

Dr Paula Watkins - Psychology, Mindfulness and Living with Endometriosis

Endometriosis can be physically and emotionally debilitating. The physical pain can impact functioning in all domains of life including work or schooling, social life and relationships. These stressors in turn can have psychological impacts including depression and anxiety. However anxiety in endometriosis can also be attributable to other endometriosis-specific factors including pain; risk of infertility; the need for medical intervention; intercourse difficulties affecting feelings of sexuality and femininity; as well as feelings of alienation, powerlessness and uncertainty associated with the condition.

Whilst there is not an abundance of research into the psychological impact and management of endometriosis there is a wealth of research into the most common symptom of endometriosis – pain. It is generally accepted that psychology influences how we perceive pain in that psychological factors, not just physical ones, can influence the amount of pain we feel. How we use our bodies, how think and how we feel all affect pain and our ability to cope with it. In this presentation we will outline a holistic psychological treatment programme for managing endometriosis. The approach incorporates cognitive-behavioural psychology, mindfulness and positive psychology.