



mind matters

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KawanBAH
Careline

Mind Matters, You Matter

Perspectives on Mental Health
Amongst Malaysian Youth

Project By

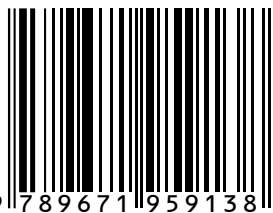


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THE UNSEEN EPIDEMIC

**A Foreword by
Dato' Shahira Ahmed Bazari**

Trustee & Managing Director
of Yayasan Hasanah



YAYASAN
HASANAH

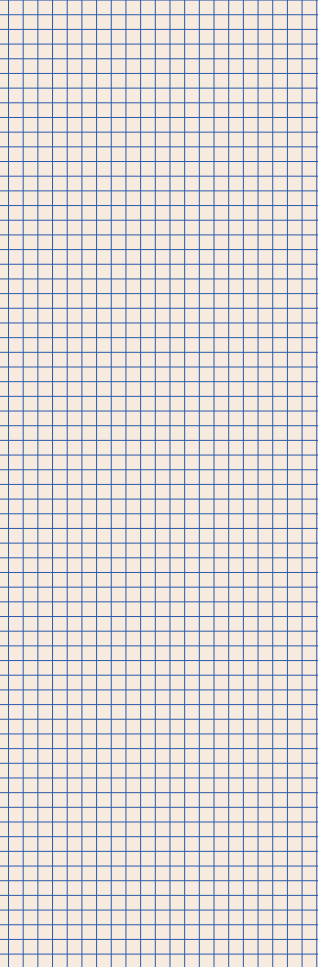


A foundation of Khazanah Nasional

In Malaysia, an invisible epidemic is silently spreading among our youth – one that urgently calls for intervention. As a grant-making foundation with Education as one of our core focus areas, we recognise that excellence can only thrive within a nurturing environment.

Our youth, who embody the essence of our nation's future, deserve our unwavering commitment to their holistic growth. Collectively, it is time we accept that empowering youth necessitates prioritising the protection of their mental well-being in addition to everything else in their hierarchical pyramid of needs – safety, physiology and belonging.

According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019, one in five Malaysians aged sixteen and above suffer from mental health issues. Among youths in Malaysia, this is especially prevalent among vulnerable groups and young law offenders. These youths face multiple stressors:



poverty, discrimination, trauma, and social isolation, that collectively puts them at higher risk of developing long term mental health problems. And this was all before the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. If anything, things have only escalated since.

A more recent finding from research commissioned by Yayasan Hasanah highlighted the more alarming extent of this unseen epidemic.

The 2022 survey by International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) among 960 Malaysian youth aged 10 to 19 revealed startling trends. The results showed that almost 1 in every 2 adolescents experience anxiety symptoms, while 1 in every 3 adolescents experience stress and depressive symptoms. This is an increase of 10 percent in depression and anxiety, and 20 percent in stress levels, as compared to the National Health and Morbidity Survey from 2017. To compound things, the survey found that inadequate diagnosis and treatment has led to negative outcomes such as poor classroom attendance, low academic performance, and other socio-behavioural issues.

There is no sugarcoating it – the challenges of modern life have made depression, anxiety, and stress unwelcome companions in the daily lives of our youths. In addition, the prevalence of suicidal ideation has surged, with loneliness affecting a significant portion of our youth population. Other clinical diagnoses, such as mood disorders and eating disorders, add to the unseen mix affecting our social fabric.

The time to intervene is now, especially for vulnerable youths who may face additional barriers to accessing adequate care and support.

Fortunately, today, there is already a growing awareness of the importance of children's and adolescents' mental health. Efforts to provide support, such as counsellors and peer assistance programs, have improved over the years. While commendable initiatives within educational institutions like the National Strategic Plan for Mental Health and various school-based interventions exist, we must also acknowledge that mental health begins within the family. Thus, it is crucial to empower parents with the

knowledge and skills required to genuinely understand their children; and foster a compassionate home environment with clear and effective two-way communication.

Having said that, awareness programmes and mindful parenting are not enough. We also need to collaborate to remove barriers to mental health services. Clinical and community-based interventions are a must to address the hidden challenges that often remain undisclosed. This is crucial to bridge the gap between existing programs and the real-life experiences of individuals at the grassroots level.

Today, Yayasan Hasanah, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, actively supports 15 mental health programmes across Malaysia. These initiatives encompass various interventions, including improved access to mental health screening, support services, psychosocial peer support, and emotional resilience training—some integrated with entrepreneurship skills. Through partnerships with organisations like Good Shepherd Services, Yayasan Hasanah's impact reaches diverse communities in urban and rural areas, including the Orang Asli community, 'mental health frontliners' in schools, such as counsellors and peer support youths (Pembimbing Rakan Sebaya), parents, as well as young law offenders ready to reintegrate into society.

Overcoming the barrier of parental support and consent for young people to access mental health resources also requires the implementation of appropriate policies and pathways. It is essential to navigate the process ethically, ensuring that boundaries are not crossed while providing youths with the help they need.

Rallying the strengths of partners from the public, private and social sectors, Yayasan Hasanah is committed to dismantle barriers, challenge stigma, and pave the way towards a better future for our youths. Far from a passing phase, mental health is a crucial conversation that must be translated into meaningful action.



MESSAGE

by **Chin Poh Choo**

Executive Director of
Good Shepherd Services



All stories matter. This “coffee table book” features an easy read collection of compelling stories about the lived experiences of programme participants from our mental health and well-being project themed “Mind Matters; You Matter”. Collectively, their stories have established a common call to challenge us to promote greater openness, cultivate empathy and deepen our understanding, conversation and practice to normalise mental health.

For us at Good Shepherd Services, this pioneering three year “Mind Matters; You Matter” initiative, implemented in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, marked our first step towards breaking the silence and stigma of mental health. Besides normalising mental health conversations among 14 institutions of higher learning in Sabah, the project also focused on strengthening the much-needed support system for vulnerable youths. Such interventions included the establishment of mental health kiosk youth-driven enterprises, college food banks and importantly, the development of “KawanBAH”, a careline support to text or call in.

Sharing one’s mental health journey takes courage. Although the pandemic has accelerated positive awareness momentum and softened public perceptions towards mental health, it remains a topic that continues to be cloaked in shame. By courageously sharing their stories in this CTB, these young adults believe that their insights will alleviate fear and ignorance All

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This CTB, which is a collective representation of our commitment and advocacy to destigmatise and address mental health challenges for youth, has been the labour of many. We are grateful to the Ministry of Finance -Yayasan Hasanah for their funding support through the Hasanah Special Grant which catalysed and sustained our involvement in this much-need cause for the past three years.

- This project successfully established a Mental Health Club in five community colleges and nine private tertiary institutions spread across five districts: Beaufort, Kota Kinabalu, Kota Marudu, Penampang, and Tambunan, with a total of 459 members.

- A careline (KawanBAH) was launched on 16 July 2020, providing a platform for youth to acknowledge and discuss their personal mental health and well-being.
- Garnered 95,381 responses through mental health advocacy programmes, such as inter-institutional campaigns, public service announcements, and radio programmes.
- An Action Plan, 'Pelan Tindakan Mempromosikan Kesihatan Mental Kakitangan dan Rehat di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi', was launched on 26 September 2022, which served as a framework to assist institutions in developing initiatives adaptable to different environments to promote mental health and well-being.
- 10 mental health radio segments aired on Kupu Kupu FM and Sabah Vfm in various languages, namely Bahasa Melayu, Kadazan, Dusun, Murut, and Bajau.
- 11 mental health kiosks were established, along with a Mind Matters self-assessment App.
- 3 studies regarding Youth & Mental Health, and Urban Poverty Among Youth were conducted.
- 11,177 youth received provisions of food.
- 23 entrepreneurship initiatives were implemented for the Belia Berbisnes Bah! programme.

To all the programme participants and key stakeholders who continue to be an important part of an on-going dialogue, thank you. Special thanks to Jason Lim and Arthur Lee for generously sharing their creative talents to create this inspiring CTB.

Stories have the power to influence, be it for oneself or to benefit others. To all the CTB contributors who have given new hope to shifting perspectives and combating stigma, our deepest gratitude. This CTB would not have been possible without your generosity of self in sharing your story, struggles and recovery.

Read, enjoy and share your story....

YOU WON'T BREAK MY SOUL 🙊

From the heartlands of East Malaysia where mental health issues have long been relegated to the shadows, a new generation of survivors and advocates are emerging. They are our hope for the future, armed with an unwavering commitment to change the narrative surrounding mental health within their communities.

Here are their stories.

Story 1

WHAT'S IN A NAME? 🤔

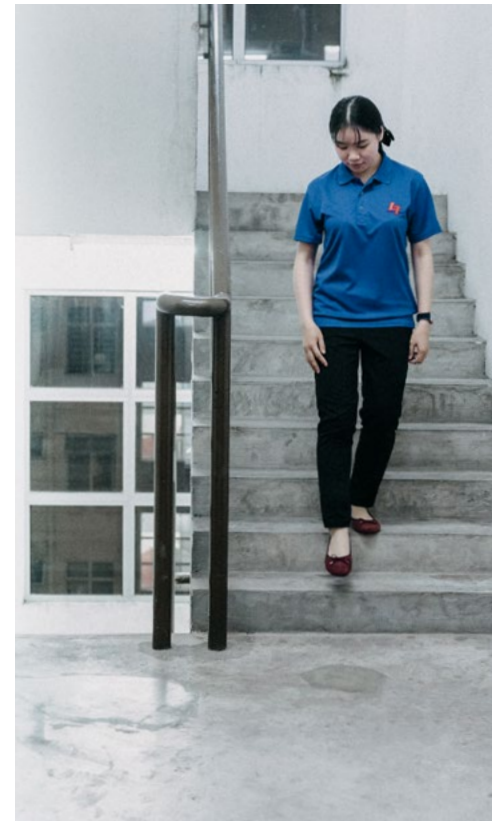
Milka Bonong

24 | Student of Cosmopoint College

Bachelor of Accounting

To name a child is to encapsulate your hopes and dreams for their future, pinning upon them a deeply personal, familial and cultural connection that becomes an integral part of their identity. Our name gives us a sense of who we are, the communities to which we belong and our place in the world. Related to the Hebrew word for “queen”, the name Milka means “industrious” and “gracious” in Old Slavic—all qualities that 24-year-old Milka Bonong embodies.

A student of Accounting at Cosmopoint College, Milka has already endured more hardship than most will ever encounter in an entire lifetime. After losing her mother at the tender age of six, Milka and her siblings were sent to live with family in Papar, Sabah while her father worked in Singapore. There, they were separated and shuffled between various relatives who would not hesitate to make the children feel like an unwanted burden. As the oldest child and the daughter who most resembled her late mother, Milka bore the brunt of her family’s ire, enduring various forms of abuse and often receiving scoldings and beatings on behalf of her younger siblings.





Her troubled and unstable home life led to a mental breakdown, a suicide attempt and severe anxiety and panic attacks. In 2018, Milka grasped the reins of her life and moved away from the family, determined to secure her own future and to build her own happiness. Then the pandemic struck, enforcing a nationwide movement control order and with it, a whole new set of stressors. But despite every hurdle and all the blows life has dealt, Milka's faith and fortitude gives her the strength to keep moving forward. She wears positivity as her armour, and wields kindness as her sword.

"Many people who have been hurt often want to retaliate in kind, to have others feel what they have felt. But through my faith, I have learned to accept that even when people make mistakes, they are still capable of change," she says. "I do not wish my own experiences on anyone; instead, I choose to see and believe in the best in people. I choose not to dwell on the things I cannot change, and to focus instead on things that bring me joy. I love to read, to sing and dance and whenever possible, to help others in need."

The hardships Milka has suffered through has made her more adept at turning pain into positivity as a way of finding strength and hope in difficult situations. Even with all odds stacked against her, Milka chooses to focus on the good that exists in this world, softening her anger into forgiveness and turning all the hurts of her past into empathy and compassion. Her unwillingness to allow the trauma of her past to dictate her future is true testament to her good nature, her resilience and her grace. It is, after all, in the name her parents gave her.



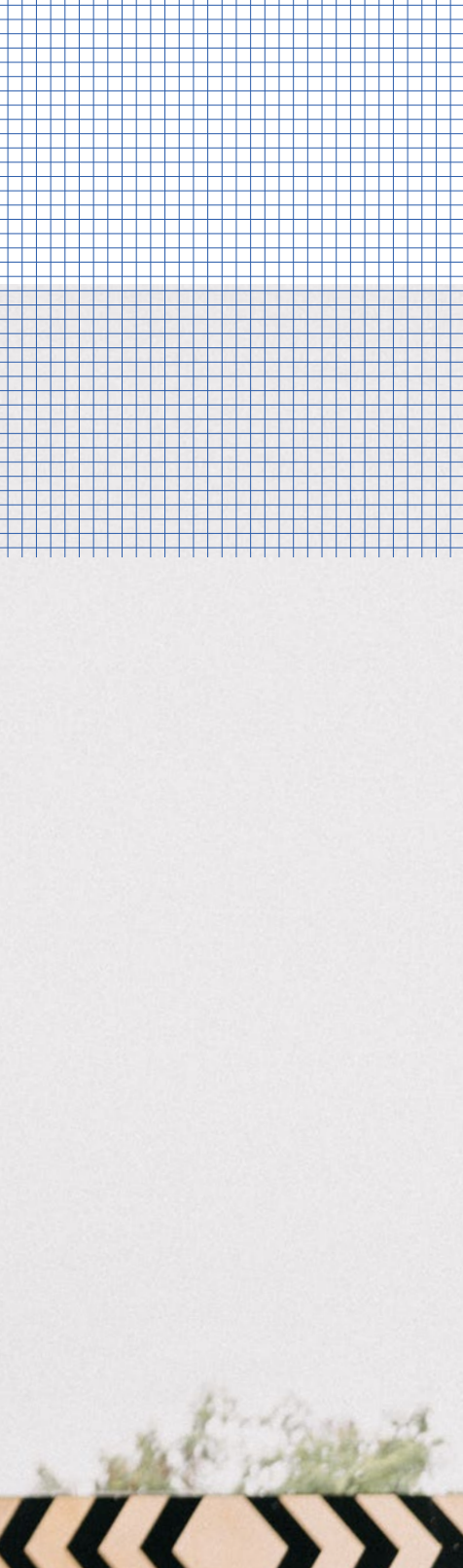
ONLY THE GENTLE ARE EVER REALLY STRONG 🦵

Duane Iranaeus Donatus Justin

22 | Student of UNIRAZAK

Bachelor of Education Majoring in English

From a very young age, Duane Justin exhibited a deep sensitivity to the world around him, finding solace and joy in creative pursuits such as drawing, reading and singing. These artistic outlets became his refuge, allowing Duane to express himself authentically and without fear of judgement. He describes himself as “emotional”, stating that it is both his greatest strength and his greatest weakness—a quality that rendered him vulnerable to the cruelty and harsh reality of the world.



In the narrow halls of high school, any deviation from the norm is feared without reason, becoming immediate fodder for the herd and like blood in the water, his sensitivity and creativity quickly drew the attention of the school bullies. He was picked and pranked on badly enough that he deemed quitting school as the only escape from his tormentors. Though not suicidal, he lost his will to live, going through each day in a state of emotional inertia. His grades began to suffer and Duane started playing hooky, cutting class to avoid the merciless and incessant bullying. In a pivotal moment, it would be his father who uncovered Duane's misery by coming across a group chat in which his classmates subjected him to cruel attacks.

Dismayed, his father brought the issue to the headmaster to the school's headmaster seeking justice for Duane's suffering. Things improved incrementally, as Duane's father tried his best to help his son through the darkest days of his young life by motivating him to finish school. He offered financial incentives for academic excellence, promising monetary rewards for every 'A' achieved and though well-intentioned, the approach addressed the symptom but not the underlying emotional turmoil.

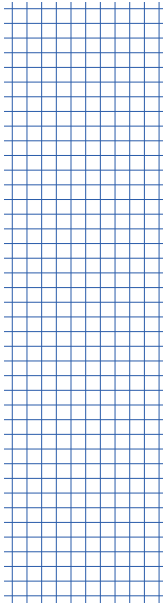
Duane persevered, finishing high school and gaining acceptance into UNIRAZAK where he is close to completing his Bachelor of Education, majoring in English. He has sought counselling services and is an active member of the Mind Matters programme, which he was drawn to when he realised that its primary focus was on mental health issues. Though he says he didn't necessarily get what he wanted out of counselling, Duane has steered his life onto a much better path.



Despite all the hurdles life has thrown at him, Duane chooses everyday to put one foot in front of the other and to focus on what lies ahead. He fantasises about a bright and happy future: dreaming of the travel he will embark on and the sights he will see, the dream house he will one day live in and the love he hopes to find.

Duane's journey is a testament to the power of authenticity and hope, illustrating how one can rise above challenging circumstances and discover inner strength through self-acceptance and the promise of a brighter future.

"I'm really proud of myself today, simply for being here. To be able to get through this interview, and to be able to continue with life," he says. "Life is short, and will eventually end for all of us. While I'm at it, I'm going to make mine a happy one."



Story 3

WHAT LURKS BENEATH



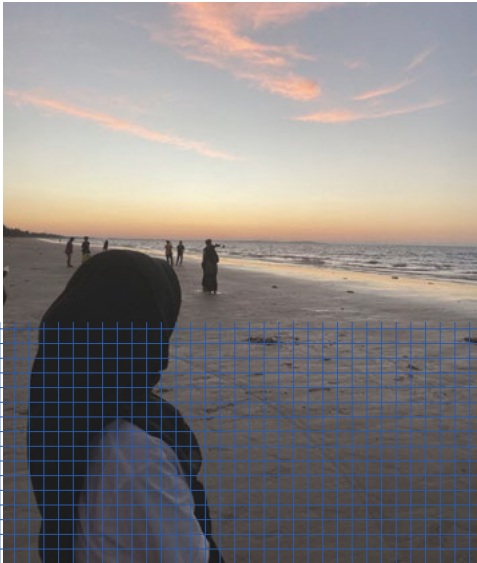
Nur Irfa Farisha

19 | Student of Kolej Komuniti Kora Marudu
Certificate in Building Maintenance

Hailing from picturesque Beaufort, 19 year old Nur Irfa Farisha has always been known for her friendly, happy-go-lucky nature. To her family and friends, her infectious warm and open smile seemed like a permanent fixture yet beneath the unbreakable exterior, a storm raged silently. Despite her cheerful facade, she felt profoundly alone with nobody to turn to, no one who would listen. Irfa's life took an unexpected turn at the age of 15, as anxiety and depression crept into her world. The absence of a listening ear or a compassionate heart weighed heavily on her, causing Irfa to self-isolate, hiding her anger and frustration and fearing that revealing her struggles would expose her own vulnerability. As the darkness set in, sinister voices whispered to her urging her to end her own life.

She suffered a panic attack—a worrisome enough event that prompted her teacher to refer Irfa to a hospital for treatment. Working with a counsellor and a therapist, Irfa embarked on a challenging journey towards recovery,





undergoing three months of professional treatment that equipped her with the tools and coping mechanisms to face her anxiety and depression head-on. Even while going through treatment her family and friends refused to acknowledge her struggles, with attempts to communicate her feelings often leading to dismissal and ridicule.

“Most people didn’t believe me. They said, ‘Be serious, how can you feel like that when you are such a happy-go-lucky person? How can you have these kinds of feelings? You must be lying.’ Their constant advice was for me to ignore it, to not talk about it,” Irfa shares. The stigma surrounding mental health issues in her community were as formidable as her struggles, with lack of awareness and understanding giving rise to harmful misconceptions and discrimination. Many erroneously believed that mental health problems equated to ‘madness’ and as Irfa was not ‘mad’ then perhaps she was merely seeking attention.

The prevailing attitudes within her community silence individuals like Irfa, trapping them in their own suffering. Her journey became a battle not only against her internal demons but against societal norms that perpetuated the culture of silence surrounding mental health issues. Her bright smile masked a hidden pain that underscores the vital importance of checking in on people, regardless of how happy they may seem.

Now a student at Kolej Komuniti Kota Marudu, Irfa is working on obtaining a certificate in Building Maintenance. She is also an active member of the mental health club in her college, helping to run and organise programmes for the Mind Matters project. She is determined to use her voice to help dismantle the walls of stigma and discrimination that

have kept too many in silence. Her story carries a profound message: that appearances can be deceiving. Irfa's journey is a powerful reminder of the significance of reaching out and checking in on those around us, as even the brightest smiles can hide the heaviest burdens. "How are you?" Three simple words that can make a world of difference.





Story 4

LISTEN

Richeal Sinam

31 | Student of Kolej Komuniti Penampang
Degree in Business Operations

Mental health issues exist on a spectrum: not always easily recognised; sometimes subtler and more nuanced but just as pervasive and debilitating. Its complexities highlight the fact that just because a person may not have been clinically diagnosed with a mental illness does not mean that their mental health is flourishing.

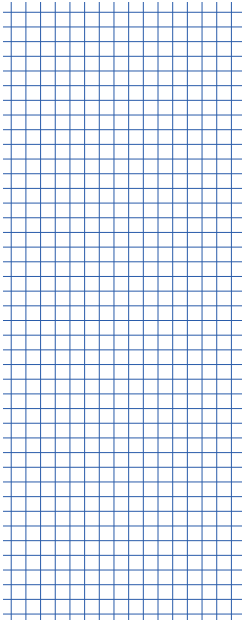


Born into a large family of nine siblings, Richeal Sinam occupies the role of the youngest, with a staggering 21-year age gap between her and her oldest brother. Richeal and her siblings were raised in a strict household, characterised by discipline but lacking in affection and emotional support. As the youngest, she often felt unheard and overlooked by her parents and older siblings—an experience that profoundly affected her sense of self-worth and ability to communicate her needs and emotions.

Upon completing her high school education, Richeal harboured dreams of flying the coop to further her studies in college but in a cruel twist of fate, her parents were unable to afford her fees due to financial constraints. Devastated and feeling rejected, she isolated herself and stopped speaking for weeks until her father explained the situation to her, helping her to accept the unfortunate situation.

Never losing sight of her dreams and proving that one is never too old to be a student, Richeal is now undertaking a degree in Business Operations at Kolej Komuniti Penampang at the age of 31. Alongside her studies, she runs a printing service within her college and works as a data entry clerk during her semester breaks. After once having the college experience denied to her, Richeal is determined to seize every opportunity that tertiary education has to offer. She serves as a representative for both her college and the student body, using her voice as a powerful instrument to amplify the concerns and aspirations of her peers.

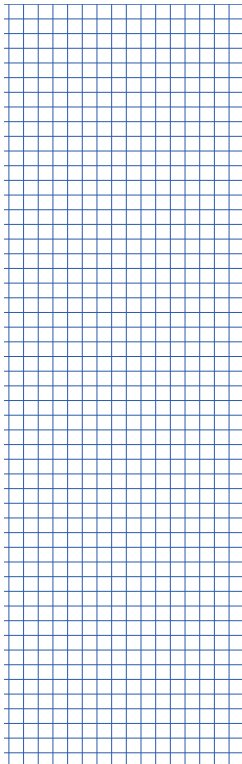
A significant turning point in Richeal's life was the untimely passing of her father. The tragic event had a profound impact on her family, prompting them to reevaluate their priorities and communication patterns. Through this adversity, they





grew closer, becoming a more supportive and connected unit and offering Richeal newfound emotional sustenance.

When asked what her life's biggest lesson has been thus far, she responds with: "Despite whatever challenges life throws at you, know that you are not alone. Don't be so hard on yourself and remember that there is always someone who will listen." Underneath her quiet and unassuming exterior lies a core made of bravery, empathy and compassion, as despite her many struggles, Richeal has made it her life's mission to extend the kindness and support that eluded her during her formative years. Her experiences have instilled in her a deep desire to help others and to provide the kind of compassionate and empathetic presence that she longed for but rarely received. Her commitment to education, her advocacy for her peers and her aspiration to provide the support she was never shown speaks volumes for the resounding strength and generosity of her spirit.





Story 5

THE SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK



Titi Extrochia Binti Jinaya

20 | Student of SIDMA College

Degree in Business Management

That God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers is a saying both trite and true. Born as the youngest of six siblings into a tumultuous household, Titi Extrochia's early years were marked by hardship and instability. Her parents battled alcoholism, constantly uprooting the family,



resulting in five moves before she even began school. When finally of schooling age, six year old Titi was sent to live in a hostel, returning to her family only on weekends. This living situation would continue for the rest of her school life and though the separation was not easy, it would serve as the foundation for Titi's independence and self-reliance. Her final year of high school would be the most challenging of her educational journey. On the cusp of sitting for the SPM examinations, the stresses of school were further exacerbated by pandemic-induced delays and the movement control order. But Titi persevered, displaying remarkable resilience and determination by successfully completing her high school education and gaining acceptance into a Business Management course at Sigma College.

In the interim period between the end of the routine of high school and the wobbly promise of freedom as a young adult in college, Titi would face her biggest challenge yet. Wishing to return to her village to care for her ailing father, Titi was instead recruited by an older sister to work as a clerk for her husband, an architect. Upon her arrival, she found herself becoming the primary caregiver to five young children who were not her own, alongside undertaking the responsibility of all household chores while her pregnant sister lay in bed. Enslaved by her sense of familial duty, Titi suffered through what was essentially domestic servitude, enduring harsh criticism from her sister and barely being paid for her time or efforts. Exhausted, lonely and without anyone to confide in, Titi became increasingly stressed and often fantasised about running away from home.

Thankfully, her suffering ended when she embarked on her college journey and was finally able to spread her wings to find her own place in the world. As classes began, Titi began to engage in various activities and programmes centred around mental health awareness, learning to open

up about her own struggles and experiences. Through her involvement with YPC, she has developed the tools required to handle her stress and anxiety, becoming a passionate advocate for mental health awareness.

“A healthy mind can influence our everyday life. If the mind is not healthy, everything will become negative,” she muses. “We need to normalise help-seeking behaviours. There are many activities now that centre around mental health and that is also why I am ready to share and speak about my experience. It is now not possible for people to say that we are crazy if we speak about mental health issues.”

While Titi pursues her studies in business management, her heart’s true calling lies in education. Her dream is to become a teacher, a role that will allow her to nurture young minds and instil in them the same resilience and unwavering optimism that have defined her own life. Titi’s story is a beacon of hope—a reminder that no matter how challenging the path ahead may appear, there is always strength to be found in hope and positivity.





Story 6

THERE MUST BE A RAINBOW AFTER THE RAIN

Nur Ain Syafiqah Bt Mohd Hermi

21 | Student of UNITAR University

Bachelor of Education (Hons) TESL

Nur Ain Syafiqah displayed exceptional academic prowess from a very early age. As the oldest of four children, her youth was characterised by a relentless pursuit of perfection driven by the weight of familial expectations. She was an avid reader whose favourite subject was English, with

ambitions to become an electrical engineer—inspired in part by her beloved father who worked at Sabah Electricity. Yet, the very brilliance that set her apart became a double-edged sword, as the intense pressure to perform began to take a toll on her emotional state.

Following the well-trodden path of other high-achieving students, she forced herself into the science stream in secondary school despite having zero interest in the subject. She began to lose focus and interest in her studies, suffering from chronic fatigue. The grades of the once straight-A student began to plunge, with her hopes of becoming an electrical engineer dashed when she scored just 4 A's out of a possible 10 for SPM. Her anxiety and depression worsened as she lumbered through matriculation until tragedy struck. In a cruel twist of fate, the sudden loss of her father dealt a devastating blow that shattered her world, pushing Ain into the depths of a major depressive episode. She oscillated between bouts of depression, delusion, impulsiveness and suicidal ideation.

In the depths of her despair, Ain recognised she was not able to handle her problems alone and sought professional help. She was quickly diagnosed with Bipolar II Disorder, a pronouncement that crushed her and would alter the course of her life forever. Ain had never heard of bipolar disorder and had no idea of the impact it had on her mental wellbeing, but ever the inquiring academic, she treated her diagnosis as a challenge and threw herself into research, scouring the internet and social media channels to learn as much as possible about her condition.

Armed with newfound understanding, Ain embarked on a journey of healing and through medication and regular appointments with a psychiatrist, she is learning to navigate the unpredictable ebbs and flows of her emotional





landscape. In the face of adversity, she found a silver lining that would ultimately redefine her purpose. She is undertaking a Bachelor in Education, focusing on teaching English as a second language. Her journey from a place of vulnerability to a position of strength has also ignited a passion within her to break down the stigma surrounding mental health. Alongside her studies, she volunteers her time with Empati Malaysia, a NGO “dedicated to fighting for [our] youth’s mental health with empathy”, founded by Syahida Zulkarnain, a fellow bipolar disorder survivor.

“I know some people tend to view those of us who struggle with mental health illnesses as unfortunate. But through my journey, I have come to view it as a beauty in disguise,” says Ain. “Life is hard, life is painful and sometimes you may feel that life is not worth living. But every storm passes and what makes it worthwhile are the rainbows that come after.”

Ain’s story is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of embracing one’s own imperfections. Her journey from a brilliant yet fragile young girl to a fierce advocate for mental health stands as an inspiration to all who struggle with the state of their mental wellbeing. As she continues to navigate the complexities of her own life’s symphony, Ain’s unwavering commitment to awareness, acceptance and understanding serves as a resounding note of hope for a brighter, more compassionate future.

THE TIME IS NOW

“To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived — that is to have succeeded.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

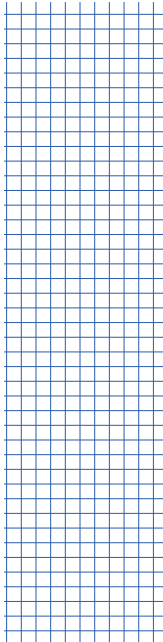
Mental health issues amongst youth all over the world are on the rise and despite its prevalence, it remains one of the most neglected health issues globally. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that in East Asia and the Pacific, almost 1 in 7 boys and 1 in 9 girls aged 10–19 years have a mental disorder, with suicide the third leading cause of death for 15–19 year olds in the region. Suicide rates amongst 15 to 19 year olds shot up between 2007 and 2015, increasing by 31% for boys and more than doubling for girls, underscoring the gravity of the situation.

In rural Malaysia, limited access to mental health resources and a pervasive cultural stigma against seeking help compound the already daunting challenges the community face. While fostering a sense of belonging,

close-knit communities can also be a breeding ground for judgement and stigma forcing many who struggle to suffer alone and in silence, unable to find the support they desperately need. The consequences of failing to address mental health conditions amongst adolescents extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.

Tackling these issues may seem an insurmountable task and yet despite the countless challenges, young Malaysians stand on the frontline, rising as champions of change. Many have overcome their own battles with mental health, occupying dual roles of survivor and impassioned advocate for change. Aged 23, Beluran native Esmiralda David is now in her final year of a pharmacy degree at MAHSA College. Shy and softly spoken, Esmi had a difficult childhood, grappling with anxiety from the time she was in primary school. Without anyone to turn to and fearing judgement, she even contemplated suicide but thankfully managed to find the strength and will to live. Now a young adult on the cusp of a bright future as a pharmacist, she has moulded her personal struggles into fuel that lights her ambition to help others.

“For as long as I have been a pharmacy student, I have learnt about and come across people who have mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. I ask myself, ‘How have they come to have these issues and what can be done to help?’,” she says. “My desire to become a pharmacist is spurred by this curiosity. What is the function of the medication prescribed? Why are we prescribing it? Are there risks involved? What relief can it offer?”



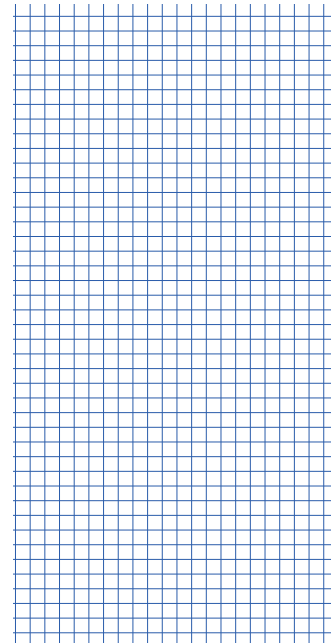


Esmiralda David

23 | Student of MAHSA College
Bachelor of Pharmacy

Esmi is one of the lucky ones who despite a system that failed her, managed to overcome her demons; though her story is a stark reminder of the danger and instability the culture of silence creates. Often, it is a lack of awareness and understanding that leads to misconceptions and discrimination, discouraging individuals from help-seeking behaviours. Determined to bridge the gap between silence and support, Shamsuddin Bin Amin, a lecturer cum Student Affairs Officer at Kolej Komuniti Beaufort has devised a novel way of allowing students to express their feelings. 'Sudut Curahan Hati' sits by the mental health counter at the student affairs department. Though its materials—a simple board with post-its and a pen—appear rudimentary, its intent and its construct are considerably cleverer. Here, Shamsuddin encourages his students to pen their thoughts, feelings and struggles, affixing them to the board where they are left for the entire semester. Sometimes he replies with words of encouragement and if any strike him as particularly worrisome, he leaves a number for them to call. Its benefits are twofold: firstly, it gives the students a platform for relief, a place to voice their concerns and share their feelings freely and anonymously. Just as importantly, it establishes a bond of affinity, allowing them to view the struggles of their peers in hope that they will not feel so alone in their own hardship.

Ingenious in its simplicity, Sudut Curahan Hati is a canny way of helping to reduce the stigma that surround mental health issues by promoting understanding, empathy and support—all qualities that Brian Loh Yun Kui embodies. Only 23, the recently graduated nurse is a confident and tireless advocate for mental health, perhaps due in part





Shamsuddin Bin Amin

Lecturer cum Student Affairs Officer
at Kolej Komuniti Beaufort





Brian Loh Yun Kui

23 | Registered Nurse and
former student at Cyberjaya College

to his education and experience in healthcare. Brian has harboured ambitions of becoming a nurse since the age of 13 when he volunteered with the Malaysian Red Crescent Society and discovered how much he loved helping other people. Just shy of his graduation and practising to be a general practice nurse, he hopes to one day specialise in either intensive care, emergency or psychiatric nursing.

Making use of the free counselling services in high school, Brian sought advice while also viewing it as an opportunity to learn. One of its most valuable lessons he says was to “Open yourself to help, because there will always be someone who wants to listen. There are places that are safe for you to speak up and get treatment. Counselling is not about giving an answer, it’s about giving a choice. It’s about opening a path for someone to realise and to do something for themselves. For those who have suffered or are suffering, remember that you are not alone.”

Even with the emergence of this brave new generation of advocates, youth mental health remains on a steady decline, with depression and anxiety among the leading causes of illness and disability amongst adolescents. Adding to the challenge is the dire shortage of mental health resources in low and middle income countries, with an estimate of fewer than 0.5 mental health specialists per 100,000 population. Azlaily Binti Jufri is a programme coordinator cum lecturer at Cyberjaya College, and is all too familiar with the uphill struggle of providing sufficient



Azlaily Binti Jufri

Programme Coordinator cum Lecturer
at Cyberjaya College Kota Kinabalu

support. As just one of two registered counsellors to accommodate for a population of more than 2,000 students, she is forced to straddle the roles of lecturer and counsellor—something that is not typically recommended as it is viewed as a conflict of interest. In order to cope, she frequently employs the services of counsellor trainees from other universities for easier to handle cases.

Despite the multitudinous challenges, Azlaily has an optimistic vision of the future. Through the widespread accessibility of social media, she is beginning to see positive changes being made, particularly as attitudes within her community slowly begin to shift towards empathy and understanding. On her hope for what comes next she shares, “I would love it if our people, specifically, our Malaysian people began to place more importance on understanding their own psychological issues. Don’t be afraid of big feelings: acknowledge your emotions, acknowledge your behaviour, acknowledge your thoughts. And the most crucial step is to validate these feelings. It will help with understanding and lead to empathy.”

In a nation grappling with rising mental health issues and scarcity of resources, it is our young people who play a pivotal role in dispelling myths and fostering understanding. The next generation are both the most important and most affected stakeholders when talking about our global future—a powerful, unstoppable force capable of igniting change even when all odds seem stacked against them. Armed with knowledge, empathy, compassion and determination, they stand poised to make a profound impact in breaking the culture of stigma and silence. The time is now.





Mindfulness 101: Hacking the ways to living in the present

Adapted from DBT

What is mindfulness?

- In its core, it is being in control of your mind rather than letting your mind be in control of you.

Why do I need to practice mindfulness?

- Give you more choices and more control over your behaviour.
- It helps you slow down and notice emotions, thoughts, and urges (i.e., increases self-awareness)
- helps you choose a behaviour more thoughtfully, rather than act impulsively and make situations worse.

Staying focused to stay being mindful!

- Focus your attention on only one thing in this moment.
- Stop doing two things at once!
 - Become one with whatever you're doing: Get into the zone.
- Concentrate your mind: Let go of distractions and refocus your attention when it drifts, again and again.

Mindfulness Cheat Sheet

- Identify what you will focus on:
 - Examples: Your breathing
 - An object (a picture, burning candle)
 - An activity (brushing your hair, cleaning your room, reading)
- Bring your attention to the object of focus.
- When your attention wanders away from the object of focus (and sometimes it will, so don't judge yourself for it!) ...
- Notice that this has happened.
- Gently bring your attention back to the object of focus.

Get started!

- Begin practicing mindfulness by noticing your attention and how it wanders.
- Gradually work on doing this practice for 30 seconds, 1 minute and 2 minutes at a time.
- Practice a lot!

Written By,

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3. Terapi Elektro Konvulsif
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semua jenis penyakit psikiatri
2. Rawatan Kes Rujukan
- Rawatan pesakit dalam wad yang
dirujuk oleh jabatan-jabatan lain di
hospital ini dan memberi khidmat
penilaian serta rawatan bagi pesakit
dirujuk oleh Jabatan Kecemasan

Hospital Beaufort

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Unit Kerja Sosial Perubatan (UKSP) memberikan bantuan praktikal dan terapi sokongan kepada klien iaitu pesakit yang mendapatkan rawatan di hospital ini agar mereka dapat berfungsi sebaik mungkin apabila kembali semula kepada masyarakat.

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Acknowledgement 🙏

Within the pages of this coffee-table book, we proudly present the voices and stories of our youth. Their narratives, like a beacon, shine light on our shared journey towards fostering mental health and well-being.

We have dedicated ourselves to the cause of supporting youth mental health through the "Mind Matters, You Matter" project spanning from 2020 to 2023. This initiative has not only been our undertakings but has represented a youth-driven effort towards overcoming the stigma and illuminating the path to resilience.

Our heartfelt gratitude extends to our esteemed funder, Yayasan Hasanah, partner institutions, mental health specialists and radio stations whose collaborative spirit has been the cornerstone of our mission.

As we flip through the pages, let us remind ourselves that our efforts do not stop here. Our commitment to the well-being of youth remains resolute. Together, we embark on a new chapter filled with hope, determination, and the unwavering promise of a brighter future.

Thank you, Terima Kasih, Kotohuadan, Ponsikou, Xie Xie ni.

From,
Project team

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Kupi Kupu FM
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Hospitals

Hospital Queen Elizabeth
Hospital Mesra Bukit Padang

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