

# HONEYBEE



LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



**P6**

DR JENNI IBRAHIM, OAM R.I.P  
HONOURING A SUPPORT  
GROUP CHAMPION

**P8**

HOLIDAY AND TRAVEL TIPS

"LET'S TALK" CONTRIBUTOR VANESSA VAJANA

**P16**

INTRODUCING THE ILLUMINATING JACKIE ROWE  
'FOCUS COACHING' - WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

**P4**

VERYWELL MIND

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
MENTAL STRENGTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

**P9**

MINDFUL PLANNER  
ITS A KIND OF MAGIC



# Chronically Inspired

## Life.Beyond.Disability

- Nourish your soul - Achieve your goals - Design your life - Inspire your everyday - Anchor your spirit -

*What's in this edition for you to enjoy?*

*Welcome my lovelies...*  
From  
Founder & Editor  
Melissa Dumitru

*Are You Feeling Inside Out?*  
...p5  
The difference between  
mental strength, &  
mental health.

*Community All the Latest*  
...p6  
Honouring  
Dr Jenni Imbrahim, OAM  
Support Group Champion  
R.I.P

*Let's Talk*  
...p9  
Regular International Contributor  
Vanessa Vajana  
Holiday & Travel  
with Chronic Illness

*A Kind of Magic*  
...p11  
Achieve balance and  
boost well-being with  
a mindful kindset  
wellness activity

*How to Get Out of a Rut*  
...p13  
VeryWell Mind  
Blog

*Introducing the Illuminating Jackie Rowe*  
...p14  
Focus Coaching  
Women's Empowerment  
& personal growth

*Walking Meditation for Stress Relief*  
...p18  
VWM

*Dealing with Bad Memories*  
...p20  
Ask a Therapist

### Social Media, Subscription, & Contact Information

Follow us and stay up to date with some inspired content for quality of life & feel good stories, the chronically inspired way! It's so easy to join me on my various platforms which are set up to be interactive, inspirational, and enjoyable. Subscribe by email, or from the new website, and apply to receive our glorious publications straight into your inbox or in hard-copy!

*HoneyBee Magazine is produced by*

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*Join the Conversations...*

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*Join in the "TasteBuds Club" WA Support Group*

A wonderful new way to connect with others while socialising and receiving support and fellowship, all while enjoying a lovely meal together  
WA only, contact me directly for more information.

### Meet Our Contributors...



*Vanessa Vajana*



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I help you live life to its fullest potential and to NOT be defined by your long term health condition(s). I will support you to understand yourself better; learn about your health, how to best manage this, and ultimately move forward so that you can achieve the life you dream of and deserve.



*Jackie Rowe*



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# Welcome

to "HoneyBee Magazine" for Chronically Inspired.




Hello my lovelies, and welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of our magazine. Apologies for the delay in getting this edition to you, it seems my mental health had other ideas! Such is the journey of transformation and empowerment that I am on. I know you understand! I am also evolving and growing the content and contributors for the magazine so you will see some changes in this edition and future editions as we grow, it is a very exciting time!

2021 continues to be a year of *intentional growth, mindfulness, practising gratefulness, and learning new and exciting things* that make us happy, and bring us joy!

Finding ways to cope with depression from our chronic illness and the world wide pandemic which now adds an extra layer of stress, are all things we need to learn in order to survive and thrive.

**NOTE TO SELF:**  
 You won't always be a priority to others, and that's why you need to be a priority to yourself. Learn to respect yourself, take care of yourself, and become your own support system.



This second edition for 2021 is packed with helpful and interesting articles and tools to help you achieve many of those things in your daily life, with intention which is the key to success when building up your personal "*self management tool kit*".

We welcome back our *regular international contributor* to HoneyBee magazine, the lovely *Chronic Illness Life Coach, Vanessa Vajana from the UK.*

Vanessa has more fabulous tips for living your best life from someone with a lived experience in the area of celebrations, and travel in our life, and how they can impact our health when living with chronic illness.

Now that we are beginning to travel again I thought this was quite appropriate.



I am beyond excited to share an inspiring woman, *University qualified Life Coach and Business Mentor, Jackie Rowe from Focus Coaching*, who has personally been guiding me through a transformative and empowering process.

Working with her has been life changing for me in a very positive way, especially after being diagnosed with PTSD in early 2021. I share her amazing history, her lived experience journey that brought her to her current work, and her latest project you may be able to get involved with. She has a vast knowledge of working with people and has made a real difference in so many areas of our community.

I am thrilled to announce that the lovely Jackie has also agreed to become another *regular contributor to HoneyBee magazine!*

I have included some "*Growth Activities*" for you to enjoy and explore, along with great articles on mindfulness and planning your year ahead with intention!

I know life is very challenging for so many of us, especially now. Life can be messy, painful, and sometimes feel quite hopeless.

This is why it is so important to practise gratitude, which switches our brains into releasing happy hormones, improves our mood and helps us to cope. However deep your personal struggle is, remember by carrying out even the smallest act of gratitude towards yourself, could make all the difference.

*Never lose hope my lovelies, recovery is there for the taking!*

*PS: Please encourage your friends or colleagues to subscribe to this magazine or contact me to be considered for a future story about someones work or organisation for people living with disability or chronic illness, to highlight the great work we all do.*

*Be well,  
be glam!  
Xo Melissa*



I honour a *Support Group Champion and Titan, Jenni Ibrahim, my friend and colleague* who passed away on the 9th January 2021, with a personal tribute about the good times we shared, and all her amazing contributions to the lung health world in Australia.

It is with great sadness I share the news of the death of one of our *Support Group Champions, Jenni Ibrahim*. Jenni worked tirelessly within the lung health sector, she produced a comprehensive newsletter, represented the Institute for Respiratory Health WA, and so much more. *For the rest of her story please go to page 7.* Jenni is survived by her loving and devoted partner Tom, and her son Khalil and his family. She leaves a big gap to be filled with her long legacy to the lung health world. *RIP in my dear friend....*

*In loving memory*



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Psychology, Child  
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**From the**

verywell Family  
verywellfamily.com



## ***The difference between Mental Strength and Mental Health***

Mental strength and mental health are sometimes used interchangeably but they're not the same thing. Many dictionaries define mental health as being “the absence of mental illness.” But not having depression, anxiety, or another illness doesn't mean you're mentally strong. In fact, you might still be mentally strong even if you're dealing with a mental health issue. Mental strength involves your ability to think, feel, and perform at your best.

### ***Mental Strength vs. Mental Health***

The difference between mental strength and mental health becomes easier to understand when you compare it to the difference between physical health and physical strength. Building bigger muscles can improve your physical health. However, big muscles don't guarantee you won't ever deal with a physical health problem, like high cholesterol. And while a health issue might make it a little more difficult to go to the gym and workout, you can still make choices that help you grow physically stronger even when you have a physical health problem. The exercises that build mental strength will also improve your mental health. And better mental health makes it easier to grow mentally strong.



### ***Mental Strength***

- The ability to cope with negative emotions in a healthy way.
- Understanding your emotions.
- Knowing when to engage with your emotions and when to take a step back.

### ***Mental Health***

- The presence or absence of a mental health issue.
- The overall state of your mental wellness.

### ***Three Parts to Mental Strength***

***Mental strength has three parts:***

- **Thinking:** It involves the ability to think realistically. That means knowing how to recognize irrational thoughts and replace them with a more realistic inner dialogue. It's also about speaking to yourself with kindness. So when you're tempted to be overly critical of yourself, mental strength allows you to respond with self-compassion.
- **Feeling:** Mental strength doesn't involve suppressing your emotions or denying your pain. Instead, it's about acknowledging how you feel. Sometimes, that means accepting an uncomfortable emotion or even calming yourself down before having a tough conversation.
- **Doing:** Mental strength is about taking productive action. Whether that means working out even when you're tired or it means allowing yourself to engage in self-care, it involves ensuring that your behaviors are good for you.

The way you think affects how you feel, and how you feel affects how you behave. Your behavior, in turn, affects how you think. There is a mind-body connection that links our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. In cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), this is known as the “***cognitive triad.***”



## How to Build Mental Strength

Fortunately, everyone has the ability to build mental strength. Developing bigger mental muscles takes exercise—just like developing bigger physical muscles. Building mental strength may, in turn, also improve your mental health.

While there are many exercises that can help you build mental strength, here are a few simple ones that can get you started.

### Cognitive Exercises

Cognitive exercises are those strategies that help you think differently. This could include any exercise that helps you think more positively, reframe negative thoughts, or develop a more realistic mindset. Here are some examples of healthy cognitive exercises:

**Write in a gratitude journal:** Gratitude journals are an excellent way to activate and strengthen positive thoughts and feelings.

**Talk to yourself like a trusted friend:** People are often harder on themselves than they are on their friends. So, try to show yourself the same compassion you would extend to a loved one.

**Argue the opposite:** In the moments you're convinced everything will go wrong, think of everything that could go right.

### Emotional Exercises

Emotional exercises increase your self-awareness about your emotional state. They may help you recognize when your emotions are helpful or not helpful, they may assist you in identifying strategies that reduce the intensity of your feelings, or they may help you embrace uncomfortable feelings. Here are some examples of emotional exercises:

**Label your feelings:** Noticing your feelings as feelings can help you get some distance from them. This can help you think more logically and get a better perspective on the problems or emotions you're dealing with.

**Use healthy coping skills to deal with uncomfortable emotions:** Instead of only focusing on negative emotions, you can take a walk, give yourself a pep talk, or read a book you enjoy. This isn't an attempt to avoid or ignore your feelings, but it can help to alleviate some of your painful emotions.

**Take deep breaths:** Deep breathing exercises can help reduce anxiety and alleviate tension from your body and mind.

## Behavioral Exercises

Behavioral exercises are about getting up and doing things that are good for you. These actions help you feel better and perform at your peak. Some examples of behavioral exercises include:

**Perform behavioral experiments:** Behavioral experiments help to challenge any thoughts that are unproductive and self-limiting.

**Schedule positive activities:** It always helps your mental well-being to make time for things that bring you joy. Schedule a warm bath before bed or carve out some time to cook a nice meal for yourself.

**Engage in hobbies:** Hobbies will engage your mind in something that you love to do. Whether it's taking pictures or baking, hobbies can bring a sense of accomplishment that can help you feel good about yourself.

### A Word From Verywell

A lot of people misunderstand mental strength. They think being strong is about not crying at sad movies or not acknowledging hurt feelings. But experiencing and expressing normal human emotions takes more strength than suppressing them. So, don't believe that showing emotion means you're weak. Similarly, don't buy into the notion that mentally strong people don't ask for help. It takes incredible mental strength to admit you don't have all the answers or to recognize when you might need help. If you want to know how to build more mental strength, reach out for help. Talking to a mental health professional might help you develop the mental strength you need to think, feel, and do your best in life.

### A word from your HoneyBee Editor

*I really liked this article, it has some great suggestions that you can put into practice daily. Sometimes working with a mental health professional can be wonderful, sometimes not so much. You can find a great support group, chat forum, and even a Life Coach that can help you to discover how to implement these things into your life. Where there's a will, there's a way. If you commit to your personal growth, you will flourish, and blossom. It is a daily choice to do this, and something you will always be working towards, so be kind to yourselves on this journey. You are so worth it! Melissa xx*



# Community

## ALL THE LATEST



**Editors Note:** I wrote this story not long after Jenni passed away and the timeline jumps around a little, a bit like my emotions did as I wrote it, and still do when I read it. So please forgive that and enjoy my tribute to this amazing human being....Melissa

I wanted to do a tribute to one of my friends and colleagues Jenni Ibrahim, who passed away on Saturday 9th January 2021. Jenni Ibrahim was a TITAN and Support Group Champion in her role, and led the way for support groups and lung health in Australia. She helped to run the first ever formed lung support group in the country, and kept it running for 30 years here in Australia. She and Edna Brown the original Founder (*god rest her soul*), navigated many obstacles, and overcame a lot of barriers and bias in their quest to see people living with lung disease supported in multiple ways, not just using the usual medical model approach.

In loving memory of my long time friend and colleague I wanted to take a trip down memory lane, to briefly share some of the highlights I remember (and could find photographic evidence of). Jenni and I were rarely photographing ourselves, rather the people within the support group, but I have found a few good photos of fun times for you to enjoy.

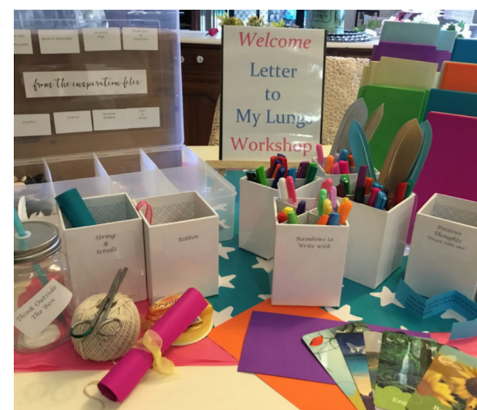
Jenni was the Coordinator for LIFE support group (*or Lung Information & Friendship for Everyone*) who are the Community Support Group affiliated to the Institute Respiratory Health in WA. When I first began my support group for people living with Pulmonary Hypertension in WA, Jenni and Edna reached out to us to embrace us and assist with setting our group up, and support each other as Lung Leaders in WA. It was a wonderful relationship, full of welcome advice, information, and education. There was laughter and a few cocktails over lunches too.

Jenni was a staunch supporter and educator of lung disease and health. After falling ill with acute pneumonia and nearly dying many years ago she herself developed a serious lung condition that altered her life trajectory. She spent a lot of time and research producing a comprehensive newsletter that went out to their many members. Their support group is run monthly at the Institute and is a wonderful base for people to gather, enjoy guest speakers, and workshops, and for fellowship. Conversation was rich and rewarding as Jenni was highly educated and previously a Clinical Psychologist, I am sure this is what gave her such an incredibly positive approach to life as she was always a cup half full kind of person.

Jenni was responsible for creating the "Lung Leaders Network WA", for which she won a prestigious award for from the Peak Body Self Help & Support Groups, ConnectGroups WA. This gave all the support group leaders a chance to gather and talk about their needs, share resources, and promote within our sector.

Jenni was a coveted guest speaker for both the lung health world, Lung Foundation Australia, and other support groups and organisations. Jenni was involved in many other groups with a keen interest in Genealogy, wildflowers and camping, and anything to do with her family. Jenni joined in on as many Expo's, and events as possible to ensure the lung health in WA was represented clearly and passionately to the public, as three in five people in Australia has a lung or respiratory condition.

Jenni and I co-designed and created a Workshop called "Letter to your Lungs", which we delivered to our support groups and other organisations in WA. It was a lot of fun being creative and watching people overcome their own resistance and begin to write letters with creativity (*provided in the form of art therapy*) and see the release and recovery of this short journey we took them on. It was a very powerful educational tool, which had a profound affect on many of us, including myself as stories were shared.



So much of our work and positive outcomes were made possible due to funding we received from the Peak Body Self Help & Support Groups, ConnectGroups WA. This project was another one of those success stories. We had hoped to take this project on the road and build from it, but unfortunately as we know it wasn't long after this that Jenni was diagnosed with cancer.

Her entire concentration had to be about treatment and surviving this new and insidious threat to her life. Her partner Tom and her son Khalil were instrumental in supporting her throughout this journey. Jenni tried many medical trials, some with success, some with rather horrible side effects. She was finally told mid 2020 that all her options had been exhausted. In her usual matter of fact fashion, she set about organising how she would die. She updated her Will, let everyone know what her wishes were for treatment moving forward, and began palliative care at home. But Jenni didn't die, not quite yet. I think that because she was such a happy person, who loved life, her partner and family, and had so many varied and interesting hobbies, that she was simply too busy to die. (I can relate to this too)!!!

Even though she was busy travelling within the state whenever she and Tom could manage it, and enjoying her Ancestry hobby and Four Wheel Driving, she was still actively working as a support group leader for LIFE.

# Community

## ALL THE LATEST

I followed Jenni's blog "*The Little Book of Phlegm,*" and her Facebook page where she regularly updated everyone. Right before Christmas we were notified that she was in the hospital in quite bad shape. Unfortunately she did have to spend Christmas day in hospital. She posted several pictures of the ward she was on with three other people who were all driving her batty!

I got a great laugh out of her sense of humour but felt enormous sadness that this is where she may die. Within hours Jenni had organised to go home with Tom and receive intensive palliative care so she could die at home in peace, where she was comfortable and happy.

I remember looking each day for any updates from her, and had to smile when NYE came and went and she was still with us. She shared a post about how her and Tom had given each other the same novel to read for Xmas without the other being aware, and how much they were looking forward to reading the book together. I still wonder if she managed to finish that book....

Mid 2020 when the COVID Pandemic was at its height in our country I was approached to be a *Support Group Champion to promote and educate about using the Telehealth Service for people with Chronic Conditions.* Once again this campaign was led by Peak Body ConnectGroups WA, and they were more than happy to include Jenni and her support group's membership to get an even broader demographic covered. This was Jenni's final act within our sector, one I was really happy she was able to contribute to, and be a part of.

After the project finished we were invited to share a lovely meal together at a Vietnamese restaurant and as I sat next to Jenni chatting and catching up. Nobody but me knew she was dying and that very soon we would lose her. I lingered on the features of her face, the resonance of her voice and reflected on the conversations we had that evening. She looked so beautiful, so at peace, and was so brave....only those of us who have had near death experiences, or are actively and progressively dying may understand the knowing look between us that night. I realised I would not have my friend for much longer. This is something I refused to accept and I continued on as if she would be with us for some time.

It was with great happiness that Jenni joined our newly formed Support Group through Chronically Inspired (previously PHNA) "The Tastebuds Club", inaugural luncheon in October 2020. We were very fortunate that WA was no longer in official lockdown due to the pandemic, and that we could finally meet up after nearly a year of being apart. That was such a joyous day and conversations were varied and lively. It was so great to share this final celebration with her.

Then came the notification via email, a list Jenni had prepared beforehand to inform those she wanted to know that she had passed away. It was with profound sadness that I posted my condolences and began to share the news with my own support group members and friends who all knew her.

Tributes flooded in from everyone expressing their grief and wish for her to be at peace, and for her beloved Tom and son Khalil. Jenni and her son had shared a very special few weeks in late 2020 together after he had been in quarantine, travelling down south and having those special conversations you have between mother and child. I was so happy they got to do this together.

As I finish this tribute to my friend her Memorial is just a day away. A celebration of her life with family and friends, and beloved support group members and colleagues. I pray that this lays her to rest in peace and forever in our hearts and minds. *Jenni Ibrahim, you will be missed, so very much, by so many.....*



# Community

## ALL THE LATEST

### THE MEMORIAL & AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS O.A.M AWARD

Jenni planned everything in advance before her death. She knew what she wanted and she made sure that all her wishes were implemented and carried out.

At her Memorial service her son Khalil who gave one of the Eulogy's made everyone laugh while he spoke about Jenni's little pet peeves such as her desire to have everyone use the correct grammar and punctuation! There was lots of nodding and laughter from the audience as he spoke about her. Her one desire from her Memorial was that people would walk away having learned something new about the person they were celebrating. I learned a lot that day about Jenni and her journey in life that added to the stories she had already shared with me.

Her memorial service was recorded and aired in multiple countries across the world as Jenni had a lot of family and friends who could not attend. The hall was old and of particular meaning to Jenni and her family. It was a very hot day, but the hall was packed to the brim with many people who wanted to celebrate and acknowledge her life. Many of us were invited to give our own tributes after the Eulogy and it was lovely to be able to share a few words. Jenni Ibrahim lived a full life. A happy life. One varied with many activities and people despite her chronic lung condition, and the cancer which ultimately killed her.

Her straightforward approach to people was actually quite refreshing if somewhat disarming if you didn't know her. I still remember the first time we had a working meeting lunch many years ago to discuss joining up for workshops and exchanging ideas. Afterwards as we were leaving Jenni said to me while nodding her head, "Yes, I think this will work out. I can work with you." I remember smiling and thinking to myself, "this is a very interesting woman indeed. I think I will learn a lot from her".

Jenni was buried in an unmarked grave in a bush setting at Pinnaroo Valley surrounded by the wildflowers she so loved in life. She was buried in a bio degradable casket, so typical of her need to leave as little impact on the planet as possible.

Before her death Jenni received the wonderful news that she was one of the recipients of the Australia Day 2021 Honours List OAM: **The late Dr Jenni IBRAHIM Formerly of West Leederville WA 6007 - For Service to Community Health.** I cannot tell you how excited and overjoyed I was to be told she had been granted this honour, as I was asked to support the application well over a year ago. It is quite a process, but an incredibly worthwhile one, and I feel that the work Jenni did within the Lung Health field in particular, means that possibly for the first time lung health has been recognised at this level. In so many ways this Award is a reflection of the combined great work we do in this sector and a wonderful acknowledgement to community health.

#### MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA (OAM), AWARDED FOR SERVICE WORTHY OF PARTICULAR RECOGNITION

Awarded to the late Dr Jenni Ibrahim OAM  
Contribution to Community Health



#### *Death is nothing at all...by Henry Scott-Holland*

Death is nothing at all.

It does not count.

I have only slipped away into the next room.

Nothing has happened.

Everything remains exactly as it was.

I am I, and you are you,

and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.

Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.

Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.

Put no difference into your tone.

Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.

Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It is the same as it ever was.

There is absolute and unbroken continuity.

What is this death but a negligible accident?

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?

I am but waiting for you, for an interval,

somewhere very near,

just around the corner.

All is well.

Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.

One brief moment and all will be as it was before.

How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again.

*This poem was requested by Jenni to be included in the program at her Memorial service.*



*Farewell my friend, you will be missed  
but never forgotten.*

*Thank you for your enormous contribution  
to our world, and for making such a  
difference in so many ways.*

*A true friend to many..  
Gods blessings always, love Melissa xx*





# Let's Talk

## HOLIDAY and travel tips



Regular HoneyBee Contributor  
Vanessa Vajana - Chronic Pain & Illness Life Coach



**HoneyBee Editors Note:** The lovely Vanessa has been in COVID lockdown in the UK for so long now that it has become a way of life. Adapting to those changes while living with chronic illness and pain are two things she is quite familiar with. In her latest blog, which was more Christmas holiday themed, I have tweaked it to represent all the holidays we will be experiencing throughout the year instead. Whether it be the festive season, school holidays, or another planned vacation, these tips will serve you well. Enjoy and don't forget to connect with Vanessa on her website, Facebook page, and LinkedIn for more inspiration.

*Whatever the time of year, holidays and special occasions need planning and preparation!*

As I write this, the weather here in the UK is much colder than when I wrote last. On my walk along the seafront today, it was very blustery, the sea was rough, and the birds were hanging onto the wooden fences along the beach. Whilst walking, I was thinking about the pending holidays and how differently we will all be celebrating this year... Some will be able to gather with friends and family and others will not.

As someone living with chronic health conditions, I know only too well how challenging holidays can be. On the one hand there is the excitement for the holidays, the celebrations, and gatherings. On the other hand, there is that sort of sinking feeling that we get thinking of all the things that may trigger our health condition. Then there's that sense of loneliness that comes from deep inside because we can no longer be spontaneous (everything has to be calculated/planned – at least for the most part) and everything else can feel as an extra effort.

Oh! And don't forget that "guilty" feeling of not wanting to let anyone down...

**However, there are lots of things we can do to manage ourselves in a healthier way.**  
**What I have found helpful is:**

- *Plan – having a plan cuts out the guessing and worrying.*
- *Set boundaries – so you are clear within yourself on how you will manage yourself.*
- *Communicate clearly what you are happy to do and what you are not able to, as this stops second guessing as well as feelings of guilt for letting family/friends down.*
- *Keep it simple.*
- *Be kind to yourself!*

If you find it hard to put yourself first – and let's be honest we all do to some degree... Ask yourself this question and answer honestly: *"How is my health (physical and emotional wellbeing) being affected by my putting everyone else before me?"*

Remember, if you do not nourish a tree it does not bear fruits, or if it does it only bears a few. Whereas if you nourish a tree, it bears a full crop, and this may feed lots more hungry people. **"Which tree are you?"**

### Some Useful Tips

*If you are having to travel:*

- Order your medical supplies etc. well in advance.
- Make a list of the items you will need whilst travelling, (medicines, medical devices, etc.).
- Look at ways you can make the journey more comfortable for yourself.
- Consider breaking up the travel time and factor in comfort breaks.
- Consider the changes in time zones and weather, and how this may affect your condition.
- Communicate your needs clearly and don't feel guilty about this.

*Try as much as possible to keep to your normal routine:*

- Diet
- Sleep
- Medications/treatments

*Other things/activities that help you manage your condition such as:*

- Mindfulness
- Exercise
- Art / Craft
- Set healthy boundaries for yourself.
- Take breaks – this will help you manage better.
- Keep to your routine but enjoy the holidays.
- Agree which activities you will do/take part in, and those you won't.
- Write these down and remind yourself of them regularly.
- Keep checking in with yourself as things may change, and you may want to do the same.
- Remain flexible where possible

**RELAX AND ENJOY!**



Vanessa primarily coaches people living with chronic pain and/or long-term health conditions, working through the effects that their health condition have on their lives. This helps them be better equipped in managing themselves (both physically and emotionally) and their relationships with others. So, if you are committed to moving forward with your life and breaking free from what is holding you back. Get in touch, I would love to hear from you!

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# A KIND *of magic*

*We can achieve balance, boost our wellbeing, and live a life we love with mindful kindness.*

Our lives are full to the brim, bustling, and busier than ever before. We careen from commitments at work, to chores at home, squeeze in social outings, and when we're not occupied in real life, we spend out time in the digital realm.

## *What is mindfulness?*

It's featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, has been touted by myriad celebrities, and embraced by conglomerates like Google, Nike and Apple. But far from a fleeting fad or Instagram hashtag, mindfulness has proven to be a powerful practice that boosts our wellbeing.

Stemming from ancient spirituality, and the subject of countless studies over the past few decades, mindfulness has the power to improve attention and memory, reduce stress, boost creativity, aid sleep and immunity, and increase our overall happiness. In short, mindfulness can have a profoundly positive influence on our lives.

While there is no universal definition of mindfulness, Matthew Young, founder of the Melbourne Meditation Centre, says that mindfulness is "a way of paying attention more consciously than we normally do, so that we can see things with greater clarity and understanding, in order to respond in more skillful ways". According to Dr Addie Wooten, clinical psychologist and CEO of Smiling Mind, 'Mindfulness is a way of living...we can apply mindful awareness to everything we do'. It might sound overwhelming at first, but we can practise mindfulness every day, in any circumstance.

## *A mind more kind*

But mindfulness can be more than just moment-to-moment awareness. According to Dr Shauna Shapiro, mindfulness is a kind, curious awareness that helps us relate to ourselves, others and our world with compassion. Professor, Author, and internationally recognised expert on mindfulness, Shapiro says that 'Research has started to document empirical evidence of this connection...consistently finding over the past two decades that mindfulness increases empathy and compassion'.

As Shapiro says, one reason that mindfulness helps us to cultivate empathy and compassion is that 'It guards against the feelings of stress and busyness that make us focus more on ourselves and less on the needs of other people'.

Another way that mindfulness helps to cultivate our compassion is that it enables us to see our interconnectedness. 'The more you practise mindfulness, the more you begin to see that we're all part of the same body - that I as the right hand actually feel you, the left hand's pain, and interconnectedness and clear seeing, which leads to greater compassion and understanding of the mysterious web in which we all are woven'.

## *A balanced kindset*

With mindful awareness, we are able to set intentions to live more compassionately, and put our kindness in action. And the seeds of kindness that we sow can have fantastic and far-reaching effects - whether we realise it or not.

A heartfelt letter to a relative or friend can provide them with immeasurable joy for weeks to come; volunteering for a bush regeneration project nurtures our natural ecosystems for future generations; a slow afternoon of self-care with a book or a bubble bath (or both) can provide a much-needed boost to our wellbeing amidst the chaos and complexity of everyday life.

But while we should act on our compassion - whether towards ourselves, others, or the environment - for our kindness to be effective, it needs to be balanced.

## *This is where our kindset comes in.*

Nicholas Haines is an author, international speaker, creator of The Vitality Test and co-founder of The Five Institute. Nicholas explains that 'A kindset is like your mindset except that it is all about kindness. A healthy kindset is when someone is equally kind to themselves, others and the planet - ideally all at the same time.' He says that this can be difficult to achieve, as we often give precedence to what we value most.

"I've met people who have been described as being "too kind" but when you drill down into it, they're actually not being kind enough. Or more accurately, their kindness is out of balance", says Haines.

Our kindness might be heavily directed towards others, but at the expense of ourselves. Or we might be too self-focused, at the risk of taking the planet or other people for granted. Haines suggests that to help shape a healthy kindset, we may ask these three questions with any situation:

*Is it kind to me?*

*Is it kind to others?*

*Is it kind to the planet?*



# Compassion

# IN BLOOM

## *A magical dance*

Haines says that achieving a balanced kindset takes practise, and is a constant dance that we must learn to love. As we bustle about our days, with mindful awareness we can set intentions to bring balance to our kindset, putting us on a meaningful path towards true happiness and wellbeing. These needn't be profound or sweeping gestures, but small moments, everyday acts; gently scattered seeds that will blossom forth and flourish.

It might be refusing single-use plastic bags; creating a ritual to connect with your loved ones; nourishing your body with delicious whole foods and adequate rest. By acting with compassion towards the planet, others and ourselves, we can create a world where kindness is the common language - and a way of life.

***Rooted in mindful awareness, an intention is a positive call to action.*** When we set an authentic intention, it is thought that we alter our vibrations - our energy - and essentially "put out there" that which we mean to attract. And research is beginning to support what many Eastern philosophies have long understood - the world around us responds to our energy.

According to Dr William A Tiller, professor emeritus at Stanford University, intention setting is able to bring about real change, lending proof to the old proverb "mind over matter". For the last 400 years, an unstated assumption of science is that human intention cannot affect what we call "physical reality", says Tiller. Our experimental research of the past decade shows that, for today's world and under the right conditions, this assumption is no longer correct. We humans are much more than we think we are'.

'Renowned wellness guru and clinical professor, Deepak Chopra, says "Everything that happens in the universe begins with intention.' While our intentions have power to manifest and set things in motions, Dr Bruce Lipton, author and biologist, suggests that for true change, 'intentions must also be reflected in our daily conscious choices'. With intention, we may sow seeds; but continued action - nurturing - will allow them to grow and flourish.

So start slowly, setting gentle but reverberating intentions intentions around a balanced kindset - compassion towards the planet, others, and yourself. Allow the following prompts to guide you, and use them to channel your compassion in action.

*I will be more mindful by*

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*I will show compassion to myself by*

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*I will radiate kindness to others by*

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*I will radiate kindness towards the planet by*

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*I intend to practice gratitude by*

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*Reminder*

*Approach your intentions from a place of gratitude, mindfulness, and compassion. The seeds you sow will bloom.*

*You're given this life because you're strong enough to live it.*

How is your current **kindset**?

Use the space below to ruminate on where you are, and the compassion you embody in everyday life; you might have a nurturing relationship with a pen pal; a nourishing self-care routine; a charitable cause you support.

And where will your kindset take you, 52 weeks from now? Jot down your intentions around the stretching limbs of the tree.

The possibilities for growth are endless...start now on your tree branches below.

*dream* →

*One Year From Now...*

→ *believe*

→ *love*

→ *hope*



*My Current Kindset*

# How to Get out of a Rut.

## Psychological Strategies to Get Unstuck



BY KENDRA CHERRY - KENDRA CHERRY, IS AN AUTHOR, EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT, AND SPEAKER FOCUSED ON HELPING STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY.



Dan Brownsword / Getty Images

## RECOGNISING THE SIGNS YOU'RE STUCK IN A RUT

- **Every day seems the same.** You might even have trouble remembering what day of the week it is. Is it Monday, or is it Friday? It doesn't matter because your days feel indistinguishable from one another.
- **You feel like you're just trying to get through another day.** Your goal is to keep putting one foot ahead of the other until the day is done. You don't feel excited or inspired.
- **You feel unmotivated.** You might want to take on new projects or engage in creative tasks, but it feels like your motivation has run dry. You just can't seem to get started.
- **You feel unfulfilled.** Life feels dull and boring. You want to try new things, but you don't know where to begin.
- **You want to change, but fear the temporary discomfort that comes with it.** You know that changing things up will make you happier in the long run, but you keep sticking with the status quo because it means you won't have to risk any pain or failure.

Sometimes these feelings may be more than just being stuck in a rut. Such feelings may be signs of something more serious, such as **persistent depressive disorder (PDD)**. This mild, but chronic, mood disorder is characterized by symptoms that are less severe than depression but can often be longer-lasting.

People often experience these symptoms for years without recognizing that what they're feeling is actually a form of depression. **Low mood, decreased energy, loss of interest, and loss of pleasure** are all common symptoms of this condition. If you suspect that you may be experiencing PDD, talk to your doctor about your symptoms.

## FINDING THE SOURCE OF YOUR RUT

Being "stuck" is something you may not even notice at first. These feelings often build slowly over time. Day after day, you might follow your same routines. Eventually, it feels less like you are working toward something and more like you're just killing time. Here are some of the signs that you might be stuck in a rut.

While you might recognize that you are stuck in a rut, you might not know what the next step should be. One thing to remember is that not all ruts are the same. Figure out what's causing your discontentment before you make any drastic changes in your life. Consider working with a licensed counselor or cognitive behavioral therapist to help you with this.

For instance, you might feel like you are in a rut with your romantic partner. Or perhaps your job is the source of your feelings. Even your health, your family situation, your friendships, your hobbies, or your home can cause unhappiness.

Don't criticize or berate yourself once you understand the root cause of your feelings. It's easy to minimize the problem and try to make your feelings seem trivial. You might think: "I have a great life," or "I don't have a right to feel this way." But, these thoughts are counterproductive and keep you trapped in the rut. While things may be "just fine" as they are, if you're not satisfied, it's time to make changes and regain your spark.

## GETTING OUT OF A RUT

Once you've acknowledged what you're feeling, start looking for ways to get unstuck. There are a number of ways to break the negative cycle and move forward. Here are a few ideas on how to get out of a rut.

We all go through periods where we feel like we might be stuck in a rut. In fact, it's not uncommon to feel like you're just going through the motions, treading water, or jogging in place. You're doing the same old things, but it doesn't seem like you are actually getting anywhere. Things that used to excite you start to feel less interesting. Instead of moving forward toward your goals, you're remaining stagnant. These feelings can be frustrating. But, there are things that you can do to not only figure out why you're stuck, but also learn how to get motivated and excited again.



## INTRODUCING THE ILLUMINATING LIFE COACH & BUSINESS MENTOR FROM FOCUS COACHING



# JACKIE ROWE

### *So here is how the story began...*

I first met Jackie at one of her Vision Board Workshops in late 2019. To be honest I was a bit of a mess at the time due to the trauma I had suffered and the PTSD symptoms I was experiencing. **I thought a workshop to give me more direction would be a fabulous idea to help me find focus and get back on track.**

I really enjoyed her welcome and was impressed by how well she connected with us. **Her genuine nature shone through clearly** and her intention was as she stated, **to guide you through the process, not sell you anything, not force her ideas on you, just let you evolve through your journey of reflection and visualisation.**

I found that my vision board was a sad reflection of my current situation, and I became quite emotional and tearful. I wandered around the room looking at the work others were producing and Jackie quietly came up to me and started to chat. She listened patiently and made some suggestions, one of which included **one-on-one coaching as and when I felt ready, to help me move out of my trauma cycle.** I was incredibly wary but I stayed in touch, and occasionally Jackie would reach out and let me know about another workshop, or her **"Women's Circle's" for which she specialises in.**

So, here we are mid 2020, mid COVID 19 Pandemic, just coming out of lockdown in WA, and Jackie is going to be running her **"Woman Empowered Circle Journey"**. An eight week program for small intimate groups of women that would guide us through a journey of transformation with a different intention each week. I am in the middle of going through EMDR therapy for PTSD with a Psychologist, and attending the WA Recovery College Alliance Educator's Foundation Course. I am currently still a bit of a wreck emotionally, but aware enough of the fact that I can longer keep living this way, and need help! **So I took the leap of faith and enrolled to attend the next Woman Empowered Journey.**

From the moment I sat down in her beautiful peaceful circle room with the other women, and listened to Jackie do her "Acknowledgement to Country", and begin her welcome to us, **I knew my life was about to change for the better.** And it did! I have worked very hard, there has been many tears, many triumphs and a lot of support as I have grown and healed. I have introduced daily intentions into my life, begun to keep a gratitude journal, explored my inner child, and healed from wounds inflicted recently, and many years ago.

**I began this journey as a bit of a skeptic.** I have now been working with Jackie for nearly a year. Initially we did one-on-one coaching and that was hugely beneficial in helping me to find perspective and become more grounded. The practise of gratitude is done to help reduce the anxiety and stress that the body holds inside itself. I was literally vibrating with anxiety so I have found this and the meditation to be quite helpful. It is something you must practice daily as a matter of self-care. Putting everything else aside to ensure you are cared for first, so that you can go on and help others.

I continue my work with Jackie and I probably always will, either personally or through my work life in an ongoing capacity, just because she is so good at helping you find focus, keeping it real while staying kind, and is there to encourage you, help you grow, feel empowered, heal, and to celebrate your victories.

**How could I not share this beautiful woman with you all!**

### *A little about Jackie in her own words...*

A little about me, my life began in a small ancient village called Winlaton in the North East of England. Its name means twisted Oak which goes back to Saxon times. I love history and believe our past is such an important part of knowing who we are now. **Our story is why we do what we do,** the relationships we form and how we travel through life.

I have had a long career in teaching, coaching and mentoring in both the not-for-profit, and private business sector. I have also lived in Dijon, Paris, London and now Perth, Western Australia and found that relationships are at the heart of life for all of us. **We are all ultimately seeking the same thing, which is to love and be loved, to contribute, to learn, to share and to connect.**

My coaching journey was born from a chance opportunity to be trained in **Strengths-Based Practice while working in the disability field** about twelve years ago. At that time I was facing a really serious crisis in my own life and was literally hanging on to my sanity by my fingernails. The Strengths-based work profoundly shifted my thinking as I learned that I actually had all the strengths and power I needed to find the solutions to any challenge that I had. This realisation changed my life and sent me on a journey to complete a **Post Grad Degree in Coaching** over a decade ago, which I have now added to with Psych K (a beautiful energy based psychology working directly with the sub-conscious mind) and Circle facilitation.

I now live close to my children near the beach in beautiful Perth and **seek out time by the ocean most days to do some grounding and tap into it's energy.** I believe we are spiritual beings living a human experience and that our life journey is about finding our ultimate alignment, and the truth of who we are.

My coaching practice is a holistic approach using a blend of coaching techniques, energy work, intuition, compassion and honesty. I work with clients online or face to face in my beautiful client room and circle room so I am able to work with women locally, nationally, & internationally.

Now as a highly experienced Transformation Coach, Women's Circle Facilitator and Advanced Psych-K Practitioner, using a holistic approach I am able to help woman to remove limiting beliefs, transform their thinking and step into their power and truth. I believe all change is possible and my vision is for all women to realise their amazing true potential, to speak their truth without fear and to live a life that they love.

I have now been working with, guiding and supporting women for over twenty years and bring the strength and expertise of this journey into my coaching practice. Through coaching and the power of circles. I help and support women with their emotional, mental, behavioural and Spiritual journey to amazing growth and transformation.

- Post Graduate Degree in Coaching (Curtin University, School of Psychology)
- BA (Hons) Degree in Education Sunderland University
- Diploma Training Design & Assessment
- Certificate IV in Training & Assessment
- Certified Advanced Psych K Practitioner
- Certified Circle Facilitator
- ASBAS Australian Small Business Advisory Services Advisor
- Member of the International Coaching Federation

## Jackie's journey...

Jackie was born in the North East of England and began life in the small village of Blaydon. Jackie, her parents and siblings lived in a two up - two down terrace house with no indoor bathroom or hot water. In the 1960s this was typical of many old working class homes in the North East of England.

When Jackie was four years old, her mum was seven months pregnant with her fifth child when life changed dramatically for the whole family. Jackie's dad aged twenty eight became critically unwell and went into a coma. Waking from the coma he was undiagnosed, now wheel chair bound and greatly incapacitated. He was completely dependent on his wife as his main caregiver along with his young children to help and support him.

## Marriage, Family, & Australia...

As a twenty year old Jackie spent a year in France as an Au Pair, in Dijon then Paris while her finance was on a long tour with the Royal Navy. The Au Pair role would prove to be her first step into what would later become a long career in early childhood. After she left France she married her fiancé before moving to London as he started his new career as a Prison Officer. Jackie had great friends and work but missed the North East, so three years later they moved back again. They had their first baby in Durham and then went back to village life in Winlaton, where they had two more children.

Jackie was drawn to early years work, working with children and families with diverse needs. Her husband continued his role as a prison officer working in a really tough prison. The role was very challenging and over time impacted on her husband's health and well-being in a number of ways and the marriage was struggling to survive. Looking back Jackie now recognises that the marriage became an unbalanced co-dependent relationship and they both played a role.

In 1999 that she and her husband and their children immigrated to Australia which was a make or break move for the marriage. Jackie shares 'I had hoped we could repair the marriage and I also wanted my children to know the world beyond the village, I wanted to broaden their horizons and give them greater opportunities'.

There is nothing stronger than a woman who has rebuilt herself.

## New Beginnings and Life Down Under!...

Arriving in Perth Jackie was shocked by the disparity she saw between Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal people in the community. She had expected to find the much promoted 'Fair go for all' applying to everyone. She was shocked when this was not the case and found the overt racism and negative language being used about Aboriginal people really distressing.

As a qualified teacher in early childhood Jackie found a position within a few months of arriving teaching at the Aboriginal Support Unit at TAFE. She was preparing to write her thesis to complete her Hons Degree in Education.

She chose to use her thesis research to gain a better understanding of Australia and the history of Aboriginal people. Her only knowledge was from school history books in the UK, which she quickly discovered was a very biased view. Her thesis focused on 'The injustices of the past and the impact on Aboriginal students of today'. Jackie was delighted when a number of Aboriginal students aged from seventeen to mid-forties agreed to participate in her research.

Life was busy with teaching, study, a rocky marriage and Jackie's youngest daughter was once again becoming very unwell and was requiring increasing emotional and physical support. There had been signs of this when her daughter was a little younger but as she got well again, they had felt it was over, but apparently not.

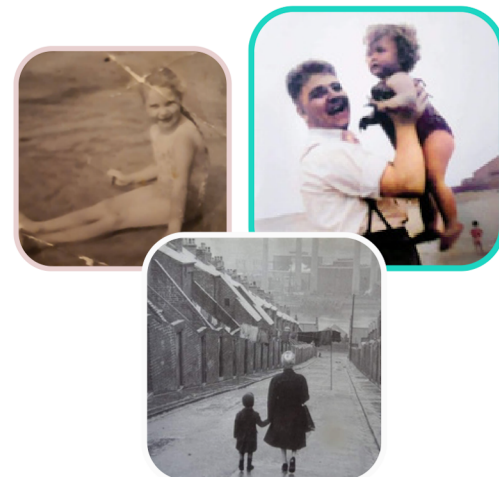
## Next Steps as a Single Mum...

Now a single mum Jackie had full time care of her infant granddaughter, her ten year old son and her younger teen daughter, life was stressful. She took long term leave from her role as an Inclusion support facilitator to create better stability for the children. However with no salary coming in now and no government payments, she found herself back in survival mode. Jackie felt completely lost and overwhelmed for months when out of the blue came another life line.

A colleague from TAFE called and offered Jackie an opportunity to join a writing team commissioned to write learning guides for Early Years. Although life was crazy and stressful Jackie grabbed this opportunity with both hands. She registered her business which would in time become "Focus Coaching".

A few years later the family moved to the tight knit village of Winlaton which in many ways offered an idyllic life for Jackie and her siblings. It was safe with a real sense of community, lots of freedom and places to play. Sadly tragedy struck again as without much warning and only months after the move to Winlaton, Jackie's dad died aged 35 yrs. Jackie's mum was now a widow but continued to show amazing strength and resilience raising five children alone, often with little to no money in her purse.

Jackie shares *"We spent years in survival mode which I believe significantly helped define who I would become, the career paths I would choose and the relationships I would build. I learned about co-dependency in this space, how to keep small and quiet, how to fulfill everyone else's needs before my own, and believing my value was only in what I could give and not who I was."*



*We arrived in Australia and quickly found a rental property as many new arrivals do and began to find our feet and settle in. 'However it quickly became evident to me in the first few weeks that moving to Australia was not going to be the magic glue to hold my marriage together. I could have gone back to England, but I didn't and despite all the challenges there have been I'm glad I stayed. I was determined to build a new life here for myself and my children.*

*My journey in Australia has been a hell of a ride so far with some major ups and downs. Many times I have found myself having to dig really deep to draw on my resilience again and again to keep going.*

*But I believe I'm meant to be here and excited to see what life has to offer next. Life is such an amazing adventure and even on my darkest days, and there have been many, I believed that the universe had my back, and I had a belief that I would be ok, and I am. **Much more than ok.**"*

With similar symptoms to Jackie's dad and no diagnosis it was very worrying time. Hospital appointments, organising additional support in school and re-balancing family life was needed.

During this time Jackie had accepted a new position to manage a Commonwealth funded training programme. This was a great learning opportunity but as the hours and pressure of the role increased home life became harder to manage. There no longer seemed enough hours in the day to meet everyone's needs and things began to crumble.

During this time Jackie's older teen daughter had unbeknownst to the family, met a much older teen who was supplying her with drugs. In a matter of months her older daughter was quickly drawn away from the family and into drug use and a world they did not know or understand. Jackie needed to work less hours and a lifeline came in a part time position as an Inclusion Support Facilitator. Jackie loved this role, mentoring and guiding early year's educators to include children with high needs.

On the home front the challenges increased as her older teenage daughter became pregnant and was in a violent aggressive relationship. The situation was very difficult for everyone and led to Jackie's daughter relinquishing care of the baby to Jackie and her husband. The breakdown of her marriage followed within a year.

The writing had to be done at nights after the children were asleep but Jackie made it work. She found solace, joy and herself again through this creative project which led to many more writing opportunities across the years. Again the universe seemed to have her back just when she needed it.

Jackie slowly eased herself back into her Inclusion Support role and was gifted the opportunity to study Strengths Based Practice, which profoundly changed her thinking.

**Strengths Based Practice** eliminates the old deficit model that sees individuals as broken and needing to be fixed, rather it builds on strengths and experience to build capacity. Through the Strengths based practice Jackie had an epiphany and realised that she had always had all the strengths she needed to overcome any challenge she might face.

She also realised if she could do that then she could help others to do that as well.

She then participated in a mentoring research programme using strengths based practice and loved the speed of transformation she saw in her mentees. She felt she had found her happy place and enrolled in a Post Grad Degree in Coaching to become a Life Coach. The more she learned the stronger she felt and now nothing seemed impossible.

She sold the family home and built a new home, in a new suburb, built on a village concept, life had turned full circle, she had found her village again. The children were all growing and were more settled with better health and new directions. **It was now time to develop her business.**

# Focus Coaching, the Journey Continues...

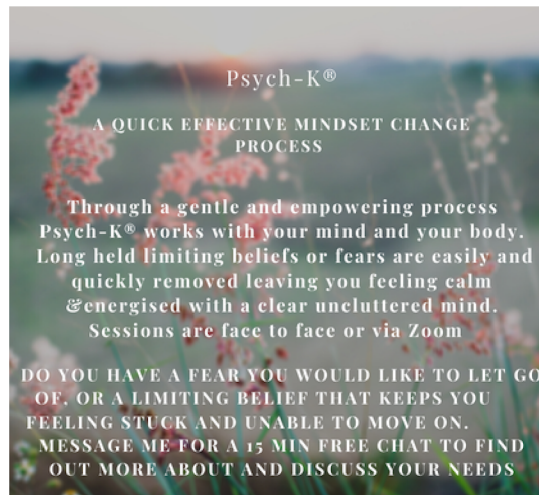
Jackie continues to grow and extend her now full time business, adding Psych K and Circle Facilitation to her services. Jackie's heightened sense of awareness and empathy for people and their situations, coupled with her ability to look beyond people's problems and behaviours makes her coaching so much more personal and enriching for her clients. Drawing on her very diverse life experiences, years of struggling to survive. Jackie is thriving and has well and truly come into her own as a woman, a mother, a friend, a coach and mentor.

Although Jackie works predominately with women in her Circle work, she works with men, women and teens through Focus Coaching. She is also an Advisor with the Commonwealth funded programme ASBAS, the Australian Small Business Advisory Service, and provides coaching for small business owners. She is also consistently extending her knowledge, writing and designing new Women's Circles, workshops, and motivational training, and so much more.

*I am really proud to have been able to share just a small part of this very special woman's story and I urge you to connect with her too. If you want to improve your life, your work, your relationships, she is a safe haven for you to reach out to. I should know....*

*Written by Editor Melissa Dumitru and Jackie Rowe*

*'Of all the roads she traveled, the journey back to herself was the most magnificent'.*





## The Power of Circles

I have always known the power of women's circles and witnessed this in the village I grew up in. The women of the village would naturally gather in circle to connect, to be heard, to share wisdom and find strength in each other. As I travelled away from village life to live in London, Paris, and now Australia, I often longed of a circle of women to lessen the feelings of isolation.

A few years ago when I was at my lowest ebb and all around me felt like chaos. I needed a strong, wise circle of women but never found it. After finding my way back to my own self-empowerment I wanted to give back to women and created the Sunrise Sister Circle which is **free** to all women. This beautiful space has now become an important part of the lives of many women. It represents inclusion, belonging, and gives back to my community.



## Mind - Body - Soul - Purpose - Connections

### Change Your Mindset

As a coach, I believe that your emotional, behavioural, mental and spiritual well-being is directly connected to your mindset. We are habitual beings and go through life with self-beliefs, values and perspectives we developed in our early years.

These habits are so familiar to us we don't even realise they are there. When we are triggered, when we self-sabotage, and there is a reluctance to step outside our comfort zone even though that's what we really want to do, this is all mindset.

My coaching is holistic in its approach and I use a range of different modalities to help you change your mindset and release negative beliefs that are holding you back. By changing your mindset, you change your life.



### Business Coaching...



Jackie is a highly motivated business owner and qualified coach and is passionate about supporting others to reach their goals and find their success. Jackie draws on over twenty years' experience mentoring, coaching teaching and leadership in the early education & community sector both in the UK and Australia. She has extensive knowledge of the early child hood sector has over nine years' experience in the disability and community services field.

Jackie is a very creative thinker with an approachable & calm style. She sees potential and possibility where others see problems and believes there is always a way forward by building the self-belief & capacity of individuals,, teams & businesses. Jackie is a skilled writer and has written and designed multiple learning guides, training programs, workshops and signature coaching and circle programs.

With a variety of ways to connect both in person and via Zoom, Jackie is open to working with you one-on-one, at one of her women's circles, mentoring, working with you and your business/team, and much more. Jackie has just launched her beautiful informative and exciting new website [www.focuscoaching.com.au](http://www.focuscoaching.com.au) and she is ready to meet you and be part of your new journey to YOU!

*Imagine life as you dream it should be...  
All positive change begins with a mindset shift  
I know it feels hard and challenging at times.*

I've helped hundreds of women transform their thinking, make the changes they need to step into a new 'ME' with a strong positive mindset for a more balanced, happier life.

### What is Business Station?

Business Station is a non-profit provider of enterprise development services to businesses across Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. We aim to build growth and capacity in small businesses by providing affordable and easily accessible training and business support. Through a number of programs, we run regular group workshops, interactive webinars and face-to-face consultations.

Our support to business owners extends through our incubators, which are home to over 70 small businesses. Membership also includes business health checks, business coaching and access to co-working and meeting spaces.

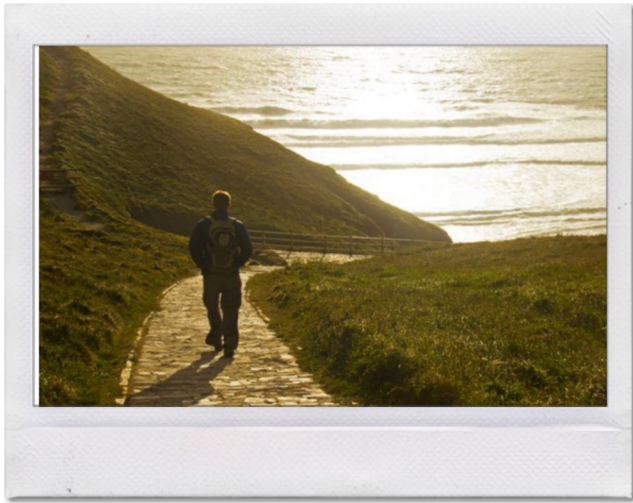
Jackie's new business venture with the "Business Station" is an ideal way to get mentoring and coaching for your business for those who are in the for-profit sector. ASBAS provides this exciting new platform for you to explore and all you need to do is to register with your ABN, and book in with Jackie or another coach today.



# Use Walking Meditation for Stress Relief

By Elizabeth Scott – May 28, 2020

Elizabeth Scott, MS, is a wellness coach specializing in stress management and quality of life, and the author of "8 Keys to Stress Management." Article shared with you from Verywell Mind Newsletter January 2021



Meditation is one of the great stress management techniques because it carries many varied benefits. It can help people create mental and emotional space between them and their stressors, allowing them to gain perspective and get their bearings before tackling the stressful situations at hand. It can also enable people to relax their mind and body to reverse their stress response. In the long term, the benefits are multiplied because meditation practice can lead to greater resilience to future stress.

That said, more than a few people have found the practice of meditation to be challenging at first, and this leads to some people giving up on the practice before they really get started with it because they find it either difficult to connect with it, counterintuitive for their busy mind, or challenging to stick with.

**Walking meditation** provides the *benefits of meditation* combined with the *benefits of exercise*, and has the bonus benefit of being easy to learn and practice, thereby making walking meditation a great technique for those new to meditation.

## How to Do a Walking Meditation

- **Get** into comfortable clothing and shoes, and set aside some uninterrupted free time. You can set a timer on your watch if you'd like.
- **Begin** walking at a comfortable pace. Really focus on the sensations that you feel in your body as you walk. Your walk can be at any pace, as long as it feels comfortable. Many people prefer a slow pace to really savor each physical sensation involved, but a fast-paced walk can become immersive as well. There's no wrong way to do it. As you walk, feel the weight of your body on the bottom of your feet. Feel your arms swinging with each stride. If you find thoughts coming into your mind, gently let them go and redirect your focus to the sensations you're feeling as you walk. Stay focused on **now**.
- **You** can also focus on your breathing as you walk. Try to breathe in for two steps, and out for two or three, for example. Focus on keeping your breathing and your steps coordinated. Or use mantra meditation techniques by repeating a mantra in your head as you walk, in time with your steps — for example, every four steps.
- **If you** find it difficult to focus on your breathing and become lost in thought, this is okay; simply redirect your attention back to your breathing, as you would with any meditation. If this feels frustrating or challenging, you can work your way into meditation by listening to music, particularly music with no lyrics. This can help you to practice focusing on what's happening in the moment.
- **Again**, if thoughts about work, money, that fight you had this morning, or other stressors creep into your head, give yourself a pat on the back for noticing, and gently redirect your attention to **now**, to your walking meditation practice. It's optimal to do this for 30 minutes, several times per week, but if you only have 10 minutes, or even 5, that's better than no practice at all. Walking meditation can be useful even in small doses.

## Tips

**Experiment!** Try different paces, different mantras, different styles of breathing, and see what works best for you.

**Commit** more to the practice than to the amount of time you spend. For example, it's more important to focus on doing your walking meditation a certain number of times per week than a certain amount of minutes per time. Once it's a habit, you can always work your way into longer sessions.

You may also want to use *music* as a focal point. Just be careful not to get sucked into thinking about the meaning of the lyrics, or technically, you're no longer meditating. (However, listening to music and exercising bring stress management benefits, too!)



## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

When you feel stuck in a rut, combat it by taking care of yourself. Self-compassion is critical to mental wellness. Start with a quick assessment of how well you've been taking care of you. Have you been eating well? Are you sleeping enough? Have you been spending enough time with people who care about and support you? If something is lacking in the self-care department, now is the time to address it. Healthy food, adequate sleep, daily exercise, and social support are all essential to your physical and emotional health. Look for ways to treat yourself a little better. Taking care of yourself ensures you have the energy to stay focused and excited about your life.

## CHANGE YOUR ROUTINES

It's hard to move forward or branch out if you're following the same routines day after day. People are creatures of habit, and sometimes feeling stuck stems from boredom. Look for ways to add different experiences to your day. Here are some things you might try.

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- **Strike up a conversation.** Talking to new people is a great way to expand your social connections. Plus, you will learn interesting things about the people around you.
- **Have some fun.** Spending some time engaged in an activity you truly love is good for your health. Whether it's hanging out with friends or pursuing a hobby, set aside time during the week and focus your energy on having a good time.
- **Try something new.** Whether it's taking a new route to work, watching a new show, or signing up for a class, exploring the world around you can add zest to your life.
- **Be spontaneous.** If you're bored with your life, live in the moment. Do things that are not pre-planned. Say yes to new experiences; and don't be afraid to do the unexpected.

## TRY HEADING OUTDOORS

Researchers have discovered that being in nature has a positive impact on the brain. For example, one study found that taking a walk outside reduced self-referential rumination, a behavior that can increase the risk of depression. Another study found that nature walks were associated with decreased depression, lowered stress, and increased mental well-being. **Not only** can being outside increase your mental wellness, studies have shown that it enhances creativity as well. The next time you're feeling bogged down, try going for a walk. Let go of the thoughts circling around in your brain. Pay attention to the world around you. Allow yourself to relax, think of new things, and enjoy the beauty you see. If nothing else, it's a great way to get some exercise. You will return to your everyday life with a renewed sense of wonder.



## FIND YOUR PURPOSE

It's easy to fall into a rut when it feels like you're not really working toward anything. Having things to look forward to and a sense of purpose are key ingredients for motivation. For instance, life goals related to your career or your relationships can provide a sense of purpose. Even small things, like having plans for Friday night, can lift your spirits.

**In fact**, researchers have discovered that having something to look forward to helps people cope with troubles in the here and now. Psychologists have long recognized the importance of *delayed gratification*. By holding out for larger rewards in the future, people build better self-control and stronger *willpower*.

**In one study**, chronic gamblers were asked to think about upcoming events like a future vacation. By doing so, they were able to curb their impulse to gamble. Thinking about the future allowed them to focus on their long-term goals rather than giving in to the desire for immediate gratification. Here are some ways to give yourself something to look forward to.

**Make plans.** There is a great deal of power in anticipation. Sometimes you might look forward to existing events, such as the release of a movie or your favorite holiday. But you also can create these moments intentionally. Plan a vacation, even if it's just taking a day trip to a local spot. Call or text friends and make plans for Friday night. Give yourself things to look forward to and get excited about.

**Don't overlook the little things.** Even small daily and weekly rewards such as being able to go to your favorite place for lunch or tuning into your favorite TV show once a week are great ways to build a sense of anticipation for the future.

**Volunteer to serve others.** Having a sense of purpose also comes from helping others. Look for ways to contribute in your community. Or, focus on helping your friends or loved ones with a project. Participate in your church. Volunteer with a local organization. Or, even engage in political activism. Such activities give you a sense of greater purpose and meaning and are good for your mental well-being, too.

## BOOST YOUR MOTIVATION

**Take small steps.** Pick something that you think you might like to pursue, such as a new hobby or workout program. Start small with something you know you can accomplish, yet is just *outside of your current skill level*. Don't wait for motivation or inspiration to strike. Just get going. Force yourself to get through the first step. Once you have mastered it, pick another small step and master it. Eventually, going through the motions will be a thing of the past and you will feel involved, excited, and interested in learning more.

**Reward yourself.** *Positive reinforcement* is helpful when you're struggling to get motivated. Promise yourself a reward for starting the task. Then, continue to reward yourself after completing each step. Eventually, pull back on the rewards, but promise yourself a larger reward once you have reached your goals. Rewards can get you started and help generate greater interest in what you are working on.

## SQUASH PERFECTIONISM

If you struggle with *perfectionism*, this can keep you stuck in the same place. No matter how hard you try, it seems like whatever you're working on is never good enough. But, you need to squash your tendencies toward perfectionism right away and recognize that done is better than perfect. In other words, rather than trying to make a project perfect, be satisfied with the fact that you completed it.

If left unchecked, *perfectionism* can keep you spinning your wheels for a very long time. Instead, focus on completing projects and moving forward rather than striving for perfection. Let yourself make mistakes. Embrace the fact that you have given your best effort and move on. In time, you will be much more productive and creative when you're no longer tethered to perfectionism.

## A WORD FROM VERYWELL MIND

Feeling stuck in a rut can be frustrating. But with a little effort, you can add a sense of novelty, adventure, and excitement back into your life. If you're feeling overwhelmed by that thought, you might be experiencing something more serious. Loss of interest in things you enjoyed, difficulty feeling happy *emotions*, and a sense of hopelessness are *symptoms of depression*. If what you're feeling is more than just being stuck in a rut, talk to your doctor right away.

**SOURCES:** <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-get-out-of-a-rut>

# ASK A THERAPIST

## How Do I Deal With Bad Memories That Pop Into My Head?

### Strategies for Dealing With Memories That Upset You

By Amy Morin – January 21, 2021

In the **"Ask a Therapist" series**, I'll be answering your questions about all things mental health and psychology. Whether you are struggling with a mental health condition, coping with anxiety about a life situation, or simply looking for a therapist's insight. (Submit a question directly to this site at [www.verwellmind.com/ask-a-therapist](http://www.verwellmind.com/ask-a-therapist)). Look out for my answers to your questions every Friday in the **Healthy Mind Newsletter**. Go online to subscribe and receive all their latest news and articles.

#### A Reader Asks :

I have several bad memories wired into my brain and I want to forget them. I cringe every time I remember what happened. How can I make it so these things don't just pop up in my head anymore?

#### Amy Morin Answers:

Bad memories can be quite disturbing. And sometimes, the more we try to push them away, the more they come back to haunt us. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to deal with the bad memories that keep popping up.

#### Emotional Memories Leave an Imprint

It's unclear from your question what type of bad memories you're dealing with. Perhaps it's a traumatic memory, like a near-death experience. Or maybe, you're recalling some painful (yet not necessarily traumatic) times in your life, like the time you didn't get invited to a party or the time when someone said something that really hurt your feelings.

Either way, we know that emotional memories leave a big imprint on our brains. You probably can't recall mundane details of your childhood or what was said in a staff meeting two years ago. But, you will **remember the times you got rejected, felt terrified, or experienced extreme embarrassment**.

Your brain responds differently to experiences that are highly emotional. The amygdala heightens your sensory awareness when you're facing a highly emotional experience, which may encode memories more effectively.

#### Recognise Your Triggers

Have you noticed what seems to trigger your bad memories? Quite often, certain sounds, smells, or experiences spark our brains to think about certain things.

For example, if you got teased in the cafeteria as a kid—and you usually ate an orange for lunch—the smell of oranges might trigger your bad memories. Or, if you were in a warzone, loud bangs (like fireworks) might send your body into panic-mode.

**When you recognize your triggers, you can decide how to respond to them.** You might decide it's just easier to avoid the things that trigger your bad memories.

Or, you might learn that it's easier to respond to those memories when you know why they're popping into your brain. Seeing that they aren't as random as you might think may help you feel more in control. And telling yourself, **"I'm remembering that right now because I'm seeing something that reminds me of that time in my life,"** may help you feel better too.

You also might be able to start associating those things with pleasant memories. For example, if you are triggered by the smell of oranges, you might start eating oranges when you are doing fun activities. This may help your brain start to associate citrus scents with positive feelings.



#### Write the Facts in a Journal

**You might find that the more you try to suppress a bad memory, the more you think about it. That's why exposure therapy may be able to help.**

- **In cases of PTSD**, where someone experienced a traumatic experience that causes nightmares, flashbacks, and other symptoms that interfere with everyday life, therapists often use exposure therapy to help them recover.
- This may involve talking about the experience until it doesn't feel so scary anymore.
- Regardless of whether you are struggling with unpleasant memories or all-out traumatic experiences, exposure therapy may help you sort things out.
- **You might find writing about your experience in a journal helps.** But, you may want to stick to the facts of the events. Rather than dive into how you felt or how horrible you felt, describe the facts as objectively as possible.
- This may help reorganize how your brain handles this memory and it may help you feel less upset when you recall those memories at other times.



#### Talk to a Therapist

**Talking to a licensed mental health professional may be a good idea as well. Therapists are well-trained in helping people deal with traumatic events and bad memories.**

**A therapist may help you change the narrative you tell yourself. For example, if certain memories cause you to feel bad about yourself, a therapist may help you see that you're not at fault for something bad that happened to you.**

**Or, a therapist may assist you in responding to those unpleasant memories in a healthy way so they aren't as disturbing to you anymore.**