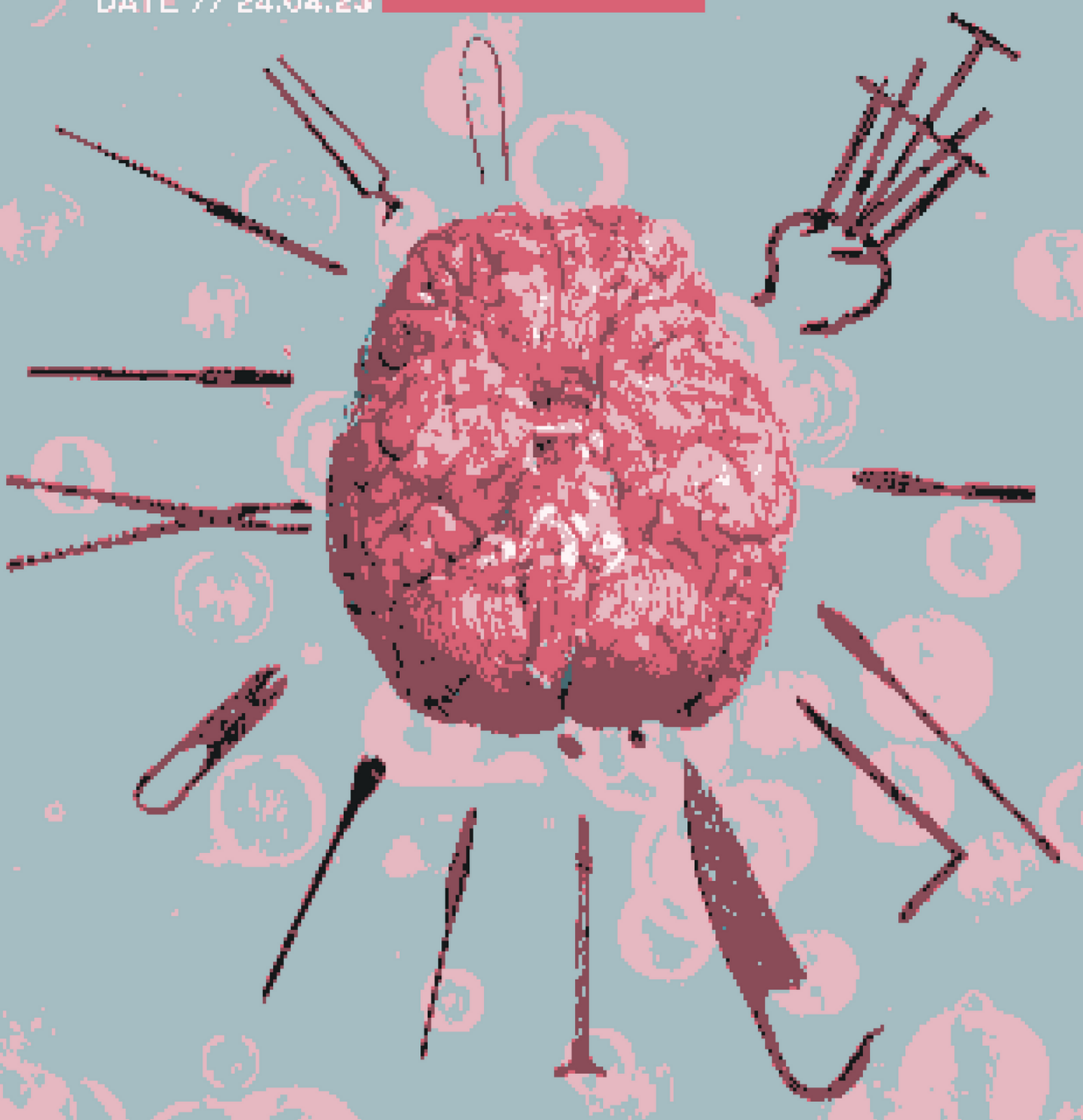


BEYOND THE BUBBLE

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IN YOUR HEAD



FROM THE EDITOR



'For the second edition of 'Beyond the Bubble' , we decided to focus on the mind and the stressors that may affect it as we felt with exams coming up for year 11 and year 13, it would be very relevant.

The last year has been very difficult for my family and me due to a personal loss, which some of you may already be aware of. We had to face many challenges, and deal with several unfamiliar situations due to a bereavement in my immediate family. Even getting the strength to get out of bed and come in to school sometimes seemed impossible; it is still really hard for me, even to be able to write about it now, but I wanted to share my feelings here so that others can read this and realise that they are not alone and that it is possible to come through the other side. Having people walk with you when you are walking through a storm, at your own pace, is important too. Although no one can stop the storm, just having them there with you is sometimes enough. It can be all you need.

For this reason, I am so grateful for the teachers and my close friends at Herschel that helped me get through the hardships I encountered this year. What I have learned from this challenging time is that it is important to understand how you feel, to accept it is OK to feel this way, to realise that you have been affected by your situation and that it is not a weakness to ask for help and accept support from those around you. The mind can play all sorts of tricks on you when you are not feeling your best, it can drain your energy, little things can send waves of worry that may threaten to overwhelm you, or sometimes it can tell you that you are not good enough if you admit you need help.

This edition continues to reflect on relevant current issues our students are facing, whether it's through the strikes (teachers and the NHS), dealing with anxiety as exam period looms near (specifically years 11 and 13), or the power of positive thinking to overcome physical hurdles ('Mentality Matters'), once again 'Beyond the Bubble' has something for you.

I have really enjoyed working with the rest of the team to produce the edition, but this will be the last edition of the publication that I work on due to my 'A' levels. Although this chapter in my life is coming to an end, I am looking forward to the next chapter. I know you will be in good hands with the next editor, Sanchali Sreelan, I wish her the best of luck.

Now the time has come for me to sign off for the last time and say...

I hope you enjoy reading!

Sara Inayat

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NO PAY RISE, NO EXIT, NO ESCAPE.

by Aarianna Amber Malick
& Suhaani Bhawna Mal

The fights between the striking workforces of the country and the Tory ministers continue to rise, with the government unwilling to back down.

Hundreds of thousands of workers – including nurses, teachers, civil servants and rail workers – have taken strike action in the last few months. In the UK, strikes have taken place since the Medieval period, but only became much more commonplace during the years of the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, when mass labour in mines and factories took off.

As of recent years, the disputes are mostly over pay, with the unions calling for wage rises to keep up with the rising prices of the growing economic crisis. The government had hoped strikers would begin to weaken by now, with many of the low-paid public workers suffering the many, many days' pay crossed off their payslips and some already using food banks. However, the long awaited changes by the government had come too late, with the strike disruption growing to the worst chaos in 30 years.

The UK has been grappling with its biggest strike wave for decades, with nurses, teachers, transport and Royal Mail workers walking away from their jobs, demanding higher pay to cope with the soaring inflation and worsening cost living crisis.

It was less than 2 years ago we were clapping for the NHS, but the government cannot seem to clap up the funds for nurses to not live on a struggling wage. Our applause doesn't pay their electricity bills. People who are already stretched too thin are being asked to do more with less. Amidst the ongoing strike wave, workers in the UK are feeling trapped with no hope for a pay rise, no possibility of leaving their jobs, and no escape from the growing economic crisis.



The situation in the UK remains tense, with workers from various professions continuing to strike for higher pay to cope with the increasing cost of living crisis. Despite the public's support for these workers during the pandemic, the government has failed to provide adequate funding to ensure they can live on a decent wage.

To make matters worse, students themselves are expressing the distress and anxiety this strike wave has caused them. After speaking to many students about their opinions on the strikes, one in particular stood out. They quoted "Every time there is a teacher strike I feel an ineffable feeling of rage. None of my teachers are close to covering the content of my course, but they are understandably forced to strike to take a stand against the government. "

The Breaking Point of NHS Workers: Overworked and Underpaid.

by Fatima Shahzad

It's all too common to be consumed by our own individual experiences and struggles when it comes to the ongoing NHS crisis. Lengthy wait times for assessment, difficulties securing GP appointments, and feelings of frustration when encountering doctors who may appear to lack competence can all lead to an unjustified tendency to blame medical staff for the issues we face. Yet, it's important to remember that healthcare professionals are not mere machines and cannot be solely responsible for preventing poor health outcomes or saving patients from their struggles.



Only when I visited a hospital and witnessed the harrowing conditions in which patients wait for emergency care whilst the doctors and nurses race around the ward attempting to tend to every patient and assess them whilst delaying their own breaks, did I truly begin to understand the daily struggles doctors face.

They work long hours and deal with immense mental and physical strain, while being unacceptably understaffed and underpaid. These challenges are intensified by insufficient funding from the incapable government that ignores the increasing demand with the ageing population, rising chronic disease rates, and population growth, which only serves to further worsen the workload of the workers.

Nurses and junior doctors, among other healthcare workers, are being clearly underpaid for their physically and emotionally challenging jobs; jobs where they hold the lives of patients in their hands every day, confronting the inevitability of death, and placing the rest of their lives on the line to save others.

Despite their compassionate and fundamental role, these workers are 'rewarded' with salaries barely sufficient to provide for themselves and their families. Around 60,000 NHS staff earn just £18,870 a year, yet some still have the audacity to blame these essential workers for striking. How long will we continue to turn a blind eye to the incompetence of our government, while denigrating human beings who prioritize our lives over their own?

Every NHS worker carries a deep sense of compassion within themselves, which drives them to save lives even if it means sacrificing their own peace and comfort in life. Yet, their pleas for adequate pay to meet their basic needs, enough to put food on their table or to almost pay their energy bills, are often dismissed as selfish. Every individual has their breaking point and for many NHS staff, poor pay is the leading reason why they consider quitting. Multiple studies and surveys show that four out of five staff members regard low pay as one of the main factors that would push them to leave the NHS.

However, it's not just inadequate pay that causes discontent among NHS workers. A sense of undervaluation is also prevalent, with nearly two-thirds of staff (64%) reporting feeling underappreciated by their employer or the government.

It is essential that we shift our focus away from laying blame on the medical staff and instead redirect our attention towards addressing the underlying causes of the crisis, the government. We must demand adequate funding and optimal staffing levels. Only then can we begin to take concrete steps towards resolving the NHS crisis and ensuring rightful access to healthcare services for all.

MENTALITY MATTERS

by Mohammed Abid Malik

How is mentality important?

Picture the scene: it's the last minute of a football game, your team is a goal down and your opponents have the ball. In this situation, a lot of regular people would give up and conclude that the game could not be won, and consequently lose the match. But this rarely happens in professional play. The reason for this is that those players have been taught to develop mental toughness and optimism to stay motivated in any scenario. There are many examples of strong mentality resulting in outcomes which would normally never be possible. Take the 2012 premier league, where Manchester City scored twice in added time with an unforgettable Sergio Aguero goal in the last gasp of the game to win his team the title. Without mental fortitude, this outcome would never have been possible, no matter the talent or skill of the players – with no passion there is no possibility.

How can mentality help?

Manchester United left-back and England hero Luke Shaw can be seen as one of the most concrete examples of mentality proving king over any turmoil in life. In 2015 Shaw faced tragedy as a poor tackle caused him to suffer a double leg break. "I'd be lying if I said I didn't think about stopping football" he understandably said. With the legs being the most important body part in the game, losing use of both with the high chance of them never being the same reasonably would have made any footballer doubt themselves. Despite his doubts, resilience made Shaw stick with it. He didn't just give up. He came back stronger. Most people would remember his remarkable performance in the England squad's European Championship run to the final, where Luke found himself scoring a goal. He went from a heart-breaking situation to being hailed as a national hero.

How can you apply a strong mentality to your own life?

The simplest way to put it is to never give up. Even if you feel the walls are closing in and the whole world is against you, do not quit. Learn from your mistakes and do not dwell over them. Have a vision and set goals. Most importantly, be consistent. The power of your mind can surely see you through hardship, not only in sport but in any aspect of life. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt: 'Believe power of your mind can surely see you through hardship, not only in sport but in any aspect of life.'

'Believe you can, and you are half way there'.

-Theodore Roosevelt





Mittens the Quantum Cat

by Christopher Dawid Zander

When you look around you, things generally tend to make sense; a mug of coffee is warm, and until something moves it, it stays in its one, single place. However, once you zoom in far enough, down to the atomic scale, rules tend to break down slightly. This article looks at the potentially distressing effects of a misguided attempt to bring a thought experiment to life, and the very real science that has led to many a headache for the philosopher.

Slowly, you regain sensation. As consciousness trickles in, you raise yourself upright, stretching out your spine and yawning a silent yawn. You open your eyes – you then try opening them again, unsure if it worked, since all you could see was darkness. No, it seems your eyes do function; they can just about make out a grey steel box, with fuzzy shapes at a paw's length. You reach out and feel them with your claws and paws; they seem to be glass structures, none of which you recognize.

"Hello, Mittens."

"You are Schrodinger's Cat."

Confused and concerned, your gaze darts from side to side.

Who is Schrodinger? Why are you here?

"I'm sure you've noticed the... unique timer, across from you. At a random point in time, that even I cannot know, poison will be released. You will die."

The hairs along the back of your spine rise. A small dose of fear begins to course your veins, and your eyes search the box for an escape with increased haste.

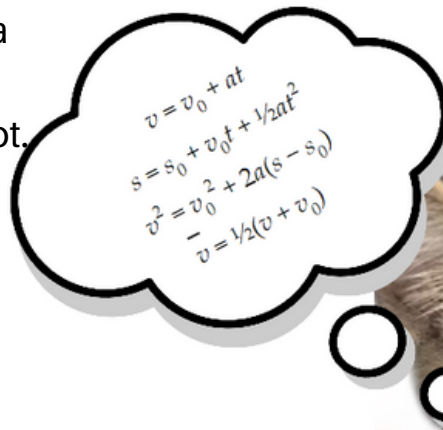
"There is, however, hope. Should I be compelled to lift the box, and you haven't yet been terminated, you will be spared."



"You now sit at the forefront of discovery. You are the living manifestation of quantum mechanics, the link between cold, harsh numbers and the soft, malleable form of life. Are you dead? Are you alive? I cannot know."

This means nothing to you: then brainwaves flashes through your mind; in the scientist's perspective, yes, you could be seen as dead and alive (if the scientist was clever, he might even call it "superposition"), but since you have perspective, you are only alive. You further realise that perhaps the reason this experiment in practice does not generate the quantum effects desired is due to the presence of consciousness, and that for an actual superposition, you might need a subatomic particle such as an electron.

"Yes, Mittens. It is a fascinating dilemma you face. The power of consciousness could very well render this process moot. The power of your mind and existence could be that which breaks quantum mechanics; destroys the system; holds the universe together.



I shall return, Mittens. We may meet again."

With that, the speakers clicked silent. Only the mysterious glass structure kept you occupied, yet you knew it could be your end.

Click.

Your eyes shot round to the glass machine, just in time to catch a gauge falling back down to zero. A hiss then permeated the air, as the air became thicker, and harder to breathe in.

The scientist wasn't joking. Your eyelids drooped lower and lower as the oxygen thickened with chemicals, soon falling entirely shut.

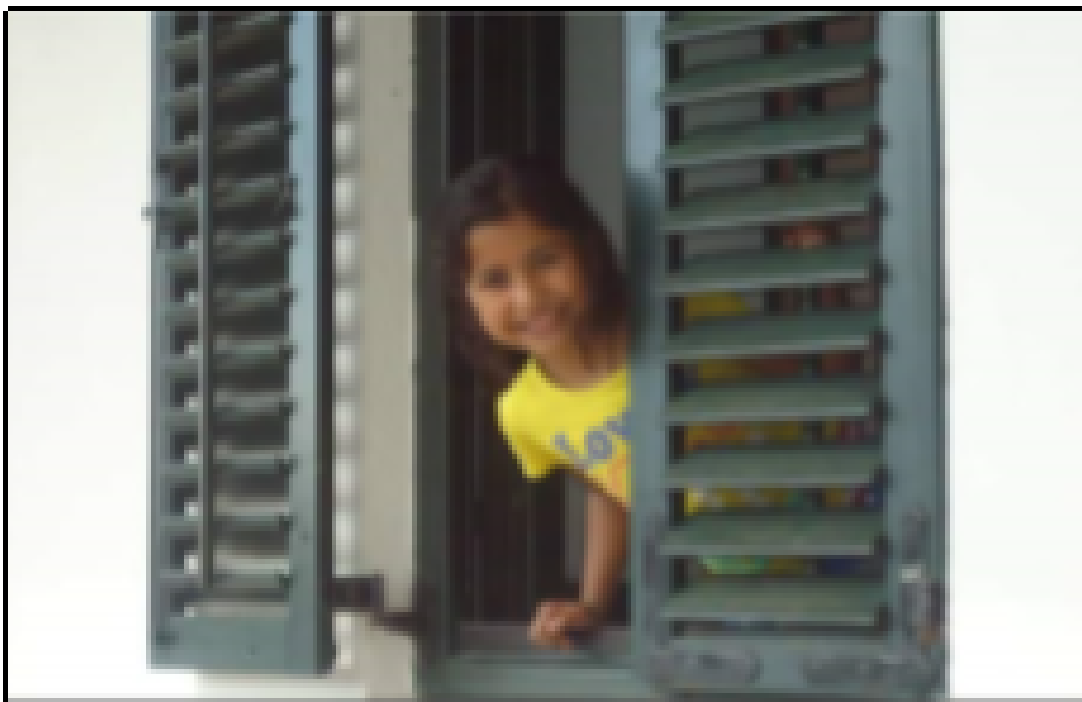
Tentatively, you meow, once, twice, hoping a heartstring will be pulled, but your only reply is the cold sting of apathy.



Moving Around Anxiety

by Anika Garg

Think of anxiety as a monkey, in my case an orangutan, that has slowly moved in with you. It will take your time, patience, sleep, and potentially your ability to think away. All that you now need to do, is, tell somebody about this orangutan! Anxiety can quickly take over your life if it is not taken care of as soon as possible. Personally, anxiety is this orangutan who has been living with me since I was 12 years old. From that exceedingly early age, I had to train both myself and my orangutan to be able to adjust around each other. It was not easy, and it took a lot of time. The thing that you need to remember is that there is no fixed solution to a mental health issue as it is very personal. You will know what works for you because you know what the best for you is. In the beginning, for my restlessness, everyone recommended meditation and focus exercises, but to this day it has not worked for me. It never helped me. But it could d be for you. Attempt different management techniques until you finally find one. For example, one of the things that help me manage my anxiety is fidgeting or simply getting some fresh air. In case of a panic attack, I try to slowly draw an infinity sign on my wrist to indicate when to breathe in and breathe out so that my irregular breathing during the attack can come back to normal. It will take time and effort, but both you and your orangutan will find it easier to live with each other with some nice, simple rules.



It started around the middle of year 8 when I began feeling different from what I classed as my usual. My family noticed the constant shift in mood, having a low mood all the time, and that I was feeling restless. I would often prefer to spend time alone in my room doing one thing or another – this could be watching a show or doing my homework. I preferred eating alone where nobody could see me eat, sometimes I would not eat at all. It became hard for all of us because nobody knew how to manage this, and nobody had any open experiences of mental health issues previously. One day, I felt miserable, like the water was getting above my head and told my parents. They immediately tried to find the best help that they could, and I got my first doctor. She was an incredible psychotherapist and helped me work out why I was feeling the way I was and helped my parents understand how I was feeling and how they can help me in the best way. To this date, I have had many different doctors that have helped me develop various techniques that help me when I am stuck in an unfavourable situation. One of the most common things that are told especially when you know you have begun to understand when your anxiety begins to peak, is to recognise triggers. For instance, I hate being embarrassed, it is one of my “worst emotions.” So, whenever I feel embarrassed or under the negative limelight, my anxiety rapidly increases (I can tell because I notice my heartbeat getting faster and louder or my voice choking. The only way I became better at managing my anxiety, my orangutan, is by learning different skills, and techniques and increasing awareness amongst my closest people; this way they know how to help me too.

This is how after a while, I finally started to manage living with the orangutan. For example, I had this obnoxious pink-orange calculator case that I used as my indicator – every time my anxiety is getting worse, I would show it to my teacher, and she would understand that I need to step out for a moment. Getting overwhelmed is normal – you just need to remember that no problem is too little or too big. It can seem daunting but all you need is a little push for yourself – talk to your closest friends, teacher or family members and they will be able to support and help you. My orangutan still likes to mess up my sleep sometimes, but I must try and calm it down so both of us can sleep and wake up ready for the next day. Your monkey and my monkey can be completely different, yours could be a baboon, so never compare what you are going through with someone else. What works for me could both work and not work for you.

Anxiety is described to be a feeling revolving around being nervous, uneasy, or worried about a certain outcome. When I think about anxiety, I connect it to things like feeling an empty pit in your stomach or having this bubble of air stuck in your lungs and windpipe. I often feel this suffocation, as if I am struggling to breathe, this is the way I recognise that my anxiety is getting higher – potentially to a point that I need to leave and get fresh air. Anxiety can result in not being able to focus, relax or speak. But remember, anxiety is different for everyone. Every person who has ever experienced anxiety has different “symptoms,” some people feel like they are constantly being suffocated or some could feel like they are completely drained.

Anxiety can also come with other mental health issues such as depression, OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) or PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). In my case, my anxiety stemmed from depression, my first psychotherapist helped me understand that.

This is how after a while, I finally started to manage living with the orangutan. For example, I had this obnoxious pink-orange calculator case that I used as my indicator – every time my anxiety is getting worse, I would show it to my teacher, and she would understand that I need to step out for a moment. Getting overwhelmed is normal – you just need to remember that no problem is too little or too big. It can seem daunting but all you need is a little push for yourself – talk to your closest friends, teacher or family members and they will be able to support and help you. My orangutan still likes to mess up my sleep sometimes, but I must try and calm it down so both of us can sleep and wake up ready for the next day. Your monkey and my monkey can be completely different, yours could be a baboon, so never compare what you are going through with someone else. What works for me could both work and not work for you.

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When you are in school for a quarter of your day, your anxiety could fluctuate massively. This could mean that you feel sick, agitated, or even have a panic attack – but I promise you that you will be all right. You can go to Ms. Smajlaj (mam@herschel.slough.sch.uk), and she will be able to give you a temporary solution and help you with other facilities like Number 22 or the school nurse for help. If you feel something building up in class, tell your class teacher! Spot your monkey and tell someone about it, the more you ignore it, the longer it takes for help to arrive. There is no need to be shy, reluctant, or embarrassed when asking for help – there is always an ear that will listen. You are never alone.



HIPPOCAMPUS

by Shruti Murali and Abhina Jeyabalan

The hippocampus is the part of the brain where memories are created and stored. When you revise, how much do you actually remember? In order to make the most out of the time you have, it is important to make priorities and not stress. You should organise your work and refresh your memory frequently – not just the night before a test. Here is some advice on how to keep on track and maintain the balance between your wellbeing and revision.

Everyone has different warning signs that indicate that they are getting stressed. For many, it can be when they lose their temper with friends and family, start to fall behind in their work, and/or experience insomnia. Be aware of your warning signs so that you can take steps to prevent stress. Poor mental health often arises from poor physical health as well. To stop this, look after yourself. For example, exercise and eat well, get enough sleep and find a way to relax.

When you are given a test date, it is easy to procrastinate and hold off on revising. This can build feelings of nervousness and anxiety, but it is important that you stay focused and prepare yourself. On this occasion, a revision timetable or a planner could be helpful. You can find many online or make one yourself. Depending on what works for you, you can colour coordinate or specify which subjects you need to work more on, ensuring to include adequate time for breaks. Make sure to avoid distractions. In order to maintain productivity and focus, you should schedule a break after 50 – 90 minutes, with intervals ranging between 10 – 25 minutes.

*“Your present circumstances don’t
determine where you go: they merely
determine where you start”*

- Dr. Lauren Fogel Mersy

Something to remember is that everyone learns in their own way, and it is best to find out what works for you. For some people, they work best listening to music. For others, it might be working in complete silence. The place where they study at and the time they study at will be different for everyone. It is vital that you find out what works best for you and revise in your own pace rather than following what your friends might be doing. As much as revising is important, it is also necessary to take a few moments to relax.



If you struggle with completing all your work on time, it can also be helpful to use a notebook to keep track on what you need to do. The key thing is to be consistent on what you write down and try to finish them accordingly. There are many websites online, such as Notion, which have templates and ideas to assist you in managing everything you need to do. By prioritising upcoming exams in subjects you find more difficult, you can reduce feelings of stress. Another piece of advice is to do your homework the day you receive it. This will prevent you from forgetting to do it and having to finish it off last minute.



A Ghost Story Film Review

by Sethan Yohananthan

Synopsis

A man, who has turned into a ghost, resides in the home that he and his wife shared.

The title of this film and the basic one-line of this story may imply that it is the simple story of a husband haunting the home where he lived with his wife and seeing the different changes that come following his death. However, when you watch the movie, it is a poignant film about grief and loss and memories.



The movie addresses grief and letting go of something or someone through the theme of memories. The movie beautifully shows that hanging onto memories of our past is not helpful when dealing with grief as it may cause us only more pain. Maybe, being in the present and living life happily will be the best way to deal with this sorrow. The present is called the present as it is a gift for us and we should cherish it, for we will never have it forever.

It's All In My Head

-Anonymous

When I was younger, I'd ask my mother to check for monsters under the bed,
She'd smile and shake her head,
It's all my head, she'd say,
Kiss me goodnight, and close the door.

I'd hide under my blanket, eyes shut tight
Hoping the monsters under my bed would leave me be.

When I got older,
I started to wonder if monsters were real, again,
It was subtle at first -
A flicker of doubt,
A fleeting moment of fear,

It was all in my head.
It was all in my head.
It was all in my head.

But then I got older,
And suddenly monsters didn't seem so fake anymore,
They no longer hid under my bed,
They started to live in my head.
Only this time,
There was no Tooth Fairy
Nor Santa Claus,
Just me and them.

It's all in my head.
It's all in my head.
They're in my head.

Sometimes, they'll vanish for days on end
Sometimes, they'll be there for my every breath
Today, they sit next to me
Smiling their feral smile
Sharp razor teeth, and eyes of obsidian
They reach out and their finger trails my cheek.

Anxiety

-Anonymous

Something lies inside of me
It's ... sleeping ... maybe dead - I no longer know.
It changes it's form so often, you see?

That's the beauty of the black-eyed beast -
It shifts and changes every passing second - like a flickering flame of fire,
Sometimes it's as big as a bear and sometimes it's as small as a bee,
Sometimes- it's not a beast at all.

Yesterday, it was a mangle of chains,
An anchor that kept me from swimming,
It drowned me in the overwhelming sea.

Today, it feels like a distant memory,
An old friend from my younger days,
Barely remembered.
Oddly missed.

I wonder what form it'll take tomorrow?
To whom do I explain that it's not an object, nor a thought?
It is a feeling that many have fought,
It is anxiety.



illustration by Abigail
Abraham