

## Ep. #328 - The 3 Stages of Growing Into an Effective Yoga Therapist



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With your host:  
Susi Hatelly

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hatelly

Introduction 00:00:01 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 00:00:22 Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here today, because this is an episode for every yoga teacher, massage therapist, or movement professional who has ever asked themselves, am I doing this right? Why does this work for some clients, not for others? How do I build something that actually lasts? If you've been stuck in a loop of trainings, certifications, or personal recovery work and you're still not sure what's next, this episode is likely for you. Because today I'm walking you through the three stages I see over and over and over again in yoga teachers who are evolving into skilled, trusted and effective yoga therapists; not just people with a certificate, but people who know or are learning how to help others reduce pain, help their clients build strength, and make a real sustainable living doing it.

Susi 00:01:15 This episode is going to help you locate yourself not in a hierarchy, but in a process in a map. It's not about where you should be, it's about helping you to see where you are so you can take the next step with clarity and trust. Ready to go? Let's begin. Level one is for the teachers who are working with clientele. And they have a question in their head which is: I don't know why this worked. It's where a lot of us actually start. You've taken a 200 hour training, maybe a 500 hour, and you've studied some anatomy; you've taken some restorative classes, perhaps maybe some posture workshops and maybe even some nervous system informed education; you might even had your own story of healing, something that is pulling you towards this work; and now you're teaching. You're trying to apply what you've learned. And then one day, something really cool happens: a student or a client says to you, wow, that really helped my shoulder. I haven't slept that well in weeks.

Susi 00:02:29 Whatever that was, whatever happened in that class, I feel so much better. And on one hand, you are thrilled. Like, thrilled! But also, you're a little confused because in your gut you're thinking, hey, wait a second, what did I do? Was it the sequence? Was it the breath? Was it the timing? Can I even do this again? You've just landed in what I like to call the accidental success phase. You know that something has worked, but you don't know why. So you try to recreate it: slim class plans, same props, same cues. And next time it falls flat. The student or the other students don't feel the same relief. You don't even feel the same connection. And you're starting to wonder if that original success was a little bit more of a fluke. This is where a lot of well-meaning, hardworking teachers get stuck because instead of learning how to see what they're already doing, they sign up for more trainings. They start layering in more techniques, more tools, more approaches, hoping that one of them will finally make some sense.

Susi 00:03:39 But here's the truth: you don't actually need more tools. You need a structure to understand what you're already doing and what you're already sensing. And those two things together, the doing and the sensing, are so paramount because your system, your intuition, your perception is actually ahead of your training because you are already noticing where your

clients brace before movement, you're already noticing where or how or when their breath doesn't land. You're already noticing the tension that they carry into a pose, but you don't yet have a framework to name it, to respond to it, or to even teach from it. This is the teacher who's saying, I'm trying to sequence but I'm guessing. I want to help people build strength but I don't want to hurt them. I'm still in pain myself. I feel like there's so much more going on, but I don't even know what it is. See, this is where the learning must shift. And again, I'll mention it in a similar way I just mentioned it a moment ago, which is: it's easy to try and go to someone else's framework rather than to create your own.

Susi 00:04:51 So it becomes more easy, in a sense, to memorize more poses and to memorize cues. Sort of where we started from, right? But rather, really what needs to happen is to understand patterns, right? So instead of saying or asking the question, how do I teach warrior? To like, looking externally from yourself and finding someone else who can show you how to teach it. Rather, it's okay, hold on a second here, what am I seeing here with this person as they move into this position with their hip, their breath, and what's even going on with their nervous system? So as you start to change the question, you start to ponder the scenario differently, but you're honouring what you already actually know. And yes, this can sometimes feel a little bit difficult because much of our learning has been framed from this perspective of, someone outside of you needs to teach you; which is true, there is an element of that and the integration which helps you really become good and solid at your craft is a training that supports you in naming your own framework and already naming what you are actually already doing, and like putting language to that.

Susi 00:06:00 This is what I teach in I Love Kinesiology. This is where we explore, where we really dive into and dial into anatomy, biomechanics, neuromechanics integrated with gait, rest and relaxation and truly how to build strength but from a place of real clarity. Right? It's going to help you understand planes of movement in a way that you have not even thought about them before. It will help you recognize compensation patterns and refine your sequencing in cueing, really learn how to see what's going on under the pose. I like to say that when people show up in my spaces for private sessions like my clientele, a lot of times they're doing a lot of things right. And to a lot of people, to a lot of teachers and professionals, they're moving fine. But I see the things that most other people miss. And so I help to help people recognize the patterns under the compensation and what happens when we start to unlock or unravel those patterns, and the fuel that comes from that so they can use that fuel for better mobility, stability and strength that actually lasts.

Susi 00:07:10 I see most people don't do that. Most teachers layer on top of the compensation pattern as opposed to really resolve it. So when we do these things around understanding planes of movement, recognizing compensation patterns, refining your sequencing and cueing and learning how to see what most other people miss, you'll learn to support that your client or your students pain recovery and also your own. For yourself, you're going to learn to start bracing when you move, and how to work with clients in a way that's precise but not rigid. So if you're looking for a process that will help you to stop second guessing and you are not interested in layering on more tools, you want to get really, really confident in the fundamentals

you have and to really integrate them in a way that is powerfully confident in yourself, this is probably the program for you, right? The key is you don't need to know everything. Gosh, no one knows everything. You do need to know what you're looking for though. Part two then, is really understanding what's going on.

Susi 00:08:16 Now we come into level two and this is where something really begins to shift. You've been at this work for a little while, you're not a beginner and you've probably helped a lot of people already. You've taken several trainings, maybe even dozens or more, and you've heard the same phrases repeated: cue from the ground up, breath is the bridge, the nervous system is everything. And you agree with them. But when you're actually in the room with your student, with your client, whether that's in-person or on zoom, things don't really feel that clear. Yes, you've done some pain science. You've done a little bit of anatomy, some restorative yoga. You've studied sequencing. You've practiced some trauma informed cueing, and you know you're a good practitioner. And yet something still feels a little tangled. And you're asking, how do I make sense of all the things that I've learned? Why do I still freeze when a client doesn't respond in the way that I expected? I know that they're compensating, but how do I help them really shift without overcorrecting? Why am I still second guessing my sessions when I've been doing this for years? This is level two.

Susi 00:09:29 This isn't a crisis of knowledge. It's really more of a crisis of integration. Yeah, you're tracking more and you're seeing more. Your nervous system is sharper, more responsive, but your framework hasn't caught up to your awareness and this mismatch can feel really exhausting, draining, depleting. You leave sessions tired, not because your clients are difficult but because you're holding so much. You're holding your client's pattern, your breath, their story, their compensations, your own memory of what you've learned and the pressure to do it right. It's too much. Not because you're not capable, but because you don't yet have a structure to sort out what matters from what doesn't. At this stage, a lot of practitioners respond by signing up for even more training, and they think, oh, if I just learn one more technique, if I get certified in this next method, maybe I will finally feel clear. But it doesn't land the way they hope. Why? Because more information doesn't solve an integration issue. What you need at this stage isn't another layer but rather, it's a clearing, a way to distill what matters, apply it effectively, and build confidence in your decisions, not just your knowledge.

Susi 00:10:46 I often will hear teachers in this phase say things like: I keep repeating myself; I have so much theory but I don't know how to actually use it; I'm still in pain; I'm still in pain even though I know what I'm supposed to do; and I'm so tired of trying to make it all fit together. The good news here is that this is where real refinement begins. Because now you're no longer asking what's the right pose. You're asking, what's this person's system really ready for? What does their breath tell me? How do I meet them? But it's not about fixing them. This is the moment where your presence starts to matter more than your protocols. You need something that helps you simplify and not strip away, rather to focus. That's exactly what we build in the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive. This program is where I help experienced practitioners, like you, take everything that you've learned, strip out what's getting in the way and clarify what's actually

working, and then build a structure for flow, progression, and pacing that both matches your client's needs with your own needs.

Susi 00:11:55 So we work on: biomechanics and movement observation, so you can really read what's happening in real time; nervous system pacing, so that you stop overriding your clients or yourself; your cueing, so that you're actually saying less but you're impacting more and teaching more; the sequencing, so you know how to really help someone go from pain relief to strength; and your own awareness, so you stop bracing, rushing, overcompensating. This isn't more techniques per se. It's applying what you already know, but in a way that actually finally works. Sometimes when people come into the therapeutic yoga intensive they're expecting me to say, everything that you have done is wrong. And it's not. And even though this analogy or this metaphor is really horrible, it's not about throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It's actually about integrating everything that you have done and making it even better, putting it into a cohesive hold. The key here is that at this stage, it's really important to recognize that you're actually not confused, even if you think you are. It's that you're overloaded in many ways.

Susi 00:13:02 You know too much and you have too little integration. Your nervous system is now over functioning, and you're exhausted from trying to remember everything and forgetting to trust your own presence. So the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive helps you do three things: it helps you simplify; you learn how to observe what matters most; you learn how to sequence in a way that's really purposeful so you know what to do next and why. You can teach sustainably, like you work in a way that really restores you, not drains you. And this becomes really fun. So for me, I teach a lot of my private series sessions on Thursdays, for example, from 6 a.m. until 1:30, and I start my day as revved up as I finish it. It's awesome. And that's what grads of this program do, too. But really, maybe what the most powerful shift is, and this is so, so important, you stop feeling like you're faking it. You stop wondering, was that enough? Did I they help them? Did I explain that well?

Susi 00:14:05 And you start trusting. Oh, yes, that landed. That was the next step. That's all that they really needed today. This is where your work really starts to feel like your own. You're no longer applying someone else's method. You're becoming fluent in your own way of teaching, your own voice, your own structure, your own presence. And you're finally able to say, I know what's going on and I know what to do with it. And that's what the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive helps you build. It's not about becoming the expert, it's about becoming the guide who knows what they're really seeing and teaches from that place. And once you land here, you are no longer seeking certainty, because you have it, but rather you're building clarity. And that's what carries you into stage three. This is where everything starts to coalesce. You've been helping people for a while now. You've built trust in your sessions, you've gotten some results, and it's not by accident so much anymore because you have done a lot of the work.

Susi 00:15:07 You've learned how to observe and you refined how to cue and you've practiced pacing. You've learned to trust your nervous system and to read your clients, too. And as I mentioned, we dig into so much of this to support you in this process and the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive and the foundation in I Love Kinesiology. At this stage, though, a new question begins

to emerge. It's not, what should I do in the next session? It's, what am I doing next in my career? How do I make this real? How do I build something that lasts? Even if it's a side business, it doesn't have to be a full time, 40 hour a week job, whichever it is. Welcome to level three. This is where the teacher truly becomes the professional and the practitioner becomes a guide. The helper becomes the leader. You're not looking to get certified simply to add more letters to your name; you're looking for a real foundation, something you can stand on and build from. I hear people at this level say, I know I get results but I don't know how to explain them clearly.

Susi 00:16:15 I want to stop floating between my massage and yoga and my other gigs. I just want to build something that's really focused. I want to transition out of the clinic or the studio, but I need some structure. I've done a lot of the healing work myself, now I want to lead others through it with confidence. I don't want to patch together my knowledge anymore, I want mastery. Or you might be one of the ones that kind of come to this earlier on. Like, I received an email today from someone who had just completed their 200 hour teacher training, and they know for certain this is the direction they want to go, and they just want the path outlined clearly of like, how do I go from step to step to step? So it's like all three levels kind of grow into them at once at this specific level, at level three. At this stage, people aren't collecting trainings anymore. They're not seeking techniques per se. They are seeking coherence. They're ready to own their work, not as something that they do on the side, but as their profession even if they're doing it part time.

Susi 00:17:18 But the challenge has been that they've been working so intuitively and so informally, so under the radar, that now they're unsure of how to describe what they do. They've helped some friends and clients and community members, and they've had some incredible sessions. They've guided people through pain, fatigue and long recoveries. But when it comes to talking about their work professionally, they start to freeze and that's what holds them back. It's not skill or talent or results; it's a lack of structure and language. So this is, in part, what the certification program is designed to address. It isn't just about getting a credential, it's about giving you the scaffolding you need to build a business, a method, a professional identity that reflects the depth of your work. So here's what we focus on inside of certification. First one is professional fluency, where you really learn how to talk about what you see in movement with clarity. You can explain your process to a client, a colleague, or a medical professional.

Susi 00:18:16 You can design and communicate your method, not just follow someone else's. Second is applied mastery. You don't just teach more theory. We teach you how to reverse engineer a client's goals; what they clearly, clearly, truly want. Create layered sessions that help build capacity over time. Integrate your voice, presence, and professional lens into what it is that you're teaching. Third: business integration. You'll learn how to build offers that really reflect your skills and serve clients in a way that's sustainable for you, and position yourself clearly in your local or online community, and move away from hourly burnout towards something structured that has a values based income to it. And you do it all while staying grounded in the work that you love. No pushy marketing, no awkward sales scripts, no pretending to be someone that you're not; just clear, supported development so you can build something real. In

our Certification Program, we work with each person very, very, very closely to help shape their path. Some are leaving massage after decades. Some are integrating massage with yoga to provide an integrative process.

Susi 00:19:25 Some are coming from health care and want to lead group therapeutics. Some want to create workshop series or mentorships. Some are just ready to finally say, this is what I do. And here's the thing about people at this level: they don't go backwards. They're not circling. They've moved through a lot of doubt, through piecing things together, through overtraining, over efforting and second guessing. Now they want to feel solid. They want a methodology. They can describe a practice that sustains them, a reputation that they're proud of, a business that aligns with their values, and a life that doesn't feel like they're constantly starting over. They want to say, I am a yoga therapist. I help people reduce and eradicate pain. I teach in a way that works and here is why. And that's what certification makes possible. Not by turning you into someone else, but by helping you integrate all that you are into one clear path. This is for the person who's ready not to hustle, not to perform, but to lead.

Susi 00:20:37 Whether you've recognized yourself in levels one, two, or three, or in a mix of all of them, know this: you're not late, you're not behind, you're not circling, circling aimlessly. You are moving and your nervous system knows it. Your clients can feel it. And somewhere in you, even if it's been a little quiet lately, you can feel it too. What I've shared today is not a ladder that you need to climb. It's not a funnel that you need to move through. It's a reflection. It's a way of saying, here's what it looks like to grow in this work without the noise, the shame, or the pressure to be further ahead than you are. And wherever you are is exactly the right place to begin. Maybe you're in that early "I think I helped but I'm not really sure how" space. If that's you, you know this, you're sensing more than you've been taught to trust. You don't need to learn everything, you need to learn to see clearly.

Susi 00:21:34 And that's what I Love Kinesiology offers. And you can find more about that at [functionalsynergy.com/ilc](http://functionalsynergy.com/ilc). Or maybe you've been teaching for years. You've done dozens of trainings, you understand the theory but applying it still feels messy. You want to sequence better, see compensations more clearly, and teach without feeling like you're carrying a whole room on your back. If that's you, you're ready for integration. And that's where the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive comes in. It's where you stop collecting and start applying. And you can read all about that program over at [functionalsynergy.com/intensive](http://functionalsynergy.com/intensive). And if you're listening and thinking I've done all that, I've helped people, I'm ready to build something sustainable, I want to do this for real, then you might be ready for certification. Not because you've mastered everything but because you're ready to take what you have mastered and refine it into a method, a message, a career. And you can get all those details at [functionalsynergy.com/certification](http://functionalsynergy.com/certification).

Susi 00:22:43 Or you can reach out to us through our contact page on [functionalsynergy.com](http://functionalsynergy.com) to ask questions. Bottom line here is you don't need to rush. You don't need to be ready yesterday. You just need to feel the resonance and follow it. That's how all of this has worked for me. It's how it's worked for hundreds and hundreds of teachers and yoga therapists I've trained. And it's how it'll work for you, too, quite likely. Because this work, the work of helping people reduce and

eradicate physical pain, restore their trust in movement and return to their lives, is deeply human. It's not about perfection. It's about presence. So here's your invitation not to leap, not to stretch, not to force but to ask, where am I now? And what's the next step that will help me move with more clarity, more confidence, and more ease? You don't have to know everything. You don't even have to be certain. You just have to take one step. And I'll be here to walk with you.

Susi 00:23:42 I hope you've enjoyed this episode. We will see you next week. Take good care.