

## The Case of the Missing Body

**Powell J, 2016, Otago University Press, ISBN 978-1-877578-31-1**

*"I am stronger than I think. That sounds very strange."* In Jenny Powell's 2016 book titled "The case of the missing body", she writes through her character Lily about living with severe proprioceptive deficits. Lily spent her entire life feeling that it was normal to only feel the sensation of her head, like it was floating on a disconnected body. It wasn't until she decided to make a change and reached out to her reliable physiotherapist Patrick that things changed. The next year was full of tears of joy and frustration as Lily began to discover what it's like to feel her own body.

Jenny Powell is a Dunedin based creative writing teacher and her book reads in a journalistic style with an informal timeline and no chapters. This made it difficult to go back and re-read sections, but I believe the style reflected the author's purpose. In the introduction Jenny wrote, "Here is Lily's Story. Her story is my story, but in order to write it I have to step back, and examine it from a distance..." With the addition of some of her poetry, Jenny tells her story in a unique and authentic way.

My initial read of this book left me wanting more. I realised as I was reviewing it that I wanted a conclusion, a win, a recovery. However Lily's story is not finished, her challenges are continuing beyond the pages of the book. It wasn't until I reflected back that I realised all of the positive changes Lily made to her body image, physical fitness, and emotional wellbeing.

This book provides an insightful, first person view on living with proprioceptive deficits. As a physiotherapist it can be easy to get frustrated teaching exercises to patients who lack body awareness. Lily appreciates how her physiotherapist Patrick asked the right questions and was patient, kind, and supportive throughout the process. This book reminds us how important it is to have compassion and treat the whole person, not just a health condition or injury.

I can also see this book being beneficial for people who are living with proprioceptive deficits or any persistent condition that limits their activity. It is written in layman's terms, with only a small number of references. There is minimal literature written from the patient perspective about this condition, and this book could be valuable to give people hope and to motivate them to find their own bodies.

This book isn't meant to teach you about proprioceptive deficits and how to treat them. It is an uplifting example of how as physiotherapists we have an amazing ability to touch people's lives in a positive way. Jenny illustrates how a little patience and kindness can go a long way to improving someone's wellness. By reading this book it also puts you in the shoes of someone with severe proprioception issues, and gets you to awkwardly walk a couple of miles in their shoes.

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