

# The Therapy of Knitting

By Stella Bernardi

I have always maintained that creative pursuits can be relaxing and therapeutic. They relieve stress and detract from whatever pain we might be suffering. It is difficult to find ways to manage fibromyalgia – exercise, nutrition and pacing all have their place. But why not add knitting? Don't laugh!!

I hadn't done any knitting for about 50 years but that changed during recent hospitalisation and incapacity. Reading was the obvious way to pass the time, but even that has limitations! But the books I read had a life changing effect.

## The Books that Inspired me

I read eight novels by Debbie Macomber, three of which centred on a 'Yarn Shop' on Blossom Street in Seattle USA. The shop is called "A Good Yarn" and is owned by a cancer survivor called Lydia who has found knitting to be a contributor to her recovery. She runs knitting classes thus forming friendships with the participants and the stories revolve around their various lives. The chapter headings are peppered with inspirational quotations about knitting which are quite challenging. Here is a random selection:

- "Knitting goes with us, it calms us." – Morgan Hicks, *Sweaters by Design*.
- "People who say they don't have enough patience to knit are precisely those who could most improve their lives by learning how!" – Sally Melville, author of *The Knitting Experience* series.
- "To learn to knit you need beginner's hands and a beginner's mind. Knitting is a hobby. Breathe, relax and have fun." – Donna Druchunas, SheeptoShawl.com
- "In the hands of a knitter, yarn becomes the medium that binds the heart and soul." – Robin Villiers-Furze, The Needleworks Company, Port Orchard, Washington.
- "Whether I am knitting for myself or someone else, my passion for knitting enables me to express my creativity and produces a feeling of accomplishment." – Rita E. Greenfeeder, Editor, Knit 'N Style.

- “Honey, knitting is so much more than just plain obsessive compulsive behaviour . . . it’s the healthiest addiction I know!” – Antje Gillingham, owner of The Knitting Nest in Maryville , TN.
- “The act of knitting is a meditation, for the work of the hands compels the mind to rest, and gives free rein to movements of the soul.” – Author unknown, contributed by Darlene Hayes. [www.handjiveknits.com](http://www.handjiveknits.com)

The knitting related book titles are

1. “The Shop on Blossom Street”
2. “A Good Yarn”
3. “Summer on Blossom Street”

Although inter-related they can be read in any order. In book 1 The class learns to knit a Baby Blanket; in book 2 they knit Socks on circular needles; and in book 3 they knit Scarves with sampler cable patterns. In the two latter ones the knitting patterns are provided.

### **My Knitting Experience**

With nothing else pressing to do I started on the scarf. I was soon hooked! It was fascinating to see the various cable patterns developing.



A friend, hearing that I was ‘into’ knitting sent me a large bag of assorted wools so I could knit items for the Christmas Shoebox Appeal! I knitted a hat, scarf and purse, then went back to my own scarf. Then I thought – “How could we

apply knitting to fibro?" I am sure fibromites will find knitting relaxing and indeed as addictive I have.

### **A Fibromyalgia Fellowship Blanket/Throw, Bedcover**

I got the idea of making a corporate patchwork blanket of knitted squares. I began to experiment! I started knitting squares, some plain, some with purl and, inspired by my scarf patterns, some with cable. Designs can be as imaginative as their knitters can create. There is no limit.

If you would like to participate make your contributions as near 5" square as you can. The number of stitches required depends on the thickness of the wool and the size of needles being used. A rough guide is 25 stitches on 5mm needles and approx 45 rows. You would need to experiment! The squares can be as simple or complicated as you wish. There is plenty of opportunity for exercising creativity and using imagination!

### **Some of my Squares**



1. Garter stitch using the leftover yarn from the scarf.



2. Garter stitch border of 7 stitches and 10 rows top and bottom. Stocking stitch centre. Yellow and white variegated yarn.



3. Garter stitch border of 5 stitches with central cable design.



4. Garter stitch border with basket-weave effect centre – knit 2, purl 2 / 4 rows alternating.

### What is the purpose?

- Firstly, we can benefit from the therapeutic effect of knitting and the satisfaction it can bring. Small targets like squares are easily achievable.
- Secondly, we can jointly produce a work of art with a useful purpose.
- Thirdly, we could use it for publicity purposes. Show the world what fibromites can do, despite their disability. Demonstrate that we can show a united front, working with a common purpose.

- We can link it with Fibromyalgia Awareness week in September and/or Awareness Day in May.

### **What should we do with it?**

We would need to find a deserving and suitable recipient, at home or overseas or it could be raffled or auctioned, proceeds to a fibro charity or research. It could be accompanied by a list of names of those who had contributed their efforts towards it.

### **So, will you work with me?**

If this interests you and you would like to participate, get knitting! Let's see how many squares can be produced before Fibromyalgia Week in September. Send your resulting squares to me – Stella Bernardi, 42 Woodlands Way, Southwater RH13 9HZ

Remember that sending several at a time will be more postal-cost effective. If this is done as a Group project - even better. If you can give me advance warning that you intend to participate it will give me a little idea of what to expect. [Webmistress@fms-sas.co.uk](mailto:Webmistress@fms-sas.co.uk)

I am going to say "Thank You" here and now as I have every hope that a goodly number of fibromites (and friends) will support this venture.

This project has the support and backing of the Trustees of Fibromyalgia Support for Surrey and Sussex. In fact they are so keen on the idea that they want me to do a Knitting Workshop at the 2012 FMS Conference to be held over the Easter weekend at Chichester.