



EMPOWERING MINDS, HEALING HEARTS:

Women's Health and Mental Resilience on International Women's Day

by Dr. Anabel Ternès

"... Women are more likely to experience mental health challenges than men, with anxiety and depression being nearly twice as common in women..."

A STORY OF STRENGTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Sofia sat alone in a crowded cafe, the noise around her muted by the whirlwind of thoughts in her mind. A year ago, she had been thriving at her corporate job, but relentless pressure and societal expectations had taken a toll on her mental and physical health. Despite her accomplishments, she battled daily feelings of inadequacy and burnout. One day, Sofia attended a workshop on mental resilience led by a local women's health collective. The speaker shared her journey of overcoming self-doubt and building inner strength through mindfulness and community support. Inspired, Sofia started small: daily affirmations, journaling her thoughts, and reaching out for help. Slowly but steadily, she rebuilt her self-esteem and found new purpose. Today, Sofia is a mental health advocate, empowering women to take charge of their well-being and reclaim their lives. Sofia's story is just one of many examples of women overcoming societal pressures to build resilience. On this International Women's Day, it's time to focus on the critical connection between women's health and empowerment.

THE FACTS AND FIGURES THAT MATTER

Women are more likely to experience mental health challenges than men, with anxiety and depression being nearly twice as common in women. According to the World Health Organization (2023), approximately 264 million women globally suffer from depression. The societal pressures to "do it all" - balancing careers, caregiving, and societal roles - contribute to this heightened risk.

Mental resilience plays a significant role in mitigating these effects. Studies from Harvard Medical School show that women who engage in mindfulness practices, such as meditation and gratitude exercises, reduce their risk of depression by 35%. Furthermore, access to supportive social networks improves emotional well-being by 60% (American Psychological Association, 2022). Physical health also plays a crucial role in mental resilience. Regular exercise has been shown to reduce anxiety symptoms by up to 40%, and proper sleep can decrease burnout risk by 50%. Yet, many women face barriers to prioritizing self-care, including time constraints, financial challenges, and cultural expectations.

"Empowered women empower the world. When women take charge of their health and well-being, they create ripple effects of positive change in their families, workplaces, and communities."

Dr. Maya James, Mental Health Advocate
(Women's Resilience Summit, 2023)

BACKGROUND:

THE HISTORICAL STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH
Historically, women's health has been overlooked in medical research and public policy. Until the 1990s, many clinical studies did not include women, leading to gaps in understanding how illnesses uniquely impact them. Mental health, particularly, was stigmatized, and women's struggles were often dismissed as "hysteria."



Over the past three decades, movements for gender equality have driven improvements in women's healthcare. Mental health is now recognised as a vital component of overall well-being, and initiatives like the UN Women's Health Program have focused on closing the gender gap in health access. Despite progress, women still face significant disparities, especially in low-income communities where mental health services remain scarce.

TIPS FOR BUILDING MENTAL RESILIENCE

- 1. Prioritise Self-Compassion:** Treat yourself with kindness and understanding, especially during moments of failure or stress. Journaling or practicing positive affirmations can reinforce self-love.
- 2. Build a Support Network:** Surround yourself with people who uplift and inspire you. Reach out to friends, family, or online support groups when you need encouragement.
- 3. Mindful Practices:** Incorporate mindfulness meditation, yoga, or breathing exercises into your daily routine to reduce stress and improve mental clarity.
- 4. Regular Physical Activity:** Exercise not only improves physical health but also boosts serotonin and dopamine levels, key neurotransmitters for emotional well-being.
- 5. Seek Professional Help:** There is no shame in asking for help. Therapy and counselling are powerful tools for building mental resilience.

CALL TO ACTION:

This International Women's Day, take a stand for women's mental and physical health. Support initiatives that promote accessible mental health services, donate to women's shelters, or simply check in with the women in your life. Empowerment starts with empathy and action.

Together, we can create a world where every woman feels seen, valued, and resilient. Let's celebrate not just women's achievements but also their journeys of healing and growth. Because when women thrive, so does the world.

www.anabelternes.de

"... Over the past three decades, movements for gender equality have driven improvements in women's healthcare ..."