

# Lighten Your Burden



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A mental health guideline and toolkit  
to help unburden the mind and spirit

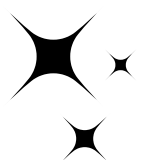
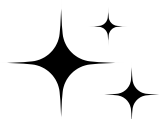
This booklet was prepared by

**Phumelela Project  
Yebo Art Gallery  
Antidote Culture Foundation**

Funded by  
**The UK High Commission Eswatini**

*Disclaimer:*

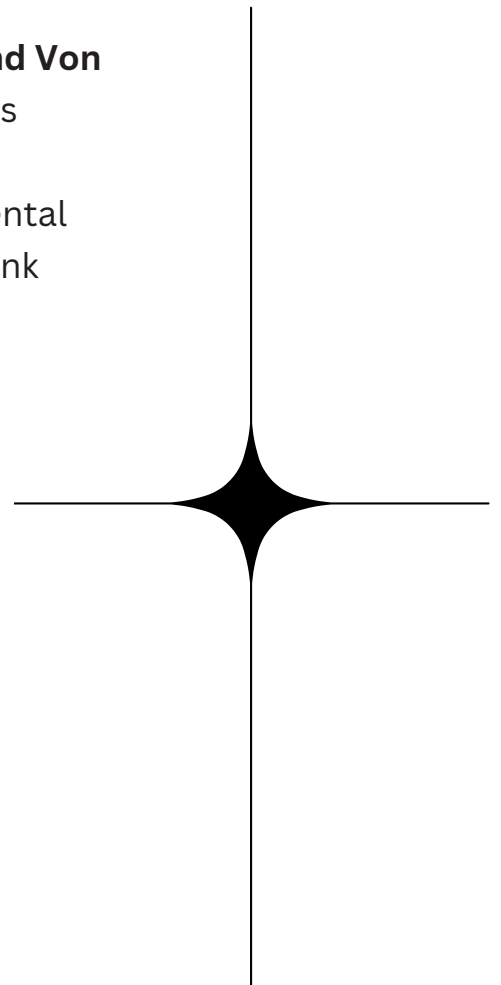
In producing this booklet, we have diligently sought to offer guidance grounded in current evidence relevant to the local context of Eswatini. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that this booklet does not replace comprehensive medical evaluation and professional clinical intervention. If you have any concerns regarding your mental health, we strongly encourage you to utilize the counseling services listed under "**Mental Health Services in Eswatini.**"



# Acknowledgements

On behalf of Phumelela Project, Yebo Art Gallery, and Antidote Culture Foundation, we would like to thank **H.E. Simon Boyden, British High Commissioner to Eswatini**, for providing the funding for the production of this Mental Health Booklet.

We would also like to especially thank **Mr. Ferdinand Von Habsburg-Lothringen** who has been involved in this project from its inception and worked tirelessly to ensure we got the support we needed to create mental health interventions with a meaningful impact. Thank you Ferdi for lightening our load :)



# Introduction

## WHY THIS BOOKLET IS IMPORTANT

The Kingdom of Eswatini is known as a peaceful country with happy people, however with reportedly one of the highest suicide rates in the world, how happy are we? With a Gender Based Violence pandemic, the youth unemployment rate at a high of roughly 50.9%, and approx. 59% of the population living below the national poverty line, it is no surprise that we are facing a mental health crisis.



Sadly, accessing mental health services in Eswatini is a challenge:

- No Mental Health Policy exists
- There is only one (1) public mental health facility serving the entire country;
- Private psychologists are not affordable for the majority of the population;.
- Some Medical Aid providers have drastically cut down on mental health benefits.
- Many people do not see their mental health as valid enough to attend to because of the discrimination and stereotypes associated with it.

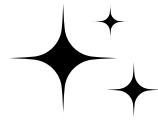
It is crucial to make mental health services accessible for all, especially for people from underprivileged circumstances.

Decentralizing mental health care and ensuring that it serves the entire nation is part of our goal.

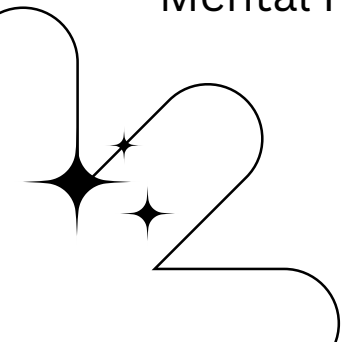
The purpose of this booklet is to share basic knowledge on mental health to increase awareness on the topic nationwide. It is designed to provide a simplified but effective understanding of mental health (relating to the local context), as well as encourage us to open up and “Lighten our burden”!



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# Understanding Mental Health



## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is about how we feel and think - our emotional and psychological wellbeing. It helps us handle life's ups and downs, and be more resilient. Our mental health affects our choices, relationships with others, and how we contribute to our communities.

Mental health goes beyond just not having mental disorders. It varies among individuals, with different levels of challenge and distress, leading to diverse social and clinical outcomes.

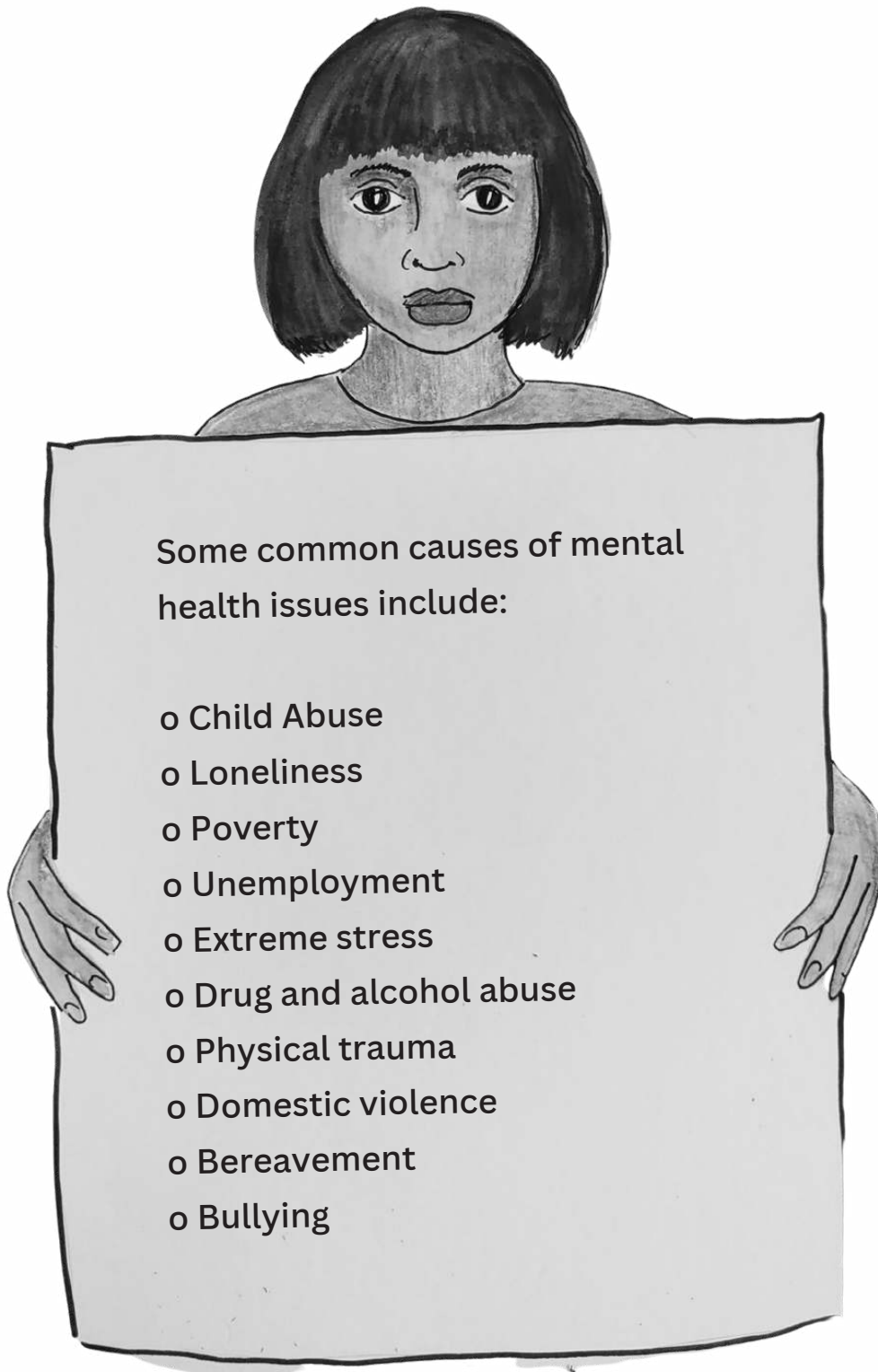
Our mental well-being is shaped by many things, like stress, what we learn, and what society expects from us. To better understand ourselves and manage uncertain situations, it's important to recognize and be mindful of these influences.

Good mental health/wellbeing is determined by these 8 pillars:

- ***Physical,***
- ***dietary,***
- ***emotional,***
- ***social,***
- ***spiritual,***
- ***intellectual,***
- ***financial, and***
- ***environmental.***

If we neglect any one of these pillars over time, it will negatively affect our health, well-being, and quality of life.





Some common causes of mental health issues include:

- o Child Abuse
- o Loneliness
- o Poverty
- o Unemployment
- o Extreme stress
- o Drug and alcohol abuse
- o Physical trauma
- o Domestic violence
- o Bereavement
- o Bullying

Just as you nourish your body with healthy food and exercise, your mind also needs care to function well. This helps you handle daily tasks, achieve your goals, and manage your emotions effectively in response to what's happening around you.



# Understanding Stress



We all experience stress – in fact, it’s completely normal!

Stress is a natural response in our bodies and minds when we encounter challenges that test our ability to maintain balance, adapt, or adjust. However, when stress becomes constant, it can start causing problems.

## SOME COMMON STRESSORS INCLUDE:

- **Environmental Stressors:** These are factors related to our surroundings that can contribute to stress. Examples include living in crowded areas, dealing with heavy traffic, or experiencing noise pollution in urban settings.
- **Social Stressors:** These are stress-inducing factors stemming from societal pressures. They may include worries about finances, shifts in moral values, the pressure to fulfill responsibilities at work or home, and concerns about crime or safety in our communities.
- **Developmental Stressors:** These are challenges associated with different life stages and roles. They encompass issues like navigating parenthood, maintaining relationships or marriages, coping with the changes and pressures of adolescence, and taking on caregiving responsibilities for family members.





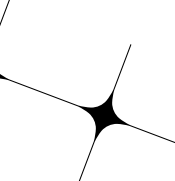
You have likely experienced at least one or even all of these stressors at some point in life, and you are probably experiencing a few even now, which is why they are known as common stressors. The people you meet on the street, in public transport, in the supermarket, in your place of work are all experiencing some form of stress, so it is important to extend everyone some grace and lead with kindness and compassion.

## HOW DOES STRESS FEEL?



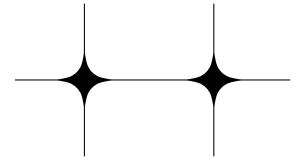
Simphiwe, who is a single mother of three children and the breadwinner of the household, survives every month, hand to mouth. This keeps her feeling overwhelmed, unable to sleep and finds herself shouting at her children over nothing. What Simphiwe is experiencing are stress reactions. Stress reactions are symptoms experienced from a stressor. Stress reactions play a key role in a person's mental health. Simphiwe being the breadwinner is the stressor, and the lack of sleep, irritability, and outbursts toward her children are her stress reactions.

When we are stressed like Simphiwe, we often feel anxious, overwhelmed and fearful of what may come. We can also become frustrated, hopeless, confused as we try to figure out how to solve our problem. Feeling like this can make it hard to focus/concentrate and affect our memory as well as sleep. As children, we stress about school assignments, chores, and/or peer pressure. Later on in adulthood, stress can shift to work, finances, relationships, parenting, etc.



You have likely experienced at least one or even all of these stressors at some point in life, and you are probably experiencing a few even now, which is why they are known as common stressors. The people you meet on the street, in public transport, in the supermarket, in your place of work are all experiencing some form of stress, so it is important to extend everyone some grace and lead with kindness and compassion.

## WHAT DOES STRESS LOOK LIKE?



Stress reactions can be emotional, physical, behavioral, and cognitive (or, of the brain). It's possible to experience several stress reactions at the same time. Remember, all these reactions are completely normal when experiencing stressors. Each person will have a different set of reactions. Even if two people experience the exact same stressor, they each will have their own set of reactions.



## HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOUR BODY CAN REACT TO STRESS:

- **Emotional:** Feeling fearful, anxious, sad, or hopeless; experiencing anger or irritability.
- **Physical:** Increased blood pressure, heart issues, headaches, stomachaches, and difficulty sleeping.
- **Behavioral:** Using more drugs or alcohol, facing more family conflicts, parents becoming overly protective of children, staying excessively busy, or avoiding social interactions.

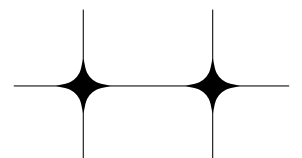
## TYPES OF STRESS

### ACUTE STRESS:

This is the most common experienced stress type. It is a relatively brief form of stress that can help with performance or be more emotionally upsetting, e.g. sudden death of a loved one, an accident or writing exams.

### CHRONIC STRESS:

Defined as stress that feels unending and unavoidable, e.g stress from a failing marriage, financial hardship or a demanding job. Chronic stress can also come from a catastrophic event and early trauma.



## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN

- Doing something you enjoy (e.g. gardening, singing/listening to music)
- Exercise (e.g. upkeeping the household, walking, jogging)
- Good diet (e.g. nutritious Swazi staple foods, fruits & vegetables)
- Upkeep of cleanliness (personal hygiene)
- Journaling/writing down your experiences and thoughts can help process emotions.
- Making time to be with yourself, away from your stressors
- Avoid excessive drug and alcohol use

Managing stress does not require an expensive gym membership, a professional psychologist, or an elaborate holiday. Going for a walk, sleeping seven hours at night, and eating a banana as a snack can be effective coping skills.



## HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN

- Take time to check on your loved ones and show your support. Listen attentively to their concerns and help them articulate their feelings.
- Share your own stress-relief strategies. For example, some find solace in attending church services, while others enjoy nature walks.
- Offer practical assistance with tasks like household chores and dishes.
- Encourage them to consider seeking professional help for additional support and relief. Refer to the chapter on 'Mental Health Services in Eswatini' for more information.





# Understanding Anxiety

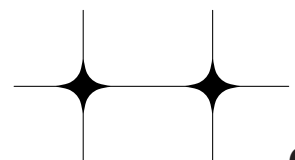


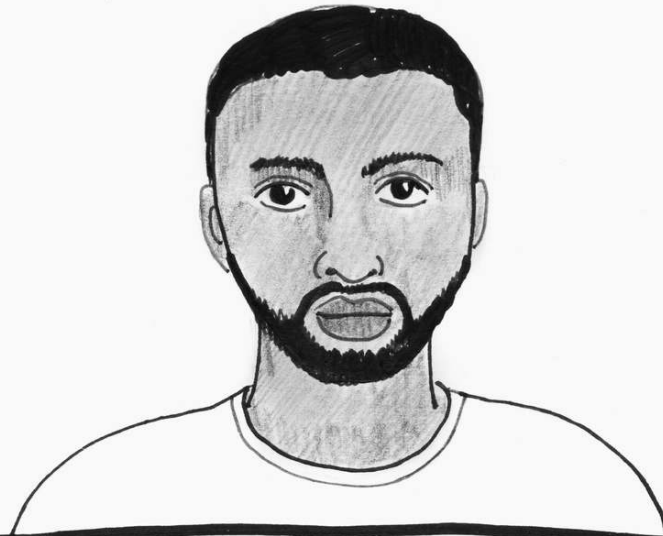
## WHAT IS ANXIETY ?

Anxiety is a common feeling of unease, worry, or fear that can range from mild to severe. It's normal to experience occasional anxiety in certain situations, like during a job interview or before an exam. However, for some people, managing these feelings can become difficult and start affecting their daily life.

## HOW DOES ANXIETY FEEL?

Anxiety feels like a persistent sense of unease, often accompanied by racing thoughts, restlessness, and physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, or tense muscles. It can be overwhelming and make everyday activities challenging, causing a heightened sense of worry or fear even in non-threatening situations.





**Signs & symptoms of anxiety:**

- o Having irregular heartbeat
- o Sweating, trembling & shaking
- o Feeling tired and weak
- o Trouble sleeping
- o Having the urge to stay away from things and spaces that trigger anxiety
- o Fast breathing
- o Trouble concentrating and thinking sensibly about your confusions
- o Difficulties in making decisions & controlling emotions



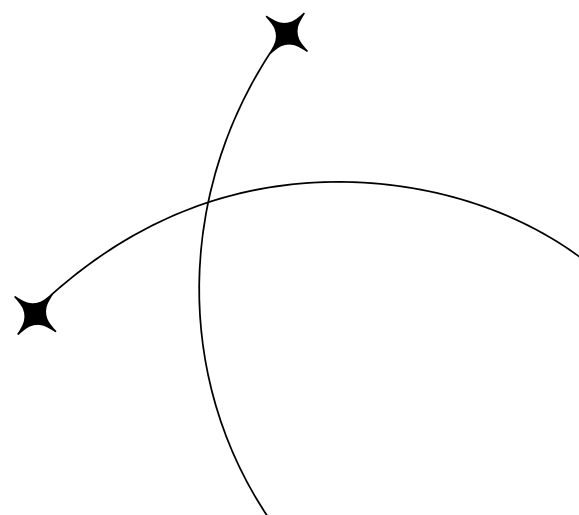
## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN

- **Reach out to someone you trust:** Share your feelings and thoughts with a close friend or family member who can listen empathetically, which may help alleviate anxious feelings.
- **Take a break from social media:** Research suggests that social media can increase anxiety, so consider limiting your usage.
- **Keep a journal:** Writing about your experiences with anxiety can help you identify triggers and understand your emotions better, especially during panic attacks.
- **Stay active:** Engage in activities you enjoy, such as cleaning, jogging, or other hobbies.
- **Prioritize sleep:** Ensure you get enough rest to support your mental well-being.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** Explore methods like yoga or meditation to promote relaxation and reduce stress.
- **Avoid alcohol or drugs:** Minimize substances that can worsen anxiety symptoms.



## HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN

- **Understand the person's situation:** Take the time to learn about the source of their anxiety. Asking about their experiences and daily coping strategies will provide insights into how best to support them.
- **Encourage seeking professional help:** Offer support and guidance in accessing mental health services (*refer to the chapter on "Mental Health Services in Eswatini" for resources*).
- **Ask how you can help:** Respect their boundaries by always asking how you can assist them effectively.



# Understanding Panic disorder

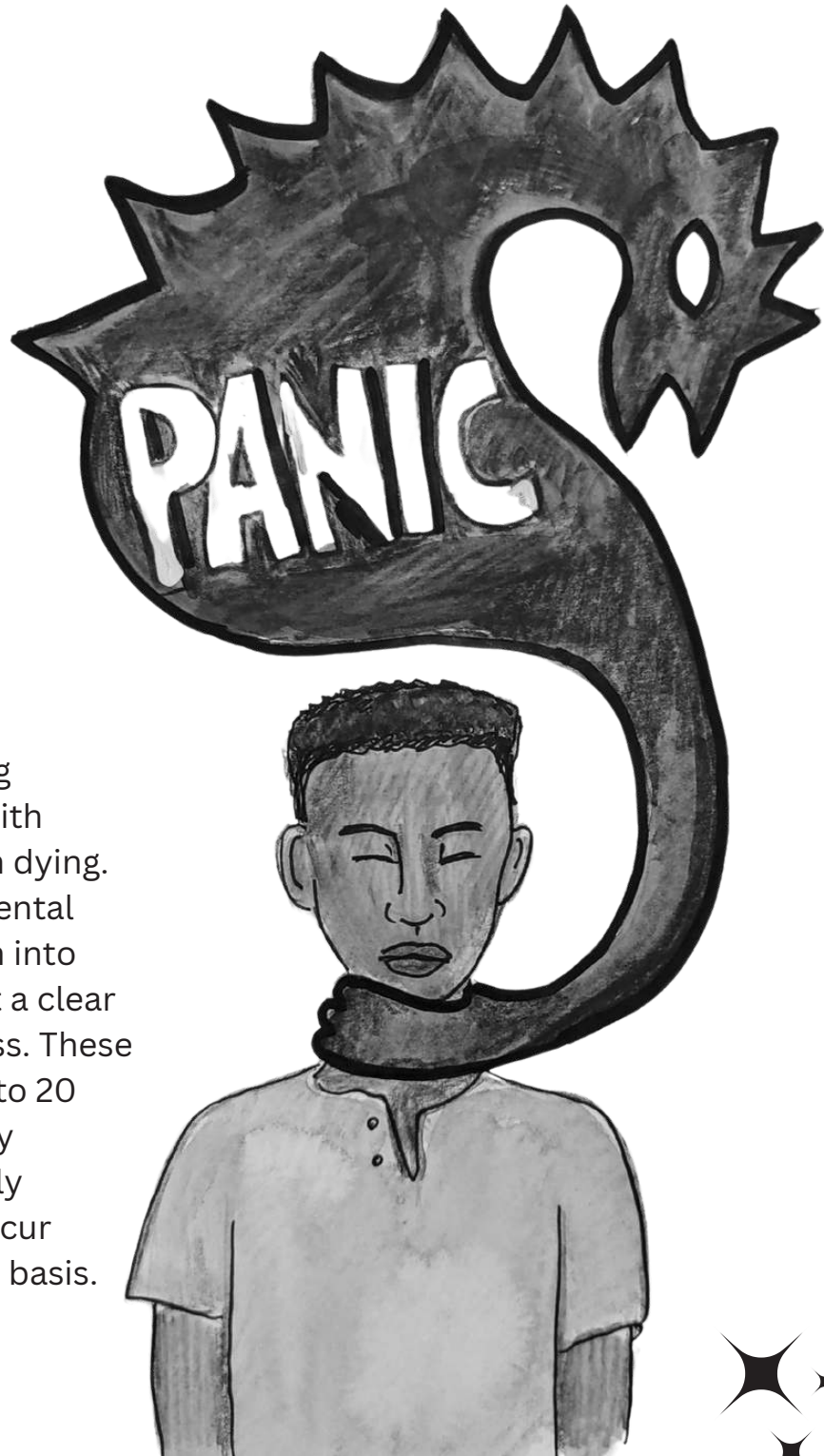


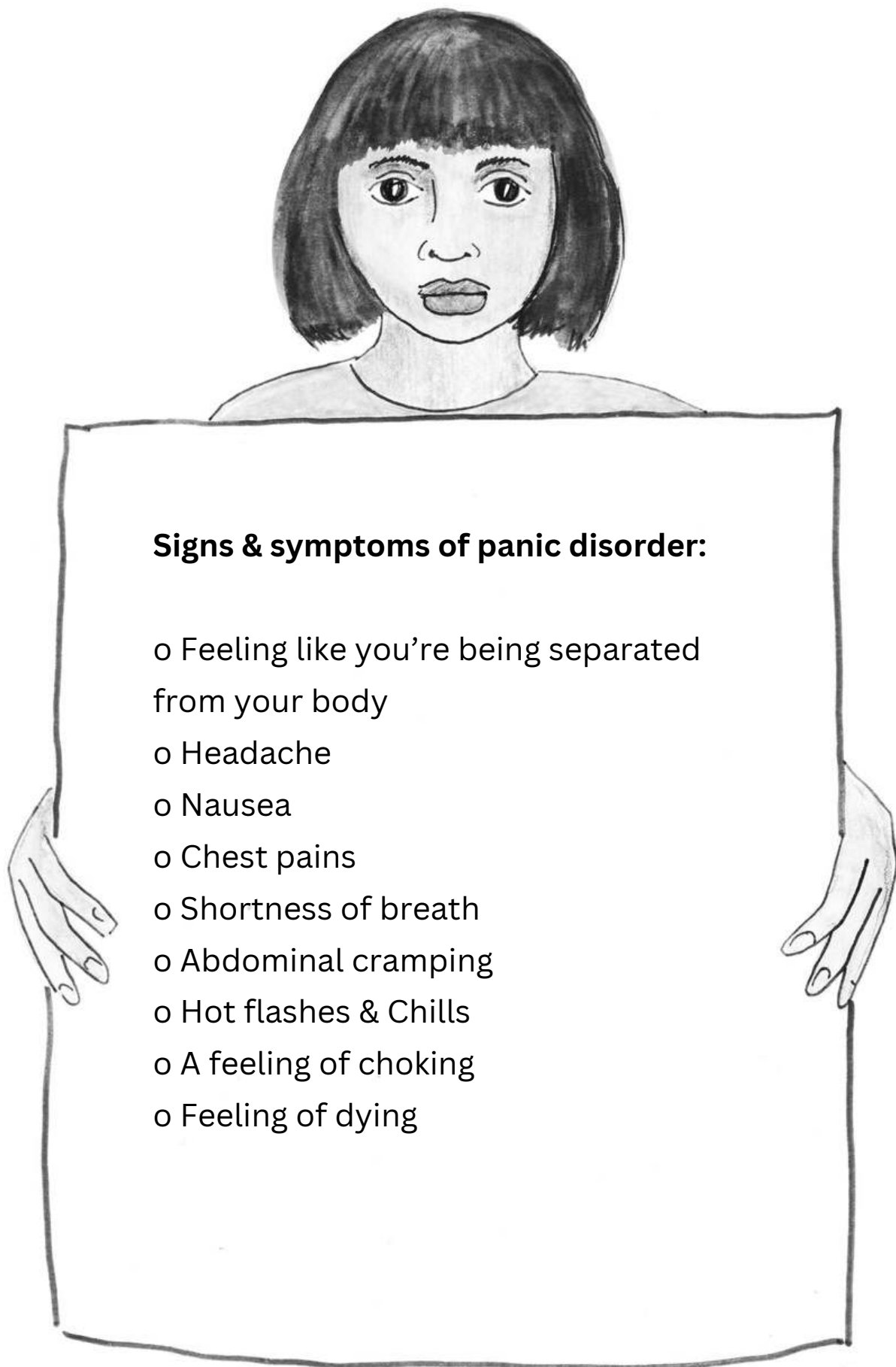
## WHAT IS PANIC DISORDER?

Panic disorder is an anxiety disorder where you have attacks of panic or fear on a regular basis - it is the most severe form of anxiety.

## HOW DOES PANIC DISORDER FEEL?

Panic disorder can be frightening because it can overwhelm you with feelings of losing control or even dying. During a panic attack, intense mental and physical symptoms can rush into your body suddenly and without a clear cause, causing significant distress. These attacks typically last between 5 to 20 minutes and, while not physically dangerous, they can be extremely frightening. Panic attacks can occur sporadically or even on a weekly basis.

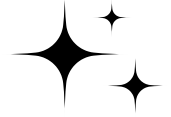




**Signs & symptoms of panic disorder:**

- o Feeling like you're being separated from your body
- o Headache
- o Nausea
- o Chest pains
- o Shortness of breath
- o Abdominal cramping
- o Hot flashes & Chills
- o A feeling of choking
- o Feeling of dying

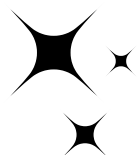
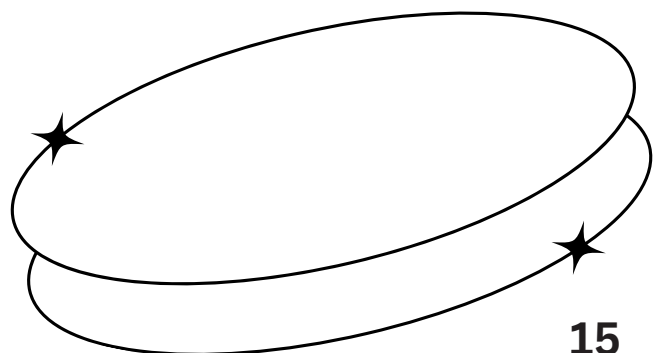
## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN



- Breathe slowly and deeply (breathe in for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 7 seconds and exhale slowly for 8 seconds).
- Remind yourself that it is not life threatening and it will pass.
- Focus on an object to ground yourself. You can also try and focus on all 5 senses around you.
- Walk around to help regulate your breathing.
- Picture a happy place where you feel relaxed, calm and safe.
- Taste mint-flavoured sweets or gum, or something sour.
- Stamp on the spot.
- Touch or cuddle something soft - wrap a blanket around you.

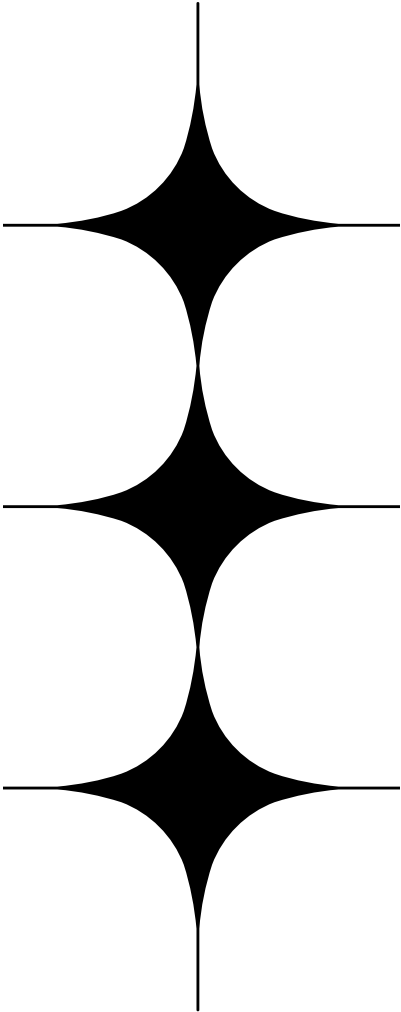
## HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN

- **Acknowledge their experience:** Calmly express that you believe they may be having a panic attack and reassure them that you're there to help.
- **Encourage deep breathing:** Prompt them to take slow, deep breaths while maintaining eye contact for reassurance.
- **Use grounding techniques:** Engage them in activities involving order and repetition, such as counting out loud together or guiding their focus with hand movements.
- **Activate the senses:** Combat their numbness or detachment by having them touch ice or feel textured fabric to reconnect with their senses.



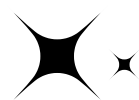
# Understanding Depression

## DEPRESSION IS ABOUT MORE THAN FEELING SAD



Feeling sad from time to time is a normal part of life, but when sadness persists for an unusually long time and is accompanied by feelings of hopelessness that impact daily life, it may be a sign of something more serious.

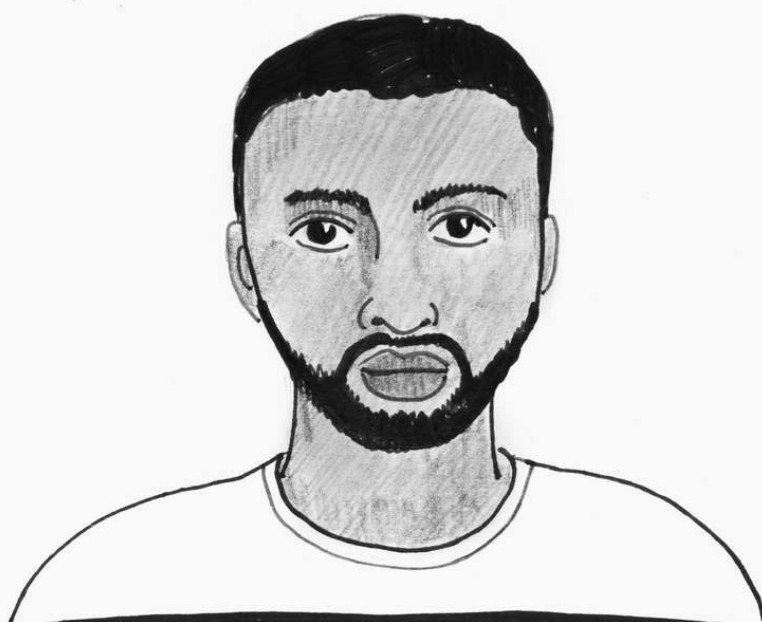
Depression is a serious but treatable illness that affects a person's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. It can disrupt your ability to function at work, school, and home. It's important to understand that depression is not a sign of weakness, and simply trying to "pull yourself together" is not effective in managing this condition.





## HOW DOES DEPRESSION FEEL?

Depression can feel like a persistent cloud of sadness or emptiness that hangs over you. It's not just feeling down for a day or two—it's a constant weight that makes it hard to enjoy things you used to love. You might feel hopeless, exhausted, and disconnected from others. Simple tasks can become overwhelming, and it can be hard to see a way out. Depression can affect your sleep, appetite, and ability to focus, making daily life feel like an uphill battle.



### **Signs & symptoms of depression:**

- o Lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness. Losing interest in things you used to enjoy.
- o Change in sleep habits (sleep too much or not at all).
- o Constant tiredness.
- o Low self-esteem.
- o Being easily irritable and/or angry.
- o Eating less or way more than usual.
- o Finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions.
- o Having thoughts of death or taking your own life (see chapter “Suicide”).



## UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

In Eswatini, people who feel depressed are often labeled as lazy, weak, or entitled because they struggle with the lack of motivation/interest to fulfil tasks and can only manage laying in bed and eating. This makes it challenging to express symptoms in the “expected” ways, e.g. sleeping too much and not being able to concentrate at school/work etc. Instead, people can also frequently face the following symptoms:

- headaches
- dizziness
- chest pains
- body aches/pains/numbness

Many people go through these symptoms and do not realise that they are depressed until their body gives out (e.g having a heart attack or stroke). They continue going to work or school because they are expected to or others depend on them.

If you have noticed 5 or more of the above mentioned signs or symptoms consistently for 2 weeks or more, we highly recommend seeking a Mental Health Professional (see chapter “Mental Health Services in Eswatini”).



## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN



- Talk to somebody you trust (a close friend, family member or mental health professional) to express your feelings and thoughts.
- Take a break from social media - research has shown that social media can intensify your depression.
- Doing something you enjoy (e.g. gardening, singing/listening to music).
- Exercise (e.g. upkeeping the household, road work, jogging).
- Good diet (e.g. nutritious Swazi staple foods,, fruits & vegetables).
- Journaling/writing down your experiences and thoughts can help process emotions.
- Avoid excessive drug and alcohol use.

**\*Progress may be slow so it is important to be patient with yourself and extend yourself some grace.**

## HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN

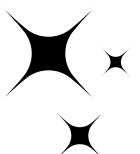
The best help you can provide your loved one, who is going through depression, is support:

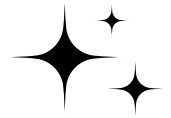
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- Let them know you care and are there to listen without judgment.
- Encourage them to help themselves.
- You can also do tasks together such as cooking and cleaning.
- Be patient and also take care of yourself.
- Most importantly, encourage them to seek professional help and accompany them if needed (see chapter “Mental Health Services in Eswatini”).

# Understanding Trauma

Trauma is a normal response of our brain to an intensely stressful experience, whether it's a single incident or an ongoing event like an accident, bullying, physical or sexual assault, childhood neglect, or emotional abuse.




Most likely, all of us have experienced some form of trauma in our lives, but we don't all respond the same way. Trauma can lead to shock, denial, and profound changes in our body, mind, and behavior. Sometimes, the effects of trauma only become apparent long after the event, especially when we encounter situations that remind us of the trauma, and this can contribute to mental health issues.





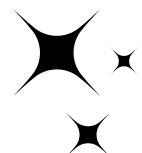
# HOW DOES TRAUMA FEEL?

When we feel stressed and threatened, our brain and body gets ready for defense, which we often don't have control over - it is called the fight, flight and freeze response:

TRAUMA RESPONSE	SOME COMMON THOUGHTS & FEELINGS	SOME COMMON BEHAVIOURS
 <span data-bbox="400 913 464 943">Fight</span>	<p data-bbox="580 869 778 898">"It's all your fault"</p> <p data-bbox="587 931 783 987">feelings of anger and rage</p>	<p data-bbox="858 831 1098 1043">Talking back to adults, storming out, showing aggression towards self &amp; others, showing defiance, blaming others, crying</p>
 <span data-bbox="424 1106 488 1135">Flight</span>	<p data-bbox="555 1077 804 1133">"I've got to get out of here"</p> <p data-bbox="549 1162 810 1249">feeling anxious/overwhelmed, the urge to flee</p>	<p data-bbox="868 1106 1114 1227">being intentionally or unintentionally distracted. fidgetiness, restlessness</p>
 <span data-bbox="400 1361 472 1391">Freeze</span>	<p data-bbox="639 1301 730 1330">"I can't"</p> <p data-bbox="560 1361 810 1391">panick, overwhelmed,</p>	<p data-bbox="868 1301 1114 1451">Giving up quickly, spacing out/ seeming not to listen, showing frustration or overwhelm</p>

# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA


If you have experienced a traumatic event, please know that your reactions are normal and you tried to survive the best you could at that time! Your feelings are valid, even though you do not understand it.



## SOME REACTIONS OF TRAUMA CAN INCLUDE:

- Feelings of anger, numbness, panic, worry, grief, confusion, shame.
- Physical effects: headaches, tiredness, sweating, forgetfulness, dizziness.
- Panic attacks.
- Dissociation - feeling disconnected from yourself and the world.
- Alcohol and Substance abuse (*see chapter “Drug & Substance Abuse/Addiction”*)
- Suicidal feelings and thoughts (*see chapter “Suicide”*)
- Self-Harm: when you hurt yourself to deal with difficult feelings.
- Sleeping problems.
- Self-neglect: when you are not able to meet your basic needs like eating and hygiene.
- Mental Health Problems, such as depression and anxiety. .
- Difficulties in keeping a job, trusting others, maintaining relationships.

## MOST COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA:

1. **Acute trauma:** Can be caused by a one-time, unexpected and stressful event. It is characterized by severe distress, shows up immediately afterward and lasts a short period (e.g. a car accident, sudden loss of a loved one, physical assault).
  2. **Chronic trauma:** Caused by repeated stressful events over an extended period of time (e.g. domestic violence, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, continuous bullying, neglect, and violence).
  3. **Complex trauma:** involves multiple different kinds of traumatic events that combine to create unique trauma symptoms.
  4. **Secondary trauma:** when you witness the trauma but don't experience it directly. Medical professionals, first responders, and law enforcement are especially vulnerable to secondary trauma. They are frequently called upon to deal with injury and chaotic information. It can impact you as much as any other trauma.
- 

## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN



**You might not be able to help yourself after experiencing trauma because you are in survival mode. What helps is different from person to person and it can also change over time. You can try the following:**

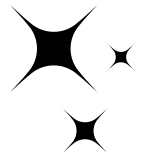
- Take care of your basic needs by maintaining a routine for eating and sleeping, even if it feels challenging.
- Ensure your safety by talking to a trusted and supportive person.
- Avoid using drugs and substances.
- Allow yourself to feel your emotions without seeing it as a sign of weakness.
- If you have thoughts of self-harm, try rubbing ice over the area instead.
- During flashbacks or dissociation, remind yourself that the trauma is not happening now and that you are safe. Holding an ice cube or splashing cold water on your face can help.
- Identify triggers to avoid or prepare for them. Keeping a mood diary can help you recognize patterns or early signs of changing emotions.
- Be patient with yourself and take each day as it comes, as symptoms should improve over time.
- While trauma is a normal response to distressing situations, seeking professional help can be important. Refer to the chapter on "Mental Health Services in Eswatini" for more information."



# HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN



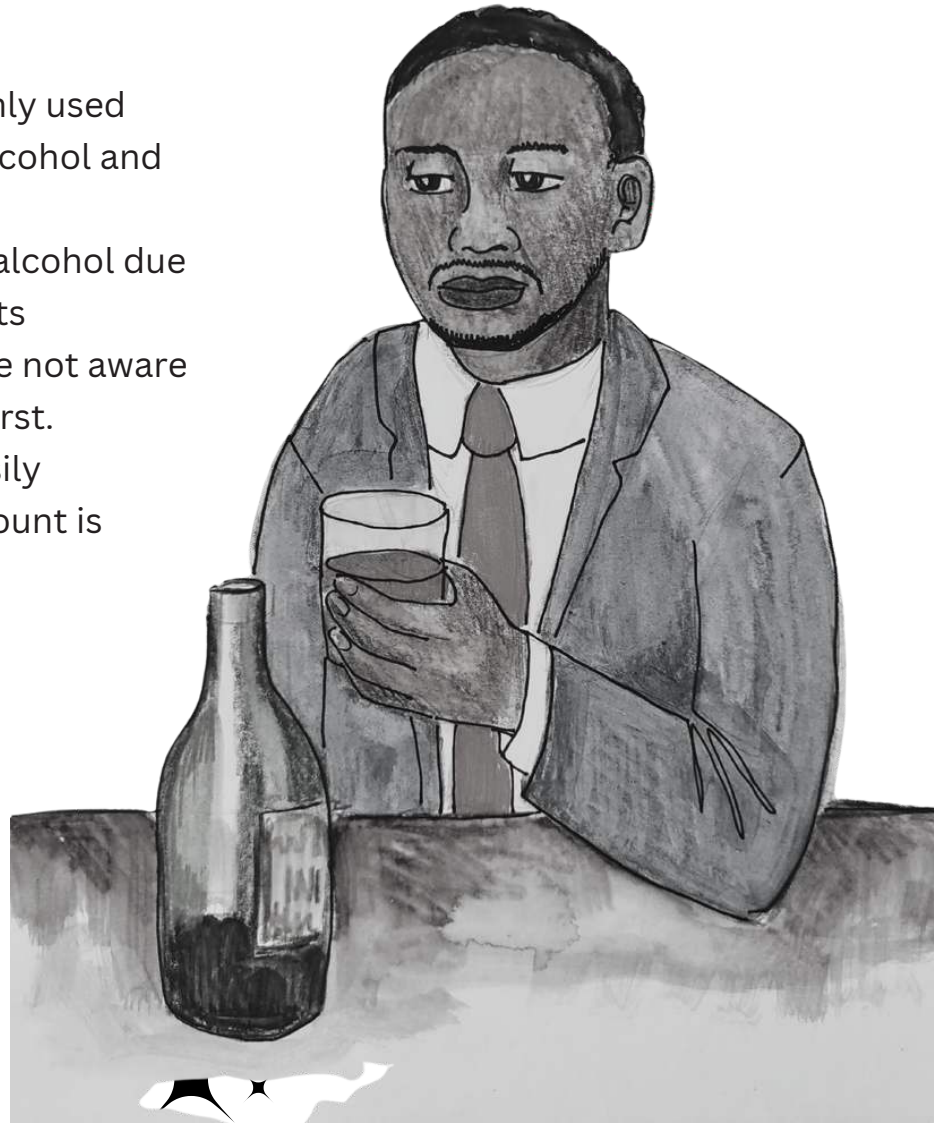
It can be difficult seeing your loved one dealing with the effects of a traumatic event, and you might not know what to do in this situation, which will make you feel helpless. However, there are a few things to consider:

1. **Inform yourself on the effects of trauma** so you understand better what your loved one is feeling.
    - Be a good listener - you don't always need to give advice, listening can go a long way.
    - Don't judge them
    - Don't dismiss their experience
    - Don't blame them; instead try to
    - let them express themselves,
    - use the same words they use
    - accept their feelings, and
    - give them time.
  2. **Avoid saying things like**
    - "It could have been worse" or "Just move on", instead use phrases like:
    - "I'm here for you", "I believe you" or "How can I help you".
  3. **Learn their triggers to be able to support them.** When they experience a flashback or dissociation try to:
    - stay calm,
    - tell them that they are experiencing a flashback,
    - reassure them that they are safe,
    - encourage them to breathe slowly.
  4. **Offer to help with daily tasks**, such as cleaning the house, cooking, getting groceries, etc.
  5. **Respect their privacy** and do not share their feelings if they prefer not to.
  6. **Engage them in fun activities**, such as going for a walk, listening to music, etc.
  7. **Take care of yourself.** Remember, you can experience secondary trauma as well!
- 

# Understanding Drug & Substance Abuse/Addiction

Many people don't know how or why one becomes addicted to drugs or alcohol. They might think the person lacks willpower or moral principles, when in reality addiction is a chronic disease. It can affect people from all walks of life. Quitting usually takes more than strong will and good intentions. You may begin using drugs during stressful moments, to numb emotions, to pass time and/or even due to peer pressure. The bridge between substance use and addiction can be slim - it can happen from initial use, over months or even over a period of years.

In Eswatini, the most commonly used and abused substances are alcohol and cannabis (dagga). It is easy to underestimate the impact of alcohol due to the easy access as well as its popularity - a lot of people are not aware that they have a problem at first. Cannabis is also relatively easily attainable as a significant amount is grown in the country.



# WHAT DOES DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION LOOK LIKE?



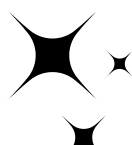
To help you notice addiction in your own behaviour or identify it in a loved one you are concerned about, these are some behavioural symptoms:

## DRUG ABUSE

- Dramatic changes in habits and priorities.
- You may start finding less motivation to engage in daily responsibilities (starting to skip classes or calling in “sick” for work).
- Drug Abuse is the early stage of addiction - Ongoing abuse can lead to addiction.
- You can abuse drugs without being addicted.

## DRUG ADDICTION

- You are unable to stop using the drug - You may feel the need to use it as soon as you wake up to be able to start and get through the day.
- You experience physical withdrawal symptoms when you suddenly stop.
- You crave for the drug and need to increase doses to experience the same effects.
- Your mood changes which can even lead to violent behavior.
- You neglect hobbies and other activities in favour of drug use.
- You socially withdraw yourself.
- You spend more time with other people who use drugs, neglecting family and old friends.
- You spend a lot of money on buying drugs.
- You fail to meet work or school obligations.
- You engage in risky activities such as stealing to obtain drugs or unprotected sex.
- You lie to family and friends about your drug use and the extent of the problem.
- You neglect your own appearance and develop poor hygiene.



## SHORT TERM EFFECTS



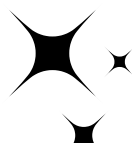
**Some short term effects of drug addiction may include but are not limited to the following:**

- Difficulty concentrating.
- Aggression & Irritability.
- Inability to control emotions & behavior.
- High blood pressure.
- Uncoordinated Movements and slurred speech.
- Insomnia.
- Rapid Heart Rate.

## LONG TERM EFFECTS

**The long term effects of drug addiction are much more serious and can include:**

- Cognitive decline
- Anxiety, Depression, Paranoia
- Infertility
- Memory loss
- Kidney & Liver damage
- Heart problems
- Seizures/Stroke
- Overdose, which can cause Death



## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN



Recovery is possible - however it takes time and patience. You might need several attempts before maintaining sobriety - **and that is okay!**

### **Steps for overcoming drug addiction can include:**

- Commit to change.
- Establish a positive support system - Family and friends or even a counsellor can help to reinforce new behaviors.
- Remove triggers, which can be any person, place or thing that sparks the craving for using (e.g. friends you've used with, places you've done drugs at).
- Find healthy ways to cope with stress (**see chapter “Stress”**).
- Deal with cravings - e.g. substitute a beer with a coke/sparkling water.

**(Please Note that if you have severe withdrawal symptoms, seek medical care immediately).**

## HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN

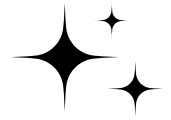
When someone you love struggles with addiction issues, it can feel like a struggle to help - most probably it will be a long and difficult journey. However, with your help, your loved one will have a better chance to overcome their challenges.

### DOS

1. Educate yourself on addiction and find support for yourself.
2. Create boundaries to protect yourself: it is not your job to keep them clean.
3. Focus on building trust.
4. Respect their privacy.
5. Tell them how it affects your life and your relationship.



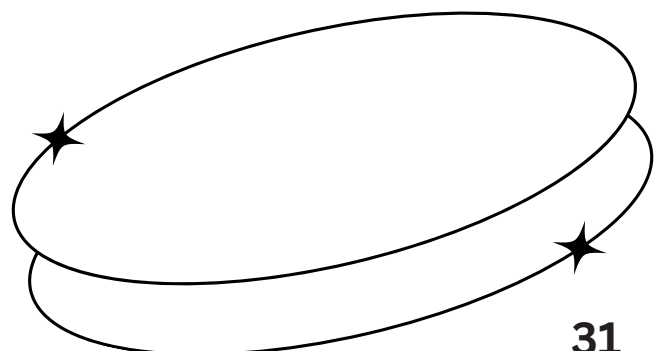
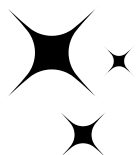
## HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN



When someone you love struggles with addiction issues, it can feel like a struggle to help - most probably it will be a long and difficult journey. However, with your help, your loved one will have a better chance to overcome their challenges.

### DON'TS

- Threaten or give ultimatums.
- Criticise, lecture or punish them, which can increase shame and their sense of guilt, urging them to use.
- Offer them the drug or provide money for them to purchase the drug as a result of feeling guilty.
- Expect immediate change.
- Make excuses for their behavior: Often the addict makes excuses to justify their behavior. Don't accept the excuses: It is a disease!
- Argue with them when high, they most likely cannot think rationally.



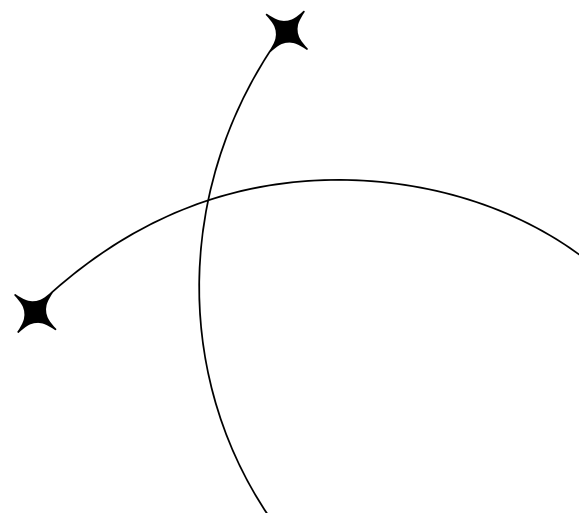
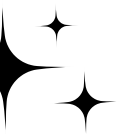
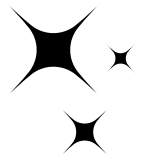


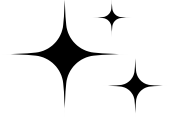
# Understanding Suicide

Suicide, often overlooked on the African continent, refers to the deliberate act of taking one's own life—a tragic response to feeling unable to cope with overwhelming life circumstances. **Suicidal feelings can affect anyone**, regardless of their background or life situation.

However, certain individuals may be at higher risk of suicide:

- People dealing with mental health issues such as depression.
- Family history of suicide.
- Child abuse, neglect and trauma.
- Not being able to pay off debts.
- Prolonged unemployment.
- Poverty.
- Gender based violence.
- Long- term stress.
- Chronic or terminal illness.

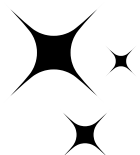




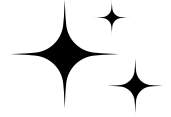
Sometimes, when someone dies by suicide, their friends and family may be shocked because there were no obvious signs. Suicidal thoughts are complex and not always easy to recognize. Many people find it difficult to talk about their suicidal feelings and may hide their true emotions by pretending to cope well with life.

However, there are behaviors to watch out for that are associated with suicide:

- **Suicidal ideation:** This occurs when someone thinks about and plans to commit suicide. It can be challenging to predict, so it's important to look for changes in talk, behavior, and mood (such as self-harm, excessive use of drugs or alcohol, etc.).
- **Suicide plan:** This refers to the specific method someone intends to use to take their own life.
- **Suicide attempt:** This involves engaging in behavior that could cause self-harm with at least some intent to die, regardless of whether it is successful.
- **Suicide Contagion:** This describes an increase in suicide or suicidal behaviors following exposure to suicide within one's family, peer group, or through media reports.



# WARNING SIGNS / THINGS TO PAY ATTENTION TO



## Talking about:

- Killing themselves and wanting to die.
- Having no reason to live.
- Being a burden to others.
- Unbearable pain.

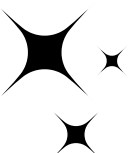
## Change in Behavior:

- Increased alcohol & drug use.
- Staying alone more, less socializing.
- Giving away important items.
- Sudden change of mood.
- Putting affairs in order- preparing a will, calling or visiting loved ones to say goodbye.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Suddenly switching from being very depressed to being very happy or calm for no apparent reason.

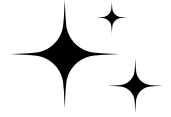
## Feeling:

- Anger or agitation.
- Humiliation and guilt.
- Hopeless, trapped, extremely sad, intense worry.
- Unbearable emotional or physical pain.

**If you observe any of the above mentioned warning signs, it is critical to take action right away and treat suicidal remarks seriously!**



# THE DOS AND DON'TS OF SUICIDE PREVENTION



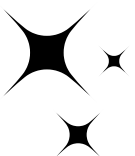
**You do not need specific training to talk to a suicidal person. If you are unsure if you should be worried about a loved one who might be suicidal, please consider the following:**

## **DOS:**

- Learn the warning signs and triggers of suicide.
- Show an active willingness to listen without judgment - don't make assumptions.
- Ask if they think about suicide. Talk openly and freely about suicide. It can encourage honesty and they might feel less alone.
- Ask open questions, which gives them the opportunity to say more than 'yes' and 'no' (e.g. How have you been feeling?).
- Show support and don't leave them alone in the situation.
- Encourage them to seek professional help.
- Help them think about how they can help themselves.
- Remove things they could use to harm themselves.
- Stay calm.

## **DON'TS :**

- Don't dare them to do it.
- Don't make a joke out of suicide, you never know who might be living in the situation you are making fun of.
- Avoid asking "why" they want to commit suicide - this can create a disconnect and make the person feel more dismissed and alone.
- Don't leave them alone.
- Don't debate if suicide is right or wrong.
- Don't shame them.



## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN

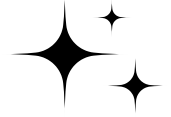


It may seem like it is impossible to solve your problems and that suicide is the only way to silence your pain, BUT there are ways how you can ease the pain and stay safe:

- **Healthy distractions-** socializing with family & friends, household chores, gardening, learning a new skill.
- **Self-Soothing** - this is a technique that activates your five senses that will sooth you and help bring you back to a state of being in control:
- **Vision** - divert your attention to looking at something that is pleasing like nature, a painting or watching your favourite movie or TV show.
- **Smell and breathing-** gain control of your breathing by taking long slow breaths, notice the smells around you (soaps, air fresheners, oil and food).
- **Hearing** - listen to your favourite sounds/music.
- **Taste** - Using the sensation of taste to focus your attention. Be cautious to eat mindfully.

**It is important to highlight that suicidal thoughts are a sign to change your life, not to end it.**

# HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN



## **Grounding Techniques/Helpful Reminders:**

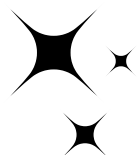
- Look for 5 things you can see around you.
- Listen for 4 things you can hear in your environment.
- Touch 3 things you can feel or reach out and touch.
- Identify 2 things you can taste or think about the taste of something you recently had.
- Finally, take a moment to focus on your breath. Notice how you're breathing—feel the air as you inhale and exhale, paying attention to your nose, throat, and abdomen.

## **Healthy coping questions to ask yourself:**

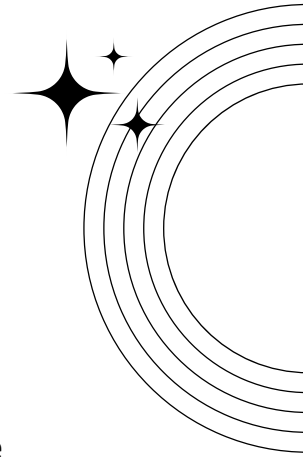
- Are the thoughts I am thinking facts or opinions?
- What has helped me feel better in the past that has worked?
- What gives my life meaning? What are my goals, dreams or life values? What keeps me connected to the living?

## **Mental thoughts that help with coping with suicidal thoughts:**

- It gets better with time
- Depression and pain are temporary, this too shall pass
- Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary intense feeling.
- Depression is distorting my thinking right now- these negative voices are my depression and they will not win over me. I don't have to act on them



# HOW TO LIGHTEN SOMEONE ELSE'S BURDEN



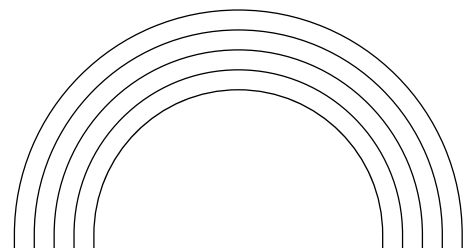
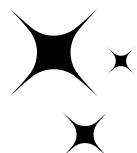
## Dealing With a Loved One With Suicidal Thoughts

Many people who attempt suicide do show some warning signs. However, there are also those people who, due to stigma or a desire not to be seen as weak, are able to hide their true feelings. **If you fail to recognize that your loved one is considering or considered suicide, do not blame yourself! Remember, that you did the best within your ability at the time.**

It is a devastating experience, and suicide loss is closely connected to complicated grief where the pain and sadness remains consistent and doesn't ease over time.

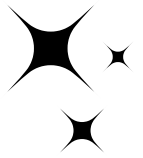
If one goes without treating complicated grief, it can lead to major depression, psychological trauma and post traumatic stress disorder. Please take note of the following care points when navigating a loved ones suicide:

- Allow yourself to express your emotions and feelings.
- Keep a journal.
- Remember that your loved ones life was more than their suicide.
- Expect ups and downs, some days will be harder than others but it's important to take care of yourself.
- Be patient with yourself and understand that it gets better the more you work on our grief.
- Seek professional help (see chapter "Mental Health Services in Eswatini").





# Self Care Tips

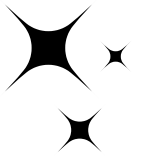


'Me Time' is often last on one's agenda, yet it is so important to take care of our body and mind on a frequent basis, and not only when you are sick. It is not a selfish act, it is an important part of an overall wellbeing.

In Eswatini, many self-care routines are ingrained in daily life, such as sitting outside in nature, enjoying the sun, spontaneous visits from neighbors, and engaging in community activities like playing soccer or chatting while fetching water. However, individuals often carry significant financial responsibilities supporting multiple family members.



Self-care techniques can assist in managing symptoms of mental health issues and prevent them from worsening. It's essential to find the right strategy that works best for you, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

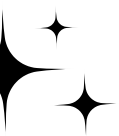


### **Benefits of self-care:**

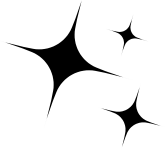
- Reduced stress levels.
- Increasing self-worth.
- Improved quality of life.
- Reduced burnout.

### **To get started with your self-care journey, you can find some suggestions for your daily routine below:**

1. Exercising can boost your mood and reduce stress and anxiety. You don't need expensive equipment to exercise, instead go for a walk, clean the house, do garden work or washing.
2. Eating a healthy diet to fuel our bodies and brains.
3. Pace yourself - even with all the bills you have to pay and all the people you have to feed, it is okay to take some time off.
4. Take a break from social media - studies show that social media can have a negative affect on our mental health. Try to use it consciously, have an occasional break and balance it with other activities.
5. Some people may find comfort in spiritual activities, such as going to church, praying, or listening to gospel music.
6. Connect with your community -
7. Get enough sleep.
8. Incorporate some relaxation into your day: Meditation, read a book
9. Start journaling
10. Set boundaries



# Start Journaling Today



Journaling, or keeping a written record of your thoughts, feelings, and experiences, offers a range of benefits for mental health and overall well-being. Here are some key benefits of journaling:

1. **Stress Relief:** Writing in a journal can help reduce stress by letting you express and process your feelings in a safe way.
2. **Understanding Emotions:** Journaling allows you to explore and understand your emotions better, which can improve self-awareness and emotional well-being.
3. **Problem Solving:** Writing about challenges can help you find solutions and gain new perspectives on issues you're facing.
4. **Clear Thinking:** Regular journaling can improve focus and clarity of thought, helping you organize your ideas and goals.
5. **Mood Improvement:** Journaling about positive experiences or practicing gratitude can boost your mood and overall happiness.
6. **Self-Discovery:** Keeping a journal helps you learn more about yourself, your values, and what matters most to you.
7. **Boosted Confidence:** Reflecting on your accomplishments and strengths in a journal can enhance self-confidence and self-esteem.
8. **Personal Growth:** Tracking your progress and insights over time can show how much you've grown and achieved.
9. **Emotional Release:** Writing about difficult experiences can provide a sense of relief and help you let go of emotional burdens.
10. **Simple and Therapeutic:** Journaling is an easy and therapeutic activity that can be adapted to suit your preferences and needs.

The following pages are a sample journal to get you started, we would like to encourage you to challenge yourself and daily journal entries. We hope it lightens your mental burden and inspires you to continue the practice of journaling.

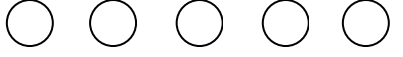


# Daily Journal

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mood/Emotion Tracker



Very Sad



Very Happy

## Reflections:

### Things that I am grateful for:

### My Goals and Intention:

### Space for Creativity

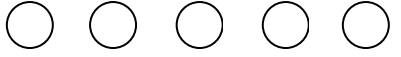
SKETCHES, DOODLES, POETRY, ETC.

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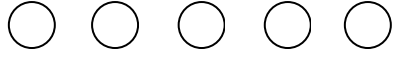
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Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mood/Emotion Tracker



Very Sad



Very Happy

## Reflections:

### Things that I am grateful for:

### My Goals and Intention:

### Space for Creativity

SKETCHES, DOODLES, POETRY, ETC.



# Mental Health Services in Eswatini

Organisation	Types of Services	Contact Details	Location
<b>Phumelela Project</b>	Free Counselling & Psychosocial Support Services (Mental Health, Gender Based Violence, Drug & Substance Abuse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 78540144</li> <li>• 79893525</li> <li>• 76317827</li> <li>• 25052407</li> </ul> katphumelela@hotmail.com	Manzini
<b>SWAGAA</b>	Free Counselling Services to survivors of abuse, their families and sometimes the perpetrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25052899</li> <li>• 25057514</li> </ul> Toll-free line 951 communications@swagaa.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manzini</li> <li>• Hlatikulu</li> <li>• Piggs Peak</li> </ul>
<b>Kwakha Indvodza</b>	Free Psychosocial Support Services for men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 78334491</li> <li>• 79157218</li> </ul>	Mbabane
<b>HealthPlus 4 Men</b>	Free Psychosocial Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 79283212</li> <li>• 24049094</li> </ul>	Mbabane
<b>Eswatini Psychology Association</b>	Contacts for Private Psychologists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76485270</li> <li>• secretary@eswatinipsychology.org</li> </ul>	Countrywide
<b>NATICC</b>	Free counselling services to survivors of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22079797</li> <li>• info@naticc.org.sz</li> </ul>	Nhlangano
<b>Survivor Eswatini</b>	Free Individual Counselling & Support Groups for survivors of sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76198557</li> <li>• survivor.eswatinisg@gmail.com</li> </ul>	Mbabane
<b>National Psychiatric Referral Hospital</b>	Free Psychiatric and Counselling Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25055170</li> </ul>	Manzini
<b>Eswatini Professional Counselors Association</b>	Counselling Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76500772</li> </ul>	Ezulwini

"You are not a burden. You *have* a burden, which by definition, is too heavy to carry on your own."

--- Unknown

**FUNDED BY**

British High Commission in Eswatini

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British  
High Commission  
Mbabane



**Phumelela**  
project



yebol art gallery



**ANTIDOTE CULTURE**  
Foundation