



# QUEENSLAND WOMEN'S HEALTH NETWORK NEWS

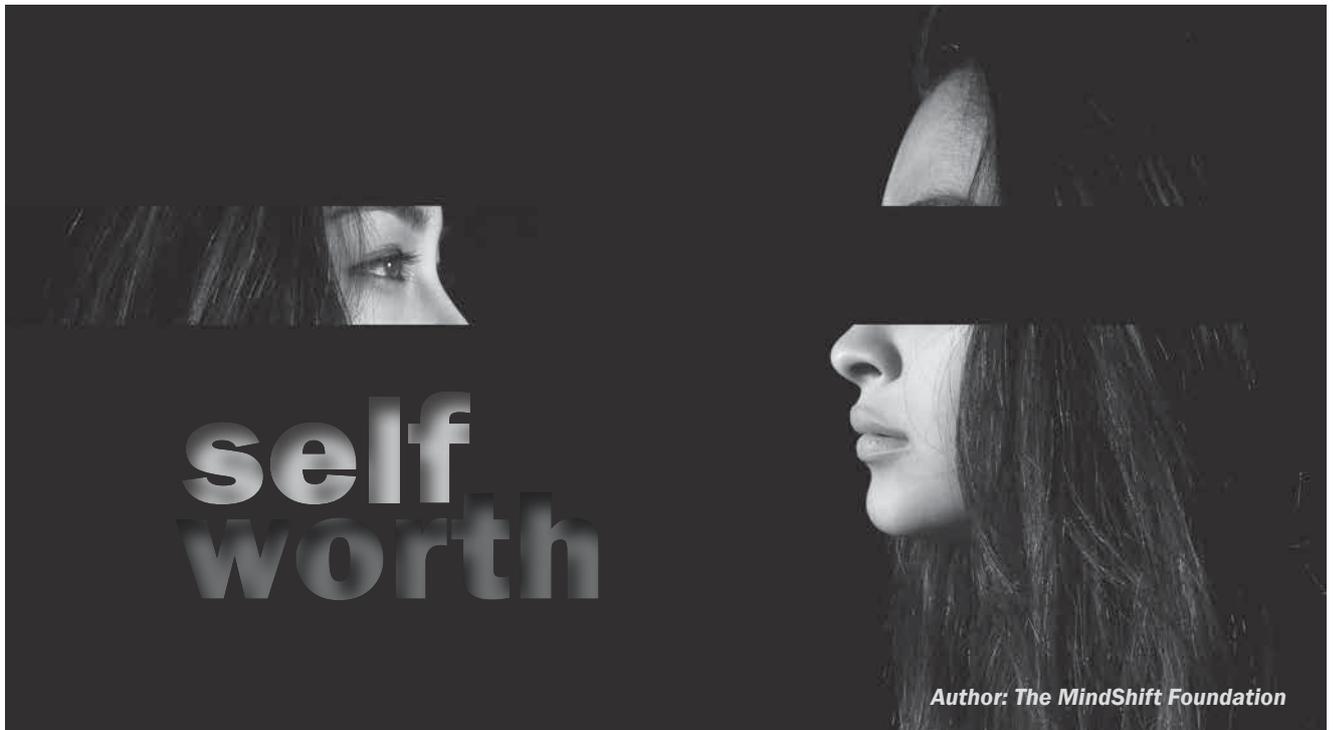


ISSUE 2 | 2019

Be WELL Connected!

Let's talk  
about

## CONFIDENCE



Author: The MindShift Foundation

**S**elf Worth is a term that is used to define a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgement of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self.

Self worth encompasses beliefs such as 'I am competent', 'I am worthy' and emotions like triumph, despair, pride and shame. People with healthy Self Worth like themselves and value their achievements.

While everyone lacks confidence on occasion, people with low Self Worth feel unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time.

In essence, how you see your Self Worth is your opinion of yourself.

### Characteristics of low self-esteem

Common characteristics of people with low Self Worth include high

levels of anxiety, problems with social interaction and a preoccupation with others' perceived opinions. Sometimes, this can lead to high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse or eating disorders.

### Low Self Worth and quality of life

Low Self Worth can reduce the quality of a person's life in many different ways. People with low Self Worth can often put themselves down and express an opinion that they are not good enough. They can hesitate to take on new endeavours due to fear of failure, and they can experience difficulty expressing their thoughts or beliefs with confidence.

Many people with persistent Self Worth problems will dismiss or minimise any positive feedback they receive and they often attribute their

successes mainly to luck, even when there is evidence to the contrary.

The impact of low Self Worth on relationships can also be especially troubling. It is not uncommon for people with low Self Worth to have difficulty getting along with co-workers, or to experience conflict with spouses or significant others.

Low Self Worth can create an excessive mental preoccupation with the negative side of a situation. This can lead a person to have diminished expectations for their general quality of life.

### Causes of low Self Worth

The causes of low Self Worth are frequently traced back to abusive or dysfunctional early years, with the resulting emotional conditions persisting well into adulthood.

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Ongoing stressful life events, such as a relationship breakdown or financial trouble, poor treatment from a partner, parent or carer, or being in an abusive relationship, can also have an effect on one's self-esteem.

Medical problems such as chronic pain, serious illness or physical disability, and mental illnesses, such as an anxiety disorder or depression, can also negatively influence one's self-esteem.

Research shows that despite a stressful early life, you can still build a robust sense of Self Worth [...]

### Self Worth building

Self Worth is strongly related to how you view and react to the things that happen in your life.

1. Treat yourself as you would your best friend. Be supportive, kind and understanding. Don't be hard on yourself when you make a mistake [...]
2. Don't compare yourself to others. Recognise that everyone is different. Every human life has value in its own right. Make an effort to accept yourself – warts and all.
3. Acknowledge the positive and appreciate your special qualities. Remind yourself of your good points every day.
4. Write a list of your good points and refer to it often. (If you feel you can't think of anything good about yourself, ask a trusted friend to help you [...])
5. Concentrate on living in the 'here and now' rather than reviving old hurts and disappointments.
6. Exercise is a good boost to the brain for all kinds of things, but especially in dealing with depression and helping you to feel good. [...]
7. Be assertive and communicate your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions. Talk to others in a direct and honest manner.

It takes effort and vigilance to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviours with healthier alternatives. Give yourself time to establish the new habits. Keep a diary or journal to chart your progress.

### Seek out support to build self-esteem

Further ways to build Self Worth include talking to a trusted friend or loved one about your Self Worth issues, reading books on self-development, taking a course in personal development and discussing your issues with a trained therapist.

### Seek help for underlying Self Worth problems

Chronic problems can be demoralising. Seek professional advice for problems such as a relationship breakdown, anxiety disorder or financial worries.

## Emotional and verbal abuse



You may not think you are being abused if you're not being hurt physically. But emotional and verbal abuse can have short-term and long-lasting effects that are just as serious as the effects of physical abuse. Emotional and verbal abuse includes insults, and attempts to scare, isolate, or control you. It is also often a sign that physical abuse may follow. Emotional and verbal abuse may also continue if physical abuse starts. If you have been abused, it is never your fault.

### How does emotional and verbal abuse start?

Emotional and verbal abuse may begin suddenly. Some abusers may start out behaving normally and then begin abuse after a relationship is established. Some abusers may purposefully give a lot of love and attention, including compliments and requests to see you often, in the beginning of a relationship. Often, the abuser tries to make the other person feel strongly bonded to them, as though it is the two of them "against the world."

Over time, abusers begin to insult or threaten their victims and begin

controlling different parts of their lives. When this change in behaviour happens, it can leave victims feeling shocked and confused [...]

### What are the effects of emotional or verbal abuse?

[Being] in an emotionally or verbally abusive relationship can have long-lasting effects on your physical and mental health, including leading to chronic pain, depression, or anxiety.

You may also:

- Question your memory of events: "Did that really happen?" (See *Gaslighting*.)
- Change your behaviour for fear of upsetting your partner or act more aggressive or more passive than you would be otherwise.
- Feel ashamed or guilty; constantly afraid of upsetting your partner; powerless and hopeless; manipulated, used and controlled [...]

### What is gaslighting?

'Gaslighting' is the word used when an abuser makes you feel like you are losing your mind or memory. An abuser might:

- Deny an event happened;
- Call you crazy or overly sensitive;
- Describe an event as completely different from how you remember it.

Gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse that abusers use to maintain power and control. When a victim is questioning her memories or her mind, she may be more likely to feel dependent on the abuser and stay in the relationship.

Gaslighting happens over time, and you may not notice it at first.

### How can I get help for emotional or verbal abuse?

- If you are in immediate danger dial Triple Zero (000).
- DVConnect Womensline: **1800 811 811**
- 1800RESPECT: **1800 737 732**

*Source: This article is an excerpt based on 'Emotional and verbal abuse', by Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.*

*For the original article: <<https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/other-types/emotional-and-verbal-abuse>>.*

Queenslanders experiencing or impacted by domestic and family violence can visit the new Queensland Government domestic violence online portal as a single point of access for information, services and support: <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/support-victims-abuse/domestic-family-violence>.

### Where to get help

Always remember you are not alone. Your doctor or registered health professionals are there to help you.

The MindShift Foundation's online resource page also has a list of organisations where you can get further information, <http://mindshift.org.au/suggested-links/>.

*Disclaimer: Content is provided for education and information purposes only. Visit MindShift Foundation for full disclaimer details.*

*Source: This article is an excerpt only from 'Self Worth – Introduction', by The MindShift Foundation. Reproduced by permission.*

*For the full article visit: <<https://mindshift.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/01-Self-Worth-Introduction.pdf>>. Copyright © The MindShift Foundation, a not-for-profit Australian organisation.*

Australian and overseas data indicate that intimate partner sexual violence is a significant social problem. In Australia, women in cohabitating relationships are more likely to be sexually assaulted by their intimate partner than any other male (Lievore, 2003). For the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey, 6,677 women aged between 18 and 69 were surveyed. Between 5–7% of these women who had a current or former partner had experienced sexual violence from them (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). The ABS Personal Safety Survey [...] found that of Australian females who had been sexually assaulted since the age of 15, 21% had been assaulted by a previous partner and 2% by a current partner – a total of almost a quarter of these assaults (ABS, 2006).

Despite these concerning figures, the issue of intimate partner sexual violence generates little public acknowledgement or discourse though it can have a devastating effect on women who live the experience.

### Intimate partner sexual violence and shame

The specific, emotional trauma associated with intimate partner sexual violence is significant and is highlighted in multiple studies across the literature. A key finding is that feelings of shame and trauma are intensified when sexual assault is perpetrated by an intimate partner compared to a stranger (Culbertson & Dehle, 2001; Parkinson, 2008; Temple, Weston, Rodriguez, & Marshall, 2007). Intimate partner sexual violence has been found to have greater negative effects on victims than physical violence alone (Bennice & Resick, 2003; Guggisberg, 2010; Heenan, 2004).

### Shame in the trauma context

The literature suggests that the particular type of shame felt by victim/survivors of traumatic events, such as sexual assault, is a concept that goes beyond merely feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed about something. In contrast to these relatively mild sensations, the post-trauma experience of shame is described as something that can affect the victim's core perception of their self and identity. Following a traumatic event such as sexual assault, shame can incorporate a sense of disgust, humiliation and negative comparisons of the self with others (Feiring & Taska, 2005; Rahm et al., 2006). Shame can cause a person to feel alienated, worthless, and stigmatised (Rahm et al., 2006). This has the potential to erode a person's self-esteem in a way that can be ongoing and destructive. Shame, in this sense, has been identified as a dimension of post-traumatic syndromes and can be acute or chronic in nature (Wilson et al., 2006).



### Social constructs of shame and cultural norms

Weiss (2010) argued that shame in relation to sexual crimes should not be considered a “natural” emotion but that shame is the result of social constructions of appropriate gender behaviour and how sexuality is dealt with in that culture.

Societal attitudes to sex within intimate relationships are reflected in the historical treatment of marital sexual assault. In Australia, until the 1980s, sexual assault within a marriage was not legally recognised as [a] crime and consent to sex was considered irrevocable by the agreement to marry (Easteal & Feerick, 2005). Australian jurisdictions no longer make a legal distinction for sexual assault perpetrated by a spouse. However, culturally, there is still a perception that sexual violence between intimates is at the low end of severity compared to stranger violence (Lievore, 2003; Easteal & Feerick, 2005).

### Shame as a tool used by perpetrators

The literature paints a picture of shame being sufficiently overwhelming to render a person powerless and diminish their sense of self and status (Wilson et al.,

2006). This makes shame an effective tool for perpetrators to exploit the vulnerability of their victim and enhance their own power in the relationship dynamic. Logan, Cole, and Shannon (2007) studied the use of sexual degradation of women in violent relationships and interpreted this dimension of sexual abuse as closely resembling psychological abuse. The women in this study often perceived the humiliation and degradation they experienced as being designed for that purpose by the perpetrators. Forcing the victim to submit to particular sexual acts that degrade and humiliate them is an example of the use of shame as a tool. [...] This method of shaming can have the double-barrelled effect of ensuring the victim doesn't report or talk about the assault to others as well as eroding their self-esteem and sense of worth, which ensures the perpetrator's position of power is enhanced.

### Implications of victim shame for health professionals

The insidious and eroding effects of shame on victim/survivors mean that it is important that those who work with women in a health or support capacity, be pro-active in recognising and understanding the negative effects of shame in a post-traumatic context. Appropriate, and supportive responses, including referral to specialist [sexual assault and family violence services which exist in all states and territories], are key tools for overcoming the barriers that shame can impose.

**Liz Wall was a Research Officer at the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.**

### SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT: GETTING HELP

Sexual Assault Helpline  
**1800 010 120**

(7.30am to 11.30pm, 7 days a week).

To find a **sexual violence support service** near you visit:

<[https://www.qld.gov.au/  
community/getting-support-  
health-social-issue/](https://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/)> or

<<https://www.oneplace.org.au/>>.

**Source:** This article is a short excerpt only from Wall, L. (2012). The many facets of shame in intimate partner sexual violence (ACSSA Research Summary). Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies. (CC BY 4.0)

**For the full document:** <[https://aifs.gov.au/publications/  
many-facets-shame-intimate-partner-sexual-violence/](https://aifs.gov.au/publications/many-facets-shame-intimate-partner-sexual-violence/)>.

I recently spent some time on an outstation in the Northern Territory. Unless you have been on one, it is hard to understand the level of poverty that some Aboriginal people live in – sleeping on concrete floors, little money, no luxuries. Life is supplemented with bush tucker and everyone works together and shares what they have.

Among the basics of life, there is resilience. But there is also something else that is perhaps even more surprising. As I sat around the campfire in the evening, what rose up into the night sky amid the smoke was laughter.

This is a community surrounded by tragedy and hard social problems. This is a community with deep concerns about the impact of mining on sacred sites, about access to education, feelings of being disenfranchised and the stresses of having very little money to survive on. In nearby towns, there are issues of substance abuse and violence. So it is easy to fall into cliché and to see this laughter as being cathartic, an important release.

But there is something deeper than just the fleeting laughter that comes at the end of a funny story, a witty comment or a parody. It always strikes me in a close-knit community that something much more profound is at work. Around a campfire with shared resources – food, clothes, blankets, utensils, even shoes – there is a deep sense of contentment, a profound happiness.

Maybe the generosity of spirit creates a deeper contentment, a deeper happiness. Or maybe it is the happiness that gives a person a more generous spirit, a larger heart.

How do you take the pain of the past, whatever your background, and make it something that doesn't cripple you? How do you stop it from being a barrier to happiness?

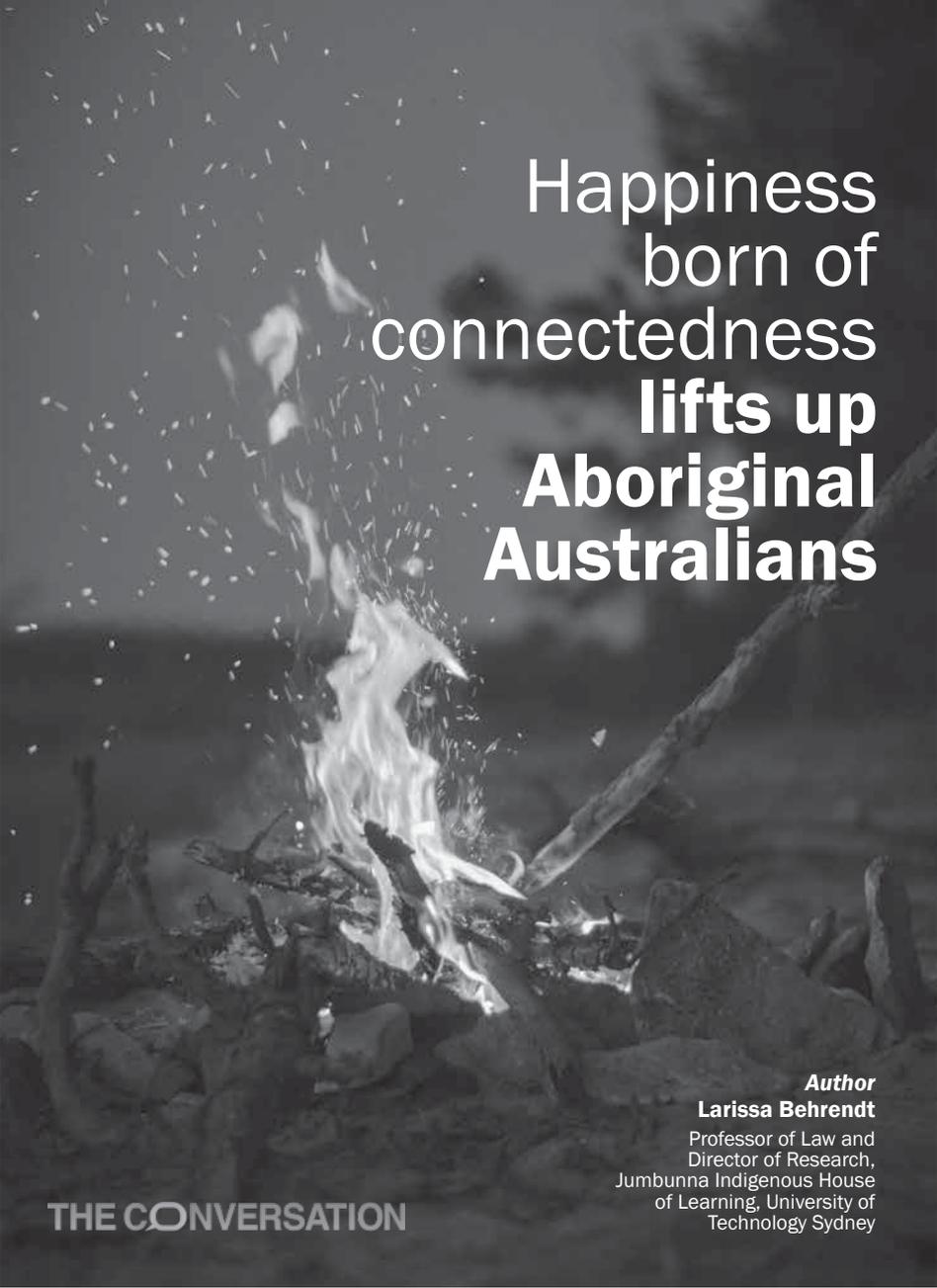
Happiness knows no cultural barriers or bounds. But I wonder what can be learnt about true happiness from the Aboriginal women on the outstation who can illuminate the world of the rest of us.

### **Connected to community and country**

The first lesson from my friends around the campfire is the way they look at the world around them. They see its riches.

They look at the sky and understand its meanings. They look to the land and sea around them and see additional sources of food. They look at the people who make up their family and community and they see the blessings in what they do have.

They tell stories of their fishing and hunting trips, of great romances and funny anecdotes. Their world is full of rich stories, of songlines, of music, of dance. It is impossible not to be struck



# Happiness born of connectedness lifts up Aboriginal Australians

*Author*

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THE CONVERSATION

by the deep interconnectedness that they have with each other and with the world around them.

When you have so very little, you are reliant on the people around you. You rely on them to share resources, to help you get from one place to another (you have to share vehicles and find a way to pay for petrol), to join together to confront a school that is not working with the community or a land council that has not been negotiating properly. And through this meaningful reliance on each other – where you don't just take but give what you have – there is deep, meaningful human connection.

This interconnectedness with other people seems to provide a strong grounding in one's own identity, one's own value, one's own place in the world. This grounding is essential for a sense of self and a sense of self-worth.

How can you be happy when you are uncomfortable with who you are? How often do we see people struggle with their identity in a way that causes them distress and misery? There is none

of that among people who are deeply rooted in their community and have a strong sense of their place.

There is also interconnectedness to the natural world. The women on the outstation have been hunting turtles and fishing in the waters since they were small girls. They know which plants are edible and they know what fruit is edible.

They also know the stories about the creation of the world around them, how the constellations in the sky were formed and the songlines about great trips across the country. In the world around them, there are stories and legends but there is also knowledge of the seasons and an ability to read the landscape and the weather.

Research shows that people who live on the outstations have better health than those living in town. These are alcohol-free communities but their diets are also better as a result of the richness of the food found in the land and sea, which supplements the processed, unhealthy food.

In these remote areas, fresh food is expensive. Lollies, soft drink and processed foods are cheap. Diets are poor and health is poor as a result. So on the outstations, where fruits, vegetables, fish, turtles and other bush food supplement diets, it is easy to see why people are healthier.

### Lives enriched by creativity

So it is easy to see how the interconnect- edness to country is also a source of a contented life. But there is something else that engages the women here, something that is linked to their culture but also seems to be a basic element in fundamental happiness. They have a very rich creative life.

The women of this community — and some of the men — are gifted painters. They translate the stories told by their parents and grandparents into vivid canvasses. They express themselves as eloquently through their brush strokes as they do with their words.

In addition to their painting, they have their traditional songs, their songlines and their dance. They are creative performers of their cultural traditions and they not only perform but teach the children the same songs and dances.

And between the painting, the dancing and the music is a rich tradition of storytelling as old as the culture. These women are natural storytellers. Although they have not written the stories, they perform them in the way they tell them. They are the expression of the vibrancy of the world's oldest living culture.



Living in close proximity to others is not easy and this is a community where there is overcrowding. On fine nights, people sleep under the stars, but there are not enough rooms for the number of people here and so people share concrete floors when they have to.

So life is not without its arguments and disagreements, its jealousies and bickering and all of the other things that happen between people who live closely. But the generosity and openness of the women who have the moral leadership in this community is defined by the love they have for their families, especially their children.

There is no romance in being poor, but there is happiness to be found when you can find the richness in life. That is the

abiding lesson I learn from my visits to this other way of life.

And as the laughter rings around the campfire, and I listen to the women, all sisters, sing their songs, teach the children to dance, tell their ancient stories, gently tease each other — and me — it is a reminder that there are ties that are deeper than blood and that lightness of spirit is the measure of happiness.

*Prof. Larissa Behrendt is a Euleyayi/Kamillaroi woman.*

*This article is based on an essay in the collection On Happiness: New Ideas for the Twenty-First Century (UWA Publishing, June 2015).*

**Source:** This article was originally published in **The Conversation** on 4 June 2015 under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-ND 4.0). **Read the original article at:** <<https://theconversation.com/happiness-born-of-connectedness-lifts-up-aboriginal-australians-42896>>.

## Building confidence in the kitchen

**R**esearch has shown that people who regularly make their meals at home have better eating patterns by naturally having less salt, sugar, unhealthy fats and kilojoules compared to people who eat home-cooked meals less often.

### What is happening to our cooking skills?

A national survey conducted on cooking and food skills revealed signs that we are losing food skills that make cooking at home easier, such as planning meals ahead, and knowing what to do with foods in the pantry, or leftovers, to make a meal.

### What are some tips for building kitchen confidence?

- **Start small and keep it simple.** Kick small goals first! Build up a repertoire of simple dishes, e.g. mid-week meals with simple ingredients that cook in less than 30 minutes.
- **Cook with family members or friends.** Learn skills, pass on tips and encourage creativity from each other. Get younger family members involved early, and invite grandparents or seniors to share their food improvisation skills and knowledge.
- **Try adapting a meal** to foods you have in your pantry/fridge. Pasta or stir-fry dishes can be a good place to start.



**food files**  
with  
*Maria Packard*  
NUTRITION MANAGER, HEART FOUNDATION

- **Go for inspiration.** Browse online cooking skill videos and recipes, or sign up for a community cooking class like those offered by the QCWA's 'Country Kitchens' statewide program.

### More Information

<[www.heartfoundation.org.au/recipes](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/recipes)>  
<[www.qcwa.org.au/countrykitchens/](http://www.qcwa.org.au/countrykitchens/)>  
<[www.healthier.qld.gov.au/guide/?type=cooking\\_skills](http://www.healthier.qld.gov.au/guide/?type=cooking_skills)>  
<<http://healthyweightweek.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Cooking-at-home-prescription-for-good-health-FINAL.pdf>>  
<[www.theconversation.com/want-to-be-happier-healthier-save-money-its-time-to-get-cooking-81419](http://www.theconversation.com/want-to-be-happier-healthier-save-money-its-time-to-get-cooking-81419)>.



# mouth matters

with  
**LAURELYN HIGGINS**  
Registered  
Dental Hygienist



## Can adults get braces?

**C**rowded, crooked or protruding teeth can make us feel self-conscious, especially when speaking to others. This can be a real problem if we need to give a presentation or attend a job interview, but also in our everyday interactions where we might be less likely to smile, speak up or otherwise draw attention to ourselves.

Most of us know that braces are an effective treatment for children and teenagers but did you know that adults can benefit from orthodontic treatment too?

Straightening teeth is not just about appearance and confidence but also improves dental health. Straight teeth are easier to floss and brush, so there is less chance of tooth decay and gum disease.

Gum disease can result in gradual gum and bone loss, leading to the eventual loss of teeth. Studies show that gum disease can also increase a person's risk of heart disease and other systemic conditions.

Orthodontic treatment has never been easier, with a range of solutions now available, including traditional fixed braces, removable acrylic plates, and clear removable aligners which gradually move teeth over time.

Teeth are an important part of our lives so if you're self-conscious about your teeth for whatever reason, why not have a chat with your oral health professional about the options available for you.

### For more information:

<<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/orthodontic-treatment>>.



## what's on?

Important Events and Conferences

Find us on

**27-30  
Aug  
2019**

### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (MHS) 29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE – BRISBANE

Organised by The MHS Learning Network Inc. The theme is 'Building healthy communities: stories of resilience and hope' and will explore the important role of resilience in building healthy communities across all facets of the sector.

FOR INFORMATION visit: <<https://www.themhs.org/conference>>.

**9-10  
Oct  
2019**

### NATSIHWA 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE – ALICE SPRINGS

The theme of this conference is 'A decade of footprints driving recognition' and will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association.

FOR INFORMATION: <<https://www.natsihwa.org.au/registration-now-open-natsihwas-10-year-anniversary-conference>>.

**7-9  
Nov  
2019**

### CHALLENGING INEQUALITY: WORKING TOGETHER FOR A JUST SOCIETY – ADELAIDE

Presented by the Australian Association of Social Workers. The conference will bring together members of the Australian and international health, advocacy and social services sectors to explore and discuss how we can collectively address pressing issues of inequality and sustainability.

FOR INFORMATION: <<https://www.aasw2019conference.com.au/>>.

**9-11  
Dec  
2019**

### STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONFERENCE – GOLD COAST

With thousands of Australians at risk of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, it is crucial for the sector to come together as one and provide a unified voice for change.

FOR INFORMATION: <<https://stopdomesticviolence.com.au/>>.



Take the lead on your health and pave the way to a healthier you!

**Jean Hailes'**  
**Women's Health Week**  
**2-6 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Sign up to receive free daily health information & tools to unlock your powers for good health.

**womenshealthweek.com.au**

*Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the knowledge of women's health throughout the various stages of their lives.*

## \$52.2 MILLION TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S HEALTH

**I**n April 2019 the Federal Government launched the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 with more than \$50 million in funding to improve women's health in areas such as ovarian cancer and endometriosis.

The Strategy builds on the National Women's Health Policy 2010 and sets out a national approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls in Australia, particularly those at greatest risk of poor health.

Australian women on the whole enjoy long, healthy lives, with a current average life expectancy of 85 for those born in recent years. This

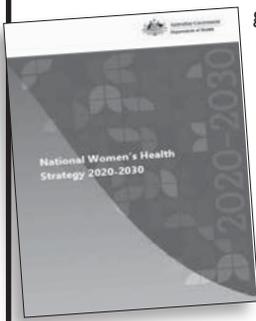
women's health on the net

relatively long life expectancy disguises a large element of avoidable ill-health and inequitable outcomes between different groups.

The Women's Health Strategy includes recommendations for action by governments, health professionals and women themselves.

**The Strategy is available at: <<https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/national-womens-health-strategy-2020-2030>>.**

**Source:** Excerpt from Joint Media Release 9 April 2019 by The Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health, and The Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer MP, Minister for Women.



# Women find friendship, understanding, confidence in self-help groups

Self-help groups are widely recognised for their role in promoting the health and well-being of participants. Put simply, these groups generally consist of ordinary people affected by a particular issue, who connect with one another to share experiences and information. Self-help groups also have the potential to be a tool for empowering women specifically, from promoting capacity building, to encouraging mutual support.

How self-help groups are utilised to empower women varies significantly across the globe. In countries impacted by severe poverty, groups have been used as an instrument of economic empowerment. In India, self-help groups have provided many poor rural women with the opportunity to establish a joint savings account and gain access to a line of credit (Poddar, 2013), enabling them to contribute to household finances through the organised production of goods and services. They also provide women with the opportunity to discuss social issues, such as health, hygiene, education, and sanitation, and have been found to reduce the tolerance of domestic violence and enhance the status of women within the household (Husain, Mukerjee and Dutta, 2012).

One criticism levelled at these micro-finance self-help groups is their continued focus on traditional cultural occupations, such as making garments and food, with these activities only taking place as long as they did not interfere with household chores. Thus, instead of defying the patriarchal structure, these groups focus on increased intensity of traditional part-time economic activities (Husain, Mukerjee and Dutta, 2012). Therefore, there needs to be continual investigation into how self-help groups can more effectively bring about transformative changes in the distribution of power between men and women.

In other countries, including Australia, self-help groups have not specifically been implemented as a tool for empowering women, however there is evidence

that they have served that purpose. In a support group for women with breast cancer, disclosure of insights between members were found to lead to improvements in functional and emotional well-being (Shim, Cappella and Han, 2011). A study of GROW (mental well-being) members, two thirds of whom were women, found that new attendees first experienced a sense of safety, then the sense of empathic understanding, and finally friendship (Evans, 2018).

*At a recent event, a support group member described how she has developed more confidence in talking about the issue in public. Before she joined the group, she kept silent. Now she is a myth-buster!*

## about us ...

**SELF HELP QUEENSLAND** provides support for support groups. We help people to find and sustain support groups to improve their health. We assist groups across the broad spectrum of health, including genetic conditions, chronic disease, addiction, grief and loss, abuse, carer responsibilities, social isolation and mental health.

Self Help Queensland provides all kinds of support, everything from finding a group meeting space to writing grants. We provide a directory and a public referral service to assist individuals to connect with a group.

Please contact us if you would like your group to be listed. We have a bi-monthly email newsletter, to which anyone can subscribe via our website <[www.selfhelpqld.org.au](http://www.selfhelpqld.org.au)>.



Self Help Queensland Manager, **Selina Utting** (far right), hands out information at a public event.

These psychosocial gains demonstrate the many advantages of belonging to such groups.

It is important to acknowledge that support groups also provide women with the opportunity for leadership, as many are managed by volunteers who tend to be female. Within these positions, women can develop skills and connections that will set them up for the future. They lead, organise and participate. They provide each other with support and encourage each other to succeed.

Self Help Queensland Inc (SHQ) is a not-for-profit community organisation which assists and fosters self-help groups. Many women have informed SHQ about how the groups have improved their confidence and reduced their reticence to participate in discussions. It is clear that self-help groups benefit women, though it is essential to consider how they can evolve to consistently empower women globally.

**Author: Selina Utting**  
Manager  
Self Help Queensland  
[www.selfhelpqld.org.au](http://www.selfhelpqld.org.au)

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Article written for QWHN by Self Help Queensland, 2019.

On Tuesday 18 June 2019, Commissioners of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability welcomed disability advocates from across Australia to the Commission's first workshop in Melbourne.

The workshop, facilitated by Commissioner Galbally, was the first of many to be held across Australia over the coming months and years, as the Commission works to consult with those who have a deep knowledge and understanding of the problems that exist for people with disability.

As part of his opening remarks, the Chair of the Commission confirmed for all participants that:

- This workshop is the first of many to be held throughout Australia.
- Workshops and public forums will be held in regional centres and remote locations.
- The Commission will soon be inviting submissions.
- Public hearings will be held in each State and Territory.

The Chair's opening remarks are available along with Commissioner Galbally's observations about the workshop. An Auslan version and Easy Read version will be made available on the website shortly.

**For more information:** <<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/news/Pages/default.aspx>>.

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## First disability advocates workshop held in Melbourne



### NEXT NEWSLETTER THEME

'SLEEP & FATIGUE'

**DO YOU OR YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE EXPERTISE IN WOMEN'S HEALTH?**

Share your insights with over 450 health & community organisations and women in Queensland.

We welcome your article ideas and other non-profit submissions.

**Contact us as soon as possible at [coordinator@qwhn.asn.au](mailto:coordinator@qwhn.asn.au)** to obtain full submission guidelines.

**DEADLINE: 27 Sept. 2019**

### QUEENSLAND WOMEN'S HEALTH NETWORK INC

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**CHAIRPERSON &**

**Nth Qld Representative:** Dr Betty McLellan

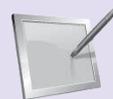
**TREASURER/SECRETARY &**

**South Qld Representative:** Karin Cheyne

**Central Qld Rep:** Bronwyn Patton

**West Qld Rep:** Aunty Peggy Tidyman

### HAVE YOUR SAY...



We welcome your feedback and suggestions for topics you would like to see in future editions.

Please contact the QWHN Coordinator Maree Hawken on (07) 4789 0665 or email: [coordinator@qwhn.asn.au](mailto:coordinator@qwhn.asn.au)

QWHN respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation.

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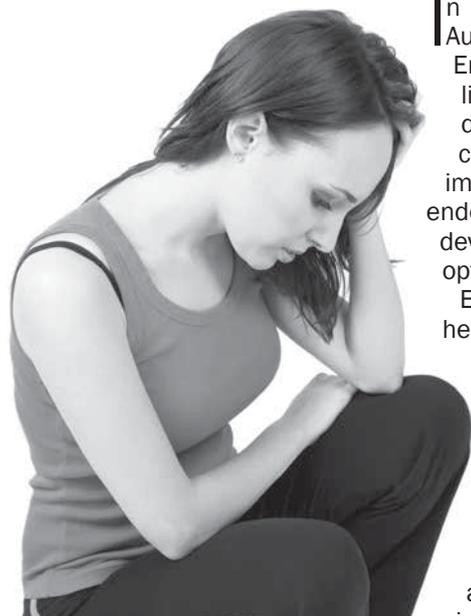
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## National action on endometriosis to help thousands of Australian women



In 2018 the Federal Government released Australia's first National Action Plan for Endometriosis to improve the quality of life of patients through better treatment, diagnosis, and aiming to ultimately find a cure. The Plan outlines a new approach to improving awareness and understanding of endometriosis, speeding up diagnosis, and developing better diagnostic and treatment options.

Endometriosis is a chronic menstrual health disorder that affects around 700,000 Australian women and girls. It often causes debilitating pain and organ damage, and can lead to mental health complications, social and economic stress and infertility.

Many have suffered in silence for far too long, enduring diagnostic delays of between seven and twelve years on average. Patients have historically experienced poor clinical care, due to a low level of understanding of the condition, both

amongst the public and the medical community.

The National Endometriosis Steering Group will oversee the implementation of the National Action Plan over five years. The Plan was developed through close consultations with patients, the Australian Coalition for Endometriosis, and Australia's leading endometriosis clinicians and researchers.

The Plan is available from the Department of Health's website: <<https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/endometriosis>>.

Source: Based on Media Release by The Hon. Greg Hunt MP Minister for Health, 26 July 2018

**You can help us promote the health and well-being of Queensland women:**

### JOIN US!

QWHN Membership is open to individual women, and organisations.

Visit: <[qwhn.asn.au](http://qwhn.asn.au)> for details.

### LIKE US!

Follow us on Facebook, and encourage your friends to do so.

### PROMOTE US!

Encourage friends, family or colleagues to become a QWHN member, or to visit our website. Pass our newsletters on to other women.