

# GAME-CHANGING MENTAL WELLBEING

By Andrea Lines-Botell

*When I was young mental health was never talked about. It is only in my mid adult years that I realized that I had extreme anxiety growing up and was so used to the feeling that it was my norm. I went through a period of my life as a teen with such bad anxiety that leaving the house would make me numb with pain and have extreme stomach aches plus hyperventilating. I went from this high state of anxiety to talking in front of 100's of people within a 5-year span leading talks on mindfulness. What changed? I am actually not sure. I know for me I hit a rock bottom in my life. I saw a flash before me of what my life might be if I didn't overcome this pattern. I still walked with anxiety but learned to accept it as part of me. Through being a Mum mental health became the focus of my life as I supported my children with their own mental wellbeing. My children have been my biggest inspiration in life. Within my family, loved ones and clients I have had the honour and privilege to support people through a myriad of mental health journeys including addiction, depression, anxiety, loss, and trauma. I have been witness to what unhealed wounds and unsupported mental health can do. I have lived knowing what unsupported mental health looks and feels like too. It is my passion to offer support in creative ways to others and my loved ones to allow opportunities for the pain to ease and for healing to happen. Walking with supported mental wellbeing is the difference between surviving and thriving. We all walk with mental health that needs support. We are all worthy of support and healing.*

Mental health is the only true personal wealth. Even if your physical health is challenged your mindset around it shapes the experience.

The brain is so complex that it is unreasonable for us to consider that mental health does not affect us all. It does. Luckily now, the stigma around mental health is diminishing and conversations are being normalized. This allows many more people to feel less alone and to recognize their signs of mental wellbeing. I do not believe that there is a normal mindset. We are all a myriad of complex information and so we digest and assimilate information in millions of different

ways. No one person will have the same thoughts or reactions to another. Part of the increase in anxiety in today's world is, of course, access to social media. This lends itself beautifully to feeding a so-called desired state of normalcy. We are fuelled by illusion every day. This illusion is from the masks we wear with each other and also social media input. We can easily fill ourselves with “should, would and if only”. When we shift into these states it becomes massively challenging to be present and to walk in a place of self-love and acceptance.

Some mental health areas can cause huge amounts of discomfort within our physical body. Anxiety is just one of these areas. We are deeply wired to avoid pain and discomfort. This fuels our drive to find quick ways out. Addiction and maladaptive coping have increased beyond any other timeline with easy access to escapisms from our physical and mental pain.

The issue with these strategies is that it gives a short-term gain for long-term pain. The coping strategy will stop working leaving the person looking for bigger and more extreme ways of dulling the pain. Inevitably it can become a pathway for destruction rapidly leaving the person walking with not only mental suffering but also guilt and shame.

Mind mastery and breath is the ultimate game-changer of wellbeing. Our thoughts feed our body sending millions of signals including peace or panic. Because mind mastery does not have the same appeal as many other coping strategies it becomes one that people avoid or do not prioritize. It is, however, the only short-term and long-term gain. It is a win-win of mental wellbeing. Prioritizing mind mastery is the key to walking with peace. We must first stop being the illusion to ourselves and start feeding our self-worth.

What have you got to lose by mindfulness? Only pain and illusion. Seems like a deal of a lifetime to me.