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ISSUE 12



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/8

### NEWS AND POLITICS

#### RACISM AND RHEUMATIC FEVER

Bethany Langton discusses how blatant racism is allowing rheumatic fever to persist.



/12

### COMMUNITY

#### HOW TRUTHFULLY DO YOU REPLY TO A 'HOW ARE YOU'

Naa-Eun discusses the stigma around conversations on mental health in New Zealand..



/23

### FEATURES

#### BORDERLINE, BABY

Sally discusses her experiences with Borderline Personality Disorder and ways of managing it.

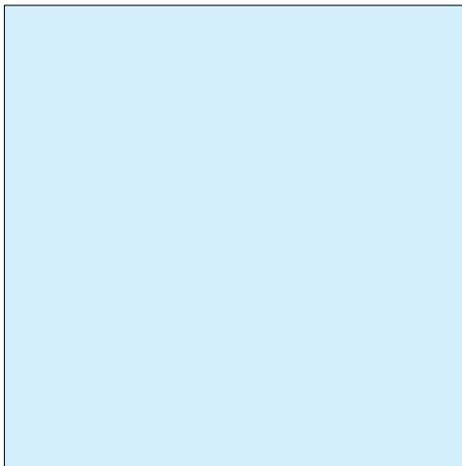


/28

### ARTS AND LIFESTYLE

#### COMEDY FEST

Various authors review the events at 2018 New Zealand International Comedy Festival.



/30

### SCIENCE

#### THE SCIENCE BEHIND MDD IN ADOLESCENTS

Rushika discusses the effects of depression on the teenage brain.



/35

### COLUMNS

#### PRUNE JUICE

Sherry tells us why her column has been titled prune juice.




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## EDITORIAL

with Helen Yeung and Jasmin Singh

# WINDING DOWN



**Jasmin:** Wow can you all believe it's already the final week of semester?! It feels like time has just flown past. We're both proud of what we've been able to accomplish during the past 12 weeks. And are both looking forward to having a break as well assessing what we can do better over the next 12 issues for semester. If you have any feedback regarding what you would like to see more of, or any themes for next semester email us! I'm ready to move back home at this point in the year. It's cold, rainy, miserable, and gets dark at 5, ew. I'm ready for warm, humid weather, lush green mountains and good food. Also durian to drive away pain.



**Helen:** To be honest I've just been cooped up at home doing assignments, what a life. Highlight of the week though, I learnt to make two new pastas from YouTube and my dad said they were both at least 8/10. He's a harsh critic, and 8/10 is an extremely high rating. He deserves to be on Masterchef really. Reflecting on this semester though, time has really flown by. Despite the ups and downs we've gone through, I'm still really proud of us for all we've done and the changes we've implemented to make this magazine into a space of inclusion. Whoever said being a Craccum Editor was easy, they're lying, it's been an uphill struggle for the both of us along with balancing our studies.



**Jasmin:** As we're now in week 12 everyone must be feeling the pressure of exams and assignments (not me though hahaha no exams for the masters student just the constant nagging thoughts about my thesis - MA students out there know the feels!). Because of this we thought it would be timely that our mental health themed issue coincide with AUSA's stress less week. We have some amazing mental health related content this week. One of my personal favourites is Naa-Eun's piece asking us to consider how we automatically respond to the question 'How are you?' and often don't listen out for a real answer. The other piece that I would look out for is the Sarah's Mental Health > Grades piece which discusses the benefits of a gap semester. As someone who went straight from school to uni and didn't take a gap semester/year at any point during my study this really gave me some food for thought.



**Helen:** Going back to the mental health theme this week, adapting to the editor role this year has definitely been a challenge. There have been instances where both of us have been close to meltdowns or were in desperate need of taking a break to recalibrate. This was something I overlooked when I was in undergrad, but looking after yourself is important, whether its going on a short walk to do some catspotting or treating yourself to some chocolate. I'm particularly keen for all of you to check out Sally's article on her experiences of BPD, she is amazing and her art is amazing e.g. the cover this week! Anyways, take care of yourself during the break, hope you look forward to our editorials next semester.

# WORLD NEWS

## Human wellbeing linked to better forest coverage

BY NAOMI SIMON-KUMAR

Forest coverage is increasing across the globe due to human wellbeing and social development, researchers have found, pointing specifically to rising incomes and improved perceptions of national wellbeing as key drivers of the growth. The findings herald good news for environmental groups, as increased forest cover helps mitigate the effects of excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

"When people are feeling good, it benefits forests," says one principle researcher, Professor Kauppi of the University of Helsinki. "It is not just income. When a society works properly then deforestation automatically seems to disappear, and society reaches a sort of a balance with the forests. Once a country has a decent life, they do not deplete forests they want to protect them. When livelihoods come from other sources not subsistence farming, then marginal lands are abandoned and people just leave the forests to grow back."

This has been observed in numerous tropical countries, as well as parts of Europe, the US, China and New Zealand. India has been recognised as one guiding example of the 'green revolution', having improved the extent of its forests substantially between 1970 and 2010 while its population nearly doubled. ■

## Malaria rates rise in Venezuela, a nation that had nearly eradicated the disease

BY CAMERON LEAKEY

Venezuela is facing a public health crisis of escalating magnitude as rates of malaria infection increase across the country. Despite the global trend that shows malaria rates are decreasing across the globe, Venezuela is now seeing a rapid increase in malaria cases with a 69% increase in cases between 2016 and 2017.

Venezuela was once a global leader in malaria eradication, with the disease being virtually 'wiped out' between the 1960s and 1980s. Venezuela is also struggling with other indicators of health, with maternal mortality rates increasing alongside rates of tuberculosis and HIV infection. The failing healthcare system is being attributed to a lack of political involvement in fixing the issues in the health system, with the alternative system of health clinics in the country's slums proving to not be as effective in creating proper health outcomes. Venezuela also faces significant barriers to healthcare provision access in combating the rise of diseases. In particular, access to malaria medications, insecticides and mosquito nets is proving difficult. In the meantime, Venezuela remains only one of four countries in the world where the rates of Malaria are increasing, not decreasing. ■



## Mexico's Supreme Court Rules that Abortion Care for Victims of Rape is a Human Right

BY MILLI ABRAHAMS

In 2015 and 2016, two underage girls who became pregnant as a result of rape in the Mexican states of Morelos and Oaxaca were denied abortion services. They decided to take state authorities to court to sue for the right to be granted access to reproductive care, and in a cornerstone ruling this month, the Supreme Court of Mexico ruled in favour of the two girls – legislating abortion access as a human right for rape survivors. Public health institutions in Mexico are required to comply with the new ruling.

The current legal landscape around abortion care is not standardised across the country. Each state and its corresponding institutions determine the extent of reproductive healthcare, including local laws and procedure around enforcement. Consequently, many victims of abuse who seek abortion services are denied care or convicted despite federal jurisdiction guaranteeing their right to access.

Regina Tamés, executive director of Information Group on Reproductive Choice said, "This sets a precedent for the whole country. This gives us hope and empowers victims of rape because they know now that the court is on their side." ■

# Incels: The Lethal Black Pill

BY HAYDEN NOYCE

CONTENT WARNING: VIOLENCE, MISOGYNY

What's an incel? This has been an unavoidable headline as "normies" have been faced with in the last few weeks. After clicking on various links, you may come to realise that the true question being asked is – "Are they dangerous?" The short answer is that incels – or 'involuntary celibates' – certainly can be. Do not be mistaken, however, in believing that the incel movement is promoting a coherent or legitimate ideology. Or that it is even an actual community. Instead it exists in the shadows of the internet, in forums of anonymous posts expressing hatred toward women, blaming them for their perceived 'low status' in society. This then tragically comes to the surface of our attention through violent mass shootings, the majority of which are perpetrated by a lone male in his twenties.

The term incel first appeared in Canada in the 1990s. It was coined by Alana, whose last name is not disclosed, as a way for people struggling to find connection to forge an online community of their own. An online community where they could create a support network based on mutual understanding and forge a positive identity for themselves. This is because, as Alana puts it: *"The concept of being a lonely virgin is not a nice identity. Finding a more friendly [sic] term helped people say, 'Hey, I belong to a group. I'm not alone.'"* Alana's objective to overcome this social stigma through the term was hijacked. Incel became a rallying cry on the internet for troubled men to espouse their extreme misogyny online, under the veil of anonymity.

Incels have most notably appeared on online forums, including Reddit and 4chan among others, as well as Incels.me, a board dedicated solely to incels. A quick delve into these sites presents a dehumanising and cynical worldview. Simply put, people are viewed as commodities. Women are degraded, seen as nothing more than sexual objects who are universally immoral and promiscuous. Incels believe that they are entitled to sex and are being denied this self-proclaimed right due to their inadequate appearance and status. Meaningful relationships do not enter the equation; it is only domination and submission that govern interactions between men and women. Incels have adopted familiar internet terms such as 'Chad', to describe a sexually successful male, the female equivalent of the alpha male in this hierarchy described as a 'Stacy'. Regarding themselves as betas whose natural right to sex has been denied, it is not uncommon to see incels compare women to Nazis, for practising 'eugenics'. Incels believe that these troubling and hugely destructive falsehoods are the stripped-down truth,

representing a social system that is weighed against them. They oppose so-called 'White Knights' and any kind of "moralising" on their forums, thus creating an echo-chamber within which they reinforce their toxic incel ideology.

This cynical belief that they are seeing the world for what it really is, underlies the 'manosphere'. A loosely defined internet subculture of men's rights activism and pick-up artistry. A prominent forum is *The Red Pill*, a subreddit on Reddit – this being a reference to the film, *The Matrix*, where the protagonist takes a red pill, which reveals the uncomfortable truth of reality. With 267,000 subscribers, the subreddit defines itself as a: *"Discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men."* Users on this forum differ from incels in that they strive to become 'alphas' themselves. Incels, on the other hand, appear to completely condemn women and society as a whole. The incel subreddit was removed by the site last November, on the grounds of hate speech and for inciting violence and rape. Incels refer to themselves as having taken the 'Black Pill' – an extension of the misogyny of the rest of the 'manosphere' and a hopeless acceptance of their position.

Some incels strike out – violently. What sparked the recent headlines was a tragic attack in Toronto on the 24th of April earlier this year. A 25-year-old man deliberately drove onto a busy downtown sidewalk in the middle of the day. 10 people were killed and 18 injured. He was later apprehended by the police and arrested. Immediately before carrying out the mass murder, the assailant posted a status on Facebook. After declaring himself a militant incel, he stated: *"The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys!"* He then referred to the 2014 Isla Vista killer, also a self-defined incel, in an idolising manner, stating: *"All hail the Supreme Gentleman."*

The 2014 Isla Vista killer murdered 6 people in Santa Barbara, California on May 23rd, before ending his own life. He initially targeted a sorority house before continuing the killing spree on the streets, eventually taking his own life. Shortly before this, the 22 year old, distributed a 141 page 'manifesto', describing in detail his frustration at his virginity and hatred toward women. This appears to be the motive for his crimes, which he planned as a *"Day of Retribution."* An infamous video was also posted online, where he lamented how he had *"never even kissed a girl"*. The video concludes with him saying, *"I'm the perfect guy and yet you throw yourselves at these obnoxious men instead of me, the supreme gentleman."*

The origins of such violence are evident on certain threads of Incels.me. One particular thread is entitled: *"[Serious] Why don't incel spree shooters acid face victims instead of shooting them?"* The original poster of the forum, named 'big nose, bug eyes; loathsome f\*\*\*\*t', suggests that more pain can be given from the disfigurement of women, as they *"should instead experience life through an incel's eyes"*. The thread then ends on one poster saying: *"What woman would let any of us get close enough to throw acid in the first place."*

Although this issue seems endemic to our Internet age, in 1989, a 25-year-old man killed 14 women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, before taking his own life. As a targeted hate crime against women and feminists, it was the worst mass shooting in Canadian history. Consequently, tighter gun control regulations were introduced. Assessment of the perpetrator pointed to psychiatric causes as well as deep-rooted misogyny that found particularly violent expression in terrorist attacks. Whether psychological or political, or both, the term incel and its associated forums have now given these acts of terror a name and a platform. As we continue to see, there are real life societal implications for this ideology in its intent to do harm that must be addressed. This extremely distorted view of reality is built upon on a pathological hatred – not just of women but themselves. ■

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# Emmanuel Macron, My Jupiterian President

BY ULYSSE BELLIER

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2017, France elected Emmanuel Macron as President. Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* played as he walked alone between the wings of the Louvre Palace; in front of the stage, people were shouting his name, brandishing pictures of him. My uni buddy was there at the time with her friend, both wearing t-shirts with Macron's Party slogan 'En Marche!' (translated as 'On the Move!'). The park was packed with joyful supporters. Three years earlier, he was known to a few. He was now under the formerly royal Louvre castle, addressing the people of its Republic after a spring of intense campaigning.

Today, as Europe and the northern hemisphere are getting the leaves that New Zealand is losing as we head into winter months, France looks back at the first year of its new president.

I met Emmanuel Macron a few years back on a TV screen, in the newsroom of a French daily, *Libération*. I happened to visit the newspaper the day he was appointed cabinet minister for the economy, in 2014. Most journalists in the room were surprised at the announcement. On the cover of the next day's paper, he wore a dark-tied pinstripe suit. For many including myself, he was a young pro-business adviser to the French President Hollande – a former investment banker who persuaded the socialist president to lead a (limited) liberalisation of the economy.

A year after his own election as a candidate "from the right and from the left", these policies are no longer limited. The Parliament, where his party got a solid majority, liberalised labour laws, removed a famous tax on the wealthiest citizens, set up a reformed university entrance selection process, launched the end of the railway monopoly system, and increased taxes for retired people. At the same time (an expression Macron cherishes) he increased allocations for adults with disabilities, planned to decrease property tax, ended the state of emergency that followed the terrorist attacks, and also organised to fund a 500€ (NZ\$850) culture pass for 18-year-olds.

When I arrived in New Zealand ten months ago, many asked me, "What do you think about your new President, Macron? He's better than le Pen right?" Yes, that's correct. From my own experience, he is more criticised in France than overseas. The Time Magazine's cover on Macron last November described him as "The Next Leader of Europe" with one condition: "If Only He can Lead France." But we see it the other way around.

So far, no one has managed to stop his wave of domestic reforms, even if many are strongly opposed to them. Since March, some universities have seen protests by students who are against the selection process at universities, with exams postponed or cancelled at several institutions because of the blockades. Railway workers organise two days of national strikes a week since April to protest against the government's vision for the railway system. The left's politicians organise rally after rally. None of these actions made the government move a single inch toward the opposition.

The French system has very few checks and balances. Elected in by 66% of the voters in the second-round of voting and leader of a strong majority in the House, Macron's decisions are soon laws. Even though he secured just 24% percent on the first voting round, he is able to get basically anything approved by a House majority.

On the international stage, he repeats continuously: "France is back". In New Zealand, many of the students I talked to saw him as the French Justin Trudeau: young, liberal and open, certainly a rather positive image. While President Trump went about saying "America First", with Theresa May engulfed in Brexit talks and Chancellor Merkel deeply weakened, the French President appeared as the new saviour on the Atlantic system, a sort of French Obama.

After the United States pulled out of the Paris

climate agreement, he declared, in English, "Make our planet great again". Months later in April this year, he hugged and spend two days with his new mate President Trump, showcasing their closeness at every occasion. Days later, his dear Donald decided to withdraw the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal, a decision Macron tried to challenge during his time in Washington. In Europe, he called for a strong, more social Europe. But the room is empty. Italy is forming an anti-Brussels government; Angela Merkel's party refuses any stronger European social policy, and London looks away.

Macron's diplomacy is bright, proactive and in English. But, at home as elsewhere, results are still to be seen. In the meantime, he sculpted a new image of the Elysée Palace. The former adviser is haunted by President Hollande's choice to be seen as a "normal" president. He advocates a "Jupiterian presidency" and refuses the traditional Bastille Day interview in France, claiming his "complex thought" is too complex for journalists to understand.

The graduate in philosophy believes his role is to fill a "void" in the political system. "Democracy is not self-sufficient," Macron said three years ago in an interview. "In French politics, the king's image is absent, and I think fundamentally that the French people did not want him dead." If his recent book is titled 'Revolution', his highly personalised style of power seems to throw us back to the Versailles monarchy. ■

**“The Parliament, where his party got a solid majority, liberalised labour laws, removed a famous tax on the wealthiest citizens, set up a reformed university entrance selection process, launched the end of the railway monopoly system, and increased taxes for retired people.”**



# Racism: The Foundation of Rheumatic Fever

BETHANY LANGTON DISCUSSES HOW BLATANT RACISM IS ALLOWING RHEUMATIC FEVER TO PERSIST AND CAUSE LIFELONG DAMAGE TO NEW ZEALANDERS. CONTENT WARNING: USE OF RACIAL SLURS

Rheumatic fever might just be a medical buzzword that you have heard, so here is a TL;DR version of what it is. Rheumatic fever develops from a simple sore throat in some people, causing the body to 'attack' and damage its own cells, thinking they are foreign. Left untreated, rheumatic fever can recur and in some go on to cause heart valve damage. These people need open heart surgery to fix damage, and people can die from this being untreated (about 160 per year, or so). The disease can be treated before this point with antibiotic injections. Rates of rheumatic fever in New Zealand are also scarily disproportionate. In comparison to Pakeha, individuals of Maori descent are 30 times more likely to get rheumatic fever, while Pacific Islanders are 50 times more likely.

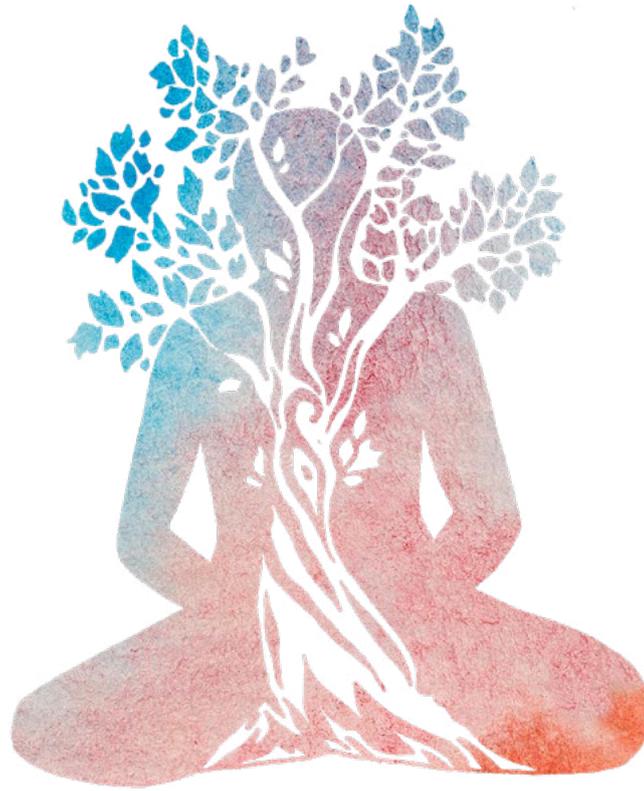
A University of Auckland study recently interviewed about 80 patients in hospital with rheumatic fever and also 33 healthcare professionals in these hospitals. They were wanting to 'address knowledge gaps' to uncover why there is persistence of rheumatic fever inequity between ethnic groups in our country. Basically, they wanted to know why government funding for targeted health promotion programmes isn't decreasing the rates of rheumatic fever in Maori and Pacific people. It was uncovered that some GP's and other healthcare providers (who it is assumed are tackling the disease) were actually perpetuating the disease by causing mistrust in the healthcare system. You know what they say about assuming...

For example, one Maori woman came to her GP with specific concerns of having rheumatic fever (note: she did). However, she was turned away without being diagnosed because she appeared 'white'. Woah. Not only did the GP shut down the woman concerns with out so much as listening, the GP also assumed the patients ethnicity. For starters, is it really too much to ask to get to know your patient and find out their ethnicity? Even if, giving benefit of the doubt here, the GP hadn't met this woman before, shouldn't we take all concerns (especially educated

concerns, where she had many of the tell-tale signs of rheumatic fever) seriously? Not only did this action prolong the diagnosis of rheumatic fever in this woman (potentially causing her to pass on the initial bacteria to whanau or friends), but it also planted a seed of distrust within this woman about healthcare providers. If her own GP doesn't take her concerns seriously, then where is she meant to go to get help and have her rheumatic fever concerns addressed?

There is also the individual who was referred to as a "coconut" while receiving hospital treatment for their rheumatic fever. This kind of overt racism is less common, but underlying racism is everywhere in our medical system. One paediatrician who was interviewed said you would have to be 'deaf, daft, and blind' not to see it on a regular basis in the hospital. When the people who are being discriminated against are also the people who have significantly higher rates of rheumatic fever (and rheumatic fever left untreated, at that matter) at what point do we say that it is not just a lack of education? At what point must we look inward for some solutions to the problem also?

Surely instead of using money to fund more advertisements targeting getting sore throats checked out for rheumatic fever, we instead use the money to better train GPs in cultural competency to address systemic bias, which will improve rates of diagnosis for Maori and Pacific Islander communities. Teaching people to recognise rheumatic fever is no use unless they are able to access effective diagnosis and treatment. But no amount of funding will change the underlying racism in our healthcare system. We need to be able to recognise our assumptions about people before we let them influence our thinking. Medical professionals need to call each other (or themselves!) out when they recognise discriminatory actions. ■



# Introducing: Mindfulness Works

*Emelia Masari* talks to *Glenda Irwin* a senior facilitator at Mindfulness Works on the importance of meditation.

## Tell us more about what *Mindfulness Works* is about?

The mission statement of *Mindfulness Works* is: "To significantly improve the mental health and well-being of all and to foster self-acceptance and self-love in all." *Mindfulness Works* has constantly met that vision year in and year out with over 500 people attending mindfulness courses every month. Mindfulness Meditation has been proven by medical science to have enormous benefits for the immune system and mental well-being. It is even known that mindfulness meditation extends telomeres (the compound structure at the end of chromosomes) - this is said to prolong life. Without going into the myriad of benefits regarding neuroscience, the immediate benefits of stress relief, or the great potentials of improved executive function makes mindfulness meditation worth it. Regular meditators will contest that

20 minutes of meditation a day creates a resilience in an individual that takes the edge of challenges. *Mindfulness Works* is committed to that experience of teaching from our own experiences and not from books or faith, as the primary way to developing tools for living a full and juicy life experience.

On the point of the collective versus the individual, if each of us can 'turn up for' our own needs and be the observer of our own part in living therein lies the potential for each and every person to contribute to the greater good for all. We practice for ourselves (no doubt that this is an individual pursuit) but in so doing; we greatly affect and improve the quality of connection and community for all.

The initial course 'Mindfulness Works Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation' has had consistently high levels of efficacy that has continually

be noted in ongoing feedback surveys. Since the onset of that course *Mindfulness Works* has since added 'M2.0', a second level course offered for those who have completed their intro level and want to continue their mindfulness practice with a group of peers. This course was written by myself for *Mindfulness Works*. Furthermore, mindfulness works provides a base at which people can source workplace trainings from skilled facilitators. And reach one to one therapy offered by Mindfulness Works facilitators in their own right. *Mindfulness Works* has become a source of efficacy proven mindfulness trainings and therapies to significantly contribute to the mental health and well-being of all.

## What inspired you to become a part of the organisation?

My own inspiration in joining *Mindfulness Works* is my journey in teaching

mindfulness to children. I had been amongst the first, endeavouring to bring mindfulness to school children. My own son is gifted and it had been terribly difficult for him to find belonging among his peers. As my consultancy with children continued, I found the need really lay in reaching parents of children. Perceived 'normality of family life' is unique to each child. To create a lifestyle that included meditation and sensory observation become increasingly dependent upon having parents model mindful living. Thereafter children found such comfort and self-ease. I was offered the opportunity of setting up Mindfulness Works Auckland alongside my partner Chris Irwin, and so I became far more involved in this mindfulness for adults as a result. I am pleased to say that there are now well-established avenues for mindfulness practices to be taught in schools, and so I feel my path was well diverted.

To this day, I remain in awe of Karl Baker, who owns *Mindfulness Works* and wrote the Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation, for having brought about this incredible piece of wellness support to the many thousands of people he has reached. What's more, the many teachers that have offered these 4 one-hour lessons, have given their every effort to support and grow wellness for participants, across the breadth of New Zealand and now in Australia also.

As a comment on society, mindfulness has been around for many hundreds (over two millennia) of years. There is nothing new under the sun that is called mindfulness! Mindfulness is the observing nature that reveals clarity and further potential. Personally, I feel that there is a growing need for mindfulness, which is a core skill to valued living. If we can wake up before we find ourselves grasping for a 'life buoy' we avoid our sinking beneath the waves. Mindfulness has been that for me - my life has ups and downs, but my observance allows for action. Society needs this tool and it has become increasingly apparent. Though we are in terribly troubling times we are also, wondrously becoming all the more equipped to create change.

### **3) Do you have any advice on how students at the University of**

### **Auckland can decrease stress and improve mental health?**

Take up meditation. The time spent still will equate to productivity. Leave multitasking for the generation that was the 1980s. Do what you enjoy. In joy lays excellence, remembering we don't have to be excellent in all things.

- Exercise - the body will love the attention.
- Eat well - let food be thine medicine and medicine be thine food.
- Identify your values - not your goals. We cannot live a goal; but we can live our values on the way to our aspirations.

Live with presence for others in your heart - when you listen to people they feel heard - listening is not a passive exercise its impactful. To create connection is to avoid isolation. Its isolation that is bad for the mind and brain. SMILE out LOUD!

In my capacity as senior facilitator for *Mindfulness Works* and in my consultancy as therapist, I have met hundreds of young people struggling with anxiety. Sadly, our current times have created so much potential for us all that we are now a wash with fears that we will not meet or will miss in some way - our 'only chance'. It seems so sad to me that this is the experience of people during their prime of life. I suggest that you can make the most profound contribution to your generation by becoming a mindfulness practitioner and by sharing your experiences. We have so much opportunity to do this now. Blog, advise, offer an ear - never stay silent when you see someone who might benefit from these few simple words: 'It's OKAY. But not NOW'. Be courageous and be the change you want to see come about. The humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers said it so well: 'The ISSUE is how we respond to the issue.'

### **Is mindfulness meditation limited to only being practiced at courses, and to who can meditate?**

Mindful meditation can be done anywhere, at any time and at any age. 'Mindfulness' is in fact a mistranslation. From the ancient word 'sati'

mindfulness should really be 'collectiveness' or remembering. The key is to remember to practice. That is also what we find hard in our current 'time poor' lifestyles. One mindful breath is already a great beginning. Notice the full duration of the IN breath; and the full duration of the OUT breath. When nerves get the better of you, hold your own hand. Intentionally focus on the feeling of your hand in your hand - the warmth, the texture, the ease of grip... be in your body as opposed to being in your mind. And when your mind comes in, thank your mind but insist upon returning to the focus of your 5 senses: see deeply, hear acutely, smell intently, taste deliberately and touch reverently. It is simple, and never easy. It takes practice and determination. It is a new discipline. I often tell students that they should think of mindfulness as a new form of brushing their teeth. You wouldn't knowingly leave the house with bad breath, therefore don't leave with a cluttered/messy mind.

### **As a Mindfulness Works trainer, if you were granted one super power what do you think it would be and why?**

What a delightful question! And there is my answer. IF I was able to, I'd grant the power for all to see the joys that are here now. Alongside the exam nerves, the ailing parent, the financial difficulties or the terminal diagnosis - there are the joys; even tiny minute ones like the delight of a warm shower. In those moments are our lives passing every bit as much as the fears of the troubled mind. My journey has taught me that there are only two Intentions in life: Fear and Love. We are fearful a lot of the time - but the love lies so nearby. It just takes turning around to notice it - and in that moment; dwelling in those little wins are the potential for creating memory. Neuroscience tells us that it takes 15 seconds for a pleasant experience to pass into memory, and to embed in the hippocampus. When we draw on memories, create fantasies or experience pleasure - the exact same chemical response happens in the brain. If I could create a superhuman ability to hold on to the good that happens (as efficiently as the brain stem holds on to negative experiences) I think the world could change overnight. ■



# How Truthfully Do you Reply to a ‘How Are You?’

*Naa-Eun Kim discusses the stigma around conversations on mental health in New Zealand.*

These are my flow of thoughts after reading a New Zealand Herald article on the seriousness of New Zealand’s suicide issues (Bernadine Oliver-Kerby: “New Zealanders need to openly talk about suicide”). I/(she) dearly want to raise awareness by openly writing about the issues around mental health and wellbeing.

“And our men, dying at three times the rate of women, too staunch to talk or too fearful they won’t be heard?”

“We ask, but do we listen?”

“How are you?” It rolls off the tongue with ease yet rarely a thought is given to the reply.”

I always express how the phrases like “be a man” and “toughen up” are ridiculous when thrown at people, especially towards men themselves. Such instinctive actions like crying or expressing yourself are shunned down by those in society who see it as a weakness, who are too shallow to consider the importance of the individual’s well-being, or too cowardly to admit the importance themselves. “Be a man” shouldn’t imply “don’t cry”, “don’t feel pain”, “don’t care”, or “don’t express yourself”. These are completely normal parts of being a human, and

every single one of us have absolute rights to express ourselves and reach out to whoever we want, whenever we want.

At some point I developed a thought that my acts of complaining and talking out my emotions to my friends were signs of weakness; that I shouldn't behave like this and I should restrain myself, because these friends weren't like myself at all. But at a leadership seminar we were told of the difference between introverts and extroverts, which was an eye-opener for me. We were told that introverts gain energy from being by themselves, and extroverts gain energy by surrounding themselves with others. Like an epiphany, I realised that being a deeply-extroverted person was the reasoning for me to subconsciously lean towards others when I was feeling down. It wasn't being weak at all, but just another one of many indications that everyone is different, and there is nothing wrong with that. In truth, I and everyone else should be embracing that.

I don't consider people are 'strong' when they put a façade on and try convey to others that they are 'tough' and 'harmless'. The truly strong and respectful people are those who acknowledge that expressing oneself is not a weakness. It is rather a powerful ability for them to gain even more strength by sharing out their burden with others and getting their surrounding people to understand what they are going through. And I must admit that I lack in this ability, with the concern that approaching others is putting burden on them, assuming that they, themselves, are too occupied living their own lives and dealing with their own problems.

But this topic isn't just a problem within myself, but throughout society as a whole. Not quite to the point of suicide, but for many of those who even just want the mutual emotional support from their peers, family members, etc- they struggle to be heard because of the lack of society's ability to accept or deal with this side of emotions.

Even the most simplest and most often asked question like "how are you" are said at the majority of times as an automatic, light greeting; but how often do we genuinely regard how the other person responds to that?

Society needs to accept the idea of openly talking and listening to each other and become better equipped with dealing with emotions, so extreme

consequences like suicide will be avoided in the first place. The stats say that 500 New Zealanders die through suicide each year, and 2500 more attempt to take their own lives and fail. This is no joke, but we are more than capable of decreasing this rate. More than capable to not have our country's name appear on the top 50 of the World Health Organisation's list of global suicide rates.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is used to help those who have depression, and it involves three main aspects: sense of achievement, pleasure, and meaningful connection. The last point really resonated with me; describing a way to re-energise yourself by making these 'meaningful connections' with people around you. It opened me up to realise that within everyone, their subconscious selves actually appreciate the dependency they both seek from others, and also offer to these people. But maybe you might think that 'I would be a burden and therefore I shouldn't bother others in the first place', however if you may think it in another way- these people around you would actually be grateful that you made the decisions to open up to them. While doing wonders beyond simply making you feel better, they in return would feel huge satisfaction and pleasure knowing that they made a difference, even just by listening. So we all may begin to slowly open up to the idea that yes, it is okay to share parts of our lives with others because there will be those who care enough to be the genuine lending ear, and willing enough to carry some of our burdens with us. This is what our society should be moving towards.

In our lives, rather than our immediate worries such as academics, earning money, how we look to others, getting your hashtags on point, taking the perfect instagram photo, etc; we have to realise that there are so much more to ourselves and others that are worth more time and investment. Take regular breaks. Look out of your window and appreciate the views. Treat yourself to that \$5 Tank of the Day. Catch up with your dear friends. Ask how they are going (and mean it). Do something you have been meaning to try out. Make time to do things that you love doing. Enjoy life in aspects other than university.

Let's not be oblivious to each other's emotions underneath our everyday smiles, and put our wellbeing as priorities in life. ■

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# Why is it so hard to talk about mental health and how can we do it better?

*Lucy McSweeney discusses how we all play a role in improving public dialogue around mental health*

Mental health has over the last year become a part of the national conversation, especially when it comes to spending on public services; but on a more personal level, it's still a tricky conversation to have at home. Some believe it is a conspiracy of silence, but I would argue that the issues around bringing mental health into public discourse are inherently more complex than that.

While celebrities from Princes William and Harry to Selena Gomez are increasingly opening up about their struggles with mental health, it's hard to see whether this increased visibility is extending to the rest of the population. As someone who has experienced mental illness in the past, I can remember being fearful that I would be seen as less capable if I 'went public' about it. This is a common concern among those who experience mental illness that is inherently less of an issue for the very successful.

Despite us celebrating those who 'speak up', there is still a lot of stigma that comes from a lack of understanding. Beyond a 'you're so brave' comment on Facebook, how can we ensure that we show genuine support to those who are facing challenges with mental health in our communities that goes beyond the trite 'go for a walk and take it easy' and others of its ilk? This kind of advice really does come from a well-meaning place, but can in fact increase feelings of isolation by making it seem like tackling mental illness should be simple.

And for all the promotion of speaking more about mental health, there frankly are some better ways to speak about it than others. I have been taught that when sharing an experience of mental illness for the purpose of breaking the stigma, it's good to frame it as experiential, temporary, and recovery focussed. All this, however, depends on what your aim is for sharing your experience with others. I am all for a cry down the phone to my mum or sharing experiences of stigma – this can help others who may be feeling similar things to feel less

isolated and to challenge unconscious biases around mental illness in our communities.

There is certainly the 'depression should be no more difficult to talk about than diabetes or a broken wrist' camp. However, we associate anything to do with our brain – our personality, our mood, our strengths – as inherently more part of 'us' than we do our wrist, or our ability to produce insulin. For us to have informed discussions we need as a society to start separating the person from the problem. I find this especially necessary as a naturally happy person who has previously suffered from depression.

At risk of being labelled a 'snowflake', I would argue that for us to do this, the language we use around mental health really matters. The Mental Health Foundation favours phrases like 'people experiencing mental distress' and 'she has schizophrenia' rather than 'the mentally ill' and 'she's schizophrenic' to avoid labelling people. Furthermore, they suggest avoiding terms like 'victims of' and 'suffering from depression' that pass judgement on someone's quality of life, instead favouring 'experiences depression.' I think that parlance seems clunky, only because we don't yet regularly use it. Normalising this language allows us to have less stigmatising conversations about mental health. Even in reframing my own manner of talk, I found the change to be really helpful. By framing my depression as something outside of me, it became a challenge for me to tackle, rather than an inherent defect that defined me as a person.

On a personal level we can all fight the discomfort we feel and have healthy, open discussions about our mental health, ill or well – but there is still so much that must be done on an institutional level. I continue to be an advocate for comprehensive mental health education in our schools. This will improve the knowledge base our young people will have in understanding mental illness, helping them to stay well, look out for each other, and also seek help if they

need it.

Moreover, government funding needs to reflect election promises to improve the mental health system. Despite mental health being a central election platform for Labour, last week's budget had little specified funding allotted to extend mental health services. They did announce free counselling for 18-25s, but the details of this remain unclear. Will there still be limited numbers of appointments available? Will wait times be reduced? We need to see a complete shift in the paradigm of mental health services from short-term and crisis interventions, to a more preventative model of wellbeing. This would signal to us all as a country that mental illness is an issue that affects many, and not just those in crisis, hopefully encouraging more people to seek help before an issue reaches crisis level.

Ultimately, for us to see a reduction in stigma around mental health, we need to see an increase in understanding. This will need to involve a variety of people sharing their positive and negative experiences with mental health, alongside all of us creating a space in which individuals feel comfortable to do so. Our public health system needs to make available early intervention mental health care, so that a variety of talk therapies are accessible to all. Far from being an issue of the left, increased conversation about mental health should be something we all aim for. Reducing stigma can have real impact on the rate of seeking help for what is a real illness, and one of the leading causes of loss of quality of life.

I urge everyone to push through the initial awkwardness and have genuine conversations with those around them about mental health. Given that one in five young New Zealanders will experience a mental health problem by the time they are 25, if it isn't us, it is someone close to us. It can be scary to hear a friend facing such tough and invisible challenges, but you don't have to solve the problem, you just have to be there. ■



# Mental health > Grades

**Sarah Tribble** describes her experience taking a break from all the burdens of university life.

When I first began my tertiary education, I was burned out.

Graduating from high school, I was swimming in academic accolades. I was a hard worker, but I also loved school, and it showed: I was Proxime Accessit to Dux Litterarum in Year 13. I had achieved Excellence grades in every internal and 90% of externals for over two years. My teachers were promising me that I would love and thrive in a tertiary environment and offering thoughtful advice on what I should study, their unanimous consensus being that I should apply to the law school at the University of Auckland. What they didn't know was that my interest in law school lasted exactly the duration of an episode of *Suits*, my diligent work ethic had sputtered out halfway through NCEA Level 2, I had been struggling with anxiety and depression since I was 15, and I was also, most conveniently, going through a break-up that somehow managed to last for nine excruciating months.

What they didn't know, and what I had also yet to realise, was that I needed a break.

High school took it all out of me. I am blessed with natural intelligence, a fabulous memory, and a talent for bullshitting my way through essays, so the fact that I had given up on studying managed to slip under the radar because I was still meeting my regular grade curve. My education was the least of my priorities, and no one knew except me. By the time semester one of 2016 commenced, I still hadn't settled on what I wanted to study and if, in fact, I wanted to study at all. I ended up landing on a Bachelor of Arts with a major in English, which, as I had been an aspiring novelist for seven years, should have been a dream; but for the next three semesters, I was

miserable. Even those with the best time management skills can't juggle mental health, a university workload, a part-time job, and a shitty break-up and still manage to keep their shit together. And I do not have the best time management skills. When once I had been swimming, now I was drowning.

It hit me out of nowhere, really. Halfway through semester one of 2017, I woke up to the most stunning idea: *I should take a semester off*. Ten minutes later, I had dropped all of the papers I had enrolled in for semester two and was counting down the days until my last exam for semester one. For the first time in years, I was completely sure about something: I needed this. I was doing this. I was not going to waste this time.

The first day of semester two in 2017 was a weird one; for the first time in what felt like literally forever, I had all this free time to do whatever I wanted. I planned to spend it all reading, watching *Gilmore Girls*, and taking three-hour naps during the day with my new boyfriend, and I did all of those things in abundance. I was very well-rested for several months. However, my time away also became a form of therapy. In the style of *Eat, Pray, Love*, my 'gap semester' was the period of time in which I truly found myself.

Unburdening myself from my mountain of school-work meant I was finally capable of actually dealing with all of my problems. First up: my mental health. The most striking realisation I had during my gap semester was the fact that **it is really hard to improve your mental health if you are literally stressed all the time**, and removing one of the most prominent stressors, even if only for a few months, was the most helpful thing I could have done for myself.

University wasn't the only thing causing me stress, but it *was* the only thing that I could put on hold, and taking it out of the equation was an enormous relief. I finally had time to seek therapy and get my physical health in order. My top 'DIY' mental health tips and tricks that I learned during my gap semester are to get eight hours of sleep a night (emphasis on *night*; sleeping from 3am-11am doesn't count), eat three substantial meals a day, and do 30 minutes of exercise three times a week, none of which things I had time to properly incorporate into my schedule while I was bogged down with assignments. Another thing my gap semester gave me: good time management skills. They aren't cures by any stretch of the imagination, but they were a foundation for the cognitive behavioural and psychiatric therapy I would receive in the next eight months, and I swear by them.

For the longest time, I had based my entire identity around my academic successes, and this mentality was eating me from the inside out. Taking a step back meant I was able to see that there are more important things about me than how well I do in uni. My gap semester also taught me that getting good grades and being an intelligent person are not mutually exclusive phenomena. In my term away, I was getting to know (and also dating) one of the

smartest and most brilliant people I have ever met, and they're a high school dropout. It really put into perspective how much of my self-worth I was allowing my grades to assign, and realising this was a huge step forward.

As for that nine-month long break-up? The relationship was resolutely terminated in the late winter of 2016, but I remained bitter and resentful, and kept compartmentalising these emotions and ignoring them for months on end. They spilled out often, in random, furious outbursts to my bemused friends and spontaneous sobbing sessions upon the shoulder of my overwhelmed new partner, and so I was also dealing with the frustration that it had been months and I was seeing someone new and it still felt like I was grieving something fresh - until the minute I was free of my obligation to attend classes, and it all evaporated. Moving on is a process, and I wasn't allowing myself to go through the process properly; I was just shoving it away. I had to let myself feel all the hurt I had been caused, give it time to metastasize and then go into remission and then heal itself completely. The boy in question also went to Auckland University and I kept nearly running into him on campus; being off campus for a while was the physical equivalent of blocking him on all social media. Which I also did.

There is an incredible amount of pressure applied to young achievers to attend university right after they finish high school. If you don't, you're "wasting your potential" or "losing your momentum", and those threats scared the hell out of me, because I was terrified of letting down everyone who believed in me. My teachers, my parents, my friends; so many people expected great things from me, and I carried the weight of that on one shoulder and the burden of mental illness, lovesickness, and academic apathy on the other. When I finally stepped back and put uni on hold, I realised that it had been impossible to deal with all of these problems up until that point. Managing mental illness? Moving on from a break-up? Learning how to love yourself again? These all take time, and effort, and concentration, and I couldn't afford them any of these things when I was also writing ten essays a semester and reading 40 pages per class every week.

I've recommended the 'gap semester' concept to everyone I know. "If you can," I tell them, "take a break. Just one semester is enough." I know that taking a break isn't possible for everyone, and that I was incredibly lucky to be in the position to drop-kick my education and rest for eight entire months. I needed a break, and I took one, and that was the most valuable thing I learned between episodes of *Gilmore Girls* and three-hour naps: my happiness is more important than my GPA. ■

**“There is an incredible amount of pressure applied to young achievers to attend university right after they finish high school. If you don't, you're “wasting your potential” or “losing your momentum”, and those threats scared the hell out of me, because I was terrified of letting down everyone who believed in me.”**



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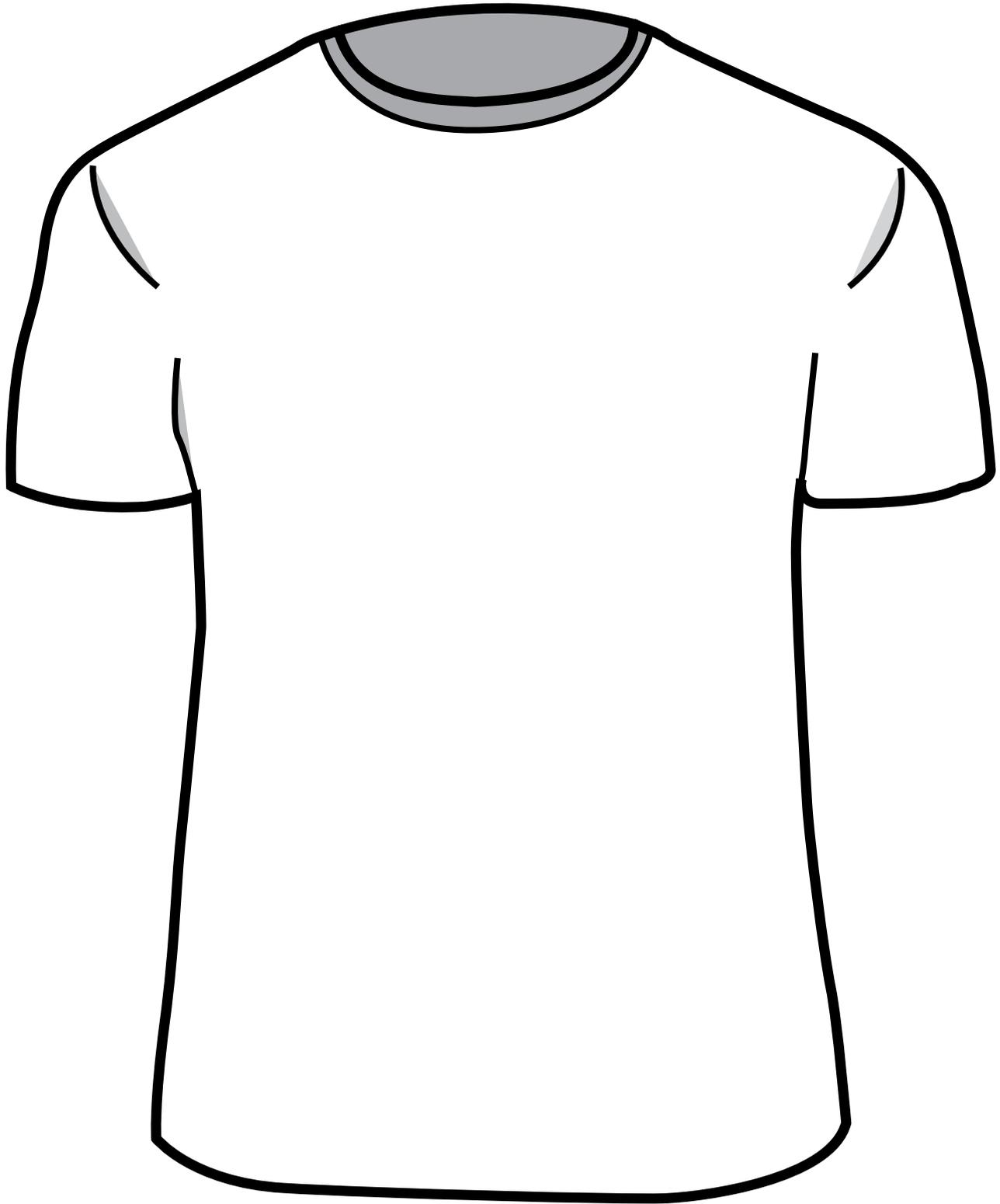
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# Sometimes slow-and-steady wins the race

*Veronica Shepherd* reminds those who feel like failures that all is not lost.

S-U-C-C-E-S-S, 7 letters and 2 syllables ingrained into every undergraduate's mind. Everyone knows the word, but few know what it actually means. I cannot claim that I know the exact meaning myself, yet I am trying. All I know is that I want to be associated with this mythical word.

I am a law student. Many will know what this does to the mind. My head is full of 'Should I's?' Should I be staying up till midnight doing my readings? Should I apply for graduate roles? Should I go to more networking events? Should I be finishing my essay, instead of writing this piece? Indefinite questions, with a multitude of answers. All of these, in my mind, lead me to a potential path to my 'success'. How-

ever, none of these aid my mental or physical health.

I have been in law school for nearly 5 years, and it is crazy the number of physical stress-related ailments I come across. Why have I heard of multiple young people in law school, a relatively small population, coming down with shingles? A disease associated with the elderly or people with low immune systems. The answer is simple. It's stress.

Stress can be a good thing. It can fuel you with adrenaline, helping you to make those diamonds (essays) under pressure. It is natural that all people feel stressed at some point in their lives, so it's not uncommon. However,

it is also obvious that stress can lead to serious uncontrollable problems. Recent studies suggesting up to 40% of New Zealand law students suffer from mental illness caused from their studies. This does not surprise me in the least. A high-pressured environment, coupled with students who are accustomed to excelling, means law schools are incubators for potentially serious mental illnesses.

I left first year law thinking I was 'smart'. I did considerably well in my A-level exams. Subsequently, I went on to be a member of a 300 student cohort of Part 2 law students out of the 700 or so students that took Law 131. There was pressure in first year to enter this cohort, don't get me wrong. It wasn't

all relaxing at home with a box of chocolates on hand (these were reserved for crying about my A- instead of an A). However, I had alternative degree plans in place. The stress of first year was incomparable to the stress I felt entering my second year of law. Stress slowly crept up on me. Slowly, I began to doubt my self-worth and intelligence. How could I not? I was in an environment where everyone was worried about whether they will get a clerkship or offer to do honours.

I never did get honours. One paper can ruin that chance, even if you do very well in the others. In my case, like many others, contract was my battle (one that bruised me a little). However, once I started electives things started to click. I started to do well again. I got a job, and found myself involved in some really important causes.

I cannot claim to be a guru on these matters, or that I am a model for good mental wellbeing. I am a law student after all! We are all a little broken inside. A lot of us still find law school isolating. Stress is still a black dog curled up at the end of our beds. However, I have discovered that the traditional path to law school 'success' may not be what it is all cracked up to be. Honours or a clerkship do not always mean happiness or long-term 'success'. Some people may find a quicker path to a position in a top firm, but at what cost does this come? To their mental and physical wellbeing? I know a few students come out of the experience without an ounce of sweat upon their face. Other students barely hold their life together, constantly comparing themselves to other honours students.

As a final year student, I am slowly beginning to understand that intelligence isn't just a few letters enclosed in brackets next to your LLB. It's quite funny to the number of people that assume I am a law honours student, apparently due to the way I speak. It just goes to show that accomplishments on the page (in my case the CV) do not always show your true worth to an big-name employer.

What have I learnt in the past few years, other than that some common law rights some common law rights may go so deep that even Parliament cannot be accepted by the Courts to have destroyed them? Perhaps that there are multiple paths to 'success'. Sometimes, the path less travelled is the most rewarding. Even if there is a quicker path to the top, it is sometimes more treacherous. Sometimes a slow and steady incline, ultimately, wins in the long run. ■

**“Stress is still a black dog curled up at the end of our beds. However, I have discovered that the traditional path to law school ‘success’ may not be what it is all cracked up to be.”**



# Borderline, Baby

*Sally Fraser discusses her experiences with Borderline Personality Disorder and ways of managing it.*

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand describes Borderline Personality Disorder as “a pattern of having very unstable relationships, having difficulty controlling emotions and thoughts, and behaving recklessly or impulsively.” 5 years ago I was diagnosed by a therapist I was seeing at the time. I was living in Wellington working as a barista and my boyfriend had just dumped me. I was not coping. I remember dissociating so badly that it was like watching my life happen floating a few metres above my body. This wasn't the first time I'd been like this and wouldn't be the last. It would always happen the same way; I'd be good for a while, life was great my friends were amazing everything was wonderful, then something would happen, usually to do with relationships, and I would spiral. The panic sets in, the paranoia, the suicidal thoughts, the impulsivity. It felt like a huge dark mass was growing in my chest and the only way to get it out was by driving a knife through myself. I'd be going around in circles trying to figure things out, risking my health and my safety, getting myself in to debt, pushing people away. Then, just as suddenly as it came on, I'd be okay. I'd be fixed until it happened again. Sometimes it'd be years until the next relapse, sometimes it'd only be a month or so. Being diagnosed didn't stop these things from happening, but it helped me understand what was going on and learning to manage it all. Borderline can't be treated with medication, the pills I take each day only help to keep me stable, it takes years of therapy, years of making mistakes and learning from them, years of relearning all the ways you process emotions and deal with emotionally stressful situations. I overdosed three times in eight years, each time I felt I'd exhausted all my options, that life wasn't worth living like

this. It's difficult and it's messy but it's who I am, and I'm pleased that I can say that still being here is for the best.

Being open about my experiences with BPD as well as it's comorbidities such as anxiety and depression has made me a sort of advocate amongst my friends for speaking up about mental health. The messages and comments I receive from people push me to keep talking about it, to keep people thinking about it. I've made connections with people who share my personality disorder and within ourselves we have a support network of friends who have some understanding of why our brain processes things the way it does. We discuss our experiences in therapy, with various meds, how we have learnt to live our lives without damaging the relationships we have, without hurting ourselves or those around us. Reading about BPD online all sounds rather dire, it carries a massive stigma of those with BPD being selfish, manipulative and attention seeking. We spend our lives feeling worthless, having distorted self-image, self-harming, having rocky interpersonal relationships and then turning to other self-destructive behaviours to try and cope with all our feelings. There are some positives, however, which I try to remind my fellow BPD sufferers of as often as possible. Because we are so in touch with our feelings we tend to be incredible empathetic, it's in our nature to take care of people because we read and understand people's emotions easily. We're often quite creative, finding various outlets to express our emotions in a healthy way. Those I've encountered with BPD have been some of the most kind, patient and genuinely caring people I've ever met. Something about being so emotional all the time gives us a soft spot when it comes to caring for others. As well as this, BPD has the

highest recovery rate of personality disorders. With the right combination of meds and therapy we can recover fully and learn to function in a more stable manner.

As I grow older and learn more coping mechanisms my BPD becomes easier to manage. Recently I started Cognitive Behavioural Therapy which, alongside another type of therapy called Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, is recognised as one of the most successful ways of managing BPD. Being able to recognise and process your emotions in a healthy way is important to everyone, not just those suffering from mental illnesses. Bottling things up is clearly not an effective way of dealing with things and generally results in our emotions being expressed in damaging ways. As well as this, being more open about mental illnesses and ways to cope makes it easier for those who need help to ask for it and provides better access to information regarding mental illness. I'm not ashamed of having BPD, I've learnt to accept it's just who I am, and I think that the best way to being treating mental illness is to accept it openly. No one should have to feel like I did, like they'd exhausted all their other options for getting help. Talk to your friends, ask if they're ok. Let them know you'll be there for them and that they aren't going through this alone. Most importantly, remind the people you love that you love them and that you care for them. A little bit of compassion goes a long way. ■

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FEATURE



# The Price Of A Small Flat White

*Brian Gu cogitates upon the benefits of befriending strangers at university.*

There are many things that you don't get told when you take your first step into university. For example, the coffee around campus is rather expensive. This was bad news for me, because I had pictured myself sitting in the corner table of a coffee house, frantically typing away on my laptop, racing against time to meet the deadline for an essay, taking sporadic sips of a steaming espresso while hunched over my screen. Yes, that's exactly how I, a frightened, overwhelmed kid walking into university for the first time ever, thought the next year of my life would go. It's an image that I had been playing over and over in my head, a way of life I had prematurely come to accept.

You see, this perfect routine that I had already developed in my mind was the first of many inaccurate presumptions I made as a newbie student.<sup>1</sup> Being a self-professed overthinker, I guess it was just my way of trying to calm my nerves and anxiety heading into this new experience, all of which came to a peak on my very first day.

Having turned up early on the day with my friend, I suggested we go for coffee not far up the road. And as we sat down either end of the empty booth, it had finally sunk in for me that I was actually here. University. An exciting, exhilarating journey I had been extensively preparing myself to undergo. Yet I still found myself not knowing what to expect, not knowing how I would fare in my new environment. Would I be able to find my place at all? Would I be able to achieve the high expectations I set for myself?

"So," my friend begins. "We need to find ourselves a productive study space." I look around the room. The waitress is clearing up for the early morning rush, and so the room is empty (excepting one guy in the corner, who had likely finished his coffee hours ago, but was too immersed in some trivial game on his phone to get up and leave). The atmosphere

<sup>1</sup> I have come to realise that nobody is expectant of you to slot right into the pack, you will take your own time and form your own experiences as to what works for you and what doesn't.

is warm, cosy and quaint, and light jazz music transforms the room into a lively, inhabitable space. *This could definitely work*, I think to myself. I look out the window and see a group of friends huddled around a park bench. They look like they've come to the end of their university journey, and every laugh they share carries an old memory to reminisce.

Seeing these people made me think how I would cope with the challenge of making new friends. Would I have people to depend on at the end of the tunnel? Or would I come out to crash and burn... And now weeks later as I write this piece, I have been hit by the realisation of what I've come to find is the most important aspect of university life that you're not told - everyone wants to make new friends as badly as you do. Even the weakest point of conversation came like a glittering jewel to others, and in each open-ended question I offered, every piece of advice that I sought, someone would catch on and contribute their own. I didn't have to worry about working for connections, they came with my willingness to reach out to others.

And it's worked out amazing for me. I've made friends from Pakistan, Malaysia, Korea and France. I've made friends with a Commonwealth games athlete, a competitive surfer, footballer and an academic Olympiad medallist. And what's even more amazing is that they're not even the same four people listed once in each category!

So if I could go back to that cold, early

morning, where I'm about to order my first coffee as an university student, I would have reassured myself that everything would turn out fine. I would make some of the greatest friends I'd ever have, I would meet some of the greatest people I'll ever meet, and we'll work together to create some of the fondest memories that I will cherish forever.

"Can I take your order?" I'm not too sure how long the waitress has been standing there, but judging by her tone and death stare, she has grown impatient. My friend has already ordered himself a bottle of cola, so I go ahead and order myself a small flat white, not deterred by the fact it costs its own weight in gold.<sup>2</sup> A few minutes later, she comes back with our orders; for my friend, a cola bottle so narrow he could barely set it straight, and for me, a paper cup of coffee no larger than a shot glass. The waitress forces a fake smile and tells us to enjoy our order.

"So, where did you say was a good place to study again?" Before I respond, I glance over at the waitress, as she walks off to pilfer her next unsuspecting customer's money.

"Does anywhere but here work for you?" ■

<sup>2</sup> In the case that the reader is interested, 100 grams of gold is worth somewhere around \$5000 USD. To be inherently clear, I did not pay for a car and receive a coffee instead.

**"University. An exciting, exhilarating journey I had been extensively preparing myself to undergo. Yet I still found myself not knowing what to expect, not knowing how I would fare in my new environment."**

## REVIEWS



### **Considering the Women**

Choman Hardi

REVIEW BY RUSHIKA BHATNAGAR



Choman Hardi's event *Considering the Women* was definitely one of the most outstanding events that I attended at the 2018 Auckland Writers Festival. Her book itself, of the same title, explores the equivocal relationship between migrants and their homeland - the constant push and pull - as well as the breakdown of an intermarriage, and the plight of women in an aggressive patriarchal society and as survivors of political violence.

The event saw Hardi reading a few extremely touching and insightful poems under the perfect backdrop of the heavy rain outside. The effect of her English poetic voice in a calm tone and plain-spoken language, act as containers for the kind of sadness felt by one who has seen too much of man's inhumanity to man. The poems their personal telling of war and persecution are presented as gentle music; they are far more than simple summoning of facts. The grace and rhythm of the telling - the singing of it in a way - moves the poems beyond the simple reportage of fact.

Yet the event was much more than just the poems. Hardi spoke eloquently of Kurdish history, the forgotten voice of the women during this time, and of her experiences as a refugee. While hearing the many stories she had to tell was an incredible eye-opener to the limited scope of history we are taught in class; it was so crucial to hear an author talk about the importance of the *silenced voices of women* during atrocities endured in the past. The most inspiring part of the entire event was hearing that Hardi has returned to her home country where she founded the region's groundbreaking 'Center for Gender and Development Studies'. It came to show that whilst many at our University mock Women's Studies, it is an extremely important rarity in many countries.

Should Choman Hardi ever return to New Zealand, I highly recommend going to hear her speak! Till then buy her books and treat yourself to some incredible poetry. ■



### **Sour Heart**

Jenny Zhang

REVIEW BY DAPHNE ZHENG



My heart was warm and open as I listened to Jenny Zhang articulate my tender thoughts on-stage: we understand each other. She gets me. This feeling of juvenile adoration has come few times in my life: the last time being six months ago when I heard Japanese Breakfast's *Road Head* on public radio.

Jenny Zhang is the author of *Sour Heart*, a novel detailing the coming-of-age of Chinese-American girls in New York City. She is also a poet, an essayist, a teacher. I had not heard of her before my friend gushed about how life-changing her poetry had been in her formative teenage years, lighting up the road to de-assimilation. These themes appeared again throughout the event.

Her conversation with Rosabel Tan tapped deep into the shared experiences of Chinese women in Western contexts: how can you thrive in the creative arts when you are defined by your otherness? Zhang brought up a brilliant point in the relationship between her and her critics. Often *Sour Heart* had been slapped with the anti-compliment of being "needed in this time." The implication hurts when it infers that minority novels are just a fad. It's further damaging when it conglomerates migrant experiences across histories into it being a singular monolithic happening, rejecting any sort of nuance across those experiences. She wants to dismantle that separation between narratives considered classics (white middle class bildungsromans) and have that inclusive of minority narratives. The event made me a bobblehead figurine impressionist: constantly nodding.

Hearing Jenny Zhang speak about her experiences as an Asian woman in the creative arts felt as if she had connected my brain to her vocal chords, unscrambling and clarifying the experiences I had never completely processed. She spoke so poetically, so beautifully, even when simply discussing the true meaning of her Instagram bio. An inspiration, truly.

Afterwards I bought her book and asked her to reaffirm my dreams. The feeling of juvenile admiration hasn't faltered. ■



### **Sad Girls**

Lang Leav

REVIEW BY UVINI PANDITHARATNE



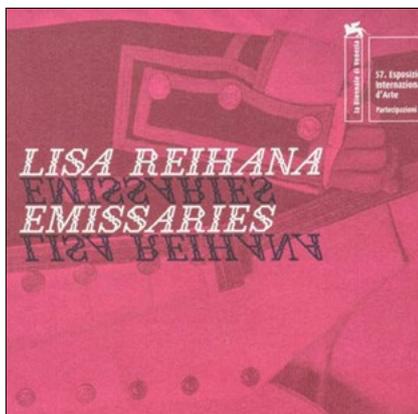
On a stormy Saturday night, myself and a roomful of others gathered to hear Lang Leav speak. Lang, accompanied by the chair Courtney Sina Meredith, wove us a tale of her life, from her beginnings in a Thai refugee camp to her formative years growing up in a 'rough part' of Sydney, to her eventual settlement in Auckland.

She talked extensively about her creative journey in particular, from the lows of being a struggling poet and not knowing where the next pay check was coming from, to the highs of the success she's enjoyed with her novel *Sad Girls* and her poetry collections *Love & Misadventures*, *Lullabies* and *The Universe of Us*.

Lang's drive and passion for creativity was evident throughout the talk. She was gentle in her assertions that the creative journey may not have been easy for her, but it was the only journey she wanted to make, and in the end well worth it.

We were then treated (and I use the word treated because Lang Leav's reading voice is honestly the most soothing thing I've heard) to a reading from her newest book *Sea of Strangers*, before then ending the night with a Q + A.

Lang left everyone with the feeling that if art was what you found yourself drawn to - no matter the medium, creative projects were what fulfilled you in the end. She made it seem simple that if a creative career was what you wanted to pursue, you pursue it, no questions asked. The night was a wonderful reminder of the happiness that expressing your creativity can bring, and how sometimes, you have to do what makes you happy, no matter how steep the mountain may seem. ■



## Lisa Reihana: Emissaries

REVIEW BY JASMIN SINGH



*Lisa Reihana: Emissaries* is a book which discusses the centerpiece of New Zealand's 2017 Venice Biennale artist Lisa Reihana's project *In Pursuit of Venus[infected]*, 2015–2017. The book produced by Auckland Art Gallery, catalogues her practice and the work that went into the mammoth project. In the beginning of the event, Reihana talks about the background of the project and leads us through a slideshow of the various components and behind the scenes perspective on the work.

Reihana heavily researched every part of the project taking time to learn as much as she could before adding it to her project. Like many people in the audience I was stunned when she told us that the project had 532,000 layers of video that went into the overall installation. As many of the contributors to the project were from indigenous backgrounds Reihana also discussed how it was of importance to her to create and maintain relationships with the people that were employed as part of the project. And ensuring they were being adequately paid for the time and effort they were putting into her work.

Despite the amazing logistics behind her project, I was disappointed when she spoke about giving equal weight to the colonisers and the colonised which she discussed during the talk. Indigenous communities are very much underrepresented and it would have been good for her to point out giving more space to the marginalised rather than colonisers such as Captain Cook and Joseph Banks. As history has often been written by the victors, in the case of colonial settings white men who colonised nations, they have had the power to control the narrative. All in all it however was an incredibly enlightening experience to learn about the time and effort that went into this visual artwork. ■



## Ponti

Sharlene Teo

REVIEW BY JACKIE LAMB



*Ponti* was an uplifting talk about what we leave behind in order to grow up. Like her novel, this intimate question-and-answer session with Sharlene Teo at the Auckland Writer's Festival explored the concept of aging over time.

Humans, like in Teo's writing, are shown to exist in the liminal space between existence and life. According to Teo, we spend our whole adult lives trying to get back to our childhood. In this talk a writer's game of hide and seek became apparent. Ideas would appear and weave throughout the talk. Through this method I was introduced to the idea of liminality in life. Teo's talk of her youth in Singapore, the place she felt a deep "emotional affinity" and where she became a person was one which reminded me of the place the past has in our lives. Humans love to romanticize the past which can lead to "unending grief" in how our lives are resolved. Maybe there's a situation you wish could have turned out differently. Maybe there's a person you wish you hadn't hurt, or let them hurt you. Maybe the past is impossible but it haunts us. The past projects like a ghostly powerpoint of memory. It may be gone forever but we are still alive today.

Like this talk, life doesn't always have a tidy ending but it shows that we will live long enough to make peace with our ghosts. Walking out of this talk, I was aware of the liminality in Queen Street. The Sunday afternoon shone down onto the people rushing by like an unending river. In this river I let go of my breath and breathed in the liminal space. It was only after the talk I found the true liminality in attending a writing talk on a Sunday when you really should be writing your two papers due that day. Or, the liminality of living – living in a way people may not understand but is the most meaningful to you. ■



## Why I am a Hindu?

Shashi Tharoor

REVIEW BY JASMIN SINGH



In his appearance at the Auckland Writer Festival, Shashi Tharoor started off by giving the audience some background from his book. He refers to the vast history of Hinduism and shatters the notion of Hinduism as a monolith, discussing the different philosophies and highlighting that unlike other religions there is in fact no fixed idea of God or commandments within the faith. After this crash course, Tharoor discusses the rise of the Hindutva and the way in which religion has been used politically by the *Bharatiya Janta Party* (BJP). Finally he talks about reclaiming Hinduism and taking it away from BJP's narrow, nationalist view of the religion.

In the question session after his talk, a woman questions his lack of sociological analysis. Tharoor denies the fact the BJP was voted into power due to their vocal Hindu nationalism, arguing instead that the reason was their promises for development related policies. However, as we have seen globally, outright nationalist and right-wing attitudes among elected officials relates to a rise in racialised violence among society too, which can be seen in recent cases in India. I was disappointed by Tharoor's lack of critical thought regarding the consequences of having a right-wing Hindu nationalist party in power.

Although it was an interesting talk and look into understanding Hinduism, it lacked a recognition of the real world consequences by focusing solely on philosophy. Tharoor brushes off the existence of caste and caste violence by erasing the system, stating that those who are use it are choosing to do so outside the philosophy of the religion. However this ignores the reality of caste violence, that Tharoor as an upper-class man does not experience in the same way that Dalit communities do. In focusing on the philosophical ideals, ignoring and effectively silencing the salience of caste within Hinduism. Tharoor silences those for whom it is a daily struggle. ■

# Memoirs of a Statistic



REVIEW BY MARY GWENDOLON

This was supposed to be a two woman show. “Kolopa Simej-Barton and Jes’mine Palaia” the website said, until a few days before the show when it said “Jes’mine is no longer able to perform due to personal reasons”.

It turns out Kolopa was ghosted by her co-star for the month preceding the show, and finally heard from her two days before opening night to find out she was in Australia due to Family Drama and wasn’t gonna be back anytime soon. Because of this, Natalie Sami heroically came on board 24 HOURS BEFORE CURTAIN UP as an opening act.

To have to prepare anything two days before it’s due is stressful, but to have to rework a two woman comedy show into a one woman stand-up show, to

be performed for a paying audience, two days before it’s due sounds like One Of The Most Stressful Scenarios Possible. It sounds like something they would make you do over and over again in The Bad Place as part of your eternal torture.

Kolopa and Natalie probably had a Very Bad 24-48 Hours preparing for this show, but both of them crushed it. Kolopa was open with the audience about being nervous, and successfully turned her alone-ness on stage into the running gag of the show. She often pulled out a piece of paper to remind her what she was up to, which was one of the most endearing and relatable things I’ve ever seen at a comedy show. Instead of the barrage of random personal grievances that stand-up can so often be, this show was an accessi-

ble hour of fun goofs and reasonable complaints supported by statistics. Highlights included Kolopa repeatedly asking the Pākehā folk in the front row if they were from the North Shore, the interactive game segment “What’s in Your Panties?”, and the related segment which involved Kolopa forcing the uncomfortable man in the front row to chant “period” with her. ■

# Brown Famous - Pax Assadi



REVIEW BY BRIAN GU

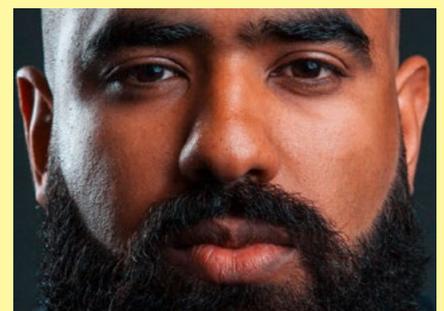
With comedians being flown in from all around the globe, this year’s NZ International Comedy Festival plays host to a plethora of worldwide talent. I say worldwide talent, I really just mean a couple of Englishmen and Lloyd Langford boarding a non-stop QANTAS flight. But nevertheless, in this long month of standout laughs and performances, you’d be amiss not to see the kid from the streets of South Auckland that made it.

FRED Award nominee Pax Assadi takes to the stage with his successive stand-up show “Brown Famous”. The show is centred around Pax’s life-long experiences being the child of immigrants, from a young boy to the present-day comedian. It is a routine Wednesday night, yet the show seems to have drawn a large crowd all cultures and ages alike.

The Loft at Q is an intimate setting, perfect for Pax’s personal and engaging show. The topic matter he tackles is centralized around the theme of growing up in a multicultural, vibrant Auckland. The anecdotes and experiences he recounts are genuine, refreshingly fun, and uncompromisingly hilarious.

Listening to Pax’s struggles (disguised as jokes) as a child to immigrant parents myself, his content is real and relatable. Thus, I had expected this review to be biased, as Pax’s cultural experiences mirrored my own. Counter to my intuition though, when Pax calls for all the accountants in the room, a middle-aged white male three seats across responds with a raucous reaction. I guess then if the white, middle-aged accountant had the time of his life, who am I to say who’ll enjoy this show the most?

Charming, relaxed and naturally funny, Pax Assadi manages to deliver, in his second stand-up show ‘Brown Famous’, a night of home-grown jokes and clever material you won’t discover elsewhere. ■



# Inner Dialogue - Liam Finnigan

TRIGGER WARNING: SUICIDE MENTION, MENTAL HEALTH.

"Inner Dialogue" is a real life telling of the clown Pagliacci. You know the story? Pagliacci goes to the doctor for depression. The doctor suggests the patient go see Pagliacci. It'll cheer him up. He doesn't know who this clown is. Ohhhh the irony. Strange story though. Generally the doctor calls your name. The clown costume would have been my call as a give-away.

Anyway, "Inner Dialogue" replaces the depressed clown with Billy T Award nominee, pork enthusiast and pork dis-enthusiast Mike King and a handful of New Zealand enter-

tainers. The aim of the night - promoting awareness to suicide and mental health. It began with King playing fun at his alcoholism and drug addiction. He knew he had a problem when he realised "all of [his] mates were fuckwits". If his impersonation of drunkenness was anything like the real thing, it would have been easy to see his problem. Judging you weren't a fuckwit probably. Jamie Bowen opened with a joke, then said he was happy to be presenting rather than hanging by his neck in his bedroom. People didn't know if he was joking. Cue awkward laughter. Bowen then shared his failed suicide attempt. Cue in silence.

Cori Gonzalez-Macuer shared how four years ago he found how his father hung himself in the bedroom. After Gonzalez-Macuer's daughter



asked, "why is Daddy always sad?" he realised he still wasn't coping. Before the show he went to the GP and was off to a mental health crisis centre in a few days. It's impossible in this review to give all the performers justice. But they all bared their deepest vulnerabilities to a room of strangers. People in New Zealand aren't talking to anyone. People in New Zealand are killing themselves. Confessions of the night were intertwined with jokes. This path was what the presenters knew and how they felt safe to share. The audience felt safe to listen. New Zealand has a mental health problem. Let's talk about it. ■



## Sieni Leo'o Olo, The Family Disappointment

REVIEW BY SARAH KOLVER

The lights dimmed in the loft. I had no clue what to expect. I certainly didn't expect a young Mangere girl to come bounding onto stage, gathering the microphone cord nervously in her hands. She introduced herself, a proud Samoan South Auckland, and scoffed when an audience member called out "Go Sieni!" She looked confused for a moment, then, "Oh, right. Sieni's my government name," she joked, insisting we call her Bubba.

She had barely summited the stage when the awkward, yet hilarious, eye contact began with the audience. She started with comedic comparisons between a Samoan parents' lecture and a white parents' one, and once she had settled into her zone, the humour became increasingly better.

She has never been in a relationship or even kissed a boy, but the relationship advice she dishes out is surprisingly relatable. Her self-deprecating jokes catalogue her awful attempts at flirtation, and her need for a "white husband, even if [she] has to give up her rights," earned several laughs. She then brought the show to a whole new level, selecting an audience member to be her stage boyfriend, and enacting a dramatic performance- complete with music- that had the audience in stitches.

Her use of physical comedy and slapstick performance really heightened the comedic value of the show. She didn't just describe breaking into her own house after crashing her car, she hit the dramatic music, cleared the stage and acted the scene out with mirthful precision. These dramatic outbursts continued throughout the show.



If you're in need of a good laugh and a break, I would highly recommend heading down to see The Family Disappointment. Contrary to its cynical title, Sieni's show will leave you feeling uplifted, with a fresh take on life. She'll teach you how to throw random shade, who to avoid fights with, and even give you an insight into that ever-secret language of gossipy Samoan ladies. ■



# The science behind MDD in adolescents

*Rushika Bhatnagar discusses the effects of depression on the teenage brain, alongside ways to treat and recover from it.*

Depression is a mood disorder which affects the way you think, feel, and behave. It causes feelings of sadness or hopelessness that can last anywhere from a few days to a few years. (This is different than being upset about a minor setback or disappointment in your day.)

Some people may experience mild depression only once in their lives, whilst others have several severe episodes over their lifetime. This more intense, long-lasting form of depression is known as Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), also referred to as clinical depression. In New Zealand, one in six individuals has been diagnosed with a common mental disorder at some time in their lives and the current global count stands at around 350 million individuals.

The symptoms of depression significantly interfere with daily activities, such as school, work, and social events. They also impact mood and behavior as well as various physical functions, such as sleep and appetite. Depression generally includes a mixture of:

- persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- lack of interest in doing most activities, including those you once enjoyed
- Significant decrease or increase in appetite accompanied by extreme weight loss or weight gain
- sleeping too much or too little
- Restlessness or fatigue
- excessive or inappropriate feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- difficulty making decisions, thinking, and concentrating
- multiple thoughts of death or suicide

Adolescent years tend to be a phase of ups and downs. For parents, teachers, and anyone who cares for a teenager, it is often difficult to help a teen navigate the broad range of challenges accompanying the complex changes occurring in the body and brain. It is a period of rapid growth and confusion in which an individual lets go of the safe hold on childhood and reaches out for a firm grasp on adulthood. It is also during this phase that a teenager gains a sense of self, based on new feelings, a new body image, and a

changing construct of their role with parents, peers and significant others.

As well as all this, from adolescence till mid-twenties, the teen brain goes through dramatic changes which scientists are just beginning to better understand. During early and mid adolescence, the brain undergoes considerable neural growth and pruning which create changes of connectivity within and between various brain regions. This transition is riddled with many potential minefields for most teenagers.

By some estimates, human brain development is not fully completed until the age of 25. Some researchers have pointed out, 'the rental car companies have it right'. The brain isn't fully mature at 16, when a teenager can get a driver's license; or at 18, when we are allowed to vote and drink, but closer to 25, when we are allowed to rent a car sans 'young driver surcharge'.

The most widely studied changes in the teenage brain take place in the prefrontal cortex, the area behind the forehead associated with planning, problem-solving, and other 'executive functions'. Healthy brain development and connections require a streamlining combination of brain plasticity, which fortifies certain connections so signals can be transmitted more efficiently, and synaptic pruning, which causes other connections to atrophy.

During healthy teenage brain development, the prefrontal cortex communicates more effectively with other parts of the brain, including areas particularly associated with emotion and impulses. The cluster of functions that center in the prefrontal cortex is sometimes called the 'executive suite', including calibration of risk and reward, problem-solving, prioritizing, thinking ahead, self-evaluation, long-term planning, and regulation of emotion.

Specific to depression: when exposed to a stressor, the body releases hormones into our nervous system. To some degree, stress can be positive and act as a motivator. However, too much stress can be harmful to one's well-being. In teenagers with depression, stressful events will lead to an overactive stress response. You may notice a higher degree of sensitivity to events and stronger reactions to stimuli. Stress can impact the developing brain in multiple ways. Stressful events may lead to neural vulnerabilities

such as decreased neural growth, lowered levels of dopamine and serotonin in the brain, decreased ability of emotional regulation, higher levels of stress hormones, impaired memory, and decreased resilience.

Depressed adolescents may present with feelings of worthlessness and guilt, decreased energy, suicidal ideation, and irritability. They may withdraw from relationships with friends and family, have no energy to participate in regular activities that were not previously draining, seemingly have a personality change, struggle with school work, and not be able to focus.

Looking at potential treatment, experts have found that balancing the amount of cortisol and other chemicals in the brain can help reverse any shrinkage of the hippocampus and treat any memory problems it may cause. Correcting the body's chemical levels can also help reduce symptoms of depression.

Besides medications, certain medical procedures can also help the brain ease symptoms of depression. This includes:

- Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), which involves sending electrical pulses into the brain cells to regulate mood.
- Researchers also believe that psychotherapy can alter brain structure and help relieve depression symptoms. Specifically, psychotherapy appears to strengthen the prefrontal cortex.
- There are other ways to boost brain health and help recover from depression without medical intervention. These include:
  - Eating healthy foods and staying active, which stimulates brain cells and strengthens communication between brain cells.
  - Sleeping well, which helps grow and repair brain cells.
  - Avoiding alcohol and illegal drugs, which can destroy brain cells.

As always, talk to a medical professional about which treatments may be best for you. ■

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## HOLLYWOOD

Each week **Lachlan Mitchell**, glorified tabloid writer, tries to cover up that he is blatantly copying Vanity Fair.



# The Peak of Human Civilisation is Owned by Disney

During the study break, E3 will happen, the *unquestionable* gaming event of each year. Thousands upon thousands of people will descend upon some stadium in Los Angeles and be shown all the new innovations and intellectual properties they desire. Millions more will watch the presentations online, with some streaming record or another being broken and ear drums going through untold levels of sound. There is always something for everyone – they're gonna get their *LIFE* from this expo. But when E3 arrives, there is only one thing I'm going to be paying attention to.

Kingdom Hearts 3.

Short of some massive natural disaster or the Rapture itself, the eagerly waiting fans like myself will finally get a confirmed release date for the most anticipated game in the franchise. Fans have been hungering for this game for 13 years and counting, but there was no confirmed hint of its existence until 2013. We first got teased with this game five years ago – we thought it was going to be an early console release for the PS4! Oh, what fools we were! Oh, what children we denied ourselves to be. We honestly thought that Disney would not hold people at gunpoint and demand that their newly successful properties be shoehorned into their only critically-enjoyed gaming property. And so, we waited. We continued to wait. In the intervening years, some even considered the possibility that it would never come out. Faith has been tested, spiritual trials not unlike the classic Arthurian tales have been undertaken here. But now KH3 is confirmed to be a 2018 release. Our prayers have been answered – my prayers to Ra; to Mithras; to Zeus and back again have been acknowledged. Even Baba Yaga has gotten a call from more desperate fans. My boyfriend hears me talk about this franchise a lot, and he is going to continue hearing more and more about this franchise as we inch ever closer to a confirmed release date. But he will soon be freed from his torment, like Prometheus being freed from his eternal punishment by the great Hercules, coincidentally also a trademarked property of Disney. Disney and Square Enix will finally relent – Mickey will extend his hands to the great unwashed and provide salvation.

My love for this late-capitalist shitfest is well-documented. I've been playing and replaying the games since early childhood – an original disc of the first game that I obtained in the year of release, 2002, is one of my favourite possessions. For all my mocking of the franchise, it is very dear to me. It is the present from Square Enix and Disney that I just can't stop

opening up. For all the whining and agonising I do about the House of Mouse's status as an inherently corrupt and morally devoid mega-corporation, my monologuing and my vitriolic Facebook Messenger rants stop when it comes to the Kingdom Hearts franchise. My crushing disappointment at the current status of Square Enix, once a premier development company, ends at the door. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Not only is the nostalgia filter just too powerful, but even at my current age of [REDACTED], the appeal of the hideously shoved-in Disney properties and the even more hideously written anime bullshit (Square Enix, everyone!) is just something I find myself incapable of resisting. The plot is infamous for being as convoluted as they come, but it is the sheer impossibility of it all that I have loved since my early, tender years.

For outsiders and fans alike, I will give you some insight as to the level of bullshit that is going on. Donald Duck, due to the greed that lingers so close to the surface underneath his physical being, is destined to become an embodiment of pure darkness upon his demise. You canonically murder Scar from *The Lion King*, who then becomes a ghost of pure evil that haunts Pride Rock. There is a cutscene in one of the later games where the Ugly Stepsisters and the Wicked Stepmother are canonically murdered via napalm by a sentient pumpkin. There is also a cutscene in *Kingdom Hearts 2* where you are led to believe that Goofy, *the Goofy G. Goof*, has his brain splattered over the anime floors by a stray flying boulder. If you want to really get an idea of the anime bullshit, the Big Bad of the franchise has currently injected pieces of his soul into seven or eight hosts, which will eventually overpower their spiritual and physical beings to become clones of him. These beings will embody darkness incarnate and remake the universe. That will stand aside his other seven forms. Which are all technically the same person. That don't have souls of their own. Which were dragged from time. Which needed him to become a ghost to do so. Also, a teenager has beaten him like four or five times by this point. Teamed up with Goofy and Donald Duck. Or Maleficent. Or Hercules. Or Mickey Mouse himself. Also, the titular *Kingdom Hearts* itself is a concept, a collection of souls and a physical place. Simultaneously being all but neither at the same time. Have fun!

Needless to say, there's a lot to take in. My television has heard me call someone a dumb cunt more than once. But after 13 years, I am ready. And I have no doubt that I am going to be extremely happy when it finally arrives. ■

## ECCENTRIC LIFE ADVICE

Each week **Astrid Crosland** provides instructions on how to improve your life in some small, but important ways.



# 12. How to Follow Your Dreams

At the close of one adventure, it is natural to look towards the future and wonder where one will go next. It is also natural to feel adrift at these times, unsure of the next course one will be set upon. It is also natural to feel like you have made mistakes that will surely unravel your future. No matter what direction your dreams are taking, it is best not to let them fester in your head. Put them to paper, in words, in images, in clippings, in code. I once received advice from a professional writer, “never to write dreams,” advice I promptly decided to ignore. I have kept a dream journal intermittently since childhood and it is often useful to look back and see what my subconscious was deliberating upon and whether I might be gifted at prophecy in some small, general, way.

When you have recorded your dreams, you can narrow down which ones you would actually like to see come true. Some dreams are nice only at night and have massive complications in the waking world. These dreams often involve

kissing vampires, chasing wolves, or eating entire tubs of ice cream, events that only very rarely live up to their own fantasy. Of the dreams you would like to make manifest, ask yourself: what can I do today, what can I do next week, and what can I do next year?

By structuring the immediacy of necessary action you can focus your time and resources effectively but please bear in mind that you do not have to do everything yourself. There is no shame in asking for help and great wisdom in asking for advice. Discuss your dreams with others and you may find those who share them! You may also find yourself allies in manifesting your visions. One of the greatest perks of collaboration lies in the old maxim regarding many hands and shared labour but a lesser acknowledged perk is, frequently, the parts of a project you most loathe is exactly the speciality of your friend. Give them thanks, lunch, and credit, and enjoy working towards your dreams together. ■



## ROAD TO #FITSPO

Each week our resident hedonist **Saia Halatanu** explores the unfamiliar world of health and wellness for your entertainment and his own longevity.



# Fall from grace

It's been two weeks since my #fitspo journey was halted by the indestructible wall that is the university's end of semester workload.

But you know what? This whole exercise and well-being stuff has been completely overrated anyway. Who cares really? I can't understand why anybody would find sitting in a gym surrounded by sweaty people, lifting heavy objects, going red in the face, looking like a complete idiot, enjoyable in any sense! Who's idea was this?

Not only is it completely stupid, I suspect, just quietly, that this #fitspo stuff is a cult. Sculpted bodies on the 'gram are their objects of worship and they pray at the altar of the preacher-curl machine. They perform their ritual eucharist everyday using the body and blood of protein and, frankly, it seems dodgy. I'm glad I've seen the light and stopped with this nonsense.

There are also health risks associated with exercise that I should mention. I mean, moving is one of the leading causes of injury, and everyone is well aware that exercise is, by its very definition, the process of excessive and superfluous moving. Furthermore, there is the risk of running out of breath and thus asphyxiation. Why risk it? Also, with the pain I've developed in my neck from all this uni work, it only makes sense that I refrain from straining my poor body anymore. Hippocrates, one the greatest Greek physicians, did say "rest, as soon as there is pain." Who am I to argue?

Not only that, think of the environment! What do I mean? There has to be some sort of affect on the environment, I'm sure. There always is. Like the gas from those protein farts or something have to have some sort of consequence on the ozone or global warming, right? Think about all that showering after the gym, washing their protein-infused sweat down our drains into our oceans, contributing to rising sea levels. Who do these people think they are? Simply selfish if you ask me.

There's also an animal rights claim to be made. I am, after all, a humble a humble member of a family of species called Hominidae which include chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans. One look at me and you can tell this for yourself. I think, most of us at this university of higher learning are in agreement that unnecessary testing on animals is morally outrageous. Who approved this abhorrent #fitspo experi-

ment? Frankly, I blame the editors of this magazine. Stop trying to get healthy. Boycott well-being. It's the right thing to do.

...who am I kidding? I'm projecting my own failure.

I haven't seen a gym in the last 14 days, loaded myself with all the consumables that are commonly touted as quick relievers of stress, haven't been able to look myself in the mirror and have become a stranger to fresh air and the sun. Essentially I've limited my wonderings to no further than 3 feet away from my laptop. I cannot forward any excuses. I have virtually gone into a form of study-hibernation and failed to keep up any attempt at #fitspo. If there is an argument for the maltreatment of animals, I've surely done it to myself. Taking an educated guess, I'd say that, in regard to my physical health and well-being, I'm back at square one. The fall from grace is truly hideous.

Things we're going so well. Who knew I'd fail? (I kind of did).

On the bright side, however...

Well...

There is...

Umm...

I've got nothing. I well and truly have nothing. I've failed. Not even a nice #fitspo quote about "failure is progress" can help lift me out of this utter disappointment I feel.

In any case, next semester join me and I shall, again, give it the old college try once more. #fitspo #iamnotfailure #fitfam #motivation #gym #workout #focus #gymrat #instahealth #imtiredalready ■

## PRUNE JUICE

Self explanatory, the drink helps you cleanse and digest. Each week **Sherry Zhang** breaks down life's incongruous mess into digestible chunks.



# Eat Some Prunes

I'm sure some of you wondered why my column is called Prune Juice. I have IBS, which developed from years of an overactive brain in High School. My gut and bowel are very sensitive. Because of this, I'm quite open about things my body do. I'm a 9-year-old boy who loves a good poop joke. If you can't laugh about the things your body does, what else can you do?

Prune juice was a funny little inside joke I had with myself. Like most things, I crack myself up even though no one else is laughing. Prunes are known to help with relieving constipation. So, I guess you'd eat these metaphorical prunes to help you digest the weeks' worth of shit. Take the mundane, the extraordinary, every big little thing and pass it through your body. Except the point of prunes is their high level of fibre. So, what's the point of its juice form? Is it just some arbitrary illusion of digestion and progress? Everything comes flying out, without really having time to process it. I found that funny, maybe that's just me.

I'm notorious for having an overactive imagination, an anxious brain, paranoid, cyclic "sherry get the fuck over it,". I'm sure these are all classic signs of anxious thinking. The education system might say that I have a good attention to detail, thorough analysis of issues. But that's just when all that brain juice spurts itself something semi-productive. I was drawing a frog with swirling eyes once, and my high school counsellor asked me if that was how I felt when I was anxious. Maybe she was right, because the mindfulness colouring page she made me colour in raised my stress levels so much I flipped to its blank back because I'm a perfectionist with an inability to make decisions. Honestly, I just wanted to draw some frogs to break up the 3 years of talk therapy.

So prune juice, shitting it all out, does it really help with dealing with issues? And yeah that's true to a point, but I run my brain into the ground. I'm get obsessive about the space between the lines, the micro-expressions, the slight tilt of the earth. Sometimes things just feel off, and I start to worry that my friendships, relationships, connection with the planets are all fucked. I get myself in such a state I even get annoyed at myself at how sensitive I am. I keep things tight inside until it spurts all out into some half breakdown: I'm comfort eating overpriced beef jerky at Munchy Mart while writing my prune juice column.

Digestion and mental health is something more people should talk about. And yeah, it's up there in dinner table nos, with religion and politics.

## Shit

I used to get terrible stomach aches at school and at sleepovers, because I would get poo shy. I'd hold it in for hours. I'm like the opposite of a puppy, I can't just pee/poo anywhere. I get performance anxiety. You know the running joke about girls all going to the bathroom together, yeah well I hate that I struggle to poop when I know someone is waiting on me. What if I need to let out a really gross fart I've been holding in and now I can't even have the privacy because you are trying to have a gossip about so and so through the door but bitch shut up I need to just fart.

## Emotional shit

I used to get really overwhelmed as a kid, with emotional shit. Emotional poo. I can't speak for all Asian households, but I think generally mental health isn't something really talked about. I know my parents love me, but we don't say I love you. I'll never tell my parents if I'm struggling, feeling sad or scared, this boy this girl did this to me. That's just not the relationship I really have with them. And that's fine. But when I was a kid, I really struggled with this. I'd get all these feelings, these colours, and I wouldn't deal with it in a healthy way. Because it would be so loud in my head, and I wouldn't know where to put it but back onto my body.

Even now, when my parents start to open a bit more, or if my mum hugs me I get emotional. I'll disappear into my room, or mumble at the floor. Because I'm not used to this kind of affection. I had a piano teacher, who threatened to kick me out of her class if I ever cried. Because she hated kids who cried. I was her youngest students at 12 years old, and it led to years of repressed anger at dflat harmonic scales. Crying is healthy. And I don't give a fuck about your toxic masculinity, or jokes about hormonal females, crying is a pretty healthy way of shitting is out.

But everything is about finding balance. Knowing when you are stuck on the same wound, crying and trying to IRAC it to something cohesive. You can't IRAC heartbreak. At the same time, knowing when you are repressing something you should just deal with. I swing between the two. Diarrhoea and constipation. And fuck I'm not a self-help guide. She's not doing psych, she's doing Communications and law: wanky bullshit. But I'm hoping you find your own prune juice. There isn't always an answer to life's problem, but there are healthier ways of dealing with the storm until it passes. And at least for now, I feel a little bit better just letting it pass through my body. And laughing at how silly it really is, laughing at some poo jokes.

Xx love, Sherry ■

**Q. I'm doing an internship and my boss is sexually harassing me. If I kick up a fuss I'm scared I'll get fired and never get hired again! I really need the money right now and don't want to be jobless after uni. What do I do?**

A. So first of all, it is not okay to let your boss do what he's doing! With regards to the sexual harassment and the possibility of being fired, it would be best to seek legal advice. The Auckland Community Law Centre offer free legal advice or you can alternatively visit an employment law specialist.

If you are struggling to pay for food and rent, you could look into the food parcels and hardship grants offered by AUSA. For other options of financial assistance, have a look at your student allowance and living cost options from Studylink. You can also consult with your bank about possible solutions they might have for students.

**Q. Advocacy Aunt! It's exams really soon and I lost my laptop - I really don't have the money to buy a new one right now and all my notes are gone! How do I deal with this dreadful situation?**

A. That is a terrible situation to face before exams! First of all, make sure you file a report for lost property at the AUSA building just in case someone finds it.

As to options for a laptop, you can consider looking in to a financial grant from AUSA. Alternatively, you can take out course related costs (up to \$1000 per year) to help you fund the laptop. In the meantime, you can borrow a laptop for two hours at a time from the Kate Edgar information desk.

To help you deal with the stress from this situation, you could also book a session with the University Counselling Services. Best of luck!

**Q. Hi Advocacy Aunt! I was rushed to hospital due to appendicitis the night before a very important chemistry test. I'm hoping to get into med, and I am worried that because I missed the test my whole GPA for the paper will be brought down. I am currently on track to get in with my other grades.**

A. There is a written tests section in the University calendar that should lessen your worry. Since this was a medical emergency

completely out of your control, you can apply for compassionate consideration or aegrotat. You must apply within 7 days and must supply evidence from your doctor from the day of your test.

From there you may on application and at the discretion of the Senate:

1. Be permitted to sit another written test, or,
2. Receive a mark for the test based on the average marks awarded for other course work, so if you're doing well this would be a good option for you!! or,
3. Take a viva voce examination, or
4. You may end up being allowed a plussage scenario where your test percentage is added to your final exam.

As you can see there are a lot of options open to you. Best of luck with getting into Medicine and rest up, your health should be a high priority!!

**FIND US AT OLD CHORAL HALL OPPOSITE KATE EDGER BETWEEN 9AM - 4PM. IF YOU'D LIKE ADVOCACY AUNT TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION IN THE NEXT CRACCUM EMAIL HER AT STUDENTADVOCATE@AUSA.ORG.NZ**



 **Kiwaha o te wiki**  
saying of the week: 

**KIA AREARE NGĀ MATA!**  
ENGLISH: LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

Example:  
Student 1: Bro, are you ready for the last week of assessments?  
Student 2: Kia areare ngā mata, pal!  
*Let's get ready to rumble!*

Notice is hereby given of an  
**AUSA SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING** to be held on  
**FRIDAY, 1 JUNE 2018 at 2pm**  
in **SHADOWS**.

The SGM has been called to consider the following:

- Changing the process for affiliation and disaffiliation of clubs.
- Creating a new Engagement Vice-President, Satellite Campus Officer, and Campaigns Officer.
- Reducing quorum required for General Meetings.
- Adding in notice periods for Executive resignations.

Association Secretary

# HOROSCOPES

Our local oracles **Annalise Boland** & **Bianca D'Souza** have studied the stars this week and provided us with predictions for our future. Stay tuned for a weekly update on your stars.



## ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your inner being has been improving exponentially lately, but now is the time to work onto new values and getting more \$\$\$\$. This week could have you questioning your relationship with money and whether it has an unhealthy hold on you. Do you own your money or does your money own you (and your decisions)? These same questions can be asked of your values and principles; do they support you and your actions, or do they keep you stagnant?



## TAURUS

APRIL 20-MAY 20

You have been noticing a number of personal changes lately, Taurus. Change can be difficult for you as you prefer things to stay the same, so take your time to process during this period - you'll learn to be patient yet decisive in the days to follow. Embrace all the urges that you have been resisting these past few months so that the new you can flourish. You're creating a new version of yourself that has been a long time coming.



## GEMINI

MAY 21-JUNE 20

The past week may have been a tough one dear Gemini, and it's left you feeling uncomfortable and awkward. Spend some time by yourself to gain insight into what has you feeling this way. Meditation, going for a long hike, or things of this nature will benefit you during this time in more ways than you can realise. While your alone time is important, you are also long-overdue for a reunion with a friend or family member you haven't seen in for some time. Consider reaching out as this could lead to further introspection.



## CANCER

JUNE 21-JULY 22

You've been evaluating those around you a lot lately, and you may be finding that people you thought you were close to have been letting you down more often than not. It might be time to search out for new friends who will listen to you or share the same enthusiasm that you do so you don't feel so alone. Don't be surprised if you find yourself suddenly knocked out of old friendships as new ones start to make themselves known to you. Remember that it's okay to let go!



## LEO

JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Dear Leo, change doesn't necessarily mean that you're a failure- despite what you might be feeling recently. This could just mean that now is the time to look for a new direction, one that allows you to be more influential, where the leadership you crave doesn't only positively affect you, but those around you as well. However, don't be surprised if your actions lead to a few squabbles with the people around you. Listen to their constructive criticism and use that as fuel that you can use to better yourself.



## VIRGO

AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You've been craving new energy and opportunities lately; and now is the time to go for what you're after. Branch out more and think of new projects that you can funnel your energy into. Start thinking bigger than you ever have before and set an intention to actually follow through with these dreams. Don't be afraid to open up to your friends and ask them for help with your pursuits.



## LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You must process your feelings in the way you know best. Those around you may not understand and this can cause some conflicts in your relationships. However, this will only help deepen those relationships as you truly know yourself inside and out. This can attract those who are lost and therefore they will seek you for guidance. Do not feel pressured to provide all the answers as you are only still figuring it all out yourself.



## SCORPIO

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Scorpio, your self doubt is clouding your judgement and therefore making it harder to see the way out of this dark time you find yourself in. You are stronger than you give yourself credit for and you will be tested multiple times in the near future. It is imperative that you do not cave under the pressure as once you bypass this hurdle, great things are destined for you! You are in control and determine your own self worth. Nobody can take that away from you.



## SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The conflicts of the past are just that, in the past. They no longer need to play on your mind and stress you out. It is important for your mental health to let go of past troubles as you can do nothing to change the outcome but only move forward. This week will be critical for your stress levels as you are at risk of easily wearing yourself out if you continue to dwell on the past. Do your best to move forward dear Sagittarius.



## CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're a stickler for tiny details and this can hinder your progress. Remember to look at the bigger picture as you are only holding yourself back. You may find yourself acting a little reckless this week due to a sudden shift in dynamics in a personal relationship. Think twice before making any big decisions as change is not always bad. If you are able to embrace the change this week, it will get easier in the future.



## AQUARIUS

JANUARY 20 TO FEBRUARY 18

People tend to underestimate you and that's their problem not yours. You are always full of surprises and can shock even those closest to you. Try to let those closest to you in on your little secrets, as this will show your softer side and help people let their guard down around you. Be wise in whom you trust to share this side of you. This week is rather uneventful and you'll be itching to stir a little trouble but be wary of the backlash.



## PISCES

FEBRUARY 19 TO MARCH 20

Pisces, you are a force to be reckoned with. When you set your mind to something nobody can get in the way of your vision. Don't forget who you are and what you are capable of. You could quite possibly rule the world someday and change it for the better. This week it's all hands on deck as everything will feel overwhelming at first, however you will pass with flying colours at every test. You are more influential than any other star sign, embrace it!

# THE PEOPLE TO SUPPORT (AND LOVE).

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Nick Withers and Daphne Zheng

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### Arts & Lifestyle Editors

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### Science Editor

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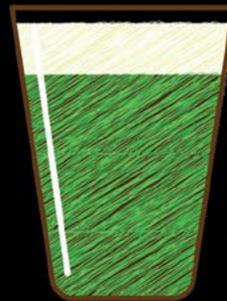
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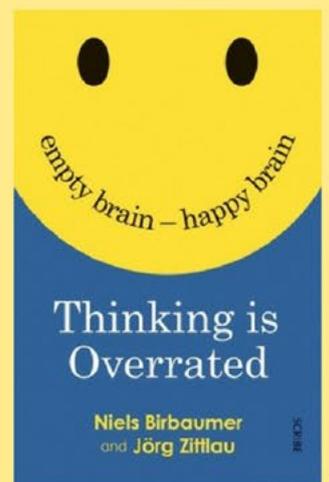
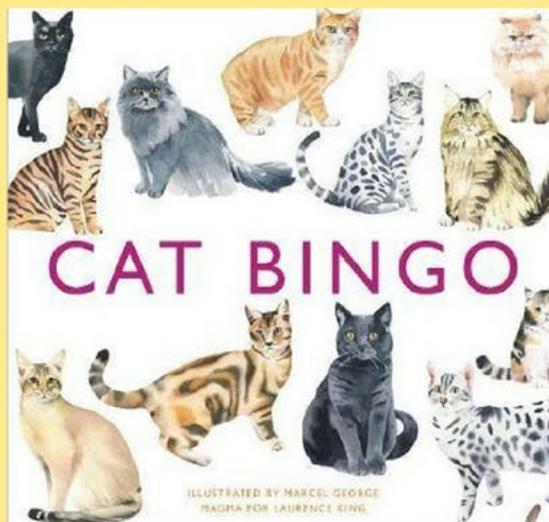
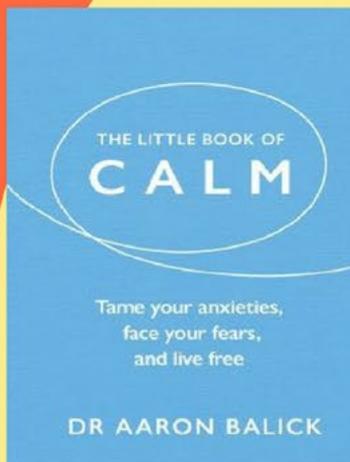
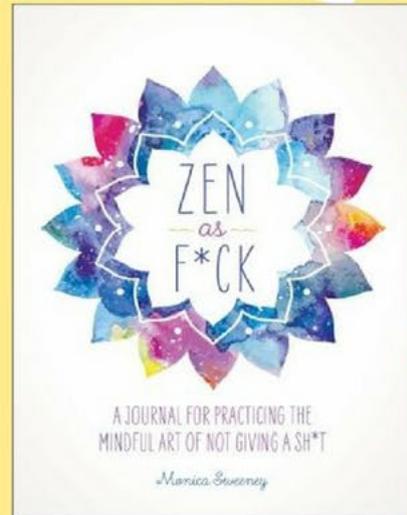
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