



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hately**

**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 today because I have a graduate here today. I love interviewing graduates. I love them sharing their stories about where they are now and what they're doing.

And today we have the pleasure of chatting with Austin Chason. And if you've been following this episode, I just want to make mention, you probably are going to hear a little tiny bit of a sexy raspy voice. I had some laryngitis last week that I'm pretty much over now, but you'll probably hear a little squeak every so often as we continue to talk.

So, Austin, I'm so glad that you're here. Welcome, welcome, welcome.

Austin: Yeah, well, thank you so much for having me. It's always a delight to speak with you, Susi.

Susi: So Austin was on a previous episode, and we'll put the show notes as to which actual episode number it was, but that was initially experiences that you had coming out of the intensive and how you were working with some mental health issues yourself and then working through the certification program through the pandemic.

I think we had one session here, didn't we? We had one session live and in person, then everything shut down.

Austin: The world closed.

Susi: Yeah, the border closed. And so why don't we start there? Why don't we start with the before story and then we'll get into the after story, the now story.

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Austin: Yeah. And so the before story, during training, during certification, this whole process, there was always, and even a little bit before, there was always this lingering discontent deep within myself. And throughout the process of the intensive and certification, I started realizing how to hold that space for myself a little differently in that kind of negative mental space. Just very deep depression, sometimes a lot of anxiety, right? And that depression is just this very heavy feeling.

And oftentimes when I'm with clients there's no, like saying the word heavy doesn't really mean anything, right? That's just the closest word that we have to it. Like somebody who's in intense, chronic pain, just saying I'm in pain doesn't really convey how much it actually hurts.

And so little by little, as that process continued, I started chipping away at these layers and started learning the things that I was doing to myself unintentionally, because there's how we think about health in our system, there's how we think about what's right for us, about how we think about what is good for us, because that's what we're told.

We're told, hey, this has vitamin C in it. You need vitamin C. Take the vitamin C. But we don't stop to ask, am I digesting the vitamin C? Am I digesting this thing that's happening? Am I digesting this experience that I'm going through?

And so all through that process, through the certification, with all the lessons from Mona and the Ayurveda, and then Susi with just that kindness and that compassion of just redirecting back to how everything feels, how does it land in the body? Are we moving with compassion? And being held in that space and in that container helped me to hold myself in that space and that container.

And that fundamentally changes how we interact with ourselves and then how we interact in the world around us.

Susi: Yeah, so how does that, how does depression and anxiety live in you now?

Austin: So it's still there. So my mom passed away two years ago and whenever I talk to people about grief, I say I've learned that this is something that we grow around, right? The grief is always there. That feeling is always there, but we learn how to contain it differently. The same thing is very true with anxiety and with depression, right? Particularly that deeper stage of depression.

The difference is now I know the yellow lights, right? There's these yellow lights that we can feel into our physical bodies where it's like, I really shouldn't be doing this, but I need to do it. And then I really shouldn't be doing this, and so I'm going to pump the brakes.

And so when I feel that depression rising in myself, I stop and I pause and I take a look at, okay, what are the things that I've been consuming? Not just in terms of food, what are the experiences that I have been digesting? Do I need to care for myself in a different way? And I just catch it a little bit easier.

And every so often, just that little thought of you're not good enough, stop, don't do it, will just pop up in my mind. Why bother? Why try? And if I let it, that thought process will continue. And then it becomes this very large thing about like, well, why do I need to be here at all? And after all of these interventions, it just becomes easier to recognize that within myself and recognize that I can care for myself differently.

And when I do care for myself differently, those thoughts don't become as all consuming. It's easier for me to connect to my reason to be, right? It's easier, there's a sense of lightness that comes with holding myself in that kind of compassion.

Susi: This reminds me of a story that another of my grads had the experience of. And she was someone who said that she was clinically depressed. And she was in the training program and she was learning. And one training week, this is when we were doing them all live in person many, many years ago.

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One training week, she came back and she looked like an entirely different human being. Like she had a very classic, I call it a very classic depression effect. There was just this way that you looked at her and you could say, oh yeah, that makes sense that this is someone who has clinical depression. And I said, what happened? Like, who are you? And where did the other one go? Like you are entirely different. And she said something very similar to what you've said.

She said, it used to be that I would be on this precipice and I would know that it was coming. And I might as well just buckle up because it was going to be a hell of a ride. Not said in an excited way. And then there was one day where she was on the precipice and a thought came to her of like, wait a second, maybe this isn't one choice here. Maybe this isn't a fait accompli. Maybe this is a signal that's asking something of me.

And the word she used was self-care. And what self-care do I actually need? Which is what you're saying too. And she also talked about the yellow lights, which I want to get into in just a minute here. She started to recognize, all right, what's contributing to this? What happened? And you've even said it. You said it, what have I been consuming, right?

She was using different words, but it was the same sort of idea. What is working? What is not working? What is happening? What is not happening? And what's missing? And so then she added the self-care piece in. The inevitable didn't happen. And then that gave her the, oh, wait a second. So, huh, maybe there's other signals here I get to pay attention to.

So then she got to a point where I remember I talked to her, you know, six or eight months later, like following graduation. I'm like, so where are you at? She was like, I don't think I'm clinically depressed anymore. Now that's her take on it, of course, but really powerful.

And so I want to circle into the yellow lights because this is something I talk about an awful lot. It's really one of the signature pieces to the work that I

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do because people can get out of pain. Lots of people can get out of pain. Anyone can go to a PT, a chiro, a yoga therapist, whatever.

We can get out of pain. We can take cannabis. We can drink alcohol. We can do all the things. We can have a bath for goodness sake. Like all these things can help us to get out of pain. And then if we're not retraining patterns, then we're going to come back into the pain.

And so one of the pieces that I do, and I'm building out a formal tool on this right now. I've been just playing around with what I'm actually going to call it. But it's more than just yellow lights because you can think about this from a visual standpoint, like a traffic light symbol, but you can also think of it from an auditory symbol. And this is something I'm trying to incorporate because there's different ways to ponder it. Whispers to screams, yellow lights to red lights, right? Like a traffic signal.

And this idea of when you can, like in your situation or in this other grad's situation is they clearly know what the red light is. Like for her, it was that precipice before going over the edge. That was for her the red light. Not over the edge, because when she was over the edge she had to just wait till it was over. But the precipice was the red light. Then she started to kind of go back and what are those yellow lights?

And so would you say for you, are yellow lights the quality of your thoughts that are coming up or are those orange? What's that gradient?

Austin: Yeah, I think the quality of my thoughts can definitely be considered a yellow light. When I find that I tend to be more terse with people, there's definitely an indication that something is going on. Sometimes there's a thought that will just come out and it's like, whoa, red light. It'll be like, whoa, stop, pump the brakes, right?

But there's also the recognition of it. And we've all done that too, right? When we come up to an intersection, right? Like for whatever reason, we're looking around at something and then it's like, oh wait, that is a red light. And we've got to slam it, right?

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And so it still happens and I still catch myself every so often. But for the most part, I would say it is a quality of thought. There's sometimes, it's not physical, but it is a felt sense that's kind of not emotional either. It's between those two layers, between the physical body and the emotional body. Or maybe it's outside of those, I'm not exactly sure.

Sometimes there is just that feeling. And sometimes that can be an indication of a state of being, right? There's this idea of bhava, right? Everything that a place is, or a personality is. And so just checking in with that state of being, and that's something that I say to my clients fairly consistently, instead of how are you, it's like, how is your state of being?

What are all these different aspects, right? What is the physical body? What's the mental body? What's the spiritual body? What's the, you know, what's everything that's going on, which can sometimes be a large question that takes people off guard. And so, but it can definitely be a quality, the yellow lights can definitely be a quality of thoughts.

And I think it's going to differ from person to person, right? Particularly as we get to the more shukshma, the more subtle parts of being, right? It's going to change. It's going to be very different from person to person. Some people feel things viscerally in their body. Some people are like, I feel anger in my kneecaps. I don't feel that. Other people do. Some people can see in colors as well, right? They can feel their emotions as colors. And that's wonderful. I think that would be awesome. I would love that, but I don't have that ability.

And so whenever we're talking about mental health, things become a little bit more subtle in paying attention to the stimulus that we're applying to ourselves and also for the route and the pathway out. And we really have to tune into kita ahitam sukaduka. What is useful to us? What is not useful to us? What is promoting well-being and what is distracting from it?

Susi: This is really, really awesome. And I think what's particularly awesome is most people who know me and listen to my podcast, they know about how I've been supporting my husband with his PTS and

hypervigilance. They know that I have a touch point into a world that we call mental health.

And mental health is a really big umbrella, really, right? It's kind of, I don't want to dumb it down, but it's like any of these things, right, whether it's back pain or frozen shoulder or physical pain or just pain. It's an umbrella term for so many things. And I think what's important here is most people, they know me in terms of the work I do as being physical pain.

And I clearly outline that in a lot of the marketing I do, the way I talk, my background is in kinesiology and biomechanics. And yet, even though people come to me who have physical issues, many of them have other things going on. A lot of people have anxiety. A lot of people have depression. Maybe not what I would call capital A anxiety or capital D depression, but there are elements of an emotional mental state that play into this.

But I think what's really profound when I think about your experience and when I think about the other grads' experience, and I think about a few other folks that are going through our program, is there's a link to how you were able to contain, the word I think you used was contain, better. And that came from working with your body.

And not just going out for a walk and not just going and doing a yoga practice, although those could be really effective. Can you share a bit more about how that process, other than yes, the trainers and I were really good at what we do, we'll totally acknowledge that. But there's something in the meat of what I'm teaching from a body perspective that does link these pieces, and I'm wondering if you can speak to that experience.

Austin: I think the teachings go back to the yoga sutras, and I think this is why I love what you do so much, and also what other clients love about what I do with them so much. And it goes back to *stiram sukham asanam*, right? Sweetly with stability, we hold these positions. And it's that sweetness, it's that stability that you really encourage, which I was never really encouraged to do before.



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Our culture is one of go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, right? It's one of let's do more. Let's do more. Let's pile things on top. If you can't do this, if you feel uncomfortable in that position, you need to do it harder. You need to do it more often. And that becomes overwhelming to the nervous system. And so this idea of inviting that sweetness into the body of saying it's okay to move in a smaller range of motion, honor yourself where you are at, you will find stability there.

And it's through that process that I then started working with my mind. When I talk with clients, the body learns it. The shoulders start to feel better. The hips start to feel a little bit easier, and then the mind is like, whoa, me next. I want that too. I want to feel that good.

And then we figure out, okay, where am I holding myself to these ridiculous standards? Where am I holding myself too high? Where can I help myself to find a little bit of ease? Where am I actually being quite stable in my life? What am I doing that's serving me?

And the more that we can turn that attention and that focus on what's going well, what's going right, the more the mind starts to follow. And it's just creating a new samskara, which sometimes can take a long time. Samskara, that deep groove in the mind, right? If we have this samskara of moving in a certain way, of throwing ourselves relentlessly at things, it's going to take a little bit of time in order to transition to a different state of being.

I always think it's interesting that yoga is this practice of stillness, ultimately. The goal is moksha, this detachment, which is described as this stillness, this oneness with life, the universe and everything. But whenever we go to yoga classes, and this isn't digging these classes by any stretch of the imagination, because they're all useful. But when we think about yoga level one, yoga level two, yoga level three, it increases in intensity, it increases in mobility, as opposed to increasing in stillness.

And so this idea that you teach, that's consistently meeting yourself where you're at, is very rooted, I find, in the yoga sutras themselves. And I think that's what makes it such effective medicine.

Susi: So well said, because it's kind of as we do in the body, the mind does as well. And I bet we could say the same thing, I bet there's other people who come at this from the other side who could say the same thing as well, right?

And what I love about the body, A, because it's where I come from, like with my kin background, but it's very objective, like your arm bone moves or it doesn't, your leg bone moves or it doesn't, you're compensating or you're not. And it's something that I can point out to someone who can't see the compensation, I can point out and go, look, it's happening.

Whereas you can have a thought, let me put it this way, you had a thought around, like you mentioned a few of them earlier in the podcast episode. I don't exactly remember what they were, but I think there was one that was, I'm not good enough. And then there was one of stop, and there was this one of like, what's the point or why bother? And those had a different impact on you five or six years ago.

Those thoughts now come up and you have a completely different perspective on them. So those thoughts are still bubbling up, but the impact on them is so different. So it's a bit trickier to work with the thoughts, I find, first. But that's because I'm not trained to work with the thoughts first, I'm trained to work with the body first.

But then as the body really settles out, oftentimes there's a lot of mental chatter as the body's settling out, because people are like, wait a second, but I can move further. I can move a lot further. Why are you saying to me to move in a smaller range of motion? And you can almost, you can hear the growing, like, holy, whatever. Like I'm never going to get better if I have to go this small.

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And so there's a lot of like talking them through and settling them through and finding that safe, safe, safe, safe, safe space to be in that range where that compensation has settled out. Because as you're there, your actual range will emerge from that. Not like right in the minute, but in some cases it can happen in a few minutes. In other cases it happens in a bit longer period of time as you train that pattern, as you put it as you create that groove.

And then as you see this, you see the success, as your brain sees the success, as that logical prefrontal cortex sees the success, the left side goes, whoo, cool, this is cool. And then that back emotional part of our left side goes, yeah, maybe that is cool perhaps. And then the sensing right side is like, yes, if I can put like all the pom poms up. But it's like then there's this coming together neurologically that really shifts up the way that we experience ourselves. So I really love that. It's really, really cool.

So I think what's also cool is you came to our intensive that I just ran. Those of you who are listening to this well after the fact, Austin was providing some insights as a grad to the trainees in our intensive. And I do that each time I run an intensive and people can get an experience of what it's like post-intensive.

And you've been on a really, really cool journey. And where you are now, I think is the coolest step of them all. And you're doing two things right now. One is you're working for an organization in outpatient mental health, and then you're also doing your own gig.

So I first want to hear more about this outpatient mental health, because holy smokes, it sounds like an incredible service that is desperately and in desperate need for in like globally, really, but especially for where you are.

Austin: Yeah, it's really quite a fantastic program. It's called Charlie Health, it's a virtual intensive outpatient program. And so the clients that come to us, they're in group therapy for three hours a day, three days a week. So nine hours of group therapy a week. And then they have one hour of

one-on-one therapy with other types of therapy that they can add on should that be needed or prescribed.

My function in that program is yoga therapy, right? I go in with individuals and I just, not individuals, with the groups and I help them and I just help them to move around a little bit. Sitting for three hours is intense by itself, much less three hours of therapy, and lots of stuff just bubbles up, right? There's so much that can happen as we move.

And I will say that in my sessions, I probably don't move as much as other yoga therapists do because there is an abundance of yoga that can be practiced with the yamas and the niyamas. So just letting, like really tuning into that idea of ahimsa, you were talking a moment ago about not working with the thoughts because the body is, yeah, the body is gross. It's not gross, not ew gross, but like gross, large, obvious.

And the mind goes back into that subtlety. And so we can't really see it. We can't really poke it. We know that things are poking it, but we don't quite know what is going to be with what. And I have found that yes, moving with the body is important and helping to provide that sense of stability in the mind and in the senses to begin with is great. I start every session with the dasha chalna, a series of churning in the body, which can be quite useful just to loosen things up in the major joint areas.

And then we usually sit down and have a discussion about the theme for the week. And I always relate it back to the yamas and the niyamas and how we can help to hold ourselves in that place of compassion and self-love little by little.

And I think that process, number one, takes people off guard because so many people who come into IOP, they've been recommended so many times, well, have you gone to yoga? You should do yoga. If you're depressed, go to yoga, right? But a 200 hour yoga teacher isn't going to be equipped to work with someone this way.

And we already talked about a couple of minutes ago about how we just kind of relentlessly throw ourselves at things. And again, I'm not saying that's good or bad. In some cases it's incredibly useful to have that distraction when we're moving quite quickly. And other times, it's just another thing that's another straw on the camel's back.

And so whenever we kind of do that little bit of warm up, it's always optional. It's trauma-informed, so you get to engage as much or as little as you like. And then there's a check in after that where everyone gets to kind of talk about their experience or what they chose to do. And then we talk about philosophy. And everyone is just kind of like, this is not what I thought yoga was, which is funny to me because that's really what yoga is.

And I just find that there's this opening up that can happen, right? There's this sense of ease that can happen that other therapeutic modalities do not have. That's not to say that this one is better than the other ones. That intense processing work absolutely needs to happen, and that's not a skill set that I have. And there is something to rest. There is something to learning to hold ourselves as we are. There is something to stillness.

And a lot of what I help clients to do is just orient them to the rhythms of nature, right? There was a client about two weeks ago and they were just talking about how their mind is racing so much and I can't do anything. They can't get anything done. They want to do things, but they're just looking at their phone. They're scrolling so much. They're worried about what's happening in the world. They're worried about what's coming next.

And I was like, when was the last time you looked at the moon? And they were like, I don't know. I don't remember. I was like, that's your homework. Orient yourself to these rhythms in nature, right? Because the world moves so much slower than we do. And when we can help ourselves to slow down and tune into these natural rhythms, we start to figure out how do I hold myself differently? How do I hold this big feeling that's popping up? How do I hold this big thought that's coming up?

And it's a practice. Just reminding everyone that this is a practice of practice, not a practice of perfection. We're going to make mistakes and that's okay. And that goes back to that ahimsa piece, that self-kindness. And then little by little, these blocks start to build on top of one another. And then people find that they have the resiliency to begin to kind of take the reins of their lives in a different way.

Susi: So it sounds like you're really helping them cultivate and build up a greater sense of resource or an Ayurveda, a greater sense of ojas and just a better container for themselves and their feeling, sensing self, which can be very scary to kind of go into if you just say, go feel. Like no one's walking around saying, if I could just feel more, everything's going to be better. Like nobody, no one ever said that ever. Well, maybe me, but that's like, you got to be a bit of a nerd around wanting to tune into yourself interoceptively.

But generally speaking, people just don't do that, right? So it sounds like a really great building resource. Now, I think I heard you say too, I'm just going to, I'm just going to toot your horn a little bit here, is when you were talking with the intensive group, you said that you were one of the most, you were highly rated.

Austin: I have a pretty high kind of approval rating, quote unquote. So 94%, the last time I looked, 94% of the clients that I work with enjoy the time that they have. The average in the company is in the low seventies.

Susi: That's fabulous. Really fabulous. Yeah.

Austin: And sure, there's a part of it that is me, but I think a lot of it is just these teachings, right? It's these age-old traditions, right? Something that I always tell clients, sometimes we'll sit down and we'll do a meditation or a breath work and they'll say, oh, my mind just races too much. I can't do anything.

And I was like, Arjuna on the field of battle looks to Krishna and says, it would be easier for me to tame the wind than it would be the manifestations of my mind. This text was written more than 3000 years ago.

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Susi: And it turned into a Hollywood movie too, right? The Legend of Bagger Vance is all about the Bhagavad Gita. So yeah, really great. I love that. I love that. So good. So, so good. Really, I mean, that's such an important service. When I heard about that, I was so pleased. And I believe you said that it is, for Americans it's covered by insurance. There has to be a referral or something of that sort.

Austin: Yeah. There's a referral or there's an intake. I'm sure there's a, I mean there's always a bureaucratic process.

Susi: Right.

Austin: I think there are some people who can just sign up, but they get insurance to sign off on it.

Susi: Got it. Okay. So again, it's Charlie is what it's called?

Austin: Charlie Health.

Susi: And Charlie as in C-H-A-R-L-I-E?

Austin: L-I-E, yes. Yeah.

Susi: All right. Okay, perfect. So Charlie, really, really cool. Very, very, very cool. So Charlie Health. So if anybody is needing services like that, then please go check it out because that sounds really, really awesome.

Now, you also work with clients outside of that as well. So you work privately with people and you've got something coming up that you wanted to talk about that I'm really pumped to hear about as well. And there's a Black Friday sale coming as well. So if you like what you guys hear, like what you hear about what Austin is offering, then do send an email. We'll get them that, I'll get your website contact from you when you finish up. But let us know about this amazing process you're doing in January.

Austin: Yeah, so post-holiday, I'm leading a digestive reset that's then going to lead into kind of a year-long exploration of health, of mental health. So

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often, particularly with mental health, we say things like self-care, like, well, you need to do your self-care routine. But so many people don't know what that means, right? And there's also the "self-care" where it's like, I should be doing this, but this doesn't really help me.

And so this is using Ayurvedic principles and just Ayurvedic wisdom to help us find the diet, lifestyle, and routine that helps us to build that contentment in the mind and in the senses. But it does so in a group setting, Sangha. Groups are incredibly healing, and so the idea is to help ourselves feel that contentedness with other people. So that way we can hold and that way we can be held as we transition into being the people that we know we can be.

But it all starts with the digestive reset post-holiday. And the digestive reset is just a way to, basically, it's a way for me to capitalize off of holiday guilt.

Susi: But it's also a good start. Like, yes, that's true. And as I mentioned to Austin before we started recording, I have a nutritionist friend of mine who will offer nutrition private sessions and series before US Thanksgiving for January. So he does very, very, very well because he's basically giving permission to go wild. And he would say go hog wild between the end of November and then throughout December.

So yeah, you're calling it what it is, you're saying what it is. But it's also an opportunity, but truly it's also an opportunity because when we get into January, there tends to be a heaviness. There tends to be a sluggishness, especially if there was an overindulgence.

And not only is it an overindulgence in food, but as you mentioned at the top of this episode, there's all the other things that you're consuming. And sometimes those interactions that we have with family can be difficult and aren't digested very well, aren't metabolized or absorbed very well. And in some cases, people don't have family, and so then that might be a scenario that is having trouble getting digested and metabolized.

So there's all sorts of across the spectrum, both from an emotional, spiritual, mental place, but also from a nutritional standpoint and even a

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movement standpoint, right? Because sometimes the movement practices go by the wayside when we get all into the festivities or the non festivities. So I think it's really, really great. I mean, you're calling it what it is, but it's also a really great entryway into clearing out and moving you forward into a great 2025.

Austin: Yeah, very much so. Because especially, like especially that beginning part of the year, you said that there's that heaviness that just naturally comes from the holiday season, the foods that we take, the emotional experiences that we have. That earlier part of the year is also when seasonal affective disorder is mostly popping up, right? Which is that deeper, heavier depression, right?

And so this gives us a chance to help the body to rest, to help it to process everything that it needs to process. So that way we can get into the rest of the season without feeling the effects of it as heavily or as deeply.

Susi: Nice. Really, really nice. So this is a year long process and do you have a link that people can access or do they email you directly? What's the best way if people are saying, ooh, I like this guy, I want to dig into this and it's really, and it is geared for people who want to explore mental health more so.

Austin: Yes.

Susi: Yes, it's got that angle. So if that's some of you, if you're jiving with what Austin is sharing and you want to go there with him, how can they reach you? What's the best way for them to connect?

Austin: So you can reach out to me through my email, [austin@yoga4everyoneelse.com](mailto:austin@yoga4everyoneelse.com). You can reach out to me on Instagram, yoga for everyone else, my website, [yoga4everyoneelse.com](http://yoga4everyoneelse.com). I'll have all the paperwork, all the links ready to go here in a couple of days just to get you signed up.

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But just if you're questioning, if you're wondering if this is appropriate for you, feel free to reach out. We can have a conversation about it and see how you feel.

Susi: All right, super. So you can find him on Instagram socially, through his email and website. And by the time this episode runs, we'll have those links ready for people if you want to go directly to the sign up page. All right?

So, really, really, really cool. Thank you so much, Austin. I love hearing about your progress. I love hearing about everyone's progress, but especially knowing your journey that you've had and where you are now, it's super cool to highlight the before story and the now story. And then I'm just imagining the future story, which is really terrific. So thank you for being here.

Austin: Yeah. Thank you so much for having me on. And thank you for being you.

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](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com) where we can customize your learning path. That's [health@functionalsynergy.com](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com). Looking forward to hearing from you.