

EPISODE 208

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02.6] PF: Welcome to episode 208 of Live Happy Now. I'm your host, Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us today. We all know that summer is right around the corner and that means many of us are thinking about how to change our bodies for swimming pool season but not so fast.

Today's guest is an author, life coach and podcast host who says changing your body or anything else you're not happy with in life is really about changing your mind. Susan Hyatt is author of the book *BARE*. As well as host of the BARE podcast and founder of the online community BARE Daily.

She focuses her work on helping people learn how to treat themselves with love, care and respect and to focus on the things that really matter in life. Susan talked with me about her book and how we can use these principles to change anything that's not working for us.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:48.6] PF: Susan, I'm really excited to talk to you today so first of all, thank you for coming on the show.

[0:00:53.6] SH: Thank you so much for having me, I am thrilled to be here.

[0:00:57.2] PF: When I first heard about BARE, actually your publicist approached me and the first thing I said was, "Well we don't do topics like dieting and weightless." She's like, "that is not what this is about." I think a lot of times when people see this, that might be instantly what they go to.

Can you talk about what BARE is?

[0:01:16.3] SH: Sure, it's a great question and I'm actually glad to hear that as a podcast host you have that kind of boundary because what BARE is, it's a diet disruptor. I am all about that

this is a life gain program and not a weightless program. Because, quite honestly, I am a mother, I have two kids, an 18 year old daughter and a 20 year old son and I became passionate about this work because when my daughter was in the 4th grade, she came home at 10 years old and said, "Hey mom, every girl at the cafeteria table today said that she was on a diet, they made a pact to not eat their lunches and go on a diet together." She said, "that's messed up, right?"

[0:02:03.4] PF: Gosh, how old did you say she was?

[0:02:06.7] SH: She was 10 at the time.

[0:02:08.2] PF: My gosh.

[0:02:09.9] SH: Yeah. I was already doing this work but it made me even more passionate to spread this message because a cafeteria table full of nine and 10 year old girls are getting the idea from somewhere, from culture at large, from family, from now their peers that their bodies aren't okay.

BARE is a process to bring a girl or a woman home to herself and that the way she is appearing today is enough.

[0:02:40.1] PF: This isn't about how much you weigh; it's about how you feel about how you look. But we've become obsessed on it being the certain number or a certain size that we need to be. Can you explain how, that's not even what's really driving us.

[0:02:58.1] SH: Exactly, you know, from television in magazines and social media. Girls and women are bombarded with the messaging that thinner is better and that our worth is based on our appearance and the skinnier you could be or the younger you could appear, that in our culture is more valued.

The actual number on the scale honestly has nothing to do with what a girl or a woman's mind says about that number. When I get clients who say they want to lose weight, my number one question is Why? When they answer that question, it's typically so that they could feel a certain way.

“Well, I’ll feel more confident or I’ll feel sexier” or you know, fill in the blank. With BARE, it’s like, okay, “Well, let’s help you feel that way already without needing the scale number to be something different than what it is.”

[0:04:05.6] PF: yeah, I love that because right of the bat say that this is not – we’re going to be happy when we reach this. Can you talk about how you say it’s actually the reverse?

[0:04:17.4] SH: It is actually the reverse. Every time we say, when I lose the 10 pounds or when I make X number of dollars or you know, when I have that spouse or partner, I’ll start living, I’ll be happy. When we start saving our life for someday and usually, that someday is for girls and women unfortunately weight related.

We rob ourselves of opportunities, we rob ourselves of experiences. We rob ourselves from the life we’re supposed to be living and instead of shrinking our bodies, what ends up happening is we start shrinking our lives and that’s why I say this is a life gain program.

Because you know, that magical day never comes and when I work with clients and they do lose some weight, it’s really interesting to see how that typically is just a byproduct of feeling great, going after what they want, if their body needs to release some weight, then fine, but it’s not a prerequisite for feeling amazing.

[0:05:25.3] PF: When it’s not done healthily or properly, now, once they achieve that goal, there’s a whole other set of pressures to maintain it.

[0:05:33.6] SH: My god, I know, I get so many clients actually who have lost the weight, they wanted to lose but they’re white knuckling their lives now because they’re terrified that you know, one false move and I’m going to gain that weight back and so they setup these rules for living that cause them to be miserable and it’s just kind of like, you know, helping them see that life is so much more than a meal plan and a workout routine.

[0:06:05.2] PF: Absolutely. How difficult is it for us to build a life that we love if we are focusing so hard on something like you know, whether it’s losing weight or making more money or

whatever that is. What does that do to our life, as you said, we shrink it. How difficult is it for us to create a life we love?

[0:06:25.8] SH: Well, you know, there may be people listening that say, “but I know somebody who is shredded and ripped and she has a great life.” Yes, of course there are people who are living their best lives and who look and feel amazing at the same time, that’s you know, the BARE process but there are also, you know, probably 95% of those people are shredded on the outside and the inside, they are literally shredding their peace of mind. So that they can post a picture of their six pack.

There actually is a prominent woman in health and fitness that I was so delighted yesterday to see on her social media, Chalene Johnson who yeah – she posted, everyone has to go look at her Instagram because she posted a before and after and her before and after was her before was when she was at her fittest and her after is today and she still – let’s face it, she still has an amazing physique.

But she was like, “Listen, this woman on the left was miserable and in order to sell health and diet stuff, often, in this industry, we do extreme things so that we can post pictures like this” and she was like, “I was hungry and miserable” and I was like, “thank you.”

Thank you for the honesty because so many girls and women look up to people who are stars in the health and fitness world and think, that’s what I need to strive to be and more of us need to be saying, listen, if you are spending all of your time trying to achieve that, you are not putting your focus and energy on to things that are actually going to expand and improve your life in a real way.

I’m someone who loves to run and cycle and workout and all those things but it’s not the focus of my life and my happiness depends on the mental health benefits I get from that’s I get from it but not what my body does as a result of that.

[0:08:28.3] PF: Right. You also talk about how will power is not the answer because I think so often times, we beat ourselves up if we miss a goal and we say well, “If I just had more will power, if I just were better at this, then that would work for me.” Why is will power not the answer?

[0:08:49.9] SH: Well, I would like every listener to really think about everything they do in their daily lives, whether it's running kids around or taking care of aging parents or doing well at the office. You know, we do so much that requires so much willpower to it's really this myth that if you just have more will power, you could have that body.

What I have come to realize in my work is that women don't need more will power, they need more pleasure in their lives and while we're so busy doing the whole no pain, no gain thing, we're leaving behind what our body is wired for and needs on a daily basis which is pleasure and there's all different kinds of pleasure and all different kinds of ways to infuse your day with pleasure that don't require, a whole lot of time, a whole lot of money, and if we focus on that, there's no need for anymore will power.

[0:09:45.8] PF: Okay, this isn't just about food and dieting. Because it's about relying on alcohol, or binge watching television or doing any other habits that aren't good for us but sometimes, we feel like that's what gives us pleasure. Now, when you have a client that comes in and it's like, "Yes, you need more pleasure in your life" and they're like, "Great, I'm going to drink more." You know, that's not –

How do we take these things that will work in the short term and break out of these routines and find what really gives us pleasure in life?

[0:10:15.8] SH: It's such a great question and you're absolutely right. My clients are like, "Hot damn, I'm going to eat this whole box of donuts, thank you Susan Hyatt." It's like, you have to really think about what truly gives you pleasure, what's truly nourishing and like a donut? Using food and alcohol is an easy, quick fix for most people which is why we're even having this discussion.

So it's like outside of food and alcohol, yes your food should be pleasurable absolutely but outside of food and alcohol, what are things that give you pleasure and I talk about diversifying your pleasure. If you ask yourself what you're really craving it could be comfort, which is a lot of binge eating comes into play but there are other things that you could do for pleasure. You might need physical touch and intimacy.

You might need some straight up fun with friends. You might need intellectual stimulation. That was actually the answer to my 35 pound weight loss, believe it or not was I was dealing with little kids and not having enough fun and I was getting all of my entertainment from food and alcohol and what I really sat with myself and ask myself what I really needed I realize I was just so bored and I needed some adult interactions to intellectual stimulation.

And once I realized that and started feeding that in building my business and doing things that really challenged me at a deep cellular level, all of a sudden that wheel of brie didn't seem so enticing because I had other things that are lighting me up and so yes, you can have a glass of wine. Yes, you can have a donut but that can't be the only way that you give your body some pleasure and the body is wired for pleasure and all sorts of practical things happen when you honor that.

Like hormones, balancing, metabolism speeding up, the brain is able to communicate to the rest of the body all systems go, sleep regulates all of those things but we think we need to pop pills and eat and do all of these things that actually disrupts our systems even more.

[0:12:31.8] PF: How do you go about helping someone identify what gives them pleasure? Because I know I am off balance when someone says, "What do you do for fun?" and I can't answer that question immediately. It's like, "Hang on, hang on I got this" you know?

[0:12:46.2] SH: Let me think.

[0:12:47.7] PF: Because we get caught up in our work and our other to-do's instead of to be kind of situation. So how do you help someone identify what gives them pleasure?

[0:12:58.8] SH: Well it is interesting that you brought up that question because when I go to parties and things and people are like, "So what do you do?" I like to ask instead what do you do for fun and most people are like, "What? What do you mean?" you know they're like, "What do you mean?" and so, the first thing that I do is I ask them in terms of their free time like what are they doing? How are they spending their time and that usually is a hint as to what kind of pleasure they are really seeking.

So if somebody says and listen, I am not against a good Netflix binge but if somebody says what they do for fun is binge watch Netflix, you know that is typically an escape or a comfort thing or if they are talking about shopping that is typically an entertainment or fun. They are looking for some more fun and so I explain to them the different kinds of comfort you could be seeking and where do you think you're lacking even like spiritual pleasure.

You know connection to your higher power, that is usually a big one that most of us are lacking like do you have a practice of prayer or meditation or some kind of connection to what is bigger than you and helping them figure out like most people are like, "Wow I don't know" and so it's going through each category and then challenging them to give it like just five minutes out of your day. You know five minutes of going out and getting some vitamin D and sitting in the sun.

Or five minutes of just sitting with yourself and hearing what your mind is telling you can be revolutionary for most people who are so busy just going through the motions of their day.

[0:14:43.8] PF: But why is it so hard for us to learn how to do that? Because we have this conversation about, "Oh we need to meditate. We need to meditate more. I should be doing this" and I have the five minutes but maybe I am going to use it in a different way even though I know that sitting down and reading and being still with myself is going to be much more beneficial. What is it about us that makes us respond that way?

[0:15:09.9] SH: Well I think there is a couple of different things. One is our culture at large doesn't value it. So we are kind of taught all the messaging is like to be productive to get stuff done, to no pain no gain. So we are just indoctrinated with valuing productivity above all else in the US especially and then secondly, typically with people it is not part of their practice even though they intellectually know like it would be really good for me to slow down.

There is a lot of discomfort that comes up uncomfortable feelings that people don't know how to deal with and I spend so much time with client saying, "Listen a feeling state is not going to kill you" like you just sitting there and acknowledging I am feeling lonely is not going to kill you but we try to stuff it down and use food and alcohol typically to do those things. So I think one of the biggest reasons is we're not taught how to just sit with discomfort and then it is okay.

I mean especially in my industry in the self-help industry most life coaches are spending their time like, “Let’s pull you out of that negative feeling space immediately!” and honestly there is a lot of benefit to just acknowledging and processing those feeling states because they’re all here to tell us something. So if you are angry great, let us see what anger has to teach you and then move into some practices to help get you out of that but for me, I was resisting boredom at all costs.

And then when I really was like, “Okay, this is not going to kill me and let me figure out what I need instead.

[0:16:53.4] PF: Parade magazine had some really nice things to say about your book and I love that they said, “This is the perfect book for anyone who wants to master the art of distressing.”

[0:17:02.6] SH: Oh, yay Parade.

[0:17:06.5] PF: Yeah, we all want to distress so why is that so difficult?

[0:17:10.6] SH: How long do you got? Because I think our central nervous systems are constantly in shock. I mean I think that in our culture we are so used to now that stress is just being part of everything we do and it doesn’t have to be that way. Everything from commuting to what is happening in the workplace to when we turn on our TV’s and see what is happening in politics and the news, it’s just sensory overload all the time.

So that has become our normal and so then when we make these suggestions like maybe you should just sit in the sun for five minutes, people are like, “What are the hell are you talking about?”

[0:17:55.2] PF: Are you crazy?

[0:17:56.4] SH: Right, are you crazy? But honestly, in the work that I’ve done some of the tiniest – my friend Laura calls it simple but significant moves. Some of the smallest little moves can make a huge impact on your quality of life. So something as little as, “You know what? On my drive to work I’m just going to do it in silence and turn the radio off” can absolutely have a domino effect on someone’s life that is quite amazing. So I think that when we think about why

is this so difficult for me, I think part of it is the lack of willingness to feel uncomfortable for a little while.

[0:18:38.9] PF: That makes perfect sense and your book is so helpful in many different ways but you also offer the BARE manifesto, which aligns some of these things that we should say no to and what we should say yes to. Now we are going to offer downloadable posts for that from our webpage but until they can get to that, can you give me three things that you hope people listening today will say yes to?

[0:19:04.2] SH: I hope they say yes to the possibility that they could stop dieting and gain a better life. I know many people listening are like, “I don’t trust myself without a plan” so I just hope that you are open to that possibility and I hope that you’ll say yes to complimenting girls and women on something other than their appearance. So saying yes to like, “Hey, that is a great idea in the staff meeting today” instead of like, “I love that dress.”

There is nothing wrong with complimenting a woman’s appearance but let’s take a minute to complimenting girls and women on their intellect and on their abilities and on their kindness and I hope that they say yes to movement. So dropping the transactional relationship between your body and exercise meaning I am only going to exercise if I have J-Lo’s booty by Friday and say, “I will move my body no matter what because I get some mental health benefits from that.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:20:05.7] PF: That was Susan Hyatt, author of the book *BARE*. If you visit us at livehappynow.com, we’ll tell you how to join her online community, where to find her podcast and we’ll also give you a link to her free downloadable print of her BARE Manifesto.

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That is all we have time for this week. We'll meet you here again next week for an all new episode and until then, this is Paula Felps wishing you a very Happy Mother's Day and reminding you to make every day a happy one.

[END]