

Working out hard has its place, but for a tired body in pain you will get better results with TLC rather than pain and suffering.

### Take care

# Questioning pain for gain



**WELLNESS**  
With Hamish McMichael

**N**O PAIN, no gain. This slogan has literally been beaten into us throughout our development. You'll find this it on walls in gyms and clubs with sweating bodies (in pain) lying on the floor below. You'll also find it on inspirational Facebook and social media posts adorned with athletic bodies. Usually it's followed up by the saying "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger".

But what if you're already in pain? Will you get more gain? Is it possible that what doesn't kill you just damages you badly?

If you're looking to compete at the Tokyo Olympic Games you should expect to feel some pain to get gain. Getting to the pinnacle of athletic competition requires not only a great set of genes, but extraordinary commitment and physical training at the limits of human tolerance.

“Pain is your brain suggesting that your body is under threat of being damaged.”

However, if you're part of the other 99.99% of the population, we'd suggest you should be cautious about buying into these slogans. Remember sport at the highest level isn't about health. It's about seeing how hard you can push yourself before you or your competitor breaks.

Pain is your brain suggesting that your body is under threat of being damaged. Ignoring this message can be a poor choice. Working through pain, or ignoring the pain due to a long-term injury can cause irreversible damage in some cases. Working out hard has its place, but for a tired body in pain you will get better results with TLC rather than pain and suffering. Less intense forms of movement such as yoga and Pilates and a well-designed gym program taking stress into account will give



► Pain isn't the best measure of working towards good health.

PHOTO: SCOTT WEBB

a tired body better results. Flogging yourself with intense physical training may be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

The philosophy we have at the Kaizen Centre is that we take stress and the health status of our clients into account when we decide what exercise intensity is appropriate. If you turn up to our centre after a frantic day at work, functioning on little sleep and fuelled by fast food on the run you will get a program that will be relatively low intensity. Pushing yourself hard when you

have high stress levels and poor recovery is a recipe for disaster.

It's time to change the slogans that inspire us to beat ourselves up, and start taking care of ourselves.

Please contact Hamish: hamish@kaizenep.com.au to get gain without pain.

Visit Hamish at Kaizen Exercise Physiologists, 2/47 Sixth Ave, Maroochydore, and get your wellness on track.

### Ask science

# Men are actually from Earth



**RELATIONSHIPS**  
With Joanne Wilson

**W**E'RE exploring the theme of being single, dating and being in those early days of pairing up. So, now I'm wondering if, after the initial excitement of new romance, if you've ever found yourself disagreeing with the opposite sex and been absolutely confused about why they're focusing on something you feel is so irrelevant?

Forget the cliché "Men are from Mars, women are from Venus". Try: "Men are from Earth, women are from Earth. Deal with it."

As you enter into a relationship with the opposite sex you'll become intimately familiar with how two humans of opposite genders can approach the same issue in radically different ways. It turns out this isn't just a cliché, a bad joke, or even confirmation bias. The truth is, men and women do think differently, and for one very simple reason: they have different brains. I'm not suggesting their brains are entirely different organs. That would be weird. It's the way they're wired and physically different.

Let's look at how these variances result in why men like to channel surf and why women can talk so much.

Science time! Researchers have been able to identify some super-fascinating information about the structural, chemical, genetic, hormonal and functional brain differences between the male and female brains. Some of the latest research tells us the brain differences are genetically hard-wired right from the beginning – at conception, even before the influence of hormones. The exposure to hormones may well then determine to what extent a brain becomes "masculine" or "feminine". I do know some guys who can talk more than women!

Men's brains end up about 10% bigger (I'll leave that alone!), women have larger limbic systems and a thicker connection



► Men's and women's brains are different, but that's a good thing.

between the left and right side of the brain, and it seems men have better connections between front and back.

What does all this have to do with our personalities, thoughts and feelings? In a nutshell ... everything!

When you know how this wiring affects so many things, suddenly it can make some level of sense.

Let's cut straight to the important factor that men have more than two times the space allocated to sex drive in their hypothalamus than women. I'm wondering if the fellas would agree that sexual thoughts and references flicker in their visual cortex all day? Women's sex centre in the hypothalamus is much smaller, and connected to the nurturing, connection and belonging circuits of the brain.

Another example – everyone 'knows' that women can be more 'emotional' than men. This is an oversimplification. Women are more empathetic than men, meaning they're better at understanding and responding to emotions around them thanks to that larger limbic system (emotional centre) of the brain.

What about the cliché that women can multi-task and men

can't. That's nonsense, right? Nope! This is down to that thicker connection between the left and right hemisphere. Women are able to handle multiple tasks at once, whereas men's brains are geared more towards breaking a problem down into parts and solving them one at a time. They are wired more for perception and co-ordinated actions.

Before I get angry letters, that's not to say men can't multi-task, it's just not as easy for them.

Or my personal favourite... hands up all the ladies reading this who've seen a man sitting around not doing much, wondering what deep thoughts he's lost in? Hands up all the men who've just been zoning out and get frustrated when they're asked 50 times what they're thinking?

Guess what – there's a reason for this too!

Scans of more than 1000 brains have revealed that men's brains actually do go idle a lot more easily than women. It's been said 70% of an idle man's brain will go 'dark', meaning it's not doing much, if anything. 70%!

By contrast, only 10% of a woman's brain will go inactive – even when she's sleeping. So yes, ladies – your man really is thinking 'nothing' when he's sitting there staring blankly at the TV. And no, men, your lady is not trying to annoy you. She genuinely can't fathom sitting there not thinking anything, because that's simply not what her brain does.

One thing she does do is have greater hippocampal activity which involves memory, so whatever you do; she'll remember!

As neuroscience is just beginning to understand the great mysteries of gender differences in the brain, I'm sure you can see they are not in competition, and not just compatible, but complementary. Take advantage of these inherent strengths to become a united force that you'd otherwise not accomplish on your own. You need each other.

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