

The Healing Power of Bowen Therapy, Yoga, and the Vagus Nerve: A Journey to Stress and Trauma Recovery

As a well-being and holistic health practitioner with 30 years of experience and 18 years as a Bowen therapist, I've had the privilege of witnessing profound transformations in people who have experienced trauma, grief, and loss. Over the years, I've seen how deeply these experiences can affect the body and mind, disrupting the nervous system and preventing healing. Trauma, whether from a single event or chronic stress, leaves a lasting imprint on the body, often making it difficult to find peace, balance, and emotional regulation.

One of the most powerful tools I've encountered in helping people heal from trauma and grief is a combination of Bowen therapy, polyvagal yoga, and an understanding of the vagus nerve. In this post, I will explore how these practices can help to restore balance, release stored emotions, and support healing from unresolved grief and trauma.

What is Trauma and How Does it Affect the Body?

Trauma is not just an emotional experience, it's also a physical one. As someone who has worked with people through various healing modalities for over three decades, I've learned that trauma disrupts the body's natural healing mechanisms. Trauma occurs when an event or series of events overwhelms our ability to cope, often leading to lasting effects on both the nervous system and the body.

When we experience trauma, our bodies typically activate the fight-or-flight response, a natural mechanism that prepares us to face danger. However, when trauma isn't processed, or if the threat is ongoing, the nervous system can get "stuck" in this heightened state, leaving us unable to return to a state of calm and relaxation. Over time, this dysregulation can lead to chronic physical and emotional symptoms.

Grief and Unresolved Loss as Trauma

One of the most profound forms of trauma I've worked with over my years as a holistic practitioner is grief, especially unresolved grief. Grief, when it's not fully processed or allowed to move through the body, can become its own form of trauma. Whether it's from the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or any other significant loss, grief can overwhelm the body and nervous system. In my years as a Bowen therapist, I've seen firsthand how grief that isn't processed fully can get trapped in the body, often manifesting as chronic pain, tightness, and deep emotional stagnation.

When grief is unresolved, it creates a trauma response. The body and mind struggle to integrate the emotions, leading to prolonged symptoms of stress, anxiety, and sometimes even physical illness. The body "remembers" this unresolved grief and holds it, causing physical tension in areas such as the chest, neck, and shoulders, as well as digestive and muscular discomfort.

Symptoms of Trauma and Grief

Over the years, I've worked with countless individuals who struggle with the emotional and physical manifestations of trauma and grief. Common symptoms of unresolved trauma and grief can include:

- **Emotional symptoms:** Anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, emotional numbness, and pervasive sadness.
- **Physical symptoms:** Chronic fatigue, digestive issues, tension or pain in the body (particularly the chest, neck, or shoulders), headaches, and a sense of heaviness or tightness.
- **Cognitive symptoms:** Difficulty concentrating, intrusive thoughts, memory issues, and flashbacks.

- **Behavioural symptoms:** Withdrawal from social interactions, avoidance of places or people connected to the loss, or difficulty trusting others.
- **Nervous system dysregulation:** Difficulty shifting between the “fight-or-flight” state and the “rest-and-digest” mode. Many people feel stuck in a state of hypervigilance or emotional numbness.

Understanding these symptoms is critical in addressing trauma and grief. Often, what we see in the body is a reflection of unresolved emotional pain. This is where **Bowen therapy** and **polyvagal yoga** can make a significant difference.

What is Bowen Therapy?

As a Bowen therapist with 18 years of experience, I've witnessed the profound effects this gentle bodywork technique can have on the nervous system, especially in those recovering from trauma and grief. Bowen therapy is a holistic, non-invasive technique that uses light touch to target the fascia (the connective tissue that surrounds muscles, nerves, and organs). The moves are designed to stimulate the body's natural healing processes, helping to release tension and reset the nervous system.

For trauma and grief survivors, Bowen therapy offers numerous benefits:

- **Releases stored emotional tension:** Trauma and grief often cause the body to “hold on” to emotional pain. Bowen therapy helps release these stored emotions, facilitating emotional processing and healing.
- **Promotes deep relaxation:** The gentle, rhythmic movements activate the parasympathetic nervous system, helping the body shift from a state of tension (fight-or-flight) to a state of calm and relaxation (rest-and-digest).
- **Stimulates the vagus nerve:** Bowen therapy can help activate the vagus nerve, which plays a critical role in emotional regulation, stress management, and overall healing.

What is Polyvagal Yoga?

Over the years, I've seen how polyvagal yoga a trauma-informed approach to yoga based on polyvagal theory can help individuals recover from trauma and grief. Polyvagal theory, developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, highlights the importance of the vagus nerve in regulating the autonomic nervous system, particularly in how we move between states of **fight-or-flight** and **rest-and-digest**.

In polyvagal yoga, the focus is on gentle movements, deep breathing, and mindfulness practices that activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and emotional regulation. This practice is especially helpful for individuals who have experienced trauma or loss, as it encourages a safe reconnection with the body and its sensations.

Key benefits of polyvagal yoga include:

- **Regulation of the nervous system:** The movements and breathing techniques stimulate the vagus nerve, helping to shift the nervous system from a state of heightened alertness to a more balanced, relaxed state.
- **Cultivation of body awareness:** Trauma survivors often disconnect from their bodies as a way of coping. Polyvagal yoga encourages individuals to re-establish a connection with their bodies, allowing them to process emotional and physical sensations in a safe space.
- **Emotional release and resilience:** As someone who has worked with many trauma survivors, I've seen how polyvagal yoga helps people process and release stored emotions, building emotional resilience over time.

The Vagus Nerve: The Key to Trauma Healing

The vagus nerve is a vital component of our parasympathetic nervous system, and it plays a crucial role in regulating stress, emotions, and

overall health. When the vagus nerve is functioning optimally, it helps us shift from a state of hypervigilance (fight-or-flight) to a state of calm and repair (rest-and-digest).

Trauma and unresolved grief can cause vagus nerve dysfunction, making it difficult to return to a balanced state of emotional and physical health. Both Bowen therapy and polyvagal yoga work to activate and stimulate the vagus nerve, helping the body recover from the effects of stress, trauma, and loss.

How Bowen Therapy and Polyvagal Yoga Work Together for Trauma Recovery

As someone who has practiced holistic health for over 30 years, I've seen how the combination of **Bowen therapy** and **polyvagal yoga** can provide a powerful pathway to recovery. These two practices complement each other in a unique and synergistic way:

- **Bowen therapy** helps to **release physical tension** and activate the vagus nerve, providing an immediate shift in the nervous system toward relaxation and balance.
- **Polyvagal yoga** helps individuals **self-regulate** and maintain emotional and physical balance. The breathwork, gentle movements, and mindfulness practices reinforce the benefits initiated by Bowen therapy, allowing for deeper emotional release and resilience.

Together, these practices offer a **holistic toolkit for healing trauma, grief, and loss**, helping individuals reconnect with their bodies, release stored emotions, and restore balance to their nervous systems.

Exciting New Offerings: Online Vagus Nerve Yoga Sessions

I am thrilled to announce that over the past two years, I have dedicated myself to studying yoga and diving deeper into the healing potential of the vagus nerve. My passion for this field has led me to create new online

offerings, including vagus nerve yoga sessions specifically designed to support healing from trauma, grief, and nervous system dysregulation.

If you're interested in learning more about these new offerings, I invite you to register your interest via email. I'd love to keep you updated on upcoming session dates and times, and add you to my mailing list so you never miss out on this opportunity to begin your own journey toward healing and emotional balance.

Please feel free to reach out, and I look forward to supporting you in this exciting new chapter of well-being and healing!

Much Love

Debbie

You can contact me via:

debbie@escapetowellbeing.co.uk

www.escapetowellbeing.co.uk

Mobile:07557 879309