

Ep #60: The Yoga Therapy Certification Program: An Interview with Students Rachel and Lory



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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.

Susi: Welcome to today's episode of *From Pain to Possibility*. And I am delighted to be interviewing Rachel Ishiguro and Lory Newmyer. And the reason for this is because you might be someone thinking about training to become a yoga therapist. You know you're good, like you've got some mad skills as a yoga teacher. And you know you deeply care. You know you can help your people. But you're not quite sure.

You're not quite sure about taking training. So this is why I've invited Rachel and Lory onto this call. Because they started their training back in January. At least the final module of the training.

And I wanted them to share their experiences because they come from very different backgrounds. And they've had a really great experience, I think, so far through it. And I wanted them to highlight their story of learning and growing and building their client practice.

So if you're thinking about training to become a yoga therapist you'll want to listen today's episode. Because you'll get a really good feel about what it's about, how it works, and ultimately if it fits. So welcome, Rachel and Lory.

Lory: Thanks, Susi.

Rachel: Thank you.

Susi: Awesome, great. So, Rachel, how about we start with you? Just tell us everything. Tell us what's going on.

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Rachel: All right, my name is Rachel and I am originally from Canada. But I've been living since 2004 in San Diego, California. And I've been teaching yoga since 2011. My mom is a yoga teacher.

And I've been teaching group classes and I really have been feeling like I wanted to do more with the yoga that I was teaching. I wanted to help people more consistently. And I wanted to just be able to go further with what I was doing. And so here I am, training with Susi.

Susi: I love it. Great. And how about you, Lory? Give it to us.

Lory: Yeah, hi, my name is Lory. I live in Hull, Massachusetts. I'm a retired nonprofit executive director. And when I retired, now almost nine years ago, I really thought, "I'm retired. I'm done. I'm totally fried." But instead of doing that, I walked one day into a yoga teacher training.

And there was a man who would become my 200 hour teacher, and then my 300 hour teacher, and then another 300 hour teacher named Shawn Cornelison. Who from maybe the first day I met him began talking about this woman, Susi Hately, who had been his certification teacher.

And I've often thought that the reason that I'm here today, or even that I became a yoga teacher, was because Shawn was my teacher. He had a way of approaching movement and somatic healing that was so different from anything I'd experienced in my life, that was just this immediate, "Aha, yes, this is it."

And I just discovered that the more I learned from him, the more I kind of wanted to get to the source. So after a lot of years of each year, saying – I'm 63 years old and when I was 55, I thought I'm kind of too old to go to this next thing. And when I was 58, and 59, et cetera. And then finally, when I was 62, I realized, "Oh my God, it's now or never, I'm going to do this." And yeah, I jumped and it was a brilliant choice.

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Susi: That's great. So now, some people might be wondering, okay, what's this yoga therapy thing all about? And I actually typically use the term therapeutic yoga or therapeutic applications of yoga to describe a bit about what I do. And yet I also know within our industry we talk about it as being yoga therapy. And there's lots of different views on what this is.

So, Rachel, when you think about what yoga therapy is, and how you're really embodying it with your clientele. Not so much what you tell them, although this might be what you tell them, but I mean, what is it for you? What does it mean?

Rachel: I think I came in thinking it was about teaching people to move better. And I think now how I think about yoga therapy is really that it's about me being in a relationship with someone else to create the circumstances for change to happen. Really supporting change to happen in all kinds of different ways.

And yeah, it often starts where I thought it started, with movement. But it is in practice so much more than that I'm starting to realize. And still really learning and getting a handle on what that means for me.

Susi: I love that, that's a really great way of saying it really is in the relationship. We have all these tools, it really doesn't matter what profession you're in, you have these tools. And how you utilize those tools depends so much on the relationship you have with that client.

How about you, Lory, how would you describe what yoga therapy is?

Lory: Well, first of all, I'm going to go back and listen to this whenever it's broadcast so I can write down exactly what Rachel just said because that was perfect.

To build on that maybe just a little bit is to say that, yes, I think it begins with learning about functional movement. For me, it's about developing a

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one on one relationship with another person that's really about helping them learn how to heal themselves and guide themselves away from pain.

I think the core for that, specifically for me in the first half of the program that we're now completing is this idea that my relationship with another person really has to come out of cleaning up my relationship with myself first. And that this kind of magical idea of presence, of really being present to another person is based also in my ability to be in that same kind of relationship with myself.

But yeah, there's something that is so concrete and specific in the work we do, and something that also has an element of magic, that I'm still trying to learn how to put into words, Susi.

Susi: Let me know when you have. Because even, I would say, 30 years into helping people reduce symptoms of different sorts I still have those awe inspiring moments of like, "What just happened?" And the client and I are both sort of like big bulging eyes of what just happened there?

So it's kind of at a place for me where I'm no longer shocked and surprised when people get well. But how it happens, like how the process unravels and unfolds is mesmerizing. Because it's not something that I could ever have imagined for any one person.

So it's as if it's like someone steps into my space. And, as you mentioned, Lory, there are some very specific things that we do. And it's how we do them that there is some importance. Not that you must follow these bullet points, because there's a much more qualitative experience around it.

And when we do those things though, something extraordinary occurs. And people can actually have this experience no matter what they do. You can apply it to your artwork. You can apply it to parenting. You can apply it to being a health professional. And you can apply it to yoga.

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So it's like this nuanced experience. It's a skill that you can grow and hone and I think, really, at its core, we as humans all know it to be true. We've all had these experiences as a human being when it's like this made absolutely no sense but makes all this sense in the world.

So yes, I love it. Those were really, really great descriptions.

So when you think about like where you've come, so we started this last module in January, the recording of this is now August. So count however many months that is now. If you look back at where you were and where you are now, what's the distinction that you would –

And I think too, I'd like you to talk a little bit, Rachel, about you and your daughter and some of the transitions you've made with your move and just kind of where you're seated now. Because when you came in, and I want to make sure you're the one who answers this, but you were in a very different space, is I think the best way to put it.

Rachel: I think that's true. I remember when I was considering the program, I had a call with you, Susie. And I was just so worried about how I was going to do it. It just didn't compute for me that I was going to do an intensive training while schooling my daughter during a pandemic. It just seemed like such a wild idea. And here I am and it's happening. And I do feel like I'm in such a different place from the person who had that call with you.

So my daughter is almost seven, she'll be seven at the end of the month. And over the time that we've been in the program she's both been doing school at home remotely because of Covid, and she's been on campus, and she's been home for summer. And I've had to put in place a lot of support of different kinds in order to be able to do the program.

And that's required me to really make a commitment and to really get clear about what needs to happen so that I can do what I'm doing. And those are

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not skills that I had. Those are skills that I've developed over the course of the program.

I came in with a lot of anxiety, a lot of stress, a lot of fatigue, a lot of depletion. And I've learned over the course of the last few months a lot of skills to move beyond the place where I was. And because of that I think I've been able to do way more than I ever would have imagined.

It's just incredible. And I feel fantastic. I have energy, I feel good. I'm happy, I'm way more seated in myself. And my business is growing, and I'm doing this program.

Susi: You mentioned something about commitment and support. And this might seem like, for the listener, an odd relationship to tie between as a triangle, but how does that relate? If we think about those as two points in the triangle, and maybe the shape, you'll want to shift the shape of this. But it's like I see these two points in this triangle as being support and commitment.

And there's also this third point, which is deliberate rest. Deliberate rest has been a fascinating concept for you to kind of take on. So how does that play into the support and the commitment and the results that you now are having?

Rachel: So the commitment piece is really important because when I was not committed, when I was fearful, when I was too depleted to be committed, then I was neither able to see the importance of rest nor to put support in place for myself.

And when I made the commitment to myself that I was going to do this program and I was going to build a business and I was going to work as a yoga therapist, and I was going to keep up my commitment to my family. Then the only way that that could be possible for me was to have support. To have the right support.

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You can have all the support in the world, if it's the wrong support, it doesn't help you move forward. So I had to create the support and the safety for myself in a very deliberate way. I had to learn how to do that so that I could move forward.

And then the rest piece has been really important for me because I have realized that although I've been teaching people to rest and supporting people to rest for a long time that I didn't really understand rest. I was still seeing rest is kind of like the finger in the dike. So it's the thing that you do when you have no other choice because you're completely collapsed.

And I've come to realize that when I use rest in a way that is supportive, that I actually never need to go to that place of total collapse. And that then I can honor my commitment. And I can do what I want to do with my business, with my life, with my family in ways that seemed impossible when I wasn't resting and I wasn't getting the support that I needed.

Susi: That's really well said. Now, Lory, you have an experience on the other end of the spectrum. You could actually say it better about your children, it was really lovely. And so you're in the different end of the spectrum, the needs and the requirements, they're just wholesale different with having grown children.

And so share that experience and then share the experience around like even when you came in, even though you had kind of gotten past the I am retired and I am done. You still had that kind of coming in. Chat about that a little bit.

Lory: Yeah. Well, I have three wonderful adult children. And so my family structure is me and my husband and my dog. So the demands on me are different than Rachel's and yours, Susi, by a lot.

I loved hearing you talk about support, Rachel, because I was thinking about one day in the program, Susi, when you were teaching us that letting

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go is not an action. It's a response to having enough and the right support. And that image has been a real life changing one for me both in my practice as a yoga therapist and in my life in terms of the clarity with which I have been able to ask for what I need and offer that to others.

When I came into the program, even though I was many, many years retired and many years into being a yoga teacher, I really was not aware of the extent to which I was still carrying a lot of the damage from my life as a nonprofit ED. And the extent to which I was buffering myself from the world around me.

I would have said I was really open, really courageous, emotionally honest. And there's a lot of truth in that stuff. I don't think that those were completely false things about me. But beginning to get clarity with myself about the fear that I was still carrying around, kind of touching the hot stove of the kind of commitment I'd had as a nonprofit ED. And talk about collapse, I mean, I just lived for decades just staving off collapse.

Of course, not knowing that, but recognizing that now. And recognizing how much I built sort of safety walls around myself so I wouldn't have to go anywhere near that.

And so the program has helped me really figure out what is the energy I have to give? What do I need to restore my own energy? How can I be more in literal and energetic touch with the world and myself and my beloved's and my friends?

And just kind of finding that clarity has been this fascinating avenue toward finding out how to communicate about it. How to live in it. How to have that kind of wonderful cycle of energy coming out of it.

So I just feel like I'm sitting at – Rachel used the phrase more seated in herself, and I think that's something I feel in myself as well and see in – Rachel, I don't know if you agree, in the 16 other women in our class with

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us, there's this sense, both of settling into ourselves and also kind of springing out of ourselves that comes out of this kind of washing, cleaning the lens deeply.

That's just made me less afraid, I think. And I would have said I was totally unafraid when I came in. But part of the program has been letting me acknowledge not so. But I'm moving closer to that place.

Susi: So if you were to go and teach a group class, let's just pretend no pandemic, all things being equal. With this new understanding that you have, and we're talking whether it's a regular yoga class or whatever, the state that you're describing, how do you teach differently?

Rachel: Well, my teaching has been evolving more and more into being a therapeutic yoga class, even in group classes. Because what I'm interested in is people's relationship with themselves through the physical practice of yoga or the practice of breath.

So if the beauty of the practice is in cultivating self-awareness, and self-knowledge, and whatever peace or honesty comes out of that, then that to me is why we do yoga. So the yoga classes I teach, yeah, there is movement in them. But it's a pretty slow and inward facing practice. And undoubtedly, is going to become more so.

Susi: Yeah, because there's something around when we model what it is that we are teaching. The line that you often hear is practice what you preach, right? A number of years ago I actually started to use the line, you're preaching what you're practicing. Because it's in all that nonverbal stuff that people are actually feeling us.

Just like a dog can smell it, and animals can smell it, horses can smell it, All those like the beings in nature can feel our vibe. Little kids are awesome, they can feel our vibe. And we can talk all sorts of BS out of our mouths. We can market and sell and convince anybody to come to a class. And if

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there's not an authenticity and an alignment really to what it is that you're saying, it's just not going to work.

And probably a better way to say that is when there is that authenticity and that alignment, that's where the magic lies. That's really where the magic shows up, is because there's such an alignment between what is source inside of you and just what it is that you're teaching.

That's why each person in the group that you're in can teach what I'm sharing in their own different way, because it's being expressed separately through them. So it doesn't become this sort of guru centric type of systematic teaching like we've seen oftentimes in yoga, even in some systems of yoga therapy.

I mean, I kind of bristle at this idea of a system of yoga therapy, because really, what I'm hoping to do is to help people just connect with it themselves. And then teach that so they can help the other person connect to themselves and then that's really where the healing happens.

So then what I think becomes curious is a big part of the program is growing your client base. So part of what I offer people is not only great skill development, but also for those who want to build a client base, whatever that means. Whether it's through classes, or retreats, or private sessions, or a combination, we integrate the business building practices within the process.

So you, Rachel, had this experience after I offered up this, I'm not even sure how I framed it. But basically, I was offering the magic of growing a client base. And you called it sorcery, I believe. And I may have preempted that thought, but tell us a little bit about what the heck happened. Because it's pretty interesting.

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, I came into the program with nothing. So I had been teaching at yoga studios. And so I had my people who knew me that were

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other people's clients though, essentially. And so for module two I had taught some friends and family. But really, in terms of building my own client base for my own business I was coming in with my mom, and my aunt, and my best friend. It was really, really limited.

And so through the course of the program I was able to start to build a small client base. But the exercise you had us do was write down the reasons why a client will book with us next week. And so I played. I played along, I wrote out a list of reasons. And then within the next few days there were people who reached out who were people I knew who wanted to know about sessions. And someone had forwarded an ad for one of my programs to a random person who reached out to me and wanted to book five private sessions.

And it really did seem like magic because it was immediately after doing the exercise there were like two or three things that happened. And I had been going through a big lull because the beginning of the summer, especially in San Diego a lot of things reopened June 15th. And so people were going out and doing all the traveling and all the fun that they had not been able to do the year previous.

And so all my clients had kind of dried up and I was having this big quiet spell. And we did this exercise and it still blows my mind. And I still have no idea how it works. But I don't need to know.

Susi: I love it, I love it. And I remember, Lory, something that when I first asked the question to you, along with the other participants of like, what does fully book look like? And I want it to be really clear that fully booked can mean anything too, whatever someone wants it to mean.

The key is that I wanted people to get a visceral feel of what they wanted this to look like. And when we offered up fully booked to you, you were like, "Wait a second." Now, this is all in text on Slack and I kind of read into

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everything in between the spaces because of how I know you. I already had kind of preempted in my brain, “Okay, Lory is going to come back with one of her great responses.”

And that happened and I'm thinking to myself, “She's thinking she's old and that she's retired. What is Susi thinking?” Is what Lory is thinking. And then here we are. So to share that experience.

Lory: Well, I think really, really facing up to that question has made me look at a couple of different quadrants of my life. I mean, one of the things I did in retirement was give myself permission to pursue art at sort of a half time level. And then I was teaching yoga. And making art is still a really important part of my life.

So I'm thinking, “Well, fully booked but I want to have time and energy and space.” And again I came back to this question of buffering. What's the cocoon? What's that wall I'm putting between me and the experience of my life to sort of have this? It's like money in the bank, you know, I better keep that savings account of time and rest, rather than commit outside of myself. Because what if?

And I have to say, in all honesty, I'm still grappling with that. I'm increasingly feeling like I have fire, I have energy. My hands are on the wheel. I can drive this car where I want her to go. And I'm trying to sort out what does that mean?

I mean, I have a pretty fantastic caseload right now. And I'm really not sure how much bigger I want it to be. But I don't think I'm at fully booked. There's more space. I'm just kind of walking that line and dancing that dance.

Susi: I love it, it reminds me of what you were saying about the buffer. It reminds me of a quote that I like to use in different arenas. I used it on the podcast episode about listening. I think I used it somewhere else. But it's a

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poem about love, which is your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.

That might not have been so much of a poem. I like to think of it as a poem, it's more of a quotation. The idea is sometimes it's the resistance to it that can actually be what's tiring. As opposed to like actually seeing what those resistances are. And then there's, again, something really interesting when those kind of fall off. Not because we willfully trying to make them fall off. But then something kind of emerges as there's a connection to really what the vibe of this thing actually is.

Lory: Yeah, that rings so true. And I think that, really, I mean, I love that idea of like, where you're placing your energy. And one of the words I've said to you that you've given us that I find so powerful is this idea of discernment. Which, to me, relates to what you just said because it's the choice of where we're going to invest ourselves. It's the choice of what we're going to invite into ourselves.

And taking the risk to be open and present to things that maybe for reasons we haven't understood we've put energy into pushing away.

But the feeling I think Rachel and I have both experienced of dropping some of the barriers and feeling the up-welling that comes from that is really a life changing one.

Susi: Would you guys have described yourself as nervous when you entered in in January?

Rachel: I would have described myself as terrified. Which might have been just me being a little bit dramatic. But yeah, I was considerably nervous.

Susi: That's awesome.

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Lory: And I would have said, no, I was not nervous. And that might be a reflection of my actually not being nervous, or my being so well buffered from understanding myself that I was and didn't know it.

Susi: I love that you were so well buffered. I love that. That's really great. So would you have said – This is an interesting idea, some of the concepts that I've been teaching you there's been some repetition. What I'm curious about is did you at any point at the beginning feel like it was like there was a rote-ness to what it was that you were doing? Whether it was with clients, or whether it was your own self work or that –

Let me first ask you that. Was that the case? Did you find that? Because, Rachel, you're nodding your head. Was there some rote-ness that you found as you were going through the process?

Rachel: Can you say more about that?

Susi: Well, I guess where I'm going, because I'm expecting that the answer is likely a yes. At what point did you notice the rote-ness falling away and you really allowing this to kind of be an expression of yourself and allowing the concepts that I'm teaching you to turn into principles as opposed to, “Oh, here's the way you have to do it.”

Rachel: Got it. Yeah, I would say when I came in there was definitely a rote-ness. Especially when I was working one on one with people. But even when I started doing groups that were more therapeutically focused and I was very restricted and I had sort of set processes that I would go through with people.

And it's been a gradual process over the last several months. But I would say now I'm really noticing something interesting. Which is that elements of things that I used to teach now are coming into my teaching in a really new way. Like those have now been integrated with the concepts from the

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program. Which have been integrated from the concepts from the intensive, And it's all become a new thing now that's just part of what I do.

And I would assume, and from what I've seen, I can say that every one of us has their own mix and their own way of integrating those. But we just did that assignment this past weekend, where we look back over what we've written over the course of the program.

And what I noticed when I did that was a lot of the things I was writing in the beginning are things that I know now very deeply in my heart, like in the depth of my being. And at the time I wrote them I didn't really understand them.

So I could really see looking back that I had the seed of this concept, but I wasn't really teaching it yet. And I wasn't really living it yet the way that I am now.

Susi: How would you answer that, Lory?

Lory: I'm just in awe of the things Rachel is saying, I have to say. Wow.

Well, you taught us some really cool stuff in the intensive and then sent us out telling us you need to see a whole lot of people. And I definitely thought, "What?" But I dutifully went off and found some clients.

I think, initially, I'm not sure I would say it was rote, but I was definitely focused on the what I was doing, as opposed to how I am seeing. And it was that transition to understanding that it doesn't matter if I have them blowing bubbles or doing backhand flips, or whatever. Which I would not have them do, by the way.

If they were just lying on a mat, what's important is what I'm observing and what they're feeling and the congruence between those things. And that sort of magic moment of realizing that my eyes are this phenomenally

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powerful tool. And when my eyes connect to my mind and my heart and my intuitive senses, then I'm really cooking here. I am really beginning to do my work.

One of the things that really helped me propel forward in that are the many opportunities we've had to teach one another and the students in the class, either through our formal times together or through interactions we have independent of the program. And seeing how we were in training together each interpret the work that we're doing, has just been an amazing way to learn. As you told us it would be, Susi.

Susi: Yes, that's true. It's always nice when that comes to fruition. That it's like you can see it, right?

If someone's listening to this and they're kind of on the fence and they're thinking, "Do I? Do I not? Do I? Do I not? Oh, do I? Do I not?" What do you have to say to them?

Lory: I don't think you need to know your end goal. I don't think you need to think you have to have the answers in hand to take this leap. I would say that there is no possible way that six months ago, if you had told me what I would feel at the six month point, I would have thought I understood you, but I wouldn't have. And that makes me understand that I have no idea what six months from now is going to look like.

So there is a leap of faith element. There's a curiosity about yourself and about other human beings that if that is stirring in you, then yeah, race at it. Grab at it. Run at it would be what I would say to you.

If the curiosity, if you're kind of on your back foot, maybe you want to take a little more time and think about this. But I would say, as with so many things that we've learned in this program, you're not going to think your way into knowing this is the right choice. You're going to have to feel your way

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into that. And when you feel it, make the commitment because what I have gotten out of this has dimensions and depths that are staggering to me.

Susi: I love that. How about you, Rachel?

Rachel: So I think I would go back to what I said earlier, which is that in the therapeutic relationship there's support that allows for the possibility of all kinds of change. And I see this program a lot in that way, that support is here within the program to allow for change if you're committed and you're interested in change. But this is not a program to come into and just cruise in the gear you came in on, for sure.

But it has, as Lory said, been absolutely life changing in a lot of different ways for me.

Susi: That's great, really lovely. Thank you two both so much for this. It's been such a pleasure, and I look forward to seeing you guys on our next call.

If you'd like to reach Rachel or Lory and talk with them about their practices and the services that they offer you can find them at www.rachelishiguroyoga.com as well as lorynewmeyeryoga.com. And those links are in the show notes. You can also find Lory on Instagram and Facebook at Rachelishiguroyoga. But again, all of those are in the show notes so by all means reach out to them.

And if you've got questions for them about their own experiences in the certification program, by all means we're happy to introduce you to participants and graduates of our program because we just think our program is so great and they will give you the real deal.

So hey, while I've got you here if you were really inspired by this episode and you want to find out more about how we run our yoga therapy certification program then reach out to us a health@functionalsynergy.com.

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That's H-E-A-L-T-H @functionalsynergy.com. We would love to help you out.