



Illuminate

with KATE WOOD-FOYE

THE GUTS, GRIT AND GROUNDWORK OF REMARKABLE REGIONAL ENTREPRENEURS, INNOVATORS, LEADERS AND GAME CHANGERS.



Rasa Kabaila wears many hats challenging the traditional narrative and beliefs around nursing. **Blending her ability and experience as a nurse practitioner, business owner and writer she shares the honest, raw, real and inspiring stories from this critically important profession.** Rasa's journey is underpinned with a deep passion for helping people holistically and dedicating herself to the care of others.

Put Some Concrete in your Breakfast: Tales from Contemporary Nursing shares the true, inspiring and truly challenging elements of the role – how does this book and your journey look to inspire nurses of the future?

I wrote the book to share the honest stories of nurses; the sad, the funny, the heart-warming and the bizarre. There is a significant difference between the politically correct version of a workday that a nurse tells someone at a dinner party compared to the reality. Nurses are the backbone of healthcare, which was appreciated even more during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these stories, I hope the public can better recognise the valuable work that nurses do. Importantly, the book demonstrates that although nursing is a tough profession, it's so, so rewarding. I hope to encourage people who are considering a career in nursing, to take the path - you can really make a difference.

Who and/or what inspired you to take on this journey in nursing leading to where you are today?

In Grade 10, I did work experience at a

paediatric ward in NSW. This was followed by work experience at a war veterans' home, where I later became an employee whilst studying. I was the youngest personal carer they had employed. The work was hard and I didn't enjoy it straight away, however, in time, I could see how meaningful the work was, despite how challenging it was. At that point, I knew that no other work could compare with that of helping others.

You have honed your craft and care for others through some hard work and long nights studying, obtaining multiple diplomas, degrees and masters to enable your work as a Registered Nurse, Mental Health Practitioner and Palliative Care Specialist. How has this multifaceted learning assisted you to be a successful health practitioner?

Education, training and learning in my eyes, are lifelong and are essential for professional growth. Education doesn't always have to be formal, I'm learning every day in my work. In my opinion, a good clinician never succumbs to thinking they know everything. They should be doing their own self-directed research as well as critical analysis and perspective taking from their colleagues, and this is the approach I take. Having formal education as a

foundation has helped me feel confident that my clinical practice is underpinned by a strong evidence base.

In 2022, you took a leap of faith and launched your own business Broadleaf HNP as a Nurse Practitioner specialising in mental health outside of the traditional clinical environment. What was the driver behind this decision and how do you hope to make an impact as a micro business in our regional community?

I'm really grateful for the ten years of clinical experience I've had in the public sector. I've been able to work in so many different clinical areas and have learned so much from every area. I've also had so many beautiful, supportive colleagues and mentors through that journey. I made the decision to work on my own to hone my practice to be the way I felt it ran best, without bureaucracy. There is a huge need for mental health service in our community, I see a broad range of clients for a broad range of needs. I provide assessment, treatment and therapy in the mental health domain face to face and via telehealth across the Mid North Coast and Australia. My aim in my practice is to always keep the holistic needs of the individual paramount.



Rasa Kabaila

What has been your most effective tool or attribute as a practitioner and business owner that has enabled you to bring Broadleaf to life and make a difference?

Being open minded, flexible and genuinely caring about people is essential. People need to feel heard, seen and be validated with whatever they come to the table with. I remind my clients that there is nothing they can tell me that would shock me. Being kind and an active listener as a health care practitioner or even just as an everyday human goes a long way. This sounds like a common-sense approach (to be kind and to listen), but it's unfortunately not always the experience when clients are looking for support. I've worked in the acute mental health sector for ten years and feel equipped to see any person in the community. I take my time with people and have no qualms in telling a client that I need to take extra steps to feel more confident in their care plan. I regularly speak with other health professionals and business mentors to gain other perspectives for clients to gain more confidence in the care plan which is always guided by the client and their needs. I ensure I am, available for consultation outside of set appointments. I do try and go the extra mile however I can. It's the care that my GP provides to me, and it's the care I strive to provide others in my business.

What has been your greatest challenge and greatest achievement during your time as a nurse practitioner and business owner?

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Deciding to resign from my permanent job in the public sector after ten years to start my own practice was a seismic shift for me. My three legged cat is a beautiful companion, but he hasn't yet become my admin assistant nor does he produce an income! I had no back up plan or safety net. It was a very scary decision, and I had no guarantee of success. My most recent challenge was coming home from two weeks leave to over 100 emails to action!

Despite this, it was the best decision I ever made. I can now take full credit for the success of my clinic and client outcomes. I have pathways to see everyone in our community regardless of their financial situation, my client flow is continuous, the income is sustainable, and I have flexibility in my work schedule. My greatest achievement by far is having my clients thank me for helping them to achieve their recovery goals.

How instrumental have sages and critics been in the evolution of your career and business? What is the most valuable lesson they have taught you?

I have received so much amazing mentorship from other nurse practitioners who have supported me to start my own practice and I'm so grateful. They have taught me how to understand the gaps in healthcare and how I can fill them with my skill set and knowledge



and most importantly to work within your values system. I'm always trying to pay that mentorship forward to other nurses and nurse practitioners wanting to go out on their own, or who need some support in their current area of practice.

You have a passion for whole of person care and that ironically dovetails with your passion for competitive boxing. How do you reconcile your nursing self with the competitive physical nature of boxing?

I'm more of a lover than a fighter! People often say that they could never imagine me being a boxer. I guess this is why I decided to take the step in competing because the idea of it scared me and felt so unnatural for me. Martial arts and physical exercise are vessels for forming not just physical strength but emotional strength. Training and competing have shown me that I'm capable of a lot more than what I realise. Getting into the boxing ring is one of the most intimidating things a person can do. Most boxers I know are total sweethearts, they are there for the same reasons I am; to have a sense of community, learn new skills and become stronger physically and emotionally. I enjoy training at an athletic level, regardless of the idea of competing. I also coach and see my role in the boxing gym as supporting all people, especially women, to build confidence within themselves, regardless of whether or not they want to compete, through boxing.

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