

Ep #24: The 100K Yoga Therapist



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Susi Hatelty

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Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hately.

Susi: With this episode I want to dig into a concept that's really dear to my heart and it's becoming more and more dear to my heart and that is about helping yoga therapists earn a living because I think that we have a service that is incredibly useful and serves so many people. It's a way of supporting people and reducing symptoms that are really constricting our lives.

I brought two of my current trainees, Dee Webb and Alë Veffer here to talk with me about their process on the way to 100K. I've been talking a lot on social and in my email about how I am working with 15 yoga therapists, group of them are in my IAYT Yoga Therapy Training Program currently, about this idea of earning 100K.

I used to not share this as widely because there's a tendency within our yoga industry to push back for a number of reasons around earning a living. There's a belief that it's impossible and if you want to believe that you can, but year after year after year my graduates are earning more than what's typical.

So, to give you perspective on this is that from some stats I recently read that yoga teachers are typically hobbyists and they earn about \$5,000 a year generally and that yoga therapists earn about \$10,000 a year and my graduates before they even graduate are earning much more than that.

I want to share with the story because a lot of times when trainers talk about programs that they run and the successes that they have they usually talk about the after story whereas I wanted to get into the during story because the during part is very interesting because I think you'll get a lot of really good information because both Dee and Alë are on their way towards 100K and they share some in the moment experiences of some of the challenges that they have faced and how they overcame them and

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what they've learned from me along in that process. So, welcome, Dee and Alë.

Dee: Good morning.

Alë: Good morning.

Susi: So, I think the first place that I want to begin is that fundamentally there are two key concepts that all yoga therapists need to understand in order to make a living and that is they need to be good technically. You can't do this and not be good technically. So, you need to be very good at your craft and then you also need to understand that there is a different skill set around business that you need to learn how to nurture, how to attract, how to build, how to grow a client base and that is very distinct from the actual technical skill of helping someone reduce and eradicate pain or other symptoms. So, I think that's number one.

On the technical side, I want to cover that first because, Alë, you and I have had a conversation in the past around templates and protocols and there was a time where that was something you relied on and then in a recent call you had said, "I am no longer even looking at those templates and protocols." Do you want to share a little bit about that transition?

Alë: Sure, absolutely. So, I would say that, as you've pointed out in the past, Susi, I've taken so many trainings, yoga teacher trainings, that are – they were all good. Your is unique because you really empower us to believe in our skills and I think so much of this training depends on the work we're doing on ourselves. Whereas the work in other trainings was encouraged, but not really monitored, I'll use that word for lack of a better word, when you're truly looking at yourself and clearing out old stuff that isn't serving you it hugely makes a difference in being present and showing up with a client which is what you're teaching us to do. That's the basis of your model.

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In a lot of my other trainings there wasn't as much emphasis on presence. It was a lot of emphasis on knowledge and learning which is all really good, but it wasn't empowering. It didn't really teach me how to meet a person where they're at and even understand what that meant and how important it was to being good at actually helping someone move better or get out of pain or improve their condition. So, really what I'm taking away from your training is that the more I look at myself the more I treat myself as a client the more I can clear myself out, understand that the work works and then I can show up and offer that to someone else no matter where they're at and be fully confident in my abilities. I didn't have that before with other trainings.

I think because I thought I had to rely on something outside of myself to guide me whereas you are not about that. It's all about me. It's all about any of us, right? Each of your trainees. When you're working with a client it's about you being present with them. So, because it doesn't matter the textbook because there isn't one, it doesn't matter the map because there isn't one I think then that just puts the onus back on me. I just keep doing the work on me and the more I do the work on me the better I am at offering the work with somebody else.

Susi: How about you, Dee, what was your transition from template and protocol into not?

Dee: It was similar to Alë, but I had a bit of imposter syndrome. I felt like I didn't know enough. What you've really empowered me to do is understand that all the tools, whether they're yoga or life, help me to be present with my clients and that's what they need. They don't need me to be somebody else. So, yeah, it's been a really empowering transition and coming into yourself.

Susi: Which is so interesting because really when we're looking at the healing process. The healing process requires a person to become present to their own self because so much of what is going on for someone lies in that arena that which is under our awareness and we can't solve anything

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that's not in our level of awareness. Then, if we're the ones who are demonstrating that then it's a lot easier to simply meet the client where they're at and then it almost in a sense gives them permission – I wouldn't even say almost, I would say it gives them permission to give that kind of care to themselves which can be really powerful because as they become aware of what's going on for themselves they have clarity and when they have clarity they can be much more accurate with both telling us as their practitioner what they need and then we can bring our expertise in. Together there is that blending of knowledge and understanding which just keeps improving the results.

That was really lovely because there's so many professionals out there who are looking for what's the greatest protocol and what's the greatest template and I see why they're doing that. I see this all over on forums and I think the key piece to let people know about is that the template and the protocol will only get you so far. It's an interesting starting point, but it will only get you so far and if you really want to become good and hone your craft and make a difference then there is that next step to go which kind of blends into this idea of business skill.

Before we started recording, Dee and I were talking about how when she did her 200-hour training program that she was told that it was impossible to make a living. So, do you want to say more about that, Dee?

Dee: Yeah, so actually it made me quite upset because I had given them \$3,000 to teach me how to be a yoga teacher and then I wanted to know why they took my money. Yeah, I had come from my previous career was similar where there was restrictions around what people thought that we could make. So, when I was told that it kind of put me in a different mindset so that I was determined to do it. I couldn't see why it couldn't be done.

I had already been following you, Susi, and I knew it could be done, but I just didn't understand the limiting idea around if you were good at what you did why you couldn't make a living out of it. It was a crazy idea to me. Then, my mentor at the time who was one of the teachers in my yoga teacher

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training when I told her I was going to take yoga therapy took me aside and told me that I should go back to school for something like counseling so I could actually make a difference and make some money. That made me even more determined to prove her wrong.

Susi: It just goes to show that there really is a lacking of knowledge of how to make it work. I remember when I was first offering business training to yoga teachers – this was before I got into more of the yoga therapy side, so many people thought they had to do it through building a studio and being in a studio setting. It's so interesting that there tends to be these constructs and these beliefs around just the way it should be or has to be and it could be very, very confining.

Even within a yoga studio setting there are a lot of studios who they don't even know how to actually run a business, because again, the business is different than the actual teaching side of things.

So, how about you, Alë? How did you enter into this? I know when you and I met one of the reasons you had chosen my program was because of how I train yoga teachers in business and that it was possible and that you also had the experience, I believe, with other teachers saying that it was impossible.

Alë: Yeah, absolutely. One of the things that drew me to you, one of many, Susi, is that you do offer a business component in your trainings which none of my other trainings and I've taken upwards of 15 or 20 trainings over the past 12 years and yours is the only one that offers a business component.

I like that because I'm not business savvy. My background is kinesiology and physical education, so I didn't go to school for business. I've never taken a business course. My parents were both self-employed, so I had a desire to be self-employed and a motivation from my upbringing, but I never really – they never really educated me about how to run a successful

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business. So, I was super motivated to learn that from you and that's something that I've benefitted from greatly in your training.

I guess other teachers, like Dee, there was talk about, "Yeah, yoga teaching is a hobby. You can do it part-time, but you need another job." I never actually believed that when I started teaching yoga about 10 years ago. I didn't believe that for myself, but then there were moments in my career where before I got into yoga therapy where I wasn't making that much money and there would be summers – summers are often very quiet for teaching, and my income would down. I would think to myself, "Gosh, do I need to pick up another job to supplement my income because I'm not making as much as I want to make?" But I never actually believed that it was impossible.

I always believed that I could make a good living as a yoga teacher, especially because it's something I'm really passionate about and then I met you and we started working together and you also believe that. Not only do you believe that, you believe that we can thrive as yoga teachers and as yoga therapists. So, I am on board for that and you've helped us all, on all of your trainees to understand how our thinking affects our results and how there's such a link there.

I'm still in the process of clearing out some old thoughts, some stagnant thoughts around money or limiting beliefs around money. I never actually really realized consciously that those thoughts were even there until you had us do this work around the thought downloads. I am the only one that's going to stand in my way. Nobody else is standing in my way of being a successful yoga therapist. So, I'm just getting out of my own way.

Susi: I think there's a couple of pieces that I've seen over the years because when I got into teaching yoga it never struck me – I never even had a doubt that I couldn't make a living. Maybe it's because I just never surrounded myself in the yoga community that said otherwise. I just did my thing.

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In fact, when I would hear people complain about not being able to make a living, I never really quite understood it and I, too, have a background in kinesiology. I don't have a business background. I didn't take business courses in school, but I did actively seek out people who were good at business who also had a good heart that I wanted to learn from.

Some of the things that I did in my own business I didn't do consciously, from a business perspective. So, something that I did early on was I had been teaching at a local studio. At the time, it was eight-week classes. There weren't any drop-in at the time and I had students coming into my classes, like 25 or 30 students coming to classes and then my classes had a tendency to fill up quite quickly. Then, people couldn't get into the current class and they'd register for the next series, but then the people who were in the current class couldn't get into the next series because other people had filled in the spots and they were quite upset about that.

So, I decided that when I started opening up my own spaces just in other locations that I would always offer my current students first dibs on the next series and I wasn't doing drop-in then either. Lo and behold it was one of the greatest business decisions I ever made, but I didn't make the decision based off of the business. I made it based off of relationship and I did it based off of heart because if people were there and to learn from me I wanted to give them first dibs.

What ended up happening is people would call and say, "I've been referred to you. I want to have a spot in your class." I would say to them, "Well, the current class is running and it's full. Let me go back to my current students and find out if they're going to come back or not." Then, I would go back to my current students. I'd say, "Okay, I've got somebody in who wants to come to the next series but it's full and I need to know from you guys if you're going to come in or not."

Lo and behold, I didn't even realize that putting one person on a priority list all of a sudden raised the value of what I was offering and the people in my current class were like, "Well, wait a second. Someone else wants to come

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in?” It raised the value, but I didn’t do that from a business decision and I think that’s what’s really, really important here is that it really strikes a chord that business is about relationship and when you’re coming from this place of deeply caring and loving to teach it becomes a lot easier.

Something that Alë and I were talking about before we started to record this, I was asking her whether it was doubt that got in her way. She was saying that pre-COVID there was a concern around even talking to people about private sessions and what she could do to help them because she didn’t have the confidence. But then, Alë, as you’ve grown the confidence just talking to people because you know you’re good at what you do it just come from this authentic place.

Alë: Absolutely. I mean, like I said before, I’m the only one standing in my way and I feel really confident in my ability to just meet a person where they’re at and to show up and be present with them and to listen to them and really hear them and see them. I didn’t realize that that was so important before which is interesting given that I was doing some one-on-one work with clients, but no one had ever really taught me the importance of presence. I think on an intellectual level I knew that, but I wasn’t fully practicing it and also, I wasn’t being fully present with myself.

I think I would be present to a degree in my group classes and I always try to show up and give my best to my students. That was something that I’ve always been committed to, but yeah, since COVID I’ve really gone into myself and I’ve really started to debunk what it is that’s getting in my way. You can come up with excuse after excuse, “It’s this person. It’s time. It’s COVID. It’s this. It’s that.” But it’s none of those things. It all comes back to me and yeah, I’m just tired of not being the best that I can be at this and I’m recognizing that I’m actually really good at this.

Susi: There’s that confidence in knowing that you’re good and then from that level of confidence you can simply – because you love to teach and because you love to make a difference can just talk to someone and be of service to them. I want to really make that point so clear to people that

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marketing is communication, it's education, and when you come from this place of deeply caring it's just this conversation between two people, that's it.

It's not like this weird trying to get a client thing. It just happens a lot more naturally. So, if you're not feeling confident in your skill then go out and grow that confidence. Find a way to grow that confidence and what Alë has been saying quite clearly is just her – and even with Dee, too, it's that confidence has come from getting clear on her own self. That really the obstacle that is in the way might be you which leads me to an idea that I've been thinking about based off of what I've seen with teachers and yoga therapists that I've trained.

A number of them will say to me, "I'm making \$12,000 or I'm making \$20,000 a year," which is actually more than the average, "and I'm going crazy. This is so chaotic." Now, mind you, this is pre-COVID, but it could even be the case with being in COVID because so many people have pivoted online and doing what they need to do to make it work and they feel like they're running around a little bit crazy. To even think about 100K they can't because, "Man, if it's this busy and it's this hard at 12 or 20 then what the heck is going to have to happen to make 100?"

What I like to say is I think the first 12 might be the hardest and if you keep trying to make money doing what you did to get to 12 or 20 then you won't get to 100. So, the skill set that's required to make 100 is different than the skill set that helps you get to 10 or 12 or 20. That's really important to understand and that it actually will snowball and there will be a momentum that you will gain because as you make the shift and learn the skills that take you from 12 or 20 to the next level you start to have more control over your time and you can be a lot more deliberate in what you choose to do.

In that deliberateness you start to be able to sit back and think to yourself, "Okay, what do I really want here?" Because you've already demonstrated that you've got a skill at being a yoga therapist and so you're already demonstrating that you can do it. Now, you can sit back and go, "Okay, well

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hold on a second here. What do I really, really want here?" Then, you can start to put action toward that.

Alë, you've made a leap from doing a lot of evening classes and being more at a studio. Then, in some ways thankfully to COVID, studios closed down and you had to shift out of group classes into private which is where you wanted to go anyway, right? So, now you're being a lot more deliberate around doing more daytime work as opposed to evening work.

Alë: Yes. Yeah, definitely. COVID was an opportunity for me, actually, and it got me to teach online which I wasn't doing before out of intimidation perhaps and a limiting belief for me that you can't connect with students online or people online which I don't believe anymore. Again, that was me getting in my own way and COVID was an opportunity to rejig my schedule to make it work for me and to actually rely less on studios and more on myself. So, it put the onus on me.

Susi: Which wasn't really an easy transition for you because I seem to remember on some of our calls when we were all kind of in the heat of it in our neck of the woods here in Canada that you went through a really tough time. It wasn't like the switch was made and you were like, "Okay, great. I'm online."

Alë: No, it was not.

Susi: There was a little bit of work. There was a bit of a slog that you did have to go through because it was – I mean, for everybody I think who was making the pivot it wasn't like all of a sudden you woke up one day and said, "Look, roses and unicorns and bowls of cherries."

Alë: Exactly. No, it certainly wasn't, and I mean there were months where it felt like a slog and it was just – it felt like it was more work than I was getting reward for. The payoff didn't seem to be there whereas now, now that I've put in that leg work, now that I've really done the clearing out work

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of myself and some of the limiting beliefs I had around teaching online it's a lot easier, I must say. Actually, I am enjoying teaching online quite a bit.

Susi: So, you've found that you can actually have connection online, right?

Alë: 100%.

Susi: How do you do that or what is different now than what you used to believe?

Alë: Well, what is different now than what I used to believe is that I've had experience that has showed me that you can certainly connect with people online and that that connection can be as strong as it is in person. I mean, there's no physical touch so that's the biggest difference about teaching online in a one-on-one or in a group versus in-person is that there's no physical touch component, but there is connection. So, the experience I've had in teaching online has changed my belief around not being able to connect thinking that you couldn't connect online.

Then, the other piece of it is that I'm getting clearer and clearer on what I want to do with my career and what I have to offer and how I can help people. So, there's that side of it and there's a huge need right now. People are in pain. People need support. People need to feel that they belong to a community, to something, right?

So, we're all looking for that and I can offer that. I got clearer on what I can offer and now I feel authentic in making an offer to someone, whomever whether it's in an email or in-person because I know that what I'm offering I stand behind 100%. I guarantee that what I'm offering can meet a person where they're at and can support them.

There is no shortage of people needing support right now, so I think that my mandate in my personal work became really crystal clear over the past few months.

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Susi: Dee, what's interesting for you is that you're straddling two kinds of work. So, you've got your business that you're transitioning away from and into yoga therapy and that's not an uncommon place for people to be. Whether they are in a job and they're transitioning to semi-retirement or whether they are in a job like you are where they actually want to get out of that job and get into yoga therapy whether it's three-quarter-time, full-time, part-time, but they want to make it a significant income source in their world.

You were at a place where things were busy. It's almost like I see this video in my mind of I think it's Vin Diesel and he's in one of his movies and he's got one foot on one semi-truck and the other foot on another semi-truck and I think he's trying to stop the semi-trucks or something. But the semi-trucks start to spread, he does the splits, and it's like you're about one foot on one side and one foot on the other side.

So, there was a period of time where it was a lot for you and then someone you navigated through it. Do you want to share a bit about that? Because you're still in the same place, right? Like, you have these two businesses and you're growing this yoga therapy business and you're doing really remarkably well at that. I say remarkably because a lot of people would see what you're doing and would say, "Wow, she doesn't have a lot of room on the plate of hers and she's rocking it." What are some key things that have enabled you – kind of got through that tough part? There was a bit of a slog for you and now you're in a place where you can really see the momentum and the doubt's gone.

Dee: Yeah, I think the first thing I had to do was get rid of the drama, the story around that I didn't have time to do it. I had a lot of story around that and you teach us a lot about using a calendar right off the bat and that became my bible. I live by my calendar and I'm working a 10-hour day at my other job and I'm growing my yoga therapy business which is thriving and you're right, it doesn't feel as hard as it did, but I've grown in steps.

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Each time I feel like I'm at capacity I seem to level up and there becomes more ease and more space. I take it a step at a time. I like to think big, so I like to blow it right out of the box. So, you really taught me to have to reign it in a little bit and focus. Again, that's just being present with myself and getting clear with what I really want from my business. I've been self-employed for 25 years and I'm really keyed in on the fact that I want my schedule to look the way that I want it to look.

I want to be happy with my time as much as with the amount of money I'm making. I've had a job where I have to turn up to work whether I'm sick. It's really hard to take vacation time or time for myself. I don't want that in my career moving forward. My kids are growing and I feel like this is time for me now and I'm really – although it sounds bizarre that I'm working two jobs, I'm really starting to figure that out in my schedule and it feels amazing that I have control over it. Yeah, calendar is key.

There's definitely been times where I feel like the semi-trucks are taking different overpasses and it's me. I get to sit down and figure out the story I have around that and what's going and as soon as I become present and cleared out it's not as hard as I think it is.

Susi: And there's an executive coach that I learned from years ago by the name of Dan Sullivan who's based out of Toronto and I believe he coined the phrase, "Ceiling of complexity." When a yoga teacher gets to that place where they feel like they're going a bit crazy and they might be dropping the ball or they might be starting to get really restless or they're losing sleep at night, just some of the stress levels are going up and they maybe are starting to wonder if it's really worth it that's usually a sign that they're hitting a ceiling of complexity.

Sometimes what can happen is that people think, "Well, maybe I shouldn't be doing this. Maybe it really isn't worth it." That's actually the time to simplify. That's actually a time to step back and re-look and then take it up a notch. By simplifying what I don't mean is getting rid of it. What I mean is truly simplifying.

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You look at what you've got and then from what you've got you take a few steps to recognize what's going to help you get to that next thing. I can't be specific with what those things are because for every business it's going to be different. For everybody's life it's going to be different, but the key is that it's a way through that ceiling and then you get into this new arena and something that Alë, and Dee, and I were talking about before we started recording is that there's this place of momentum that starts to build once you get through that ceiling of complexity.

Then, you build and you build and it just starts to kind of run itself because you've got things working. Then what will happen is you'll get to the next ceiling of complexity and you'll feel the same way again and that way again is going to be another opportunity to simplify and then you'll get to the next ceiling of complexity and onward you'll go.

In many ways it's not unlike us helping someone recover from pain is that they get to a certain place and they reach a ceiling of complexity and then our job is to help them simplify and refine a bit better and then they get to that next level of function and that next level of ability to be in their life. It's the same organic principles. So, the two of them, this idea of working with someone and helping them get out of pain and the work at growing our business has a very similar vibe and theme to it which is why I call my business program Yogi Business because you've got to keep the yogi in the business. Because if you don't then it's just going to all go to – well, to put it bluntly it's going to all go to shit. It's not going to work, right?

Because what you're offering is yoga. So, if your business isn't based on those fundamental principles then what the heck are you actually offering? From there, I think to finish up and maybe summarize, Alë, do you have any final suggestions or advice for someone who might be in that initial phase of, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, I know it's possible. I don't know how to do it"?

Alë: Yeah.

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Susi: Any words of wisdom or advice based off of where you're at now in your journey towards 100K?

Alë: Mm-hm, I would say get really, really, really clear on what you want to offer and what you have to offer. Get really clear on what it is and why you're doing it. From there everything will fall into place. So, when you're clear on the what you're doing and the why you're doing it and if you truly want to serve people and if your motivation is true, believe in yourself. Keep believing in yourself and doors will open that you never even thought were possible. So, you just have to have trust in the process. Get clear, believe in yourself, and trust in the process.

Susi: How about you, Dee?

Dee: I think I'd say you don't need to be a master of all things on day one so start a day at a time and just find a couple of things you can do to grow your business. Like Alë said, get really clear. I'd say find your joy because when you find your joy, your passion for what you're doing, when you feel like you have found your purpose and you're serving the people that you're really meant to serve it doesn't feel like work. It doesn't feel like you have to push. It just organically happens. And there's some stuff like I don't love the computer work, I don't love book work that has to happen around it, but it all just starts to get easier as you find that place where you feel like you're filling your cup when you are serving your people rather than depleting it because you're doing something that you don't want to do.

Susi: So, I think the final words that I want to add here is that what you'll notice in there is they didn't say, "Get on Instagram and get on Facebook and start posting like crazy." They came at it from a completely different space. If you really sit in that place of recognizing that you can do this, it is possible, that you need to grow your skill, you need to feel confident in your skill and that you can actually help people reduce their symptoms, reduce their pain, and you can eradicate their pain and help them get back into a life that they really want.

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Then, start to build that skill of really nurturing your client base and understanding what that looks like and to come from that place that really is heartfelt because it really is like that's what's key. This is not some corporate Pepsi corporation – nothing against Pepsi, but we're not some corporate brand. We are yoga therapists who are supporting people and reducing their pain and reducing their symptoms. If we can come from that authentic, natural place of heart and love you'll be really pleased with what your end result is.

So, if this has been inspiring and if you would like more and you would like to talk to us about any of our programs whether that be the Yogi Business Program or the IAYT Accredited Yoga Therapy Program that I run then please email us at health@functionalsynergy.com. Thank you, Dee and Alë. This has been terrific.

Alë: Thank you so much.

Dee: Thank you, Susi.

Susi: Nice to chat with you.