

## Ep #295: Journey of the Healer with Claire MacEachen



### **Full Episode Transcript**

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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.

Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad you're here because I have Claire MacEachen on the podcast, and she was on the podcast once before when she had completed the intensive. So this is really, really fun because this is all about Journey of the Healer. I'm going to be running Journey of the Healer as a program coming up here in January.

And Claire is a great example of what is possible and her journey of where she was when she finished the intensive. I mean, even before the intensive, really, Claire, we can even get into that. And just even in the short kind of couple of months, we're recording this in December, and in the short couple of months, just the evolution you've had in terms of engaging with people and where you're sort of figuring out you're going to get going next.

So I'm really excited to have this conversation because I think sometimes people venturing into a yoga therapy program, they're excited, they can be nervous, they can hear what I like to call the drumbeat on the industry that you can't make money at this, and yet they also know that there are people who are doing it. And this is a great opportunity for those of you listening just to see where Claire is at, and you can catch her previous episode, we'll put that into the show notes so you can actually hear it from her, like you'll hear where she has evolved from.

So Claire, welcome. I'm so glad you're here.

Claire: Thank you.

Susi: Awesome.

Claire: Happy to be here.

Susi: How would you describe now compared to then?

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Claire: Well, evolution is a great word for it, I think. Yes, there was some nervousness to start and obviously walking into a little bit of unknown territory as to, you know, you have it in your mind how you think it's going to play out and then it goes a little bit differently than what you think. So now I feel sort of, I'm ready to run with this. I feel very excited. I feel very passionate.

I think that would be the two things. Like I feel an energy and I feel some momentum that was not there at the beginning when we first started after that first intensive.

Susi: We have not finished the program yet. We still have a couple of months to go before you even begin the business training. So how about we start with what inspired you to join?

Claire: Well, that was because of my own pain. I came to a dead end when I was sort of told, well, you've got pain in your spine from arthritis and when the pain gets bad we'll just give you some cortisone shots. And I just couldn't accept that. And then that's when I sought out you, Susi. And obviously nobody knows this, but Susi and I knew each other from a long time ago when I did some intensive work with her back in probably 2009, 2010, I don't even recall.

So yeah, so after I had kind of got this negative kind of results from the x-ray, I sought out Susi and I thought, well, let's see what Susi's doing. And then lo and behold, within a week or so the intensive was there. And so I jumped in.

And pretty much after that intensive, that pain had diminished. Then I was just like, I was ready to dive in because I know if I can help others to do what I did, then that's going to make me feel just really good about this journey for sure, to be able to help others.

Susi: So are you saying that when you came to the intensive, you had no intention of actually becoming a yoga therapist? Or was that sort of lurking

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on the side, but you primarily took the intensive for you? This part's new if that's the case.

Claire: No, no, no, no. It's twofold because I think that the year before I had also looked at the intensive. And whatever the reasons why you look at it and you don't do it, I don't know. There's several reasons. I was in the middle of a move to Kelowna and then I decided to come back. And so there's many different reasons why I didn't do it the year before.

But then I think with the pain that I had got and that diagnosis that was kind of like a dead end and I was like, I can't accept that as a result. And then being able to do the intensive and then resolving my own physical pain and then just being like, okay, now is the time to do this intensive.

And I feel like everything just kind of lined up for me at that point to just be like, okay, I'm going to jump in and do this because I knew it was either going to be last year or right now I would have been signing up for this year, or January of 2025. So, it was coming.

Susi: But when you were at the intensive, were you already planning on doing the full certification program?

Claire: It was on my mind.

Susi: Ah, okay.

Claire: Yes, I thought let me do that first and then I'll see. If it resonates with me, because I had done your work before, if it resonated with me, then I had thought, yeah, I think I'll probably do it, but I'm going to do this first. What is it, six days?

Susi: Yeah.

Claire: Yeah. And then I'll see how I feel after it.

Susi: See, this is so great because this is really, really, really common where people have certification sort of on their radar. They're not really

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sure they want to jump in. Some of them do. Like we do have people who are like, okay, I'm ready to go, and they've been thinking and thinking and thinking and thinking about it. Or they just see it and they're like, this is the thing, this resonates.

And there's also this scenario too, which I think happens more so than not. And I think the experience is more for, okay, if this works on my body, then it will make sense to me. There needs to be that embodied experience that makes sense.

So then you finish it, you enroll, you start motoring along. Was it all smooth sailing?

Claire: Oh no. Okay, how do I answer that question? Well, I don't think anything's ever smooth sailing because you have your own self doubts. And I think that's, you know, I've said this to you, Susi, is that you sometimes just got to get out of your own way.

So no, I mean, I feel like there's sometimes, you know, trying to figure out the path that you want to take. And then if I'm just very open about it, you see other people in your own cohort and they have different skills and skill sets and they're having a different journey with it. And so then you're just sort of like, oh, well, I'm not that, and I'm not that. And so you do have a little bit of self-doubt, if I'm honest.

But I mean, I've taught yoga since 2008. I've embodied yoga since 2000. So it's just kind of like trying to be patient to allow your own path to kind of unfold. And as a yogi, you should just be able to allow that to happen.

Susi: I love that, you should just be able to allow that to happen.

Claire: You should be able to allow that to happen.

Susi: If you're a good yogi, this is the way it should go. I love it. I still love it. We can get caught in that for sure. For sure. So would you then say, I'm going to take a wild gander here, is that were you wanting this to happen

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faster initially than it did? And then, yeah, I'll just ask that. Did you think that it was going to happen quicker?

Claire: Well, of course, I think we all want something to evolve quicker. Now that I'm at, we're in what, month 10 of the intensive, or 11, I guess.

Susi: Of the certification.

Claire: Of the certification. It totally makes sense that it has to be a process like this. It totally makes sense to me. I think at one point I was like, okay, where am I at here? But now it really makes sense because you've got to be able to embody it. You have to have that experience. You have to, you know, I've worked with 70 or so people now, and I've needed that to evolve myself. So that's the beauty of it.

So would I have wanted it to happen faster? My answer to that would probably be back several months ago, yes. But I'm happy that it didn't because I'm just very, very different. And I'm very confident now in my skills and how I present and probably which way this is going to go for me.

Susi: It's curious because I've often looked back at my career, which I think is a funny word for me to use because when I started in the process of helping people get out of pain with yoga, I never thought that I was embarking on a career. I was teaching. I was doing my thing, getting up in the morning and doing yoga and helping people out of pain.

And then as time has marched along, I can look back and go, wow, it's been a career of 30 years so far. That's kind of wackadoodle. And when I look back at the key areas that fundamentally shifted or encouraged or fine-tuned my skills, it's really been the growth stuff. It's been the harder stuff.

And not that I would will any of the harder stuff on anybody. It's really been those times. And whether it's been something personal in my life, whether it's my sister dying, or going through a divorce, or things within my business or clients who came with challenging scenarios or they themselves as

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humans were challenging for me to work with. Like it's those things that I can remember as being really the, we can use whatever metaphor, but they really helped evolve me as the trainee or trainer or whatever.

And maybe that's partly my makeup, is that I'm willing to take on those things. And there's something about getting through those rough bits because I think, and if I think back to some of the moments you went through, sometimes I think in the process of growth there's sort of a hope that we don't have to change fully. That if we can take the concepts that we're learning and put them in the same pretty box that we've got, and that we don't really need to change our paradigm too much. We'll take some concepts that we're learning and put them into the paradigm that we have.

But yet really to evolve into working this way as a yoga therapist, it's not that we're smashing the box. It's not that, but the box definitely is not the same box that you're in now. How would you describe that?

Claire: The confidence that I have now, you know, if somebody was to ask me how I could help them, I feel like the answer is very different than what it would have been even a year ago. And I've done a lot of yoga trainings, like a lot of yoga trainings. But this one, I think for me is, I think I just get it.

It's almost like, it's sort of so simple it's kind of funny in a way, that I can be able to just look at somebody and I can see that I would be able to help them. I just see an evolution in me. I feel a confidence and just sort of this readiness to help people that I didn't have a year ago. I felt a little stuck a year ago, I think.

Susi: Can you have a memory of how you may have explained to someone what you did? Like how you could help them before?

Claire: Well, I think before it was more that I was just, not just, I was a yoga teacher. And I was a yoga teacher that was in pain. And that was very hard for me because if I'm teaching how I'm teaching and I'm in pain, are they also in pain? If somebody, you know, and I don't think people ever come to

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yoga and say, well, how are you going to help me? They're just coming to yoga because people go to yoga. They either like your class or they don't.

So I don't think I really answered the question of what I do for them. It's just, here's my yoga class. If you want to come, that's great. If you don't, well, that's okay too.

Susi: All right, so now fast forward a whole bunch of time, we're in the present day. How might you say it now? Or does it depend on the person?

Claire: Well, I think for sure it's definitely going to depend on the person. But I think mostly now if somebody is going to ask me how I can help them, I think the answer is that I can help them move better. I can't fix anybody, but I can help a person move better and become more aware of their body and the movement concept of it.

As we know, as your movement improves, then life becomes lighter because your pain decreases and you can get back to whatever that is for you, whether it's running. For some people, I've just had people that wanted to get out of the bathtub without grunting and groaning. Seems small to maybe us, but for some people that's a huge thing.

So it's kind of like that sort of helping them get back to running or hiking or, you know, I'm 58 and we're all in that stage, well we all are in the stage of aging, but even more so for me and like getting with those people that are at that age where, you know, age is a number. You can still hike, you can still ski, you can still snowboard. You just have to have that desire to move better.

Once you start moving better, you can have all these things.

Susi: It's like saying your age matters, but not in the way that we think.

Claire: Yes, exactly. Age is beautiful. I love the age that I am because you just have, it's kind of like this journey of, you know, from the beginning of this year to where I am now. That's what I said, you need to have that time to evolve and grow as the healer, whereas your age is the same thing.

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Susi: Oh, that's so good.

Claire: You know what I mean? Like you don't know what I know now at 20 or 30 or 40. And so there's this just sort of like, ah, this is great. It's such a great age to be at.

Susi: So good. So good. Especially when you don't have pain when there's so many people in that age category, even younger than that and older than that, who have a belief that that's just what happens at the age that you are, that pain is part of the game. And you're saying quite clearly, I'm saying quite clearly, that does not actually have to be the case.

And I also really like how you're now in this place of saying, I'm not fixing you. And yet, as you move better, you will feel better. Your pain will reduce and in many cases will go away when you start to move better, because I've said that over and over and over and over again.

It's also why I have the certification program set up the way that I do and not like, take this module and you can take a break and then take that module and you can take a number of years to get through this. I think people would lose the flow if that was the case. Whereas when you're going from one week to the next week and having that consistent touch point between the training weeks, there's a container, right? There's a container and a guidance.

Claire: I love that. I really have enjoyed every – When we've done our eight day intensive, I'm always ready for it. There's enough time between and I'm like, okay, I want more. And then you go away, do you know what I mean? And then you go away and then you play.

And that's exactly what it is, you get to play with all these concepts and play with them in your own body, which you do need to embody it and then be able to offer that stimulus to your people.

And I still teach yoga classes and I've integrated so much of this work into the yoga practice, into what I teach. And in fact, it's morphed into more of

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kind of like a therapy yoga class, or we warm up with that and then do a little bit more of the sort of yoga that I was teaching. But it really has changed even the way I teach. And I'm seeing some benefits.

I mean, I do virtual classes, but I can see, you know, I have eight to 10 people that come and I can see the changes in them. I can see the shifts in their bodies. It's hard to get that feedback when you're in a virtual class, but if I was to have taken a picture 10 months ago to now, I think that we would see some really huge shifts for those people in my yoga class.

Susi: Really, really cool. And then share, if you're open to it, where are you taking this next? Because you've got a great smile on your face. So what's happening for you next? Because I think it's super exciting.

Claire: So my life, other than my yoga journey, has been in the dental profession for years and years and years. I was in the administrative side of dental as reception and I managed clinics for years. And I still work casually in a dental office close to where I live.

And so what had happened was I had started with a lady who was an RDA, Registered Dental Assistant. And she was in a lot of pain. And we worked with her, I think she did six or so sessions with me. And thank you, Susi, for teaching me what you know and love because I was able to teach this person how to move better. And she actually got out of pain. Like literally got out of pain.

And so anyways, then I decided I was like, this is really interesting. These chair-side assistants and dental hygienists and dentists as well, they're in a very precarious sort of position all day long. You know, you're sitting sideways to a person, you're twisting, and then you're flexing to work on them. And then you've got your arms suspended with these sharp instruments in your hands.

So I'm like, no wonder. No wonder these people are in pain in their backs and in their shoulders. And so anyways, I decided this was going to be, you know, I was going to start to interview some dental assistants and

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hygienists. And sure enough, they have this common thread of where their pain shows up, which is what I just told you.

And so anyways, this is what I'm going to start to do, is I'm going to start to prepare a program for dental professionals that are in pain.

Susi: Love it.

Claire: Yeah.

Susi: I love it. I love it.

Claire: It's the early stages of it. The response I got, and I can't even believe that I've been in this industry for I don't even know how many years, 35 years, and not ever realized that those poor chair-side assistants and hygienists and even the dentists, were in so much agony. One of the dentists I work for right now, I mean, he just had a hip replacement six months ago. And it's definitely occupational. He was even told that by his medical doctors and whatnot.

I'm just so excited to build this program and then be able to share this in an industry that I've been part of for so many years.

Susi: Yeah, it's so great. It reminds me a little bit of hairdressers because there's the arms up work. And with the hygienists and the conversations I've had when I've seen my hygienist, she says pain's just part of the job. I've been at this for the decades I've been at this for and everybody I know has pain and it's just what you do as part of the job. Like, it's just you get your massage and you get your thing, you manage it. But this is what it is.

I mean, this particular hygienist I've had for a long time. But before that, the other ones I've spoken to, same conversation. It's definitely a problem. But what I love about it is you've actually specifically asked them about things like, where is their pain and what is possible? And they've responded really, really well to you.

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Claire: Yeah. And it's interesting too, because in the industry, you see this shift in like a registered dental assistant. Quite often around that 40 year old dental assistant, they start to become the dental receptionist. And there's a reason for that, because they're in pain. And you probably will also notice that your dental hygienists are not usually very old. And that's because they've had to go out the door to a different career or retire because of the pain.

I believe that there's, you know, I think that there's definitely some things that they could be doing to help with that with what we're offering through yoga therapy and movement.

Susi: Really, really interesting. And even like what they could do between client visits.

Claire: So I had this thing, because every dental office has a staff room. And so all I can think of is me having gone through an office or something and giving them a strap over the door so that they can work on their arm movements. And maybe there's some therapy balls that they can roll their feet out on. Just all these things that are just kind of going through my mind as to what this program could actually look like. But more importantly, how I can help the teams.

And if you've got that lightness about you, you know how you can get through your day without being crippled over by the time you leave.

Susi: Mm-hmm. Yes, because a lot of practices have like, what are the hours typically of someone who's working chair-side. Like they work an eight hour day typically?

Claire: Yeah. And in a lot of offices, they are not taking breaks. Yeah, they are not taking breaks. So if you're working a seven or an eight hour day, you are back to back full on. Set up a room, you're with your patient, take down the room, sterilize it, then you're on to the next one. It's a hard day.

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And most people don't want to be in the dental chair. That part of it, that stress part of it for the clinicians is huge too. Huge.

Susi: That's actually a really interesting point because not only is this a profession, unlike perhaps a hairdresser where the person is happy to see their hairdresser and they're going to be looking beautiful when they leave their hairdresser. Now, granted, I do love how my teeth feel when I leave the dental office, but I can't say that going to the dentist is top of my list.

Claire: That's hard for the clinicians. I mean, I think that's why when you find your dental hygienist and you have a good rapport with them, that's why you continue to go to them because it makes it easier for you because it's about having the visit with the person that you really like, and then they're doing all that scraping and whatnot in your mouth and you don't like the way that feels, other than the end result of it.

And for dentists as well. Like I can't even tell you how many times a patient would come out and say, oh, I just hate him. But they don't hate him. They just hate dentistry, but not him or her.

Susi: Right, right.

Claire: You know what I mean?

Susi: Yeah, and it's interesting because I even see a rollout that you could even do in terms of that relationship that the person has with their patient, right? I remember, this isn't dentistry, but it reminds me of when a friend of mine was in the hospital because they were in an accident, a really horrible accident. And they needed to move their leg and the leg was really sore. And I said, I can help you with that leg and they were frightened because the last time the nurses came in to move the leg, they were really rough. And I said, just trust me on this. I think I got this.

And so then as I put my hands and moved things around, they were like, hey, that actually felt better. Because I know how to put my hands on people, right? I recognize how limbs move. And I think about stories of

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people that I've referred to my dentist because they've got some scenarios with their mouth or with their jaw or with like maybe it's full body pain, and he and his team have ways of placing their hands on them that's more comfortable. That's not so rough and tumble the way that some practitioners can be.

There's even like that kind of connection and in the connection that they have with them, like that presence piece, that healing helix piece that they can then grow not only as they're being with themselves, but being present to the patient that's in the chair of like just sensing into them when they need a break, right?

Claire: Yeah, that is so interesting when you think about that healing helix. If they had that model, the dentist/patient relationship would be so cool.

Susi: Yeah, little seeds that you can plant, starting with them, right? Because it starts with the person's pain, like the practitioner's pain, the dental hygienist's pain. And then as they start to kind of get spacious about that, they'll just start to notice so much more about what's going on with their people around them, which is what tends to happen, right?

Oh my gosh, this is so cool. So you can all who are listening, you can count on Claire coming back because I am going to be as interested to see how this evolves because Claire really, you really landed in on this opportunity around working within the industry which you've been in for so long, but from a different angle, just really recently. Like just in the past month or so. And it's really starting to pick up some pace.

And so don't be shocked if she's coming back in six or eight months and we're going to find out the next piece of Claire's journey.

Claire: Yeah, I always say it was kind of like the elephant in the room, right? You know, like we're kind of like going back and forth about, you know, what's the journey or what's the path that I'm going to take? And then all of a sudden it was like, wait a sec. And I love dentistry. I mean, I've been in it for so long. It's hard to move away from what you know, but if you can pull

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in this other piece that you know, and there's that blend, it becomes harmonious.

Susi: So good. So good. So people might be listening to this and then want to get in touch with you. Maybe they do, because it's been a long time since I've been running my Power of the Tongue workshop. We have a lot of dental folks who have taken that and might be listening to this podcast, or there might be people who haven't done that yet, but resonate with what you're saying.

If they would like to reach out to you, what's the best way for them to find you?

Claire: My website is [bodymotionyoga.ca](http://bodymotionyoga.ca). You know, obviously there's ways of getting a hold of me through that. And then you can also email me at [yogawithclaire.om@gmail.com](mailto:yogawithclaire.om@gmail.com).

Susi: Brilliant. So we'll have that in the show notes. So if you want to reach out to Claire, chat with her about what she's up to or anything else that you've been hearing about on this episode, please, please, please go for it. I know she'd love to hear from you. Claire, thank you so much. Like I said, we're going to have you back. I can't wait to hear the next piece of this.

Claire: Awesome. Thanks for having me, Susi. I appreciate it.

Susi: Take care.