

The background of the entire page is a stylized illustration. It features a large, smiling woman with her eyes closed, wearing a dark blue hijab. The hijab is decorated with white stars and small, purple, alien-like creatures. The woman's face is a light peach color with a gentle smile. The background behind her is a dark blue space with white stars and a few larger, stylized planets or moons. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, purples, and a soft peach for the woman's face.

Student Wellness

A Mental Health Guide for Students

Joint Initiative for the
Wellbeing of All



in collaboration with
the Ministry of Health



كهرتيرن كصيرتن
KEMENTERIAN KESIHATAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Perpustakaan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Brunei
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Foreword



Mental health issues in adolescents and young people are a growing concern worldwide. In 2021, WHO reported that 1 in 7 adolescents across the globe experience a mental disorder, yet it remains largely unrecognised and untreated. It is, therefore, imperative that we acknowledge the need to address and improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people as these may affect their social, intellectual, and emotional development.

In today's fast-paced world, students face increasing pressures and challenges such as academic performance, peer pressure and identity formation, which can take a toll on their mental health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly exacerbated symptoms of mental disorders globally, with students having to rapidly adapt to home-based online learning, then re-learning to attend school physically after almost 2 years of home-based learning.

In Brunei Darussalam, the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) 2019 found that students aged 13 to 17 experienced loneliness and suicide ideations, while some reported being bullied regularly. All of these factors need to be considered contextually and in relation to the overall mental health needs of young people locally, in order to help them function better socially, academically and vocationally, as well as to enable them to become well-adjusted and productive adults.

With this strategic collaboration between the Ministry of Health and JIWA, we hope that this book will serve as a supporting tool and guidance to the young people of Brunei Darussalam; to help empower them to address and prioritise their mental health and enable them to thrive academically and emotionally. Within these pages are practical tips, motivational advice and useful information that can guide students in developing resilience and good wellbeing.

We hope that this book will also serve as a beacon of hope for students, teachers, and families alike in Brunei Darussalam – inspiring all to create a safe and supportive environment to foster resilience, kindness and understanding towards ensuring a mentally healthy nation.

Message



All praise is due to God, It is with great gratitude that JIWA presents its long awaited project, the Mental Health Book Drive. Ever since the pandemic hit our beloved country, to say that things have changed would be an understatement to the reality of impact it had on our lives, relationships, jobs, and health. Many people were starting to lose hope; anxiety and depression were surfacing in every corner of the globe and few knew how to cope. Although it was a time of darkness for many, for us it was an opportunity to bring hope, resilience and solidarity back to our community again.

Furthermore, the most potent roles to achieve this was none other than the youth. It was in this, that the project was born. To provide quality awareness and educational resources to people became not only important but vital in the empowerment and preparation of our youth. With the initiation of this project, JIWA hopes to equip the youngsters with the necessary tools to realize the county's vision of building a resilient nation capable of withstanding any and all struggles that they may face. With the grace of God, and His blessing of our efforts, we hope that succeeding our youth is not only achievable but also inevitable.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the team of psychiatrists and psychologists from the Ministry of Health and the Health Promotion Centre for their never ending support, advice, and supervision over the contents of the book making sure that our message is of the highest quality and effectiveness. Without your expertise, this project (and many other projects to come) would never have happened. And so, with great hope in our nation's vision and implementation of their mental health action plan this upcoming year, we are hopeful that we see a brighter future for the resiliency, and strengthening of our nation's youth.

Haji Mohammad Zulfan Farhi bin Haji Sulaini
Co-Author and Founder of JIWA

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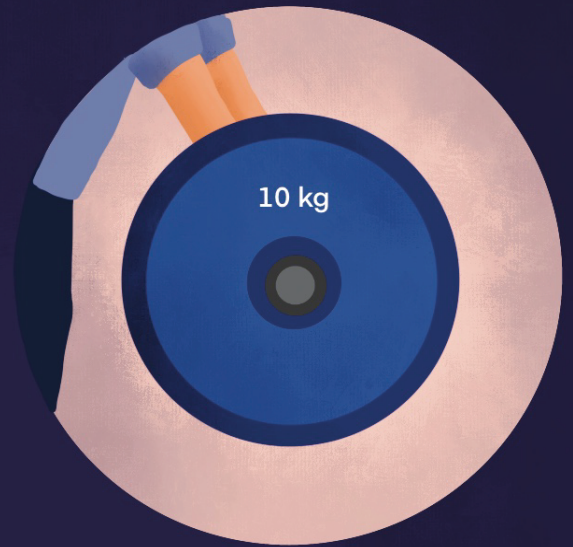
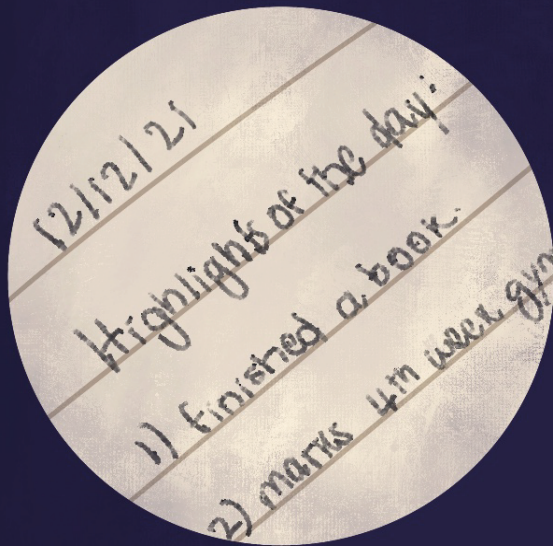
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What is Mental Health

Introduction

Mental Health as defined by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) is our state of well-being which includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being.

The quality of our mental health determines how much we are aware of our own abilities. It affects our ability to cope with stress, productivity, and contribution to community (WHO)

Mental health plays a huge role in determining the quality of life from childhood to adulthood. It can affect a person's personality by how they think, learn, communicate, find self-worth and develop relationships.

What is mental-illness?

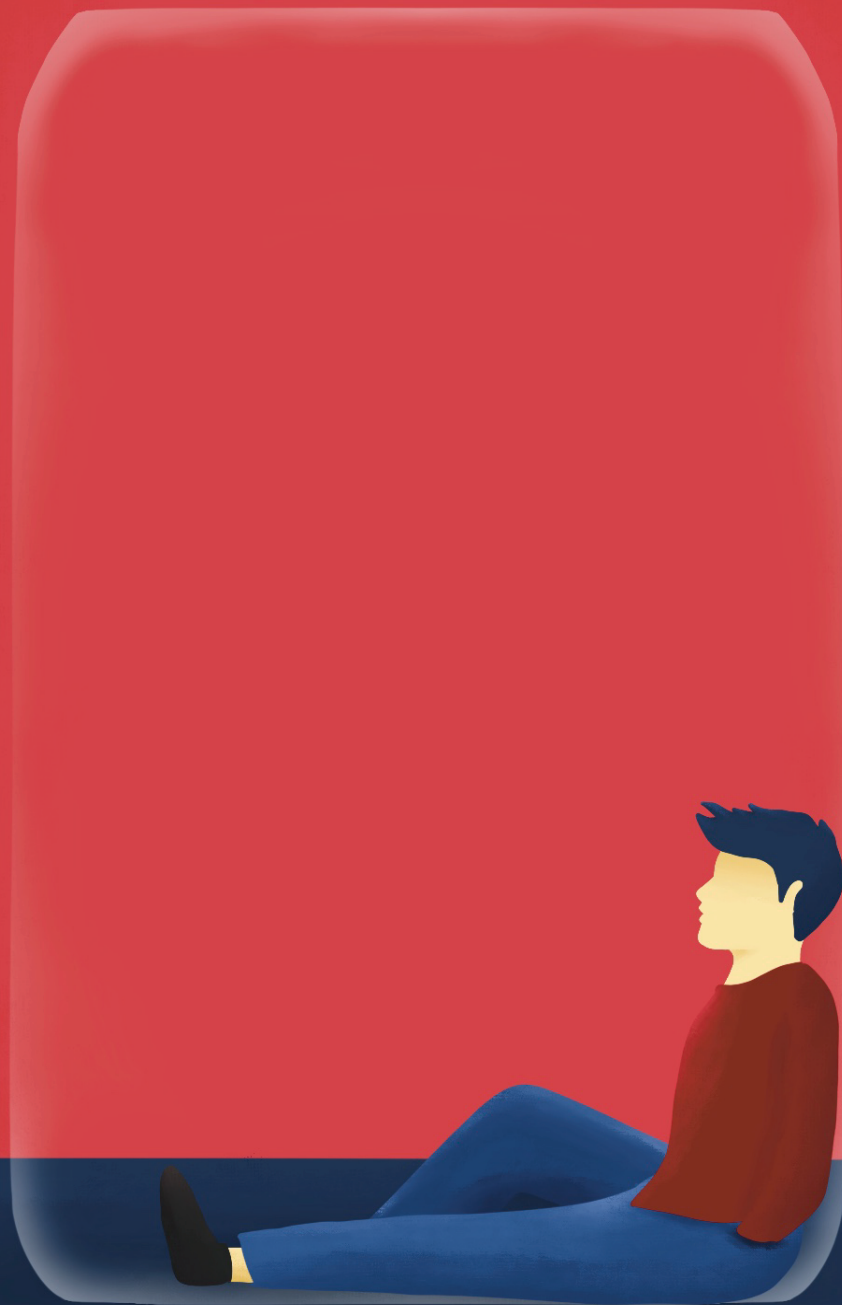
Since mental health is the state of well-being, a mental illness is when that state is **compromised, becoming imbalanced**. A mental illness is a health condition negatively affecting a person's **emotions, thoughts and behaviours**.

When a person is going through a mental illness, it can impair their ability to live through their daily life. Even the simplest things can feel like a big challenge, such as getting up and getting ready for the day.

As mental illnesses affect one's feelings, thoughts and behaviours, they aren't always apparent – some people may be able to cope and manage their symptoms better than others, depending on the severity of their illness. Some people go through mental illnesses without telling anyone. It can hide behind a **smile or laughter**.

The most common mental illnesses today are **Anxiety Disorder** and **Depression**. Although they are all categorized as mental illnesses, each has their own set of symptoms and presentations.

Anxiety Disorder & Depression



Anxiety

is a feeling of nervousness, restlessness, worry and fear. Everyone will experience feeling anxious at some point in their lives as it is a normal human response to a perceived danger or threat. However, excessive and unaddressed feelings of anxiety may lead to Anxiety Disorder, which is a Mental Illness that has symptoms that can affect a person's ability to function in their day-to-day.

Symptoms may include both mental and physical disturbances, such as:

Excessive Worrying

Trouble Concentrating on the Present Moment

Panic Attacks

Feeling of Being in Constant Danger

Sweating & Trembling

Increased Heart Rate

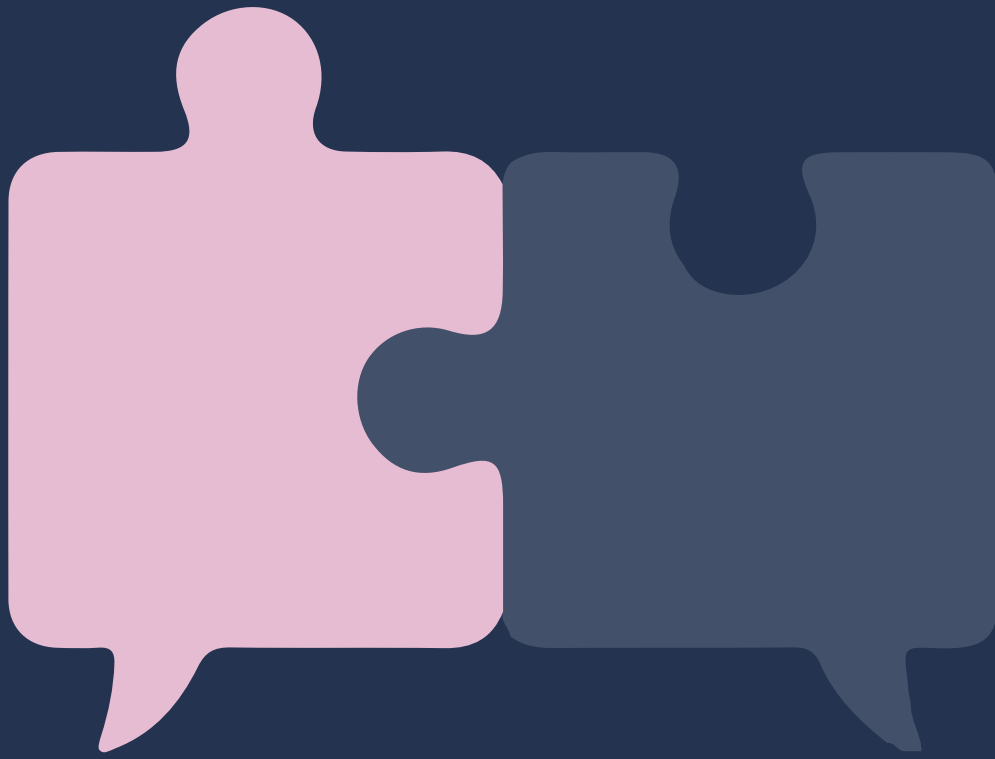
Constantly Feeling Weak or Tired

Depression

is one of the most common mental illnesses characterized by chronic/prolonged sadness, loss of interest and/or pleasure in activities, feelings of tiredness, poor concentration and feelings of worthlessness.

According to the World Health Organization, there was a 25% increase in global prevalence of anxiety and depression during the first year of the pandemic.





Misconceptions of Mental Illness

Myth 1

It is not normal to have a mental illness

Fact: Mental health struggles are a normal part of life. Research shows that 50% of common mental health issues begin at the age of 14.

Myth 2

People who have mental illnesses are crazy and dangerous

Fact: Studies have shown that people with mental illnesses are 10 times more likely to be the victim of violence rather than the perpetrator.

Myth 3

People with mental illnesses are weak and ungrateful

Fact: Mental illness is a health condition, much like physical illness. The illness that they are fighting affects their thoughts, feelings and behaviours - making them more vulnerable than others. Seeking help for your mental health is a sign of strength and resilience.

Myth 4

People with Mental Illnesses can easily snap out of it to be free from their illness

Fact: Like any illness or disease, it takes time and commitment to treat. It needs to be treated ideally by a mental health professional. Both the patient and practitioner must trust in the process and commit to making positive changes to get better.



Myth 5

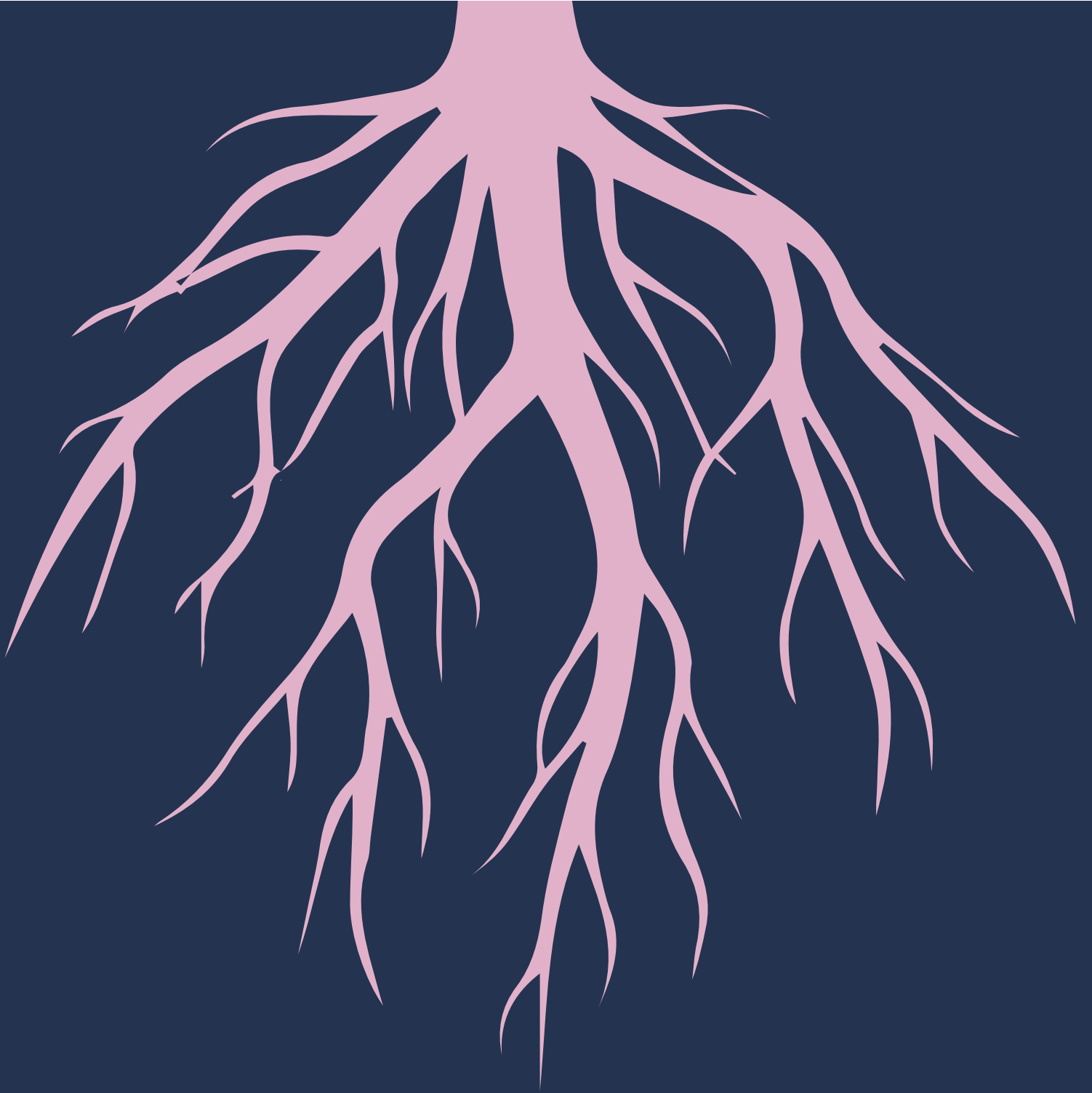
Mental illnesses are incurable

Fact: Many people have recovered from mental illnesses and continue to live long and healthy lives. Research has found that 65% of people living with serious mental illnesses experience partial to full recovery over time when they seek treatment from a professional.

Myth 6

Mental Health help is only for those that have severe mental illnesses

Fact: Everyone can benefit from seeking help from a psychologist, therapist or counselor. Some people may want to seek mental health advice, therapy or counselling for self-discovery, career advice, parenting advice, relationship advice and others.



Root Cause of Mental Illnesses:

What are the causes?

Mental illnesses can be caused by a variety of factors that aren't necessarily the same for everyone. These may include:

Genetic factors:

Studies have shown that children who are born in families that have histories of mental health problems have a greater risk of developing mental illnesses later in life. Genetics can make an individual predisposed or increase their risk of developing a mental illness.



Physical health:

Physical health and mental health are closely related. An unhealthy diet, low physical activity, obesity, lack of sleep and certain vitamin deficiencies may directly affect one's mood and mental health.





Psychological Trauma:

Trauma in early childhood can affect mental health later in life. Children who have experienced severe psychological trauma such as sexual abuse and violence, emotional and physical abuse, neglect, and bullying may have difficulty regulating their emotions, thoughts and behavior in adulthood.



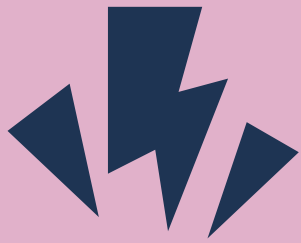
Family and Community:

Certain life events that trigger a heightened amount of stress to a person can negatively impact their mental health. An individual's upbringing and family dynamic may also influence their mental health. These may include the death of a loved one, divorce, moving to a new city, starting at a new school, unemployment and many more.





School Mental Health



**Stress &
anxiety**



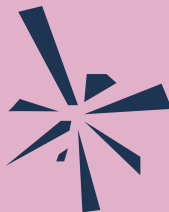
Trauma



Relationships



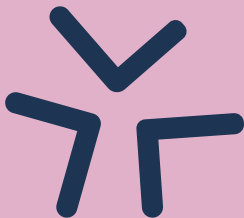
School culture



Mental health



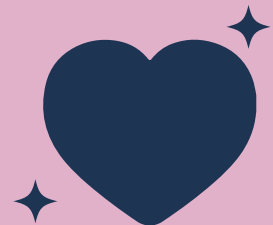
Sleep



Pressure



**Learning
Ability**

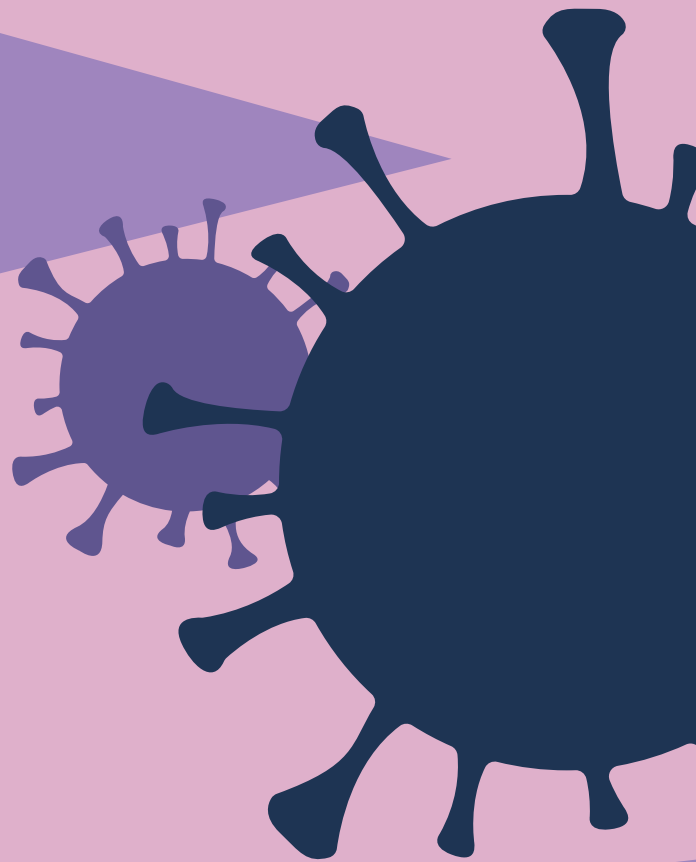


Health

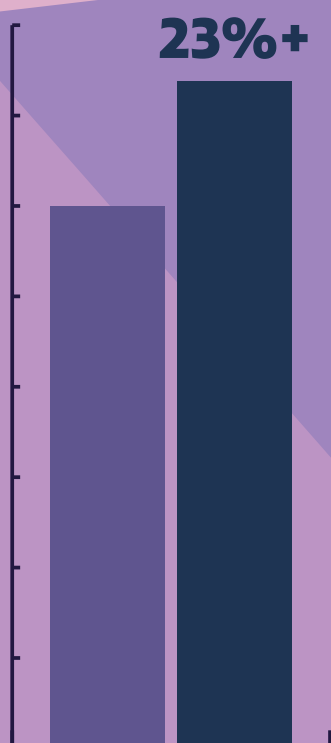
School and academic performance are some of the most common stressors for young people.

School-aged children go through rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth, which may pose additional risk of developing mental health conditions in later life if their time, energy and focus are not managed well.

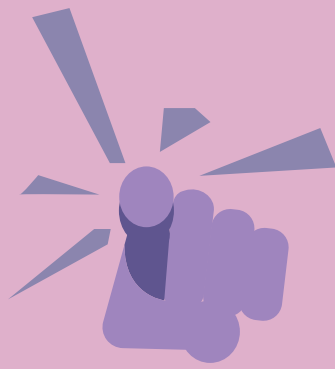
With the combination of strict deadlines, multiple assignments, pressure to excel from parents and teachers, and inadequate sleep, the mental health and well-being of students could be compromised.



In 2020–2021,



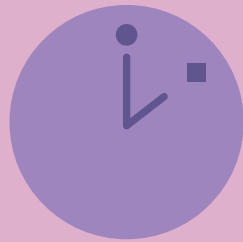
schools around the world faced a rapid transition when the covid-19 pandemic began. Schools were forced to close, leaving students and teachers to resume classes online. During this period, students and teachers alike faced various mental distress. Factors that affected their mental health were associated with social distancing restrictions and draining online lessons. Studies have found that there was a 23% increase in cases of children ranging from 7- 15 years old experiencing mental health issues during the pandemic. (Citation 1)



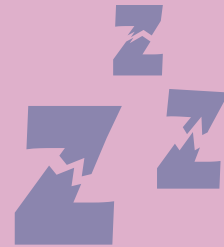
Bullying



Excessive workload

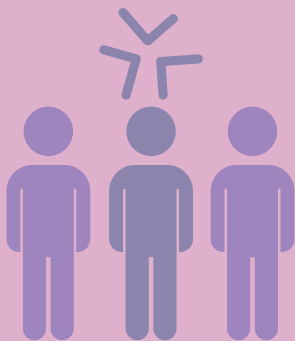


**Rapid changes in
routine**



**Inadequate
rest/playtime**

Mental health stressors in school



Peer pressure



Test anxiety



**Lack of peer /
social support**

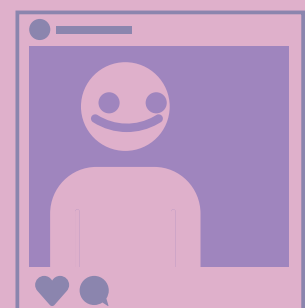


Image concerns



Bullying

Bullying

Victims and by-standers of bullying at school have been found to be associated with **higher odds of mental health problems** compared to those that aren't victims (citation 30). Victims of bullying are not restricted to one particular age group, gender or social status. Bullying is not only limited to physical bullying, but also verbal bullying (name-calling), social bullying (ostracizing / isolating others) and cyber-bullying (online / using technology).

The Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) conducted in 2019 among 13-17 year old students across schools in Brunei found that 23.7% of students (both male and female) experienced bullying on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey. Additionally, 19.9% of students (male and female) seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months before the survey.

The impacts of bullying on adolescents include mental and physical consequences such as:

Low self- esteem:

Victims of bullying can feel constantly insecure feeling unaccepted, isolated, angry, and may resort to self-harm. Victims also find it hard to build new friendships due to their fear of being vulnerable and hurt.
(Citation 31)

Prone to physical injury:

The physical impacts of bullying can be immediate, involving injuries from physical abuse and fights.



Sleep disturbances:

Victims of bullying often have difficulty getting enough quality sleep due to an increase in stress hormones in the body.



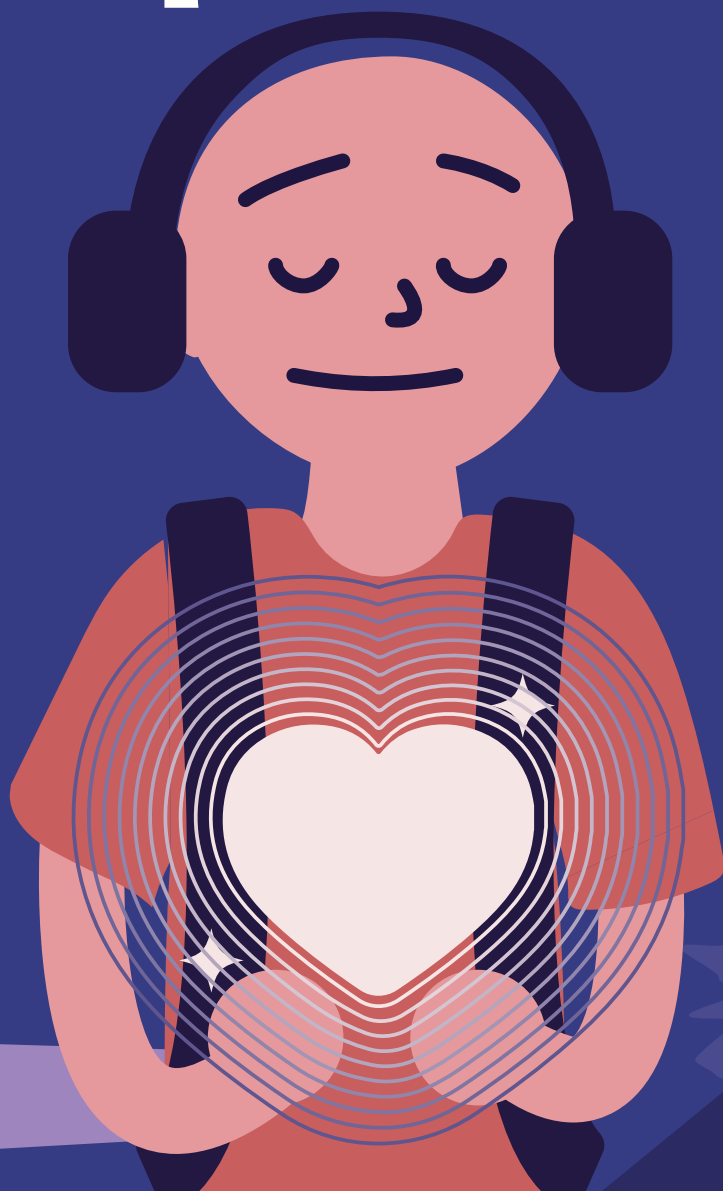
Trauma:

Victims of bullying tend to constantly be in fight-or-flight mode due to psychological trauma. Studies found that people who were victims of childhood bullying have a high risk of developing mental health issues in adulthood such as anxiety disorders, depression and suicidal tendencies. (Citation 31)

It is important to address the subject of bullying early in schools to prevent further normalization of bully culture. If you or anyone you know is a victim of bullying, it is very important to seek help from a school counselor.

✦ **You may save your or someone else's life.** ✦

Why students' mental health is important



Research has shown that students who struggle to manage academic stress tend to do poorly in their studies, have low well-being and are at higher risk of developing severe anxiety disorder and depression. Conversely, students with a better grasp on mental health care show higher compassion in schools and foster resilience in their academic and personal life.

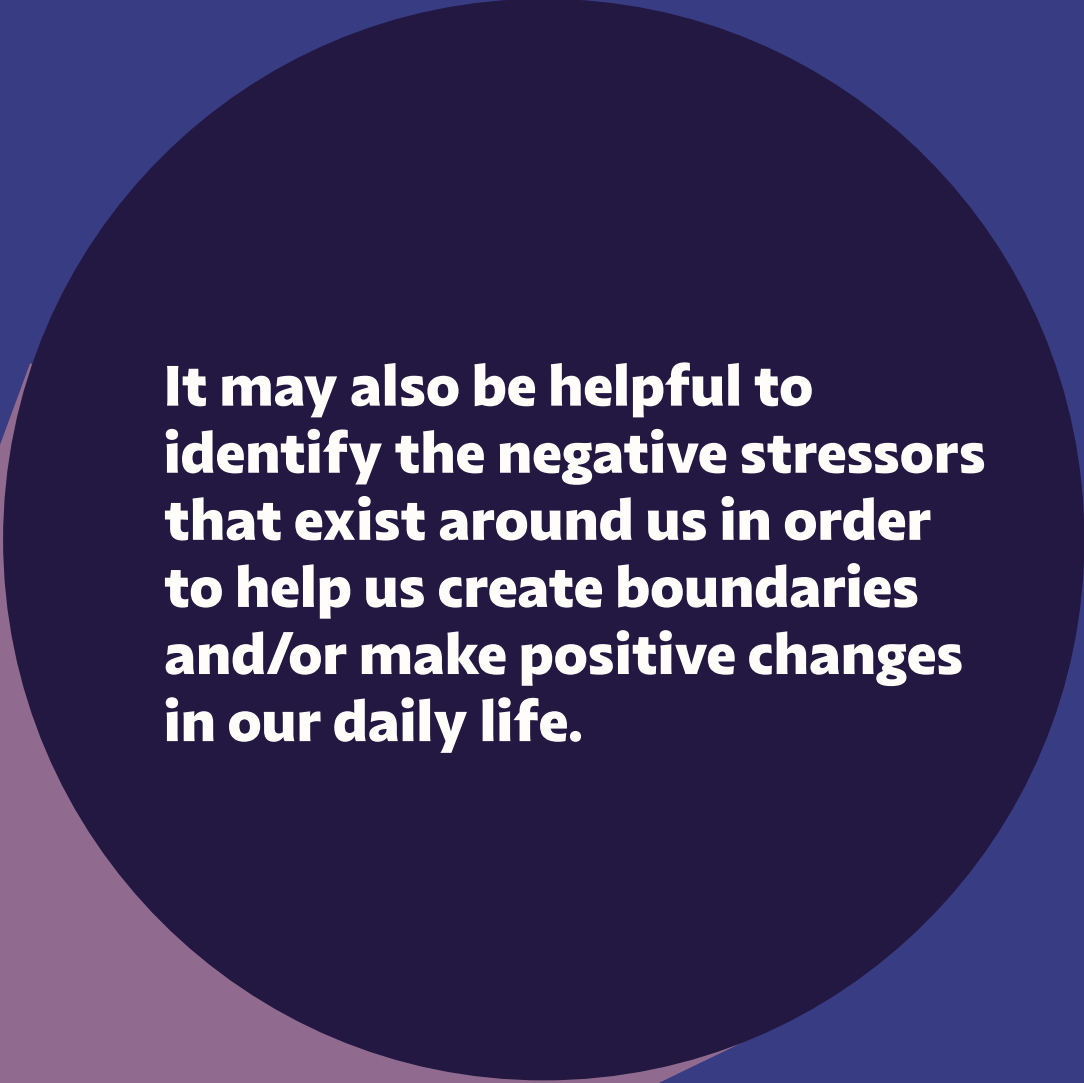
Research also shows that good mental health and well-being in students is associated with increased learning, creativity and productivity. It also encourages pro-social behavior (helping others), foster healthy relationships; improve physical health and overall life expectancy. (Citation 6)



Taking care of your mental health may be as simple as adapting small changes to your daily routine in order to build a healthier lifestyle.

A key aspect of taking care of your own mental health is self-awareness.

Self-awareness helps you to understand how your surroundings make you feel – which can then inform you about your needs.



It may also be helpful to identify the negative stressors that exist around us in order to help us create boundaries and/or make positive changes in our daily life.



Without self-awareness, these stressors can sometimes go unnoticed.

Overtime, the effects start to build up and may negatively affect our energy levels, mood, productivity, and motivation.

(These stressors are covered in page 24).





Mindfulness

**Being aware of mental
health stressors**



To be self-aware, we have to be able to pay attention to our thoughts, feelings and behaviours at any given moment. This process is called mindfulness – a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment while calmly acknowledging one's feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations.

The best way to improve our mindfulness is by practicing **mindful meditation**.





Studies have shown that meditation and mindfulness can help to alleviate anxiety and increase psychological well-being by building self-empathy.

Meditation has also been found to strengthen the part of the brain called the *prefrontal cortex*, which is associated with memory, focus, and emotional regulation. When you are aware of your own feelings, it is easier for you to manage them.

TIP: Make it a habit every day to check in with your feelings before or after school.

Step 1

Set aside 5 minutes before or after school to simply connect with your feelings and the present moment



Step 2

Focus on your breathing. Inhale through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. If your mind starts to wander, bring your focus back to your breaths. Repeat for a few cycles of inhale and exhale.



Step 3

Take in your immediate surroundings and engage with each of your five senses. What do you hear? What do you feel right now, at this moment? Try not to overthink on the past or worry about the future but be present in this current moment.



Step 4

Practice makes perfect. Keep practicing to build your mindfulness muscles.





Creating a meditation routine before school can help us start the day with mindfulness and be aware of our feelings, or after school to help us let go of any negative energy we have picked up throughout the day.





Journaling

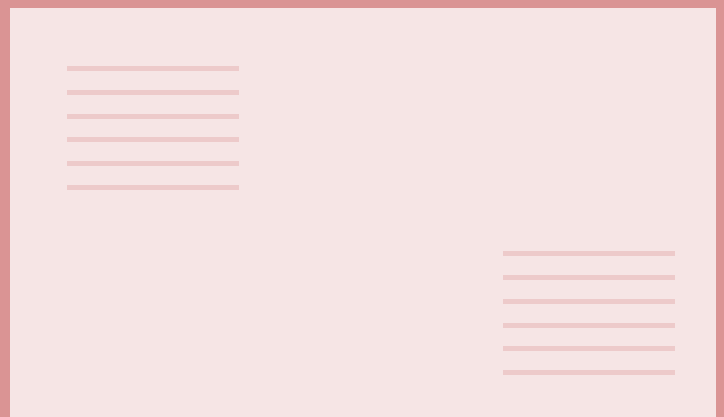
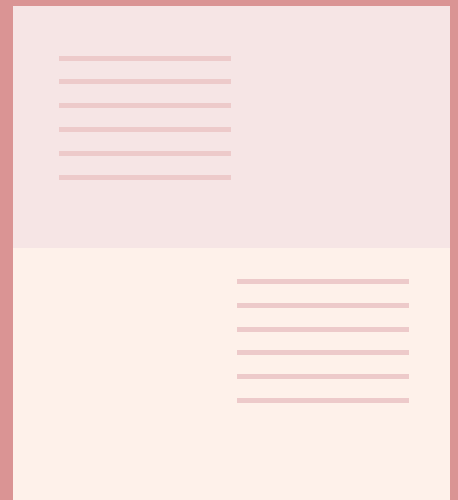
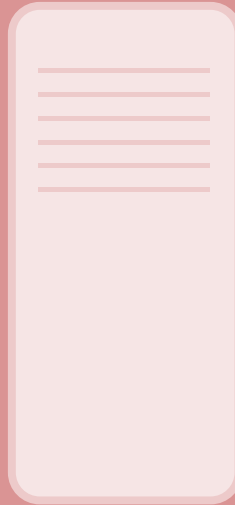
Putting our thoughts,
feelings and behaviour
on paper



Journaling template with horizontal lines for writing.

8PM

9.30PM



Journaling is a helpful tool to express yourself, understand complex emotions, and process unresolved emotions. Writing our thoughts, feelings and describing our behavior helps us develop awareness to change.

Journaling can be helpful when you want to better understand your past and make sense of your experiences. It can also help you become unstuck by providing clarity that leads to specific actions.



Studies have found that Positive Affect Journaling is associated with decreased mental distress and increased well-being. People who habitually journal were also associated with lesser depressive symptoms and increased resilience after one month.

Here are some tips on what to write about:

List out 3-5 areas of your strengths and how you can use them to overcome a specific obstacle.

"If my tears could talk, they would say..."

Record feelings of gratitude. List three things about today for which you are grateful.

"When I'm feeling emotionally overwhelmed, I can..."

You may also choose to look back on previous entries. Describe the progress you've made so far.



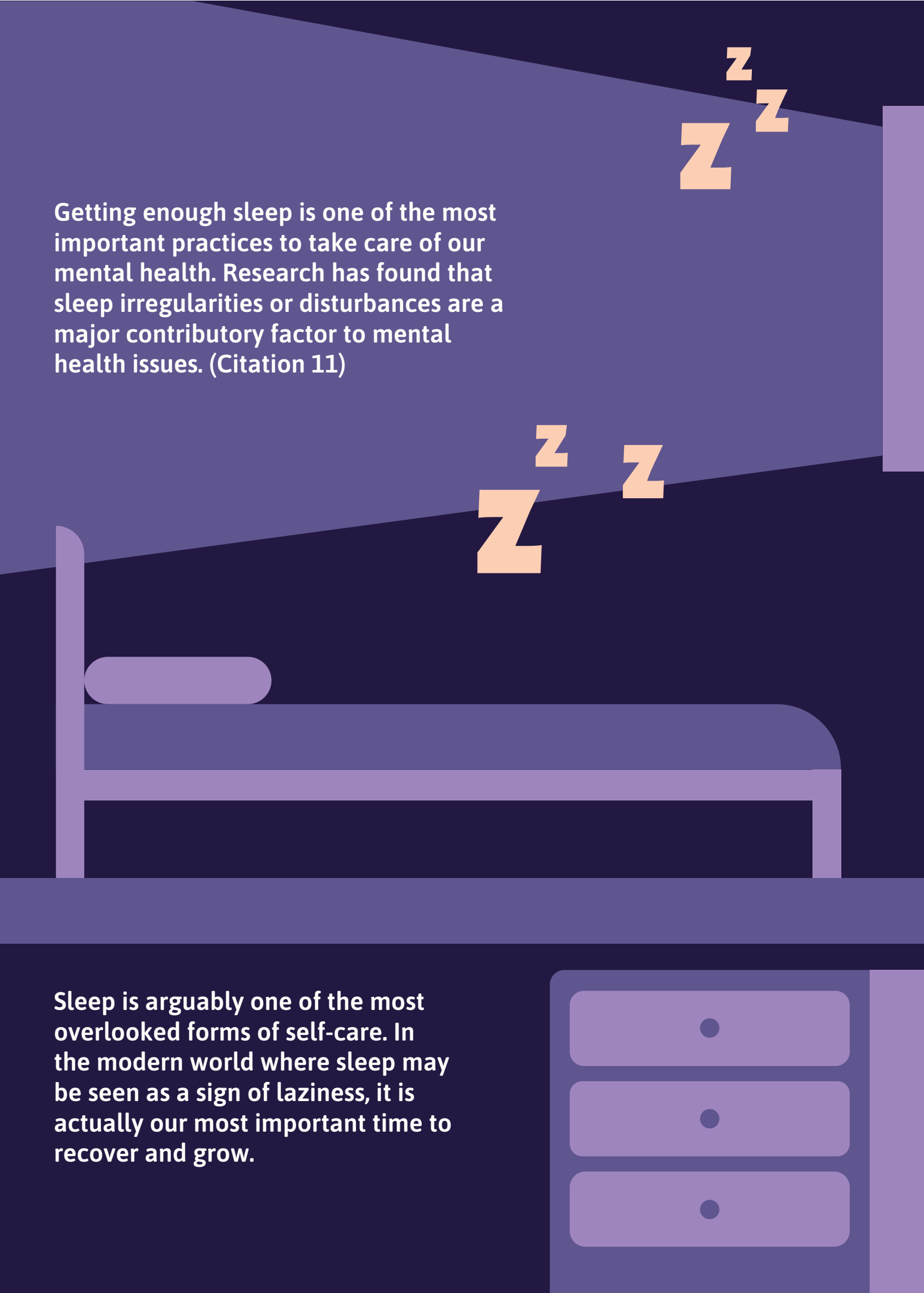
Overtime, when we make this into a habit, we can start to see how we have **grown stronger** and **more resilient** over the years. We can start to see that our weaknesses are not setbacks but an exciting opportunity for improvements!





Sleep

**Taking care of our
rest time**



Getting enough sleep is one of the most important practices to take care of our mental health. Research has found that sleep irregularities or disturbances are a major contributory factor to mental health issues. (Citation 11)

Sleep is arguably one of the most overlooked forms of self-care. In the modern world where sleep may be seen as a sign of laziness, it is actually our most important time to recover and grow.

Further studies have found that people who have lost significant amounts of sleep were associated with higher scores in mental health issues. Conversely, people that form healthy sleep hygiene had lower scores on mental health issues, and an increase in psychological well-being.



Here are some tips for good sleep hygiene, to help you get enough quality sleep of 7-9 hours nightly:

 Set a definite time for when to start preparing for bed.



 Meditate & Journal before bed to help prevent intrusive thoughts and feelings keeping you awake at night.



 Dim the lights as you prepare for bed.





- z^z** Keep the temperature of your room cool and comfortable.
- z^z** Put your phone and any other electronic devices on silent and far from your reach an hour before bed time. Using your phone for at least 30 minutes after lights have been turned off have been associated with poor sleep quality, daytime sleepiness, and sleep disturbances.
- z^z** Practice deep breathing exercises to help calm you before bed.
- z^z** Stay disciplined and stick to your bedtime.

Adopting good sleep hygiene routine can train your brain to sleep at the same time and give you enough mental and physical rest and recovery for the next day.





Exercise

**Strengthen the body,
strengthen the mind.**



We all know the benefits of exercise on our physical health, but how many of us know that it affects our mental health too? When we become physically active and strong, so does our brain and mind.

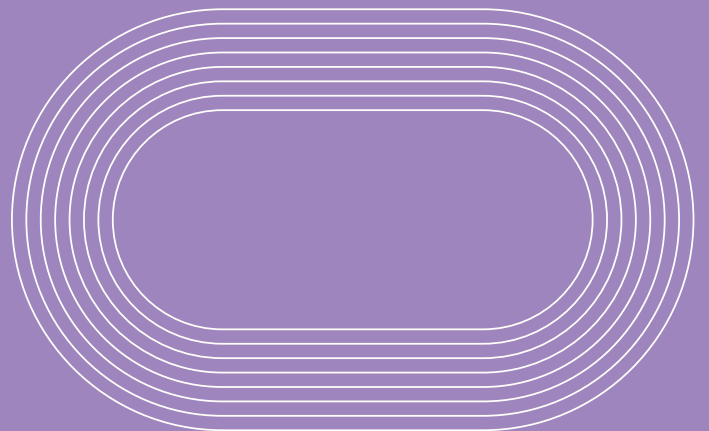
Research found that exercise improves mental health by improving self-esteem and reducing anxiety, depression, and negative moods. Moderate exercises such as yoga and brisk walking have been found to positively impact children with mental health conditions.

Even with a busy schedule, it is important to stay physically active. Although students have a set time for Physical Education during school hours, making exercise and movement a daily habit can have a great impact on our mental health.



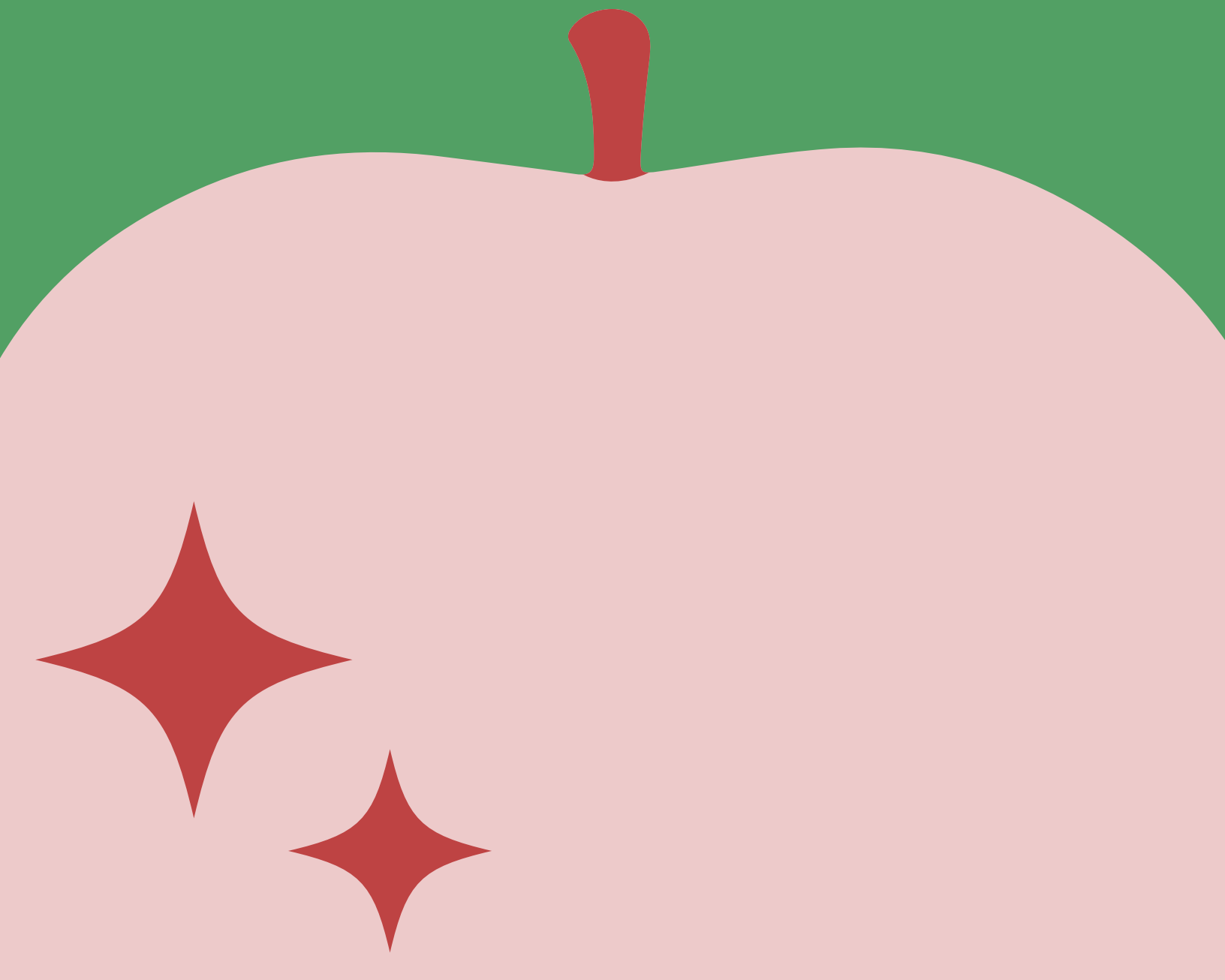
Here are some tips to stay physically active even with a busy school schedule

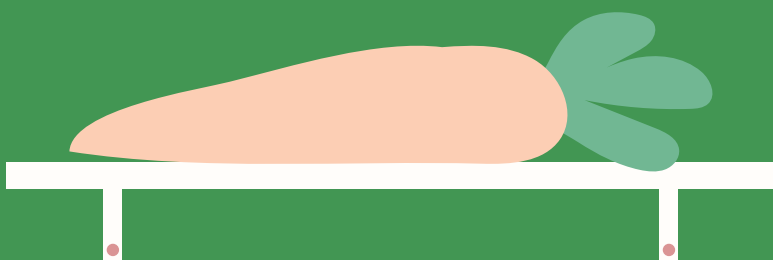
- ⚡ Make a goal to reach at least 10,000 steps each day. Walking and moving more is not physically straining and an easy way to get in your daily exercise
- ⚡ Learning a new sport can also increase motivation to learn and improve self-esteem
- ⚡ Join a sports after-school club or extra-curricular activity and get friends to join. Surrounding yourself with people of the same interests can make it easier and more fun to be active



Nutrition

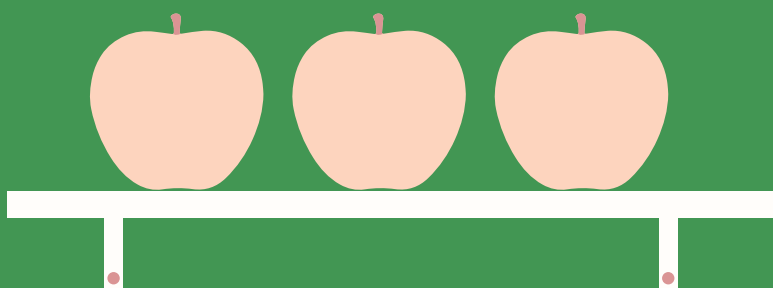
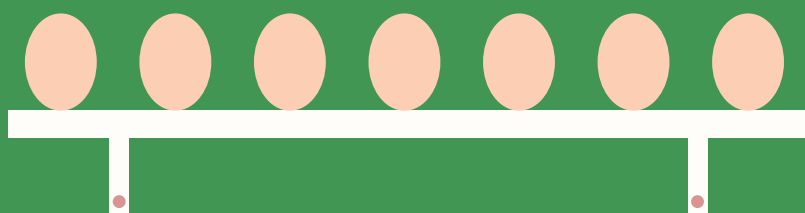
**Fuel for the brain
and mind**



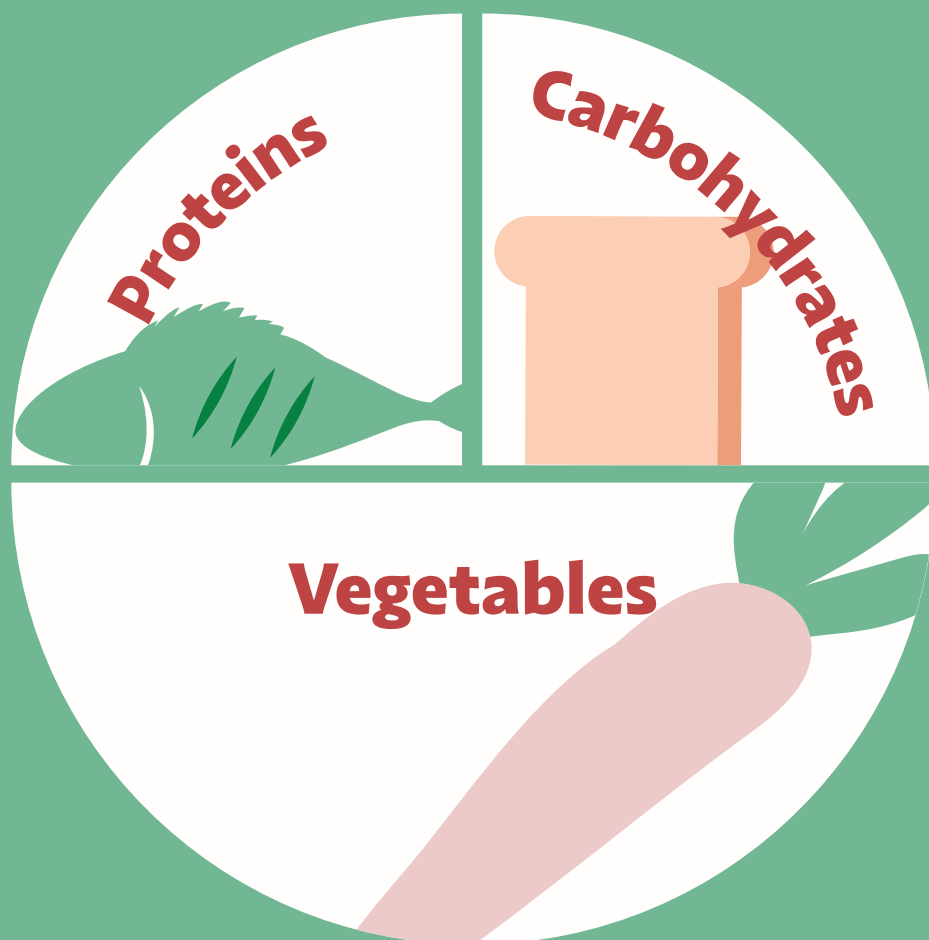


Healthy nutrition is another important aspect in achieving good mental health. What fuels our body is also what fuels our brain. Our brain is the processing centre for our body, and requires healthy food and nutrition in order to work at its best.

Research has found that a healthy and balanced diet – consuming high intakes of fruits, vegetables, nuts; moderate consumption of poultry, eggs, and dairy products; and reduced red meat intake, was associated with a **reduced risk of depression and other mental health issues.** (Citation 33)



Managing our meals and eating habits will help us better manage our moods and energy levels throughout the day.



Here are some tips to start building healthy eating habits and adding nutritious foods to your student life

Meal portions should follow the 'healthy plate' model, which is to have half of your plate for fruits and vegetables, a quarter of your plate for protein and the other quarter for carbohydrates.

Replace sugary snacks with healthier wholefoods that contain fibre and protein, such as fruits and nuts.

For every craving, try healthier alternatives:

Craving	Healthier Alternative
Sweets and chocolate	Dates & honey
Chocolate bar	Granola bar
High sugar drinks	Fresh fruit & vegetable Juice
Instant noodles	Home-cooked, low salt egg/rice noodles
Sweet & salty snacks	Almonds, sunflower seeds, walnuts, dates, prunes apples.
Sugary spreads	Low sugar, natural spreads (Cocoa spread / Almond spread)

Stay hydrated. Carry a reusable water bottle wherever you go. You can download apps that remind you to drink water every hour. Since the body is made of 70% water, it needs to be hydrated to stay energized.

Building a healthy eating habit takes time and consistency. It is important to take small consistent steps in your healthy eating journey. **Small progress is still progress.**

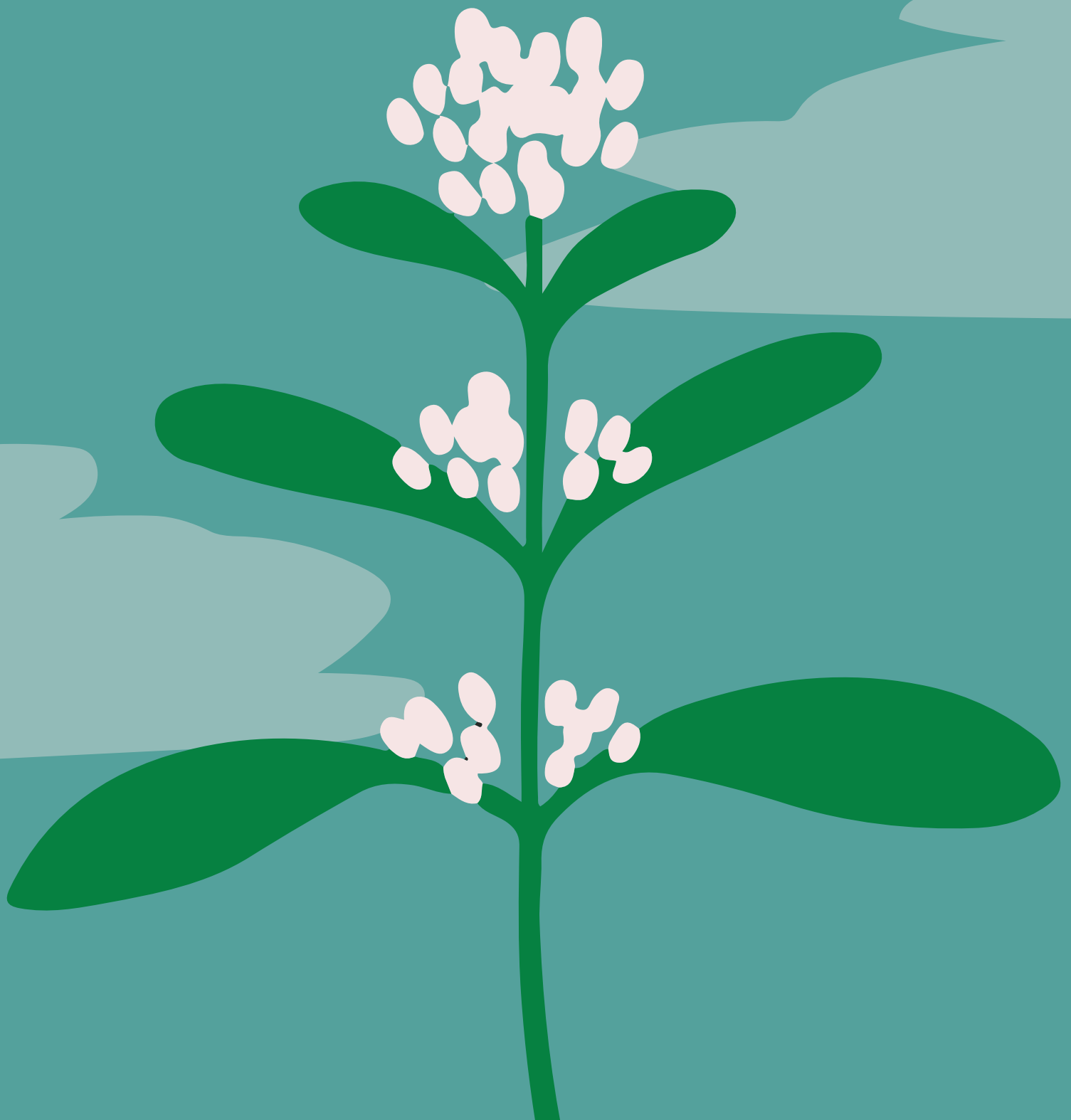


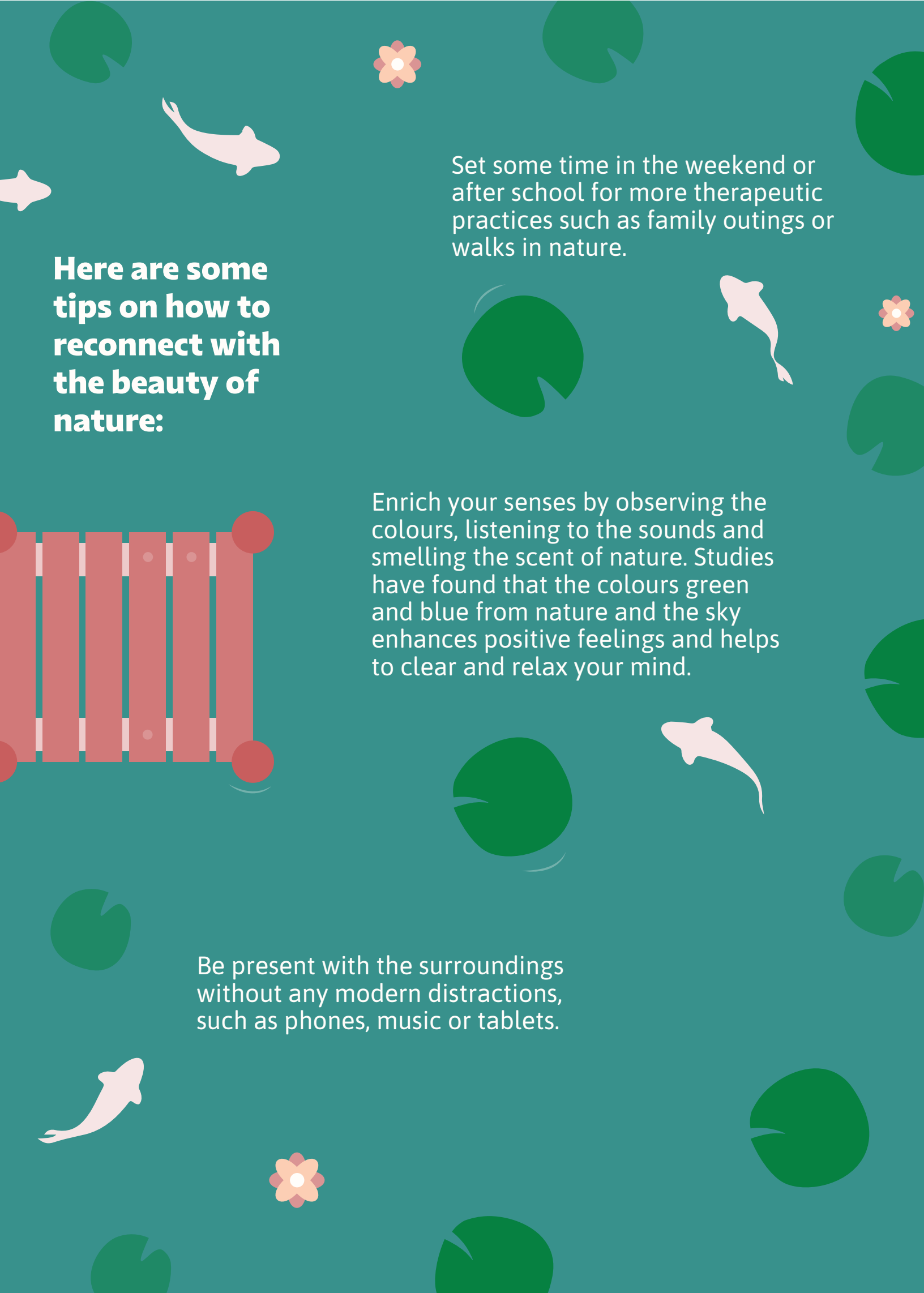
Surrounding yourself with nature

Exposing ourselves to nature has positive effects on our mind and mental health by bringing our attention to the stillness and calmness of nature.

Studies have found that “*forest bathing*”, or wandering in green nature, has **positive psychological effects** such as reducing blood pressure and heart rate, improved immunity, and alleviation of depressive and anxiety symptoms.

**Take some time to wander in nature to let
your mind take a break from the hectic
workload of school.**



The background is a solid teal color. It is decorated with several stylized green lily pads of different sizes, some with small white highlights. There are also several light pink fish swimming in different directions. Small, five-petaled flowers in shades of pink and orange are scattered throughout. On the left side, there is a graphic of a red wooden fence with vertical slats and rounded posts.

Here are some tips on how to reconnect with the beauty of nature:

Set some time in the weekend or after school for more therapeutic practices such as family outings or walks in nature.

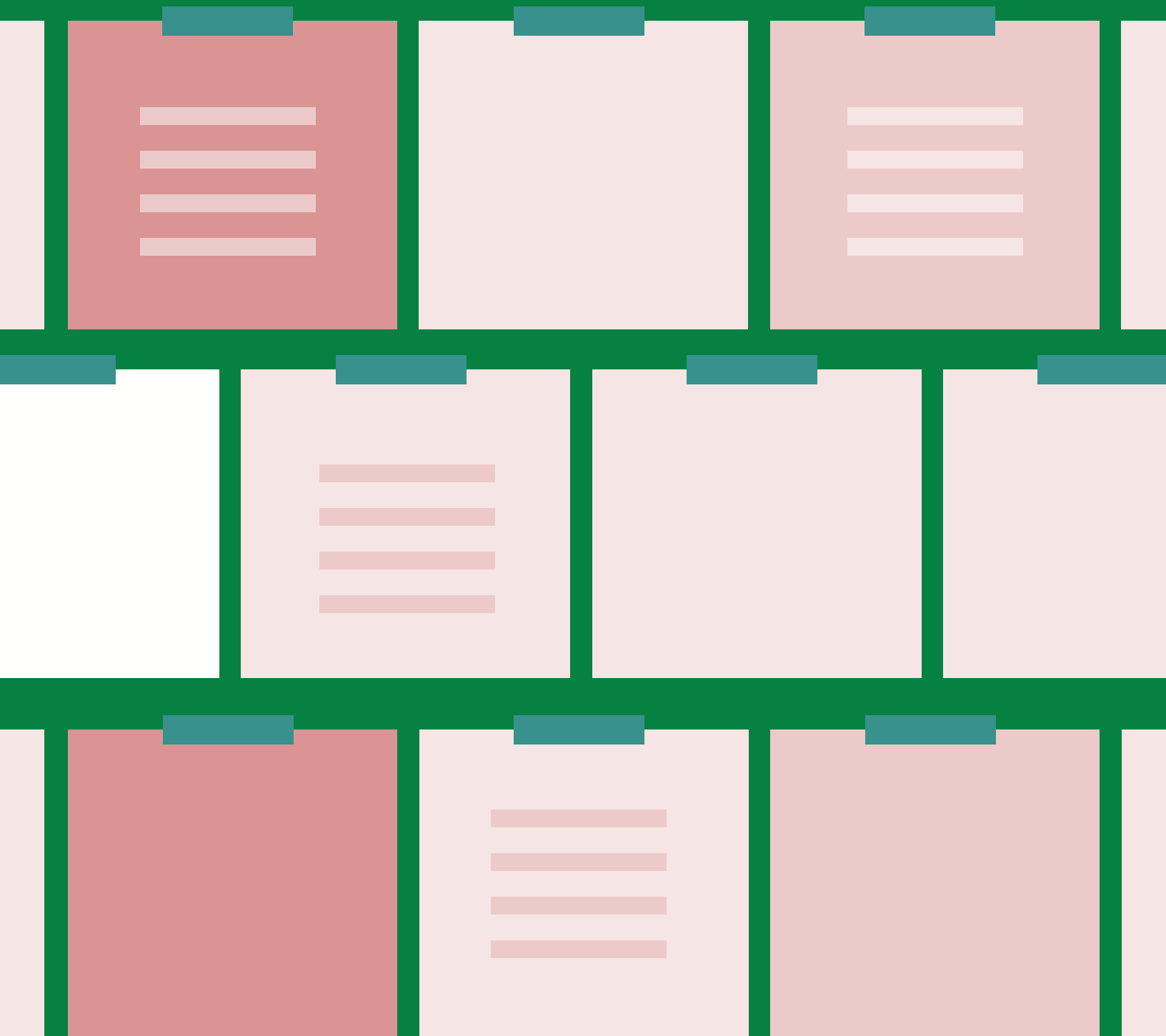
Enrich your senses by observing the colours, listening to the sounds and smelling the scent of nature. Studies have found that the colours green and blue from nature and the sky enhances positive feelings and helps to clear and relax your mind.

Be present with the surroundings without any modern distractions, such as phones, music or tablets.



Time Management

Scheduling work & rest



21:30

Wed
30

24°

Good time management helps to keep our disorganized, chaotic and muddled mind in check.

When we manage our time for work and for rest, we can better manage our energy and focus efficiently and effectively at tasks.

Studies showed that effective time management training has a positive correlation with alleviation of anxiety, depression and even sleep quality.



60%

WORK

With effective time management, we can start to set boundaries for when to work and when to rest and play.

We are then able to manage our expectations of ourselves and avoid burning out due to mental and physical exhaustion.

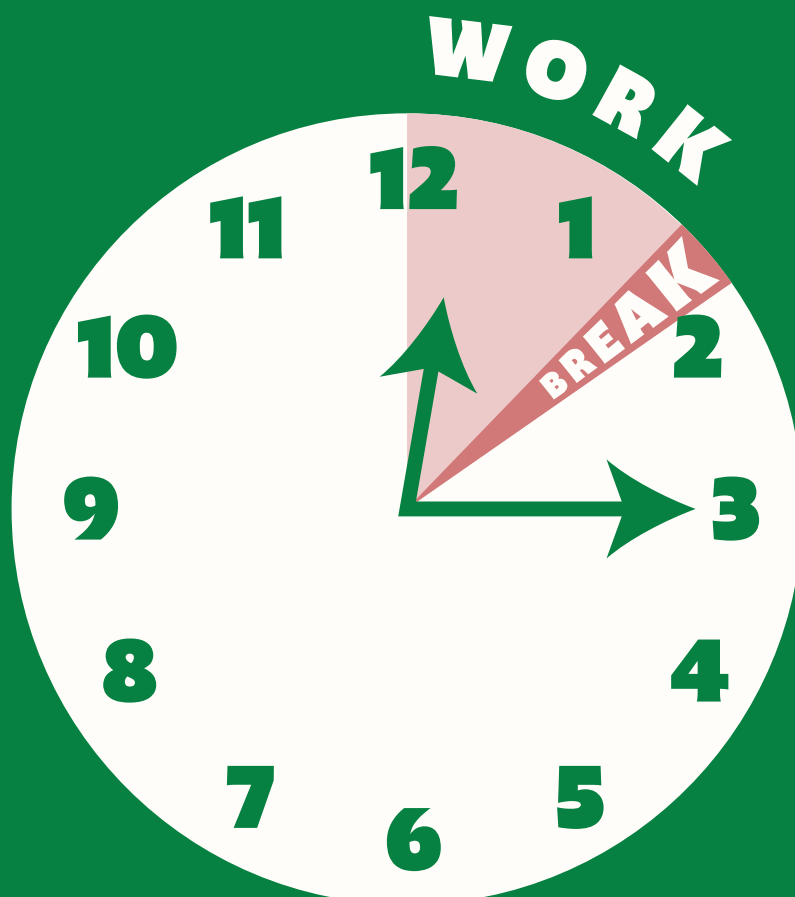
40%

PLAY

Here are some tips to implement effective time management in school:

Schedule your assignments & work needed throughout the week including weekends. Set up a plan for how many assignments are due this coming week and when to start working on it

Use the 'Pomodoro Technique' to help you stay focused on your tasks: Set a timer during focus sessions where you focus completely on the work at hand (25 minutes) and alternate that with bite-sized rests (5 minutes) to help increase productivity. Repeat this 25-5 minute cycle for 4 sets and give yourself a long break (25-50 mins) before starting over.





Social Support

Talking with someone

Having support from peers, friends, teachers and parents are important in taking care of our mental health. Studies have shown a strong positive correlation between the amount of social support a student receives and the quality of their mental health.

Social support whether from family, friends or a professional, has been found to provide benefits such as:



Emotional Awareness

The ability to be aware of negative feelings when they arise.



Emotional Regulation

The ability to control and alleviate negative emotions on their own.



Social Awareness

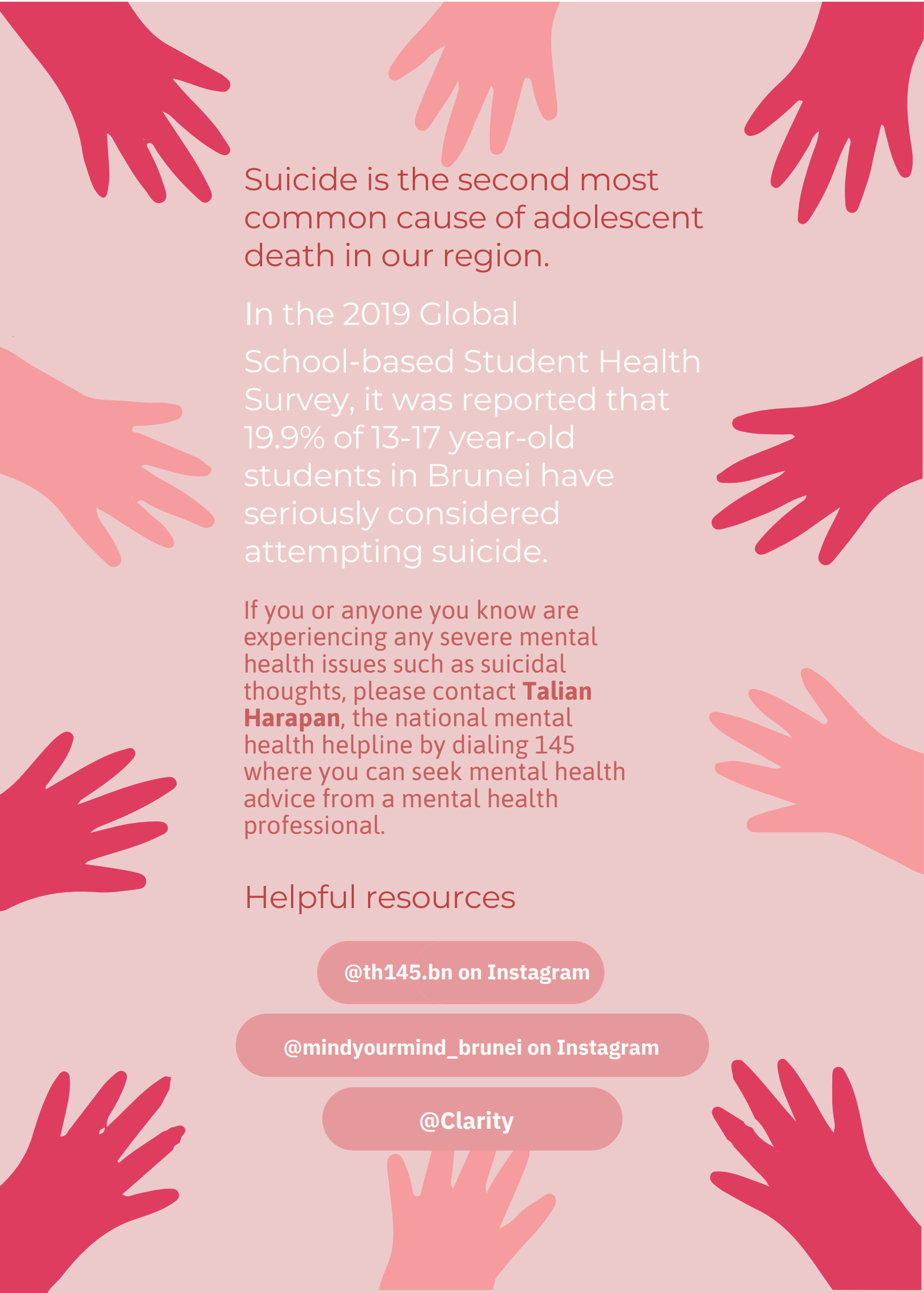
The ability to take the perspective of others and empathise with them.



If we cannot find friends or family that we trust with our feelings, it is important to consider seeking professional help such as with a school counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist.

Seeking help from a trusted professional can help us identify our blind spots that we can improve on.

The sooner we identify our challenges, the sooner we can overcome them and grow from them.

The background of the entire page is a light pink color. Scattered around the text are several stylized hands in two shades of pink: a darker magenta and a lighter rose. The hands are positioned as if they are reaching up towards the text, with some at the top corners and others at the bottom corners.

Suicide is the second most common cause of adolescent death in our region.

In the 2019 Global School-based Student Health Survey, it was reported that 19.9% of 13-17 year-old students in Brunei have seriously considered attempting suicide.

If you or anyone you know are experiencing any severe mental health issues such as suicidal thoughts, please contact **Talian Harapan**, the national mental health helpline by dialing 145 where you can seek mental health advice from a mental health professional.

Helpful resources

[@th145.bn on Instagram](#)

[@mindyourmind_brunei on Instagram](#)

[@Clarity](#)

Where To Seek Help For Mental Health Support

Go to the nearest government health centre and speak to a General Practitioner (GP) who will make a referral to see a Psychologist or Psychiatrist upon initial assessment.

*Clinical & Community Psychology Services
4th Floor and 6th Floor, Block 2G, Ong Sum Ping
Condominium
+673 7212697
+673 8699614*

*Psychiatry Services
Spg 253-79, Kg Kiarong, Jln Gadong
+673 2454644 (Adult Outpatient)
+673 2425090 (Child & Adolescent Outpatient)*

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The Joint Initiative for the Wellbeing of All (JIWA) is dedicated to providing awareness and promoting quality education on social issues such as mental health as one of its strategic goals in line with the country's values, mission and vision.

Some of our on-going projects include:

Road to Wellness Podcast

Understanding the Causes of Depression and Anxiety Disorder

Community Wellness Blog

At JIWA, We aim to share everyone's stories on their struggles in life including mental health. These stories are from people of different backgrounds committed to sharing hope to those that might go through the same. Spend as little as 3 minutes of reading on our wellness blog where we continuously post content on how to live well

Newsletter

Subscribe to our email list on our website where you can be part of the JIWA community! We share monthly updates on our projects, and events that you all can are invited to!

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