

# COMMUNITY DIARIES



NATURE



JOURNALING



ART

## MENTAL HEALTH

### REAL TALK, REAL FEELINGS...



**I** love a verse in the Bible that talks about how God allows us to walk on fire, but we shall never burn, he also allows us to walk on water and we shall never drown. I'm a twenty-one year old university student, a daughter and mostly a suicide survivor.

My journey on depression dates back to 2020 when I went through the hardest phase of life; with attempting to end my life thrice and unfortunately the major attempt resulted in some health changes that affects me till now. I'm mostly glad to have gone through this chapter of life because it has led me to realize how powerful God is, and his love for us.

I have never been someone who can go to church a lot but I have seen biggest miracles in my life. I have had self-harm issues, cutting myself or scratching myself mostly emerging because of anger within myself and the people around me who didn't seem to care or cater for me or hear my screams. I found myself willing to save other people out of depression since I couldn't be saved from it.

I started a mental health campaign on WhatsApp and it was very emotional on how I would share words of encouragement and comfort to people until my DM got loaded with messages of people wanting my help; some were rape victims, abused by relatives, bullied, lost their loved ones, life challenges and so much.

I had no clue on how to help these people but I just tried. I did researches on mental health and how to approach people in different situations, it got me in a spotlight and I ended up being called 'Khaya The Therapist'. I also started a creative movement for people to be creative and express their talents, it was a digital magazine which is called Khayas Creativerse. In that same year I published a book on some life issues that I faced, it's called 'Dear Future....everything I was afraid of happening happened'

Depression is a demon, suicidal thoughts is a force in a body that doesn't want to live anymore, and it has power, so much power.

I'm so sensitive to mental health issues and I always get my attention and take action on what I can, to save people out of it. I always get 1a.m messages and well so much people are troubled daily but I'm confident to say I have helped all my therapy clients successfully, they have appreciated my services and I never look for any appreciation from them. Helping others has helped me too.

My name is Karen Palisah Mhanda, a young multi-talented woman who is a Published Author, Mental Health Therapist, Magazine Founder, Media Student, a daughter and a sister.

My journey has brought me to become so many things every day.

*Story by Karen Mhanda*

*"Depression is a demon, suicidal thoughts is a force in a body that doesn't want to live anymore, and it has power, so much power."*



*"Mental health is not a destination, it's a journey. Let's walk together."*



Source: pininterest.com



**W**hen I moved to Kuwadzana, a high density suburb in Harare, from Chivhu, a small town, I often felt uninspired and mentally exhausted. I lost my creative ability and struggled to write even just one line. It often led to anger issues, for example, lashing out at someone unintentionally, and regret it a minute later because it happened out of my control.

Through research, I soon learned that the two challenges had names; the mental weight is called mental fatigue, and the lashing out is called impulsive aggression. I also learned that I was unable to control my reaction to situations because I was often depressed due to mental fatigue. The mental fatigue was caused by all pollution from the urban life going into my body and weakening my brain function.

The solution in all the studies that I consulted was in increasing time in natural green spaces such as parks or just walking along tree lined streets. Exposure to natural green spaces boosts the amygdala, a part of the brain that regulates mood, and also helps with the release of serotonin, also known as the happy molecule.

I then began the ritual of taking walks in nature. Within a few weeks of practicing nature walks and sun gazing, I reclaimed my creative strength. Today I have over 80 songs recorded. I attribute it to the intentional nature walks and participating in tree planting initiatives.

*Story by Tafadzwa Gwini*

**M**y artistic journey started when I was a twelve year old boy sometime in 2012. I used it to easily connect with people and share my artistry abilities, that way I found great solace, as I would make friends whilst harboring and bottling my well-guarded secret, I was not ready to face the judging world. All was rosy until in 2020 when I was dumped by my then girlfriend because of who I am, (I had finally decided to let my partner know my HIV status) she freaked out but art quickly assumed her role, the breakup pain was numbed. I drew inspiration from such an unfortunate exit, I started writing poems, the best one being "I didn't choose to be like this". Even during my epoch at college, breaking the cocoon seemed like journeying towards the deep blue ocean floor, I was nervous. My classmates thought I was scared of girls, as I would discourage advances from my female colleagues. Determination however awarded me with the greatest asset, as proudly I am a holder of a higher diploma in film and television production. Hope is not all lost, I smell my partner fast approaching from an earshot distance. In other words I am still single. Lastly to you art, you are my all weather friend, let us maintain this hand and glove relationship. Thank you art, I admire you Pal.

*\*Name withheld*

**B**eing a woman, an African woman is no mean feat. The odds are stacked against you from birth. The sterner sex is always afforded more opportunities while females get sidelined. After graduation it can only get worse in the cut throat world of job hunting. You travel the length and breadth of Zimbabwe dropping of CVs and attending interviews. They call you for interviews, just to make you believe you have a fighting chance, when the whole thing is just a ruthless charade. If they pick a female it's mostly one of two things, to meet their quota of 'gender balance' in the workplace or because the successful candidate is well connected.

This so far has been the story of my life, a university graduate who has had to borrow and ask for handouts just to either buy data to email application letters and CVs and sometimes travel hundreds of kilometers to attend interviews that have so far yielded nothing, not even a polite decline with a promise to keep my CV on file in the event a vacancy arises.

The frustrations of being unemployed when you know you are employable and your skill set is priceless. After a while hope begins to wither, but you can't afford to lose hope, because losing hope is suicide.

This is just one of the hundreds of pages mirroring how my life has been so far, all the trials, tribulations. To vent I've resorted to writing, a book about my life. A book for every woman out there, a book about not losing hope because just as the sun shines for everyone and rain falls on both the evil and righteous, I know as long as I live I'll get my chance to realize my dreams.

*Story by Rumbidzai Mbirimi*

*"Mental health is not a destination, it's a journey. Let's walk together."*

## "Self-care is not selfish, it's essential."

### ASHES TO BEAUTY

I remember staring at walls and all I could see was a dead end, the closed dull curtains complemented the darkness I felt inside. Trust me I would scream, cried a river but unfortunately he could not hear. Some days I couldn't breathe, his laughter would suffocate me. How could he be happy when I was out of breath suffering from depression and anxiety?

I wrote many poems about him, to him for him but he never got to read them, because I didn't find the strength to share them. If he couldn't feel pain as he watched me cry tirelessly would he have understood words on paper? I became a fan of Adele, Selena Gomez, Olivia Rodrigo the Queens of heartbreak Songs, I re-lived every lyric, There was a raging fire starting in my heart I mean how could he?, why would he and somehow I still loved him, I guess it's true the heart wants what it wants but it was true that Olivia said it took him just two weeks to forget me.

Did he? He hadn't but somehow there was a mind game he played, I never realized it somehow. Slowly being turned into a helpless person, waiting for him to love me at the right time. Indeed I waited, he showed up and then disappeared leaving me puzzled, was it a dream or reality. I lost my sanity and peace trying to understand him and sadly I blamed myself for not making him happy.

This one day I stumbled upon a video on You-tube on how to get over your Ex and surprisingly there was another video below it was written SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A NARCISSIST. I watched the video it was 13 minutes long and I remember ticking all the boxes which meant it was a toxic relationship.

Was I ready to leave? It wasn't easy, it's one thing to possess information and the other thing to apply it. I wasn't sure, I knew the truth deep down but he was all I ever knew and he knew me more than I. Somehow I couldn't silence these voices they were stronger than my freedom, being bound to him freed my heart from misery, so I chose love and not peace. I held up for so long but I would still come across articles about Toxicity and Narcissism and the guilt started over weighing my love for him.

Somehow I became so drawn to Mental Health, and I remember speaking to my Grand Dad about the relationship that's when he opened my eyes and taught me about Self Worth. He asked me to listen to Alicia Key's Woman's worth. I started to listen it attentively and these words caught my attention, "A real man knows a real woman always comes first."

One of the most miraculous things that happened on this Journey was God started to guide me through reminding me that I was fearfully and wonderfully created Psalms (139 vs 14-16) and For God So loved the word (John 3 vs 16). I remember sitting down with myself crying so hard and telling myself that I wish I knew what I was worth, I wish I knew what my value was. I wish I never bartered for my worth to get validation.

That's when God gave me the inspiration to start the Organization with the mindset of imagining the number people that are going through what I went through? They also need that inspiration to keep ongoing and to know their worth, they need someone to talk to feel less depressed and for me it still is a journey but worth the adventure.

# Mental Health Matters

Story By *Loveletter* — *Avril Nachipo*

*"Was I ready to leave? It wasn't easy, it's one thing to possess information and the other thing to apply it. I wasn't sure, I knew the truth deep down but he was all I ever knew and he knew me more than I."*



*"Mental health is not a destination, it's a journey. Let's walk together."*

## "You are not alone, and your mental health doesn't define you!"

This is a story I hate and telling it might make me break but I will tell it anyway....

I found myself born into a world I could never fit in with a family that loves me ever so much but could never understand me  
I started my battle with depression and anxiety at fifth grade. Every day was a fight until I learnt to hide my feelings and ignore all of society's rules norms and all that held me down.

When I finally thought life was working for me I got kidnapped and raped at 15 a constantly recurring dream four men kidnapped and drugged me, dragged me to the end of nowhere and left me for dead.

I spent six months going up and down to and from police station but it all proved pointless.

And in 2021 I was in the hospital on a suicide attempt.

I tried sooo hard to forget and move on with my life but I couldn't get over the fact that they hurt me!

They not only took my innocence but they scarred me mentally and physically I found myself in and out of the hospital only to find out that I got cysts in my ovaries, as far as I'm concerned I might not even be a mother in the future

Yet I am here surviving and trying to find peace in this world

The worst thing is my family has no clue on how I am doing

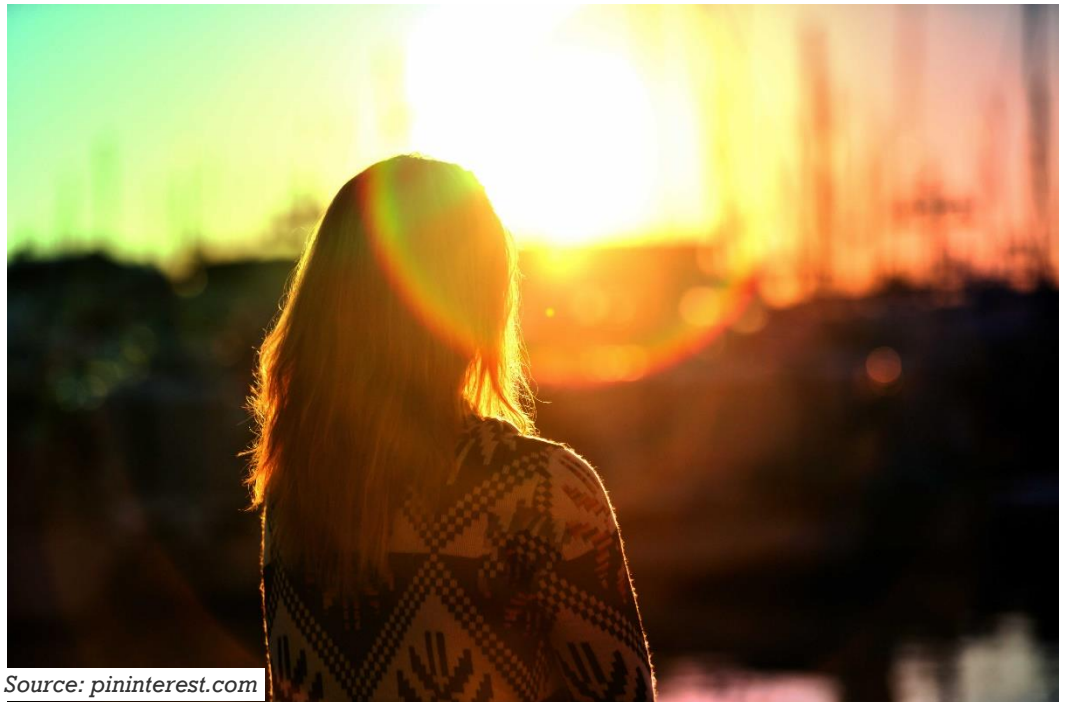
I have had breakdowns, every night.

I am just here trying to mind but these memories

I swear I am scared to tell how they would react I am (Attention Deficit

nursery rhymes even if it slapped me in my face.

My journey and struggle with mental health hasn't been easy on me but I am holding on I always say, **I WILL TAKE A LITTLE RAIN WITH MY SUNSHINE.**



Source: pinterest.com

***"I spent six months going up and down to and from police but it all proved pointless  
And in 2021 I was in the hospital on a suicide attempt."***

meltdowns u name it. I feel like giving up

put the peace to the mind for some peace of stuck in mind 😞.

them how I really feel because I don't know already the family's crazy and have ADHD Hyperactivity Disorder). I cannot focus on a

*\*Name and picture of author not published for ethical reasons.*

| Fun Facts about Mental Health  | Facts about mental health!  |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Laughing can reduce stress hormones by 39%!</li> <li>2. Spending time in nature can improve mental health by 47%!</li> <li>3. Exercise can reduce anxiety by 43%!</li> <li>4. Mindfulness can improve sleep quality by 50%!</li> <li>5. Creative activities can improve mental health by 40%'</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health issue each year.</li> <li>2. Mental health affects 1 in 5 children and young people.</li> <li>3. 50% of mental health issues start by age 14.</li> <li>4. Mental health is just as important as physical health.</li> <li>5. Self-care can reduce stress and anxiety by 50%!</li> </ol> |
| <p>Sources: World Health Organization, National Institute of Mental Health, Havard Health Publishing, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, Arts Council England.</p>   |   |



## Brushstrokes of Healing

**H**aticliffe, Harare, a vibrant neighborhood where the sun casts a golden hue over the bustling streets. The air is filled with the sounds of children playing, vendors calling out their wares, and the distant hum of music from nearby homes. Amidst this lively backdrop lies Yvonne's small, cluttered room, adorned with her artwork—each piece a fragment of her soul. Yvonne, a sixteen-year-old girl with a vivid imagination and an artist's heart, is caught in the turmoil of adolescence. Her eyes, a deep shade of brown, often reflect a world of emotions that she struggles to articulate. Yvonne's journey is one of self-discovery, marked by her battle with anxiety disorder, a shadow that looms over her due to the dysfunction of her family life.

### Backstory...

Yvonne's home is a fractured one—a father whose temper flares like a summer storm, a mother who retreats into silence, and a younger brother who mirrors the chaos around him. In this environment, Yvonne often feels like an outsider, her heart heavy with unexpressed feelings.

### Conflict...

The internal struggle of her mental health manifests in vivid dreams and overwhelming anxiety, often leaving her paralyzed before social situations. However, Yvonne finds solace in art, transforming her pain into colors and shapes that speak where words fail. Each stroke of her brush becomes a release, an act of rebellion against the silence that suffocates her.

### Yvonne's World

Yvonne, lives in a world where chaos reigns at home. Her father's unpredictable temper and her mother's emotional withdrawal create a suffocating atmosphere, leaving Yvonne feeling isolated and overwhelmed. Anxiety manifests in her life as a constant companion, whispering doubts and fears that cloud her mind.

### Art as an Outlet

In this turbulent environment, Yvonne discovers that art becomes her sanctuary. When she picks up a brush, the world around her fades into the background, and she

enters a realm where she has control. The act of creating allows her to channel her turbulent emotions into something tangible. Each color she chooses and every stroke she makes reflects her inner landscape—her fears, her hopes, and her pain.

### Transforming Pain into Expression

Yvonne's anxiety often leaves her speechless in social situations, but with a canvas before her, she finds her voice. She begins to translate her feelings into visual art. Dark, swirling colors represent her anxiety, while lighter hues symbolize moments of clarity and peace. Through this process, she learns to confront her emotions rather than suppress them. The canvas becomes a mirror, reflecting her struggles and allowing her to externalize her internal chaos.

### Mindfulness through Creation

As Yvonne immerses herself in her art, she discovers the concept of mindfulness. The rhythmic motion of her brush, the scent of paint, and the vibrant colors all help anchor her in the present moment. Each session becomes a form of meditation, drawing her focus away from her racing thoughts. This practice of being present helps to reduce her anxiety, granting her brief moments of tranquility amidst the storm.

### Building Confidence and Self-Acceptance

With each artwork completed, Yvonne experiences a sense of accomplishment. This newfound confidence spills over into other areas of her life. Sharing her art with friends and family becomes a transformative experience. Positive feedback encourages her to embrace her creative identity, and as she learns to accept herself, her anxiety begins to lose its grip.

### Connecting with Others

Yvonne's journey takes a significant turn when she decides to enter an art competition. The prospect of showcasing her work is both thrilling and terrifying. However, the support she receives from friends, especially from a new classmate who shares her passion for art, becomes a lifeline. Through collaborative projects and discussions about their creative processes, Yvonne forms meaningful connections. This sense of community helps alleviate her feelings of isolation, allowing her to tackle her anxiety head-on.

### Finding a Voice

As Yvonne continues to create, she begins to explore deeper themes in her artwork, such as family dynamics and personal struggles. Each piece becomes a narrative, a way to communicate the complexities of her life without words. This exploration not only fosters healing but also empowers her to express her feelings to her family. Gradually, she learns to articulate her emotions, bridging the gap that once felt insurmountable. In recompilation of Yvonne's healing journey, through the transformative power of art, Yvonne embarks on a journey of healing. While her anxiety remains a part of her life, she now possesses the tools to manage it. Art becomes a vital part of her identity, offering her a means to express herself, connect with others, and cultivate resilience. With each brushstroke, Yvonne rewrites her narrative, emerging stronger and more self-aware, ready to face the challenges of her teenage years with newfound courage.

*Story by Yvonne Muchenje*

*"Mental health is not a destination, it's a journey. Let's walk together."*

**"You are stronger than you think, and you can get through this."**

### **"From Shadows to Light"**

I was once trapped in darkness, unable to escape. Depression wrapped its heavy chains around me, suffocating my soul. Simple tasks felt like climbing a mountain. I felt lost, forgotten.

I still remember the day my world turned upside down. The darkness that had been lurking in the shadows of my mind suddenly consumed me, suffocating my every thought and emotion. Self doubt, fear, and crippling anxiety became my constant companions, making simple tasks feel like insurmountable mountains.

But amidst the darkness, a glimmer of hope emerged. I discovered solace in art, inspired by biblical verses. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me", Psalms 51:10

One day, while scrolling through my Bible, I stumbled upon Psalm 40:1-3. David's words resonated deep within me: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure."

Inspired, I picked up my abandoned sketchbook and pencils. As I drew, I poured out my emotions onto the paper. Colors danced, swirling together in beautiful chaos. My mind, once cluttered, started to clear.

I discovered solace in worship music. Singing hymns like "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and "Great Are You Lord" became my daily ritual. Prayer became my lifeline. I cried out to God, and slowly, He lifted the fog.

With each stroke of my pencil and every note I sang, depression's grip loosened. My identity in Christ strengthened. I realized I was not alone; God was my Rock.

Through art and music, I expressed my struggles and victories. My faith deepened. Joy returned.

Today, I'm living proof that healing is possible. My art and music testify to God's transformative power.

Personal Reflection: Depression taught me to cherish life's beauty. Art and music became my therapy, my worship. God's word guided me through darkness, reminding me of His Love and faithfulness.



*Story by Nyasha Mamina*



It was last year when I Marvellous Nherera found myself in a very dark place. I was caught in the grip of addiction. What started as a way to have fun quickly became a serious problem after writing my o level in Chitungwiza. I relied on drugs to escape my pain, but they only made things worse. I felt lost and alone, and my life was falling apart.

One evening, a friend invited me to a gospel concert. I didn't want to go at first, but something inside me said I should give it a try. When I arrived, I was surprised to see so many happy faces. The atmosphere was full of love and hope. As the music started, I felt something stirring in my heart.

When the choir began to sing, I was amazed. Their voices were powerful and uplifting. The songs spoke of hope, love, and redemption. As I listened, I felt the weight of my struggles start to lift. The music filled me with joy and reminded me of the good things in life. I closed my eyes and let the gospel melodies wash over me, feeling a sense of peace I hadn't felt in a long time. I am grateful to my friend and God too. Now I am a living testimony and always listening to gospel songs.

*Story by Marvellous Nherera*

**End.**

*Greatest thanks to all the courageous young people who shared their mental health stories. Your words are truly inspirational, and your willingness to vulnerability is a beacon of hope for many. By sharing your struggles and triumphs, you have helped create a safe space for others to open up and seek support. We are humbled by your trust in us and honored to amplify your voices. Thank you again for your bravery and creativity in helping us build a more compassionate community*

*~House of Arts Association*

*If you'd like to share your story, participate in our activities, or learn more about our mission, please don't hesitate to get in touch through our social media handles @houseofartsassociation (Instagram and Facebook) or WhatsApp +263771843428. We're here to listen, support, and celebrate your journey towards mental wellness. Remember, we are all going through something and we only got each other to make the healing journey easier*

**"Mental health is a human right, let us all advocate for it."**