

Knitting baby clothes for my new grandson is so much fun!

January 2016 – My beautiful grandson has arrived!
Knitting baby clothes is SO much fun!

Now I know why people love knitting baby clothes, blankets, outerwear – all of it!

I knit a 'coming-home' outfit before our newborn baby-to-be was born – hat, jacket, baby ugg and a carry-blanket.



My friends questioned me... was knitting baby gifts before he was born a good idea? What if? I decided that knitting with

a prayer in every stitch for a healthy baby would cancel out the 'what if'. And did I ever pray – and now I thank God for answering my prayers.

Our baby is now 7 weeks' old, and seriously working on smiling. It's so much fun to watch his mouth twitch and turn as he experiments with expressions and learns the joy of controlling his movements. He turns his head from side to side to follow our voices and is so proud of himself when he finds his mom and dad. OK – maybe I'm projecting a bit (haha), but what I do know is that every minute of every day he's discovering something new – what a little miracle!



Knitted sleep sack for baby
with Pipsqueak by
Yarnspirations

And now he's wearing and being kept warm in my love, whether or not I'm with him. Soon he'll grow out of the jacket – hence the bunting bag which I gave to him last evening. Now I guess I'll have to give him a chance to try out his other gifted clothing which works out just as well since my other ufps (unfinished projects) are crying out for my attention.



I've taught a few pregnant moms who've decided to use their last few months before their babies arrive to learn to knit. Now they're knitting baby blankets, mittens & hats, vests and sweaters. Here's a little knit baby sweater that one of my students completed last month – she'll be giving it to a women's shelter to help out a new mom. Teaching is so much fun – especially when I see how quickly my students start referring to their 'knitting addiction'. ☐



Knit with Vanna's Choice – perfect for Spring & Fall

If you're looking for a huge selection of FREE clearly written patterns, I highly recommend [Lionbrand](#). There's also a good selection on [Yarnspirations](#). I don't suggest that my Canadian readers buy their yarn from these American sites, though – shipping charges and the exchange rate can as much as double their listed prices. We have great Canadian yarn stores – check them out in your city.

[I'm An Emotional Knitter and Proud Of It!](#)

I'm An Emotional Knitter and Proud Of It!

“Knitting may not, on the surface, seem relevant to engines that run the world, but at its essence, it is actually quite vital. For knitting, which can express so many emotions, most often expresses love. And when all else is lost, love is what most often stays with us.”

—Melanie Falick, from Foreword to *KnitLit*
Edited by Molly Wolf & Linda Roghaar

Emotional Knitting

I came to a realization yesterday –I'm an emotional knitter. I've never heard the term, so I checked with Mr. Google, and found an academic paper talking about a painting, “[The Sock](#)

[Knitter 1915](#)". The artist was Grace Cossington Smith, and the portrait was her sister, Madge, who knit socks, 'comforts', in Australia during the first World War. In short, the author Bruce Scates explores the unpaid labour market and calls us emotional knitters. This would indeed fit all of my Mitzvah Knitter friends.



The Sock Knitter 1915 by
Grace-Cossington-Smith

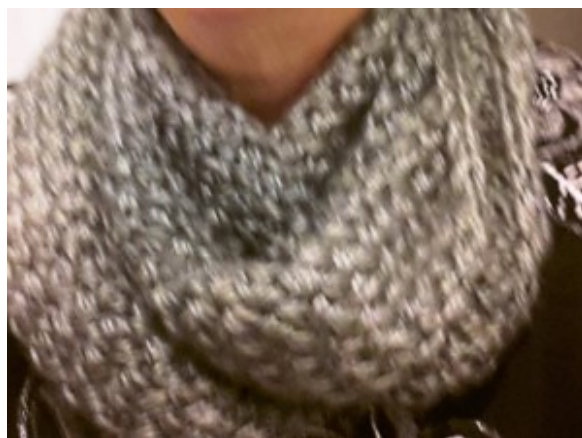
My definition differs – I'm an emotional knitter because I feel emotional when I'm knitting for a loved one.

When I'm knitting my younger daughter's afghan, I think of her and how she will still have it 25, 50 years from now. It's a complex cable pattern and there are mistakes already. The beauty is that there are so many cables that the mistakes look like just another cable. But if my daughter runs her hands down the afghan and explores carefully, she'll find them. And she'll know that on THAT day her mom lost her concentration and maybe she'll wonder why. When she finds the next cable that's not exactly like the others, she'll know her mom wasn't well that day but knit HER afghan anyway. She'll study the thousands and thousands of stitches and know that her mom loved her THAT much. When she's cold or anxious, she'll wrap herself in this particular afghan and she'll feel hugged by me. ***I love knitting this afghan – every stitch – while I picture my daughter and the gift she's giving me by allowing me to express my love for her by knitting.***



Knit cabled Afghan – work in progress

I'm also an intrigued knitter – intrigued by new stitches and how a particular yarn with a particular size needles will look when it's worked up. And so I knit up this basketweave infinity scarf last week. It worked up quickly and I love the look. I enjoyed the process and the result, but I didn't feel an emotional tug. Why? Because I didn't know who would be wearing it. Soon I'll gift it to someone special and I'll be thrilled every time I see her wearing it, but the actual knitting process was very different. By-the-way – [click here for the FREE pattern.](#)



Double-stranded, knit Infinity scarf twisted in figure 8 around neck.

Here's a cowl I knit for my daughter-in-law. Knitting this was definitely an emotional experience for a wonderful young woman who I've come to love as my own. I gifted it to her while joining her in a visit to her Dad who was in the hospital. ***I hope she knows as she wears it that it's to give her a hug – my version of personal comfort and warmth as well as the more practical physical warmth in the Canadian winter.***



Knit diamond
cowl

Last winter I knit a top-down dress for my other daughter. There were new techniques involved which I enjoyed learning and executing. But more important was that, as I learned and knit, I knew she'd have it forever and cherish the love that went into each stitch. Here we are a year later and she's hesitant to wear it because she wants to keep it forever. I'm encouraging her to do both – ***wear it, enjoy it, and when it's no longer wearable keep it anyway because it will connect us forever.***



Knit top-down
dress

I loved seeing my sister-in-law wearing a scarf I made for her a decade ago, my son wearing his scarf, my mom wearing her sweater, my brother telling me he wore a sweater I made for him about 20 years ago. ***These are just a few of my hand-knit gifts that are truly gifts of love.***



Knit sweater from
many years ago (he's
lost a lot of weight
since then!!)

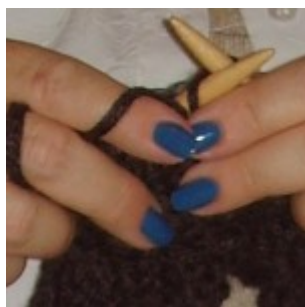
So my New Year's resolution – knit even more for loved ones

because it gives me such joy.

And joy is good.

My Mom is Knitting Again!

Broken Bones have Knit Together, and Now the Needles are Clicking Away



I've had a crazy couple of months. The craziness started about 7 weeks ago with a call from my Dad saying that my Mom had taken a bad fall and they were on their way to the hospital. I met them there, followed soon after by my other siblings. To make a long story short, Mom had broken her left shoulder and fingers on her right hand. Can you imagine? Her left arm was immobilized in a hard sling and her right hand was casted from her fingers to her elbow. We quickly realized how much we use our hands and arms, and not just for knitting either. We often use at least one hand to balance when we get up from a chair or sit down. Think about lying down in bed – it generally involves positioning by first lying on your shoulder and this was just way too painful. Let's not even talk about cutting up food, holding a glass of water or getting dressed. Luckily my parents had 4 children and we all

live in Toronto. We pitched in together along with grandchildren and CCAC to help my Dad and by now the casts are off and the physio has started.

Mom knits scarves for the Mitzvah Knitters, a non-profit group I run along with my good friend Arna Cappe, and while she was in the hospital on fairly wonderful pain meds she kept reminding me that she needed a new set of 7 or 8 mm needles for her next project. I had to laugh (either that or cry) and reminded her that first she had to be able to actually hold the needles. I'm delighted to report that today Mom came with me to the Mitzvah Knitters' biweekly get-together and I gave her new needles and she was able to knit. It was amazing. She's been a contributor for 8 years during which the Mitzvah Knitters has gifted over 11,000 healing shawls, lap blankets hats, scarves, mittens and more to those in need of physical, spiritual and emotional warmth to hospitals, nursing homes, shelters and many other worthwhile non-profit organizations. Mom's famous within the group for teaching everyone the drop-stitch scarf – she loves it because it works up so quickly and looks so fancy. By the way, this technique uses additional wraps around your working needle while knitting to create elongates stitches. The effect is an airy and light open fabric with very nice drape.



Drop-stitch is easy, fun and looks awesome.

So, back to craziness. I finally found the home of my dreams while my Mom was in hospital – the only catch was that I had

to take possession on January 1st! OK – not really a problem; once you start packing you might as well do it. Except then came the ice storm and we had no power for 5 days so packing was a tad difficult. Putting it mildly. LCBO refused to let us take boxes because they claimed it was their busy season. I don't know... Christmas, New Years... alright I guess they could have been telling the truth. The move was awful – lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. on one of the coldest days of the year – but in the end well worth it. Friends and children helped me pack and unpack, for which I'm eternally grateful. Best of all I have a dedicated knitting classroom which is bright, airy and perfect for knitters-to-be and knitters looking to knit even better. I love it!



So here we are stuck in the middle of the winter that just won't quit, but I'm safe and warm in my new home with my yarn, needles and students coming and going. There's nothing quite like watching Downton Abby with my sticks clicking away magically turning string into these...



Great way to learn to cable.

Living the Dream in Knitting-Land

Knitting, knitting, knitting. I'm immersed. I'm living in Knitting-Land. Absolutely not complaining – I'm living the dream!!

I'm sitting at my desk and there's a skein of yarn, a random circular needle and an issue of *Vogue Knitting Magazine*. Oh wait – that's just on my right. Looking to my left I see a pile of patterns which I've printed out for my not-for-profit knitting group ([Shaar Shalom Mitzvah Knitters](#)) and yes, another ball of yarn (this time variegated) and a *Creative Knitting Magazine*. Then I look straight ahead at my 27" inch computer monitor. This super-sized monitor lets me look at my [Learn2Knit Facebook](#) page, beautiful knits on Pinterest (<http://www.pinterest.com/learn2knitpurl/>) and patterns on Ravelry while I'm typing up this blog.



To continue on my apartment tour, let's go into the living room where there are 3 couches. Daughter #1 is sitting on couch #1 knitting an afghan of squares, daughter #2 is sitting on couch #2 knitting an intricate dog sweater and 3 of my UFPs (unfinished projects) are sitting on couch#3 waiting for me.

Daughter #1 is struggling with what she's currently in the mood to knit – she spent a few weeks working on a gorgeous 1-piece, multi-coloured ripple afghan until it got too heavy to take on transit. Since she spends many of her waking hours on transit, this is a deal breaker. I wouldn't have given it a second thought – save that one for home and start on something more portable for take-along. She's young, though, and has yet to learn that this is really o.k. Normal, actually. She's still at the stage in her knitting life that she feels she has to finish something before starting the next thing. Silly girl. She'll learn. Meanwhile I'm happy to report that I managed to convince her not to unravel the UFP; put it aside, start the squares and who knows what the future will bring.



Daughter #2 is another story. She's been heard to say (out loud!!) that knitting is painfully boring. I finally challenged her with a dog sweater pattern full of cables, moss, honeycomb and MORE. Suddenly the TV has to be turned off so she can concentrate, mistakes get fixed and knitting is boring no more. Personally I'm just hoping that the cold weather will hold off a little longer so the sweater gets finished and our cute little 9-lb Gracie can warmly and proudly don her new made-with-love outerwear.



And me? Well, I'm finished the body of a beautiful top-down sweater/dress for Daughter #1 and am working with dpns (double-pointed-needles) on the sleeves. I'm half-way done a scarf which I teach in my Beginner Level 1 class and am really torn. On the one hand I'd love to finish it and wear it, but on the other hand it's a more effective teaching tool while still unfinished on the needles. Oy. And then there are squares for my patchwork afghan scattered everywhere – while I test different yarns and different needle sizes to create teaching materials for my '[knitting-an-afghan](#)' course. And I won't even mention the half-way knit Homespun triangle shawl or bobble/diamond afghan that temporarily lost their place in the lineup.



But who has time to knit? I go onto Pinterest, admire all the gorgeous knits people have pinned and find out that my clocks have pulled a fast one and moved ahead an hour. Then I check

out Ravelry to see what's new. Mail's here and there's a new magazine. Have to find my post-it notes to prioritize what to knit. Got to post on my [Facebook](#) page. Finally time to knit. Oops – not really. Daughter #2 lost a stitch. Then I remember I need to blog. That's it – I've only knit an hour today and I'm having withdrawal symptoms. So I'm done writing and off to create another beautiful unique square for the patchwork afghan. Stay tuned....

Knitting – The Next Olympic Sport?



Yes, knitting at the Olympics (heck – there are enough knitters in the stands already that the Olympic organizers can't have helped but notice us). Think of the possibilities. Only the best of the best compete. The rest of us watch our knitting heroines and heroes. We're so into it that we can hardly breathe (although we do manage to knit away without a glitch). We see who knits the fastest, who knits the tightest, who knits the neatest. Heck, we even measure for 'best consistent tension throughout'. And really measure – like with a ruler. So, unlike figure skating, we'd have objective judging based on reality. Hmmm – what a concept. As the world watches a bunch of people with furiously clicking sticks and threads of yarn swirling, magic happens. Mittens appear, hats pop up, scarves wrap around

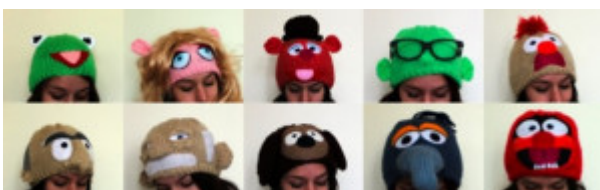
necks, sleeves magically sprout out of squares and rectangles. Wait, a curve. Voila – a sweater.

OK – likely not going to happen. But one never knows...

Knitting can be solitary – we knit alone while listening to an audio book, watching TV or being so totally absorbed in that special project that it's all about the knitting. But knitting is also a group activity, and has been since at least the middle ages when people sat together to figure out a sock, or teach each other a new technique. Now more than ever knitting groups are sprouting up everywhere; a couple of hours of enjoying fellow knitters' company while shutting out the rest of the world. Rest, relaxation, learning, sharing, entertainment and, at the end of it all, a tea cozy, dishcloth or anything our imagination leads us to create. We venture out back into the world refreshed and ready to tackle our daily lives once again...until the next knitting group get-together.

What could be even better than a couple of hours with fellow-knitters? How about a couple of DAYS? **We knitters have no end of opportunities, and an all-Canadian retreat is coming up soon! It's from November 8th to 10th at the Briars Resort & Spa in Jackson's Point.** Click on <http://www.pinesandneedlesretreat.com/> for details. Trust me – it will be a blast. We'll meet new people and reconnect with old knitting buddies, learn new techniques and feel the magic of sharing our own tricks with others.

After all, if the Muppets sang about it (*Album: Other Songs G-R*), it must be true:



*It's neat and it's sweet
It's a ding dong treat
Knittin' socks for little feet
Just sittin' with your knittin' all day long
You know knittin's friendly
And knittin's fun
Knittin's good for everyone*

So join your fellow knitters at the Briars.
<http://www.pinesandneedlesretreat.com/> I'll see you there.

KNITTING AND STITCHING TEACH KEY LIFE SKILLS

Teachers are beginning to use knitting and stitching in the classroom. There have been reports of cross stitching being used to successfully change violent and disruptive behaviour in special schools. One head teacher said **“The effect is instantaneous, overwhelming calm”**.



Some teachers in mainstream schools and colleges are using knitting to enable them to teach pupils with ADHD and kinesthetic learners (those who need to fiddle or tap while they take in information). Knitting appears to occupy the brain sufficiently to lessen or stop hyperactive or disruptive behaviour whilst at the same time enabling the pupil to take in information and to learn. One teacher told us **“It opens up a window for learning”**.

Others are using knitting groups to open up channels of communication with difficult students. These teachers report members of groups, who may have been initially aggressive towards each other, beginning to communicate and talk. They report improvements in performance in school work and social integration since taking up knitting. In addition, self esteem is raised in those who may have previously lived with constant criticism.

One story tells of an English Literature teacher in the 1960s who encouraged his whole class to knit while he read them stories and plays. The story teller told of how she remembered what he had read and was able to recall the information later. She also remembers his lessons as the most enjoyable she had.

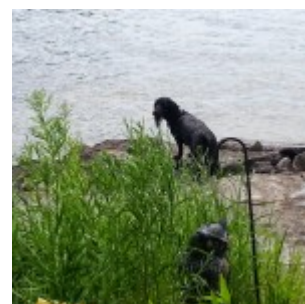
Many others have also told us that knitting has improved their memory. It's known that multi-sensorial events are remembered more readily, so perhaps this is an explanation. Others believe that being a bilateral exercise, knitting could be enhancing the connectivity between the right and left cerebral hemispheres, which may lead to an improvement in memory.

The bilateral movements required in knitting could also be an explanation as to why those with dyslexia and dyspraxia have found improvement in their conditions since taking up knitting. In addition they have found that knitting also helps them to organise their thought processes and have found this skill to be transferrable to other areas of life.

Knitting and stitching teach key life skills, such as **PATIENCE**, **PERSEVERENCE** and **COMMUNICATION**. Many stories also tell of how knitting in particular teaches that mistakes can be undone, that it's not a catastrophic event to make a mistake and that goals can be reached despite a few detours along the way. Indeed, the end product may be considerably 'richer' if a bit of exploration is done on the way! They also raise self esteem, so along with the calming properties they can be extremely useful tools in the classroom.

The Royal Baby Blanket Screw-Up...

Actually, it was a royal screw-up of the baby blanket I'm knitting for a friend's new grandbaby. It happened while I was vacationing at a cottage on Bass Lake – beautiful, relaxing and close to Casino Rama for the rainy day – and much as I'd love to blame it on my dogs, I can't.



What would I love to blame on the dogs, you ask? My partially unravelled knit baby-blanket-to-be. And how did it become unravelled? It wasn't easy, let me tell you, but I'm just that talented.

First, earlier in the day, I stopped midway through a row and didn't put stoppers on the needles.

Second I plopped down on the couch without noticing that the gorgeous baby blanket-to-be was there first.

So there I am, sitting on the couch with something under me. And then came my third mistake. Instead of looking to see what it was, I yanked. It didn't come right away so I yanked again. Really, who wouldn't? And then I looked. And then I screamed "*Oh sh*t. Oh no.*"

What-the-heck?". Because there was loose yarn everywhere, loose stitches and an almost empty circular needle. After jumping up and staring at this mess for about 10 minutes as if expecting it to miraculously fix itself, I did what any self-respecting knitter would do – I had a drink. And maybe another one too. At which point I went back to the couch only to discover that it was still there. Go figure. So I sat down – this time beside the royally screwed-up baby blanket – and began the diagnosis. I was flummoxed. One-third of the blanket was ripped down 4 rows, and the other two-thirds was intact. After staring at it for about a half-hour, expecting the answer to pop up in a word-balloon, I gave up.

As I tell my knitting students...sometimes we just have to give up on the 'why' and move on to the 'how can I fix it'. I'm proud to say I finally took my own advice. In the end I ripped the whole thing down about 6 rows and then frogged another row (frogging, by the way, is the term for taking it apart stitch-by-stitch as in rip-it, rip-it, rip-it) to make sure I had all the stitches back on the needle. Oh – did I forget to mention that this is a lace pattern complete with yarnovers, slipped stitches and knit-2-togethers? All's well that ends well and was finally back to knitting, so proud of myself for meeting the challenge. That is, I was proud of myself until my daughter said to me "You really like knitting? I think I'd rather bang my head against a wall repeatedly for an hour than fix your



blanket stitch by stitch." Urrgggghhhh!

I forgive her though and even feel sorry for her... she's a non-knitter who doesn't know the joy of problem-solving and creating this gorgeous garment which will eventually be gifted with love. A one-of-a-kind with its own special story to tell.

Kate and William – Do we knit baby blanket or baby outfit?

As the world waits for news that Kate is in labour, we knitters wonder whether she and Prince William would prefer a knit baby blanket or a really cute sweater, dress or other piece of clothing? And if it's a cute hand knit outfit, then should it be in size 0 – 3 months, or bigger?



These are serious questions – I may not be able to create world peace, but I can definitely achieve inner peace by knitting. And if I'm not knitting because it's 35 degrees Celsius (that would be about 95 Fahrenheit) and my hands keep slipping off the needles, then I'm reading knitting magazines, looking at Ravelry to see what other people are knitting, searching out patterns or going to air-conditioned yarn stores to look at yarn (I rarely go with the intention of buying – that would just be greedy. No, I go merely to look and if that perfectly yummy skein of yarn cries out for me to buy it, then I must. Never disappoint the yarn – that's my motto!).



I've been conducting my own unscientific surveys to determine the answer – knit outfit or blanket – **if** Kate and William **had**

to choose (which of course they don't since he's a Prince of England AND the Duke of Cambridge and she's the Duchess of Cambridge). I've been speaking to moms and grandmoms and they've all agreed that **no-one should have to choose**. There's nothing like hand knit items to enjoy and keep forever. Some said clothes are great because they're perfect for photo ops and can be handed down to future kids-to-come. They won't wear out because they'll fit a baby for about 10 seconds so will be handed down the generations for eternity. Talk about an heirloom. But others say that the proof is in the pudding – their 2, 3 and even 5-year-olds are still walking around and sleeping with their hand knit baby blanket even though it might be more than a little ratty by this time. But who cares about ratty? This baby blanket has kept the baby warm and cozy, and transitioned to become the toddler's constant companion giving her warmth and security wherever she is.

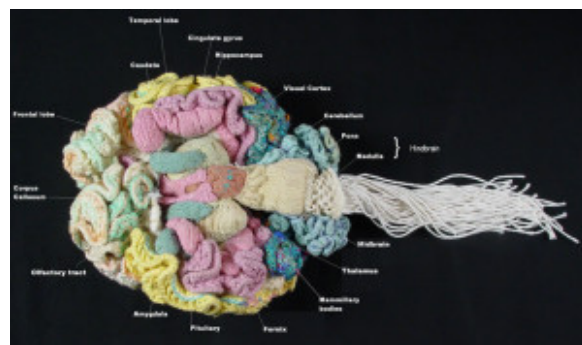
I'm not going to leave you hanging – there IS a solution. The only solution, really. **BOTH**. Now, you're worried that a 9-month pregnancy doesn't give you quite enough time. And really, it's not 9-months for you or me – we don't even know that a new giftee is on the way until half-way through. And we're already in the middle of at least 4 projects. So prioritize! You need to **first** knit up a cute little 3 – 6 month size clothing item. Not littler because what if the baby's a big one? Not bigger because you don't want him crawling, walking or playing with dirt wearing your art. 3 to 6 months? Perfect. When that's finished, get to work on the blanket. It doesn't matter if baby doesn't have it for a couple of months – get it finished before the 4-month mark and she'll never know she didn't have it from birth. Honestly, even the 6-month half-birthday is fine. Either way, baby will be carrying his favourite blankie around for years while his sisters and brothers get to wear the like-new knit outfit. Of course, each new arrival needs their own blanket, but that goes without saying.

Happy knitting for the babies-to-come in YOUR life.

Knitting Towards a Healthy Brain and Inner Peace

Research Shows Knitting to be a Healthy Pasttime

Not exactly a blog (actually not a blog at all, LOL) but an interesting article about the benefits of knitting. Just what I always suspected... world peace would indeed be achieved by teaching the world to knit. If not world peace, then how about peaceful discussions? Especially in meetings.



A knitted brain; very cool!

People ask me how I can knit and be part of a meeting at the same time. I reply, ***“you don't want to have me in your meeting if I'm NOT knitting.. trust me”***.

If I start to feel aggravated or impatient, or if I'm loving the discussion but losing the ability to focus or if I'm just in the mood to knit... or...who cares why actually... I pick up my

knitting, do a few stitches and the world is OK once again. My blood pressure goes down, my anger and impatience fade away stitch by stitch, and my focus returns. I'm good as gold – all because I've got 2 sticks and a string in my hands. Go figure. And now there's scientific research proving it really does work (*knitters will not understand why we need to pay money for research to prove what we've known all along, but then non-knitters can't understand why knitters will spend a thousand hours knitting a pair of socks when they could buy a pair for \$1.00 at their local Dollar store*).

In the rhythm is part of an article Therapeutic Knitting by Betsan Corkhill 2007.

The rhythm of knitting has a calming effect which is already being used successfully to manage disruptive behaviour and ADHD in children. Many people use their knitting to manage anxiety, panic attacks, phobias and conditions such as asthma, where calmness is important. Of course the portability of knitting means you can carry your calming remedy around and use it when and wherever you need.

The automaticity of knitting is important, too. It occupies some areas of your brain, whilst freeing up others. Many find that this enables them to 'zone out' to become 'mindless'. This gives **your mind a mini break from any problems, enabling you to escape into the sanctuary of a quiet mind.** This brings down stress levels and breaks into negative or ruminating downward thought cycles.

This occupying of the brain at one level has interesting results if you're knitting in groups. Conversations can become more intimate more quickly and, as a result, communication improves. It's as if the brain is unable to think too critically or prejudicially about what it's saying because it's occupied elsewhere – it enables barriers to come down.

The action of knitting slows down thought processes, which is

important in our modern, stressful world. Thoughts can often whiz around in our heads preventing sleep and keeping stress levels high. Slowing them down enables us to view, sort and process them. This could have important implications for those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). **Indeed knitters tell me their knitting significantly improves their PTS and in some cases cures it completely.**