



Women's Health Tasmania

MAGAZINE
SUMMER 2022

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That mysterious mind/body connection

Are you curious about how the mind and the body connect, but find that the “wellness” marketing puts you off reading about it? Relax, we're not selling you anything.

In our work we see all the time the connections between the mind and the body – how mental ill health can make you physically ill, and how physical issues can affect your mental health.

This magazine covers some interesting topics that relate to the mind/body connection – the research on the mental (as well as physical) benefits of yoga, what we are learning about the mental benefits of walking, the ways in

which your gut can affect your mental wellbeing ... and more.

We also have some useful stuff – tips on body positivity and our new podcast series, Meditations with Valerie. It's the best podcast series since our last great podcast series.

And you'll also find information on what's happening at Women's Health Tasmania. Read on ...

Getting in touch

25 Lefroy Street
North Hobart, Tasmania 7002
Gates open 9.15am–12:30pm
Monday–Thursday
P: 6231 3212 F: 6236 9449
Women's Health Information Line
Free call: 1800 675 028

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



SUPPORTED BY

Tasmanian
Government

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FREE

MIGRANT MOTHER & BABY PLAYGROUP



For women who
have migrated
to Tasmania
from overseas
and have babies
aged under 12
months of age.
(Please don't
bring older
children.)

Come to Women's
Health Tas,
25 Lefroy St,
North Hobart
Register on
62313212 or
[Info@womenshealthtas.
org.au](mailto:Info@womenshealthtas.org.au)


**Women's
Health
Tasmania**

Rise in gut problems and depression...coincidence or related?



- Have you ever gone through a stressful experience and noticed that your appetite disappeared?
- Have you had constipation and noticed how lethargic, irritable, and low in mood it made you feel?
- Have you ever been really anxious and felt 'butterflies' in your stomach, or noticed you needed to run to the toilet multiple times?

That's your gut and your brain talking to each other, and they do it all the time!

BeyondBlue tell us that in any one year, around one million Australian adults have depression, and over two million have anxiety. As many as one in five Australians will suffer from IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), just one type of gut problem, during their lifetime. Research shows us these two things are not coincidental.

Depression, anxiety and stress interact with gut problems like stomach pain, constipation, diarrhea, irritable bowel syndrome, and nausea. Studies indicate that stress changes the levels of gut bacteria, contributing to symptoms of anxiety and depression. There is also evidence that gut problems can predict future anxiety problems, and that rebalancing gut bacteria has a positive influence on both current and future mental health.

Do I have a second brain?

The gut has been called our 'second brain' because of the important role it plays in our mental health. During the 19th century, Western doctors believed poor gut health caused mood, thought and behaviour problems.

In the 20th century, Western doctors were more likely to believe that poor mental health was the cause of many gut problems. Now, in the 21st century, there is a growing understanding that both gut and brain affect each other in what is called a 'bi-directional' relationship. They talk to and influence each other.

Just how do my gut and brain talk to each other?

We all have gut bacteria, from before we are born, and we need these 'good' bacteria to be healthy and well. The levels and diversity of bacteria can change due to stress, diet, and antibiotics, and these changes have significant effects on our body and our mental health.

The gut-brain axis refers to the three pathways through which the gut and brain talk to each other, and in which a range of complex things happen. For example, if we are stressed, this changes our gut bacteria so that we release more cortisol (the stress hormone) and it is able to move through more parts of our body resulting in pain, fatigue and anxiety. Our gut triggers an inflammation response to stress and infection, and this can increase depression, anxiety, and pain sensitivity. By rebalancing our gut bacteria with food, anti-depressants, or activities that reduce stress, we can reduce the release of cortisol and increase the release of dopamine, which is a hormone promoting relaxation and positive mood.

How can I care for my gut-brain health?

By taking an holistic approach, you can look after both your brains!

Pre-biotics are a type of fibre that we get from food. It passes through our gastro-intestinal tract undigested and stimulates the growth or activity of certain 'good' bacteria. Foods that act as pre-biotics include vegetables, legumes, fruit, breads and cereals, nuts and seeds (and human breast milk!).

A few tips to increase your fibre intake:

- Eat a high-fibre breakfast cereal and add nuts, seeds, and dried fruit
- Add a few tablespoons of bran or psyllium husks to cereal, soups, casseroles, yoghurt.
- Eat wholegrain breads
- Eat fruit and vegetable skins, don't peel them
- Snack on fruit, nuts, and seeds
- Eat legume or lentil-based dishes a few nights a week (e.g. fufu, chickpea salad, dhal, add lentils to casseroles, salads and soups)
- Eat fruit instead of drinking fruit juice or soft drink

If you've been diagnosed with IBS, seek the guidance of your doctor.

Probiotics are a way to get more good bacteria into your gut, and these can be through fermented foods or dietary supplements. There is no recommended daily intake for probiotics, so just add what you can to your diet. The most common fermented foods that contain probiotics include: yoghurt, kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, pickles, miso, tempeh, kimchi, sourdough bread, and some cheeses.

Stress-reducing techniques and activities contribute to improvements in both your mental health and your gut health. Try things such as:

- spending time in nature
- spending time with pets and friends, on hobbies and things you enjoy
- exercise (walking, running, swimming, yoga)
- meditation, mindfulness, and visualisation
- progressive muscle relaxation
- breathing exercises
- counselling and psychological support

References and resources

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'The Gut-Brain Axis: historical reflections', *Microbial Ecology in Health & Disease*: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30425612/>

'Prebiotic Diet FAQs', *Monash University*: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/ccs/gastroenterology/prebiotic/faq>

'How to get more probiotics', *Harvard Health Publishing*: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-get-more-probiotics>

Don't know how to find or download your vaccination certificate?

Help is on its way.

Meet Lynn and Celeste, our volunteer **Vaccination Certificate Search and Rescue Team**.

Lynn and Celeste can help you:

- Print your certificate off
- Save your certificate on your smart phone
- Help put your covid vax certificate into your Check In Tas app

They may not be able to do everything (sometimes it depends on how old the smart phone is) but it's a great experience for folk because there's learning along the way!

You will need to wear a mask while meeting with the volunteer.

Our volunteers are available to meet you at the WHT Centre (25 Lefroy St) on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons between 2.30 and 4pm.

To book a spot call Maree or BJ on 6231 3212 or email info@womenshealthtas.org.au

(If you are happy to have a go yourself there are instructions on the Tas Department of Health Coronavirus website: www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/business-and-employees/vaccination-requirements/vaccination-status-and-evidence)



WOMEN WRITERS' SUPPORT GROUP



A story about friendship and support.

Meets first Wednesday of the month 2–4pm at Women's Health Tasmania

This group is for all women writers — published, experienced or not! For more information call Women's Health Tasmania on 6231 3212.



The environment and your health

Floods, fires, polluted air, food systems or water...the environment can kill you! The environment can also heal you.

Historically public health systems focussed on dealing with environmental health risks. Public health physicians worked to ensure people had clean water supplies, clean air, and safety from toxins. Their work has now expanded because the degradation of ecosystems and climate change also pose profound threats to human health.

There are also strong links between the built environment and health, but they aren't necessarily obvious. How our cities are designed and managed affects our choices (for example, whether you use a car or public transport, or cycle or walk). And our exposure to public health risks in our neighbourhoods (for example poker machine venues and fast-food outlets) also affects our health, as communities, and as individuals.

So, the environment you live in can have a negative impact on your health. We're also learning about the ways in which the environment can make you well, especially the natural environment.

For example, research has shown that taking exercise in the natural environment is good for your mental health.

There are psychological benefits to just doing physical activity; exercise can work as well as antidepressants for some people.¹ But the environmental/mental health connection also exists. Research has shown that doing activity in a natural environment produces greater mental health benefits than physical activity in other environments, and that it doesn't have to be huge exposure to the natural environment. Even exercising just once a week in the natural environment substantially reduces the risk of poor mental health.²

And it doesn't have to be high intensity exercise. Research has found walking in nature is good for your mental health and positivity and lowers levels of depression and feelings of stress. Exposure to plants and flowers nourishes a sense of calm and wellbeing – even just looking at them. Patients recovering from surgery who have a window view of trees have statistically shorter hospitalisations, less need for pain medications and fewer negative comments in the nurses' notes, compared with patients who have views of bricks.³

Somehow, we all know this even if we don't read the research, and even if it's been a long time since we've been able to get to some green space. In the last three years Women's Health Tasmania has done three major consultations with women who are at risk of poor

health outcomes: women living in rural and remote areas, women who are LGBTIQ+, and women who are homeless. When we asked these three apparently different groups of women what helped them stay well the first answer in each case was: the environment ('being able to walk on the mountain', 'where I live', 'being able to go into the bush', 'my garden').

The Tasmanian women we have talked to have all said that access to natural environments should be protected and promoted. We support that as a policy position – natural environments protect public health and make us feel better.

References

1 "Exercise is an all-natural treatment to fight depression", Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, 2nd February, 2021, www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/exercise-is-an-all-natural-treatment-to-fight-depression

2 Mitchell, R "Is physical activity in natural environments better for mental health than physical activity in other environments?" Social Science and Medicine, Vol 91, August 2013, Pp 130-134

3 Institute of Medicine (US), Rebuilding the Unity of Health and the Environment: A New Vision of Environmental Health for the 21st Century. Washington (DC) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK99584/>



THE UNDIES PROJECT

The Undies Project was our project to give 250 people living in the Hobart City Council area 5 pairs of free period-friendly underwear.

We wanted to tackle period poverty and to reduce landfill from single use period products. We were helped by an Urban Sustainability Grant from the Hobart City Council and a partnership with Modibodi, the Australian underwear manufacturer. Was the project successful? Yes – it was amazing!

Landfill was reduced

Everyone who signed up was asked how many single use items they used in an average period. They were asked again after they had been using the period-friendly underwear for a few months. The results were astounding.

We saw an 85% decrease in the use of single use items. At the outset participants used an average of 10 - 20+ single use items each period. After a few months average use had dropped to 0 - 5 single use items. 53% of people were using none at all.

This meant a reduction of around three quarters of a tonne of waste going into the Hobart City Council tip every year the participants use their undies (An average menstruating woman creates 3.59kg of single use item waste each year.)

The financial burden of period poverty was reduced

89% of project participants said that the undies had helped by reducing the cost of their period and 98% said they would continue to use them.

The financial benefits of this project will be long lasting. Modibodi undies continue to perform at a high level for around 2 years.

People were having a better period experience

93% of participants said that the undies had improved their experience of their period. They told us about reductions in stress (especially financial), elimination of leaking, and how they helped them deal with health conditions.

The comments section of our feedback survey was lit up by people telling us what a difference the undies made to:

Their ability to undertake personal care: the undies lasted longer than pads or tampons. They were also easier to put on and off than tampons or pads for some women with physical disabilities.

Sensory issues: mothers of girls with disabilities said that because the undies "feel like regular undies" there is no sensory discomfort and altered sensation, as there can be with a cloth or disposable pads.

Living with the experience of trauma: some people told us about how the memory of sexual trauma can be triggered during their period because it meant changing their pad or tampon. Because the undies could be worn simply during the day, it meant a "life changing lowering of stress".

Living with chronic gynaecological issues. Women who experience prolonged heavy bleeding reported greater comfort and security as well as significant savings.

People told us they liked being 'Undies Warriors'

People told us they liked being part of a positive group that was doing something positive for the environment.

"It's actually been a wonderful experience. It has felt like a fun and happy experience, like I'm in with a group of people, and not something shameful, ie, that I needed assistance to secure period products. I feel very grateful for the reduced stress levels that have come into my life thanks to the program."

"It has helped me financially so much, money that was being thrown away on disposable pads that only add more single use rubbish to the planet. Thank you so much!!"

"The undies have allowed me to have a sustainable period! Which is really, really amazing."

THANK YOU, UNDIES WARRIORS! Your participation and your honest discussions with us about your period experiences have deepened our understanding of menstrual health issues and wellbeing. We know so much more about the many ways people manage periods and the complexities of menstrual health. We've also learned a lot about how stressful and undermining period poverty is.

We want to do more – there are more would-be warriors out there

We are going to keep going with The Undies Project. We're raising funds to do the project again, this time statewide. Our goal is to distribute 250 sets of period friendly underwear to Undies Warriors around Tasmania. You could help. A donation of \$50 would provide period security for an Undies Warrior for two years. If you're interested, please go to the donate page on our website.

Take a break from body-negativity (it's good for you!)

We live in a body negative culture. Collectively, women's bodies are too fat, too thin, too tall, too short, too rounded, too muscley, too flabby, too differently abled, too stretched, too pregnant or they're the wrong colour. For a hot minute, thinness was in, but beauty ideals keep on changing and now the messaging about what's 'beautiful' is getting more complicated.

A lot of industries thrive on women feeling like we're not enough as we are. The idea that we need to 'fix' something about our bodies and appearance is key to most advertising and it filters into how we think about what we wear, what we do, how we exercise and how we eat.

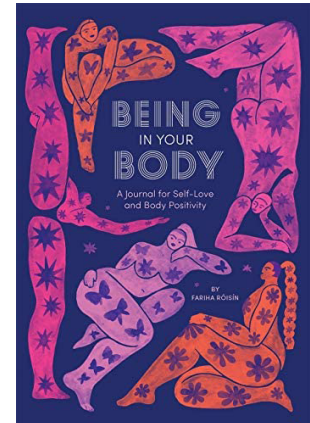
So how do we change this? Obviously, step one is to continue to dismantle the patriarchy. But while we're doing that, it's also worth giving ourselves a break from the constant barrage of body-negativity. Maybe taking a break from body negativity is dismantling the patriarchy? There's certainly a relationship between how we feel about our bodies and mental wellbeing.

So, grab a pen and a paper. It'll just take a few minutes.

1. Describe yourself in 100 words, focusing not on what you don't have, but what you do have. Your shining eyes, your glittering laugh. Be generous to yourself! Be wildly generous! Compare yourself to no one.
2. Beauty ideals are subjective. If you could come up with your own beauty ideal – what would it be?
3. Does worry about how your body looks stop you from doing something? What's one thing you'd like to do, that body negativity stops you doing?
4. List five experiences, or sensations that make you happy you have a body.
5. Do you lift, sis? Garden? Knit? Shift from thinking about how your body looks, to what your body can do. You can start by making a list of the cool stuff that your body is able to do.

Now that you've written your personal body-acceptance manifesto, stick it up on your wall, on the fridge, put it in the car. Remind yourself, whenever you can. You're enough!

The questions in article have been adapted from Fariha Rósín's book, *Being In Your Body: A journal of self-love and body positivity*, Ambrams, New York.



Yoga: the union of body and mind

Whether you regularly roll out your mat at a yoga class, or have never entertained the thought, you will likely have heard of the mind-body connection offered through yoga.

Our minds are most often busy, noisy places - with thoughts, memories, daydreams, fears, worries, and to-do lists competing for our attention. It is little wonder what is going on in our minds can also affect our physical bodies.

When starting a yoga practice, the focus is on the physical aspect of moving the body through asanas (poses) and using the breath intelligently. The purpose of asana practice is to develop strength, endurance, flexibility, and breath awareness while calming the nerves and beginning to focus the mind.

When focusing the mind on what we are doing with our body and breath in our asana practice, we calm them.

'Asana' means seat. The purpose of asana practice is to prepare the body, breath and mind to be able to sit comfortably for meditation in stillness. The benefits of meditation¹ are profound; it quietens the mind, brings relief from worry and stress, lengthens attention span, improves memory, enhances self-awareness, increases kindness toward self and others and may help fight addiction, control pain, decrease blood pressure and improve sleep.

One translation of the definition of yoga from the Yoga Sutras is "Yoga or union is the cessation of the movements of the thinking mind for the time being in order to feel. 'Who am I?'" Just as the mind has an impact on the body, what we do with the physical body influences our mind. Through asana practice, we stimulate and calm the mind. Back extensions, like cobra pose, and side stretching, like triangle pose, create space for the breath, increase blood pressure, stimulate the mind, and promote an outward focus.

Conversely, forward folds support turning inwards, introspection, as the posture decreases the capacity of the breath and lowers blood pressure. Calming inversions like legs up the wall, or a shoulder stand, activate the parasympathetic nervous system – leading to feelings of calm and balance. Strong arm balances, like handstand and forearm balance, get the blood moving; invigorating the body and revitalising the mind, improving concentration and memory. Turning upside down also gives a whole different perspective, both literally and figuratively. Sometimes inversions can even help us to see things more clearly.

The work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, shows the influence the mind can have on the health and well-being of the physical body, and vice-versa. Kabat-Zinn uses a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)² approach, combining gentle hatha yoga with mindfulness meditation. His studies have produced impressive results, and the method is now being implemented at hundreds of hospitals and clinics across the world.

Kabat-Zinn worked with patients with a wide variety of medical conditions including depression, anxiety, cancer, chronic pain, and arthritis. He observed patients who experienced primarily physical complaints, such as pain, often did best when using meditation.

Patients living with mental health issues such as anxiety or panic attacks seemed to do better with approaches like asana practice.

Not everyone will neatly fit this rule of thumb. Fortunately, yoga offers an enormous toolbox from which to discover practices, to best support your physical and mental health.

A science and philosophy for living, yoga doesn't tell you what to do but teaches you how to be.

Women who participate in yoga classes with Women's Health Tasmania regularly report improvements in their physical and mental health both from the practice and the social connections made with other students. One woman recently told us how she sings all the way home after class.

Fundamentally, yoga is union. It concerns the underlying unity of things which might appear, on the surface, to be separate. It can indeed be helpful to speak of the mind-body connection. However, through the practice of yoga, we may come to realise the body and mind are not only connected but are each manifestations of the same thing.

References

- 1 Thorpe, M, MD PhD and Link, R, MS RD.2020. 12 Science-Based Benefits of Meditation. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/12-benefits-of-meditation>
- 2 Kabat-Zinn J, PhD. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Training website <https://mbsrtraining.com/jon-kabat-zinn/>





Join our Facebook Live Classes

You can access Tai Chi, Weights, Yoga and Meditation.

Not so much a closed group, more a welcoming community.

Search Facebook for Online Classes With Women's Health Tasmania.


**Women's
Health
Tasmania**

The Religious Discrimination Bill – what now for heaven's sake?

The Australian Parliament is holding an inquiry into the Religious Discrimination Bill. This was called suddenly with little time for consultation, and no effort to reach groups in the community who will be most affected (eg people with disabilities who needed the documents in accessible formats).

WHT has joined with Disability Voices Tasmania, Unions Tasmania, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Independent Education Union (Tasmania), Tasmanian Council of Social Services, Multi-Cultural Council of Tasmania, Family Planning Tasmania, Equality Tasmania, and Equal Opportunity Tasmania to voice our concerns about this Bill.

We are asking that the Inquiry hold a hearing in Hobart because

1. Tasmanians will lose far more existing discrimination protections than citizens of any other state or territory because our Anti-Discrimination Act is the strongest and it is specifically targeted by the Federal Bill.
2. Our unique and progressive Island laws (threatened by the Federal Government) are not widely understood on the mainland and have been misrepresented.

3. The Tasmanians who will be most significantly disadvantaged by the Federal Bill already face discrimination, marginalisation and stigma. The inquiry should ensure their voices are heard, and not drowned out by the voices of the powerful and the often-heard.

4. We want to ask why state provisions which have operated so well for decades are suddenly under threat from the Federal Government? The gravity of the proposed over-ride of Tasmanian law should have its own inquiry, but in the absence of that, a special focus on Tasmania is essential.



Take a walk
with the Women's Health Tasmania

Women's Walking Group

Wednesdays
10:30 am to 12 noon
(For women in the Hobart region)

Maximum number of 20 walkers
Call 62313212 to book a spot

Walking and the power of the mind

Did you know how connected your legs and your mind are? You might have heard of the jogger's rush – the endorphin hit that comes from intense exercise, but you might not be aware just walking can have a positive impact on your mental health.

Women's Health Tasmania runs a walking group for women in Hobart.

The group tell us participating is an important part of their week, it's "lovely to meet new people" and it "gives me something to look forward to every week."

Whether you walk with a group or on your own, walking is great. It can improve your mood, reduce the risk of depression and anxiety, and it can help create more balance in your life.

"It's only walking, it's not like its exercise or anything..."

No, my disbelieving friend, walking is actually good exercise. Walking is low-impact exercise, but it is weight-bearing (you carry your own body weight when you walk). Low impact weight-bearing exercise helps keep bones strong and healthy without putting too much strain on your joints.

Here are some of the good physical things that come from walking:

- increased cardiovascular and pulmonary (heart and lung) fitness
- reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- improved management of conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness, and diabetes
- stronger bones and improved balance
- increased muscle strength and endurance
- reduced body fat.

And, it's good for your mind.

How does walking help your mind?

Walking and other exercise can help improve self-esteem, decrease negative thoughts and improve your general feeling of well-being.

You don't have to be a youthful power walker to get the mental health benefits of walking. Studies have shown exercise is always associated with improvements in mental health, and this is not age-related; everyone can benefit from the activity.

Walking is not only a good booster of positive mental health, it is also a particularly good tool for managing the symptoms of mental ill-health.

Walking and depression

Walking is a useful tool for tackling the symptoms of depression. Some researchers looked at a range of walking projects – walks that were provided as treatment for people with a wide variety of experiences of depression, including post-natal depression. It included walks that were done inside and outside, times when walking was the only treatment people were offered, and times where walking was offered in combination with other treatments. The researchers concluded that in all different experiences of depression and whether people walked inside or outside, alone or in groups, with treatment through medication or without, walking had a significant positive effect on symptoms of depression.¹

Walking and anxiety

There is less known about the effect of walking on anxiety but what is known suggests walking and other forms of physical activity can benefit people living with anxiety. People living with panic disorders who exercise have reported some improvement in their symptoms and people living with agoraphobia find cardiovascular exercise helps them towards overcoming their anxiety.²

How do I become a walker?

Here are some ideas

- Make walking part of your routine – try doing it at the same time every day
- Ask someone to walk with you – that makes it more fun
- Join a walking group – the group is organised for you, you can just turn up, walk, and make friends
- Keep a journal of your walks – make sure you congratulate yourself if you are sticking with it

- Wear a pedometer – it's very instant feedback on how you are doing
- Borrow a dog (that's not a joke – many dog owners will gratefully accept your offer!)

Walking doesn't pose much of a health risk, but if you have a medical condition, it is always a good idea to check with your doctor before you start any new exercise program.

How much should I walk every day?

For walking to give you health benefits, you should try to walk at least 30 minutes a day as briskly as you can. Every day means *every* day. Brisk means you can talk but you can't sing. But start slowly to give your muscles a chance to warm up.

An inspiring story about walking

Have you heard the true story of Raynor Winn? *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn is a beautiful, gentle and inspiring story which also includes a discussion about the extraordinary health-giving power of walking.

Just days after Raynor learned that her husband was terminally ill, they became homeless. The couple decided to walk the 630 miles of the English Southwest Coast Path with almost no money and just what they could carry.

You can get *The Salt Path* from your local bookshop or from the State Library as a book, ebook, audiobook or large print book. And you can listen to a Conversations podcast with Raynor here <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/raynor-winn-salt-path-walking-homelessness-illness/12750226>

References

1 Robertson, R. et al. 2012. *Walking for depression or depressive symptoms: a systematic review and meta-analysis, Mental Health and Physical Activity*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK99429/>

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KNIT YOUR BITS

*Which bit will
you knit?*

What a joy the Knit Your Bits project has been. It has put us in touch with crafty women from Currie to Geeveston.

So many stories have been sent to us about women's lives and bodies. Some women have used the project to tell us about lessons they've learned, some have used it to acknowledge the life-changing impact of illness or surgery, some have just had a hoot crocheting vulvas.

Thank you to the creative folk who sent in dermoid cysts. Whoa.

We'd especially like to send a big shout out to the women who told us that things were pretty hard for them at the moment, but knitting or sewing was something they could still do, so they kept going one stitch at a time. You are warriors, every one of you.

Keep an eye out for the exhibition which will be coming to a part of Tasmania near you in 2022. It will be launched in Ross on International Women's Day and will journey to King Island, Cygnet, Sheffield, Hobart, and Launceston. But perhaps not in that order.



In the meantime, here's a taster... here is a vulva made by a women's health GP, to show what she sees when she's taking a pap smear.

TAI CHI

MONDAYS
11 AM TO 12 NOON

WITH WENDY

at Women's Health Tas

To book call 6231 3212



She's Out There

[www.womenshealthtas.org.au/
podcasts/shes-out-there](http://www.womenshealthtas.org.au/podcasts/shes-out-there)

WHT's podcast series on
sexual and reproductive health

Meditation with Valerie now available on your favourite podcast platform

Valerie's meditations are going global. Well, potentially.

One of Women's Health Tasmania's fantastic meditation teachers, Valerie Cameron, has recorded a series of meditations, contemplations, and explanations. The audio recordings are being released fortnightly and are available on all the major podcast platforms so they can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

These valuable resources were recorded and edited over several months in 2021. Valerie said she was keen to create the series when she was approached by Women's Health Tasmania with the idea.

"I liked that it was an opportunity to get a better sound quality and make it more available to women who may not be able to access the centre in business hours."

"Also, to create a more comprehensive package that people can dip in and out of."

The series includes an introduction with tips on how to start well and make the most of your time meditating, shorter and longer meditations and some discussion of the neuroscience that underpins why meditation and mindfulness are so good for our brains, our bodies and our wellbeing.

The explanations are mostly recorded separate to the meditations, so you don't need to listen to them every time you do a meditation.

Valerie also recorded two shorter contemplations.

"They are asking people to sit quietly and build a greater sense of connection. One with nature to focus on how enmeshed we are with the natural world and one to help understand how interconnected we are with other people."

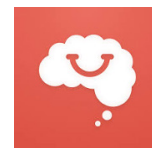
There are people living in different places across the world that we have never met but we are interdependently connected."

"They help soften the edges and boundaries and feel more connection."

We really hope that this series will be a wonderful way for people to connect (or reconnect) with mindfulness and we thank Valerie for being so generous in sharing it with us.

Another option for young people in your life...

If you have young people in your life who might benefit from mindfulness, try the Smiling Mind app. This free, Australian developed app has mindfulness exercises and meditations tailored for all age groups right through from as young as 3 years old, up to adults.



Meditation with Valerie



<https://www.womenshealthtas.org.au/podcasts/meditation-valerie>



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BOOK REVIEW

The Body Keeps Score: Mind, brain, and body in the transformation of trauma by Bessel van der Kolk

Review by Lucy Shannon

I gave this book to a friend recently for their birthday. In the book shop I hesitated. Would my savvy, insightful friend find it patronising if I selected a book about trauma for them? Would they roll their eyes at me, "You really need to stop 'social working' me, Lucy!"

A few months later the friend said that the book had changed their life. Unexplained physical problems have been plaguing them for a long time. They'd been to doctors to no avail. "Agency" they told me, "I'd never thought about it like that before, but this book has helped me focus on getting my agency back. I'm realising that these physical things, I'm not to blame for those."

Published in 2014, *The Body Keeps Score* is considered one of the keys works about how the effects of trauma are experienced in the body, not simply 'in the brain.'

One of the strengths of this book is van der Kolk's ability to explain the science of trauma in ways that are engaging and potentially very useful to anyone who's experienced trauma themselves.

In particular, van der Kolk is adept at using metaphors to describe how the different parts of the brain work together.

For example, he describes how the amygdala (try saying that five times quickly) is the 'smoke detector' of the brain. It senses danger and prepares the body to flee or fight.

The smoke detector has a direct line to the prefrontal cortex – which Kolk calls the 'Watchtower'. The Watchtower observes what's happening and makes an assessment. It hears the smoke detector going off and it is then able to work out – is the house on fire or is it just my dodgy toaster setting it off again? For someone who's experienced trauma, the smoke detector may be loud and goes off at the drop of a hat. Even if the watchtower tells it, "There's

no danger here!" The smoke detector has had so much practice at firing off, it can't stop.

One of van der Kolk's key points is that responding to, and healing trauma is about restoring the balance between the brain's watchtower and the smoke detector. For Van der Kolk much of traditional therapeutic approaches (talk therapies, medication) have focused on trying to strengthen the watchtower. He proposes that addressing the impacts of trauma must involve "recalibrating the automatic nervous system", the part of our brain that does all the basic and vital stuff that we rarely pay attention to: breathing, digesting, sleeping, touch and bodily sensations.

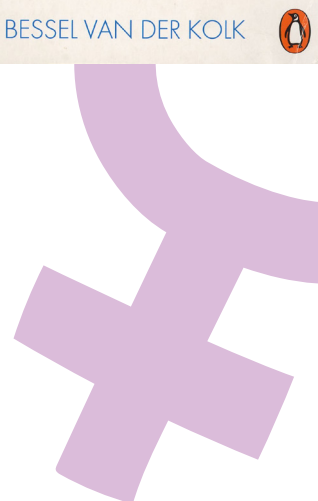
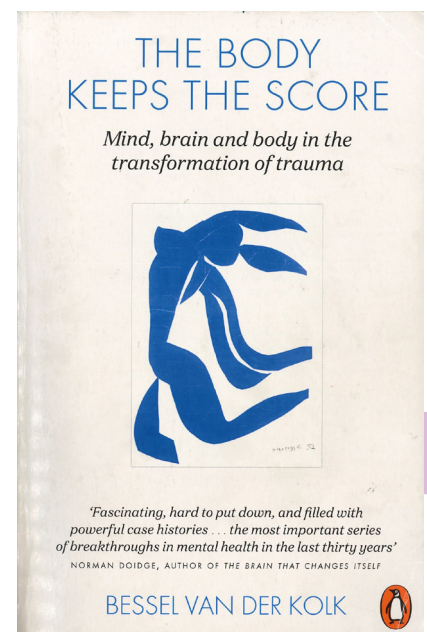
In other words, we need to find ways to address and work with the physical manifestations of trauma that affect our guts, our hearts, and our lungs.

Techniques that use breathing, touch and movement can access the automatic nervous system and are a vital, not often recognised part of healing trauma. It's these techniques that help us access and soothe our nervous systems. The key to moving through trauma, is in the body.

Van der Kolk discusses a range of therapies that use breathing, touch, and movement to heal trauma. They are focused on giving the body experiences of safety and connection.

What does this look like? Well, it can look like massage, physical practices such as yoga and tai chi, and breathing and meditation. They are all about tuning into the body and many give the automatic nervous system a chance to calm, rest and reboot.

Trauma affects more people than you might think. This book is an excellent way to inform yourself about what trauma is and how it's experienced. It sounds glib, but I mean it sincerely, it may change your life.



What's on at Women's Health Tasmania?


Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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Online classes:

6:30am–7:00am Gentle Sunrise Flow with Jen Live-streamed on Facebook Recommences February 7, 2022	6:30am–7:00am Gentle Sunrise Flow with Jen Live-streamed on Facebook Recommences February 8, 2022	6:30am–7:00am Gentle Sunrise Flow with Jen Live-streamed on Facebook Recommences February 9, 2022	6:30am–7:00am Gentle Sunrise Flow with Jen Live-streamed on Facebook Recommences February 10, 2022	Closed
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Classes at the centre:

11:00am–12:00pm Tai Chi with Wendy (Max 12 participants) To book a place call: 6231 3212 Recommences February 7, 2022	10:30am–11:30am Meditation with Jean (Max 12 participants) To book a place call: 6231 3212 Recommences January 11, 2022	9:30am–10:45am Yoga with Jen (Max 6 participants) To book a place call: 6231 3212 Recommences February 9, 2022	10:00am–11:00am Meditation with Valerie (Max 12 participants) To book a place call: 6231 3212 Recommences January 6, 2022	10:00am–2:00pm Waste to Wonderful A textile project and shared meal for women from refugee and migrant communities. Childcare provided. To learn more call: 6231 3212 Recommences February 11, 2022
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TAI CHI

MONDAYS
11 AM TO 12 NOON

WITH WENDY
at Women's Health Tas

To book call 6231 3212



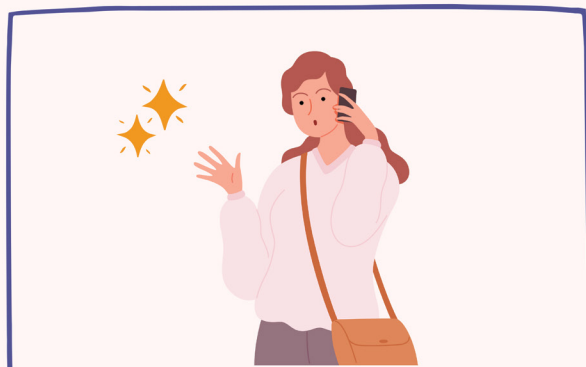
Breast Cancer Support Group

For women in the Hobart area

3RD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH
@WOMEN'S HEALTH TAS
25 LEFROY ST, NORTH HOBART

To register call 62313212 or
info@womenshealthtas.org.au

Wherever you live in Tassie, these services are for you



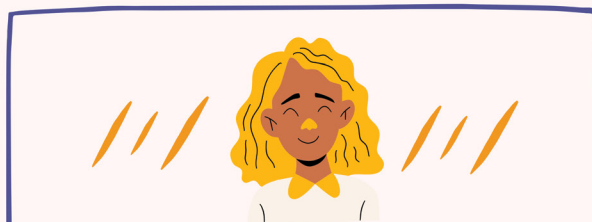
The Women's Health
Information Line
1800 353 212



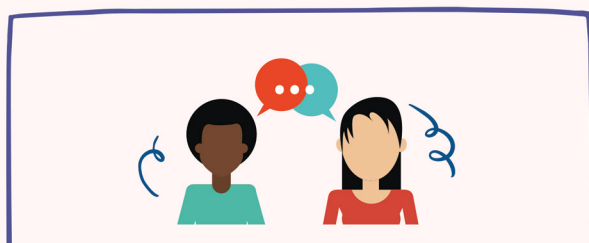
Free counselling by phone or
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(Health and wellbeing,
Pregnancy Choice, Birth and
Parenting)



Online podcasts, Yoga, Tai
Chi, Weights and Meditation



Free online forums for people
with lived experience of mental
illness, and carers



Webinars, projects and
workshops in your area

Coping Skills



The Women's Health Fund

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