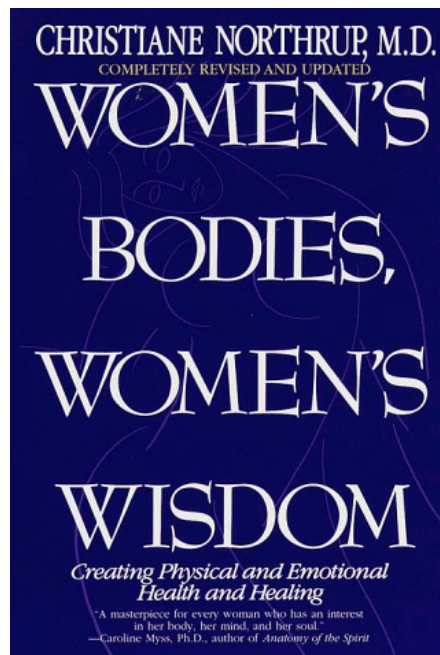




Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing

Christiane Northrup

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Quite possibly every female over the age of 12 will find this huge book enlightening, pain saving, and perhaps even lifesaving. Think of it as a much more empowering and holistic *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Northrup is a gynecologist who acknowledges the power of natural therapies and herbs, but also maintains that allopathic treatments, including surgery, are sometimes best. In *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, she covers the treatment of many physical concerns--among them PMS, menstrual cramps, breast cancer, fibroids, endometriosis, infertility, depression, childbirth, abortion, cystitis, and menopause--explaining how many of these physical problems have roots in emotional upsets. For example, a woman who is unhappy with her marriage may be infertile because deep down, she knows that her husband is not the right man to have children with; a teenager who has cramps may be having problems accepting society's expectations of her as a woman.

Some readers may be put off at first by Northrup's obviously unconventional ways of thinking. Her medical approach is decidedly feminist, blaming our "addictive" and patriarchal society for many of the health problems plaguing women. She clearly illustrates her ideas, however, by drawing upon two decades of experience from her medical practice and citing dozens of her patients' remarkable personal stories. Northrup also delineates the best way to go about tuning in to one's body and mind in order to start the healing process, a self-induced therapy of sorts. She also includes in the book a copy of the eye-opening health inventory she gives her clients. It includes unusual questions such as "Are you bored with your life?" and "Do you have enough friends or neighbors?"

This book will be of special benefit to women who are pregnant or entering menopause. Northrup is an unequivocal believer in natural births and her dialogue on the birthing process will remove the fears of even the most petrified mother-to-be. She criticizes episiotomies (she should know; she's given birth without one) and supports midwifery. She also warns against the harmfulness of cesarean births and includes illustrations of acupuncture points that help turn around a breech baby.

For women in perimenopause or menopause, Northrup will help turn this life phase into one of peace and personal growth instead of one of suffering. She was one of the first doctors to use natural progesterone to treat menopausal symptoms, and this revised edition includes a clear primer on the latest in hormone replacement therapy and how to determine if it's right for you. Northrup also expounds upon the benefits of acupuncture and herbalism--as well as emotional self-analysis--for alleviating hot flashes and mood swings. -*Erica Jorgensen*

Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing Details

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Kristie says

This is one I will be reading through for ages to come. I skip around and read what applies to me at that time in my life. Not for everyone, as the author gives a more holistic approach when healing the mind, body, and soul.

Rebekah says

Exceptional book, taking medical, holistic, cultural, and spiritual studies to connect women's health issues to their lifestyles, giving insights on how to cleanse the associated health problems and behaviors from our beings. Tuning into feminine intuition, Northrup helps pinpoint weak areas, giving advice to change those around. Filled with specific diets, medicinal advice, alternative therapies, and plenty of women's own stories, this book can be an empowering tool for any woman who has ever thought "is this normal?", or wondered what her body was trying to tell her.

While I did not agree with some of Northrup's assertions, particularly that women have always been held back by men, society, and religious institutions so that we must reclaim our identities (and some of the African stuff just didn't resonate with me), I am happy with the freedom that she gives to women who have felt chained down. You have to remember that this is a book by a somewhat feminist author, fighting her way into a male-dominated profession, where she sacrificed much of her time with family to prove something. This is a book about and for women; it wouldn't serve her purpose to include insights on how the role of men has changed over past generations and how they are also having to re-examine their roles and identities, and how working together we might find the perfect balance in our relationships. It seems that in most of her personal stories, the women she helps end up changing their health habits--and their husbands. While this is advisable in abusive relationships, I find it interesting that Northrup in her own story (around page 800) moves through her own issues, describing how she and her husband had to adjust their relationship to meet both of their needs, working intensely to keep this relationship that was so valuable to her. Instead of saving this for last, I wish she would have expounded on this earlier, modeling one more healthy behavior that can help heal women and their partners significantly. Perhaps in the next book.

Still, with all the incredible information and insights, and my lack of medical expertise, this book will remain on my shelf as an ongoing resource for years to come.

LizG says

Every women should read this book, period.

It's jam packed with info not just on health, but on understanding, respecting and honouring the amazing knowledge and strength women have when they connect with what their bodies are telling them.

For me the most powerful underlying idea that many of the systems of our culture are defaulted to a

linear/masculine way of thinking, which leaves women feeling like they don't fit. If we can acknowledge this and disengage from trying to fit, it's possible to discover a whole other way of being, one that fits just fine.

And, I learned amazing things about the female body.

Willow says

I LOVE this book! I keep it by my bed and look things up frequently. I'm a healthy person but I find it comforting to have answers to questions I may encounter right at my fingertips. Originally, I was recommended this book when I was experiencing multiple frequent ovarian cysts rupturing (incredibly painful), and the doctors I was going to had very little advice or answers for me. This book explained more about what was happening in my body than the doctors could. The cause ended up being (as far as I can tell), birth control that I simply cannot take. Since then, I have used this book for countless little and big questions I've had including pregnancy. I would recommend this book to any woman or man that wants to be informed about women's' bodies and health.

Kathryn says

May 2008: My initial opinion of the book was overwhelmingly positive, though I do feel I need to "caution" prospective readers because it certainly will not be for everyone. I focused on the women's health aspects, ignoring the chapters on pregnancy and menopause as neither applied to me. Dr. Northrop couples traditional "Western medicine" and by-the-book discussions of female anatomy and biological functions with a holistic, soulful approach to understanding why our bodies work the way they do, the way society and emotional footprints influence women's perceptions of themselves and, subsequently, the way our bodies react to their woman-ness. I find that this approach fits nicely with my own perceptions of understanding our bodies and maintaining health in that I appreciate such non-Western aspects as chakra energy and the benefits of acupuncture, but also realize when Western medicine may provide assistance. Also, I do believe emotional and external influences do have an impact on how we feel and that this can sometimes manifest in physical symptoms. With that said, I think sometimes Dr. Northrop takes the ideas a bit too far--it seems that many times she suggests that some sort of emotional/relationship unrest is the underlying cause of physical problems. This could certainly be upsetting to, say, a very loving and committed couple who experience fertility issues. However, taken with a grain of salt, I think Dr. Northrop's messages should be heard and I've found benefit from the book already.

February 2012:

I returned to do a light brush-up with the information after several years and found myself caught by the "Abortion" segment since the Susan G. Komen/Planned Parenthood issue has been in the news lately. Although I generally avoid the subject since I have my own very firm convictions about it, I couldn't help but sneak a peak here.

I wish I hadn't.

I was deeply troubled at what Dr. Northrup had to say about the subject. While I certainly do not want to attack her personal beliefs, I was surprised that she conveyed them in this medical book.

Dr. Northrup believes in reincarnation. Now, I have no trouble with this but here she mentions that the

aborted soul will come back another time when the parents are ready (or, assuming the mother never gets pregnant again, I guess the little soul would go to another woman's uterus?) which seems to make the choice about having an abortion much easier. Now, she does not believe in abortion as a casual birth control method and she admits her anger when performing a fourth abortion on a woman who is simply careless and that she wishes we lived in a world where abortions are not necessary (and believes in a grieving process for terminated pregnancies). However, she does feel it is perhaps best to have an abortion if the mother feels the pregnancy is "not right" (she is not singling out cases of rape and incest here, but even for married couples who feel that it is not the right time for them, etc.) In one example, she told of a woman who felt that her pregnancy was "wrong" and talked to her baby asking it to leave, but it stayed. Finally, she called the abortion clinic and later that day she had a miscarriage, to the mother's great relief.

The idea that there IS a soul inside the growing fetus, but that it can be aborted without blame, is one I have never encountered before. Perhaps it is not unique to Dr. Northrup, but, again, I found it a troubling inclusion in a medical book.

Moreover, she says that the damage done by carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term is perhaps so great that abortion is the more compassionate choice as the child would otherwise likely live out his/her life in misery. As the wife of a happy and well-adjusted man who was adopted (and sister-in-law to his two equally well-adjusted adopted siblings), I find Northrup's ideas deeply disturbing and offensive and I feel sorry for adopted women who read this section of the book. Certainly I do not deny that a pregnancy in which the child is wanted well before conception and loved throughout the pregnancy and into its young life is the most preferred. But to claim that when a pregnancy feels "not right" it is often best to abort is deeply troubling to me. Adoption can be a very important way to bring a family together, even if it is not with the birth parents. Also, I have friends who did not plan to conceive, and wrestled with the idea of having an abortion, but chose to keep the baby and are wonderfully loving parents. Of course, I'm sure there are those who had unwanted children and did lead miserable lives, but I felt there was not enough balance presented in this book and feel sad that adopted children might read this and think there is something inherently damaged about their spirits.

I do still feel there is some value in other aspects of Northrup's book and feel that her heart is in the right place in wanting to help women live healthy and happy lives, but the abortion segment really turned me off to her "wisdom" on pregnancy and childbirth, and I'm afraid it will do the same for many others. Moreover, I remain troubled by the idea that women's health problems are all based on underlying psychological problems, especially in the case of infertile women (see the one-star Amazon reviews for their feelings about the book if you fall into this category to see if reading the book would be troubling for you). I might suggest *Taking Charge of Your Fertility: The Definitive Guide to Natural Birth Control, Pregnancy Achievement, and Reproductive Health* as a more neutral and helpful book in regards to reproductive health.

I've always tried to be a "healthy person" -- eat right (well, most of the time, haha!), avoid artificial junk, take care of my allergies, etc. It's dawned on me, however, that I really have not taken a significant or sufficient look at being a healthy WOMAN. There's a lot more I can learn and understand about specifically female aspects of health, and I like the sound of this book's approach in that it is a blend of Western medicine, holistic approaches, and some spiritual aspects. Now, to find out if it delivers! (And, yikes! it's a really long book!)

Andrea Marley says

"Women are rising like yeast all over the planet" -Sonia Johnson

I reserve my usage of 5 stars for outstanding books such as this. I enthusiastically believe every girl and woman need this information, although I do believe we are already experiencing a shift in our society. The times, they are a changing! I look forward to sharing these new traditions and rituals with my daughter.

Let me conclude with a little Tupac:

"...And since we all came from a woman
Got our name from a woman and our game from a woman
I wonder why we take from our women
Why we rape our women, do we hate our women?
I think it's time to kill for our women
Time to heal our women, be real to our women
And if we don't we'll have a race of babies
That will hate the ladies, that make the babies
And since a man can't make one
He has no right to tell a woman when and where to create one
So will the real men get up
I know you're fed up ladies, but you gotta keep your head up"

Lora says

I read most of this several years ago and recently pulled it back off the shelf for reference to present cares and woes. I have to say my initial response of enthusiasm for the book is still...mostly...there. It is a good reference for womens health issues and the many emotional and spiritual underlying causes of such physical manifestations. On the other hand, it crosses the line in its hostility to the entire idea of a patriarchal society. I always wonder if any aspect of our society is wrong in and of itself, or only wrong in the assumptions and the methos of application that we witness. Don't get me wrong, the history of the world has been a long endurance lesson for females. But so, I suspect, has it been for everyone.

That aside, the examination of our addictive culture really made a lot of sense as Northrup opened up rotted old ideas and shed plenty of light on the ways women suffer in their lives, their own behaviors, and their bodies. There is lots here to give a woman tools to reconstruct her inner worold, and then move out into her outside world. It's just too bad that Northrup seems heavy on the 'dump-that-jerk' stories and light on the 'let's-work-it-out' stories. Maybe that's just the way i remember it, I'm not re-reading the entire thing. I also remember a very strong feeling of sharing in the personal stories and gaining strength for changes in my health, plus real options from more than one source of medical learning, and practical ways to make a start. So, overall: a fresh approach to a woman's life that is holistic rather than throwing pills at her and telling her she's being uncooperative; but as with all books, there are parts where you can take it or leave it.

lola says

This book is so OK in many ways--she has me nodding "yes, yes, yes" about working on your attitude to improve your health and everyday well-being all the way up until she starts talking about how like, you can give yourself cancer if you regret not having children or whatnot. Sort of like when Louise Hay writes in You Can Heal Your Life about doing therapy with overweight people and then just busts out with, "I explain that they are fat because they don't love themselves." For a better explanation, please see Jezebel.com: Is Oprah's women's health advisor a misogynist?

Right, so I gave myself chlamydia because I was angry at myself for procrastinating a test or breaking up with an old boyfriend or some shit. Next time I get a yeast infection I'm going to treat it by stuffing one of those "Hang in there!" posters and a restaurant gift certificate up my cunt.

Rebecca Recco says

This is an amazing book. A friend recommended this book to me when I mentioned that I was having issues with my health. I expected this book to have a lot of information about that, but really didn't expect to find such a wealth of information on women's wellness -- from stress to diet and exercise, to attitudes... I learned that there is so much more to health than simply dealing with illnesses. Illnesses are nothing more than our body's way of telling us to re-evaluate our attitudes and habits, and to find balance in our everyday lives.

steph says

I've been reading this book in spurts off and off since like May I believe. And since the year is almost up, I figured I should add it to my GR pile before I forget. This book has good and not so good parts. The good parts is that the author really stresses the importance of getting to know your body and how so many people are quick to turn to medicine and things that manipulate your body before even understanding how their body works. I like also how she stresses that everything influences you -your stress, your emotions, your lifestyle, etc. It works in tangent with your body so in order to be your best functioning self, you must take care of all aspects of you. I liked that and I think that is important to understand. Also I liked that the chapters are split by body type/need so it makes for easy reference when your need a certain thing clarified but don't want to go through the whole book again.

However the bad parts is that this author has a tendency to override or blame the patriarchal society for all of our modern day issues and really stresses returning to the Goddess of old mindset which is not for me. So pretty much I say this is a good book full of good information about females and their bodies but not all of it may pertain to each individual reader. So take what works for you and ignore the rest.

Shiloah says

A must read for every woman!

Olivia Marquez, says

What more can I say? This book is life changing!! If you are a woman of any age, pick up this book and read it NOW. You will thank me later. :-)

Danielle Wells says

This is an excellent book to have on hand at home as a reference manual. I think it would be a great book for

teaching young girls about their body. The topics covered in the book are: women's anatomy (uterus, ovaries, breasts, vagina), menstrual cycle, pregnancy & birth, fertility, motherhood, menopause, healthy eating, exercising, medical care, flourishing and healing.

The book is over 900 pages so it's not really meant for a complete "read through" like I did. I think one might read parts as they need it or want to learn more. It's very comprehensive and has lots of recommendations for further reading in specific topics. But it's not written so clinically that you can't understand it. I could totally read this in a room full of children and still be able to follow and concentrate.

Daniel Donatelli says

I received this book as a gift from my ex-girlfriend after I told her it had passed my "first sentence, first paragraph test" while I was poring through her bookshelf one night, and its quality remained steady throughout. As a hypochondriac, I think I needed to read this book about women's health issues in order to learn the power of listening to ourselves and our cells without losing myself in worries over the various maladies described (I could learn about self-healing without having to palpate myself for signs of a telltale fibroid). With a little tweaking, this book could have been called "People's Bodies, People's Wisdom," but I completely understand why it was woman-centric instead. I bring up that point if only because despite being a man I was able to glean a tremendous amount of information about myself from this book. In my opinion, WBWW should be required reading for high schoolers -- male and female. If you ask me, the earlier and more credibly these ideas can be given to people, the better.

Shannon (Mrsreadsbooks) says

My therapist recommended this book to me and I was very surprised when it arrived and was about 900 pages. I have not read it completely as at the moment I have no use for the chapters on pregnancy and menopause, though I do plan to read the pregnancy chapters soon and will add to this review.

I would have given the book 5 stars but there were a few things that I didn't really like. This book is very interesting, the author is a gynecologist but talks about a lot of things I would assume traditional Western gynecologists don't speak to their patients about, such as how our menstrual cycles alone with the lunar cycle and a great deal of Eastern medical ideas. My therapist recommended it mainly because I have gynecological issues and the book talks a lot about accepting our cycles as a normal part of our female lives. It also contains a great deal of useful information on everything from the various parts of your cycle, gynecological problems, PMS, hormone imbalances and everything else in between. There is a great deal of information on female sexuality and anatomy as well.

Overall, I think this is a great book and almost a reference manual that every woman should at least read, if not own.

Pamela Wells says

Every woman should read this book and every man should buy the book for the woman in his life. Empowering women worldwide with knowledge about their own bodies in the most practical of terms, this book covers a broad range of women's health issues with the balanced yet practical wisdom of mind-body wellness. I

recommend this book to all my friends and it has been a permanent addition to my favorite books collection. This book was a foundational book for me and gave me greater understanding into both my body and mind. Christine is a wonderful teacher, mentor and true healer.

Kelli Best says

The "This is You" book for women. This book is rich with information, and with ideas that don't see the light of day in traditional medicine. Not sure if I buy all of it, but it is certainly thought-provoking!

missy jean says

pamy and julie...i finally read it! joe's mom actually had it on her bookshelf so i read it over the four days that we were in illinois. you were right: i loved it. i want to get a copy for myself and read it with a highlighter, because there were so many comforting parts (especially the parts about birth and nursing) that really spoke to some of the feelings i've had since the baby was born. what a great book...

Angie Libert says

I have dismissed Dr. Northrup for years because of her MD title. I falsely assumed that an MD would not speak truth. Well, just like all prejudices, I discovered I was wrong! :) This lady is fabulously insightful and knowledgeable. She has meshed her MD knowledge with Eastern medicine into a truly beneficial wealth of knowledge about women and their bodies. I am looking forward to reading more of her material!

Na'ama Yehuda says

Wonderful, demystifying, normalizing book about what many women did not have the opportunity or place to learn or know (and what many doctors--and research that was done only on men, to avoid the effects of 'hormonal fluctuations' on the result--could not tell us women about our own bodies). Love it. It is through that book that I realized why Aleve works for menstrual cramps for me while Advil and Motrin did not. It helped me understand other things, and it helped strengthen my relationship with this amazing vessel that carries me daily. We women are blessed with a very fine tuned miracle maker body. Christiane Northrup points a light onto the many things that make it so, and how to make living in a female body more fluid, more gracious, more fun, and more fully understood. Love it. If you are a woman, you gotta read it. If you are a man, you REALLY have to read it.
