

The link between health and emotions

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While the connection between our environment and our emotions has been well explored what is less understood is the profound connection between our emotions and our physical health.

Internationally recognised mind-body-stress-wellness expert Professor Esther Sternberg will join the University of Sydney's Professor Ian Hickie next week for a special discussion on the science connecting our emotions and health.

Emotions, the Brain and the Body: the science connecting health and the emotions is part of the [Sydney Ideas Open](#) series of talks and forums and will be held Thursday 14 October.

Professor Sternberg, Chief of Neuroendocrine Immunology and Behavior at the US National Institute of Health, is widely recognised for her discoveries in the mind-body interaction in illness and healing, as well as her ability to translate her complex scientific subjects for lay-audiences.

As well as featuring prominently in US print and broadcast media, she is recognised as one of 100 women to have changed the face of medicine by the National Library of Medicine, has testified before US Congress, and has acted as an adviser to the [World Health Organization](#).

She will explain how nerves, molecules and hormones connect the brain with the [immune system](#) and how as a result, the brain can signal the immune system and make us more vulnerable to illness, while the

immune system can also signal the brain and affect our emotions.

Professor Sternberg will discuss the implications this may have for the treatment of both chronic and treatable diseases.

Professor Hickie, Executive Director of the Brain and Mind Research Institute (BMRI) will explain that over the past three decades a whole range of psychological and medical research has demonstrated the extent to which the brain regulates the body's key functions to ensure physical wellness.

"A much greater focus in the last decade has been: can you improve [brain function](#) to improve physical health and reduce your risk of developing other illnesses?" he says.

Both Professor Hickie and Professor Sternberg will discuss studies conducted by the BMRI which demonstrate the role played by emotions in the developing adolescent brain.

"Our focus is particularly on the last major phase of brain development," he explains. "That's the time of onset of most major adult [health](#) problems, like anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and psychosis, which are associated with a risk of physical disorders such as diabetes and disruption of the circadian, metabolic and immune systems."

Provided by University of Sydney

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