

Ep. #387 - What My Graduates Say Is Different About Yoga Therapy Certification with Functional Synergy



Full Episode Transcript

With your host:

Susi Hatelly

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

Introduction (00:00.00)

You are listening to From Pain To Possibility with Susi Hatley. You'll 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 Hatley.

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Welcome, and welcome back. I'm really glad that you're here today because I have had a great opportunity to speak to a number of my trainees and graduates about my Functional Synergy Yoga Therapy training.

I'll sometimes get people emailing me, asking me, "What makes your program different than other programs?" And to be honest, frankly, I don't know. I mean, I can read what other programs write up, and sometimes it's clear on what the distinction is, but other times, it's not so clear. The reality is, is that all the programs that have been accredited by IAYT all have met a certain level of standard.

But it doesn't mean we address each standard equally. So for me, for example, I've got a strong biomechanical and functional approach interwoven with the way that I integrate yoga and Ayurveda, and really sinking into Yamas and Niyamas. Other programs will do something similar, but maybe not exactly the same emphasis on different areas. So our reality is, is I don't really know—well, until now.

I've had the opportunity to talk to a number of grads who have interacted with grads of other programs, and I've talked to them about, you know, what's made a difference, or the ones who have come in and have been learning basic yoga therapy processes from weekend trainings, and then they indicate to me what's different. But I've also had a real treat: that this cohort that started in June, I have one person who's actually doing two C-IAYT programs, plus two people who took another C-IAYT program and they wanted more. And I asked them, "All right, so what's different?"

So this episode really connects with what's different, after talking with 15 to 20 of my trainees and grads.

So number one, I think the key here is why I ask the question. I asked it because I was—I truly am fascinated to understand, because I know that there's a bazillion ways to help people heal, and it's helpful to know what actually makes different programs unique. I knew going into the IAYT process that it was going to be like a lot of other professional trainings—that you can get a degree from a lot of different places in the same field, but it's different because each university or each school, each program has a different angle based off of the teachers who are there or the people who are leading it. So I wanted to get more of a sense, and here I was with an opportunity.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about the different way of thinking, a different way of seeing a client, a different way of working with pain, a different kind of learning environment, and what those different experiences enable.

So, let me dig in. When I review the responses that I've gotten from all the people that I spoke with, here is what the majority said—the through line.

One of them is that my program has strong clinical reasoning, has an ability to strengthen assessment skills, and there's a strong emphasis on therapeutic decision-making, not simply the provision of sequences and templates. One of my trainees specifically said how much she enjoyed how the program helps her think about becoming a movement detective, and being able to observe, assess, respond to each client as an individual rather than relying on general protocols. It's moving beyond having a plan before going into a client, and really simply being with the client who shows up. Because if you've had a client one day and they go away for a week and come back, you have no idea who's showing up next. You don't know what happened during that week, you don't know what they did when they drove to you or turned on their computer. The reality is, is you need to be able to pivot your plan as you play.

Along with that really is the process that they're gaining. They're describing that they're improving their ability to observe, assess, and respond, with an emphasis that each client is an individual. And while a lot of other programs will say that, overall, every single person I spoke with said that that was very, very specifically a clear difference—that we weren't just talking "people are individuals," we were teaching how to actually be with each client as an individual. And again, this contrasts with "here are general protocols for these conditions."

And there's a simplicity in talking about complexity and nuance. Some people, some trainers can kind of get overwhelmed in the way of speaking about complexity. The way I think about it is that human beings are complex—that's just the nature of who we are. We don't need to make it any more complex. There's a way of being able to work with people that utilizes and works with that, as opposed to drowning in it.

Lots of programs that I heard about use a visual assessment of being able to see the way, say, one leg looks compared to the other, making assumptions about the strength output or the balance of muscular development. Whereas what I'm doing is, I'm not so much looking at shapes of a limb, although that's curious, I'm teaching actually how to observe movement patterns—seeing compensatory movement. Because in the ability to see compensatory movement, you can change it. Because time and time and time again, when pain is present and there's compensation, when we reduce the compensation, pain often reduces. So we begin there, and that's the way of being able to help our client grow their awareness, which is another key bit—is that we're not doing to our client, we're not responsible for our client getting better, but rather the way that we're teaching them, the way that we're modeling, interacting with them in the healing relationship, is what we're helping train them to feel and be with in their own body.

The result has been that every single trainee and grad that I spoke to has more confidence in how to start and continue in their sessions. And there is this practical application that weaves in with the academic.

Another big piece that came to light was the way that I'm working with pain. A number of people really, really like that my focus is not like across the board, "Let's do general yoga therapy." I am interested in training you to help people with persistent issues of pain reduce or eliminate pain—focusing on neuromuscular retraining, but the reality is it's not just biomechanical. We're weaving in the physiological reality of the sensorimotor loop, but also utilizing yoga theory, yoga understanding, Ayurveda, to bring the wholeness to the person, and from there to be able to address that where the pain is, is not the problem. We can begin with the nervous system, knowing that the nervous system is communicating to the myofascial system, which is then telling the skeletal system how to move.

We're drilling down into the details of specifically how to help someone reduce and eliminate pain, step by step, piece by piece—a clearer model for helping people get those results. And more than half of the people that I spoke with said this was the missing piece of all of the workshops and trainings, including their cert program—a missing piece for really where they wanted to go next.

A significant piece that made a difference for a number of people is the way that we facilitate our learning environment. I'm not lecturing at students, and the trainers are not lecturing at students. Rather, there's a continued mentorship, a deeper study, the opportunity to refine clinical reasoning. And in doing that, it's not a student sitting listening to a teacher; it's an interaction. It's integrating their experience, all of their learning with what's new. It's not throwing out what they already have learned and suggesting that what I'm offering is better; no, it's taking what they already know to be true and upleveling it.

The key is, it's not the system that's not working for them that they learned elsewhere, but rather when to apply that particular system. I help people think. It's that classic idea of, you know, "give someone a fish and you feed them for a day, and teach them how to fish and you feed them for a lifetime." It's about self-reliance—helping someone right now is great, but we're really—my idea here is to really help refine their thinking so that they can be there with their client and see, trust their eyes, open their eyes to what's experiencing. It's not getting rid of intuition, it's building upon it. And this is important because a lot of trainees when they come in, the first piece that's important is 99% of the people I'm training are over 50 years old. They've been teaching for a few years at least, they've got a client base, and they're getting decent results. They like to work with people therapeutically, and they want to grow it—either their private client base, small groups, they want to do some workshops, and they want a part-time type of business that facilitates their retirement and gives them something that they love to do and provides them with a steady income.

They're also highly intuitive people; they wouldn't have gotten the results they had if they weren't, because the reality is, a lot of yoga teaching doesn't give you the skills for actually

becoming therapeutic and effective therapeutically. So they've relied on their intuition in many ways. And my point for them is, is that intuition is great, but it's difficult to explain what you've intuited to somebody to help teach them about awareness and where to take them forward. And that if you've intuited something, you've actually seen it already, because intuition lives in the right side of our brain. So, we've actually seen something, we haven't consciously named it. So what I often suggest to people is to really experience what did you see, and trust what you've seen, because when you can name what you see, you become more intuitive, and you're able to explain to your client so much more effectively what the next steps are. And that gives them more confidence, more clarity, and they progress faster, which then just uplevels everything.

So your intuition becomes stronger, your eyes become stronger, you trust your eyes—which is probably the biggest thing I'm training people to do, is helping them to move from doubting what they see to really acknowledging that, "Yes, I'm seeing this, I can state it, they're getting it." And as a result, that's the refinement of clinical reasoning, because you can't reason something you can't see.

Now, along with this technical training, we also spend a good deal of time on the business side, because the reality is, is a lot of yoga teachers get a bit nervous about the work that's required from a business side for them to have the income that they want. And that makes a lot of sense because there's a lot of misinformation online and from what other people say. And I've trained a lot of teachers in business—I ran the Yogi Business Program for many, many, many, many years outside of certification; it's now integrated in certification. And I, more than anything in the world, want people to get a great return on their investment, and most do. Within the year or six months after, they're making their money back because of the way that we train them both technically—with their technical skill—and their business skill. We're there for them, and we support them in not having to go on social media, but to make real, specific, lasting connections with people. And that goes so far in terms of developing a client base that is successful and steady and consistent.

So this isn't just about the material being delivered, but rather the mentorship, the discussion, the connection, the application, and the continued refinement. When I talk with the teachers who have graduated or who are about to graduate, what they often will say is how much more confidence that they have, how their clinical capacity has improved, and their ability to be with complexity has improved. The confidence they have not only to begin, but also continue in a session when they get to that point where we all do at times, they're like, "Oh my gosh, what am I doing here? This is not going the direction I thought it would, and... oh, wait a second here. Hold on, hold on, hold on. Okay, this is where I need to go next." It's about what I like to say, becoming a movement detective. Movement detectives, good detectives see what others don't see. They see in between all that evidence, and they see the patterns, and they address the patterns. They're not just eyewitnesses—they take all that data and they pull it together and recognize the pattern. So, it's not about having a predetermined plan before the client even comes in, but the key is, is really to be with that person.

And alongside that, because we're working embodied and deliberately, most trainees also reduce pain, increase strength, and enjoy their yoga practice that much more.

So if you are someone who wants to become a really effective, dare I say, a great yoga therapist for the clientele that you want to work with; you want to have a retirement income doing what you love and being really, really effective; I encourage you to take a look at our certification program, and then to connect with us through our contact page at functionalenergy.com, and connect with one of our graduates and find out really, for real, for real, what's possible. You can read more over at functionalenergy.com/certification. It would be an honor and a true pleasure to help you grow your skill, both technically and professionally, and to build a business that you absolutely love, helping people reduce and eliminate pain.

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Has this been an interesting episode that resonates with you? If you want to dig in further, then you can check out the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive. This is the first step of our certification program, and it's happening this October. You can read more over at **functionalenergy.com/intensive**. And on that site, click the button for "Contact Us," and we'll connect you with a grad. You can ask all of your questions and find out really, for real, how the program works and what it's really about.

Take care, and we'll see you next time.