

# Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hately** 

**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: Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad that you are here today because I have two graduates that are going to share with you some really interesting perspectives on the certification program and their own journey.

And what makes this particularly different than perhaps other interviews and episodes we've run, is that Lory Newmyer and Ruth Ann Penny are both over 60. And we have an increasingly larger number of people coming into our certification program who are over 60.

We have an increasing amount of inquiries about, "Well, you know what? I don't know, am I too old for this? Am I into the sunset of my life? Will it be worth it? Should I do it? Shouldn't I do it?" And so the questions that people are coming up with are interesting and curious.

And so we get enough of them, that I know that there are a lot of people who are in that stage of their life that are listening to this podcast. Which is why I have put it together, because you can hear it directly from them. And then if you want to have conversations with them, both of them have had conversations with other folks who are over 60 and are curious and interested about registering. And they can give you all the details, like all the juicy stuff from their perspective.

But for now, let's just have a conversation. So welcome Laurie and Ruth Ann, I'm so glad you're here.

Lory: Hi Susi.

Susi: So, I think the first question that I have for you is like, why? Like, why did you do it? Some people email me directly and they'll say, "I want to build this as a retirement business." And I know a lot of people who do that,

which is great. Is that why you joined? Lory, why did you join the certification program? What's the lead-up to that?

Lory: Yeah, hi, Susi, and it's great to be here with both of you. After I retired from my job as a nonprofit executive director, which I had for 26 years, I kind of stumbled backward into yoga teacher training. And so I had begun what I would air quote a business in teaching yoga. It was really more of a community-based program. And I was loving it and had pretty large classes of people who, by and large, were 40 and older, up into their early 80s.

Over years of teaching group classes and doing some ongoing training I, really to my surprise, began to develop an appetite for working one on one with people. And I didn't see that coming. That wasn't my plan. But working in groups, I just found that there were things I felt I wanted to be able to do with people, I wanted to understand more about how the body worked, how we worked as aging people, that I wasn't finding wherever I was looking other than with Susi Hately.

And so I had heard about you through a longtime teacher who was then a student of yours. And I had thought again and again, starting when I was maybe 57, I'm too old for this, as you said. I mean, why would I be doing this? It's a big commitment in time and financially.

And then along came Covid and you transitioning the program onto Zoom. And suddenly a lot of the barriers to my wanting to study with you fell away, principally the travel, the money and the time of traveling and staying in Calgary. I live on the eastern coast of the US.

And yeah, when I came into this, was I thinking about a retirement business per se? I know I wanted to work with people in a different way and one on one. The part of it that became a business, which it has become, really came through training with you.

Susi: How interesting, so it evolved into it when you saw something you didn't see before?

Lory: Yes, that's exactly right.

Susi: Interesting. Okay, we'll unpack that a little bit later. How about you, Ruth Ann, how did you find your way here?

Ruth Ann: Well, first of all, again, thanks. Thanks for having me. It's always fun to talk about yoga and yoga therapy. My path wasn't dissimilar from Lory's. I've been retired from full-time work since 2009, so 14 years. And immediately I left full-time work, I started into a 200 hour teacher training. I knew that I wanted to keep on doing things.

I have a lot to say about the myths of retirement, that might be another podcast. But I knew that for myself, and I was only 58, that I just was making a change in my life. I was going to do something different. That was it. That's all I knew. And I had some consulting jobs in my old area. I was an educator and school administrator and I had some consulting jobs that were ongoing post-retirement that I pursued.

But I was really enjoying my yoga practice. And I decided on the 200 hour teacher training with no therapeutic goal in mind. Like Lory, I just thought I'm going to pursue this and see where it goes. I like the learning. I love yoga. We'll just see what happens.

And I quickly learned, because my 200 hour training was in the vinyasa flow, it was a straight up old fashioned Hatha yoga teacher training, that since I was 10 or 15 years older than any other candidate in that training, that I was an underrepresented demographic.

And there were a lot of myths floating around that teacher training, even from otherwise very open-minded people about the aging process and about physical limitations and strength and all of that sort of thing. So I knew from a personal perspective inside my body and from the perspective of this learning process I was in that I wasn't going to teach a traditional vinyasa flow class, most likely.

And so I started on a journey trying to find teachers that did something a little different. And I found my way to the Scaravelli method eventually, which is well known in Europe and highly embodied and slow and respectful. And I certified as a Yin yoga teacher along the way. And then on a kind of quite fortuitous, serendipitous moment that I hadn't planned, I met you.

I went to a yoga conference. I was interested in some other presenters who were there who, frankly, I can't even remember who they were. But at the time it was very important for me to go to that yoga conference. But what actually happened, what also happened was I attended a seminar that you were doing on the business of yoga.

And I spoke with you and you were just, you know, I was one of six people who had questions afterwards and so forth. And I walked away thinking, I haven't really thought about the business of yoga. I've thought of myself as a teacher, but not about the business of yoga. And I'm really liking Susi, so I'm going to find my way back to her, which I did.

But to answer your question, my motivation for doing this at my age is secondarily about running a business. Running a business, to me, was something that I learned I need to know more about in order to pursue one on one, more therapeutic, more embodied teaching practices. I could see as time went by that I was, like Lory, not going to be teaching a lot of classes.

I was more interested in small groups and one on one. And I needed to augment my tools. My background is not biology, physiology, kinesiology, anything like that. And so I needed to tool up. And I found my way to you. And then, of course, I did all those wonderful things around biomechanics and kinesiology.

But also, as we've talked about before, that was like 30% of what I learned from you. And 70% was, and we can talk about this differently, was some of the stuff that I think is the most important stuff about yoga. The

embodiment, the awareness, the presence, what I learned from your copresenters.

And so running a yoga business kind of began to creep from the back of my mind forward the further I went into the therapeutic yoga arena. And it's only in the last year or two that I thought, "Okay, I'm going to do this." And I only, as you know about two years ago, Susi, I set up my own little business just so that I could have a place to kind of park my ideas about what to do.

And it's only in the last little while that it's started to be something that's in the foreground now, something I consciously attend to and I'm trying to do. But as an older person, I just want to say, I wasn't motivated to run a business. I was motivated to keep teaching and offer a service, and offer a service using my well-honed teaching skills.

Susi: So this is interesting because you've both said something very similar, which I want to unpack a little bit because you've said that you wanted to keep teaching. But there's a distinction between teaching, that I'm hearing from running a business. Okay, so what's that distinction in your mind, Ruth Ann?

Ruth Ann: I could keep on teaching classes at community centers and yoga studios and even just say to my small circle, if you want a private yoga class come to me. I could do that and never have to run my own business. I could do that and just say, here's some prices, here's what you'd pay me or agree with a studio.

I have no interest in being – When you say running a business, I have no interest particularly in owning a studio or having to be responsible to manage a big space or a staff. That kind of feels like a been there, done that thing in a way. I don't want to manage people. I just want to teach one on one on a small scale. And in order to do that, I have to have some kind of business structure in place, I realize.

Susi: So it sounds like there's a difference between, and I'll put this in air quotes, just kind of connecting to a circle that's around you and saying, "Hey, you know what? If you want my help, I'm here." Maybe going to a studio or an online studio and doing a few classes. And it's like, it's just a thing that you might do. Whereas there's a distinction between that and having a structure in place.

Ruth Ann: Yes, for sure.

Susi: Okay.

Ruth Ann: And thinking about myself as a business woman and an entrepreneur forces me into that kind of structure. Into a structure that is, I think, ultimately supportive of what I want to do.

Susi: Okay. And then how about, Lory, how does your view of that, either is it similar or is it distinct or different or additive?

Lory: Well, I think I'm a few years further out of certification training than Ruth Ann, and there's certainly been an evolution of my thinking, Susi, since the first time you and I discussed this. I have an entrepreneurial background and I'm comfortable with that. I like that, it's some juice in me.

And I also really enjoy the structure of having created a business that's consistent, carefully articulated, lets people know what to expect and also has built into it a lot of flexibility. Because I still do not want to turn people away from working with me because of a financial barrier. And I can afford that because I'm retired. And that's one of the things that I look at that's really different between me and some of the younger people in the cohort with whom I graduated.

In my work, I continue to teach group classes, and I've intentionally made the entry point to those classes very low, the financial entry point. And for working with me one on one as a yoga therapist, the point of entry is substantially higher. And I begin every conversation with every client with a

no cost interview in which we're looking at each other and seeing, are we a good fit? And that includes a discussion about money.

And so I have what I charge, and then I have a lot of different ways that I can massage that to accommodate people I might want to work with who can't afford the fee that I want to charge or that I've stated is my fee. And that looks like all kinds of things.

It looks like having a friends and family package. Or working with two women who are remarkable, who couldn't afford to work with me individually, I now work with them as a duo. And between the two of them, they pay me my air quote, "rate."

So I mean, I think having an entrepreneurial mindset allows you to be creative and playful in how you think about doing this inside the structure of running a business, which is not something that I find distasteful.

Susi: Interesting, because I think sometimes people hear the word business and their stomach turns a little bit. And I'm curious about that, because I'm more of an entrepreneurial mindset and so it's not something I've really – I've just gravitated towards being creative in engaging with the clientele.

So I wouldn't even say that I've been creative in engaging with the business because there's an entity that I might call a business, but really I'm working with clientele. And then there's a structure that I'm working within that morphs and changes depending on what's happened in stages of my life, right?

Like I started doing this yoga thing back in my 20s. Then I had some kids and it changed and morphed again. And then it's morphed over time. So you two are representative of a space and time in your life where perhaps more – I'm not sure if this is actually true or not, because I'm not there yet. But it sounds like you can be more intentional about how you're setting it up because you can design your life more clearly. Would you agree with that?

Ruth Ann: Speaking for myself – Well, like Lory, let me say this, I have the freedom and the financial security to be able to decide to work part-time without worry, which I've done. So I approach the business that I'm running now, in a very similar way to Lory.

I have, I think as well, a bit more I'm going to say emotional freedom or psychological freedom. I don't feel I need to prove anything. I don't feel competitive with outsiders. I feel that I'm doing this for my own satisfaction. So I have a lot of liberty. Am I answering your question? I've almost forgotten your question.

Susi: Keep going, I love it.

Ruth Ann: I do feel that the things that motivate me to run the business are different than the motivational factors behind someone who's 35 and 40 years younger than me, for sure. And I've really noticed that among my friends from my certification group, I have the freedom to be a bit less fearful if things go sideways. I have the freedom to change my financial goals or not. So yeah, my approach is different because of my age and stage, I'm sure.

Lory: I think, Susi, one of the things that I learned most deeply through our training, and the ongoing training that I've been doing with you and with other teachers from the program, is a really deep valuing of my own skill, what I've learned, what I have to bring. And I've learned that speaking with clarity about that to my clients is very comforting.

That's one of the reasons that I like having a bit of a business structure, is I think clarity is a real gift to self and to others. Which doesn't mean we can't be flexible, it just means that we're clear and, as you said, intentional. I think that I came into certification thinking about making an investment in myself, and it's a substantial investment in time and money.

And in turn, I'm really encouraging my clients to think about making an investment in themselves. And that's also in time and money. So there's a

really interesting modeling of who we are as older people doing this. And I felt in our cohort, Susi, I mean, I was what, 10 years older than the next person. And there was a little group of people in their mid to early 50s and then a lot of folks in their 40s and 30s.

I was very cognizant of being the elder in that group, and delighted in that role. Like Ruth Ann I had been the elder in all of my 200 and 300 hour trainings. But I think there is such freedom in being this age and doing this work because my kids are grown up, I'm not caring for them in the same way.

How I can choose to use my time, I'm not managing a full-time or part-time other job, right? I can take vacations around the training. I mean, there's so much flexibility as you get to be the age that Ruth Ann and I are so lucky to be.

And I think showing the freedom and the growth that's possible at this point in your life, it's an extraordinary thing to get to show both to our younger colleagues in training, but also to the people who are somewhat sometimes fearfully edging toward being in yoga classes or engaging in therapeutic yoga, right? Because they don't really know what they're stepping into.

And here we are, we're lovely, we're kind, we look safe, we are safe. And I just think that's a remarkable privilege to be in this position.

Ruth Ann: I echo that 100,000%. I feel delighted to have been the older person in the group. I think I was able to bring perspective. I hope I was, I sense that I was, that I was able to be of assistance to individuals and smaller groups within our cohort from time to time. And that really pleased me.

And I really like what you said about modeling ongoing vitality, ongoing curiosity, ongoing appetite for learning and difficult learning. And in fact, I hope one of the things that I modeled to my peers in my cohort was that

you can do this. You can persist and do it. Just keep on going one day at a time and it'll be okay. And I truly hope I was able to offer that.

So, yes, there's a modeling to younger people that we who are 20 years older or 10 years old or 15 years older, apart from maybe an achy knee or an achy, hip are thinking the same kinds of thoughts and feeling the same kinds of feelings.

I'm also really, I'm amazed within my own friendship group, people I've known for 30 and 40 and 50 years in my life, they are most curious to know why I would take this on. Which really reveals, to me, an interesting bias, even in the people in my life that I think are open-minded and go-getters and energetic. A funny bias about why I would do something like this at my age when maybe I could just play pickleball. And so that's where I talk about there is creativity in being an entrepreneur. I've discovered that it's fun.

And most importantly – And I didn't want to lose this thought – it is the big motivator for me, no matter what in my life, and I don't have grandchildren yet but it may change when I do, that I have to have purpose in my life. I can't just be hanging around in my garden. I love my garden. And maybe I'm serving the greater good by offering places for bees.

But what I mean to say is that anything I take on seriously has to have an element of serving the greater good. That seems increasingly important to me as I get older. It really is key to my happiness.

Susi: So interesting. Lory, did you have that similarly in what Ruth Ann was saying about even within her cohort of, like not in the group, but outside of the group, with people and friends that she has who are like, "Why are you doing this?" And there is even a perspective of, "Why are you doing this at your age?" And they're at the same age. Did you have any of that happening?

Lory: I find that my friends are extremely excited for me that I'm doing this. There may be a silent and unexpressed, to me, sort of raising of an eyebrow. But what is conveyed to me is just tremendous excitement watching what I'm doing.

I think it was in a podcast I listened to, Ruth Ann and Susi between the two of you, now maybe three years ago, in which Ruth Ann you were talking about the idea that we talk about a four year old growing and a 70 year old aging. Do you remember this? And it was a wonderful moment for me listening to that way back when because it just put into words an idea that I hadn't been able to articulate for myself.

And I think with my friends, they see that I'm still a competitive rower, we're hikers, we're people who are active in our lives. And that's not in any way a denial of aging. I would say exactly the opposite, it's an embracing of who we are now. But not seeing that as a limitation, seeing that as an exploration.

And yeah, it's really fascinating, this idea of how your mind changes and how your body changes with time. I'm very lucky to have friends and family who are perhaps amused, but always terribly encouraging about what I'm trying to do. And I'm right now pondering diving into the Ayurvedic health counselor program, which would be a multi-year training Susi has.

Susi: Awesome.

Lori: And I'm having that discussion with myself, why would I do that? What do I hope to get from that? What do I hope to give from that? And so what I'm questioning about that is, will that enhance my work as a yoga therapist? And, of course, I'm leaning that way because I believe it will. And I'm so excited by what I continue to learn that I can only believe that that excitement will translate over to my clients and students.

Ruth Ann: Oh, it will. Absolutely.

Susi: It's interesting, because as I'm listening to both of you speak, it reminds me of a realization that I either had or that I read, and I can't recall which it was. And I was in my late 20s or early 30s, and even from when I started, every one that I taught was pretty much older than me. It's always been that way, that I never seem to teach a whole lot of people who are my age or younger. Everyone was at least a decade older.

And when I look at my private clients today, that same is true. I would say that a good 75% of people are into their 60s that I work with. And so I think that's been fascinating.

But I remember somewhere in my late 20s or early 30s and having this realization that when I was doing my kinesiology degree at university, and all of what I had learned, or a lot I should say, of what I learned about aging and being older, a lot of it was based off of the research to that point. And where were most of the older people that they could research? Nursing homes.

So it would make sense that what we knew about aging or being older has that certain sort of flavor. I found a fellow who I call my funny eccentric neuroscience guy, and his name is Steven Kotler. And he runs, or he's a part of a group called The Flow Collective Group. And he wrote a book called Gnar Country: Growing Old and Staying Rad.

And he's also a skier, which is great because it aligned with me because I'm a skier as well. But he's older than I am. He's been really digging into the neuroscience and the physiology of being older and what is peak performance at an older age. And what the research is actually showing, and is what we knew before, is actually not true.

And there are things to keep in mind, and I love what you're talking about with Ayurveda, Lory, because we're also seeing that in the Ayurveda. And the beauty I find with western research is that we see what's happening and then research wants to figure out why it's happening. So the lived experiences already happened, we might not know the exact mechanism

for cause. And so then the research goes and starts to dig around and see what the heck, why the heck it's happening.

But we see it clearly in the Ayurvedic folks that all three of us know, that there's something clearly occurring when people follow these sorts of principles that is distinct from what we know aging to be. And I think about this, even when my dad was getting older and I looked back at all of his friends, and the ones who followed certain practices and principles that were very clearly obvious through their 50s, lived in their 60s and 70s very differently than the ones who did not.

And it just kind of struck me that there's something happening here. And so I share all that because we're all kind of in a fishbowl of kind of socialized of what being older is. And in many ways, some of it's a bit of a crock of caca.

And I think, and I'd love for you guys to follow up on this, because I think if someone's listening to this, and really, whether you're younger or whether you are older, whatever that means to you, and there's sort of this knowing kind of like, yeah, thing, then follow it. Like follow it. If not now, when? Is that the line? If not now, when? So what would you add to that, either of you?

Ruth Ann: I would say that, first, with regard to aging, the creative urge does not age, I don't think. I think what happens is it might get buried in other things. In well grooved some scars about how to live well or whatever the some scars and the biases are that I have in my life, they might prevent me from freely embracing that urge. But I don't think the need or the desire to be creative or to be awed by new and beautiful things ever leaves us.

In fact, I think it probably grows. I often think that one of the compensations for physical aging, and for the fact that there is an essence in the genes, is that our ability to appreciate new frontiers and to be awed by things and to be propelled towards them out of curiosity seems larger than ever to me.

So I would say to someone, as you just said, go for it. See where it leads. What's the worst that can happen? And respect and honor the fact that you do have capacity. Don't think of that as just some kind of odd occasional thing you do. You have creative capacity until the day you draw your last breath.

Lory: I've seen in many of my older clients, when they first come to me and also in some of the folks with whom I've discussed coming into certification, a sometimes quite subtle but generally present resignation. And the resignation might be about age, or it might be about chronicity of pain. It usually includes some really deep thoughts about limitations in movement or in how I can think.

And I think that manifests as what I might call a limitation in hope that is kind of baked into that sense of resignation. And we just don't have to live like that, at any age, as Ruth Ann is saying. We don't have to live like that, we have a choice about that.

We have a choice about how to be loving to ourselves and others. How to find purpose. How to step toward vitality, away from fear. And yeah, being in certification taught me a lot about how to keep enkindling that in myself.

I mean, I will say I'm lucky to have been born with a bit of a dose of that to start with. So yay genes and rearing, but I've also worked at keeping that flame alive. And now I have a much better articulated toolbox about how to share that with other people and how to help them enkindle that in themselves.

So I think if you're running up against some sense of resignation, or I'm too old, or fear about "can I do it," which, of course, many people have about many things and I do as well, step toward that. Yeah, lift the lid. You will not be unhappy that you did.

Ruth Ann: I'm going to go back and find this because when I read it, it really made total sense to me. A study that I'm going to describe the can't cite,

but I'll find it, in which a variety of people in the last quarter of their lives, the third or fourth stage of their lives – all emotionally healthy, all pretty physically healthy, all with good levels of deemed to be a good self-esteem, solid self-concept, et cetera, et cetera.

They all had, notwithstanding all those positives, a hugely wide range of attitudes and beliefs about aging, that were different, in many cases self-limiting. So even though these people had an otherwise wonderful sense of self and their capacity and their expertise and all of that stuff baked in, as you say, Susi, was a socially imposed, I imagine, or whatever factors in their particular lives notion that old age was something to be feared. It just was.

And as a result of that belief, they started to self-limit. Whereas other people with the equally seemingly solid self-esteem, who had an optimistic view of their old age or had reason to believe that old age held within it, or getting older held within it many, many, many opportunities, thrive differently, lived longer.

It was a fascinating distinction between ordinary self-concept and beliefs about aging that I really appreciated.

I'd like to pick up on one thing that Lory said, that one of the things that gifts of this program – And this is, I think, something that is worth saying to a candidate who has doubts, is that one of the things that is a great gift of your certification is the illumination, I will speak for myself, that I felt and received, as a result of studying with Mona and of reviewing the philosophic elements of the program through the Niyamas and the Yamas.

Which I had already been introduced to superficially in both cases. But the deeper dive we took into each one of them offered me some moments of deep reassurance. Deep reassurance and deep, how should I say, support in my belief that what I could do was meaningful.

So my own sense of myself in the universe, as Mona likes to say, capable of holding up my corner of the universe, strengthened as a result of my involvement in the program. And it was not expected. I was expecting, just as I've said, to go through it and tune up the biomechanical end of things and then motor on. And much more happened.

Susi: Yes. So good, I love that. I love that. So someone's listening to this and they're inching closer toward, and they would love to chat with you and to chat with how you have done it or to even work with you. How is it best for them to reach you? How about you, Lory, first?

Lory: Please reach out to me through email at lorynewmyeryoga.com. And I would imagine Susi will put that with proper spelling somewhere. And I really enjoy talking with folks who are considering jumping into certification, whether they do or not, although I think most do because it's such a wonderful program.

And you do so much, Susi, to make it work for people of so many different backgrounds.

Susi: Nice, thank you. And then Ruth Ann, how about you?

Ruth Ann: Yes, the name of my business is Move Better, my website is movebetternow.ca. People can find me there. That's probably the most direct way because they can see me on my website and see my offerings as well as have an opportunity to connect with me.

And then the Gmail account that you have, Susi, is fine if people want to just contact me by my Gmail account.

Susi: And, Lory, you can add to this but, Ruth Ann, you specifically work with people who are over 70. That is only your client base, that's it. So that's also super interesting because when people think about, and you hear it a lot in the fitness world senior's care. And they both just rolled their eyes, by the way.

And life is different at 70 than it is at 60, that's clear. And so much is still very possible at 70 and over. And Ruth Ann and I have had different conversations on the podcast about that, and we'll be likely circling back to that in future episodes.

So if you're someone who is of that age and are interested in working or learning more about what Ruth Ann is doing, or you're somebody who wants to do that sort of work, then do reach out to her as well.

And, Lory, who do you primarily work with? Are you noticing a pattern with whom you work with?

Lory: Yeah, I have a few clients who are in their 30s and 40s, but they are not the people that I've been kind of messaging to. They've generally been referred to me through my older clients, who currently range in age from about 55 to 92 is my oldest current client.

And I was actually thinking about my two oldest clients, who are 86 and 92, when I was thinking about that idea of hope, because these are both people who have such extraordinary zeal and they're not creaking toward the exit here. They are embracing life with gusto and with real joy every day.

Susi, just now when you said life is different at 70 than at 60, I'm only 65 but I would say and better

Susi: Love it. Love it. I wasn't insinuating that different was worse, so I'm glad you actually clarified that.

Lory: Right.

Susi: Yeah, I love that.

Ruth Ann: And I'm going to be 72 In a few days. And apart from the fact that I'm right now in an argument with my arthritic shoulder, life has never been better.

Susi: Love it. I love it. So do reach out to these two because there is such a wealth. And one of the things I love doing is, when I see that there is another reality that's actually possible, then what I see as being a myth, but is considered to be true, I.e., like what happens when you're older, so to speak, like, here's great evidence of what is possible.

And so if this is a reality that is resonating inside of you, do reach out to these two. And I'm also happy to have a conversation with you as well about the program. And what you can do is email me at health@functionalsynergy.com, I would love to engage with you. And either of these two as well, and their information will be in the show notes. It would be great to connect. Take care and thank you, you two, so much.

Lory: thank you, Susi.

Ruth Ann: Thank you.

Lory: Great to see you.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams, and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.