Yoga & Coaching: A PCOS Health Transformation Guide Transcript

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Introduction to PCOS, Yoga, and Health Coaching

Welcome to this episode of the PCOS SOS Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Felice Gersh. Now we have a very special episode. It's about a topic that you would never probably figure out.

Goes together. It's all about health, coaching and yoga and PCOS. My guest is Jo Yang, who puts us all together, and she's going to explain all about how yoga and health coaching combined to help all women with PCOS to lead better lives.

And tell us about her business. Find Jo Flow, which she's going to also explain the name. So welcome, Jo. Thank you so much for joining me for this episode.

But tell the audience first about your stories. Like, how did you get involved in yoga and health coaching and what is your particular interest in poly cystic ovary syndrome?

PCOS? Yeah, well, thank you so much, Dr. Gersh, for having me. I'm excited to be part of this community and also be able serve all the women who have PCOS.

So let me go back with my story. Let's start with my story. I actually didn't know I had PCOS and it all really started in high school. I first noticed my irregular periods and at that time I didn't know what to make out of it.

I just noticed this irregularity in my period and brought up to my doctor. Now that time, I was a very active person. So as fairly skinny, I mean, you wouldn't suspect that had PCOS.

So I suspect that's also how the doctor presented it. They I brought up to them and they they said it was just stress stress related. I was and you know, high school it's normal to like experience irregular periods yourself, especially if you're stressed.

And so I took their word for it and they didn't think much of it. And it wasn't until years later when I actually went to college and this irregular period became like a prolonged period where it was almost absolute.

Like, I wasn't experiencing it for a whole year, and midway through that process I was kind of happy because I'm like, I don't have to be worried about getting pads, tampons, whatever it may be right?

I didn't have to worry about it. But after a year, I actually started to become concerned. And that's when I started reflecting and doing my own research, reading books.

Jo Yangu2019s PCOS Diagnosis and Holistic Turning Point

And PCOS came about and I wondered, you know, I don't have certain symptoms that they mentioned, but I do have the irregular period. Let's just bring it up again.

So went back to my doctor and that's when we did further investigation. It would ultrasound and then we found cyst in both of my ovaries. And that's when I was finally diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome.

Before that diagnosis, I was just confused. I was confused. I was lost. I kind of thought was in my head. And the diagnosis came at a relief. And it's odd to say that.

It's weird to say, Oh my gosh, you got polycystic ovary syndrome. It was a relief. That truly was, because now it no longer lived in my head. There's actually a formal diagnosis and I felt like with that formal diagnosis, then I can move forward.

I can figure out what the next actions are to to manage it, to prevent it, to heal from it. And I quickly discovered there are things we need to do. We we have to manage it because they can cause cancer.

I could you know, there's a bunch of other things that could lead to fertility, whatever it may be. And all of that was just so overwhelming to hear. All of that was shocking and scary.

And I felt a sense of shame, shame in the sense that, like, I can no longer conceive if I wanted to. And that's not completely true. But that was the story that I told myself at that time.

I eventually wanted a pill and got to managing it, but I wanted to believe there was a holistic approach to managing PCOS. And that's when I, out of my curiosity, came upon a holistic nutritionist who put me on a diet and helped me make some lifestyle changes and is really at that point where I realized and there was a spark that came upon me and made me notice and realize and just knew that I wanted to be able to help women with PCOS because number one, it was a lonely process.

It was confusing and it's unclear what healing looks like. But there is a process of healing. Like we can overcome it and we can live a life that's vibrant, that's thriving.

And so years again, later, down the road, I actually stumbled upon health coaching. And that's when the light bulb lit. And I realized, this is what I want to do.

I want to become a health coach that can serve women with PCOS because I understand their pain. I can empathize with them. And it's a holistic approach to managing PCOS.

It's not just your diet or it's not just exercise, it's it's all encompassing. And so that's kind of how my story unfolds and why I decided to become a health coach helping women with PCOS.

Well, that is quite a story and it sounds like every step of the way you had to be the investigative reporter, you know, figure out what is going on with your own body when you finally got the diagnosis.

Did anyone learn that you worked with any of the doctors suggest a holistic approach to you? Did anyone suggest changing your diet or doing exercise or a stress reduction, or did all of that completely come from yourself, from inside of you?

Yeah. I mean, at that time, all I can really remember when I was asking like, what can I do? I was given medications. Like that was my options and I don't recall any other holistic approach, but really we're like the holistic approach comes from is really my mom.

She always took a really holistic approach and raising us when it came to our well-being because that they didn't have medication. It wasn't something they relied on.

They had to really tune in to their body to understand their sickness, to see where it was stemming from. And so that was kind of our ingrained in me.

And I think that's also what shaped my desire and how I wanted to heal from PCOS. Yeah, I wondered where that came from because it is not typical that you just, you know, go down that path now.

Tell me a little bit about health coaching. I mean, a lot of people may not know what is a health coach and what did you have to learn in order to become a health coach?

And let's just do a first a deep dove into the whole topic of health coaches and health coaching. Yeah, absolutely. There are a lot of programs out there where you can become health coaches.

There can be a six month program, a year program. I did a variation of both. I actually went to an institute online in New York and got my certificate and then further my education for at a master's program that's also an integrative

health and wellbeing coaching.

So I combined those two knowledge together to really help equip me so that I feel ready and prepared to really provide the muscle and just the in-depth services for women with PCOS. But it's really a new career.

I feel like it just came out several years ago, so I still feel like health coaching is a new concept, but what makes coaching and health coaching really different?

Because coaching in itself has been around for a really long time. There's coaches everywhere, but health coaching particular takes slightly different stance in the sense that we are here not as the expert but really partner with our clients that we work with.

I'm going to give you three scenarios of how that works and kind of like why I decide to also blend yoga into my coaching.

What Health Coaching Is and How It Differs

I hope that this story or this imagery can really help us understand how health coaching is different and what the benefits are. So imagine someone wants to someone wants to fix their or maybe make lifestyle changes.

They want to work on their diet or whatever it may be. They have the tools. Maybe they met a dietician in the dietitian. It's like, do X, Y and Z. So they're on this journey, they are in this car and they're driving on this road.

They have the tools to get there or not, the tools necessarily, but they know where they want to go. They're writing and they're driving this car and there's maybe a pothole.

And so they drive around it, right? Or maybe they get a flat tire and they kind of know how to fix that. But then there's this river in front of them and they have no clue how to pass that.

And on this journey, they kind of end up stopping. And so that's what kind of looks like without the guidance of a coach. Now, let's say health coach, now they've they've found a health coach and decide to have that coach join them on this journey.

Well, as a health coach, we're partnering with them. And in this scenario, instead of me being the driver, they continue to be a driver, but I am the tour guide.

So that's my position in this journey that we are on to better health. So on this journey I'll guide them, I'll give them options where they can go. I'll maybe give them the lay of the land, give them some knowledge, really equip them with tools.

Maybe there's a hill that we have to go up to encourage them so that they can keep going when they're feeling exhausted or feeling tired. Maybe there is a little river that I mentioned before, so I have some tools in my pocket and we can work together.

I can give them options. There's this bridge that's like a mile down. You take that, you might take that boat or do want to build a bridge together. We can we can take that route.

So really empowering them to have that ability to be able to like rate from one point to another, which is where they really want to be at the end of this journey.

Now, the driving with their health or overcoming whatever they want to overcome or be successful or what they're working towards. The reason why I decide to build or provide a tool of yoga as supplementary to my services is because on this journey imagine the same story but before and never mention of any mirrors in this car.

Right? So yoga is kind of like the mirror in the car. It allows you to on your journey, be mindful of what's around

you, allows you to reflect your your experiences.

And at the end of this journey, not only are you creating sustainable changes because you have this health coach, but now you're also experiences inner transformation.

Because yoga has taught you in this way of living, in the sense of mindfulness and the ability to reflect and the ability to like sit in the present and be mindful and practice this self-awareness, practice self-compassion.

And that's why I really combined health coaching and yoga together, because it's not just for me, it's not just about creating sustainable change, especially for women.

With PCOS, we deal with a lot of challenges out here, but also and here there's a lot of insecurity, a lot of fear, a lot of shame in here. And yoga allows us to kind of break through some of those barriers.

Wow. Well, let's go back and talk a little bit about what yoga is, because I know some people have seen pictures of people balancing in very unusual positions like on one hand and and so on.

So what kind of a skillset does one need to actually go into and and perform yoga properly? It sounds like it's as much a state of mind as it is a state of bodies.

Like maybe just give up like the ABCs of what is yoga in the first place. Yeah, that's such a great question because like you said and like what many of us observe, we associate yoga with certain postures and really complex postures, but yoga is actually so much more than that.

Posture is just one limb or one aspect of yoga. The essence of yoga is actually quieting the mind, the monkey minds, so that you can find your true self.

So we we tend to associate yoga with poses, but it really starts inward. It's really about the transformation that happens in your mind, body and spirit.

Well, you know, I think a lot of people really need to learn the foundational premises of yoga like you just described. So you talked about the monkey brain.

So a lot of people, they say to me, you know, I can't fall asleep. I just can't like quiet my mind or, you know, I have cravings and I can't quiet that inner voice that's telling me to go eat that bag of chips as such.

So can yoga then help with those things, help with sleep and cravings, as well as sort of finding a sense of inner peace? Yeah, absolutely. Yoga can help with all of that.

There are different aspects of yoga. There is the philosophy of yoga. There's a posture, like we mentioned before, there's also the meditation. And so all of these can become tools to help guide us and aid us when we're making lifestyle changes.

If we just break down what I said earlier, what yoga is calming the mind so that we can find our true self. You know, when we're dealing with this monkey mind, yoga talks about how we can actually think about the monkey mind that we're experience experiencing and actually put them in different buckets in regard to like where is this mindset stemming from?

And the more that we can actually understand that these are monkey minds and these are not us, the more we can kind of detach yourself from it. You know, sometimes we tell ourselves, I'm lazy or I, I'm just like, I don't have this card.

I'm just going to eat because I don't have the power to stop myself. We can actually pause and reflect and assess which bucket of thought is this? Is this like, is this me being is this actually this actually true or is this me making assumptions?

Is this like an idea that I'm creating in my head? Like, where does a stem from? And being able to actually unravel that and realize, I'm not lazy, I'm actually just I'm actually experiencing stress and therefore I'm turning to food.

That's how we can actually stop herself from certain behaviors and be able to correct and be able to guide herself and find a solution that actually fits the problem that we're actually really dealing with to the core and the heart of the problem.

In regards to mindfulness, I mean, there when we talk about food, let's just talk about food specifically right now in regards to food, everybody, when it comes to PCOS, we're going to have different approaches to food.

Everybody's food is going to look different because we have different symptoms, we have different backgrounds. And so food is going to look different for all of us.

But we can also experience these cravings and with meditation, it teaches us how to be mindful. It teaches us how to sit with ourselves, with the discomfort and really look inward and really listen.

Yoga as Mindfulness, Breathwork, and Self-Awareness

Listen to ourselves, listen to our thoughts, really notice what's around us and these skills, these attitudes can actually transfer to our lifestyle. We can look at our food and our diet and we can practice mindful eating.

Now, sitting with what we're eating. And instead of rushing it, we can observe it. We can we can just slow down and really enjoy that food. And then that's kind of the beauty of how yoga can really translate into all these areas of our health, all in the areas that we want to work on.

Well, I'm so glad you brought up the whole concept of mindfulness with eating, because so many people are eating on the run, you know, that's like they're running around and, you know, they can eat a meal and then they don't even remember what they ate because they were doing other things.

They weren't focusing on it. So one of the things about running around and being so busy is that a lot of people have trouble making their priorities clear to themselves.

You know, they say, I don't have time for this. I don't have time to learn how to be mindful. I don't have time. So how do you work with your your clientele to help them to prioritize, to say, you know what, you have to decide what matters to you.

Like, how do you get people to actually sit down and have a really mindful, enjoyable, enjoyable meal instead of just eating on the run? Yeah. Yeah. I think when it comes to time, time is such a interesting concept because, you know, time is really relative to what we see.

We have we all have, you know, the same amount of time. But some of us, we feel like we don't have enough time and some of us feel like maybe we have too much time and we don't know what to do with it regardless when it comes to the time and not feeling like we have enough time, I think that's is where coaching really is impactful and powerful in the sense that we can ask these powerful questions.

Like you mentioned before, how do we know what's most important to us? And simply asking, engaging these questions can really help a person kind of define for myself what is important.

And maybe at that time when you're asking them, they don't know what's important to them. That's where we can also guide them into themselves and, you know, remove all these ideas of what we think is important and really find the truth that's within us.

The core, like at the end of the day, what does really matter to us is our health is that work is a school like what's the most important to us? And then how do we direct and guide your life in a way that resonates with what really matters?

And so as a coach, I don't I don't tell people what they need to do, but I guiding cares to really find their inner truth so that they can live in accordance to their authentic self.

If that's what health is for them, what really matters is their health. Then I'm going to help encourage them and remind them, This is what you presented to me to before.

How do we live in accordance with that? What what lifestyle changes do we need to do so that we can uphold this value that you have? If that means time is getting in the way, what do we need to do?

What do we need to switch so that you can achieve the goal that you had set for yourself? Well, that's beautiful. And it brings me back to your initial analogy when you were talking about kind of a journey that you don't just stand there and just like point a finger, like go that way.

You actually take the journey with them to like remind them, you know, do you find that most of your clients, they really, like, lose their way if you're not there with them?

They just kind of get distracted or they lose their focus. Like, how important is it to stay on the job with them as opposed to just like planning things out and then sort of setting them loose, you know, how do you decide how much time does an individual need of your time?

Is it the same with everyone? Do you individualize that? How does this work? Yeah, yeah. It really into visualize that because everybody's different everybody has different motivation level, everybody has different lifestyle levels.

And I recognize that we have different eras in our life that really impacts our time, really impacts what we are able to invest in. And so knowing that there isn't a specific time frame for how long I work with someone, how much time I spend with someone, it's really up to them and what they need from me.

And so if they need if they feel like they need a lot of assistance, a lot of support, then that's why I'm here. That's that's what I'm here to guide them for.

Are here to guide them and so that they can reach their destination that that where they want to go. Now, sometimes along the way, family members or friends kind of become like obstructions.

So do you intervene when you find like a family member is, you know, maybe not intentionally, but does it matter? It's really happening that they're sabotaging your client in their journey to achieve optimal health?

Like, how do you handle that? Yeah. And that happens. That's that's a really good question because that really does happen. Our family, our network do influence us.

We we can't, especially if we want to be in community. That is inevitable. It's inevitable that, you know, we that our families or friends may influence us, may impact us on our journey to healing.

And in regards to those cases, this is where it's important to teach my clients really how to speak from a place of authenticity and compassion and really learn there.

So there's actually this cool tool called nonviolent communication and that's when you actually really learn to convey what's most important to you in a nonviolent way and express to them what your needs are being able to tell them, what your needs are.

Now, they can respond however they want, but at least you are able to communicate that to them. And that's really the most important thing, is that you were able to communicate that to them and be able to distinguish what they want you to do versus what you want to do and be in control of the actions that you you get to decide upon yourself.

Maybe your family won't agree with your lifestyle changes. Maybe they want that. Maybe they don't want to eat

what you want to eat. And that's okay because we aren't in control of other people in their choices, but we are in control of ourselves and we can decide how we want to show up.

And we also have every right to share with other people how we want to show up and how we want to live. And that that's our right and that's our free to.

And so I teach and empower clients to be able to have the tools and the ability to, number one, to communicate their need and how they want support to look like for them and learn how to also accept what is received and be able to know that they can continue on the path even if other people don't support them.

Well, that is really powerful and and empowering for everyone who's listening how to really control their destiny by handling the people in their lives.

Because that's not like you said, it's not a small matter. Now, you've talked a lot about the emotional and mind, you know, sort of related issues with yoga.

What about the physical part? So do you encourage your clients to actually learn a few basic poses or and what's the benefit of doing poses? I mean, people have heard of child's pose, some of the other types of positioning.

So tell us a little bit about that part of yoga. Mm hmm. Yeah. So when I am in my coaching sessions, I usually offer grounding because I know that we all have our own lives and maybe we come into a session and it's just been a really chaotic day.

I really want myself and my client to be present. So I do. Or I may offer some yoga poses or some meditation, so I call it grounding exercises. I may offer that one benefit of engaging in these postures and not that one has to the benefit of engaging in this posture is, number one, the demeanor that we actually come into, you know, where we are in these postures.

Sometimes it creates a fire in us and it brings out the energy within us. Sometimes it calms us and really relax us and allows us to really dove inward and be able to experience certain sensations and be able to be aware of certain tensions that may be or of living within our body.

So that's one of the benefits of actually engaging in these postures in the sense that it can really bring up the heartbeat, but also really learn how to like learn how to relax our body.

And we need a balance of that. We need to be able to, you know, if we want more energy, be able to light that up through vigorous poses. At the same time, if we're especially in a very stressful state, be able to find ways to remedy that and really calm the body as a whole.

And so poses that poses or asanas that we like to call it can do that for us. Well, that sounds like a wonderful thing for people to to give a try. And I know that a lot of people talk about yoga, breathing.

So maybe you could talk a little bit about the role of breathwork with yoga and how that helps women with PCOS to get, you know, to feeling better. Yeah.

So the breathwork or the pranayama that we like to call it can be really beneficial and clearing for all of us. There are different types of breathwork that we can engage in.

Some we may have heard of the four, seven, eight, I believe there is a box breathing. And so there's all different types that works for us.

Yoga, Fertility, and Personal Transformation

And I would say, listen to your body to know which breath works work for you, because some can be really hard for us and so I wouldn't recommend all different types of breathing, but really find one that works for you and one that

you feel you can do by the parts of breath.

Breathing is just being able to have that breath, be kind of the anchor into a state of calmness, into a state of relaxation. The more that you can actually allow your breath to anchor you, the more you can settle into your body and you'll start noticing.

You'll start noticing just everything kind of melting away. And the only thing that you hear left is just your breath. And that can be a really powerful experience.

It's going to be a experience that varies from person to person. But the more that we do that, the more that we create this cleansing experience throughout the whole body, the more that we can calm the whole body, kind of also create this posture of openness, openness to receive what may be needed to be received, the ability to just clear the mind and let go.

And so, I mean, there's so many benefits to just breathing because we don't although breathing is something that we often don't think about, it happens naturally.

We also don't realize how like ineffective we breathe. We don't realize that we we take our breath for granted. And being able to engage and breathe these breathing exercises really allows us to notice that we have control of our breath, even though it's automatic, and that there is something really special about being able to engage in that.

Well, I couldn't agree more when I first learned about yoga, breathing, and then tried it at it. Once you learn it, you can never abandon it. It's it's so remarkable in its benefits and you can feel it instantly.

It's not like delayed gratification. You really feel it instantly. So everyone should definitely learn some of these different breath techniques. Now, many of our listeners and viewers want to get pregnant.

Not all, but some of them do. So do you have any different approaches for women with PCOS or struggling with fertility? Mm hmm. I don't have any specific approaches when it comes to fertility, just because that isn't my expertize.

And I want to be mindful of like what is within my realm. But there are definitely plenty of yoga postures that allows us to tap into the different organs in different parts of our body to just kind of like open that up or release that.

And so there is a there's poses where you can lay in the ground and you do the bar fight, pose and just open up that area and being able to like release that tension and find relaxation.

There's also we talk about chakras and there is the sacral that's kind of like in your pelvic area. You know, there's a lot of poses where you can tap into that area, that sacral area, that creates intimacy, that creates sexuality, creativity, that kind of lives there.

And so I would say, you know, that's a great place to start, especially if like fertility is a place that's important to you. Start there, starting a place where you can start feeling the fire that burned energy, bring that energy towards that area.

And in hopes, I hope that that will encourage fertility. Well, that's great. That's what I was hoping that you'd share, because I had heard that as well, that certain yoga poses really do help to promote fertility.

And so much can be done that involves mind, body medicine, you know, which is really what I'm hearing from you is that yoga is almost a philosophy of life.

You know, it's like an approach to everything in life. So do you find when you teach that with the health coaching and combining with the yoga that people actually have transformations in how they view like everything?

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I can take myself as an example of that experience. So it's also why I decided to blend

these two and know that yoga is a piece I want to offer as a tool for my clients during my own experience, especially having with PCOS, even though I didn't look the part and people thought that I was driving, I was okay and a lot of emotional turmoil having to deal with PCOS.

There was a lot of shame and a lot of just like loneliness and not being able to express that pain to anyone. I really held it and I felt really insecure.

I felt like I was never enough, especially as a woman. I felt like I was never enough and now all just lived inside me and nobody can see that. But I felt it.

I felt it day in and day out, even though I went to go see a therapist and talked about maybe some of these feelings of not feeling enough, able to feel good for a moment.

But it wasn't until I got on to my mat that I felt this release, this sense of letting go, this sense of surrender and self-acceptance. And so through all of that expansion, I found that there is this transformation that we can experience.

Now, transformation is going to look different for everybody. You know, yoga is a way of life, but, you know, it's also a practice. It's a daily practice.

It's not just one where you go on to your mass and then now you're all better and you're all transform. And it's a consistent practice. It's it's day in and day out and being able to challenge some of those beliefs that maybe we have about ourselves limiting beliefs and being able to sit in the discomfort or so that transformation can happen.

Now, Jo, everyone who has been watching this interview wants to proceed to learn yoga. I can guarantee you everyone wants this transformation. So what would be the next step to learn about health, coaching and yoga and perhaps work with you?

Maybe you could share a little bit about your business and what could be next steps for all of our viewers? Yeah, absolutely.

Find Jo Flow and Next Steps for PCOS Support

So you can find me at Findjoflow.com/pcossos That website will be specifically for all our listeners today. There's also a 50% off on my health coaching services and a free consultation, so that's where you can find me when it comes again, pretty simple and clear in regards to my services.

It's it's primarily health coaching with coupled with yoga as a tool. And together I really hope that we can create this transformation when it comes to managing PCOS is really my mission around my business and everybody's going to serve women with PCOS differently, but my hope and goal and mission is allow us to redefine what PCOS is.

And I thought about this for a really long time and I wish I had this for myself and it felt like banishing PCOS. It just took over my life. It became all aspects of my life from every choice I make to what I did do and didn't do.

PCOS was a thought that a sector and so I hope through my coaching services someone who is who I coach will end up redefining what PCOS looks like for them and realize that PCOS no longer is polycystic ovary syndrome for us.

But PCOS becomes positive body, it becomes community connection, it becomes overcoming our symptoms through lifestyle changes and and self-compassion as as we again redefine and find her flow with PCOS.

Oh, I just love your approach and how you really take charge to redefine how you view your condition and your life and then help all of your clients to really take a different view of who they are and what they can be.

It's beautiful and I cannot thank you enough for joining me for this episode. I'm sure everyone is going to want to listen to it again and then find out from you how to really proceed in this manner because this is such an amazing

tool.

Knowing is one thing, doing is another. You enable the doing and that leads to the ultimate result. And I just want to thank you again and I look forward to having more contacts with you in the future.

Thank you for helping me.