



Mental Health

Your Mind Matters by 5B Gigi Liu

Have you heard of the term “*mental health positivity*”? I was first exposed to it when randomly scrolling through Instagram. Mental health is the state of our physiological, cognitive and emotional well-being. But the term seems unfamiliar to us when it comes with one more word “positivity”. Mental health positivity refers to the positive attitude towards taking care of our mental health and acknowledging the fact that our feelings are valid. Even though the term involves “positivity”, it is a belief that all of our feelings, both positive and negative, should be taken into account. **Toxic positivity**, believing that thinking positively is the only solution to certain circumstances, suppressing our genuine feelings, i.e. putting our negative emotions into denial, could make us feel even worse.

In the past, people usually associated mental health with disabilities and abnormal behaviors. Seeking professional and emotional support was for ‘less resilient’ and ‘more vulnerable’ people. However, content related to mental health positivity has emerged on social media and dispelled many of the stereotypes. In fact, brain chemistry, genes, food, past experiences, societal environment, all of these contribute to our physiological states. The destigmatization of mental health encourages us to embrace our mental individuality, as well as raise the awareness of self-recognition.

Mental Health Awareness by 5D Katie Ng

The prevalence of various mental health disorders has been on the rise. An estimated 1 in 7 people in Hong Kong have experienced a common mental disorder at any given time. Of those experiencing a mental health disorder, three-quarters do not seek professional help. Many continue to suffer in isolation because of feelings of shame, lack of awareness about their condition, and a shortage of accessible professional support.

Poor mental health affects how we handle stress, and how we make choices. Anxiety and depression are especially common among teenagers, from being confused about their future to having unstable friendships or family relationship problems.

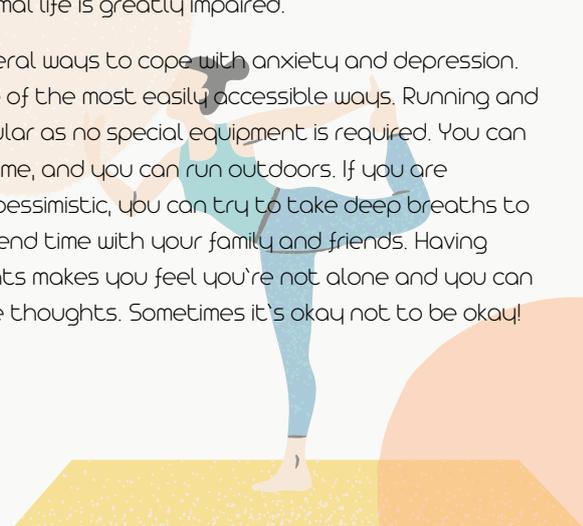
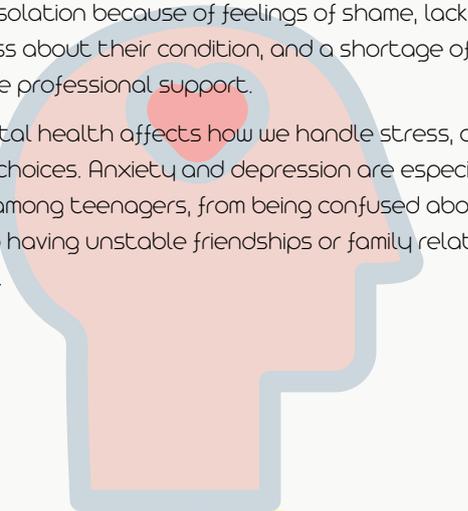
“We are all different. Don’t judge, understand instead.” Developing mental health positivity is a lot harder than you think. It is more than coping with just emotions, but also stigmas and stereotypes. Statistics show that under the effect of gender suicide paradox, males have a higher suicide rate around the globe. The outdated stereotype that males should be emotionally less vulnerable leads to the suppression of feelings. It becomes harder for males to seek professional assistance when needed further increasing the risk of suicide commitment. It’s important not to make judgements based on our impression and assumptions of others. Everyone is fighting their own battle.



POSITIVE
VIBES

Anxiety is when you can’t stop worrying excessively about one thing that has not even happened yet, and this kind of feeling even interferes with every part of your life. Serious anxiety and depression may lead to negative consequences physically, such as a sudden loss of appetite, which further leads to weight loss, or by contrast a sudden urge to binge-eat, which leads to weight gain. Insomnia or always dozing off may occur too. These result in a decrease in working productivity, less willingness to socialize with others, and thus it is clear to see that your normal life is greatly impaired.

There are several ways to cope with anxiety and depression. Exercise is one of the most easily accessible ways. Running and yoga are popular as no special equipment is required. You can do yoga at home, and you can run outdoors. If you are continuously pessimistic, you can try to take deep breaths to calm down. Spend time with your family and friends. Having accompaniments makes you feel you’re not alone and you can avoid negative thoughts. Sometimes it’s okay not to be okay!



PROCRASTINATION

by 3A Kevinn Cheung, Alina Ko, Yomiko Wong

Have you ever put off your homework till the last minute, or studied for an examination only the day before? These are the fundamental symptoms of procrastination. Procrastination is an action of delaying or postponing something. With procrastination, you find yourself getting distracted easily and regularly having a hard time meeting deadlines. Actually, nowadays, procrastination is not an infrequent phenomenon in the public. Recent statistics have shown that about 80 to 95 percent of college students engage in procrastination and consider themselves procrastinators. But, do you know why procrastination is so common and what consequences it leads to?

Why do people procrastinate?

The three main reasons that cause people to delay their tasks are **lack of motivation, self-control difficulties and perfectionist ideology**.

Firstly, people lack motivation. They assume that projects won't take as long to finish as they really will, which can lead to a false sense of security when we believe that we still have plenty of time to complete these tasks. And it's a common phenomenon amongst most students.

Secondly, people have difficulties in self-control or have trouble concentrating. They are always attracted by their surroundings like, televisions, video games, comic books etc. And eventually the surroundings lead to difficulties in concentrating on their work and thus postponement of their work. Hence, low efficiency and productivity is caused.

Lastly, people who are perfectionists are usually procrastinators too as they fear failure at work and want to make their work as perfect as possible. These 'worriers' will not start that important or difficult task because they are not sure whether they are able to accomplish it or not, which leads to procrastination.

In a nutshell, procrastinating is **not equal to being lazy** and it is not a mental illness either. Some people just spend too much time procrastinating that they are unable to complete important daily tasks. They may have a strong desire to stop procrastinating but feel they cannot do so.

What's wrong with procrastination?

With procrastination, you cannot solve problems and may become a deadline fighter who leaves all the things to be done till the last minute. Moreover, if this problem continues to bother you, numerous tasks may become accumulated, causing mental tension. As you keep on postponing, you will be easily under chronic stress. And this pressure will never go away as long as you procrastinate. Eventually, you may suffer from severe psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety. Procrastination is held responsible for poor mental health and that's why we must deal with it. To most of us, procrastination is a natural impropriety which we are now facing, and it does lead to disruption of our life and loss of control of schedules. So, in order to be the pilot of your own time again, you have to get your time back in control.

Proper time management

By creating a daily or weekly schedule, we can list out all the tasks that should be done within a period of time. This can help us to prioritize the stuff we have to accomplish and distribute our time more effectively to prevent cramming or wasting of times.

Eliminating distractions is another skill for time management. When it's time to get down to work or study, turn off your phone or other technological devices which you will easily get diverted with and put them out of your sight. This can help you be more focused on the tasks you are working on and lessen the likelihood of procrastination.

Adopting a reward system

Reward systems are also an uncomplicated method to help ease procrastination. If you are feeling discouraged or stressed to start your work, a reward system may help you. You can start by first setting up appropriate rewards or focusing on the benefits your work can bring. For example, you can enjoy a bite of cake after finishing a part of your homework or have a day off after completing a project. When you feel spiritless to begin a task, think about the gains behind your pains! You will be motivated, stop procrastinating and get back to work. It is also a way to relax and energize your mind to carry through your work.

Complete the test to see if you are a procrastinator!



Self appreciation

The Key to Happiness by 3A Aries

Stop Criticizing Oneself.

Everyone makes mistakes, it's more important to learn from the mistakes and improve instead of focusing on our failures.

Let me share a story about a man and a donkey: Once upon a time, there was a man who owned a lovely donkey. She was tenacious and loyal to her owner. Down to her luck, her ruthless master never understood her excellence. One day when they were going into a town, the donkey accidentally stumbled over a rock on the road. Hence the man beat her. A man scolded the man for being so heartless to the donkey, yet the man was indifferent to his accusation and left. Year by year, the donkey that was once optimistic eventually became hopeless. All that was left was the anger in her eyes. An ignorant man he is, he never knew what he had done wrong and complained about the donkey being so useless till the end.

This story tells how people often criticise themselves even though they are very outstanding. Just like the way the man beat the donkey once she made a tiny mistake.

Then, how can we stop this vicious cycle?

The one in the mirror by SB Mandy Wan

'I like being you,' said by a sound softly. 'To me, you're perfectly perfect.' I blushed. 'Yes, it's you! You have wonderful eyes' I blinked with astonishment, 'I do?' 'Absolutely. They sparkle like stars on the darkest of nights.'

We never say something good of ourselves or appreciate who we are. Instead, we always criticize for not being slim enough, and not being popular enough. Self-appreciation is essential to change our life by transforming negative ideas into positive ones and nurturing self-beliefs.

Leila Kamweru, an intern at the WYA Africa Regional Office, has shared the story of how she is accepting herself for not being as perfect as she hopes. In her previous article, she mentioned that she used to compare herself with others. But then she learnt not to focus on outside appearance. 'You don't need anyone to tell you how spectacular you are. You can do it yourself and there is no greater goal than being your own inspiration and motivator.'

Stop Living Up to Other People's Expectations

We should never let others define our worth. For instance, some people may expect you to be kind and do what they want you to. If you don't fulfill their expectations, they might feel disappointed and that may make you feel frustrated. But remember we are not perfect and we don't need to make everyone satisfied with ourselves.

Most important of all, if we want to change the way we think, we should appreciate ourselves more. When we are thankful for what we have, we'll end up having more. But if we concentrate on what we don't have, we will never have enough.



YOU'RE
doing
Great

Maybe we should be our own biggest fan. Rather than waiting for someone to tell us we are brilliant, shout it to ourselves. We all think that it is nice to praise others, but none of us have the thinking of admiring ourselves.

Appreciating others gives them confidence, it goes the same way for ourselves too. A healthy self-love means we have no compulsion to justify to ourselves or others as we believe in our ability.

Self-appreciation is to realize that one possesses intrinsic and inviolable human dignity. And we have an important responsibility to protect and defend it in order to love ourselves.

I gently pressed my hands against the glass, telling the reflection in the mirror, 'I like being you too. I want to be you forever.' Both of us smiled in unison.

"The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself"

-Michel de Montaigne

Ways to Relax

Caught in a chaotic spiral, where people are chasing a faster pace of life, you are always moving forward and there are no limits to how far or how fast you can go. No time to pause or reflect. Fast at any cost is the mantra of the stressed and distressed Hong Kong society today. Then, anxiety hits from out of nowhere, when you're not sure about what's going to happen, such as when you're about to give an impromptu speech in class or under great academic pressure. All of these have negative effects on our lives. So, it is essential to find ways to relax. Let's find out how.

Ways to relax by 3A Coco Chan

Take hot baths. It only takes 15 minutes to do something for your well-being. Research shows warm water helps blood vessels expand, leading to an increase in oxygen in the blood to reduce muscle soreness caused by stress and pressure. Hot baths can help us relax, so when you can't sleep, take a hot bath, to decrease your body temperature to fall asleep more quickly and have a better quality of sleep.

Find Your Own Way by 2A Teresa Lui

Have you heard of the latest craze - pop it? It's like unlimited bubble wrap for kids and adults. Fidget toys like Pop It are being used for helping children with anxiety or sensory difficulties. Dr. Will Shield, a child psychologist from the University of Exeters, says that Pop It can also help us with concentration and attention, just like when adults play with a pen when they're trying to concentrate. Both kids and adults enjoy these Pop It toys to transfer their stress and anxiety. With its super soft silicone, durable circular base, and colorful design, the toy has gained popularity around the globe. I tried it and immediately fell in love with it. It is a wonderful way to reduce nervousness through the 'pop' sensation.



POP IT!

HAPPY

Stay optimistic. When we keep telling ourselves that we can't do it, we find that we really can't! In this case, our stress increases. Harland David Sanders, the founder of KFC, in his younger days, failed at many jobs. It was at about 60 years of age that he started KFC. If you were him, would you give up? He didn't because he always believed he could. Remember, a positive attitude goes a long way.

Listen to music. Research shows that listening to your favourite song can help your nervous system recover better. We should listen to music without earphones to avoid damaging our hearing. Listening to music can help reduce the hormones which make us anxious. For example, 'Green Music' can make us feel more serene and peaceful. So go for it and listen to some calming music.



Allow Yourself to Relax by 2A Jeff Cheung

Releasing stress may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy and relaxing activities. These relaxing activities can help you release stress and make you calmer.

If you don't have time to relax, you may become distressed and unhappy, which could affect your day-to-day interactions with others. It shows the importance of relaxation. Take ten to thirty minutes to relax after doing homework or studying. It can help your brain to recharge. Relaxing can help us to study well!

Everyone has their own way to relax. Try to find your own way!

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Let's chill out together! by 3A Angela Li

Remember to have enough sleep. Many students burn the midnight oil to prepare for quizzes especially during UT and exam weeks. Don't! Your brains need to relax! Teenagers need to have at least 7.5-8 hours per day. It can help you flush toxins out of your body, improve your memory and refresh your mind.