

Ep #280: Lynda Spalding and Diane Stanton - You Are Not Too Old To Become a C-IAYT Yoga Therapist



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Susi Hatley

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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 so glad that you're here because again today I've got a great interview with two almost graduates, Linda Spalding and Diane Stanton, and they are just rounding the corner now of completing their program. And it's fun, I'm looking really forward to this because much like an episode that I did a while back with Ruth Ann Penny and Lory Newmyer, and I'll put the link to that podcast in the show notes, they are on sort of the upper end of the age spectrum for people who enroll in certification programs with me.

And I think it'll be really interesting for you to hear, especially for those of you to hear especially for those of you who in your mind are thinking I'm too old to do a program like this and I'm too old to consider doing another type of, whether it's retirement work or building out your skill set for this, like it's the I'm too old for that sometimes I will get emails about. So Diane and Linda will have some good insight for you and for the listeners about this because they just go to show that there's, just like Ruth Ann and Lory, age really doesn't matter.

So with that welcome, Linda and Diane. I'm so glad that you're here. And what I'd like just to get right into is, I mean I've now known you guys for a little while and I'm curious, why don't we start with you Linda, what was it that had you even decide to take the full certification program? What was it that you were wanting to get out of it or where were you at at that stage where you saw the program could offer you something?

Linda: Well first, thank you, Susi, for this opportunity. But I guess prior to the certification program I had a weak sense of anatomy and biomechanics. I also knew that breath was important to yoga, but I never dreamt how important it really was to healing. And now I have more

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knowledge of all of that through going through this program. And among my family I'm known as the lady that gives the why of yoga movements. And that's the W-H-Y.

But I desired more respect and I felt that the certification would lend more credibility. And when I say respect, respect as a yoga teacher. I just felt like I wanted that extra credibility to add to my current yoga teaching certification.

But I also found it very cool when I took one of your early classes. It was just a weekend class years ago, how you help people manage their pain or help them eliminate their pain with just these very small subtle movements. And then I tried some of them and I realized through going through the program what a tremendous support it was to me, to my health and my healing and how I actually improved my strength. So I just wanted that for other people as well.

Susi: Really, really, really interesting. Really interesting. And Diane, how about you?

Diane: Well, you were talking about age, I was 50 years old when I actually started doing yoga at a gym, but really loved doing it. Then when I retired I was able to do a little bit more. And I also had an injury that really set me back a little bit. I had a herniated disc that affected my whole left side from my waist down and resulted in a spondylolisthesis, where one of the vertebrae comes forward over top of the other.

And when I had people looking at my x-rays or my MRIs and saying like I don't even know how you're walking. Like I don't I don't know how you can even be doing what you're doing after I had recovered and recuperated, which I realized then that form doesn't always equal function. And also believing that if you give your body what it needs, it can heal itself. I did acupuncture and I did some other non-traditional Western medicine things to help heal myself. Physical training and then back to yoga.

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And then it was during this time that I decided that I would become a yoga teacher. And I graduated at the age of 67 with my 200 hours, and then I went on to take my 300 hours and graduated in 2021 at the age of 70. And I'm 73 now, so I'll be graduating from yoga therapy at the age of 73. I discovered Susi, I think it was during Covid or it was soon after I did my 200 hour yoga teacher training. And so I've kind of been following her ever since on her podcasts and also on Facebook during Covid.

One of the things that attracted me to Susi was the fact that she uses words like wackadoodle and things like that. So anyway, she just seemed like a real person and also in line with a lot of the way that I was taught during my yoga teacher training too that I took. So I was fortunate that I had some very good teachers along the line too.

And so I was eyeing her program before Covid, where you had to actually travel to Canada for the classes, and thinking that, well, that wasn't really going to fit in with things that I was doing at the moment. And then after Covid, when it was all online, I just said if I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it now.

So I decided to take the plunge after a few conversations with Susi and decided that this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to have more private, to really be able to help people one-on-one with private sessions. Help people get out of pain or whatever it is, the issues that they had. So that's what I did. I am very happy that I did it.

Susi: And I remember, first of all, wackadoodle is hysterical. In all the time I have known you, I've never known that that was something that was a thing. That's pretty funny. That's actually really funny, I love that.

And I remember you working with somebody who had a number of replacements, and this was early on in the training program. And how you were just like piecing things together as you were working with her, and it reminded me too of like when you finish the intensive and you started

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working with a client and it was about six months after and their body diagram went from quite a lot to like nothing and there was an ability for you to just take the ideas and take the concepts and start working with them.

And quite quickly, even though we didn't even really talk about replacements, you were able to sort of string together many of the concepts and try things out. And there was a certain level of curiosity that you already had where you could just experiment.

Diane: Yes, and I think that's what the whole idea of working with a client is about. It's about experimenting and working with someone and having them notice what works for them. Because it's not a template where, okay, if you have a bad back or if you have a hip replacement or if you have whatever, X, Y or Z, that you do one, two, three, and four. It's not always like that.

You have to really be able to be able to see what's going on and to work with the client and how they are feeling and what they're noticing for them to help heal themselves. So we're actually teaching someone how to be their own teacher in their own bodies.

Susi: And I mean you had a little bit of that already before you came. Like there was a foundational piece of that that you had, so it wasn't a big stretch for you. And some people come into the program really new, because some of them are expecting, oh, I'm going to get the yoga formula for helping people to reduce and eradicate pain. And really the formula is meet your client where they're at and see what's going on for them. And your role being the seer, like your role being the guide is really, really fundamental.

So I think what I'm really interested in knowing is because you already had some of this foundation already, what evolved for you? Like where do you see your skill as really having grown over the past bit of time?

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Diane: Well I think that my ability to see what's happening with someone else, see what's happening not only with their movement, but what's happening in their overall being has improved a lot. And I think that a lot of that comes from all of the work that we do in the yoga therapy program, turning that into ourselves also.

Being able to actually, like I always thought that I was pretty body aware, that I knew how things felt and I was right on. But I realized that there are so many more nuances that you can explore in your body and really take it a little bit deeper. And I think that understanding has helped my clients to be able to sort of explain that to them and help them to know what it is like to actually feel into their bodies.

And learning also some of the vocabulary in the way that I don't always say what does it feel like anymore, I say what sensations do you have? Because you can ask somebody, I mean one client that I have it's like, how does it feel? It's okay. You know, you get very, very short answers. But if you ask them about the sensations, can you tell me a little bit more about what that sensation is like, and then it draws them out a little bit more. But some people are just more expressive than others too, so it just depends.

But I think that my ability to see and be more clear about things, I think that all has evolved over time for me.

Susi: You know, it's so interesting because people who are coming to work with us, many of them have had a persistence of symptoms for a period of time or they haven't been making gains in some of the work that they're doing. Or they've been making some gains but then they kind of hit a wall and they want to make more gains. Do you find that teaching them awareness, is it difficult or are they ready for it?

Diane: It depends. Some people are ready for it and sometimes it's very difficult teaching them awareness. I had a class recently that I was teaching at a lakeside community on the beach, and these were people that don't

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always, it's not the same people that come all the time, they're different people. But one class I just said, okay, I'm going to use this opportunity to allow people to become more aware of what's going on in their bodies and to move from a place of ease.

So I did a whole mini yoga type of class with them. And the whole time that I was queuing them, I wasn't queuing them how to breathe. I was telling them that you know you can play with your breath and just feel, play with your movements and feel how it is. And we just did the same movements over and over again. And even if you don't, like if you don't want to do those movements and you want to do something else, then do those too but just turn inward.

And it was beautiful just watching everybody. Like they really got into it and they were really feeling and it really, I think, helped them sort of plant the seeds of this is something that we can all do that we don't normally do on an everyday basis or when we're taking a regular yoga class when people are queuing inhale, exhale, do this, do that. And so we really don't think about it, you're thinking more about the pose. Am I doing it right?

And afterwards I asked them, "Does anybody have any comments that they'd like to share?" And there was one woman who just said, "That was wonderful, this is how you Tuesday," because it was a Tuesday morning.

I kind of got off track here, but I think that allowing people to realize that they can turn inward and they can feel and that there's no right or wrong sometimes to movement. Movement is movement, and it's great to move. And so you don't have to be like, oh no, you're not doing that right, because then who wants to move? Who wants to do it?

Susi: Mm-hmm. And yet we get inundated with messages about what's right, right? And so there's almost a sense of freedom in, and sometimes initially some trepidation in being okay with whatever movement that you have, yeah?

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Diane: Yes. Yes.

Susi: Yeah, interesting. So Linda, when you think about your clientele, because you also work with a wide range of people from a therapeutic perspective, have you found it easier to teach awareness? Are people coming to you because they're ready to kind of go in and wanting to grow their perception of themselves?

Linda: Most of the time. Most of the clients have been that way. I too, when I get away from the breathing instruction and just let the students or clients do the movement, they seem to be much more relaxed.

And I think we often were told in our certification program to work with the students and say, "I'm curious about how you're moving," and ask them to do something else. And a lot of my clients would say, "Oh, I did that wrong." It's just human nature, they thought that they were wrong in the way they moved. And I said, "No, not at all, I just would like to see you do it a different way." And I would give them a new instruction.

And what was fun for me was one of my students, clients that I work with who also has been a yoga student of mine and has had a myriad of problems. But what we worked on with her was back pain from a double curve from scoliosis from when she was a child. And a couple of the sessions she ended up saying, "I feel a good relaxed now. Not relaxed."

Because the first few sessions she was trying to figure out what I was asking her to do and she said this is really hard work to focus on what my hip is doing or what my shoulder is doing. And those were areas of pain for her besides her back. And then finally, when she learned the movements, learned to really listen to her body it wasn't as intense for her but it was more relaxing, which was really fun for me to see that happen.

Susi: Interesting. Interesting. And when you think about the classes that you're planning to teach now that you're almost through the process, what

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do you see for yourself in terms of classes or private or workshops? Are you catering more to an older crowd generally?

Linda: Yes, and as far as what I see myself concentrating on, all of that. So it'll be a little bit of small group, some large group, and then also individuals.

Susi: And Diane, what about you? Where do you see yourself going with it?

Diane: So I see myself doing more private clients. I do also attract, I think, well, at least people over 50. And some of them are even older than that. Some of them have had replacements, various joint replacements. But also people who have had persistent pain and have tried other things and they don't seem to work for them and they're ready to just try anything.

Before I took the training I was fortunate enough to be able to do some six-week series that I put together which turned out to be very popular. One was yoga for beginners, one was yoga for bone health, and one was yoga to find your calm.

And so what I am doing now is kind of revisiting, instead of creating a new wheel I'm just tweaking the wheel. Going back and looking at what I've already done and thinking about how I can do things a little bit differently and using what I've learned through the yoga therapy program and everywhere else that all the other things that I have taken, all the other trainings that I've taken and bring it all together.

And also I've been teaching a couple of yoga teacher training courses with the yoga studio that I belong to and that I work with. And so I'm using a lot of what we learned in yoga therapy to inform how I'm teaching those classes also. And perhaps at some point maybe writing a whole module on functional movement to be a part of a 500 or 300 hour yoga teacher training.

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So that's what I'm working on now. I also have other ideas of what I want to do. I love to do the yoga nidra, the R&R sleep meditation that we learned with the healing dialogue. Like that is so powerful and I've used that with my private clients. I even do one class that I do every Monday, we have a yoga nidra Monday every once in a while where we just do that yoga nidra instead of movement. That's been popular.

So I like to work in person more than online, but I do have clients online also. You know, that's a whole skill in and of itself.

Susi: Yeah, I mean they're two totally different venues, right, for teaching. Where when you're online you don't have the ability to touch and you have one angle at which you can really view someone, whereas when you're in person you have more of that. I used to think that in person was better, and I just think they're different now. Like they're just totally different and there's things that I can do in person that I can't do online, and so long as I don't try to make in person online, I'm fine.

But in those early days when we were switching over and I was trying to make in person just in person online it didn't work because they're just, they're two totally different animals in terms of teaching and getting results.

Diane: Yes. Yes, definitely. I can see that. And especially when you have someone who doesn't have much space and they can't maneuver their camera angle in a certain way or they're not very mobile. Yeah, so it's a little difficult but it's interesting and it's also just like everything else. It's a practice and the more you do it the more skilled and the more confident that you'll get at doing it.

Susi: Yeah. Yeah, now one question I do have to address is that, as I mentioned earlier, both of you are probably skewed more towards the older side of the trainees who come in. And for people who would say things like, I'm too old to do this, or I'd love to do this but I'm in the sunset of my life and, you know, there's a desire for them. Like they still have it, they still

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have the desire to do it, but they may have just passed through a line. Linda, what do you have to say to them?

Linda: Wow. Other than go for it. Enjoy it. You've earned this time that you have now on your hands if you are in retirement. And so many of us retire and have goals to learn something, why not this?

Susi: I remember when I was speaking with Ruth Ann and Lory, one of them made a comment about how all through our lives it's kids who are growing, and then at a certain point people start aging. So kids grow and then adults age, and so there can be a different sort of idea. And going to school is a part of growth. So then if you're in an aging space, then going to school isn't necessarily something that you're thinking about, right?

Linda: Right. Well I think too, this has helped me to stay young and I would imagine that Diane could say the same thing. And I like to keep fun in my yoga teaching. I don't think it's just all about being so, so serious that you can't just crack a smile now and then. And so that has helped me with this program.

Susi: Interesting. Now how about you, Diane, what would you say to those folks?

Diane: Well when anyone talks to me about age, I like to quote Helen Hayes, who if you are as old as I am you will know who Helen Hayes is. And she said, one of her quotes is, "Age doesn't matter unless you're a cheese," and I add or a fine wine.

Susi: Yeah, that's nice, cheese and fine wine together.

Diane: Yes, so I think it's all about your mindset. And even when I, you know, I'll see students in classes or whatever and they'll start to complain about, oh, I've got this pain, I've got that pain, it's just all about getting older and, you know, there's nothing I can do about it, it's just age. And so if

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you're on the fence and you're thinking about doing this, it's worth it. It's a lot of work and there's a lot of time involved, I have to be honest about that.

But it is, definitely if you're thinking about it and you've got that little thing inside you that keeps saying do it, do it, do it, you should do it.

Linda: Agreed. I think to add to Diane's words there, anything worthwhile takes work. Anything that you want to achieve takes work, whether it's learning to play golf or pickleball or bridge, mahjong, whatever. And so you know if this is your passion, you should try this certification program. And like Diane said, know that it's going to take time. Know that at the front end.

Susi: And I also find that of the folks who are skewed older than many of the trainees, a lot of them are working with older clientele too. And the reality is that there are a lot of people in that age range. And when you can be somebody who's trained up to serve that demographic, there's so many people who are younger now, right? Like you get to a certain age and more people are younger than you than older than you, right?

And so I find that there can be, not all the time, but I find that there can be a resonance when you're working with people who are trained and who are close in age as you. Do you find that or is that an assumption that I'm making?

Diane: I find that when people find out how old I am, they're surprised sometimes that I am doing what I'm doing. And I have older, older in that older skewed demographic that you're talking about, or even younger like maybe in their 50s, have told me that I'm an inspiration to them, which is always nice to hear. So they say that, but I think that it just shows them that you don't have to stop. You don't have to stop living, you don't have to just sort of give up and not do anything.

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I mean if that's what you want to do. I mean if you want, you know, if you have other things that are more important or that you want to do, then fine, that's great. But if this is what you want to do, then I think you should do it.

Susi: Linda, do you have anything more to add there?

Linda: I do. Like Diane said, the people telling you that we are inspiring to them, I also think we have learned to inspire others. And last year when I was working with one of my clients for my 150 hour practicum, I came across a 79 year old client that I worked in person with. And she had always been heavy all of her life. She had a lot of goals, she wanted to do a lot of things yet. And she knew she probably had time because her mother was in her late 90s still at that point in time.

And so she thought, well, I've got these good genes and I want to put them to use. So she said one of the things I want to do is walk a portion of the Camino in Spain. And she said, but it's looking like I'm not going to be able to do it this year when I turn 79. And I said, why not next year? What's the matter with doing it at 80? And she looked at me, took a double take and she said, all right. So she signed up and she's on track right now with all of her work towards that. So I'm looking forward to walking with her this month to help her prepare for that goal in September.

Susi: That is awesome. And you're not the only client, sorry, you're not the only trainee who has clients preparing to walk the Camino. That's actually, like it's not uncommon in terms of why a client comes to seek out yoga therapy support, is they want to be ready and they want to be able to do it and they want to be able to do it well.

Linda: That's good to hear, I'm glad. And I think that also along with Diane's line of age doesn't matter, it really doesn't. The more seniors that I've met, the more young they seem to be. The more active they are. I think about my parent's generation and how they would think somebody was absolutely

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out of their gourd at age 79 to walk the Camino or much less take a yoga class or play pickleball or any of those things.

And I happen to live in a retirement community where all of that is possible if you want it to be possible. So I think, again, back to us as yoga therapists, that's part of our job is to inspire them to move with ease so that they can do these things that they really aspire to do.

Susi: That's so interesting. I so love it. So Linda, if someone is wanting to walk the Camino and they want to be able to reach you and they're almost 80, how can they best reach you?

Linda: They can text me, they can email me. I can give you that information.

Susi: So what we'll do is because that's very personal information, if you are somebody who wants to reach out to Linda, just send us a note through our website at functionalsynergy.com and we will set up that introduction with you and Linda. And how about you, Diane, how can people find you and connect with you?

Diane: Well they can find me on DianeStantonYoga.com, so that's my email address. I'm also on Facebook, Diane Stanton Yoga, which one of the things that I need to really do is to sort of ramp up my presence on Facebook, which I have been neglectful in doing lately, but I am on there. But probably the best way would be to contact me through DianeStantonYoga.com.

Susi: All right, perfect. And that link will be in the show notes on the website. And then again, if you also want to reach out and have an introduction to both Linda and Diane, then by all means send us a note through functionalsynergy.com and we can set up that introduction for you.

Linda and Diane, thank you so much. I think what's great is to share with people what's possible, and it's always lovely to hear the stories of where

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people were before and then during and then where they are now when they're rounding the bend towards the end of this. And it's been such a lovely pleasure to chat with you today. Thanks so much.

Diane: Thank you, Susi.

Linda: Thank you, Susi.