

Full Transcription

Today, we're talking to Susan about her new book, *Somatic Internal Family Systems Therapy: Awareness, Breath, Resonance, Movement and Touch in Practice*. Susan, welcome back and thank you for joining us today.

Susan McConnell: Oh, thank you so much. It's wonderful to be back. I feel very honored.

Aníbal Henriques: Welcome back, Susan, and many congratulations on your new book, *Somatic Internal Family Systems Therapy*. Before we dive in your book, let me share that I keep such beautiful memories of our time together in Lisbon back in April 2018 and February 2019. It was a privilege to benefit from your precious presence and help to certificate the first IFS Portuguese practitioners and therapists. So, I feel still grateful for the way you led those trainings and you offered participants a great experience and understanding of the model. Also, I want you to know your trainees in Portugal miss you, respect you and admire you.

Susan: Oh, thank you. Well, just even right now, hearing your voices and being able to see your pictures too, which I can see right now, it just brings back such wonderful memories of just being with that amazing group and the growth that all of us experienced being together, drawn together by this amazing model that I just have been so privileged to teach all these years. But being in Portugal was among the highlights, I think, of all my teaching experiences. And I thank you both for that, because you both contributed to that. You probably, Aníbal, so much just with your also falling in love with the model and wanting to offer this to people that that you're teaching, So, yeah, just lots of appreciation all around. Good way to start, right?

Tisha: Absolutely.

Aníbal: Susan, how have you been and how are you coping with these tough pandemic times?

Susan: Oh, yeah, it's been, what? Maybe seven, eight months or so. I sometimes have parts that criticize me for being slow to adapt to the changes that we need to make and then I remind those parts that, you know, to just step back a while and let me just be with the difficulty. And as someone, like you said, Tisha, that is focused very much on the somatic aspects, I think I do process things through my body and it's been more difficult to get all the information that I need in this more limited context of Zoom, you know, just the online experiences, both with clients and with the teaching.

There's been undeniable losses at the very beginning. I lost my mother and then a week later, very afraid I was going to lose my daughter, who had a serious case of covid-19 and who had even post viral symptoms. But I'm happy to say that she seems to be fully recovered now. And one of the gifts of this whole thing was when she and her family, which includes two my grandchildren, came and spent two months with us here. And we all had a lot of fun. And of course, there were a lot of changes, but it was just kind of set everything aside to be present with them for the summer. And, you know, the summertime hasn't been so bad because we have

found creative ways to get together with friends outside. And I have to admit too, there's some parts that are wondering what the darker days, the colder days will bring when there's less opportunity to do that. But, you know, again, all in all, I'm so aware that most of us here are so much more fortunate and so much more blessed than so many people. The people of color in our country and people in developing countries around the world and people with less resources and people who don't have access to zoom, the Internet and on and on. I mean, really every day. And I'm grateful for my spouse, you know, that I'm not alone, I'm not isolated, really. And I feel just, maybe even more aware of the interdependence of all of us on this web.

And, you know, it takes me back to my early days in IFS. I was talking with a friend and colleague, another IFS trainer just yesterday, and we both were sharing how one of the strong things that drew us to this model was the community. Just the wonderful people that are drawn to Dick Schwartz and to the model. And, you know, both of us, we just kind of looked around and kind of got a sense of the people and said "Wow, this is an amazing group of people, we're going to stick with this." Not only as a model, but the people that recognize how valuable this model is and that want to do whatever they can to promote it and to teach it and to share it with their clients and patients.

So, yeah, I just have both that sense of loss with how do we carry on without in-person trainings and particularly over time zones. Oh, the challenges, you know, to try to translate what we've offered in person to a more restricted venue. And yet, just the unexpected gifts. And just, you know, it's been a lot of lessons for me.

Anibal: Mm hmm.

Susan: Yeah. So, thanks for asking. It's a good way to start.

Anibal: Yeah. So, Susan, focusing on your new book just released in September, right? I found your book a powerful reading and learning to get a closer and more appreciative relationship with my body. Find it an eloquent deepening of the IFS model full of clinical applications and examples. And I'm still in the process of reading it. How long did this project took you since you started the writings? I remember you announcing a sabbatical time to work on it back in 2018. And of course, we can see this book start back in 2013, when you wrote that article for the IFS New Dimensions book, right?

Susan: Yeah, I can't really say that the idea for a book started in 2013. I think again there were parts thinking "I'm not an author, I can't write a book. I wrote that chapter and that was enough." You know, I was glad to be asked to write that chapter. But I never really considered a whole book, until...I really should try to go back through my records and see when I actually began. I was kind of looking at my computer and seeing how many little pieces of writing I had done, maybe after a particularly moving session and wanting to record that, it would take some time to write that down. And maybe I would read what someone else wrote and then take some notes on it and put that in another file. So, I began collecting a lot of stuff and just began to think that maybe someday I'll put this into a book form or something. But, you know, honestly, I think what really motivated me was when one of my former students, someone who had been at both the Costa Rica and had been in a training that I had done, basically

sat me down to "Susan, someone needs to write a book on Somatic IFS, and it should be you. And if you're not going to do it, I'm going to write it."

And so, I'm like "whoa, she's right, it's got to be me." I mean, maybe other books will come too. But, you know, it's interesting, like, I remember when I first, years ago, started offering, you know, long before 2013, started offering three-day workshops, I thought "What do I want to call it?" And I just decided to call it Somatic IFS. And I wasn't really sure whether there'd be much interest in it. IFS is already a fairly embodied model. And yet I began to see the value of bringing the body in even more fully than we typically do in IFS. I was certainly doing it with my own clients and the participants in the trainings were giving me feedback, like "there's something a little different that you're offering." And I got curious about that. And so, out of that, I began to offer more and more of, you know, giving myself more permission to more fully bring the body in, which I didn't do when I was teaching Level 1's and Level 2's. But I think probably when I was in Portugal, I guess two years ago, I was already in the middle of it. So, perhaps I started about three years ago. Just, you know, at first thinking "I don't even know if someone will...if I can find a publisher, but I can always Self publish it." And I did submit a proposal to North Atlantic books and was quite surprised. I thought well maybe I'll have to, you know, I don't know. But they quickly said "Yes, we want to publish your book. Oh, my gosh. I guess it makes me an author." So, at that point, I got pretty busy to, not just with the first chapter, but to really begin to flesh out the remaining whatever, six or seven or eight chapters that are in the book. And yeah, just any time I had some free time just sitting down with my little laptop and putting it together, and it was just really one page at a time, you know, it's kind of amazing, it just all came together. And it was really quite a nice process that was, of course, completed maybe. I don't even know for sure. Well, I guess it would have been, maybe sometime in November or something of this year that they wanted it to be the final edits to be completed. So, it's just been an interesting process. I would really encourage anybody with an inclination to do this, to go ahead, because it's, you know, I think the more you write, the more you really learn what it is you're trying to teach.

Tisha: Susan, I picked up this book, it just came to me a couple of days ago, and it is such a gift and your writing it's easy to read, it addresses just an aspect of the model that is so important. And I wanted to give our listeners a sample of your writing and a sample of why Somatic IFS is so valuable. If I could read the first paragraph of your introduction. Are you all right with it?

Susan: Sure.

Tisha: Great. So, it says "including the body story, along with the verbal story in therapy, illuminates and awakens what has been obscured in darkness. The feral animal of our body, startled by light, may scurry back to hide in dark corners. The touch, the nourishment, the movement that our body craves may be buried under a history of neglect and trauma. We may feel our body has betrayed us. We may have internalized an objective attitude toward our body. Our individual hurts and collective societal burdens lodged in our tissues await the light of our courage and compassion shining into the depths of our interiority, leading us to the essence of our being." It's so, beautiful, Susan, and this book is a guide for how to do just that, to bring light into the depths of our interiority. And so, thank you.

Susan: Thank you for reading it. Yeah.

Aníbal: And also, Susan, you got the sweet forward words from Dick Schwartz acknowledging your central role developing the model along the way.

Susan: Yes, he was very kind in his introduction. I was so, again, honored that he wrote that introduction and he's... I've always felt his support, you know, even in the very early days, he was like "Well, yeah, bring it on. That's not my gift, but it is yours," you know. So, I've appreciated that. And I think there were times when I felt a bit on the fringe, you know, of the rest of IFS, as other topics were offered on Level 2, it never seemed like anyone thought about the body, you know. But I just kind of kept going because I thought, well, it's important to me and to many people who support it, who have supported me. And yeah, I just... And the two of you too, even right now, it just, it's just amazing, I just keep breathing it in and it really gives me fuel. I think too about, you know, as a writer, again, I didn't know, I didn't particularly think of myself as a writer, but Mariel Pasteur who wrote our latest version of the manual, asked me to write a piece or two for that. And she was one person who just said "Susan, you have a voice." I was like "really?" I didn't know that I... I guess that was a part of me that didn't have the confidence that I could find my voice, that I had a voice. And, you know, another connection, I think maybe you're right. Maybe I did begin this more when I was teaching in Portugal because I remember Enrique, who was a PA during the training, and he said "You know, Susan, I'm glad to hear you're wanting to put a book together, because my wife, she's you know, we have a publishing company with this niche that your book fits into perfectly in Barcelona. But also, my wife is an editor and a coach...", I think is the word I'm looking for. I think she's a writing coach. So, it turned out that I end up actually not working with her for more than a session or two. But again, when I was in Portugal, I got so much support from the two of you for moving ahead and from Enrique as well for continuing on with this process of book writing.

Tisha: You break the book down into Awareness, Breath, Resonance, Movement and Touch. Can you speak a little bit about how you begun to organize the Somatic IFS in this way? Awareness, Breath, Resonance, Movement and Touch.

Susan: Well, you know, you have to come up with some way to structure things, right? I did, again, years ago, I think when I, possibly even 20 years ago, I like "how is it that I can convey this that I do?" And those were sort of the five practices or aspects of the work that seem to encompass it all. Sometimes in writing the book I thought I could have just picked one of these and written a hole two hundred and fifty pages on, you know, on Somatic Awareness, for example. But obviously it begins with that and I think of Awareness as just the foundational practice. And, you know, awareness, don't you think it's fairly synonymous with Self-energy when we are truly aware?

Aníbal: Exactly.

Susan: When we are aware without an agenda, but just sort of that open awareness, not needing to find something has to be fixed, or something wrong or something good or whatever. But just opening up to that broader field of awareness that includes our body, of course, and the sensations... That's really where we begin. And

in order to really open up that awareness, we first often find the parts that, like I say in that first paragraph, maybe are afraid of opening, of shining the light onto those dark corners, that we find the parts of ourselves that block that awareness. We begin with that. We begin with the protectors that block our awareness. And then as we move into more and more awareness, that leads us to we become aware we're breathing. And then, lo and behold, we can deepen into that practice, it's like oh, yeah, all this breathing, which is both voluntary and involuntary, both conscious and unconscious. What happens when we bring awareness first to our natural breathing and how can that help us both access parts, but also witness the part story? How can breathing kind of be an opening into some of our parts? How can breathing be an opening to more Self-energy? How can we breathe into those places? How can breathing really be a vehicle for the light that I mentioned in that first paragraph? How can our breath shine a light on places in our body that are tight or unavailable to us? Breathing has been recognized for millennia by many spiritual practices and body mind spirit practices, yoga in particular - the pranayama - as a tool, and there's so many breathing practices that can help us with our healing, with the transformation. And again, it's just always there. It's always there. A breath away, right? Just like "Oh, my breath." I'm feeling, like overwhelmed or I'm feeling my trauma, you know, bringing me up, you know. But that actually, I'm glad I said that because these two practices, Somatic Awareness, connects us with the ground below us, the earth and Conscious Breathing brings us to a more awareness of the space around us and the infinite space above us. So, in a way, those are two amazing resources. When I'm sitting with a client who's bringing to me and sharing with me in a very sacred space the depths of their pain, I might get overwhelmed if I didn't remember that I have this access to a bigger space of Self-energy around me before I open into that relational realm, which is the third practice, which is Resonance. And that gives me the grounding, the anchor to be willing to enter...I just can feel it even right now, like, isn't that amazing? It just really, when someone trusts us and says "I'm going to share with you how I've been hurt." And it is such an honor really. And how can we be fully, fully embodied in an embodied way present not just to the verbal story, but to all that they're sharing nonverbally, that is much more than half of the story. So, we use our bodies as a vehicle to really open to the entire story and they sense that full-bodied resonance, that full-bodied witnessing and invite them to fully embody their own witnessing of their part as well.

So, in a way, these practices are sequential, like we first have the Somatic Awareness of our own bodies and of our client's bodies and help them become more aware of their bodies. We become aware of our breathing that helped the client become aware they're breathing. We're just multiplying the resources to be able to then resonate with the body stories, the verbal and the non-verbal stories that our parts so need to be heard and not just heard with our ears, but heard with our hearts, heard with our limbic brains, you know. So, in that chapter, I go into various aspects of our body that we use to resonate in this radical fashion, which is our hearts, our limbic brains and our guts really. Our enteric nervous systems are also a part of our connection with other human beings. Yeah, just taking a moment myself because it's very...It just means a lot to me, these practices. I've been living and breathing them for years now.

Tisha: I think it would be easy to skip over the value of Resonance. It's a surprise to see the equal value that you give it to Breath and Awareness.

Susan: Yeah. Yes. And I can't really say any one of these is more important when I talk about them, when I say "Oh no, Somatic Awareness is the most important" and I'm like "Well, I don't know, Breath is kind of right up there..." And then, yeah, radical, but not only can we not skip over it, but sometimes I think that's it. That's what we do, just this Resonance that needs to be acknowledged and not just acknowledged, but kind of...I don't want to say practice, because I mean, I think Resonance maybe is like a practice, right? To find our blocks again to Resonance. Each one of these practices begins with finding the parts of ourselves that don't want us to fully open to utilizing these practices both for our own selves as well as our clients. But we all have blocks, we've all been hurt in relationship, and we all have parts that protect us by not letting us open up quite so much. And as therapists, I think sometimes we don't know if we can fully let ourselves resonate with such a painful, traumatic story, you know. So, we hold back a little bit, right? Do you feel that too? Like, "Oh, I don't know." But when we find, when we have those first two practices and we trust that will be okay even if we can reverberate, you know, that we can reverberate with far more than we even imagined and we can invite our clients to also reverberate with their Self, with their part stories. And none of it it's ever more than we can handle. None of it is.

Aníbal: So, Susan, you say Somatic IFS consists of these five practices that you started describing.

Susan: Yes.

Aníbal: And you also say those practices can be sequential and interdependent.

Susan: Yes.

Aníbal: As you also illustrated. But how do you differentiate Awareness from Somatic Awareness or even Breath from Conscious Breath or Resonance from Radical Resonance? But let's start with this one, the Awareness. Is there some difference between Awareness and Somatic Awareness?

Susan: It's, it's...That's a really good question, and I think throughout this book I'm just wanting to emphasize the whole, the body, you know. That our parts are embodied. And if we don't experience them that way, then that's because that part or another part is blocking us from experiencing the embodied aspect of it. So, I bring the adjective, I have an adjective in front of each one of these practices just to emphasize something, you know. So Somatic Awareness, of course we're aware of what we're thinking, what we're feeling, but even just stopping there...Most everyone is agreeing that our emotions have a source in the body, so, our emotions are not never separate from the body, even though in our culture we tend to say "Oh, well, I'm confused" or "Well I'm frightened" or "I'm angry." And then you say "Well, where do you feel that in your body?" They're not really sure or even say "What are you aware of right now?" I might even say "What body sensation are you aware of?" And they'll say "Oh, I'm confused or I'm angry and frightened." It's like "Yes, okay, those are emotions. And what is the source of those emotions or those mental states - like

confusion is more of a mental state, what is the source of that in your body?" And oftentimes it's hard to find. "I don't know. I'm just angry". "Yeah, would you be willing to just stay with that anger and just be curious about maybe how your body participates in that emotion?" So, I emphasize Anibal, emphasize the adjective Somatic as way to say there's something of value, I believe, that comes when we focus our awareness on our body. And actually, as I hear you feedback what I said about - but Tisha also said about - the sequential nature, I also want to say these practices are not only sequential in a very linear way...

Anibal: Of course.

Susan: They are not just only dependent on the one that lies before it in a sequential way, but there's actually another dimension to these practices where they are very non-linear and very interdependent. So, we can start with movement, like many movement, like dance movement therapists might do. Like let's see what movement wants to happen, you know. And then you begin moving and then you go "Is this some part of me moving? Is this Self-energy? Like who is it that's moving? And what happens as I move? And can I become aware of what's happening in my body? What sensations come up as I let this, you know, as I stamp my foot or as I make a fist or as I leap around the room or even just make a little shift in my posture, what happens as I do that? So, there are not only sequential and dependent on each other, but they are non-linear and interdependent. As a body worker, I often began with Touch. People came to me because they wanted my touch. I'm like "Okay, yeah, let's see what happens when I place my hands here. Yeah, like what images come up, what feelings come up, what memories come up." So, really, we can begin with any one of the practices.

Tisha: I am so grateful you included Touch. It's so important.

Susan: Oh, absolutely.

Tisha: And it's also...I think it can be a little dicey...

Susan: Yes.

Tisha: To talk to therapists, counselors about using touch. And you incorporate it so beautifully. But how was it for you to begin to own that Touch is a part of a Somatic Internal Family Systems Therapy book?

Susan: Yeah, great question. I began to realize that my parts were exiling touch, which is just so ironic because before I became a Hakomi therapist and IFS therapist, I was a body therapist. I was doing craniosacral therapy and structural body therapy. And so, in a lot of ways, I have a lot more experience with touch. But I was being influenced by our culture and by the reluctance to.... By the diceyness of it to...When I would have an opportunity to do workshops or trainings, I somehow was never leaving enough time for this final practice. I'd be like, well, it's either working with attuned touch or doing about an adequate completion for our time together, well we'll just spend a little bit of time on touch so that we have enough time to really complete. And I started noticing that that was a real pattern and I thought "I can't let this happen. I really need to look at the parts of me that are colluding with the culture

that has made a separation between mind and body and particularly between touch therapies and talk therapies and in the process of seeing these parts that have been so influenced by societal burdens and both understandable caution and also, in many cases, I think, almost throwing the baby out with the bathwater, if you want to use that awful expression.

But there is so much, I think, as I describe in the book, that touch is so powerful. And that's what I got in touch with myself as I found my parts that knew had experienced both personally and also with so many clients on my table, the power of touch. And also knowing the power to harm. You know, so there is a power to heal and a power to harm, and that a lot of our very understandable inhibitions and regulations against touch are to really safeguard our clients from the abuses of touch. And yet the more I read, I realize that these well-intentioned safeguards are not what's really needed to truly safeguard our clients. Instead, what's needed is for each of us to work with our own experiences with touch, both abusive touch, neglect of touch, and our positive experiences with touch to unburden those parts that have been hurt. And then we can truly bring in Self-led, attuned touch as an offering. Plus, of course, therapists who are in very real ways, whose regulation or insurance or whatever would be threatened by incorporating touch, that is not at all necessary to include attuned touch in the panoply of practices, because we can, all of us do without even thinking we're all, when we're doing IFS, we're all making the possibility of the Self of the client to touch the parts, particularly our exiled parts, they often long for just to climb right in our laps, right? Or be hugged or held by us.

So, imaginary touch is what I call it in the book, just imagining as it "What is that part? There's a part wanting to get closer to you?" "Yes, it is actually jumping on my lap". "Oh, great. Yeah. Is that okay with you?" "Yes, it's fine". "Any parts concerned about that?" "No, not at all". "Good. Well, what happens for your part when it's feeling your arms around it?" "Oh yeah. It's just really relaxing". "What happens in your body as your part...?" "Oh, my whole body feels relaxed..." So, that's the imaginary touch. And then "Is there a place in your body that would like your touch right now?" And frankly, even when I do in-person work, oftentimes that's all that's needed. So, I don't really come up against that dilemma. Hardly at all. And in the IFS model is so much about our own Self-energy, healing our parts that oftentimes that's what's needed. And sometimes I only just say "Would you like my touch in addition to yours?" "Oh, yeah, that might be nice. Let's see let's see how that feels." And it either feels really good or unnecessary. But for some of the people who have taken my trainings, they may be touch therapists, you know, they may be body workers or osteopaths, doctors or nurses who professionally are licensed to bring in touch. Yoga practitioners who often will incorporate "Let me just touch you here to bring more awareness to the fact that you could shift your posture a little bit." It's really good to have this information to know that they're touching not from a part that has energy of there's something wrong with what you're doing. And I'm going to have my criticism, my fixing part come through the energy of my hand, but instead more of a let's just touch here to see what's needed, you know, to see if my touch can bring your awareness, your breath, my resonance to that touch. So, it's a very different approach to touch than many of us were trained as body workers to bring that energy. So, yeah, you can see I have a whole chapter worth for want to talk about it. I appreciate your question, Tisha, because there's a lot there that I have to say about it. Yeah.

Anibal: I'm glad that you called this beautiful chapter The Power of Ethical Touch and that you gave your readers good tools and guidelines to follow on this so much needed approach, the touch, yeah.

Susan: Yes. The Power of Ethical Touch. Attuned touch and ethical touch. And touch from embodied Self-energy, and that's why it's the final one, really, because it relies on the practices below it to, that we go through, that we immerse ourselves in these practices until we can be assured that we are in that state of embodied Self-energy and that we're not touching because our parts want to be touched. Our parts want us to touch, our parts need that touch. Or our parents feel like if we touch them...Anyway, it has to really be ethical and I think the best safeguard against the ethical touch and attuned touch is really not external regulations, external protectors, you know, societal protectors, but instead our own internal sense and our trust in the client knowing, being able to tell us. Like, I would not touch a client who is blended with a part, for example, because I wouldn't be able to trust that they in telling me "Yes, yes, it's fine, go ahead and touch me there." I wouldn't be able to trust that it really was fine with their parts and they weren't overriding any other parts who are basically kind of going "No way, no way, I'm not ready for that." And many of my trauma survivors, when I was doing body work taught me that. That it was really important for me to find a way to bring in that quality of touch, or else I was retraumatizing them.

Anibal: Mm hmm.

Tisha: One thing I love about this book is how you use examples and you give a lot of exercises. I wonder if right now you could share an example of healing touch. Where touch might have helped the trauma survivor.

Susan: Well, interestingly, what you just said, Tisha, actually takes me to...I will get to your question. I mean, your invitation. But first I want to just acknowledge, and I think the book does that. I want to just acknowledge all the people came before me with each of the chapters. I mean, I am in a way, I'm standing on the shoulders of so many people who with each of these practices have written books and devoted their lives to...really hundreds of years, in many cases, to each of these practices. And so, I'm not making up any of these practices, obviously. And many, many teachers have taught me so much over decades, really, that I just want to, again, bow to all of them and hope that my book at least touches in on all their contributions, including on this very dicey topic of attuned touch.

Mm. Again, I think...I don't remember any of the examples that I might have put in my book, because that was, you know, perhaps a year ago that I wrote that chapter. And often when I think about what I just mentioned, like what I learned from my trauma survivors when I was just many, many years ago, just doing touch....I think I've mentioned her in the book if I recall, that her protector parts were assuring me that the Structural Therapy, which is a fairly intensive kind of touch, you know, very, very deep into the fascia, you know, she's like "Oh, yeah, I'm fine, I'm fine with all this stuff. Just go right ahead. I'll just be laying here." But after a few sessions, I began to wonder. I just began to have some questions about whether she was really receiving

my touch and started to talk with her about it and finally realized that she had a very, very severe trauma history that although she was seeing a therapist, was not resolved fully. And I invited her therapist to come in to our sessions. And so, it was myself and this client and her therapist together. We found out that what she could be Somatically aware of was...Not even with my touch, but just simply her own awareness, was one little finger, a portion of her little finger for about, you know, just a few seconds. That was so different than what I assumed when I first started working with her, I had to back way off...I just didn't touch her for quite a while until her parts were...I didn't even know about parts. It was long before IFS, even before Hakomi that I just eventually had her be able to inhabit her body more and more and then began to find ways to use touch to help her and safely inhabit her own body until we expanded that to more than a few seconds and more than just her hand, more than just her arm. And eventually we really did get to a place where she not only could inhabit her body, but begin to tell me what kind of touch she really wanted and could take in and appreciate and, you know, could really take it in and not just not just survive it, right? But to really enjoy it. And so, she really came to a place where she could enjoy her body. And so, I just have to credit her once again for teaching me so much about touch and about how far back oftentimes we need to go in that therapeutic relationship to know that we can be fully present, and they can be fully present to what we're offering. So, I think that was really the foundation of much of the later work I did with IFS and touch with my clients. So, I hope that that's a good enough example. Tisha.

Tisha: It's a great example. Thank you.

Anibal: Susan, just quoting you from that chapter, you say "Attuned touch can repair the wounds from too little of the right kind of touch and too much of the wrong kind of touch, restoring our birthright of sensory aliveness." So well put, yeah.

Susan: Yeah. So, yeah, too little of the right kind of touch and too much of the wrong kind of touch. I mean, I think most of us can relate to that, right? In our childhoods there are times when even those of us who were fortunate enough to not be seriously wounded with touch, I think we all can remember the uncle who tickled us when we didn't want it, right? Or the aunt who insisted on a hug or, you know, being maybe seven or eight and wanting to climb on her mother's lap and being told we're way too old for that. And those are just experiences that all of us can relate to. And all of us deserve to have healed and not just have to cover over and just soldier on regardless. You know, that we all can go back to those even what we considered as minor wounds to get the right kind of touch, right? And particularly during this pandemic, how many of us are not getting...I mean, I can say I'm among those that are not getting the touch that I was counting on for my physical and emotional health from acupuncturists and chiropractors and body workers and friends. Every time I see a friend and we're six feet away and I just go "Oh, I wish we could hug." And we all go "Oh, I know." And we just can't, right? So, just to even acknowledge those parts that are longing for that touch and we have to say "I'm so sorry." And even someone said to me instead of, you know, the gesture I'm doing right now is stretching my arms out as if I could hug you when I can't, which is good. To just say "Oh, I want this, and I can't have it." But then to come back and just put my arms around my own arms and shoulders, my hands around my own arms and shoulders and go "Yeah, okay, and this will have to be enough for now." So, yeah.

Anibal: Susan, the Somatic IFS differs from the so-called the regular original IFS or just deepens original IFS? I mean, I notice, for instance, you refer the unburdening process can be different than the shamanic one that Michi Rose and others put together. You say unburdenings can be spontaneous and felt in our body as well. Do you want to comment on this?

Susan: You too have fantastic questions. Yeah, because it gives me an opportunity to clarify, because I do want to clarify that I am not creating a new model. And I think people who have read the book will realize that I'm not trying to teach IFS all over again, only bringing the body in. I am more saying those of you who already know the model, primarily because you've been through the training or even people who are still quite informed about the model through other venues, or having been clients of, you know, IFS clients, that they will see that I'm relying on a certain base understanding of the model and I am...It's like I'm adding to it, not just on top of it, but sometimes going underneath and finding the embodied roots of it. So, that's the first thing I just want to be able to clarify that I'm not creating a new model. But at least that wasn't my intention. I don't believe I have created a new model.

But yeah, unburdening is, again, I think I go back to my years, many decades ago, working with people on the table and learning so much about the therapeutic relationship and about how change happens and how healing happens by being present with not just touch, but also with the...From the very beginning, open to, like, very curious about how are the emotions being expressed through body symptoms. And I found that unburdenings were happening spontaneously as we brought body and mind together, that that created the alchemy for transformations to be happening. And we would then just go "Oh, there was a big shift. Did you feel that"? "Yeah, I felt that, let's be with that. Let's just stay with that shift and let that unfold, you know". "Oh yeah. I'm so glad you told me to stay with it because I'm just feeling like this energy streaming through my body that I never felt before or I want to get up off your table. I feel there's this new way that I could...I have a new alignment. I feel more connected with the Earth and I feel my breath is just able to be coming in more freely and I feel my heart open." People are just sharing all these things that are happening just simply through that. So, I already had a foundation, I think, of experience, of unburdenings that underlay my understanding of what Dick was teaching me about his experience with unburdening that was also informed, I think, by Michi Rose and others of us who were there at the beginning who helped him really understand that unburdening...We could bring in the four elements, we could bring in the horizon, we could bring in the light, we could bring in these various elements to help the unburdening process. So, although I incorporated that, particularly when I was teaching the IFS trainings, but when I come back to Somatic IFS, I come back to my base, which is realizing that in a way unburdenings are happening all along. And it can help the process to just stop for a moment and say "Oh little shift. That part is trusting you, isn't it? That part heard your words. It just sort of shifted somehow, didn't it?" So, I really take unburdening as a bit of more of a process rather than event. That unburdening is definitely happening in the body, in IFS, again, we say, where is that burden in your body? And that can be very useful, but sometimes it's not necessary because it is so clear where the burden is on their body, you don't have to go back and touch back into the body. We've been with the

body all along. And the burden has been unburdening through the body all along. But then in the actual unburdening process, I typically don't go to "Do you want to let that burden go through the earth, through fire, through water, through air?" But I more will say "How is it that that part..." I like to engage because it's more fun for me. I like to engage the creativity of the part. "Is that part really ready to let go of that? How would it like to do that? Does it have an idea?" Or sometimes it has no idea. Then I say it to my client "Do you have an idea?" And then I engage their creativity. And if I hear "I have no idea, I'm ready to do it, but can you help me?" Then I will go "Well, yeah." And I'll either go with one of these elements or I'll go with...I just tune into the field around me and just say "How does this particular part, what's the best way to let go of that burden?" It's just more fun for me. It's more fluid, I guess, for me. So, I appreciate your question, Aníbal, because I think I offer, I think, an equally valid and perhaps more entertaining or interesting way to acknowledge the little micro unburdenings and then the more macro unburdenings that are happening during the course of our working with clients.

Aníbal: Susan, you finish your book with a chapter on the Embodied Self and another chapter called Nobody, No Mind, No Self, No Parts. Looks kind of a spiritual approach to the model. You want to say more about this?

Susan: Uh...You know, I think there is a way that this spiritual realm is something harder to talk about and it's something that takes me a while to enter into. And I think writing that book, that chapter was...I wasn't sure all along how we would end the book. And I think that an immersion in each of the five practices which lead to embodied Self and deepening into a description of embodied Self and trying to deepen into that description while being, while staying embodied in my Self, which is a bit of a challenge sometimes when you're sitting there, sometimes for too long, you know, when my body is kind of saying "Long enough, you know, get up and move around." But denying, unfortunately, some of my parts that...But just staying with that and typing with my fingers on the keyboard and yet it's trying to stay embodied as I write it and then finding it, just finding that it just took me to the spiritual place. I don't know that right now I can articulate it, so, I don't know, maybe you can do that for me, or Tisha can say where it took you, maybe as you read that.

Tisha: I haven't gotten there yet.

Susan: Okay.

Tisha: I'm still working on embodying my Self-energy.

Susan: Oh, I know. I know. Well...

Tisha: May happen sometimes. Sometimes I just, you know, when you feel a deep connection, when you feel that just natural confidence or clarity...

Aníbal: I just found those absence of boundaries that nobody, no mind, no Self, no parts, such an expanding experience for us collectively. And I found it beautiful and maybe it speaks for this spiritual approach.

Susan: Actually, that helps me, thank you, because I do...I think all along, even decades ago, I do realize that across our culture, which I explained at the beginning of the book, that our culture, which is created this...Western culture, meaning our culture, has created this sort of somewhat artificial but perhaps necessary for our development, separation between mind and body in many of us. I mean, I think, again, decades ago I realized that this was an artificial separation. And I think in the ensuing years, many more of particularly the therapy culture has recognized, particularly with Bessel Van der Kolk's wonderful book, you know, with trauma, but just with more and more of these clinical issues that come to us that we need to bring in the body. I have found that when we bring body and mind together, it opens us up to the spiritual realm. And again, body and mind and spirit is really overdone. It's become let's try...They sell shampoo with it in, everything else it's become a marketing ploy. And yet it's really true that when we bring mind and body together in a very full and authentic way, we just find ourselves in this realm of spirit. I guess when you said like the boundaries in a way, I mean, we need the boundaries, of course, and yet there is also an unboundaried place, which is a realm of spirit, right? That we all know, we all sense, and we know when we can enter into it. And it's a bit of a gift isn't it? That's a bit of that illumination, like, we can't really just turn on the light, but we do what we need to do before we end up...The light just emerges, right?

Aníbal: Susan, we would like to wish the best journey and success to this new book of yours, Somatic IFS. It's been a pleasure to read it and a pleasure to grasp it somehow with you today. I'm sure it can help us collectively to find a better relationship with our bodies and minds and also deepen our IFS understandings and practices.

I'm also looking forward to a time when, as you say in your book, touching and hugging is no more dangerous. And we can confidently benefit from the healing effects of loving and attuned touch as you say.

Susan: Hmm mm.

Aníbal: So, Susan, thank you so much for having us and for helping us with your wisdom and this book to welcome and better inhabit our bodies. It was a joy to be here with you and Tisha, and I hope we can keep meeting, sharing this model, our work and our lives.

Susan: Hmm.

Tisha: I'd like to say thank you as well. This book is an incredible contribution to the community, greater than the IFS community. All the people that will be healed and all the lives that will be touched by your wisdom. Thank you.

Susan: This has been lovely for me too, and in a way, you know, the completion of the book and then the final steps of actually getting it out there and, you know, even a little bit of promotion, I think this talk with you is a necessary step for me to begin to take the next step, which is, I think, offering some trainings and first, you know, of course, online. But I think I do want to begin to find ways to do this in an embodied way. So, again, just to let the listeners know that I will be...Because a lot of people

are asking about that, so, I just will be working towards that. So, thank you for this important step towards being able to do that more fully. Yeah.

Aníbal: Thank you, Susan.

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