curious to know more about how she does what she does and the people that she works with. Thank you again, Pat.

Pat: Thank you, Susi.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.