

Ep #40: Healing and Psoriasis



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Susi Hately

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Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hatley. 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 Hatley.

Welcome to *From Pain to Possibility*. With this particular episode I am so excited to dig into a concept with my husband, Stew Corbett. And this topic we're going to get into is psoriasis. Now, last week I talked about sort of an overview of him and his psoriasis. And I promised that I would at some point, bring him on. And well, the timing turned out well, and here we are.

So the piece here that I think is most important is that I consistently share about how healing is possible. That the body is a barometer. And when we listen to the whispers that we don't have to hear the screams. And what Stew has experienced around his recovery, his working with his psoriasis really has illustrated these concepts. And that's what I want to speak with him about today.

I'll be sharing a little bit about my role as being the wife of, as well as being the teacher of the concepts, but the wife of Stew. And then he'll be sharing his own experience as the transition of where he was to where he is today.

So I think a place to begin is, Stew, how about, introduce yourself and just share a little bit about you and anything you want to add about you. And then into the psoriasis diagnosis and your experience with psoriasis.

Stew: Okay. Hi everyone. Well, to begin with, I'm a little over 60 years old. So I have actually developed psoriasis a little bit later in life, about 15 years ago. And it started off slowly as funny little spots on my chest after a trip to Mexico. And I didn't think very much of it, I thought maybe it was picked up a little rash from the beach or something.

But I was diagnosed right away by my general physician with having guttate psoriasis. And from there, over the course of a few years, it just kept getting worse and expanding and expanding. And it has become kind

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of like a plaque psoriasis where it flakes. Susi can attest to the fact that I would probably shed more skin and put dust all over the house in one day than most people shed in a year. Also suffered considerable amount of irritation and itchiness with it, to the point where it was almost driving me crazy.

And over the course of that time of suffering it, and even before meeting Susi, I tried a number of different medications. Some worked well, some didn't. But it wasn't until I started learning a lot more about, I'd have to say healing and how the body actually works. And absorbing a lot of that via osmosis from Susi, was that we actually started, and I use the term we, we actually started seeing some results in my psoriasis. To the point where today I virtually have no indication on my skin of having that condition. The odd little spot here and there, but nothing much to speak of.

Susi: So I think a piece to add in here that's really important is that we're talking about a condition that is a skin condition. And some people might find it surprising that we're even having this conversation because I tend to be someone who works from a movement perspective. I work with people who have conditions that are more often related to body and physical movement. And then over a course of time I started to see a lot more indications of people with mental health issues or depression and anxiety really benefiting from the concepts.

So that when Stew and I met, to help him see this idea of listen to the body when it whispers so you don't have to hear the screams. And then seeing the results that he has shown demonstrate how this is not just a thing, or the way that I teach is not something that just simply helps people with physical related issue, or mental health related issue, or even skin related issues. Its underlying principles of recognizing, of being aware, of tuning in, of seeing the dots, connecting the dots, uncovering what you're not necessarily aware of.

And that's more and more we're going to dig into as the episode goes on. But I wanted to just mention that simply because it might seem out of

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character to actually be speaking about something like psoriasis. So can you share a little bit, Stew, about the treatment that you did do early on, because some of it did work for you for a period of time.

Stew: Well, there are a number of treatments out there in the marketplace. What I tried, and what most dermatologists will give you right off the bat will of course be topical creams, corticosteroids. Which they work for me in the sense of providing immediate relief and holding the psoriasis back a little bit. But also there were a number of other things we tried initially. Methotrexate is usually one of the first ones that's always recommended. But that drove my liver count crazy, so we got off that right away.

Tried Enbrel, and that was interesting because by the time I had tried that, I was probably into a full-blown flare up of psoriasis. And it's an injection type drug. And after the first dosage I noticed an immediate improvement in my condition. I went, "Wow, here's the miracle for me. This is going to work great." Second dose, everything seemed to plateau and go along okay.

And by the time I was at my third dose, and you take this medication about every three or four months. By the time I was into about my third dose I was noticing that my psoriasis was recurring again. And a little bit more frequently and coming back a little bit with some more intensity. So I got off that. And I wasn't one to really want to take medications anyway. So those were the main components from treatment point of view.

Oh, and of course UV treatment is also prescribed. But you have to be careful with that, obviously, because of the long-term side effects of that with skin cancer. But that was also very effective for me in at least controlling it to a certain extent so that I could live with it on a day-to-day basis. But in terms of medications, that was about the extent of what I've tried.

Susi: And then we met. And so when I met Stew, he had quite a bit of red on a lot of his body. And there were spots as well in other parts of his body. And you were taking a medication at that point, which you might have

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already described, but it was one of the ones that at that point had stopped working.

And interestingly, like early on in our relationship, I started doing a digestive reset. And it was one where it was a removal of wheat, and sugar, and dairy, and alcohol. And there was a bit of a limitation of certain items of food. And this was a naturopath guided reset that I was doing for purposes related to my own health and wellbeing.

And I kind of laugh because it was early enough in our relationship where you wanted to support me. I actually remember you saying this, because I remember saying to you, “This one's going to be a little bit intense.” And he's like, “Well, you know what? Well, I'll support you.”

Stew: I'd do anything you asked me to do back then.

Susi: What happened next, I think was a bit shocking for the two of us. It was initially a three-week process. And over that three-week period of time, your skin completely and totally cleared up. And those people who are listening to this who are nutritionists, who work with food, it won't surprise you. And on one level, I wasn't surprised at all because I already had known the impact of food on myself. But to actually see that his skin completely and totally cleared up was remarkable in such a short period of time.

Stew: I was so surprised.

Susi: Do you remember that Stew?

Stew: Oh, absolutely. And what that also spawned in me was, that was one of the first instances really that I had actually been exposed to diet as a function of... Well, you know, I knew I had to eat well, and I thought I ate very well. But it was one of the first exposures that I actually saw that diet could affect a significant change in the body.

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And so I began a little bit more research along that line there and started to understand a little bit more about the phenomenon that's been coined leaky gut and a number of other issues. And looking at some of the foods that I ate a lot of and really enjoyed, and went, "Oh, well these may not necessarily be the best things for my skin." As it turned out, a lot of the diet was good for me in other aspects as well. But it was quite a remarkable change.

Susi: Now, I will say though that as much of a change as it was, and the insight and awareness that you had, it's still to where you have come to today. So that reset would have been in 2012 maybe? 2011, 2012.

Stew: 2012, 2013 something like that, yeah.

Susi: And then here we are now in 2021. So there's been a window of time that has passed. And in those early years following that initial digestive experiment, we can call it or experience, you oscillated a lot in terms of what and how you ate. And I remember having some conversations with you where you just wanted to not have to deal with it. That maybe there was other ways, because some of the food that you noticed wasn't working for you, you actually really liked.

Stew: Well, yeah. Let's be honest about it. It hasn't been an entirely smooth and easy process over the course of those years up until now. Over the course of those years I'll be the first to admit I had some major flare ups. And that may have been a lot attributed to diet and slipping back into old habits.

There was also a learning process along the way that some of the foods that were identified as possibly not being good for psoriasis in terms of leaky gut and conditions like that, I could actually tolerate. And after that first cleanse, I think it was such a remarkable change in my skin, I think I thought I had been cured. And I didn't have to stay on a strict regimen anymore.

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And in fact, I think now what I've learned is I don't have to be on such a strict regimen that it's restrictive. I can still enjoy a lot of the foods that I enjoy. But I also know that there are others that trigger.

And it is also quite remarkable now that I have also learned, and again, I'll say through osmosis and learning a lot from Suzy, and actually practicing a lot of the things, and seeing and taking some of the practices that she does, I have been able to become more sensitive. Or I'll say my awareness has improved to the point where I can actually feel or sense a reaction to something I've eaten, that maybe I really wanted to enjoy and I maybe enjoyed too much of. And know that I need to take corrective action immediately before I have another large flare up.

So that's where I'm at now. That's the most fun and interesting part of this whole process, is now being at that stage where I have my, let's call them trigger points or my yellow lights as Susi likes to coin them. And I can see them coming maybe even before they're a yellow light, or I can feel them coming before they're even a yellow light. And it's all about improved body awareness. And definitely part of the way I describe the process that I've gone through.

Susi: But before we actually get into that, because the process that you've coined for yourself around what you actually did next, I think needs a little bit of runway. And that is that there was that first real awareness of, "Wow, food has an impact."

Stew: Yes.

Susi: And then when it was at that surface level of food has an impact, you were able to notice, and then slip back into some of the old habits. Started to see that your skin would flare. You started to recognize some of the stress responses. And then me being, this is where I got myself into a bit of a jam. But me being your wife and seeing what was possible, I then started to do some research too, of like what other diets could we do to help you kind of get back on track? How could we shake things up a little bit?

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One of the ones we did was the AIP Paleo diet. Which I thought that the reset that we did was restrictive, this thing was I'm not even sure I can remember what we were eating on that one. But again, what was very interesting about it is, again, how your skin cleared up. And where, as we reintroduced foods, where the sensitivities were. Which if I remember correctly it's where we could actually see some of those foods that are sometimes considered flares for people with psoriasis weren't flares for you, whereas others were flares for you.

And so I have to say around that, so the food piece really got clear. And there was some slippage back to old habits because you wanted to indulge. And I mean who doesn't sometimes, right? I think the piece that I think is... I have to call myself out on this because it's important, particularly for those of you who are married or in long term relationships, and you might have someone in your life where it's like me and Stew.

Like, there's somebody who's struggling and me as the spouse who knows a thing or two wants to help him and wants to support him and knows what's possible given what we already saw. And if I'm honest, I kind of got in the way of the process without even knowing that I was getting in the way of the process. Like I found the AIP Paleo diet, I found a few other things.

And at one point, I came to a place of realizing that I was the one managing Stew. And that was really not helpful, and I had to get to that place. And Stew wasn't coming back to me saying stop doing it. I think on some level you were appreciative of my finding these things to support you. But really, it was the process, as I saw it, was being reliant on me. And I came to this place of like, "Wait a second, what am I teaching all of my trainees? And look at what I'm doing." And I had to step back.

And one day I remember saying to you Stew, it's like, "I can't be the one who does this. This has got to be you who does this." And interestingly enough, but not surprising, and perhaps some of the men who are listening to this are like, "Yay Susi, good for you on letting go of the reins." Because

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when that happened, very soon after, you picked up the reins. And you went about it the way you wanted to go about it. And I had to just sit back and watch it unfold.

And I learned so much from that process. Which actually, we have this term that a trainee of mine provided me, which is the mire of misery. Which I really, really like. And that mire of misery is a concept that it's like you've become aware of some Stewff, you know you're on your way towards that transformational recovery healing piece but you're in that muck. And you're working with it and it's like you're not quite on the other side.

And I was going through that for myself, as I was watching Stew going through his process. And he was certainly going through his own mire of misery as he was going through. And I think that the piece that becomes important there is our relationship that was a part of the recovery in a sense. And there was also he recognizing these superficial things of the food that were important.

But then there was this other layer deeper that he needed to get to. And that the psoriasis, yes, could go away. But if you didn't go kind of deep enough to understand, not necessarily why it was there. It's not asking that esoteric or spiritual question of why me? That's not what I mean. But it's more about like, what's sort of feeding the process, in a sense.

And when he got to that place, and I think that's where we get into this inside, outside, upstairs, downstairs concept, Stew, that you've coined here. Is that then something really, really shifted. Where now I would say looking at you, and looking at COVID, where COVID had its level of stress and still has a level of stress, we didn't see a flare at all. And, I mean, it hasn't been easy and yet there's been no flare.

And so that just goes to show the power of awareness of when you get that initial like, "Yep, okay, I get that food is an impact." But then can go to that layer deeper and really uncover some of this other piece that's driving the

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process, then that's where that transformational piece really shines through.

Stew: Yeah.

Susi: And so when we chatted, you were talking about this idea of what you call the inside, outside, upstairs, downstairs.

Stew: Well, the first step of it, and this is where it kind of gets into this upstairs, inside, outside kind of thing. Susi's absolutely right, I was kind of following along and letting her guide things. It wasn't until I was actually in a way forced to take ownership. The first stage, very basic stage of taking ownership of what I was doing and how it affected me, that the first real change started to happen.

So what the inside, outside, upstairs, and then downstairs concept is all about for me was, and Susi you coined the phrase superficial, and you know what? It almost is that. Yes, we can watch our foods and intake, which is what I call taking care of the inside. So it's the, you know, the inside gut, it's what we're putting into our bodies, how we're treating it. Even to the point of exercise or maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Taking care of the inside.

The outside, again, what I was using was in a sense Susi's superficial, was the topical creams just to take care of the spots and the flaking. But it wasn't taking care of what the problem was. It was treating the symptom, which is what the psoriasis manifests itself as.

And I did want to point out that, you know, psoriasis is such an individual thing as well. On some forums and the conditions I see that people have called psoriasis varies incredibly, and the intensity is just phenomenal. I think I had it bad, and I was, I looked like a walking strawberry at times. But some of the conditions I've seen are absolutely horrific. So I feel grateful that I didn't have some of those.

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So again, it's a very individual thing. And maybe the process is a bit individual as well. But the inside, taking care of the inside was what we've talked about a little bit with diet and things like that. The outside would be the superficial topical creams.

One of the major things that I did that really helps me, and still helps me to this day, is I changed what I use to bathe in and shower. I make my own soap out of a product called African black soap. Very natural using elements from bark from Africa. And I don't know what's in it, but it works for me, maybe not work for everybody. So that's kind of taking care of the outside.

The upstairs, the inside was making the connection. And this is when things really started to change. And I think Susi will agree with that, is when I really started to become more aware and take notice of what affected me. And yes, you know, stress does have an effect on psoriasis. And being able to work on those levels and start. Start with the upstairs in my head. I became more aware that the mind and the brain working in conjunction with the body can become a very powerful healing tool and mechanism.

The body is just an incredible, it's not a machine of course. But the healing that can go on when you get everything all connected and working together is just wonderful. And you know, it doesn't just go for psoriasis, it can go for I would think any health or medical condition.

And then where Susi was starting to get into and this has become more what I've learned in the I would say the last period is the downstairs. And I hadn't really considered the downstairs before. But it's going really down deep into the roots of what might be manifesting some of the issues that create for me psoriatic flare ups. What can I do to help myself control that and understand?

And like I said earlier, I can sense now, I can have a food or a drink of some sort that I should know that it's going to cause something. And my barometer, and you may have heard Susi talk about your body is a

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barometer. I have a barometer that tells me right off the bat that I've had something I shouldn't necessarily have had or had that much of. And for me it's a part of my body that all of a sudden, I'll start to notice a sensation and then it's really weird.

But once I started to recognize and accept that, it's helped me manage this condition on a day-to-day basis. Where it's almost right now where I don't even manage it, it just happens.

Susi: So the piece that we're referring to is where the inside is, what goes into the body, whether it's food or drink. The outside is what you're putting topically on your skin. So there are some cream that you have, and you use the African Black Soap a lot. And then the upstairs is managing your mind and noticing some of the congestion, so to speak, that might be up there in terms of thought processes and mindset.

Stew: The noise.

Susi: And when those pieces are, like you recognize more about what contributes. Like Stew was saying, psoriasis, like any condition is very, very unique. So it's not that there's like a bullet list of the things that all people who have psoriasis are impacted by. Like tomatoes don't really impact you as much as other people as an example. Whereas alcohol is something that does impact you.

Stew: Absolutely.

Susi: So that becomes really curious. And then when you start to get more and more awareness of these aspects of inside, outside, and upstairs then you begin to recognize more of the roots and there's almost the support and the structure to be able to go into the basement and dig around in the basement a little bit and see what's there that you might not have necessarily had the structure, or the support, or the yearning to go to. But it naturally opens the door there.

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And that's when you can start piecing together some of these whispers that are letting you know that the screams are going to come. That's when you really begin to feel what the barometer is and recognizing your own body battery.

And I think this morning when we were talking about this episode, you had said that you feel it in your ankles. Your ankles are the first place that you just start a little. And you're like, "Okay, there's my little cue." And you can address it at that point so that it doesn't get louder. It doesn't go into orange and it doesn't go into red.

Stew: Yeah, it also creates for me that little, well the whisper to have a look at "Oh, okay. What was it that actually caused this?" And so it's an ongoing learning process as well, and awareness process. And it might be something completely different, you know, I might get that feeling and go, "What was it? What was it that I had in the last two or three days that may have caused this? Or what's going on in my life? Or was there some sort of stressful or some sort of situation that may have triggered some anxiety?"

And again, now that I've been able to understand and open up that basement door and get down and look at some of the Stewff that I've stored down there all these years. That is remarkably healing as well. And so yeah, the little whispers or the barometer is an ongoing process. It's not, "Oh, that's the answer right there. That's the switch." It's just an ongoing process.

Susi: So the big shift that I'm hearing you say between when this started with that first digestive reset back in whatever year it was 2011, 2013, 14, whatever, whenever it was that we did that. And now is that back then you were almost looking for a single data point

Stew: Yeah.

Susi: "Aha, this is the miracle. This is it. This is what is going to make the difference."

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Stew: Yep. And the reason I relapsed on that first one is I don't think I had accepted upstairs that this is something that I had to manage on an ongoing basis. I thought it was the miracle cure. "Oh, the spots went away I'm done. Good. All right, I can go back to doing what I was doing before."

And you know, that's not unlike someone who gets injured, perhaps, a sports injury or whatever, or surgery and they get back into life a little bit too quickly. They're feeling great, they're looking great. And they go, "Hey, I'm good. I'm going to go back into it." And lo and behold you start to trigger other things, or you start to re-injure or trigger your problems again.

It's amazing how there's this a synergy. There's a lot of these different conditions and health issues or recovery issues, the process, I think, is very much the same.

Susi: Where you recognize that it's not a single data point. It's recognizing the variety of data points along the way and starting to connect those dots, connect those data points to understand how it is for your unique situation. And what you can do for that unique situation to support yourself.

And that's why we can get Stew in that mire of misery sometimes, because we're in the process of figuring that out. Because so much that helps us improve and to recover and heal lies under our awareness. And we can't change anything we're not aware of, right? So we've got to allow for it to come up into our awareness. Which comes through trying and trial and error.

I mean the number of skin products that you tried in the time that I've known you. And some of them worked, and some of them like had no impact at all. And you just try, and you try, and you try. And then you start piecing together the sequence and the formula and the thing that actually is the thing that works for you. Which often is this combination of inside, outside, upstairs, and downstairs.

Stew: Yeah, that downstairs.

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Susi: If you can offer any sort of final bits for someone who has psoriasis. Any final advice or bullet points that you would like to share with them, is there anything you'd finish off with?

Stew: Well, one of the biggest things, and I see this on the forum is there is hope. There's hope for everybody. You know, a lot of people who suffer psoriasis that I read and hear about, they're almost at the breaking point and they're going, "This will never go away. I've got it for the rest of my life."

And I just want to share with everyone that it doesn't have to be that way, at least in my experience. I thought I was a hopeless case; I was going to have this condition and red spots the rest of my life. This doesn't mean I might not have future flare ups at times. But I at least have an idea now of what I need to do, both inside, outside, upstairs, mentally, and allowing myself to dig a little bit deeper and find out what else may be causing this. But it all works together. And there is hope for all of us out there. I think that's about that.

Susi: That is great. Thank you very much, Stew, for sharing this. And it has been a great journey. It's actually brought us closer together in terms of recognizing our relationship and how we can contribute to each other in terms of our own individual processes.

Stew: Thanks Susi. It's been fun.

Susi: If you are someone who is seeking some support with your psoriasis or any other condition, there are a couple of ways that you can receive support from us. And can start off by emailing us at health@functionalsynergy.com. I run three-month series of private sessions. If you want to connect with Stew and have another conversation with him, you can find him through our team at health@functionalsynergy.com, he'd be happy to chat with you further.

And if you're a professional who wants to dig into these concepts of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams,

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understanding how to utilize this concept of the barometer, or the body battery, or the inside, outside, upstairs, downstairs concept. We've got the therapeutic yoga intensive coming up, and you can read more about that at www.therapeuticयोगaintensive.com.