



natural wellness noosa



Jane's Story

I have over 40 years' experience working in education and health. I have had three major episodes in my life where my mental health was challenged.

My career began as a primary school teacher in Melbourne in 1980. I taught in many schools and loved music, theatre, art and drama. I completed a Graduate Diploma in Visual and Performing Arts and a Graduate Diploma of Movement and Dance. My interest in movement research began with the questions Do babies dance? and How important is children's play? I lectured part time at Melbourne University in Interdisciplinary Arts and became involved in community theatre, directing a theatre company and working as a choreographer for local singing groups.

In early 1989 working at a primary school, I injured my spine lifting a very heavy typewriter. Within a few days, I had difficulty standing upright and walking. I couldn't work and my world began to fall apart. I became depressed at losing my ability to move and my career dreams. I saw many doctors and spent time in hospital trying to cope with chronic pain and the sudden loss of my job.

My mental health greatly suffered. I attended regular physiotherapy and hydrotherapy for years, eventually retiring, with doctors telling me "...you will never work again!" I wrote a play called 'How's your back?' about mental illness and how, in a single moment our lives can change. I performed

my play at the Universal Theatre in Melbourne and discovered many 'normal' people were suffering despondency and sadness.

I wanted and needed to help myself. I studied a Bachelor of Health Science in Naturopathy and a Diploma of Homoeopathy which took me 10 years. I moved to NSW and started a small business to help others with chronic conditions. What happens to our body and mind when we experience chronic pain? Wanting to learn more about body structure and physiology, I trained in Certificate IV in Massage and a Diploma of Remedial Massage. My business was successful due to my training, personal experience and the genuine empathy I had for my clients.

In 2005, my long-term marriage suddenly ended, my mother unexpectedly died, a month later my older brother died of a heart attack, all in the space of two years. My mental health once again became my focus. I was beginning to understand and value the role of the mind in medicine, healing and recovery. I completed courses in pain management, mindfulness and meditation.

When my father was diagnosed with dementia, I wondered 'What happens to the elderly in nursing homes?' I began writing, courses, training and facilitating staff in aged care facilities throughout NSW. I explored western and eastern medicine believing Natural Medicine can work with the general medical model. I lectured for 10 years at Newcastle University in complementary health-back care. With my business, teaching, training and lecturing, I was finally in a happy place.

In August 2014, I found a lump in my left breast. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and my world dramatically changed overnight. Within 2 days I had a mastectomy, stopped working and began 2 years of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

I had trained, studied, educated myself in mind body medicine. However, nothing could have prepared me for cancer. I developed new strategies to nurture my mental health. I had to learn to be my own best friend, my own teacher and help myself, trusting I would survive this next chapter in my life. Death, loss of parents, friends, relationships, change in health, spinal injury, chronic pain, death of my dogs and cancer, all affected my mental wellbeing. It has been six years since my cancer diagnosis. I retired to Noosa three years ago, yearning for a simple healthy life.