

Ep #238: Healing & Synergy: Making Money as a Yoga Therapist – Is It Possible?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hately

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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.

Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here today because I'm continuing with my mini series on healing and synergy where I've been interviewing clients and I've been teaching key anatomical and biomechanical concepts that I think are important for helping clientele reduce and eradicate physical pain.

Today I'm digging into another key part of this synergy conversation, which is about digging into key business skills that yoga therapists need to learn in order to grow a sustainable business without burning themselves out. And the reason I'm doing this episode is because so many people in our yoga industry will say that it's not possible to make a living as a yoga therapist. And while I disagree with those people, the reality is that they're not entirely wrong.

There are yoga therapists who are struggling. And there's a reason why it's difficult for so many to make a living as a yoga therapist, there's a reason why so many struggle to balance being a yogi with the doing of running a sustainable business that brings in their desired revenue. There's a reason why many begin to believe that yoga and business are like oil and water. You ready for it? It's because nobody taught them how.

Yoga teacher trainings, yoga therapy trainings, many of them don't teach the actualities of building a yoga-based business. I've even had trainees come into my certification program and say to me that they had trainers in their yoga teacher trainings who said you can't make a living at this. They're running teacher training programs for goodness' sake.

Now, the good thing is that the trainees that found me saw that I blend yoga and business and I am very passionate about doing both. I see the huge importance of this if you want an ROI on your training and really want to

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serve your clients. They found me and they're like, all right, this girl knows what she's doing. She can teach me how to build a business and also build my skill, my skill at helping people reduce and eradicate pain.

It's truly why I've set up my certification program the way that I have where we spend the majority of the first part of it on technical training, helping build the skill towards honing the craft of helping people reduce and eradicate pain. And my trainees get results very quickly in the process because of the way that I focus here, because of the trainers I bring in to support me, which support them.

I sprinkle in business concepts just to keep this rolling because when we shift into the next part of the training, which is about building business skills, it's not a super surprise. And so I bring in a true blue business coach and she supports them in real time helping them grow their business. This is not some lecture opportunity. They are now working with their clients, they're working on their marketing copy, they're figuring out where to put their message, how to engage with their clients. They're sorting out the programs that they're building.

This is like the real rubber hits the road, taking action and building this business. It's why I have many clientele who are earning a living, whether it's part of full-time, whether it's a retirement-based living, and they've learned how to do it. And they're quietly going about doing a great job helping their clients reduce and eradicate pain and taking care of the business components necessary so that they don't burn out. They can really nurture and nourish themselves and their clients.

So that's what this episode is about. I want to teach you some key business ideas that will help you build the client base that you want, that you love and that is sustainable. We're going to talk about the necessity of keeping the yogi in your business, why it's important to build two sets of skills and the necessity of a niche, but not in the way that you think or that they talk about niche out in the internet world.

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All right, so let's dig into this. The first one is we need to blend our yoginess with our business. I like to say we want to move towards the spiritual and the sustainable. To make my point really clear I'm going to describe two ways that are not effective for creating a sustainable enterprise that pays you what you want and provides the life you desire.

The first one is simply to make the money. And this one is pretty obvious, right? With that one, the tendency for life is to be pretty fractured, poor health, high stress, poor relationships with your spouse, your partner, poor relationships with your kids, the community. It's basically an empty life that's not all that admirable, right?

The second is to simply do the yoga business as a spiritual need. To serve a spiritual need. And while it's awesome to operate solely from passion and faith, this can often lead to serious energy depletion, overwork, and ultimately burnout.

So the key is we want to build two sets of skills. We need to build business skills and yoga skills. If you really think about it, the yoga industry is filled with yoga trainings. There is a thought, and I see this in other trainings and industries, I see this with massage-based industries too, is there is a lot of commentary about, well, if you just do this other training you will learn the thing that you need to learn that will help you attract more clientele. And they're focusing on yoga therapeutic skills or yoga teaching skills and anatomy skills.

And I run a lot of programs like that too, but the reality is you can be really good at your craft, an artist in a sense, like a true expert, but if you don't have the business skill, you're not going to be able to turn that expertise or that artistry into anything that really serves a client base.

And think about it, with all the technical trainings that are out there in the yoga industry, if that were really true, if all you needed to do was build your technical skill and hone your craft, if that was all you needed to do, and since so many yoga therapists and yoga teachers are doing it, don't you

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think there would be a lot more yoga teachers and therapists making a living doing what they love?

So as I've said a few times already, we need two sets of skills. We need the skill to teach yoga and yoga therapeutics, but if you only have those skills to draw from you will set yourself up for exhaustion and quite possibly burnout. This is why you need the business skills, and these include how to find and how to nurture clientele, how to market, i.e. how to communicate, how to leverage and how to execute the tasks that need to be done consistently and deliberately.

When you learn these, it's amazing what you'll create. Let me tell you a story to highlight this. I remember when I first started, I was someone who was fueled off of passion. I love, I loved and I still love yoga. I love and back then loved, so that love is still there, this idea of helping people reduce and eradicate pain. Love it. And I'm excellent at doing it.

I was excellent at doing it even when I first started. I was great. I've honed my craft since then, but I was getting fantastic results when I first started. I was also exhausted. When I started to learn business principles, because I was not born into the world as a business person, I went to school for kinesiology, not business. I had to learn them outside of my university proper education.

When I learned them from true blue business coaches and I integrated them into my work, I was able to leverage my time. I was able to regain a whole bunch of energy. I was able to understand what was needed from a skill base to run my business with ease. And not surprisingly, the results of my bank account went up as well. So the more I was able to integrate business principles, the more revenue I earned.

Now, here's something that's important to understand. There's not just a set of business skills. The skills that take you from zero to 10,000, there's a set for that. Then to get you from 10,000 to 20, there's a set for that. 20 to 50, a set for that. 50 to a hundred grand, a set for that. Over a hundred grand

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towards 500, a set for that. And so as you go, right, like at different revenue levels, there's different skill sets.

Truly, it's not unlike helping someone get out of pain. To help someone get out of pain, there's a set of skills. What you would do at the level of helping someone get out of pain is not what you would do to just help them get stronger, right? There's some strengthening that's happening in helping someone get out of pain, but it's not the same as strengthening for real.

And much like the process of helping someone get out of pain, we build upon those skills when we move through the process. So as someone improves, as someone improves and reduces compensation and improves greater function, we build upon those skills, we don't throw them off to the wayside. We build upon those skills so that then we can strengthen for real and continue to improve function. And onward we go, we continue to refine and on it goes.

Same thing with the business. Those skills that you needed to have to get from zero to 10, you don't throw those to the side. You build upon them to help you get to 20. You build upon those to help you get to 50. You build upon those to get towards a hundred, right? So you're building upon them in a stepwise way.

Now it might be, too, that the money number, like 10, 20, 50, 100, that may have no interest for you. I had a trainee who's now a grad, she's been in business and just killing it. She's doing great. And she said to me in training, she goes, Susi, I hate money. I don't want to talk about money. I said, all right, so then why are you here learning these skills? You're going to go back and you're going to integrate them and do things with your clients. So for what purpose?

And she said, I want to buy my husband a motorcycle. I said, perfect. All right, let's go find the motorcycle that you're going to buy. And so she found the motorcycle online. We saw what the price point was. We went back to what her business currently was. And it's like, all right, so if we're going to

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earn, if you're going to earn X number of money to be able to buy the motorcycle for your husband, then what are we looking at in terms of how you want to build the business?

Is it from like a private clientele base? Is it a group base? Is it whatever? I mean, there are so many things we can do inside of our business to serve clientele. What would it look like? And so we just mapped it out. All right, this is how it looks. This is what is required. Here is what the communication is like. We just started to build it out.

And here's the thing, we built it out according to her and her energy and the way that she speaks. It wasn't a Susi based business, it was her business. And now, she trained with me before 2010. I don't remember the exact date. I think she trained with me in 2008 or 2009, somewhere in that range.

And now it's 2024, and like I said, she is doing awesome at being herself, helping her clientele get out of pain in amazing ways. And she's got a living and she's not as afraid about numbers. In fact, she said to me, Susi, you are the person people should go to if they're terrified about earning a living and not knowing how. They need to learn from you.

So the point is that we need two sets of skills. And if you don't even like talking about money, that's okay. There are probably some other things that you desire that your business can nurture and nourish you for and to support you in living the life you want to live.

All right, so the next piece here is about moving towards a niche. And there's a lot of conversation in the business world, the online world about how you need to have a niche. And the reality is it's true, but I'm going to teach you an idea here that I teach my trainees to think around niche because sometimes people can get frozen in this, who am I serving and what am I doing? Do I work with people with back pain? Do I work with people with neck pain?

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And part of the reason I teach niche in the way that I do is I had a similar thing. I didn't want to focus on back pain or neck pain or whatever, primarily because so often what was leading to the back pain was not the same between all people. What was leading to neck pain was not the same between all people. A lot of times it was their foot that was leading to their back issue or their head was leading to their knee issue or their shoulder was relating to –

Where the pain is isn't the problem. So for me, and I know there are people out there who do have niches in the back space, but for me, based on how I was teaching, it made absolutely no sense. So instead, what I focused on is I help people reduce and eradicate pain. I help people move from pain to possibility.

And I'll explain a little bit more about how I speak to that. But the point is that there can be a lot of niche drama and concern about, am I choosing the right one? Am I boxing myself in? What happens if this doesn't work and I've put all this effort into this particular niche?

But having a niche is important because a lot of yoga teachers and a lot of yoga therapists have trained with similar people. So if they're training with similar people and have similar cueing and instructions, then how do you stand out from them? How do you really differentiate yourself?

So what I offer to my certification group initially is this: when you're working with your clientele, what are the key things that you are saying over and over and over and over again? Don't think about it too much. Just what are you saying over and over and over and over and over and over again?

So for me, I talk a lot about listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams. I talk about yellow lights. I talk about listening to your body. I talk about how to listen to your body. I talk about from pain to possibility. I talk a lot about anatomy and how it's important to reduce compensations and improve pure movement. I talk about how it's absolutely possible to make a living as a yoga therapist.

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Okay, now this is my niche. It's the stuff that I'm already talking all the time about. That's the niche. So take a moment, consider what are you talking about all of the time? When you are with your clientele, what do you say all the time? And write that down and then notice how you're saying it all the time.

Now, the second part of this is who are you saying it to? Now, when I look at my certification group, what I'm seeing is there are a whole lot of people who are in an age category and certain demographics that show up all the time. And there are people who are not showing up that are in an age category and of certain demographics.

So there are people that resonate with what I'm teaching and there are people who don't resonate with what I'm teaching, or haven't heard about what it is that I'm teaching, right? So I don't tend to attract people who are in their 20s. That's not who I tend to attract. I tend to attract a lot more people who are over 40, over 50. And I have a lot of people who are over 60 and are wanting to build out a retirement-based business. A lot of folks.

I'm also seeing a lot of folks who want to integrate their yoga teaching or massage therapy or physiotherapy, and they want to integrate that with yoga therapeutics. They want to blend those things together or other skill sets. I've got Pilates teachers and personal trainers who have got some fundamental skills in certain arenas, and they're not totally satisfied in those arenas. And they're seeing how I'm integrating all of what I'm doing and they want a little bit of that. So I see a lot of those people coming in.

So think about who are you already teaching? Who are you already engaging with? Now, I will also say that while across my career I have worked with mostly people who are older than me all the way along, the demographic has moved and shifted over the course of time.

So there was a period of time in my private clientele where I was seeing a lot of men over the age of 50 who happened to be in the C-suite. I saw a lot

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of them. So there were waves that came in and waves that went out. It just kind of was this flux.

And so in some cases, the way that I was messaging and the niches that were sort of showing up for me, they altered and shifted and they moved. But notice that I worked with that organically rather than like I chose this.

But because I was growing my foundation of business skills alongside honing my craft as a yoga therapist and really getting good at what I did, because I had both of those skills, because I paid attention to what I was saying, I could notice these waves of niches coming through me, through to my business and serve them.

And where I was focused is what am I consistently saying, and saying over and over and over again? From pain to possibility, reduce compensations, listen to the whispers. It is possible to reduce and eradicate pain. If your body has shown that it can reduce pain, your body has shown it can reduce pain. It means that it can reduce pain. Do you see that?

So this is what I would love for you to do with this in mind, is consider what are you already saying? What are you already talking about? This is where your passion, which really shows up, this is where that can be spoken, that can be acknowledged. And acknowledging who it is that you're sharing this with.

And just notice, is it a demographic? Is it like an age category? Is it a gender category? Is it an occupational demographic, like kids in school, or high school teachers, or people recovering from cancer treatment, or people with autoimmune conditions? I mean, there's a bazillion different sets of kinds of people that you might be talking to. But what are you already doing? And start there.

So with that, then with this first business-based episode, there were these key things I really wanted to address. The first is that you need to have two sets of skills. And those skills will grow and will evolve as you grow and

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evolve and as your business and as your client base grows and evolves. You need to keep the yoga in your business. They aren't separate.

You are a yoga professional. Your clients are seeking a yoga-based therapeutic experience, meaning that they're looking for a mind/body connection and they've sought you out because of the approach that you have. These aren't separate things. They aren't oil and water. They blend together. And to understand and to be deliberate and cognizant about who you're already speaking with, what are you already saying and to whom?

Take that time, write it down, become clear, and gain the awareness of who you're already speaking with and what you're already saying to them. And then be deliberate about sharing it more. That is how you really gain traction in making a difference relative to other therapists.

I believe that all of the yoga therapists that have been trained, all of them that are doing good work, all have space. There is no one who's taking up more space from somebody else. Much like a lighthouse with boats in the harbor, we are all shining our light, guiding the boats who are attracted to what it is that we're doing.

When I think about the trainers who work with me, the kinds of people that they attract into their businesses, they're similar to me, but they're not the same. So in that way, we don't really compete. We're collaborative. So the ones that we have, the clientele that we have that do have resonance, it's not unsurprising when they all work with all of us.

But there's not a competition here. It's being clear about who it is and how it is that we're serving them, gaining that awareness, connecting with them, nurturing them in a way that really resonates with you. And as you do, you will really amaze yourself with how less complicated building a business actually is, because you're serving the people you want to serve in the way that you want to serve them.

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Now, if this resonates, if you've got a client base as a yoga teacher, as a massage therapist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or other health professional, and you want to integrate yoga into your practice and the certification program's been sort of poking at you, it's been niggling at you, you're like, ooh, you know what? I kind of want to do it.

And this is really starting to resonate. Like, yes, now I can see how this is possible. I can see how I can get a return on my investment. I can see my future helping these clientele. Then please visit functionalsynergy.com/certification. We outline the program there. And if there's questions, send us a note to health@functionalsynergy.com. Take good care.