



MACQUARIE
University

**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**

EVERYDAY
IS

YOUR DAY

**Mental Health Toolkit
for Young People**





Dear friend,

**Thank you for taking
the first steps to
learning about your
own mental health and
the things you can do
to look after yourself
every day.**



Who are we: **Restless Development**

Restless Development is a global youth focused organisation, helping support and empower young people through providing them a voice and helping them create a just and sustainable world ⁴ . Restless Development has been working in Nepal since 1991⁴ .

Our aim is to support young people to become independent leaders by identifying problems and finding solutions within their communities ⁴

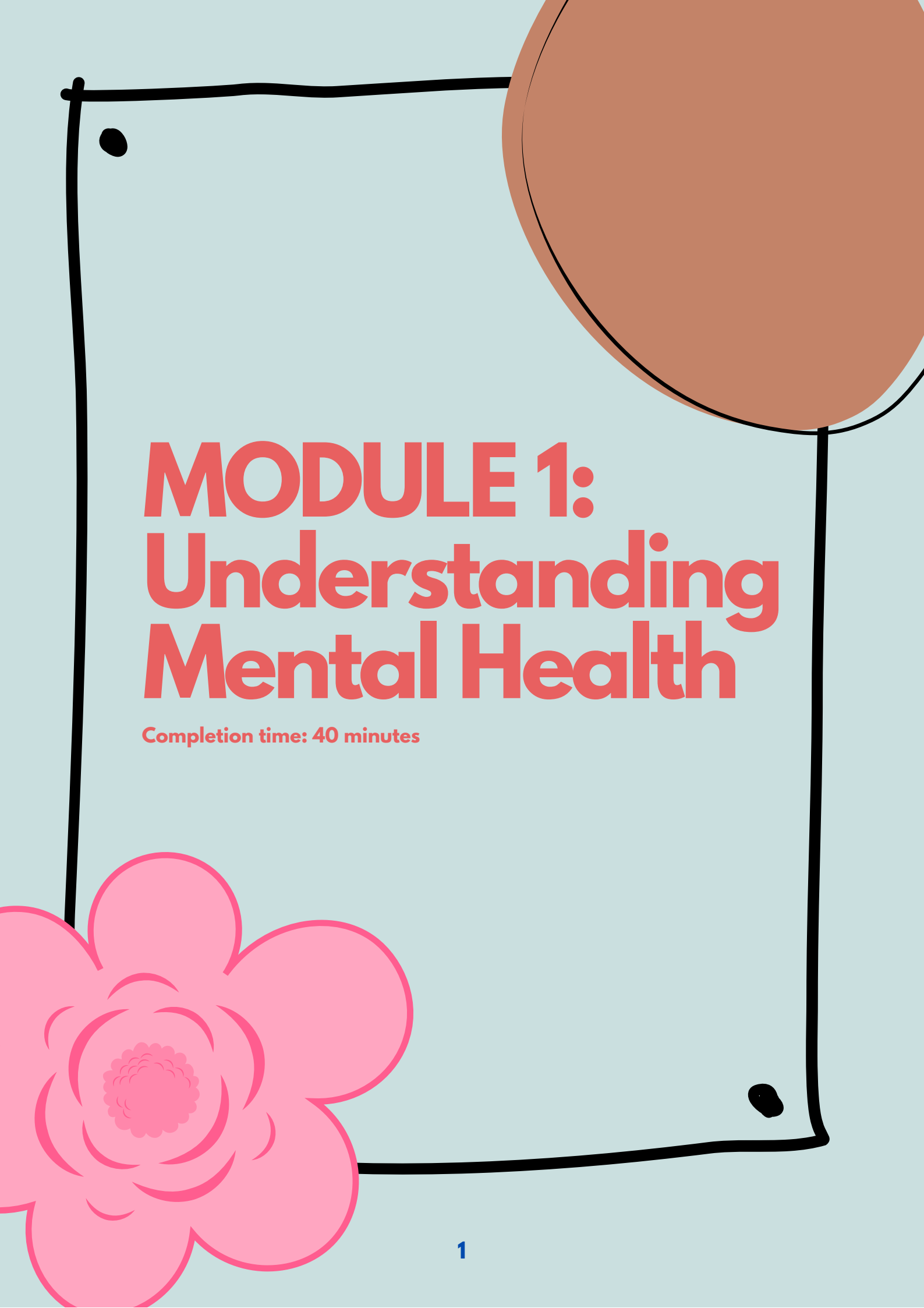
Our main focus is to **help young people reach their full potential** through allowing them to have a voice in decision-making, have a decent state of living, freely exercise sexual rights and to **become leaders** contributing to the development of sustainable and resilient communities ⁴



⁴ Nepal. (n.d.). Restless Development.

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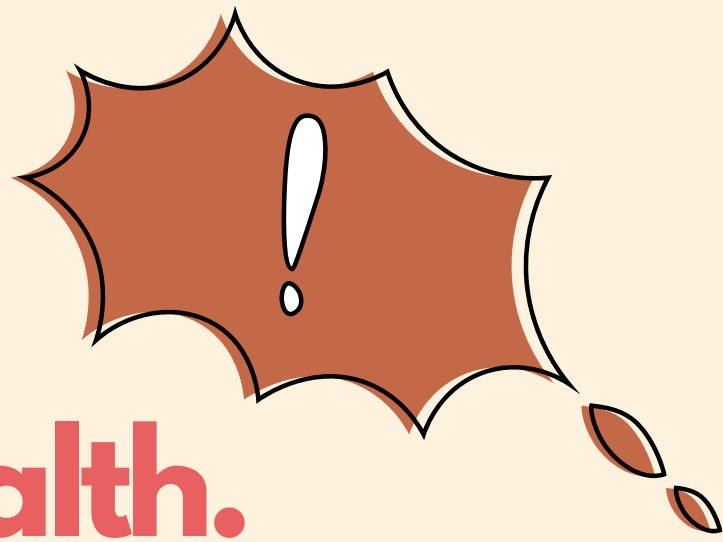
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MODULE 1: **Understanding Mental Health**

Completion time: 40 minutes

1.1 YOUR Mental Health.



What is Mental Health?

Your mental health **affects the way you feel, think and behave** in day-to-day life ¹

It impacts how you are able to deal with stress, the types of relationships you build, your physical health, sense of worth, motivation and how well you're able to bounce back from difficult and challenging situations in life ¹

Having good mental health is not simply the opposite or absence of mental illness.

Good mental health is when you **have a positive sense of wellbeing** ^{1,2}

Some examples of what having good mental health looks like includes ¹ :

- Being able to have fun and laugh
- Bouncing back from stressful and difficult situations
- Having good self confidence and high self esteem
- Maintaining a healthy balance between work, rest, play
- Maintaining meaningful relationships
- Learning new skills and being able to adapt to change

¹ Melinda. 2019

² (2022). Un.org.<http://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce>

Mental health lies on a range, with **positive mental health** on one end and with more negative, poorer mental health on the other² end

Mental health is not fixed and you can move along this range depending on the circumstances you experience in life

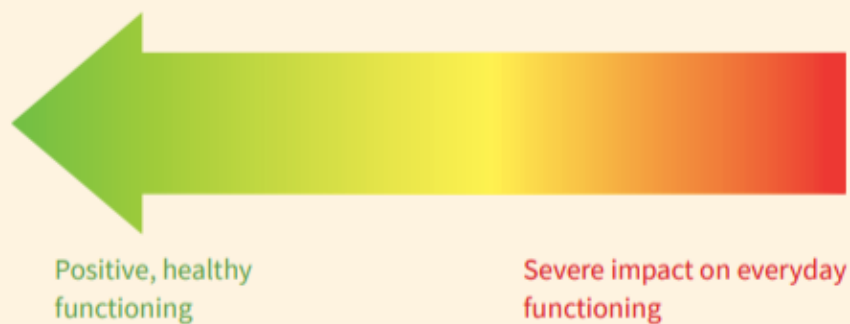


Image from <http://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce>²

Some examples of circumstances which can **affect your mental health** include poverty, the **COVID-19 pandemic** and natural disasters such as the 2015 earthquake, all of which have **severely impacted Nepal**.

Youth in Nepal are particularly vulnerable to negative mental health outcomes due to factors such as ³

- Poverty - affects health and education
- Child labour, exploitation and human trafficking
- Changing family structure - (eg: due to divorce)
- Neglect from parents

³ Chaulagain et al., 2019

Factors of mental health in Nepal.

[illegible]

1.3 Government policies related to supporting youths' mental health

The Nepalese government has developed the National Youth Policy (2015) to support youth and aims to provide an opportunity for youth to become active members in building Nepal⁵.



To achieve this,



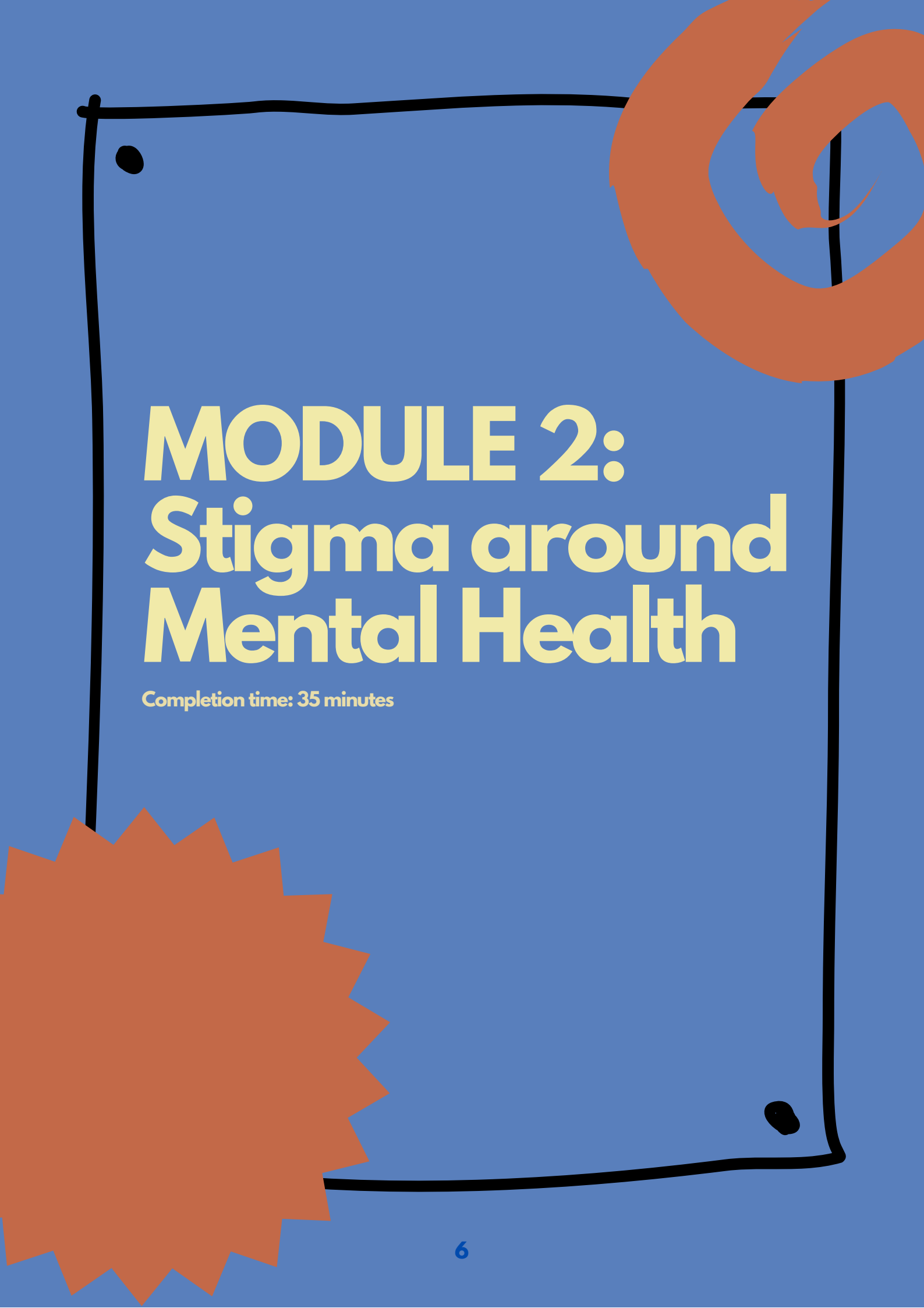
a 10 year long strategic plan was developed through the National Youth Council which includes "Youth Vision - 2025"

The Youth Vision 2025 strategy aims to achieve this by promoting health and social security, where encouraging and supporting mental health has become more of a priority⁶

Youth Vision is a strategy which aims to make youth more strong, capable and self-reliant through contributing as leaders to Nepal⁶

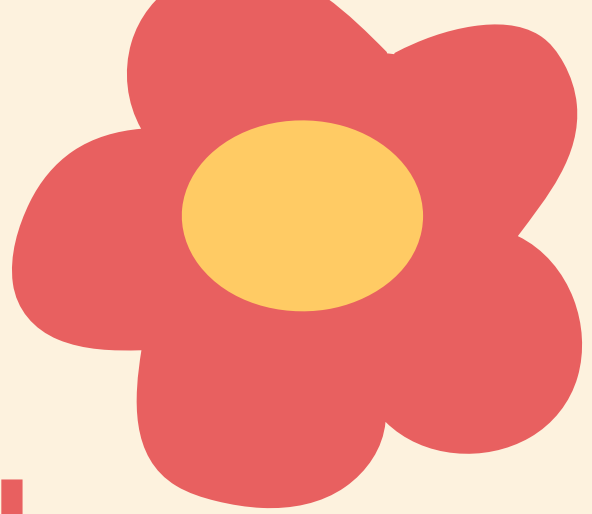
⁵ National Youth Policy, (2015).

⁶ "Youth Vision – 2025" And Ten-Year Strategic Plan, (2015).



MODULE 2: **Stigma around** **Mental Health**

Completion time: 35 minutes



2.1 YOUR Stigma on Mental Health.

We all have mental health. To better understand our mental health, we need to remove the stigma surrounding mental health.

Stigma

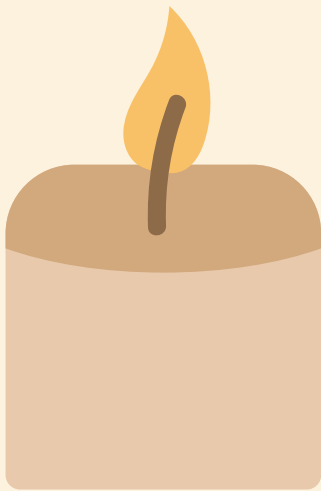
is a complex and involves depressed feelings when you compare yourself and your experience to others in a group or society⁷

In terms of mental health, stigma also can happen when you perceive threats based on your thoughts about: ^{7,8}

- social and gender inequality
- caste discrimination
- sexual harassment
- finance difficulty
- lack of employment
- weak health, nutrition and mental health
- absence of education and investment for your future career
- difficulty in marriage

⁷ Youth Vision 2025

⁸ Gurung et al., 2022



2.2 Why is it important to remove stigma?

Because stigma is a strong boundary which limits the ability to understanding your mental health ⁸

It may result in not being able to seek for early help, as well as accessing mental health care services.

The stigma makes you hard to accept other's opinion because of feelings of shame, and can shape misbeliefs towards your mental health as well ⁹

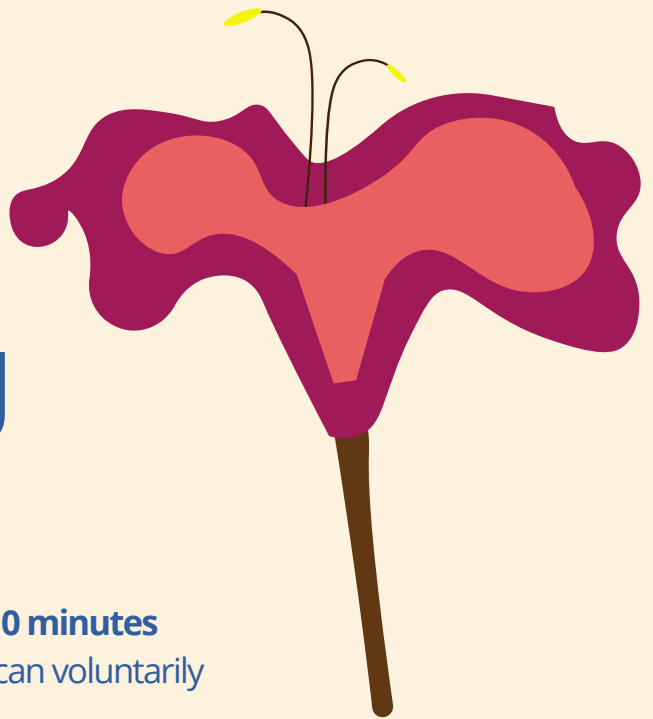
Youth Vision 2025 supports young people with mental health by providing:

- medical treatments
- access to hospitals & mental consultation centres
- access to rehabilitation cares
- self-cure activity services such as yoga, pranayam (exercise), dhyana (meditation).

⁹ Korht et al, 2010

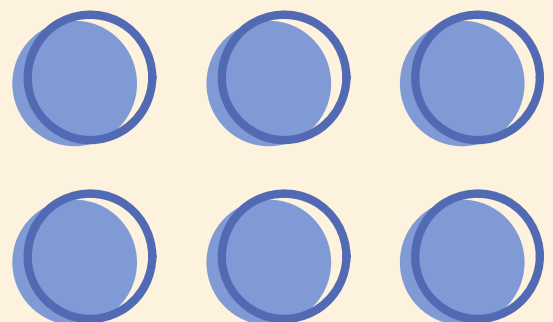
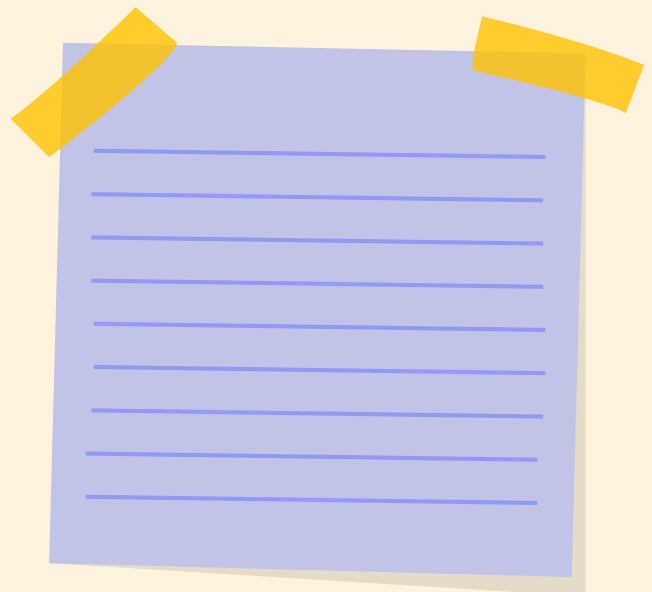
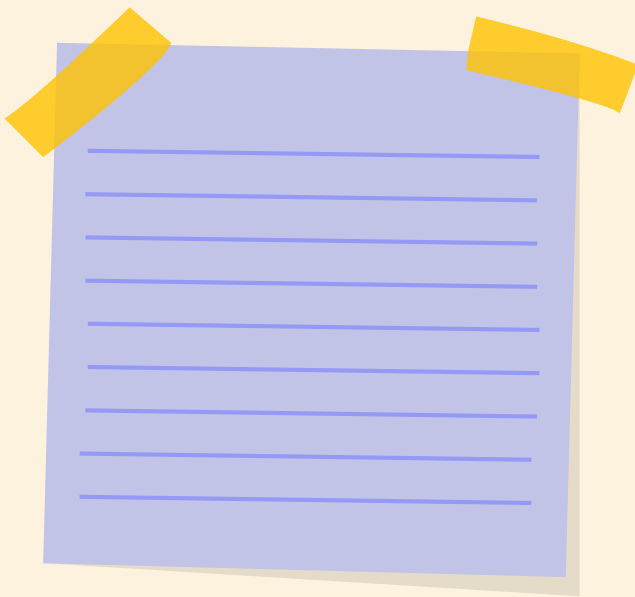
2.3 ACTIVITY:

Overcoming Stigma.



In this activity, you will work alone and spend **10 minutes** brainstorming ways to overcome stigma. You can voluntarily share this to the class or to those around you.

List things you have done or are doing to overcome stigma.



2.4 TIPS TO OVERCOME THE STIGMA.



Understanding what mental health is, and correct your misbeliefs about mental health.



Don't isolate yourself and seek for help from others - this will help in the process of seeking early treatment.



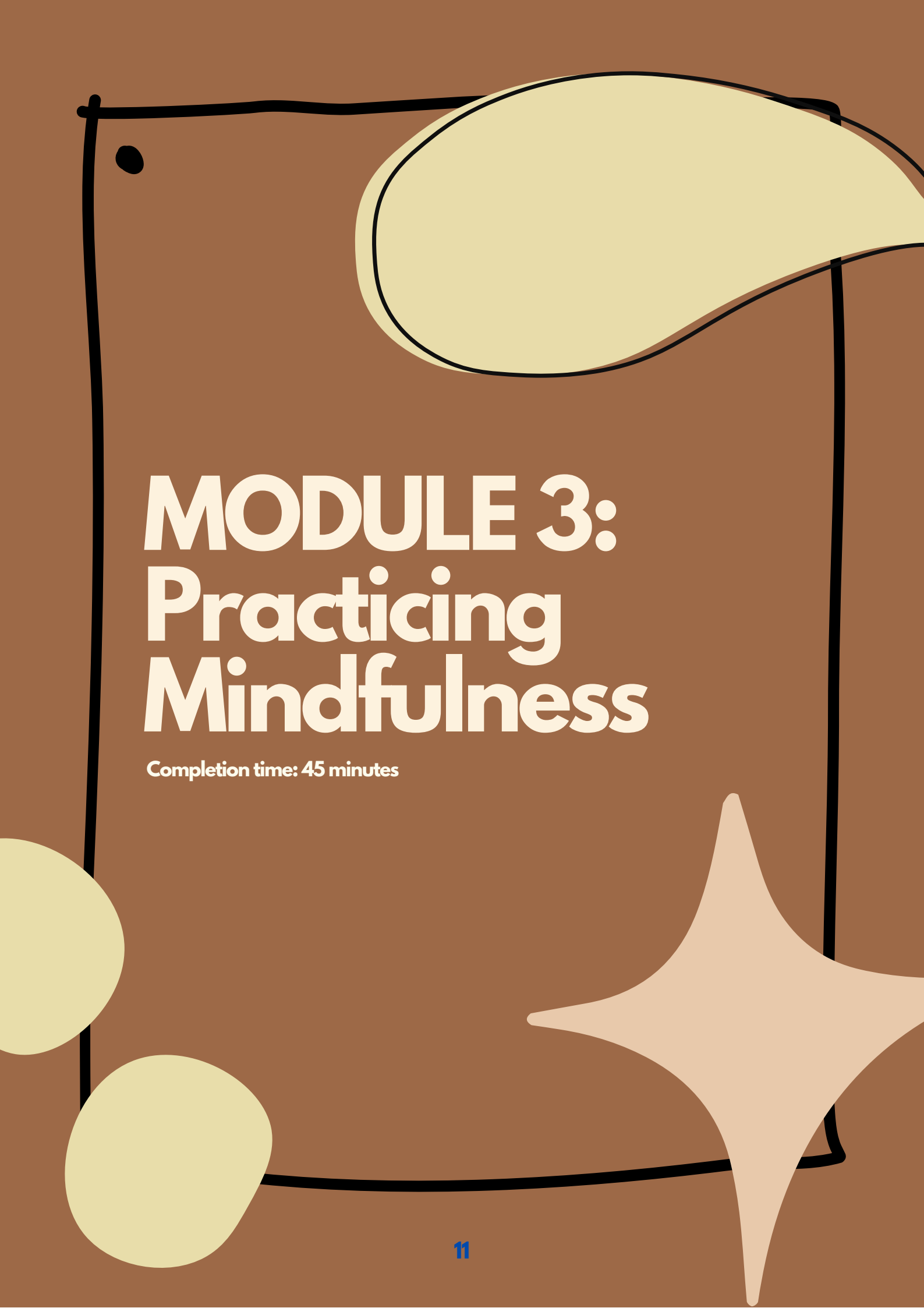
Join a mental health support group, this will help you to access the materials and education needed to improve your wellbeing.



Share your story and opinions against feelings of shame. You can share with anyone you feel comfortable with. You don't have to talk to your family members or friends if you uncomfortable. Instead you can write down how you feel on paper.

**We all are different, so
it's okay to be different
from others!**

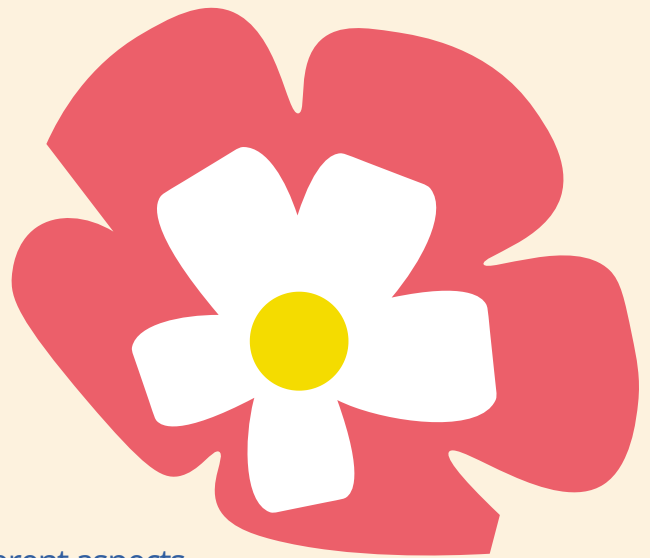
**Food for thought:
Why is it important to talk
about your mental health?**



MODULE 3: Practicing Mindfulness

Completion time: 45 minutes

3.1 YOUR Mindfulness.



In this module, you will be introduced to the different aspects of mindfulness and have a chance to participate in exercises that will help you become more mindful. At the end of this module, you will better understand what mindfulness is and how to use it in your everyday lives!

Mindfulness

is a valuable tool that can help **maintain our mental well-being**. Buddhist practices heavily influence and inspire mindful exercises that remind people to live in the present moment and be less judgemental of their own experiences ¹⁰ . Being mindful is becoming **more aware of ourselves** ¹¹ . Mindfulness, therefore, helps us recognise, reflect, and accept our thoughts and feelings in a healthy way.

Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has a variety of positive effects that includes improving your:

- emotional regulation ¹²
- relationships with others ¹¹
- how you communicate ¹¹

And most importantly, your mental and physical well-being!

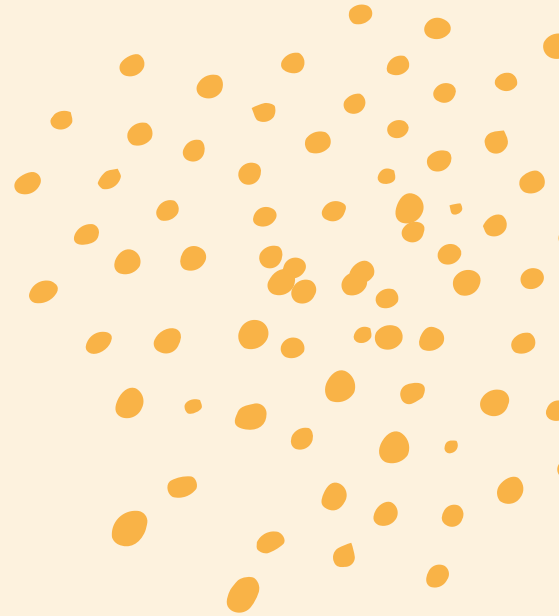
¹⁰ Robins et al. 2014 and Singh et al. 2020

¹¹ Davies & Hayes 2011

¹² Singh et al. 2020 p.8

3.2 HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

Identifying your thoughts and feelings is important in understanding and being present within yourself¹³. The simple act of recognising that you feel a certain way can help you better reflect inwardly. When identifying your how you feel it is important to remember there is no right answer! However you are feeling is OK, try not to judge your mood as 'good' or 'bad'

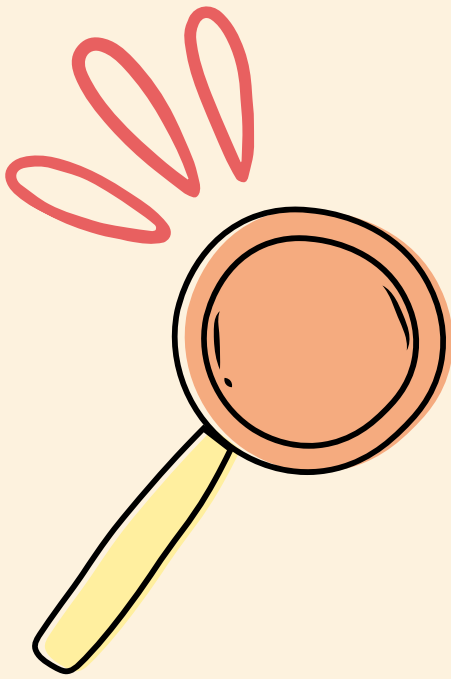


3.1 Using the chart, which colour best describes you? Take 2 minutes.

Think what it is like to experience these emotions. Trying to describe the sensations and experience of a feeling can help you identify and better understand your emotions.

¹³ Pescatello & Pederson 2020

¹⁴ Robins et al. 2014



3.3 Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt!

Take **10 minutes** to partake in this fun activity.

Cross off all the things you can find around you!
Describe what you found.



SEE



Find a green object



Find something smaller than your thumb



HEAR



Can you hear something **LOUD**?



Can you hear something **QUIET**?



SMELL



Find a nice smell



TOUCH



Feel something soft and hard



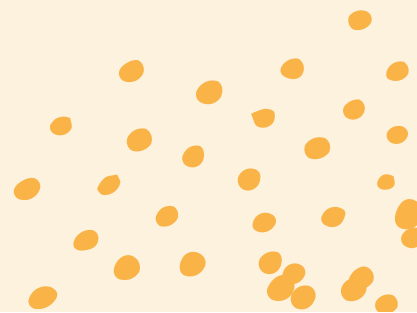
Find something bumpy



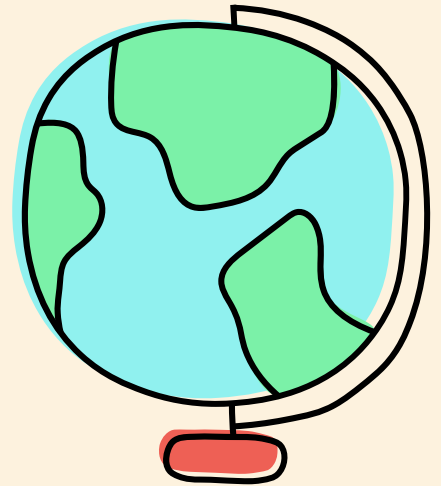
TASTE



Find something you can eat



3.4 Benefits on focusing on the now and doing the hunt.



Being mindful is being aware of yourself and your surroundings, specifically how you interact with your current environment. Simply recognising what is around you and how you observe them will allow you to become more aware of the present moment and your senses.

This activity may also be a helpful grounding exercise when you need to refocus your mind away from overwhelming thoughts.

Some of the main things this hunt could help is:

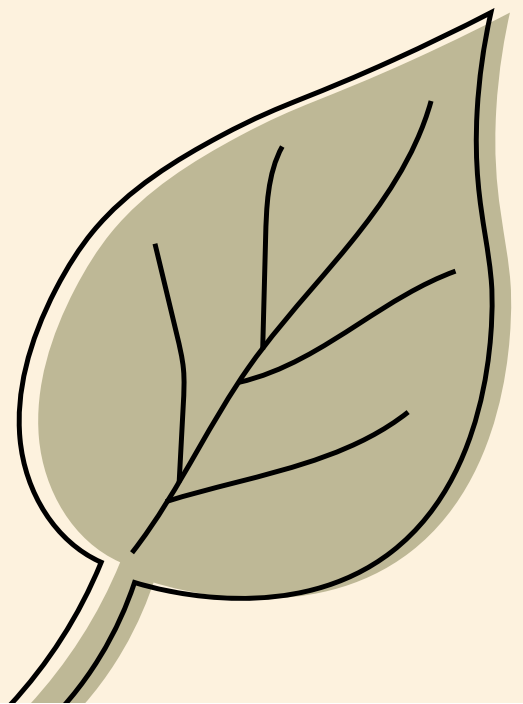
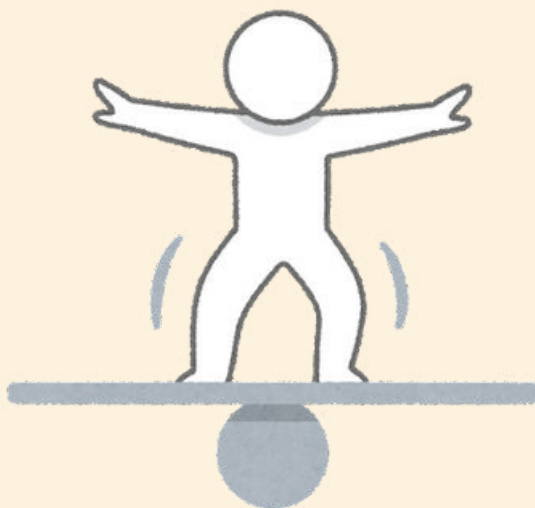
- increasing observation skills which develop awareness in recognising how to help yourself and others
- helps you enjoy the present moment and encourages you to be in the moment
- teaches you how to refocus overwhelming thoughts and tackle mental challenges in the moment

3.5 Meditation.

Mindfulness meditation is an important skill which can improve your mental and physical wellbeing. This meditation will combine the skills from previous exercises.

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. For approximately 10 minutes, close your eyes and meditate. You can play music or listen to what is happening around you. It is normal for your mind to wander while you meditate. When these thoughts or feelings come up during your meditation, acknowledge them as what they are – only a thought or feeling – and let them pass. Bring your focus back to your breathing.

Be aware of the present moment, what you can feel, hear and what you are doing – breathing.



3.6 Practice Breathing!

This **5 minute** exercise will teach you how to “anchor” your attention to your breathing¹⁶. Breathing is an important aspect of mindfulness meditation and can be a helpful tool in everyday life. Think about a time where you are upset or angry. Can you notice how your breathing changes?

Using breathing exercises, you can try and regain control and clear your mind in times of distress.



For this activity you are going to take slow, deep breaths. Keep count of your breathing cycles, by noting each time you exhale. If you lose count, try again from the start¹⁷

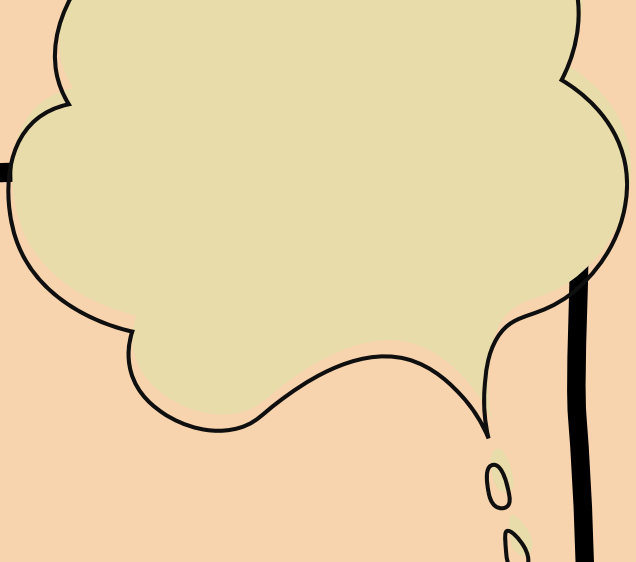
See if you can count 20 breathing cycles.

Try and clear your mind, focusing on your breath.

¹⁵ Burnett (2022), Nature Scavenger Hunt.

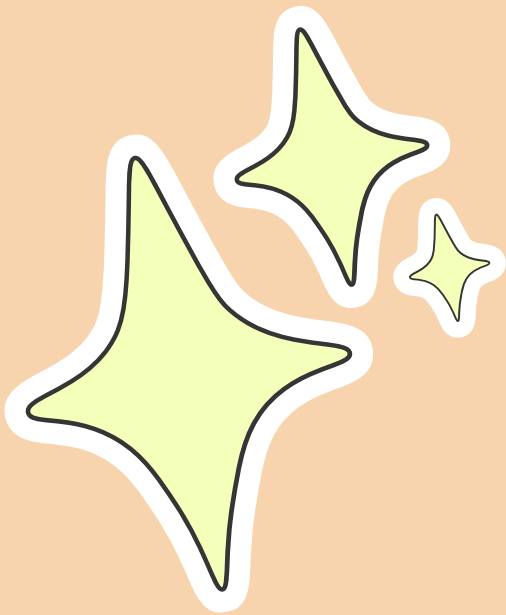
¹⁶ Robins et al. 2014

¹⁷ Wisner & Starzec 2015



MODULE 4: **Communicating & Sharing**

Completion time: 50 minutes





Completion time: 5 minutes

4.1 YOUR Communication & Sharing.

Everyone is facing their own difficulties and struggles - even you are.

Recently, Nepal has placed more emphasis on identifying and treating mental health disorders in adolescents and children¹⁸

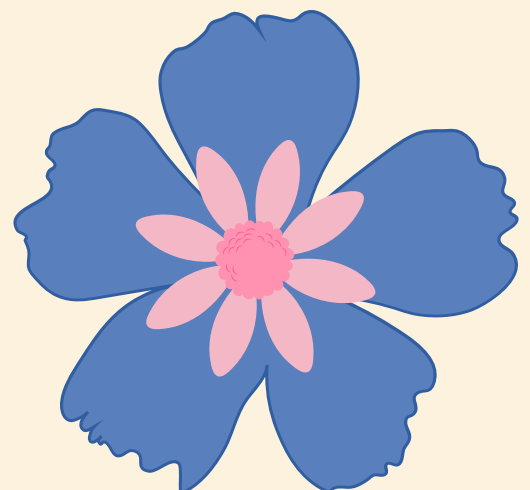
Whether it is a change in your family structure, separation from family or parental neglect, all of these increase risk of mental health problems¹⁸

At times like these, communicating with friends and people we trust is essential. There have been numerous studies highlighting the importance of communicating and sharing your emotions appropriately ¹⁹

Hiding and suppressing one's emotions can lead to higher rates of anxiety, insomnia, and other unhealthy outcomes. Actively listening to the people around you and communicating your feelings is a step to maintaining **good mental health.**

¹⁸ Chaulagain et al. 2019

¹⁹ Butler et al. 2013



4.2 Ways to Communicate - Be Kind to YOUR Mind

Understand your feelings

Before you can express your feelings, you have to understand what you are feeling. Our current busy and noisy lives can cloud our judgement and make it hard to connect with our feelings. To help, you can try:

- setting aside some quiet time to reflect
- taking 10 minutes per day to write down your thoughts
- going for a walk helps me get clarity

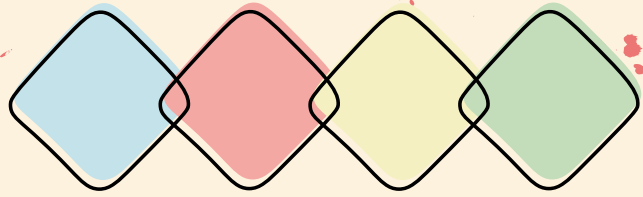
Remember there is no wrong way to feel. You can feel sad, angry, scared, happy - they are all valid. Try to identify your feelings and explore what's happening in your life that could affect these feelings.

Process your feelings

It is important to process your thoughts so you know when to seek help. To do this you can try:

- keeping a journal
- seek a supportive friend
- validate your feelings by speaking them out loud and/or in writing

This will help to calm yourself and create clarity on your emotions.



Be cautious

Remember, **your feelings are important** and should not be shared with people who do not care for you. Begin by sharing small amounts of thoughts that you feel are safer to share. After this, if you feel the person you are communicating with is receiving it well - share a little bit more.

Be direct

Effective communication is clear and direct. It is easier to be direct when you know what you are communicating about. You can try 'I' statements to express your feelings and needs. A simple formula for an 'I' statement :

I am feeling _____ (angry and alone) because _____ (you've been busy with work this week) and I'd like _____ (to schedule more time to spend together).

Be a good listener

Communication is not all about **WHAT** you are saying. A big part of communication is actively listening to the feedback you receive. Others might be able to view your difficulties from a different perspective, which can help solve issues. Listening builds trust and openness which is valuable to maintain good mental health.

Active listening is:

- listening attentively to the person speaking
- understand what they are saying
- respond appropriately (verbal and non-verbal cues)
- reflect on what's being said



4.3 BE KIND TO YOUR MIND

TIPS FOR SHARING & COMMUNICATING



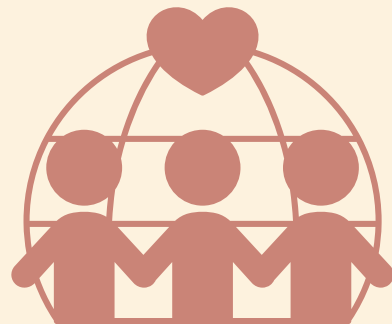
Active Listening



**Make yourself
available to talk
if needed**



**No Judgement &
Gossiping**



Be empathetic



**Do further
research / let
an adult know**

4.4 ACTIVITY:

UNDERSTANDING EMPATHY

Sympathy

understanding from your own perspective.

Empathy

putting yourself in the other person's shoes and understanding **WHY** they are feeling this way

EMPATHY or SYMPATHY???

Indicate which of the two scenarios are showing EMPATHY and which one is showing SYMPATHY



Just Listening

OR



Giving unasked advice



Feeling pity without truly understanding the other person's feelings

OR



Putting yourself in the other person's shoes



Experiencing similar feelings of one another

OR



Acknowledge another person's situation

Take a 3 minutes to complete the task on the left by yourself. Once you have finished the task, discuss your answers with your peers.

This task allows you to help better your understanding of how to talk to others and understand people who are in need or need advice.

4.5 HOMEWORK:

Direct Communication

To put what you have learnt into practice. Take some time at home to complete this task which will help with communicating your feelings and help you take the next step in looking after your wellbeing. **You can write this extract on following page.**

Dear (yourself, friends, family)_____,

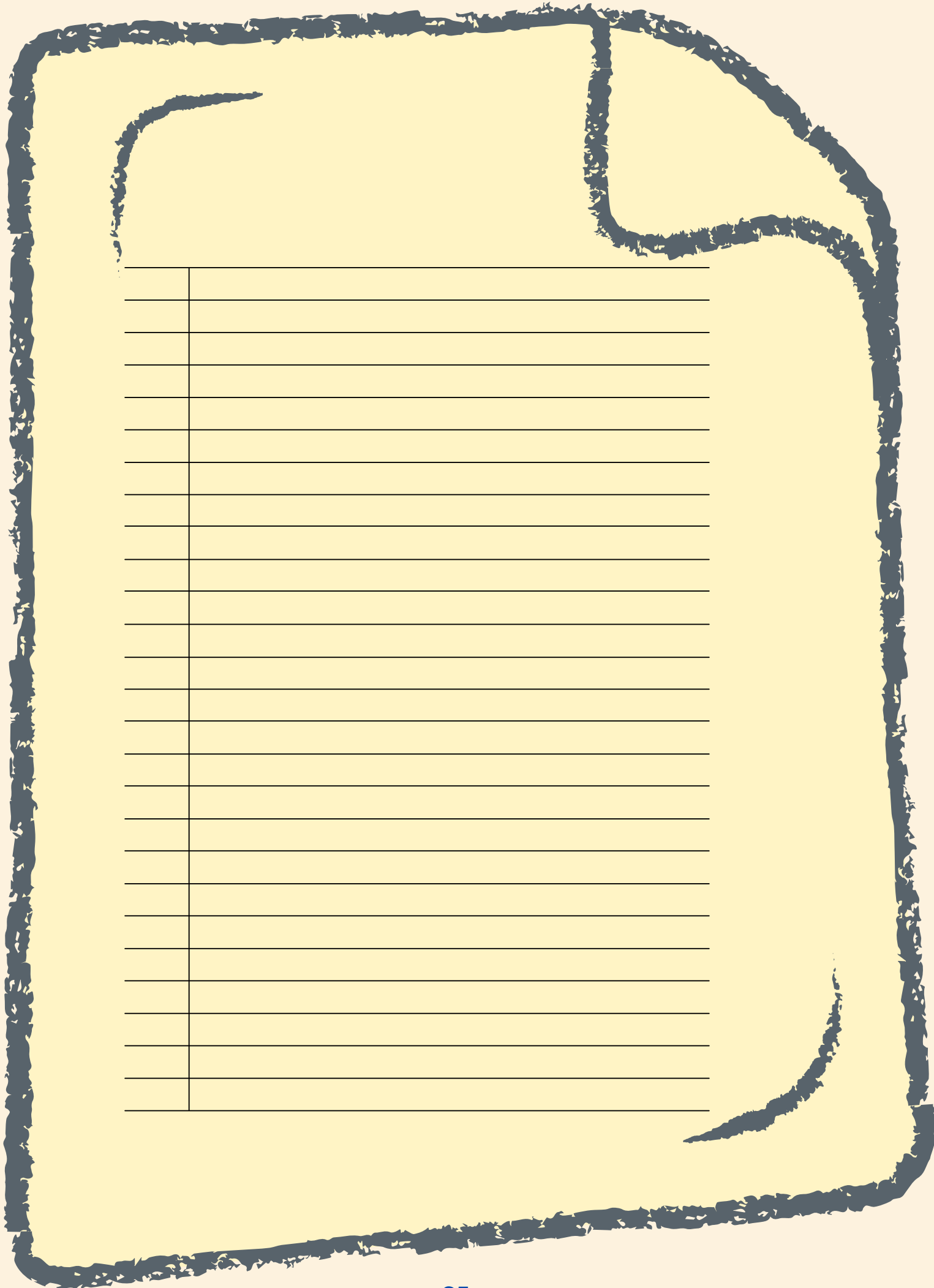
For the past (day/week/month/year/_____), I have been feeling (unlike myself/sad/angry/anxious/ moody/lonely/hopeless/fearful/overwhelmed/ distracted/confused/stressed/empty/restless_____).

I have struggled with (family changes/ family separation/parental neglect/ lack of energy/inability to concentrate/alcohol or drug use or abuse/ environmental changes/feeling worthless/paranoia/nightmares/ bullying/overwhelming sadness/losing friends/unhealthy friendships/unexplained anger or rage/isolation/sexual assault/death of a loved one/_____).

By sharing this I feel (nervous/anxious/hopeful/embarrassed/ mature/self-conscious/relieved/_____), but I'm telling you this because (I'm worried about myself/it is impacting my daily life /it is affecting my friendships/I am afraid/I don't want to feel like this/I don't know what to do/I don't have anyone else to talk to about this/I trust you/_____).

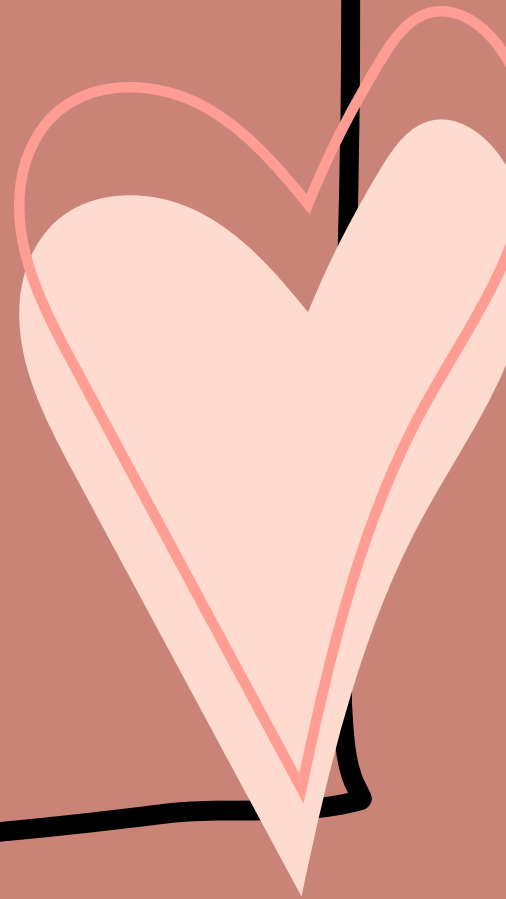
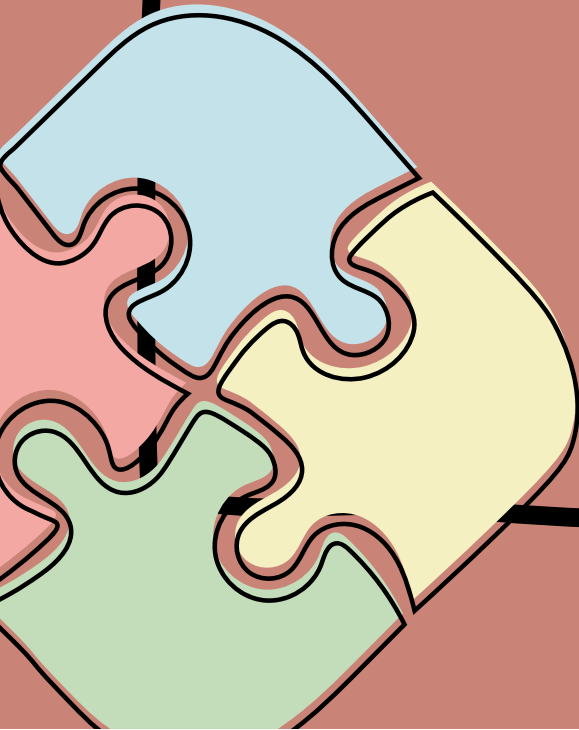
The next step I would like to take is (to talk to you about it in person/ talk to a doctor or therapist/talk to a guidance counsellor/talk to my teachers/talk about this later/create a plan to get better/talk about this more/find a support group/_____) and I need your help.

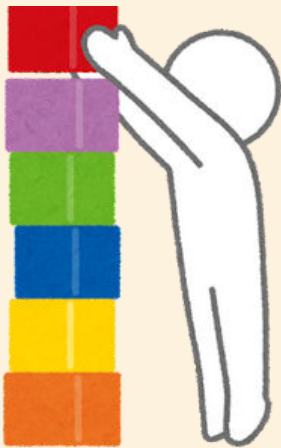
Sincerely,
(Your name_____)



MODULE 5: Self Awareness & Wellbeing

Completion time: 40 minutes





5.1 YOUR Self Awareness.

Self-awareness

is knowing about yourself²⁰. This means you have to be focused on your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and understanding the reasons why you think and behave the way²² you do

Self awareness also includes knowing how others see you²⁰

Why we need it?

We have to recognise the challenges and problems the Youth face everyday, with the primary focus to strengthen the mental health of the Youth²¹. You are our priority²¹.

To help the Youth, self-awareness helps us understand ourselves more²². By knowing yourself more, you will be more comfortable and confident²². This will lead to making decisions that will positively impact your life²². It's important that you take care and value yourself and by understanding more of yourself will lead you to improve your wellbeing²²

²⁰ Brown & Ryan 2003.

²¹ Durbur 2015.

²² Richards et al., 2010.

5.2 ACTIVITY:

Improving self-awareness

Take **10 minutes** and think about what has happened during the week or the day that made you feel happy, sad, angry, confused or overwhelmed.

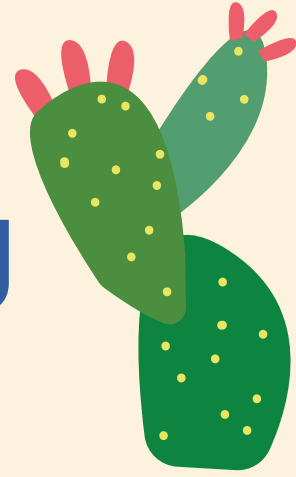
Now, think about why you felt that way and write down the things that made you feel the way you felt.

By doing this activity, you will be able to practice in being more aware of the things around you and think about why you may be feeling a certain way and **understand yourself more**.



The illustration shows two white notepaper sheets with horizontal orange lines. Each sheet has a piece of orange tape at the top. The sheets are positioned on a light orange background. To the left of the sheets is a large, irregular orange shape. To the right is a large, irregular orange shape with a teal-colored shape inside it. A thin white line curves around the teal shape.

5.3 Wellbeing in COVID-19.



With COVID-19, the Nepal Government struggled to prioritise providing extended needs such as counselling, mental health, protection services ²⁴ .

As of this, many initiatives such as 'RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT' and other youth networks aim to raise awareness on mental health issues for the youth, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak ²⁴

As a result, its important to continue to fight for each other and especially the Youth who are affected by COVID-19 and mental health.

How do we protect our wellbeing?

We suggest a list of things you can do to help your self not only during the pandemic but for your future wellbeing as well.

Consistent and regularly mental and physical movement and activity will increase productivity and overall wellbeing ²³ .



²³ Diamond & Byrd 2020.

²⁴ Vazirov 2022.

5.4 Ways to protect your wellbeing!

Walk around



regularly to clear your mind and help blood circulate in your body. Staying active is important in looking after your mental wellbeing.

Create a routine and stick to it



by getting good sleep, which will give you more energy to be productive - this will create healthy habits.

Use a journal



to write down how you feel so you can better understand the feelings you experience at the time. This book you keep should be a secure place to share all your thoughts and emotions - this will help you understand more about yourself.

Stay away from distractions



to use your time more productively. You will feel more better when you limit screen time and surfing the internet. Social media can affect your self-esteem and heavily impact your emotions.

5.4.1: You may be already doing these things in your life or even more.

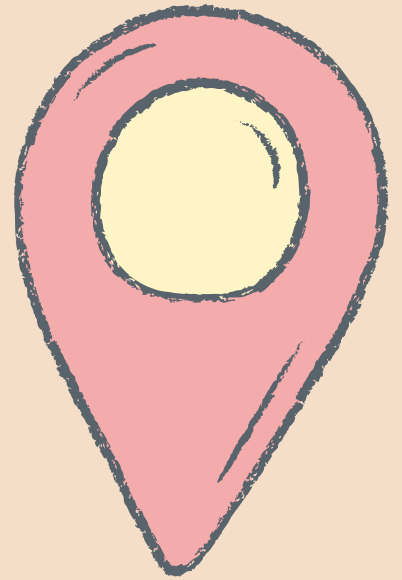
Take 5 minutes to think about what you have been doing to protect your wellbeing and things you could be doing to protect it even more.

[illegible]

Completion time: 10 minutes

5.5 TAKE HOME :

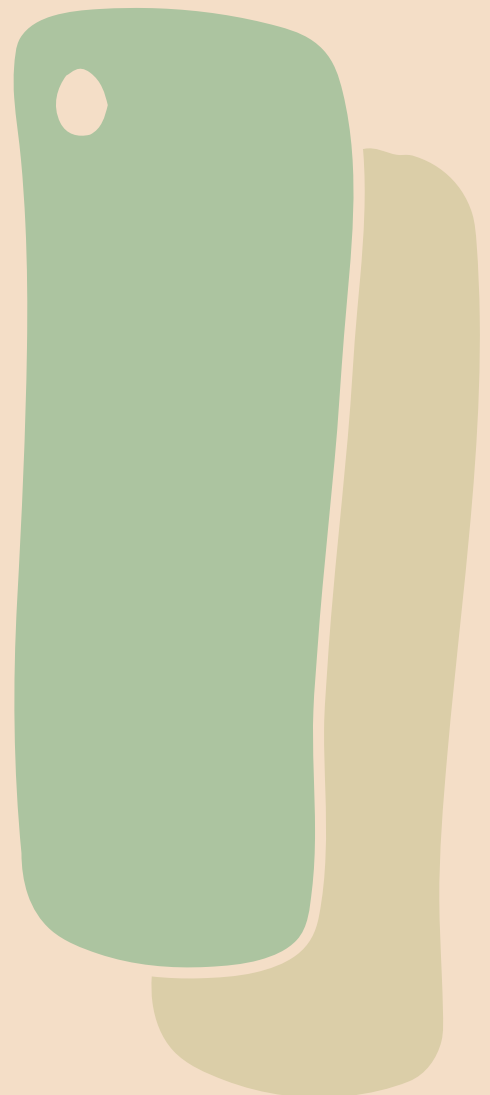
What is YOUR Commitment?



**What are your personal commitments to mental health?
Spend 10 minutes to think and write down below the
things you want to commitment yourself to.**

For example, "I will be committed to bettering my meditation, I will regularly go for mental health check ups, commit to improving physical health, I will share and talk and open up about mental health more". These could be some of the things you can commit yourself to and begin the journey to bettering your mental health.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



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