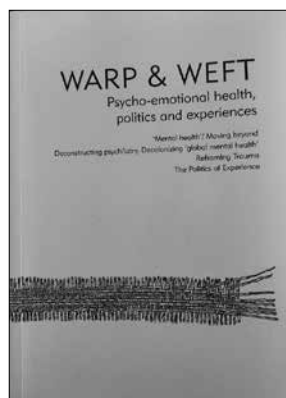


## Book review

### Warp & Weft: Psycho-emotional health, politics and experiences

by Lisa Fannen  
(2021). 438 pages



REVIEWED BY JOY M ROONEY

This book is an up-to-date synthesis of Lisa Fannen's views about "psycho-emotional health" (how we feel, what happens to our body and soul, not just our head, mind or brain). Fannen is a radical health activist, bodyworker and community herbalist. She moves beyond and breaks down psych/iatry (meaning: soul/ medical treatment). She considers changing (decolonising) global mental health through global North, South, East and West interactions. Trauma is reframed through broadening out from the individual to the collective, considering social trauma. The politics of experience is considered in its widest sense by superseding the pathologising of our consciousness, distress and struggle away from biomedicine into a social and spiritual context. Ideas are provided at the end of each of the four sections for group/collective conversations

While this is not designed as a self-help book, it may be of assistance to those who wish to study alone and certainly I learned lots from it. It includes many original, practical exercises for release, rest and reconnection in an appendix.

The scene is set by examining past and present thinking in biomedicine and "mental health". It includes so much information it is difficult to pick out what learning stood out for me. Possibly it was her critique of the de-stigmatisation of mental health campaigns. She believes we really need to talk about "the impact of the alienation of most work structures and the division of labour, of class inequality, the injustices around economic and social resources, intergenerational trauma, structural racism, the violence and meaningless of consumer capitalism and the grief of environmental damage" (p. 64).

The book forces the reader to re-think what they know about psych/iatry, its history and global imposition. Psych/iatry often suppresses indigenous understanding and healing approaches to distress, struggle and/or variable consciousness. For me, the idea that psych/

iatry is associated with individuals, rather than society, politics and cultures was new learning. Healing is seen as restoring balance with the self through relationships with others in the environment, using holistic integrated approaches.

In part three, trauma is considered using an alt-biomedical model – a biomedical model plus alternative/progressive mainstream ideas that look inside us. Then Fannen looks outwards into the experiences of distress, in all its forms, and tends to it there. Collective, rather than individual care, is the starting point for resolution in radical compassionate and embodied ways. Her alt-biomedical model considers things like "how do we reset, rest, renew, reconnect, re-associate?" and "how do we respond and reimagine?"

The final section is about the politics of experiences, named after the title of a book by R.D. Laing, a leader in the anti-psych/iatric movement. It honours the use of diagnosis but critiques the classifications of experiences of consciousness or distress. Symptoms may be considered as protests against oppression. Diagnostic labelling is set aside for a broader, more accurate and useful language of experiences with collective care.

*Warp & Weft* is an assured read on psycho-emotional health, trauma and the politics of experience. This book is companion to her feminist health book *Threads* (2018). Both books are available at [www.threadsbook.org](http://www.threadsbook.org) for free, however, they are also in print through [www.actedistribution.org](http://www.actedistribution.org) at £8-91 and £4.75, respectively. They are published creative commons and not-for-profit. ■

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**Crafting Contention:**  
The role of **ZINES** in **CONTESTING**  
**MENTAL HEALTH** → knowledge → & practice.

The MadZines research project, funded by Wellcome, is exploring zines created by people with lived experience of madness and distress that include critical or challenging insights – that is, zines that 'craft contention' about mental health.

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