



Women's Health Tasmania

NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2020

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Getting in touch

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Women's Health Information Line
Free call: 1800 675 028

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www.womenshealthtas.org.au
facebook: womens-health-tasmania
twitter: WomensHealthTAS



SUPPORTED BY

Tasmanian
Government

WHT receives funding support from the Tasmanian Government through the Department of Health.

Corona Survival

There are projects starting already encouraging people to write journals or take photos to record the history of the Year of COVID 19. It is very strange to be living through such history-making times; harrowing, worrying, affirming, alarming, moving. What a rollercoaster.



We wanted to avoid a COVID-drenched newsletter for our winter magazine, but it's such a huge story that the tale of the virus leaks into a lot of what we're talking about. So we focussed on things that are working well for people — mental

health supports, health service supports, entertainment, income supports. We hope you find this useful.

As always, stay well and stay in touch. And as the Scots say, "wash yer hands!"



There's good news about anxiety

Everyone experiences anxiety. We all have times when we feel worried, nervous, uneasy, fearful. We might get anxious because we have to do public speaking, or we might get anxious about climate change, or catching COVID 19, or the long term impacts of the pandemic.

For some people anxiety can feel very intense, with very physical consequences. It might make you shake or tremble, sweat, feel sick, or make your heart beat fast. Some people get pains in their stomach and tension in their neck and shoulders. It can make you dwell on things that worry you, but at the same time make it hard to concentrate. It can stop you sleeping and make you irritable. It can be so bad that people have a very constant feeling of dread; a feeling that something truly awful is about to happen. It can even be so severe that some people have physical symptoms that are similar to a heart attack.

And the symptoms aren't just physical — they can have a big impact on how you live your life. Anxiety can make people avoid situations that they think might make it worse — including avoiding challenges, situations or social settings.

If you experience these things you are certainly not alone, especially now. Traumatic experiences can cause anxiety, so can social and economic conditions, including living with threats that are beyond our control. Losing jobs, financial stresses — all of these are anxiety provoking events. Women especially experience anxiety at quite high rates which can often be about the roles we're expected to play and the pressure to cope.

But the good news is that there are things you can do to manage anxiety. They're different for everybody, but here are some ones that many women have found useful.

- Talking openly to someone about how you feel.
- Using relaxation techniques like deep, controlled breathing, or mindfulness. (Mindfulness just means paying attention to what is happening.) These techniques can reduce the symptoms of anxiety when they first occur.
- Replacing anxious thoughts with positive ones.
- Looking after your health helps. Take time to relax, to be physically active, and to help yourself sleep better. Eating a healthy balanced diet, limiting alcohol and caffeine helps, and spending time with people who care about you all helps.

- Laughing is good. So are friendships, hobbies or interests. Community is good, and you can find that by joining a group, or a club, or by volunteering. These activities are still happening even while we have to do physical distancing — groups are meeting online, volunteers are joining up to help support other community members through this time in ways that are safe for the volunteers.

There are lots of online resources and programs for managing anxiety, and some have been especially developed to help people with anxiety related to the pandemic. (See below)

And finally, you can learn to understand and recognise anxiety. Books written by people who learned how to manage their anxiety symptoms have helped much better community understanding and can be very useful. WHT recently bought *Your Own Kind of Girl* by Clare Bowditch for the Women's Health Library. Clare, a successful singer/actor/radio presenter, gives a wonderful explanation of how she took control of her life back from anxiety using the techniques developed by Claire Weekes (see our Book Review for more about that inspirational woman!)

At WHT our programs and services are designed for the particular health needs of women. That's why our physical activity programs are forms of exercise that are healthy for the mind as well as the body (tai chi, yoga, weights) and we also promote meditation. We also have counsellors available to talk to and a Health Information Line staffed by Health Workers who are experienced in talking to women who are dealing with anxiety.

Our classes and meditation are online — you can get access to them via facebook, or through our enews (we'll send you a link to them). Sign up for our enews to learn more.

If you feel like anxiety is getting on top of you, you can call our Women's Health Information Line to talk to one of our health workers 1800 675 028.

There is also a Tasmanian COVID-19 mental health support line, being provided by Lifeline Tasmania 1800 98 44 34.

Free online tools and practical ways to protect your mental health:
<https://covid19.thiswayup.org.au>



Telehealth — virtually impossible?

By RACHEL ANDREW, WHT BOARD CHAIR

COVID 19 has challenged us to do things differently. Telehealth is one of those things. It has long been said that telehealth is really a great way of getting our health needs met, especially in rural communities. But let's face it, none of us used it, our health care professionals didn't use it and we didn't like the thought of it. Then COVID happened.

I am a pelvic floor physiotherapist – a “vagina” physiotherapist. So, I'm a member of a scientific and very physical profession. Pre-COVID I had been thinking about telehealth because it's supposed to be so good and I see a lot of women who have to travel a long distance, but I couldn't wrap my head around how it would actually work.

I thought that telehealth was practically impossible for my work, and I had a lot of personal hang-ups at the thought of it: the technology, the security, and whether it would even work to help my patients. But because of COVID I had to give it a go as I couldn't continue to work face to face in a way that was safe for my clients or myself.

When I researched it, I found a surprising amount of evidence around how effective telehealth is. There are a lot of studies for things like back and knee pain and even urinary incontinence and they all show that it is as effective as conventional physio appointments. For psychology, specialist or GP appointments, it can be extremely effective.

I did some training in how to set my room up. I found a secure medical program like Skype, and a backup option (a telephone call) if it didn't work.

So, what happens? It will vary slightly depending on the platform your health provider uses, but you will get an email with a link to a virtual “room” you click into at the time of your appointment and will get a little information about telehealth. Then you will get a split screen and see your health provider. They can ask you questions, take your history, clarify what has been happening, show you pictures, send you documents through the program, and even directly send prescriptions to you and a pharmacy.

With my profession, you might be asked to do certain movements or try different things after the appointment and you'll be given a plan for each result. I tend to follow up the appointment with an email summary of important information.

Some of the significant benefits can be

- It's quicker — no travel time — you just have to click the link at your appointment time
- It's convenient
- It's cheaper — no travel costs, parking fees, time off work
- The treatment is safe and effective
- It's bulk-billed (check with your healthcare provider when you book the appointment). This means you can probably see your GP or specialist for no out-of-pocket expenses.
- If you have a Team Care Arrangement as part of a GP management plan the appointment for allied health (physio, dietician, speech pathology etc.) can be bulk-billed for some people (again check before the appointment)
- Telehealth puts you in charge of your own health
- You may or may not choose to change out of your pyjamas

Now telehealth does not work for everyone. Some people don't have the room or the privacy at home. However, it does work for a lot of people, and as a physio, I have done a 360° turnaround in my attitude.

The treatment is so much in the story. With an experienced clinician and the right questions, the treatment can be tailored to you.

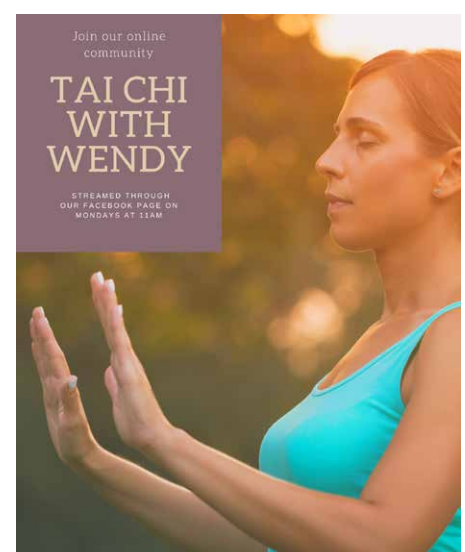
I'm finding that new clients who I haven't seen “in the flesh” are getting better. The treatment is as effective, and sometimes it seems I am able to progress people more quickly. Having even a short appointment helps keep people on track, allows any worries to be eased and helps me progress their rehab, so they keep getting better during this weird time.

Especially for new clients it is a really great way to learn what has been going on with them, question and problem solve and get them started with treatment.

People have to take responsibility for their own health - they are doing things and observing what happens and reporting back. Then we make a new plan.

This is something my clients have asked me to keep doing when things are back to “normal” as they have found it beneficial and easier than travelling to town, so I am keeping it in the diary.

I would encourage you to get in touch with your health care provider if you are worried about anything – use the telehealth option if you are self-isolating and don't neglect your general health care.



Podcasts — your new best friend

Podcasts are great companions for a long, slow afternoon. You can take them for a walk with you, they'll chat to you while you do the housework, you can go to sleep to them. Up to you.

And they're free. Incredible.

Here are five favourite feminist podcasts, which we recommend to you.

But first, do you know how to find them? Here's how. You can find them on websites. Put the podcast name into your internet search engine. The podcast webpage will have the episodes visible with a LISTEN button. Click that and you're away.

If you have an iPhone or iPad you probably have an Apple Podcast app. You can go into it to search for podcasts. (The search symbol is often a magnifying glass icon.)

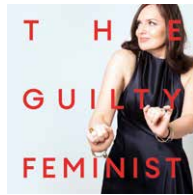
If you have an Android smartphone you can use the Google podcasts app. You'll find that in the app store. Just install the app, then use it to search for podcasts. (Again, look for the magnifying glass.)

What? That's a sly, soft launch!

Yes, we're about to launch a WHT podcast series!

We've called it *She's Out There* – in honour of Amelia Earhart, who for generations of women was a brave, wonderful, bold mystery. No-one knew where the famous 1930s aviator had disappeared to. She was still 'out there' exploring, pushing boundaries.

Stay tuned to our social media or enews for the release of the podcasts.

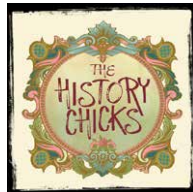


The Guilty Feminist

For just about everyone

Probably currently the most famous feminist podcast in the world. Huge range of speakers, discussing topics of interest to '21st century feminists' while giving room to 'our insecurities, fears and hypocrisies'. And snort out loud funny too.

<https://guiltyfeminist.com/>



The History Chicks

For just about everyone

"Any resemblance to a boring history class is purely coincidental". A great trip through female characters in history, factual and fictional.

<http://thehistorychicks.com/>



Chat 10, Looks 3

For people who love books, podcasts, television and eating food with weird ingredients

Hosted by Leigh Sales and Annabel Crabb. No party politics or bad news here, just chatting and laughing about the things that give us happiness.

<https://www.chat10looks3.com/podcast>



Too Peas in a Podcast

For everyone

With Mandy and Kate. A podcast that 'contains tears, laughter and an occasional f word. It's not suitable for children'. This is a podcast by two friends parenting multiple children with disabilities and special needs. .

<https://toopeasinapodcast.podbean.com/>



Dolly Parton's America

For people who love sadass songs

A dive into the Dollyverse. The maker puts a strong case for Dolly as a feminist icon — a woman who flipped the story on songs about women, and a VERY savvy businesswoman who knows exactly what she's doing with the whole Dolly shtick. It's funny, bubbly and moving.

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/dolly-partons-america>



She's Out There

For women anywhere in Australia, but especially useful for women living in Tasmania

This is our new podcast series. In season 1 we look at sexual and reproductive health. We talk to women around Tassie about menopause, Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives, Eco-friendly menstrual products; the health of bisexual women, access to terminations, and painful sex.

Access to termination services during COVID

During the first months of COVID crisis we were watching with concern how shrinking services would affect women, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

Certainly, things did get harder for women needing to have a surgical termination of pregnancy.

Although this is category 1 elective surgery and could therefore go ahead even when the strictest restrictions were in place, overall there was less surgery happening and theatre 'lists' got smaller. Then the two North West hospitals closed, and their patients were transferred to the Launceston General, making it hard to get services outside Hobart. Mainland services

became unavailable as flights out of Tasmania were reduced to one a day and women leaving the state were facing the requirement to quarantine for 2 weeks on their return.

However, to address this reduction in services, the Royal Hobart Hospital was given extra capacity to deal with women who might be coming from other parts of the state. And the low-cost private Hobart clinic also continued to provide services. WHT played a very active role in keeping providers in touch with each other and up to date about what services were available.

The value of the work of the last few years to support and build a network of GPs who provide medical termination services could also be seen at this time, as these providers continued to

work through the crisis able to deliver these services, often through telehealth.

While we acknowledge that having to travel distances at such a stressful and risky time is really hard for women, it was encouraging to see that the importance of access to surgical termination services was not ignored in the Health Department's response to the COVID crisis, even in such a difficult context for health service providers. We were reassured to see that efforts were made to ensure that services remained available in Tasmania.

It's a long journey to see women's services normalised and given equal priority — but this was a good step on the road.



Rethinking health promotion

Our health workers love to get out into the community to offer sessions to support the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian women.

However, COVID-19 put the brakes on our health promotion visits to Neighbourhood Houses, Child and Family Centres and other community organisations. Like many things, we have had to re-think how we offer these sessions.

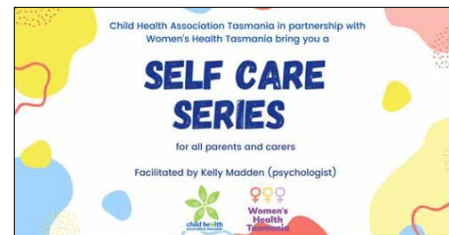
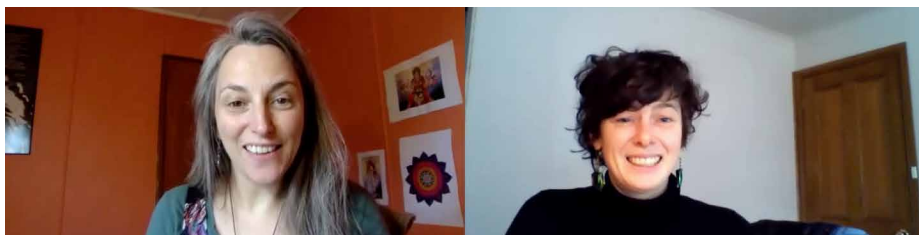
Lots of other organisations have been doing the same sort of re-thinking. When we talked with the Child Health Association of Tasmania (CHAT) and wayraparatee Child and Family Centre in Geeveston, we considered ways we could connect with community members while we can't physically gather.

We are pleased to have partnered with CHAT to offer a series of video-conferenced self-care sessions for parents covering managing stress, mother guilt and mindfulness in May and June. Our Psychologist

Kelly Madden has also attended wayraparatee Child and Family Centre's Tiny Bubs group via a video-conference session.

We will continue to look for innovative ways to connect with Tasmanian women to discuss important topics around health and wellbeing.

If you are involved with a community group that would like to partner with us to deliver an online health promotion session, please get in touch. We'd love to discuss how we can connect!



Conversations with LGBTIQ+ women — access, inclusion and welcome

The Conversations with Women project is about hearing from women about what's working, what's not and what needs to happen to make health in Tasmania better.

So, what have we heard from LGBTIQ+ women? The full report is not far off but here's a taste of what we heard.

Exclusion has an impact on health

Women told us that exclusion can be felt in a lot of different ways - from the indirect messages that LGBTIQ+ women receive through marketing and the physical environment of health settings to instances of overt discrimination. Experiences of exclusion and discrimination can stop LGBTIQ+ women accessing health services.

LGBTIQ+ inclusive health care needs to be visible

Women spoke about not knowing who to trust to give an inclusive service or who had the necessary medical expertise. Women wanted health professionals to be active, informed and visible in working with and for LGBTIQ+ women and people.

Women wanted inclusive preventative health spaces

Women talked about how the sometimes subtle, sometimes not so subtle culture of a public place, gym or pool impacted on how comfortable they felt to be in the space. Ideas about physical appearance, gender and how your body looked could really get in the way of enjoying exercise. Women wanted spaces where all bodies and identities were welcome to get on with exercising without feeling like they were the odd one out!

Perhaps you can relate?

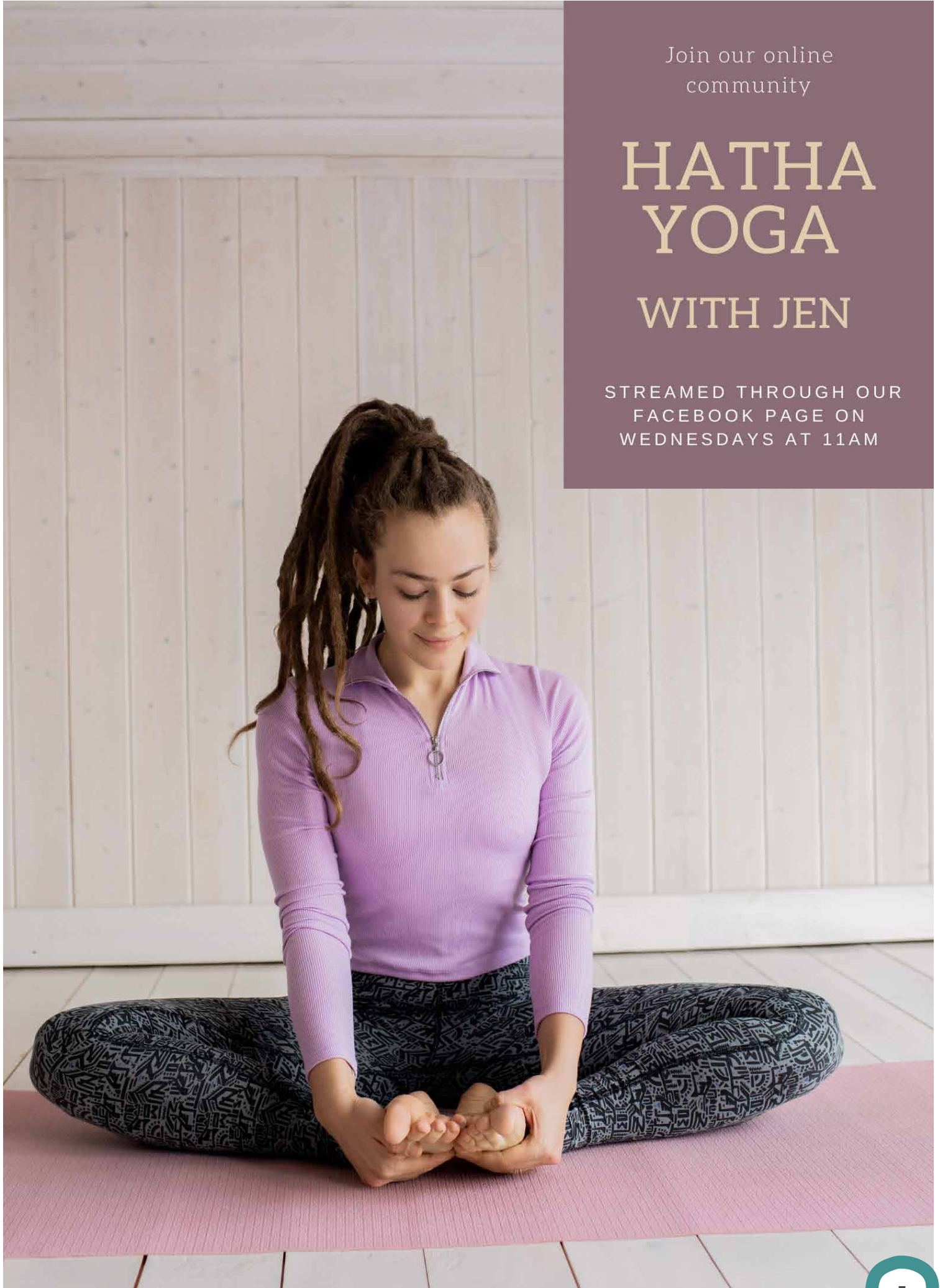


Join our online
community

HATHA YOGA

WITH JEN

STREAMED THROUGH OUR
FACEBOOK PAGE ON
WEDNESDAYS AT 11AM



BOOK REVIEW

The Woman Who Cracked the Anxiety Code: The extraordinary life of Dr Claire Weekes Judith Hoare

By JEN VAN-ACHTEREN

In the bookstore, this biography leapt out at me for a couple of reasons. Firstly, as the title suggested, it was about an extraordinary woman. Secondly, because of her ground-breaking work, at odds with the medical establishment, in assisting people living with mental illness to find their own way out of distress.

My mother lived with mental health problems beginning in the 70s and - I imagine like many people touched by mental ill health, either personally or through watching a loved one suffer - I find myself attracted to possible explanations and cures. While I had not heard the name Dr Claire Weekes before, I did remember the title of her first book, *Self Help For Your Nerves*. It was an international bestseller, and is still in print; my Aunt had given my Mum a copy.

The Woman Who Cracked the Anxiety Code explores the life and achievements of Dr Claire Weekes, a pioneer in the modern treatment of anxiety and other mental health conditions. Weekes' observational research in biology and her own personal experience of anxiety, after a mistaken diagnosis of tuberculosis, shaped her life's work to develop a practical treatment which handed power back to the individual. Recognising in herself how the physical body reacted to fear, Weekes combined physiology and psychology in a way not done previously and coined the term 'mind-body connection'.

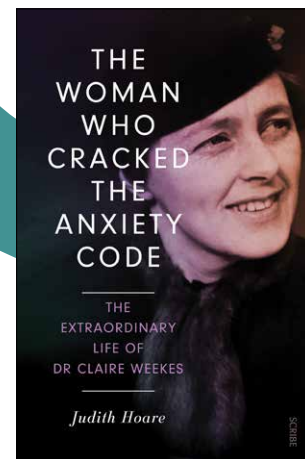
While telling Weekes' life story, Hoare also thoroughly sets the scene - by sharing information on the forebears of modern psychology, and explaining the tension between followers of Freud and Darwin. The level of detail might be too much for some readers, but it does provide an understanding of the debates Weekes was exposed to, and contributed to via her research.

Weekes led an incredibly busy, interesting life and, like most of us, her personal life was full of ups and downs including family dramas. Not to mention the personal cost she must have experienced, in constantly battling the establishment. The devastating loss of her lifelong companion, pianist Elizabeth Coleman, was a massive blow, with those closest to her describing her after as depressed.

Coleman not only offered Weekes companionship and intimacy, but had also run the household. Weekes was not fond of housework and had her own very strong views on gender roles and the damage done by them. She had, in fact, received the ire of many husbands by suggesting women find something else to do, something creative when recovering from mental ill health.

Author Judith Hoare's distinguished career and skills as journalist and editor, are plainly apparent in the amount of research she's obviously undertaken to inform this very detailed retelling of Weekes' story.

While the public embraced Weekes' books, and her patients the treatment she offered, there was a great deal of



resistance from mental health professionals. To them, she was only a general practitioner, an unqualified populist who had the audacity to question the prevailing orthodoxies. Weekes presented not only a new method of treatment which taught people to cure themselves, but also a threat to the establishment.

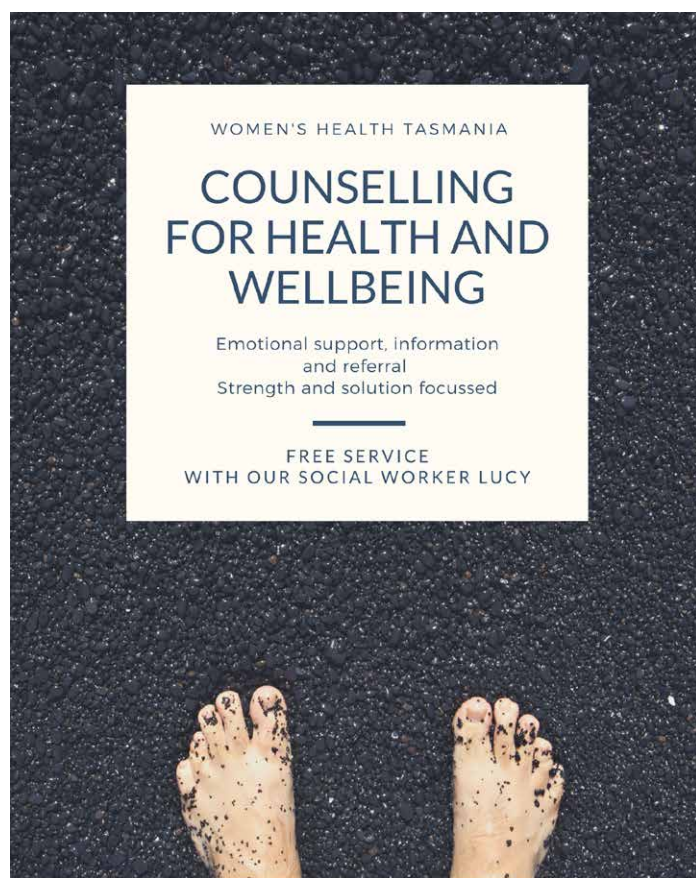
Hoare began her research expecting to find predecessors had documented Weekes' life and work; to her surprise this was not the case. From the level of detail in this book, one could surmise Hoare was focussed on presenting an ironclad contextual, definitive explanation of Weekes' legitimacy and that her lasting legacy in the field is duly recognised. Depending on the reader, of course, this detail and more formal tone may be less enjoyable to read. Those of you who are fascinated by the woman, the subject, the context, the detail and don't mind going off on a tangents, will love it.



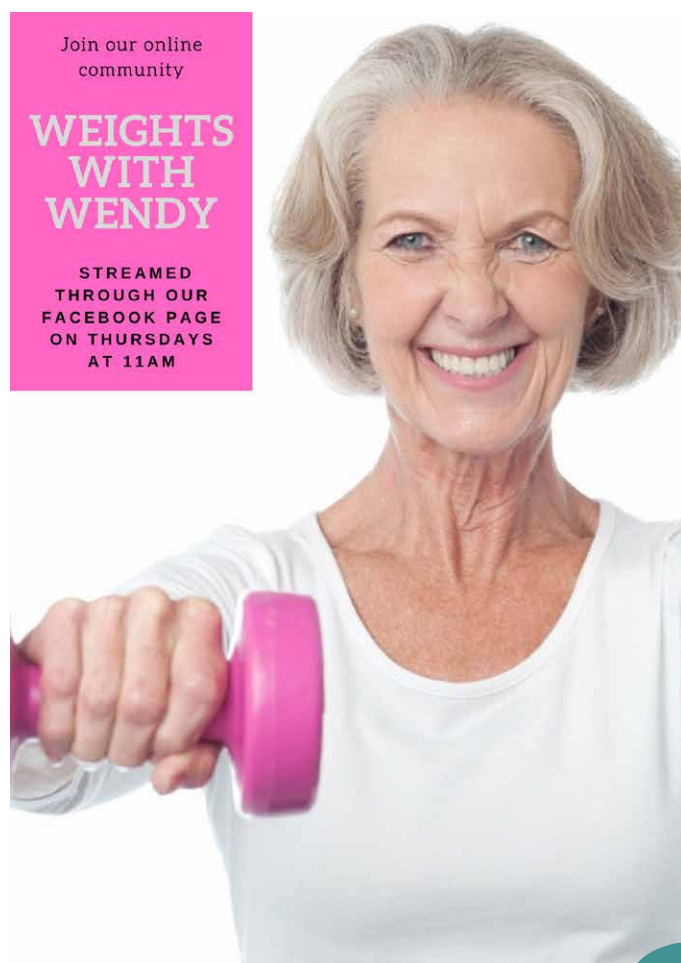
What's on at Women's Health Tasmania?

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Starting at 10am Walking Bus (Hobart area) with Lucy — contact WHT to participate			Closed
11am–12pm Tai Chi <i>live on Facebook</i>	11–11:30am Meditation with Jean <i>on Facebook</i>	11–12:30 Hatha Yoga with Jen <i>live on Facebook</i>	11–12:00 Weights with Wendy <i>live on Facebook</i>	Closed
Phone and online counselling • Pregnancy Choices • Emotional Health	Phone and online counselling • Pregnancy Choices • Emotional Health	Phone and online counselling • Pregnancy Choices • Emotional Health	Phone and online counselling • Pregnancy Choices • Emotional Health	Closed
Health Information Line: 1800 675 028	Health Information Line: 1800 675 028	Health Information Line: 1800 675 028	Health Information Line: 1800 675 028	Closed
No Interest Loans (NILS) Loan Officer	No Interest Loans (NILS) Loan Officer		No Interest Loans (NILS) Loan Officer	Closed

Coming soon: Breast Cancer Support Group Online | For counselling or NILS appointments ring WHT on 6231 3212.



You can book a phone or online appointment by calling 1800 675 028 or emailing info@womenshealthtas.org.au





Online!

Breast Cancer Support Group

Starting again soon using zoom.

Interested call Rosemary Kerrison on 0439 423 934.



Will the windows arrive from Germany?

Are you wondering what is happening with the renovation of WHT's 25 Lefroy Street site?

Anyone who watches home renovation shows knows how slow renovations can be, even without a global pandemic. But nevertheless, work has continued.

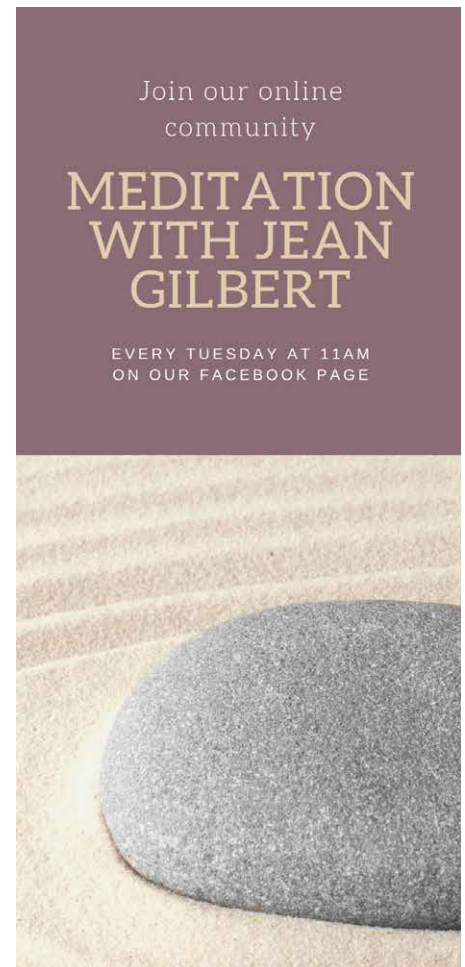
To recap — Phase 1 and 2 are complete (Phase 1: the renovation of the back room and makeover of the admin area; Phase 2: the building of the drain to stop damp creeping in through our western wall). And the Board has found the funds we need to complete Phase 3 — the renovation of the Cottage.

We consulted with women using the Centre, asking what they would like to see done with the Cottage. In response to your suggestions, here's what we can and can't do:

- ✓ more storage space!
- ✓ more light!
- ✓ a makeover — fresh paint, fresh look to kitchen!
- ✓ bring back the GP! We can take the first step, by repairing the consulting room.
- ✗ spa/jacuzzi! Brilliant! But no. Can't. Sorry.

We're about to commission architects, which means we can start getting the engineering and surveying permissions.

We're hoping this work can be done while physical distancing requirements are in place so that having a grand opening will be part of being physically together again.



Health, poverty and the Corona Supplement

Until October 2020, people receiving the JobSeeker payment (and some other payments) will receive a 'Corona Supplement' of an added \$550 per fortnight.

Before this, the payment for a single, unemployed person with no dependents was \$565.70 per fortnight — far below the poverty line.

It's not enough to live on and we see this reflected in health outcomes for folk living on unemployment payments.

Research shows that people who receive unemployment payments are more likely than waged workers to have poor health outcomes, and to live with multiple health conditions and mental health conditions.

Out of pocket costs for health care can be significant. People on low incomes often put off essential health care, dental and mental health support because they can't afford it.

Socio-economic disadvantage leads to poor health outcomes.

The Corona Supplement is welcome and needed.

It's invigorating to think about what changes in health outcomes might we see with the increase. Indeed, private rental affordability has gotten better for some people virtually overnight as a result.

But perhaps the next questions really are about whether the increase will be maintained and when will a Government commit to making unemployment payments keep pace with the cost of living.

**RAISE
THE RATE**

References

ACOSS, *Poverty and Inequality Make us Sick*. https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ACOSS_Cohealth_health-inequality-infographic.pdf

ACOSS and UNSW Sydney, *Poverty in Australia 2020* http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Poverty-in-Australia-2020_Part-1_Overview.pdf

Anglicare, *Rental Affordability Snapshot April 2020*. <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/rental-affordability-snapshot-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

If there is any move to reduce the payments to unemployed people again you can do your bit to stop the terrible impact of this on unemployed people and their families.

Sign on to the Raise the Rate campaign at www.raisetherate.org.au

A woman with brown hair, seen from the back, is walking on a gravel path. She is wearing a blue knitted sweater and has a brown leather strap over her shoulder. The path is surrounded by trees with yellow and green autumn foliage. The text is overlaid on the image.

**Tuesday
Mornings**

Women's Walking Bus

**Contact Lucy at
WHT for a
walking partner,
start time and
more details.**