

We're on a mission to change how mental health
is seen and spoken about across Australia.

Our stories, our worlds, made visible.

The artwork contained in the book was produced over a 3 year period by young people and artists brought together by headspace.

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25-year olds. Each year, headspace helps thousands of young people access vital support through our headspace services in communities across Australia, our online and phone counselling services, our vocational services, and our presence in schools.



headspace



visible

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this book contains names and stories of people who have passed away.

Individual Expressions

Life quickly changes and things can become uncertain and overwhelming, especially if you're feeling isolated and disconnected. So it's no surprise this is the time when people are most likely to face mental health challenges.

Especially to us. Because we know how it feels. We're the Australian Youth Advocates for Mental Health, and every one of us has experienced mental health challenges of our own.

The truth is, it's hard to talk about something you can't see. It's hard to find the words to explain something that's invisible.

But we want to change that.

We want to help young people feel safe, supported and accepted for their mental health. How? By sharing our own stories and making the unseen seen.

We have partnered with talented artists to produce an insightful collection of creative expressions that shine a light on our real experiences facing mental health challenges. We believe these expressions will have the power to open people's eyes to the truth about mental health – so that our communities become more accepting and understanding, and young people can feel more comfortable talking about their invisible challenges.

**Harry
x Josh**

How can you find resilience and strength when challenged by chronic physical health issues?

Having faced multiple chronic physical health issues since childhood, Harry Iles-Mann has often felt like he's watching life from the outside. In this vibrant graphic expression, Harry and artist Josh Muir convey a multi-perspectival image of Harry that reflects both his internal and external experience. The work is a whole created by fragments, signifying Harry's journey towards finding balance and building his own stability, while appreciating the support of those around him.

For more than two decades I've lived with multiple serious chronic physical health issues that restricted what I was able to do growing up. I wasn't able to be involved with the world around me in the same way that someone who was healthy and my age was able to. It took support from family and friends, building a relationship with my psychologist, and more consciously building a level of personal resilience to build stability, routine and connection back into my life. The aspect of my mental health experience that Josh and I focused on was the extent to which I relied on the care of those around me, and the ways that I sought help. The heavy support of my family, whilst also acknowledging my own personal strength, got me through that time.

I want young people to know that while you might feel fragmented at times, it's possible to take all of these competing pieces of yourself and express them in a way that can make you feel whole again. No single thing has been responsible for seeing me through my experience. The relationship between my physical health and mental health, family and friends, my own conviction – these are all places that I can draw strength from. *-Harry*

The roses represent a beautiful struggle as well as a flourishing new life – I felt the floral would be a symbol of standing the test of time. The “never cruel and never cowardly” quote is a motto that Harry suggested, and is incorporated with the phoenix representing new life. The birds and the wings represent family. We spoke about support from Harry's family and loved ones which is represented through the pillars. These pillars are a strong part of his identity. For the backdrop, we developed a whole bunch of patterns that represented the different things he spoke about. I also created a central image using his face – I didn't want to lose the essence of who Harry is, so I used Harry's eyes straight from the photo I based this artwork from. The expression has two sides to it – that darker side and a lighter side. *-Josh*



***Never Cruel or Cowardly*, 2020**

Digital Illustration

Artist: Josh Muir (he/him)

Advocate: Harry Iles-Mann (he/him)





"It's an expression of how important it is to have a healthy balance of internal strengths and the strength of the supports you surround yourself with."

***Never Cruel or Cowardly*, 2020**

Digital Illustration

Artist: Josh Muir (he/him)

Advocate: Harry Iles-Mann (he/him)

Dani

x Ashika

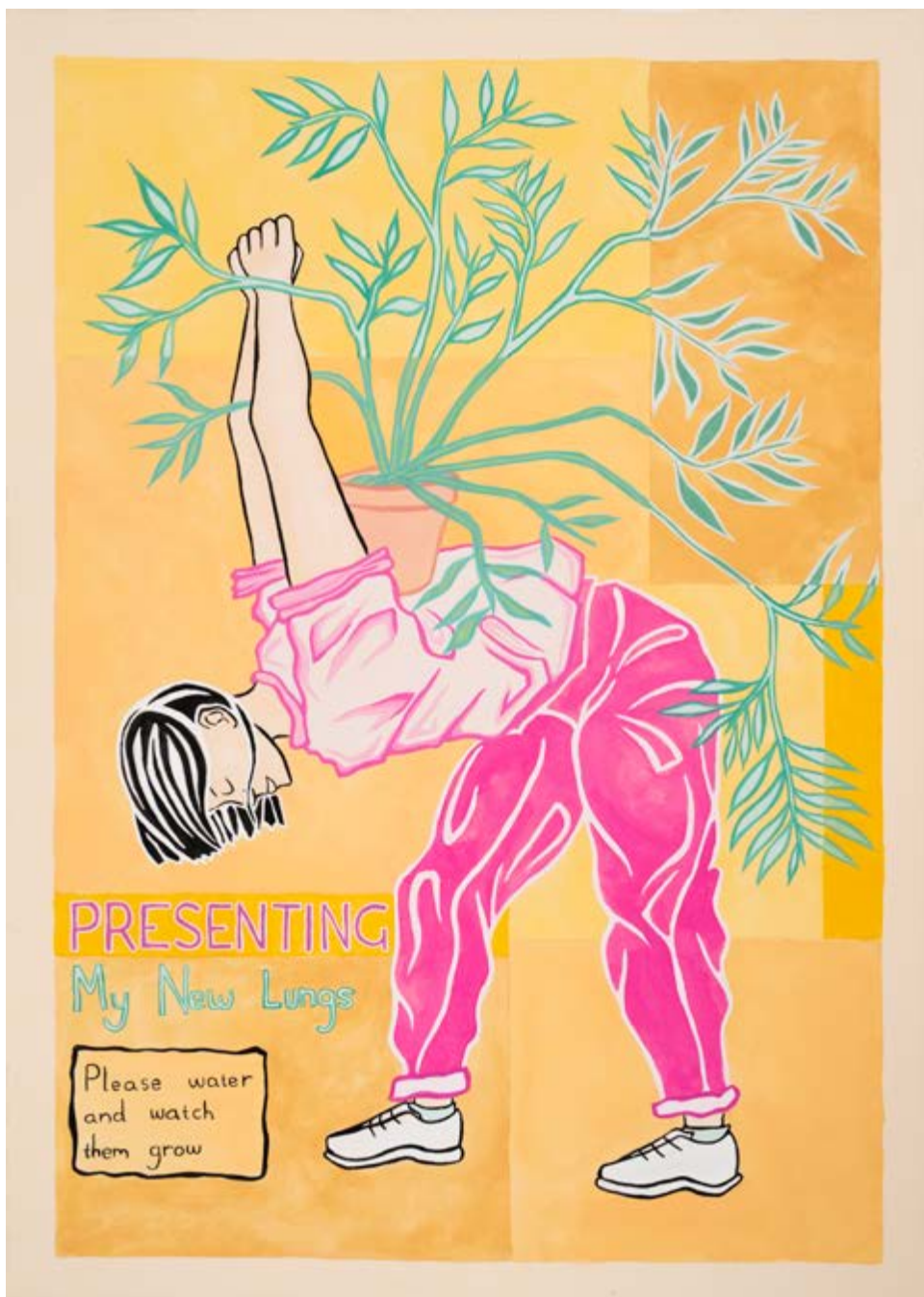
**Finding space to breathe
through belonging and connection.**

During intense periods of anxiety, mental health advocate Dani Leever often found the simple act of breathing a challenge. In this powerful combination of imagery and words, Dani and Ashika Harper – artist and best friend – explore the physical pain and restriction of anxiety, as well as the solace found through connecting with others.

This work is about the support of Dani's community and how that space helps them manage mental health. Through conversation, we discussed how anxiety has affected them. We talked about breath and the way breathing is such a physical characteristic of their anxiety. I imagined Dani's community as the cells that form the structure of plants. They live and breathe as one organism that continues to grow and flourish. This plant is like Dani's emotional lungs. It sits firmly on the back of the figure who presents it with strength and courage. They breathe together and help each other develop. *-Ashika*

I've lived with anxiety for many years and when I was first experiencing it, the most notable part of my experience was that my chest would be tight constantly and it wasn't always easy to inhale. Occasionally this would lead to panic attacks, but it was the consistent pain in my chest that made moving through life every day feel really difficult. The experiences that I wanted to convey to Ashika throughout this process were not only ones of struggle, but also how community, connectedness and my queerness have been so instrumental in the healing process of mental health. That finding like-minded people and learning to build solid support networks can help me heal, and in turn, help me inhale and exhale.

The key messages I want to convey are around finding community at the queer community has brought so much joy and healing into my life. I want everybody who has experienced mental ill-health to feel like they can belong – whether it's a community of queer people, a religious or cultural community, Dungeons and Dragons fans or just a solid network of friends and family who understand you. *-Dani*



My New Lungs, 2020

Painting

Artist: Ashika Harper (they/them)

Advocate: Dani Leever (they/them)



PRESENTING

My New Lungs

Please water
and watch
them grow





"Healing can be complicated, and sometimes you need community and support to get all the nutrients you need."

***My New Lungs*, 2020**

Painting

Artist: Ashika Harper (they/them)

Advocate: Dani Leever (they/them)

Georgia

x Jonno

**What does it feel like to have a mind
that doesn't fit the mould?**

This photographic series, from mental health advocate Georgia and artist Jonno Revanche, captures the tension of living with neurodiversity in a world not designed for it — a feeling Georgia has experienced regularly as a person living with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The work reflects the human and personal experience of mental health challenges, while also offering a more abstract reference to the structural and systemic barriers many people face in seeking treatment and connection.

This series represents ADHD, and more specifically the challenge of living in a culture, where our attention and energy is constantly being pulled in different directions, and why it makes it difficult to perform somewhat mundane, necessary tasks and keep up our relationships. The photos depict individual experiences of struggle, alienation and mental ill-health, while balancing something more macro in the other hand. *-Jonno*

Many young people grow up feeling like they don't quite fit the world around them. This feeling can grow if we encounter serious difficulties in parts of life that our peers seem to breeze through effortlessly. Like many young people with undiagnosed mental health challenges, this was my experience. I didn't know why I struggled with so many things. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) doesn't always look the way people assume. Like many mental health challenges, it comes in different types and some can slip under the radar more easily. There are unique challenges if you don't get diagnosed during childhood. Not only is it harder to access support in adulthood, I spent years assuming my struggles were challenges everyone experienced – and that everyone else was just better at coping with them. Like many who discover their neurodiversity in adulthood, finding out why my brain seemed to work differently helped me find the supports I needed. I was able to change my environment, rather than continuing futile attempts to change myself.

If you planted a seed and it didn't flower, you wouldn't blame the seed. You would fertilize the soil, adjust the water, keep it warm and care for it. This care and support is what is needed for people living with neurodiversity and mental health challenges. As someone living (and thriving) with a mind that doesn't fit the mould, I've learnt how to support myself and my mind without blame. *-Georgia*



'Chosen Chaos' from *Focus*, 2020
Photograph

Artist: Jonno Revanche (they/them)
Advocate: Georgia (they/them)





"All young people deserve the support to thrive."

'Kinetic Falling' (left) and 'Intimacy' (above)
from *Focus*, 2020
Photograph

Artist: Jonno Revanche (they/them)
Advocate: Georgia (they/them)



'Submerged' from *Focus*, 2020
Photograph

Artist: Jonno Revanche (they/them)
Advocate: Georgia (they/them)



'Trying' from *Focus*, 2020

Photograph

Artist: Jonno Revanche (they/them)

Advocate: Georgia (they/them)



'The Fall Out' (left) and 'The Balancing Act' (right)
from *Focus*, 2020
Photograph

Artist: Jonno Revanche (they/them)
Advocate: Georgia (they/them)



Jess

x Anna

**Navigating the complexity and non-linear path
towards post-traumatic growth.**

Mental health advocate Jess Mitchell has had a long and complex mental health journey stemming from childhood trauma. Working with artist Anna Paddick, Jess shares experiences through an emotive combination of image, soundscape and spoken word. The work reflects upon Jess' non-linear path to healing and Jess' transition from trauma to hope, and from pain to purpose.

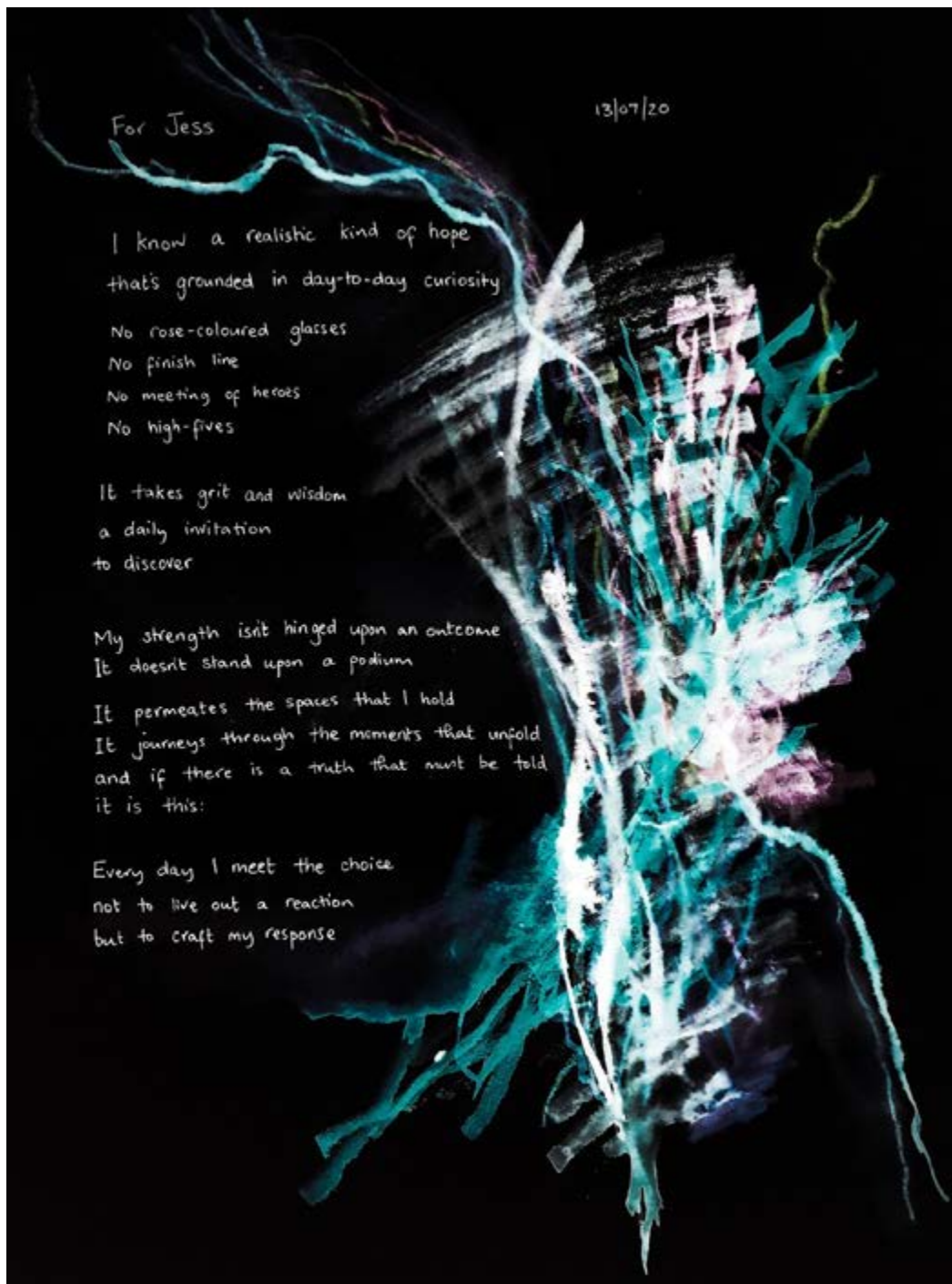
Jess shared experiences of trauma and turmoil that are consistently represented throughout the piece by the colour yellow, the colour of the house that Jess grew up in. The drone sound that underpins the soundscape holds a sense of heaviness and continuity throughout the whole duration of the piece. It provided me an opportunity to vocally explore ways that dissonance, intensity, and transformation can arise and take shape in relationship to formative traumatic experiences that stay with us as we move through moments in life. An integration of trauma, hope, pain, and purpose, are brought together in this piece to depict just a morsel of the post-traumatic growth that Jess continues to experience. Through this work I mean to tell part of the story of Jess' 'ordinary triumph' – being alive.

-Anna

I experienced a great deal of complex childhood trauma and adversity. As it was unsafe for me to express my turmoil, I often turned it upon myself, punishing myself through unhealthy coping mechanisms. My trauma has manifested in many ways through issues with eating, exercise, mood, impulsivity, self-harm and suicidality. I experience the world in extremes and express myself in the same fashion. I struggle in relationships due to attachment issues. I also frequently become detached with reality. I experience flashbacks, nightmares and am significantly impacted in many facets of daily life by the ongoing impacts of my trauma.

My key message is that the idealised narrative of hope and "it gets better" lacks nuance and often does not portray the reality that we continue to struggle and continue to fall and get back up again. For me, it is really important to communicate that recovery is not linear and that any hope we hold onto must be realistic about the often chronic nature of mental illness.

-Jess



Ordinary Triumph, 2020

Image, soundscape and spoken word

Artist: Anna Paddick (she/her)

Advocate: Jess Mitchell (pronouns: Jess)





“Your life can be incredibly meaningful even if it is incredibly painful.”

Ordinary Triumph, 2020

Image, soundscape and spoken word

Artist: Anna Paddick (she/her)

Advocate: Jess Mitchell (pronouns: Jess)

scott

x Josh

**Connecting with inner strength
to grow through struggle.**

Growing up, Gooniyandi man and mental health advocate Scott felt alone with his thoughts and feelings, unable to share his story because, what if other people had it worse?

With proud Nyoongar rapper, Flewnt, Scott shares the message that everyone has a story worthy of being shared – when you connect with your inner strength, you can grow in the unlikelyst of places and through the toughest of terrain, like a Desert Rose.

This expression is about discovering your inner strength, especially when feeling alone in your own mental health lived experience. I always felt that my story wasn't much to share because I thought, "It's not severe enough, it's not worth sharing – there are so many other people doing it really tough". I did not realise that I had normalised my struggle, and I feel a lot of people across Australia can relate to that discovery. When you hear the song, you can really see the ins and outs of my experience. Finding that inner strength really helped me grow and also built up the strength to know that I was going to be ok. That's always been a part of my journey – building and relying on that strength that comes from culture, family, role models and from my own understandings of the world.

It's hard to share your inner self, to share your story, but because it's hard, that's the thing that your body, your mind is prompting you to do. Growing up, I felt I was alone with my own social and emotional wellbeing and mental health journey. I didn't think I could share. Building resilience helped me to do things I never thought were possible. I want to share with young people that you can do it. Even though you might feel alone, you're going through a lot of things – you can find that inner strength to grow through it. -Scott

The expression is a hip-hop track that we put together – me, Optamus (the producer) and Scott. It was different because I always seem to write from the perspective of myself and I still wrote as if it was me, but having all of Scott's journey in my mind at the time that I wrote it. -Josh



Desert Rose, 2021

Song

Artist: Josh 'Flewnt' Eggington (he/him)

Advocate: Scott Wilson (he/him)

**I feel the sun,
I feel the rain.**

**I feel the hope,
I feel the pain.**

**I will no longer
be ashamed.**

**I know we feel
the same.**

Desert Rose, 2021
Song

Artist: Josh 'Flewnt' Eggington (he/him)
Advocate: Scott Wilson (he/him)

**I put the straightjacket on myself.
I never thought about my mental health.**

**I was tall from a youngin when I was growing up and coming
just to keep my sad thoughts to myself. It didn't help.**

**I didn't share with no one else.
Felt like I'm alone in a cell. Didn't know the domain in my brain
where I dwell was soon to become a gel I couldn't tell.**

**Well, the anxiety in my body at night when I sleep
made me feel like I fell to the pits of hell.**

**I'd sell and arm a leg or even just give it
to revisit childhood or even relive it.**

**Reminiscing about the time so simple to find
If only we could rewind
But that ain't how it's designed.**

**I hope I'm not gonna be like this forever
Yes, I'm waiting for my moment I get better**

**Like a desert rose
thinking that I'll never grow
But my inner strength, will forever show**

**I've decided that I'm ready for change
I see a world and I got plenty to say**

**I know that as long as I remember the ways
of the old people that I'll get better with age and grow
I'll pave my road I'll take control, Break the mould
Time to let my soul evolve.**

**I believe that my culture was always the key
for me to be free and finally find peace.**

**I find inside me. Man, I'm ready to do it.
This is the whole reason that I became flewent.**

**So I can set goals and go and pursue it, inspire others like me and
start a movement of young people that want to make a difference
in this world of ours. Ain't got all the answers yet, but I'm sure that'll
work it out.**

**My time's coming. And there's something that I'm certain about.
I'm gonna say it loud right now. I ain't gon turn it down.**

Jordan

x Isobel

A journey of recovery from despair to self-care.

For mental health advocate Jordan, keeping up with the mounting demands of everyday life can lead to total system overwhelm; manifesting in extreme anxiety and compulsive urges to skin pick. Through a series of animations by artist, Isobel, Escape, Repair, Resurface illustrates the journey that Jordan takes when she gives herself permission to step away, reset and recover; reminding us that taking time out can give us the strength to move forward.

This sequence depicts anxieties that Jordan struggles with regularly, how they manifest, and the way she manages her feelings with self-care. We chose a scenario that is a typical stress trigger for Jordan, followed by a surreal escape into an enclosed space which represents a feeling of wanting to shut everything out. The self-care scene was designed with all the calming imagery that appeals to Jordan and the Band-Aids are symbolic of Jordan putting herself back together while still wearing the visual marks of her anxiety, almost as a badge of strength for having made it through something. The colours used in the piece are colours Jordan associates with stress and calm. *-Isobel*

This artistic expression encompasses the part of my journey that has struggled and still struggles with depression, anxiety and a lesser spoken about form of body focused repetitive behaviour, which for me, is compulsive skin picking. This artwork is inspired by all the times that I feel overwhelmed (which is often), from things as simple as text messages or phone calls that need to be replied to, to assignments, due dates and social outings. When I get extremely anxious, I tend to go on auto-pilot and pick my skin as both a distraction, coping mechanism and outlet, despite knowing the severe mental toll and deep shame that comes with it. The video explores this, my various healthy coping mechanisms, and depicts that we are all capable of lifting ourselves up, bandaging our wounds and continuing forward.

I want people to view these videos and see themselves, or a loved one. To get a sense of what it might be like for those who suffer from any kind of mental illness at all. To get a peek into why their friend hasn't replied in a few days. Or perhaps why they may be acting different lately. And for those struggling with mental health who feel alone and ashamed, I want to emphasise that you are not alone, but are visible. You're not alone and you don't need to hide. There is help out there, and things can get better, even if it's just finding little ways to manage the day-to-day. *-Jordan*



***Escape, Repair, Resurface* 2021**

Animation

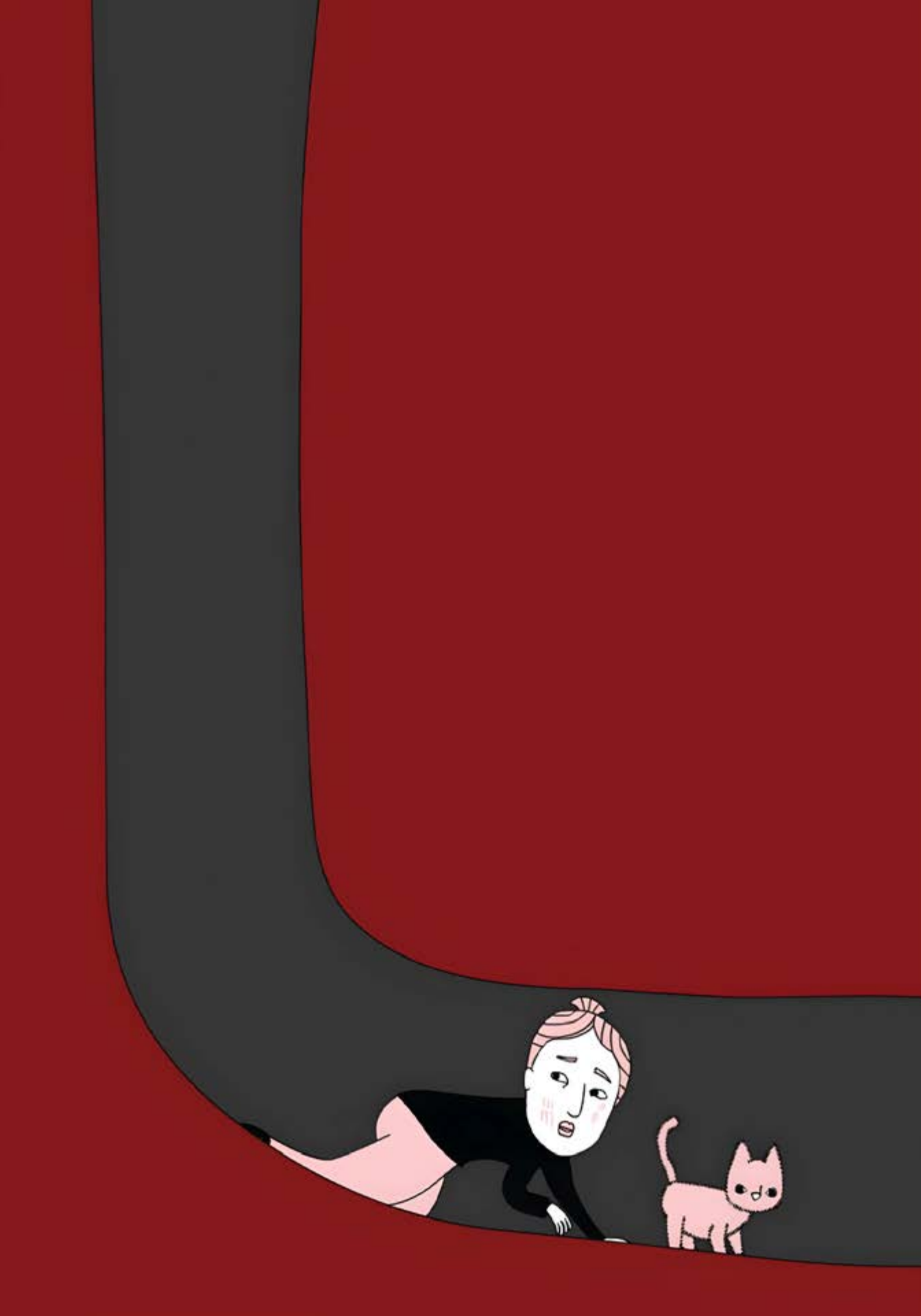
Artist: Isobel Knowles (she/her)

Advocate: Jordan Kaatzke-McDonald (she/her)

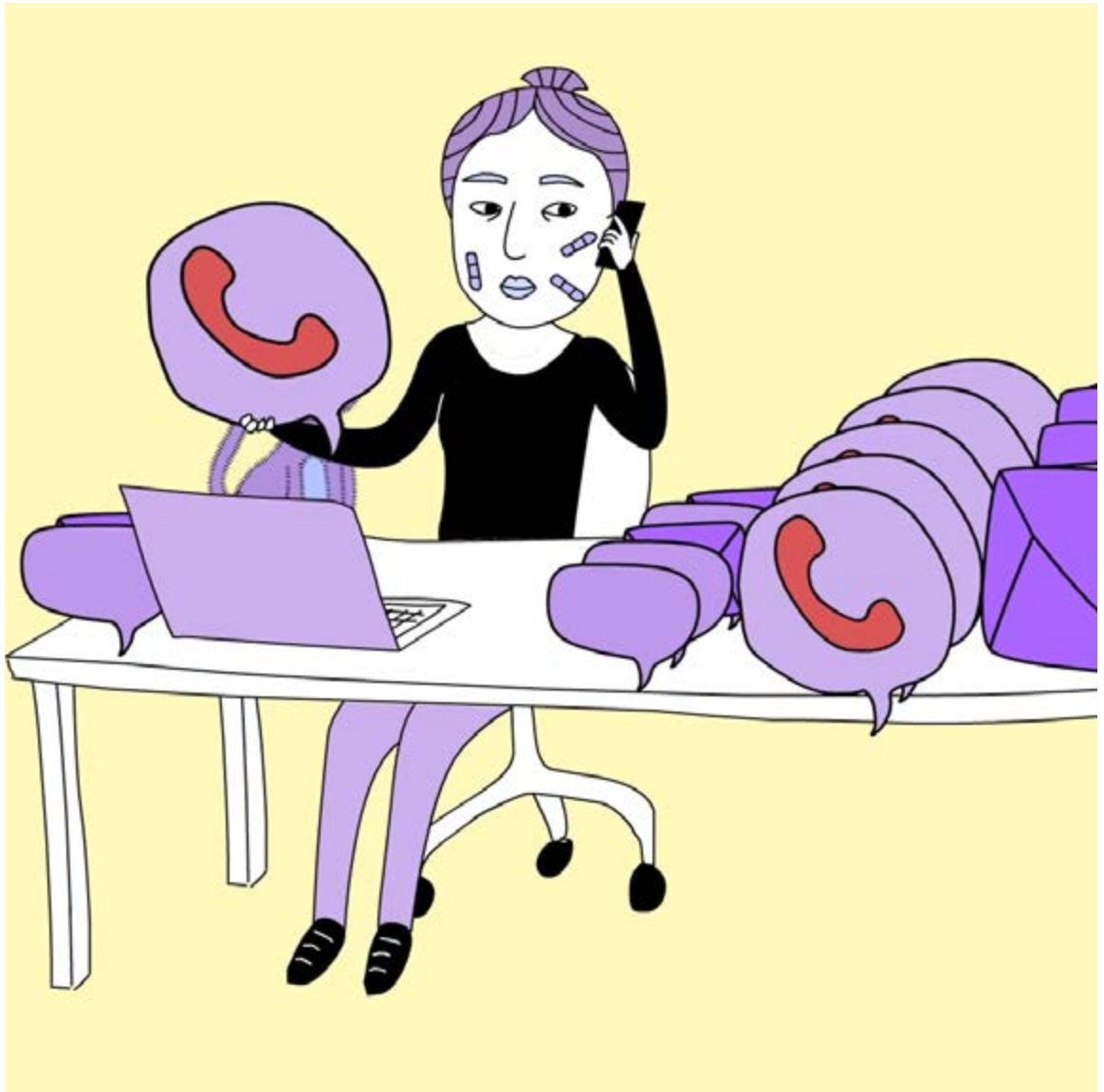


'Escape' from *Escape, Repair, Resurface* 2021
Animation

Artist: Isobel Knowles (she/her)
Advocate: Jordan Kaatzke-McDonald (she/her)







“My headspace is different, and the Band Aids are a physical representation of the trauma that lies beneath, but it does not define me. I am not my scars. I will keep moving forward.”

'Repair' (left) and Resurface (above) from Escape, Repair, Resurface 2021
Animation

Artist: Isobel Knowles (she/her)
Advocate: Jordan Kaatzke-McDonald (she/her)

Josh x

Amy

x Zaide

**A shared journey towards trust,
compassion and support.**

For siblings Amy and Josh, navigating the complexities of their interwoven yet individual mental health experiences has had its challenges. Through this emotive portrait series, artist Zaide Harker uses colour, form and positioning to help the two express their unique perspectives, exploring the impact that mental ill-health can have not only on the individual, but on those closest to them.

There is a separate portrait each for Amy and Josh, which were created with oil on canvas. The pieces can be presented with Amy and Josh facing each other as if in conversation. Swapping the positions of the two portraits sets the subjects back-to-back looking apart from one another. The paintings were created this way to capture the shared value of an individual experience. -*Zaide*

The biggest challenge I faced during my experience was speaking out about my mental health to family, friends and medical professionals. A lot of that had to do with the feeling of being a burden towards my family and friends because I knew I wasn't well, but I didn't want to put people in a position where they would constantly have to worry about me. Not being able to voice my thoughts and get everything off my chest only made things worse for me, ultimately sending me into a much darker hole than before. The inspiration behind this artistic expression is all about finding your voice, which I am so glad I finally could. Being able to talk to someone close to you, like my sister Amy, was the biggest step I took in getting better.

Even during the times that feel so hard to find your voice, speak up to others about the things in your life that are really bringing you down. It is so important to let the people closest to you know you're not feeling your greatest. Having that first line of support was everything in getting myself better, a family member or a friend just to turn to and talk about the stuff that was hurting me the most. -*Josh*

This expression embodies my inner-conflict through the sharing of simultaneously polarising and interwoven experiences. This includes my brother's experiences with mental illness, what it was like for me to support him, as well as the impact being a carer had on my own mental health. As much as we sometimes think our experiences are individual, we often share them, intentionally or otherwise, with those that we love. Caring for loved ones who are experiencing mental health challenges is about balance, and it's important to maintain boundaries, self-compassion and be able to trust one another to step back when it's appropriate. I want people to view this expression and know that you can't neglect your own mental health while prioritising someone else's. If you are struggling with your own mental health as a support person, it's important to extend the same trust in your loved ones that you want from them. -*Amy*



***Dialogue*, 2021**
Oil Painting

Artist: Zaide Harker (he/him)
Advocate: Josh Boyd (he/him) Amy Boyd (she/her)



***Dialogue*, 2021**
Oil Painting

Artist: Zaide Harker (he/him)
Advocate: Josh Boyd (he/him) Amy Boyd (she/her)



***Dialogue*, 2021**
Oil Painting

Artist: Zaide Harker (he/him)
Advocate: Josh Boyd (he/him) Amy Boyd (she/her)

Jamie

x Cynthia

**Finding relief from stigma and isolation
through nature and community.**

Through this colourful visual expression, mental health advocate Jamie Sea and artist Cynthia Sobraty express the solace and peace Jamie has found through their connection to nature and community. From fear and isolation to the freedom to be their true self, Jamie's journey of transformation is represented in this work through the rhythmic layering of swirling colours, symbols and shapes.

I wanted to evoke the feeling of community amidst chaos, and the sense of protection that comes with having a community, big or small, that you can seek refuge in. Jamie described the feeling of being bipolar as oceanic in its breadth and calamity, swirling and surrounding. I made the ocean surrounding the three individuals in the middle very detailed to contrast the simplicity of the figures. The three figures are holding each other, physically and emotionally, and they overlap each other. The parts that overlap create a new segment, something that could not otherwise have been created without the other. This is symbolised by a new colour created in the overlay. The sun is drawn very naively, to symbolise the innocence and childlike nature within the warmth of such an embrace. I purposefully made the ocean deep blues to contrast the colourful parts of the piece.

-Cynthia

Growing up in the closet and secretly struggling with my mental health was terribly isolating. I felt alone in a deep dark blue pit of depression. I didn't know it was so common to feel this way. We just didn't talk about feelings. My mental health started to rapidly deteriorate in my early 20s and it was really difficult to be myself around my friends and family. Society was starting to talk about depression and anxiety as very real experiences, but I felt that there was still far too much stigma to talk about dissociating and hallucinating. It was exhausting, trying to hide my distress and living in a constant fear of losing my mind. But once I found my chosen family, I finally felt myself shedding all of that fear and instead embracing honesty and community.

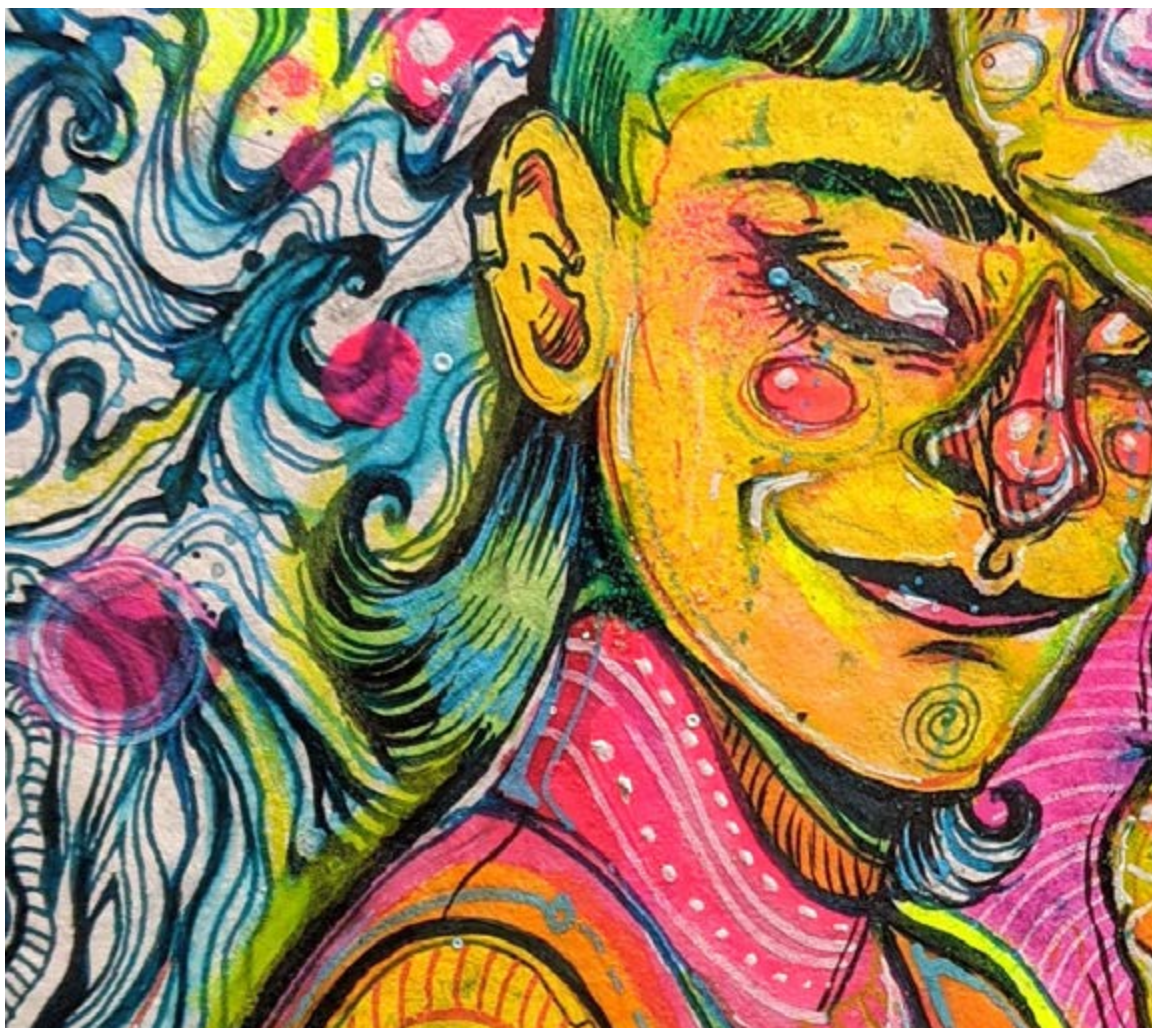
My wellbeing is closely connected to the people and places around me. I wanted to share my gratitude for the people who hold us tight when we feel alone. And I wanted to show my love for nature always comforting me. I hope that you will see yourself in the warm embrace and remember how it feels to be held by your loved ones. That magic gooey feeling in your tummy and knowing that you are loved. We can get caught up in big intimidating ideas and feelings, and sometimes, not always, we can find comfort in a slow day in nature or a cuddle with a friend. Seemingly simple things give our brain a big burst of happy chemicals! *-Jamie*



I hold you close, 2020
Mixed Media

Artist: Cynthia Sobraty (they/them)
Advocate: Jamie Sea (they/them)





"No matter how alone you feel in your mind, there will always be loved ones and strangers alike who will be there to listen and hold you tight - you just need to ask."

I hold you close, 2020
Mixed Media

Artist: Cynthia Sobraty (they/them)
Advocate: Jamie Sea (they/them)

**Hannah
x Rebecca**

**How do you convey a journey towards empowerment
and finding freedom in individuality?**

As a young mum with a history of depression and eating disorders, mental health advocate Hannah Godfrey's experience as a teenager was often one of isolation. In this mixed media installation, Hannah and artist, Rebecca, express her journey towards empowered individuality and inspire others to find freedom in their own journey.

I planned and created an artwork that represented the complexity of adversity faced by Hannah. Primarily focussing on enduring life after becoming a young mum within a small Tasmanian community. The wind chime ornament represents a song of individuality and expresses spirit, subtly referencing a baby's mobile. The dress that inspired the artwork, is represented in its aesthetics. Clay ornaments were hand crafted and moulded with Tasmanian blue gum leaves and ferns to reference the Tasmanian specific story. *-Rebecca*

At the age of 12 I was diagnosed with an eating disorder and depression, which saw me become isolated from my friends and extended family. My recovery was supported by a stay in hospital just before starting High School. After this I tried to find freedom away from my diagnosis and individuality in my story and experience. During my final year of high school, I found out I was pregnant. This forced a barrier between me and a lot of the social connections I had made during my 4 years of school. Again, I became isolated and withdrawn. I hope to encourage others whose stories may be similar or vastly different to reach out seek the individuality in their journey.

The expression is based on a baby mobile, incorporating leaf prints to symbolise Tassie trees, bells that chime in the wind to create an "individual song" and the material to symbolise my leavers dress, which I wore to defy the comments of people who said I wouldn't show. I want people to see and have the confidence to express the individuality in their stories and see the freedom in where their journey is yet to take them. To remember that life throws us challenges but none are too big that we can't embrace who we are and leap over hurdles in time. *-Hannah*



Freedom in individuality, 2020
Mixed Media Installation

Artist: Rebecca Bannister (she/her)
Advocate: Hannah Godfrey (she/her)



"Embrace your journey, its individuality and your own individuality and freedom in who you are."

Freedom in individuality, 2020
Mixed Media Installation

Artist: Rebecca Bannister (she/her)
Advocate: Hannah Godfrey (she/her)



Niharika
x Shyamla

**The power in reclaiming your own story
and breaking free from expectations.**

Through an original song and dance piece, Niharika Hiremath and artist Shyamla Eswaran convey Niharika's journey from feelings of anxiety and hopelessness to empowerment and self-love. The dance builds a lyrical narrative through classical Indian mudras, while a fusion of alternate dance styles represents Niharika finding the courage to challenge expectations and express her true self.

The expression is based on classical Indian mudras, gestures and expressions, which are used to act and dance out the lyrics of this original song. Katakamukha mudra is used to represent Niharika as a woman. Traditional Indian colours – red and green – have been chosen to represent cultural expectations; red is also linked with love and marriage and therefore is used to represent the roles expected of Indian women and girls. The veil represents the challenge of balancing family expectations with one's own true desires. Sometimes the veil blinds her, other times she dances with it in joyous harmony – the key is balance and compromise. The fusion of non-Indian dance styles represents the idea of breaking free of expectations and expressing one's self in new ways. -*Shyamla*

People often talk about being the rock for other people in their lives. I felt that I had to do that for the people I cared about the most, but without having filled my own bucket first. It also felt like these same people were so caught up in their own stories that I couldn't ask for that support and understanding back. Like I didn't deserve it – because my only role was in being the supporter, the caregiver. My entire self-identity was wrapped up in what I was doing for others. Never in what I could and should be doing for myself, especially as a young person who was still trying to figure out who I was. This uncertainty and lack of self-worth translated to severe anxiety – I was constantly sick and I forgot what it was like to live a life that didn't include stomach aches. Things felt hopeless and I felt like I had lost control.

For me, reclaiming my story was about gaining control over what I could influence. It was about turning that love that I was so eager to show others, towards myself – in order to recognize that I could absolutely still hold all of those roles in a way that added to myself and in addition to who I truly was – not just who I was for others. Once I started sitting with and addressing the issues I was facing, with the help of people who loved me and mental health professionals, everything started to change. The sense of control and strength I have gained since has not only pulled me out of the deep hole I had found myself in, but allowed me to break free of any expectations I didn't want to meet. I finally feel free to make decisions in my own self-interest, knowing that I deserve to love myself fully. Giving to others is still a large and deep part of my life still, but finally from a place of balance and true loving, not just terrifying fear. -*Niharika*



Worthy, 2020
Song and Dance

Artist: Shyamla Eswaran (they/them)
Advocate: Niharika Hiremath (she/her)



Worthy, 2020
Song and Dance

Artist: Shyamla Eswaran (they/them)
Advocate: Niharika Hiremath (she/her)





Worthy, 2020
Song and Dance

Artist: Shyamla Eswaran (they/them)
Advocate: Niharika Hiremath (she/her)

Here I sit
eyes closed yet wide awake
not sure who I am
Barely even breathing in
oxygen begins to flow
I shed my skin
Here I am
detaching from the chaos
that surrounds me
Finding my own story in
forgiveness of myself
The anger melts away
Not just a daughter or granddaughter
Not just a partner, girlfriend, lover or neice
Not just a sister to a brother
I am me
So let me be
I breathe through all the expectations
As I fly away, to the
place where I'm more than just a woman with a role to play
I will find a way back to this moment
When I lose myself
I'll exist in the bliss of this truth
Am I worthy?
I am worthy
Today
Nah sirf beti hoon ya pothi
(Not just a daughter or a niece)
Ya bas biwi or Jeevan sathi
(Or just a wife or lifelong partner)
Nah sirf bhai ki haath ki rakhi
(Not just a Rakhi on my brother's hand)
Mein jo hoon – mujhe jeene do
(That(who) I am....let me live.)
Mein hoon kaabil
(I am worthy)
Today

Braiden
x Nick

How do you express what it feels like to be a young man secretly living with an eating disorder?

For mental health advocate Braiden and graphic designer Nick, the answer was in a collection of bold, abstract designs. Each expression represents an important milestone in Braiden's journey, and together, they capture the real experiences of facing mental health challenges.

Being a young male, it was difficult for me to understand and express the way I was feeling at times. Being brought up in an environment where there was a lot of focus on looking after my physical health, I never got taught that I should also be focusing just as much on my mental health. My experiences with eating disorders inspired my creative expression. I wanted to capture the raw reality of what it is like for a young man to be secretly living with an eating disorder and the pressure that comes with that.

In my teenage years I really struggled to navigate through life. I was unaware of who to talk to about what was going on for me at the time and I think my creative expression really captures that message. I am hoping that my expression can help people understand that mental health does not discriminate. It's important you find someone who you're comfortable with and trust enough to talk to. I think a lot of my mental health experiences could have been prevented if I knew that there was someone there for me to talk to. -*Braiden*

After hearing Braiden's story, four key themes were identified that were significant milestones in his experience with mental health difficulties. Although each of these themes was powerful enough individually to warrant their own piece, we collectively came to the decision that a narrative that encompasses the whole journey would be an ideal way to communicate his story. I wanted to retell the story using graphic, abstract compositions that were true to the experiences, yet also allowed the viewer to relate their own experiences to the narrative. -*Nick*

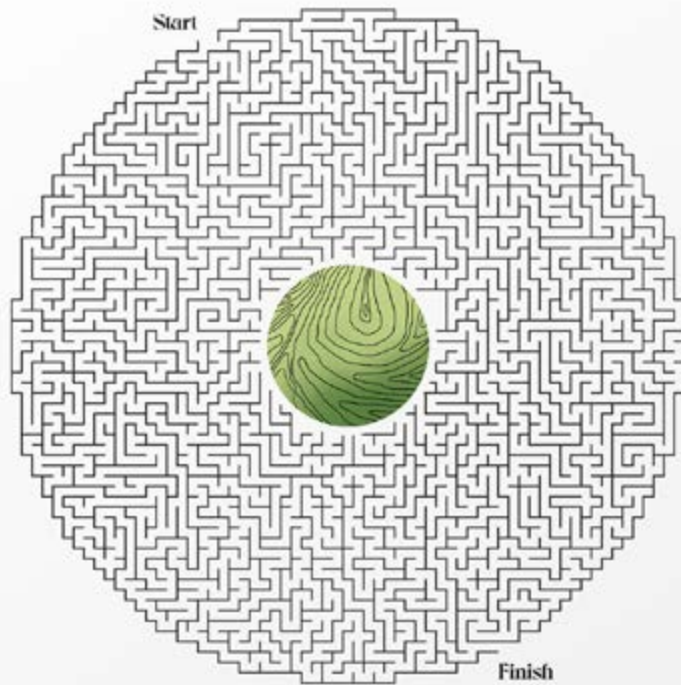


'3/4' from *Hide no more*, 2020

Graphic Compositions

Artist: Nick McGovern (he/him)

Advocate: Braiden Fitzsimmons (he/him)



FEELING LIKE I AM
"Lost in the maze"

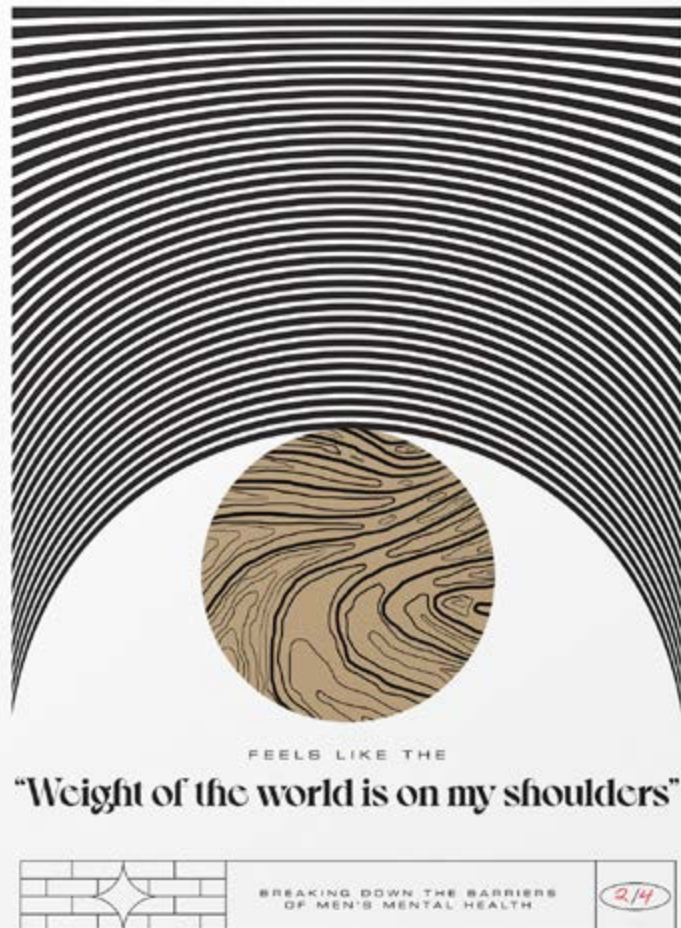


'1/4' from *Hide no more*, 2020

Graphic Compositions

Artist: Nick McGovern (he/him)

Advocate: Braiden Fitzsimmons (he/him)



'2/4' from *Hide no more*, 2020

Graphic Compositions

Artist: Nick McGovern (he/him)

Advocate: Braiden Fitzsimmons (he/him)

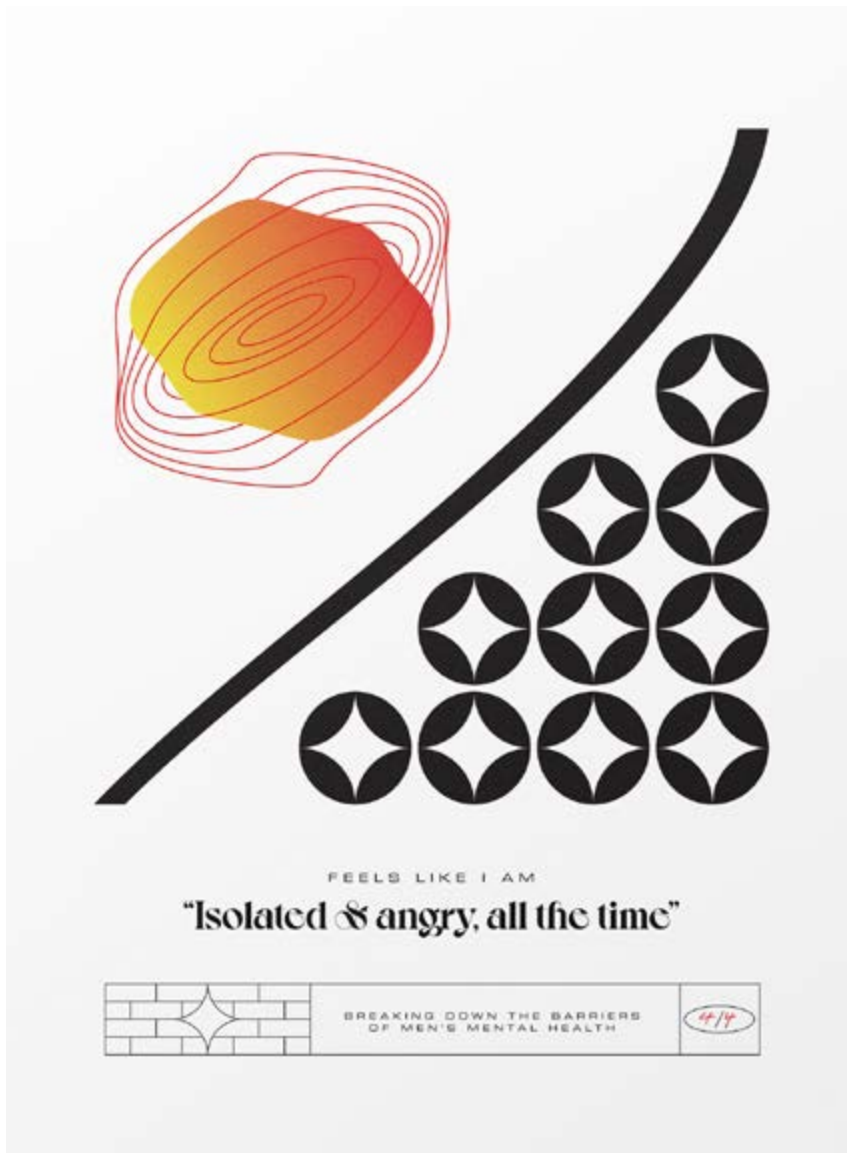


'3/4' from *Hide no more*, 2020

Graphic Compositions

Artist: Nick McGovern (he/him)

Advocate: Braiden Fitzsimmons (he/him)



'4/4' from *Hide no more*, 2020

Graphic Compositions

Artist: Nick McGovern (he/him)

Advocate: Braiden Fitzsimmons (he/him)

Josh

x Nadia

**How do you express the complexities, while
challenging the stereotypes of living with OCD?**

Through movement, light and sound, mental health advocate, Josh Di Nucci, and artist, Nadia Milford, capture the depth and intricacies of living with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). This creative dance piece explores the duality of ritualism; from initial comfort to anxious entrapment, while instilling hope for those living with obsessions and compulsions.

VisAble knott expresses an interpretation of Josh's lived experience of OCD, in particular the emotional journey of a compulsion. The use of wool was inspired by Josh's cathartic love of knitting, conveying both the comfort and entrapment of a compulsive ritual. Initially there is a sense of calm, careful measurement and sterile perfection. Each object introduced is symbolic of 'triggers' or 'barriers' which become entangled in the web of anxiety that can feel strangling for those caught inside it. Leaving the tangled wool represents overcoming the compulsion. -*Nadia*

During my early teenage years, I started noticing that something wasn't quite right. I had this urge to retrace steps and repeat simple tasks until I felt I had done them in a perfect way. Over a number of years my thoughts became more complicated, and my behaviours became more and more ritualistic. This began to take up a significant portion of my day and caused large amounts of distress, to the point where I was so heavily silenced and gripped by my experiences.

In 2016, I was officially diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. I worked closely with a network of people, who empowered me to become the 'master of my own illness'. Despite my continual efforts to challenge rigid, unfunctional thoughts and behaviours, I still live a life impacted by OCD. I see my recovery as management. This creative expression really speaks the intricacies of my day-to-day living. OCD is so nuanced and different for everyone. It was important that the common stereotype of OCD in society wasn't further reinforced in this expression, by just showing someone washing, cleaning, or organising things. There is so much more depth to the illness, which may not always be seen. By visually depicting the deeper meaning, I wanted those who may have an experience of OCD or mental ill health to know they are not alone in their intricate, embarrassing thoughts and behaviours. -*Josh*



***VisAble knott*, 2020**

Dance

Artist: Nadia Milford (she/her)

Advocate: Josh Di Nucci (he/him)





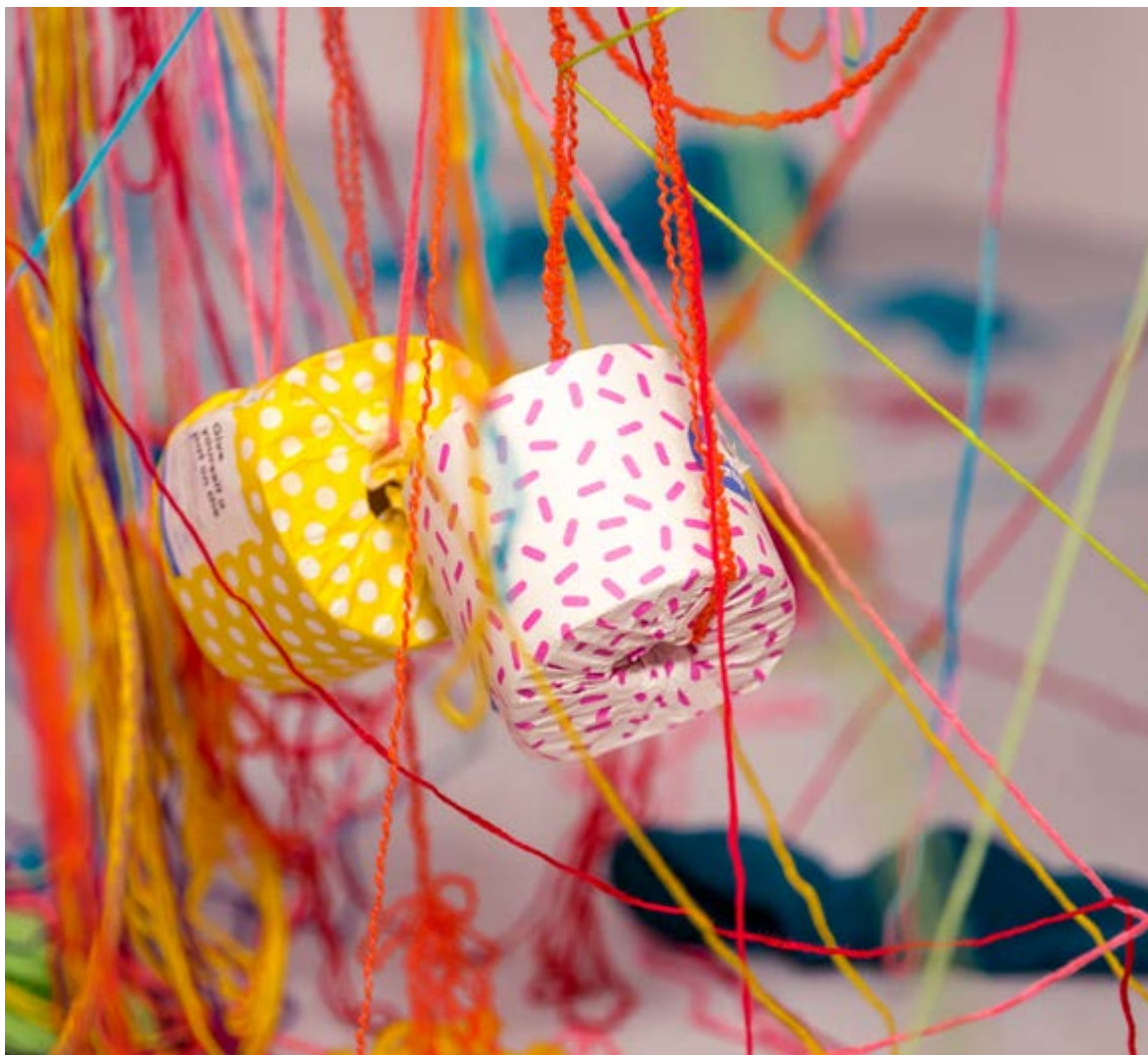
"OCD can make living a functional life difficult, but it is not impossible, and doesn't define a person."

VisAble knott, 2020

Dance

Artist: Nadia Milford (she/her)

Advocate: Josh Di Nucci (he/him)



“You can live a life of meaning and purpose while managing this mental illness.”

VisAble knott, 2020

Dance

Artist: Nadia Milford (she/her)

Advocate: Josh Di Nucci (he/him)



Mel

x Zoë

**Finding freedom and purpose
through self-appreciation.**

Mental health advocate Mel knows all too well the debilitating and endless pursuit of being 'good enough'. In this powerful combination of poetry and dance, Mel and artist Zoë give agency and self-determination back to the body, showing the strength in survival and in appreciating the body for the life it gives us.

In society girls are so pressured to measure up to an unreasonable standard of femininity. Mel and I wanted to make a work that was about what a body could do, rather than what it looked like. We made a dance that showed agency and self-determination in the body it portrayed. You get a body telling her story, a body that moves the way she wants to; a body that chooses life. -Zoë

What started off as a seemingly normal preoccupation with health turned into a sinister, obsessive and never-ending pursuit to be 'good enough'. I went through cycles of lethargy and hopelessness, wrecked family relationships, physical and emotional damage. I was diagnosed with disordered eating in 2013 and was in treatment and recovery for Anorexia Nervosa until 2016. Through recovery, I learned to appreciate my body simply because it allows me to do the things I love. If it wasn't for my body, I wouldn't be able to pet my cats, go on a bushwalk, hug my friends and family, see a movie or have bubble baths. I am proud to say that I have learned to listen to my body and am fully dedicated to taking care of it. My eating disorder made me feel worse not better, and now that I am recovered, I am able to feel passionate and purposeful about the things that I do in life.

I'm really interested in the value that we (as a society and individuals) place on our bodies. My personal belief is that bodies should be first and foremost valued for their incredible functional capabilities rather than their specific aesthetic qualities! The 'look' of a body should be totally free from judgements about a person's character, personality and value. -Mel



Step one, 2020
Dance, Spoken Word

Artist: Zoë Bastin (she/her)
Advocate: Mel Keller-Tuberg (she/her)



"If we listen, respect and love our bodies for the things they do, not the way they look, we are freer to learn more about ourselves, what we love doing and the world around us."

Step one, 2020
Dance, Spoken Word

Artist: Zoë Bastin (she/her)
Advocate: Mel Keller-Tuberg (she/her)



**Kara
x Rebekah**

**How can you find the strength to keep moving
through the darkest moments?**

This painted expression from mental health advocate Kara and artist Rebekah shares Kara's journey and personal transformation from hopelessness to healing. Through a combination of portraiture and symbolism, the piece represents Kara finding light through the darkness, and her connection with family, the beach and country.

The overall summary of the expression represents Kara's personal journey of seeking help to overcome a dark place she found herself in. On the surface the painting speaks for itself, showing on one side a dark colour palette symbolising Kara's battle with her mental health and on the other half a positive reflection of her journey. The self portraits are in a central position in the painting representing these two sides, surrounded by a circular pattern that symbolises a sitting place. This representation reflects Kara's family members (mum, dad, siblings and her nan), who are around her and have been a guiding light and strength during dark times. The footprints are a symbol of resilience and how Kara was able to overcome some of her challenges at a time when she thought there was no way out. The beach has a personal meaning to Kara, being a place of letting go and healing. One particular day there were dragonflies which are known to represent change and transformation. They represent her personal transformation -*Rebekah*

My mental health was not so healthy before. I've since overcome self-doubt, negative self-talk and suicidal behaviours. Although sometimes I still have self-doubt, I've overcome not-so-healthy mental health through a journey of rebuilding and rebirth. I hope this will help break down the stigma in the Indigenous community. In the Kimberleys there's a very high suicide rate in the community. I don't want to see the young Indigenous people die by suicide. There is a lot to live for.

I hope my story impacts young people who are scared to open up about things. I hope having someone else's story that you can see or listen to will help someone who is struggling with their identity, sexuality, or has ups and downs with their own mental health problems. I want them to realise that they're not alone. Even though my experience may not be the same as what they're going through, they're not alone. -*Kara*



***Becoming*, 2020**
Painting

Artist: Rebekah Treacy (she/her)
Advocate: Kara Farrell (she/her)





"I hope my story impacts young people who are scared to open up about things."

***Becoming*, 2020**
Painting

Artist: Rebekah Treacy (she/her)
Advocate: Kara Farrell (she/her)

Josh

x Jayden

**Finding new ways to express
and process emotions through art.**

In his mental health journey, advocate Josh Muir often used visual art as a way to manage anxiety and process emotions. Working in partnership with musician Jayden Lillyst, Josh's experience with anxiety, depression and paranoia is expressed through an entirely new medium, with shapes and colours transformed into melodies and harmonies.

Anxiety, depression and paranoia are some of the messages I'd chosen to come across in the music. The arts and mental health go hand in hand, and music has always been a strong focus for me. I'm a visual artist myself and I feel like art decorates space, while music decorates time, and it was good to bring these together. Art is a therapeutic platform for me. I need art and I can't go a day without it. It's my way of voicing how I'm feeling and what I'm going through. Some people might find playing music or sport is their thing – any recreational activity that you might have. Art is one of those things that I need to balance my lifestyle and help me deal with the emotions that I might be feeling at the time. It's almost a necessity. I want to set an example by speaking openly about mental health issues.

I hope to encourage people to think about their own experiences and share them with others. I hope we push the message out there for people who are listening so they can really absorb it and use it as a tool to make their lives and their mental health issues a bit more understood. I can only speak on behalf of myself, I can't speak on behalf of the entire mob, but I think it's also important to show First Nations people being really productive in this space. I hope I can be an example of what you can do in this space as a First Nations young person – as a creative or as someone with mental health issues. *-Josh*

My expression for Josh's experience is 'Better headspace'. Why this seemed relevant is because of the message I wanted to impart on Josh, but also, through my own lived experience, show him there is a road back to where HE wants to be. Josh is a Visual artist as well as mental health advocate so I think this was a great experience, getting these two mediums of Music and Visual art space to dance together, crash, be broken, then reassemble into something amazing. With Josh's particular story, I think vibrance was the word I tried to use to guide me through. Trying to translate his shapes, forms, colours, into licks, melodies and harmonies. *-Jayden*



***Better headspace*, 2020**
Song and Digital Illustration

Artist: Jayden Lillyst- music (he/him) Josh Muir- Visual (he/him)
Advocate: Josh Muir (he/him)



Seen the downside of up, seen the upside of down and all in between,
Have trouble sleeping coz I wake up weeping coz of what I had seen
Been shoved off my feet, slept next to people down on the street
Gotta keep my head low round some crowds because I took the heat

But I wasn't prepared to pay that price, money's good and the livin' nice,
Had to escape while I still could, for next generation livelihood
Don't think I could sleep at night, knowing I cause my family strife,
So let 'em live how they think they can, I gotta be a better man

I been places that Satan wouldn't hang around
Used smoking and drinking to help my thinking when I was down
Did what I could in the neighbourhood coz I fitted the size
But something changes when you Brothers face has your same eyes

Better headspace, 2020
Song and Digital Illustration

Artist: Jayden Lillyst- music (he/him)
Advocate: Josh Muir (he/him)

Emma
x Eloise

**How does it feel to live each day
under the weight of inner turmoil?**

For mental health advocate Emma, facing the stigma of mental ill-health in a small rural community resulted in an inability to express herself. Working with artist and friend Eloise, Emma's experience is shared here through a creative wearable expression that captures the entrapment of internalised turmoil, and the freedom that comes from stepping into the light.

Frightened, powerless, dehumanized – messages that led to the creation of a garment from a quilt, experimenting with a feeling of being under a weighted blanket or hiding oneself under the covers in an attempt to protect oneself. Emma associated a sense of heaviness with white as a symbol of numbness and void. The concept of feeling controlled and restrained all influenced the exterior of the coat, symbolizing what others might see when witnessing someone suffering through mental ill-health, locked away from human contact and society. Messages inked across the interior of the coat express Emma's inner turmoil, hidden from the sight of others. -*Eloise*

My family lived in a rural area and had no access to a service that was appropriate for my complex needs. From this experience I learnt very early about the stigma that is sometimes associated with mental ill-health, particularly in a small rural community. I didn't have the language to express what was going on for me on the inside, however on the outside I was able to hide most of these issues. It wasn't until I left school and decided that there has to more to life than feeling like this that I began to find new ways for treating and managing my mental ill-health.

Living with trauma, I spent a lot of time feeling lost and completely detached from myself and an equal amount of time running as far away from myself as possible. In my short experience on this earth, I know that trauma and disassociation from the self often walk hand in hand. Upon stumbling onto this truth, I think that the most valuable process someone with a mental illness can undertake is uncovering the self. Often, we get caught up on the concept of 'finding yourself'. Finding yourself is the process of unlearning. It's an excavation of the soul. It is learning how to hold your own light and honour your truth and to stand on your own two feet without wavering. It is allowing yourself to be fully seen, exactly as you are without living in the shadows of shame and fear. And once you know how to do that, it's about empowering other people to do the same. -*Emma*



***Under Cover*, 2020**
Wearable Garment

Artist: Eloise Coleman (she/her)
Advocate: Emma Pryse Jones (she/her)





"You are not lost. You are probably just buried. Buried under shame, cultural conditioning, social learning, perceptions, expectations and the definitions of the western medical model."

***Under Cover*, 2020**
Wearable Garment

Artist: Eloise Coleman (she/her)
Advocate: Emma Pryse Jones (she/her)



***Under Cover*, 2020**
Wearable Garment

Artist: Eloise Coleman (she/her)
Advocate: Emma Pryse Jones (she/her)



***Under Cover*, 2020**
Wearable Garment

Artist: Eloise Coleman (she/her)
Advocate: Emma Pryse Jones (she/her)

**Mehmet x
Emmanuel**

**Finding a balance between physical, emotional,
and spiritual health.**

Growing up in a culture and community steeped in tradition and values, mental health advocate Mehmet found himself feeling trapped beneath the weight of pressure and expectation – striving to be what he felt others wanted him to be. Working with artist Emmanuel, this introspective piece reflects on Mehmet’s journey of caring for his wellbeing and how his cultural heritage can support this. Finding the ‘why’ and appreciating his religion and culture from a place of intrinsic curiosity rather than external pressure.

This piece reflects my experiences as a first generation Australian. It has been inspired by my experiences as a Turkish Muslim living in a small country town who later moved to Adelaide. The artwork focuses on my connection to religion and culture as well as how I navigated my teens and early 20’s; the good, the bad and the ugly. There are themes that include religion, social and emotional growth as well as external pressures to be academically successful. I hope it inspires other young people from CALD backgrounds to recognise the impact that culture plays on our everyday functioning. There is a lot of stigma attached to seeking help for mental health, especially in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It’s such a broad demographic that it makes it difficult to provide effective support for people in these communities. Each community has their own experiences, beliefs and traditions.

My experience within my own community has been that the importance of an individual’s mental wellbeing is too often an afterthought. Culture and traditions are often imposed on young people early in their development. As we grow, we learn the ‘why’ and appreciate our religion and our culture through our own personal opinions and experiences, not the expectations of others. Through education and collaboration, we can understand the positive influence that culture can play in our lives.
-Mehmet

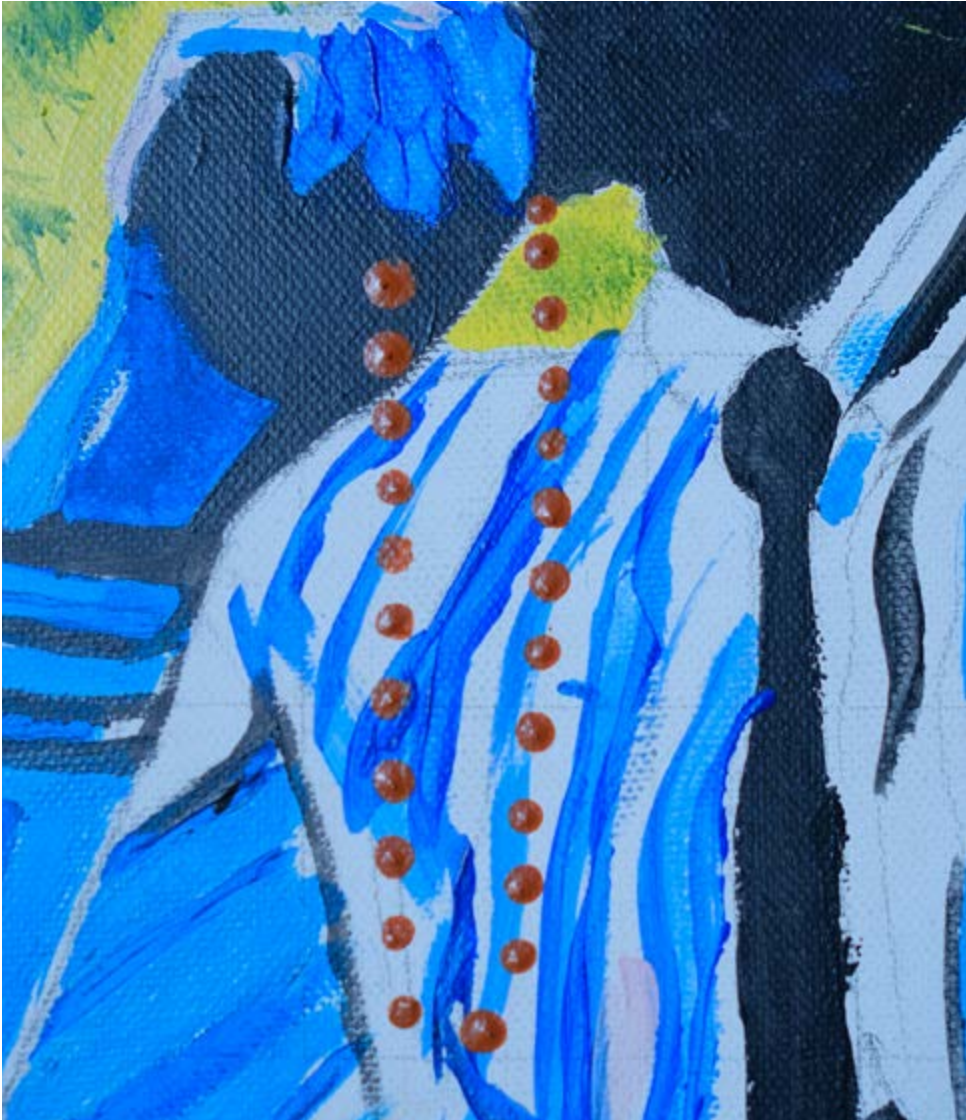
For Mehmet’s message to be heard, metaphors were used including colours and the placement of objects. Colours such as blue symbolises sadness, yellow symbolises hope, and the talisman represents identity and religion. I carefully listened to Mem’s story about his experience of hopelessness, low mood and low motivation. To my surprise, Mem and I have a lot in common; we shared a similar experience. This made my work easier. Asking for help does not mean you are weak, asking for help means you want to remain strong. *-Emmanuel*



Me_m, 2020
Acrylic Painting

Artist: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)
Advocate: Mehmet Kavlakoglu (he/him)





“Culture is what you make of it. Pave your own path and prioritise what is important to your own development.”

Me_m, 2020
Acrylic Painting

Artist: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)
Advocate: Mehmet Kavlakoglu (he/him)

Emily

x vivi

**Uncovering identity, connection
and healing in virtual worlds.**

For mental health advocate Emily, a search for connection uncovered places to heal that were miles away from traditional approaches to recovery. Virtual gaming worlds and communities gave them the creative freedom and emotional support they needed to recover and discover themselves beyond the limitation of others' expectations and biases. Through a symbolic composition of animation and characterisation, artist and animator Vivi recreates Emily's journey of healing and self-discovery by highlighting the different characters they walked with along the way.

Growing up, I was always surrounded by other people's expectations. I tried so hard to be someone other people wanted me to be, but along the way, I lost sight of who I was. Healing looks different for everyone, but for me, video games were a place of recovery. Video games made me realise I didn't have to be alone anymore. They allowed me to connect with others at a time when I wasn't emotionally or physically able to leave my room. It was also the first time I found people and characters of diverse struggles and identities that I couldn't find in real life. When I created an avatar, they became an extension of myself. I could choose to be whoever I wanted to be, developing my personality and values without being influenced by other people's expectations.

In video games, you see the me I want you to see. Unconsciously or not, people's perceptions of me have always been influenced by my gender, race, age, or body. Video games were one of the only places where I didn't have to worry about discrimination or prejudice. When you meet me in a video game, I can just be present, unfiltered, and unapologetically myself. I hope that in sharing this part of my journey, it will help start conversations about mental health, video games, and other non-traditional ways of supporting mental health. No matter what your mental health journey looks like, your experiences are valid, and you are not alone. *-Emily*

This piece is a 24-frame walking cycle animation made with 24 of Emily's favourite game characters. These characters represent parts of Emily throughout their life, as a combined walking cycle. The animation symbolises their journey of becoming themselves through video game play. When I first talked with Emily about the collaboration, we focused on ethnicity and self-identity, but throughout the conversation, the direction evolved into Emily's journey through their relationship with video game playing, and how it helped shaped their identity. We soon realised how important this aspect was to Emily. An animation that depicted all their favourite game characters walking quickly became our creative direction. *-Vivi*



***Walk with me*, 2021**

Animation

Artist: Vivi Feng (she/her)

Advocate: Emily Unity (they/them)



A S H



C H E L L



C O M M A N D O



H O R E T



C H U N - L I



M O I R A



I S A B E L L E



M A R I O



L I N K



S Y L V A N A S



D I A B L O



V A U L T _ B O Y



DEADPOOL



ELLIE



CRYSTAL MAIDEN



SOAP



CLEMENTINE



ELIZABETH



GERALT



SOLID SNAKE



GORDON FREEMAN



JOHNNY SILVERHAND



ASHE



PINK

Mimi

x Emma

**Sometimes the only way is through,
and on the other side is greater freedom.**

For mental health advocate Mimi, confronting the painful stand-off between her mind and body started her on a journey of learning to choose kindness over criticism. Mimi began embracing all the parts of herself on the good days, the bad days and all the days in between. Together with ceramicist, Emma, 'Moving Through' reminds us that growth is possible when room is made for the struggle and the perfect imperfections; seeing them as part of our journey rather than something that must define us.

'Moving Through' represents mental health as an ongoing journey; as an experience someone doesn't move on from, but continues to grow and change with. As Mimi recounted her past experiences with an eating disorder, we realised this artwork needed to reflect where she is now – in the present, the challenges she has overcome, and most importantly, convey a message of hope and positivity to others. This piece depicts a body that has changed and adapted its form whilst continuing to grow.

-Emma

After struggling to fit in at school, I wrestled with low self-esteem, self-worth, and became a bully to myself. I experienced an eating disorder along with anxiety and depression. For a while I lost the bubbly, fun, creative parts of myself whilst my body and mind battled. I eventually reached out for help and I went on a journey to learn about my health and ways to overcome my struggles. During this time, I learnt a lot about myself, my body, my mind, and how looking after myself both mentally and physically was something that, whilst difficult at times, would ultimately benefit me and lead to a happier and healthier life.

I hope that anyone who sees the sculpture will note its curves, bumps and perfect imperfections, and see this as the mind adapting to the journey that is life. Life is not just a straight line or a mapped-out path. It is a rollercoaster of waves and emotions. Whilst life's ups and downs can be challenging and exciting, you can also learn from life and constantly grow and adapt. Whilst living with mental health, you can learn to work with these feelings, and whilst some may never go away entirely, they become a part of you, a part of your story and ultimately make you the person you are today. *-Mimi*



***Moving through*, 2021**

Sculpture

Artist: Emma Bartik (she/her)

Advocate: Mimi Kilbey (she/her)





"Just like the weather, life has many seasons. Sometimes the rain may stay for a bit longer than you would like but that doesn't mean you should give up hope. The sunshine will appear again."

***Moving through*, 2021**
Sculpture

Artist: Emma Bartik (she/her)
Advocate: Mimi Kilbey (she/her)

Emmanuel
x Anton

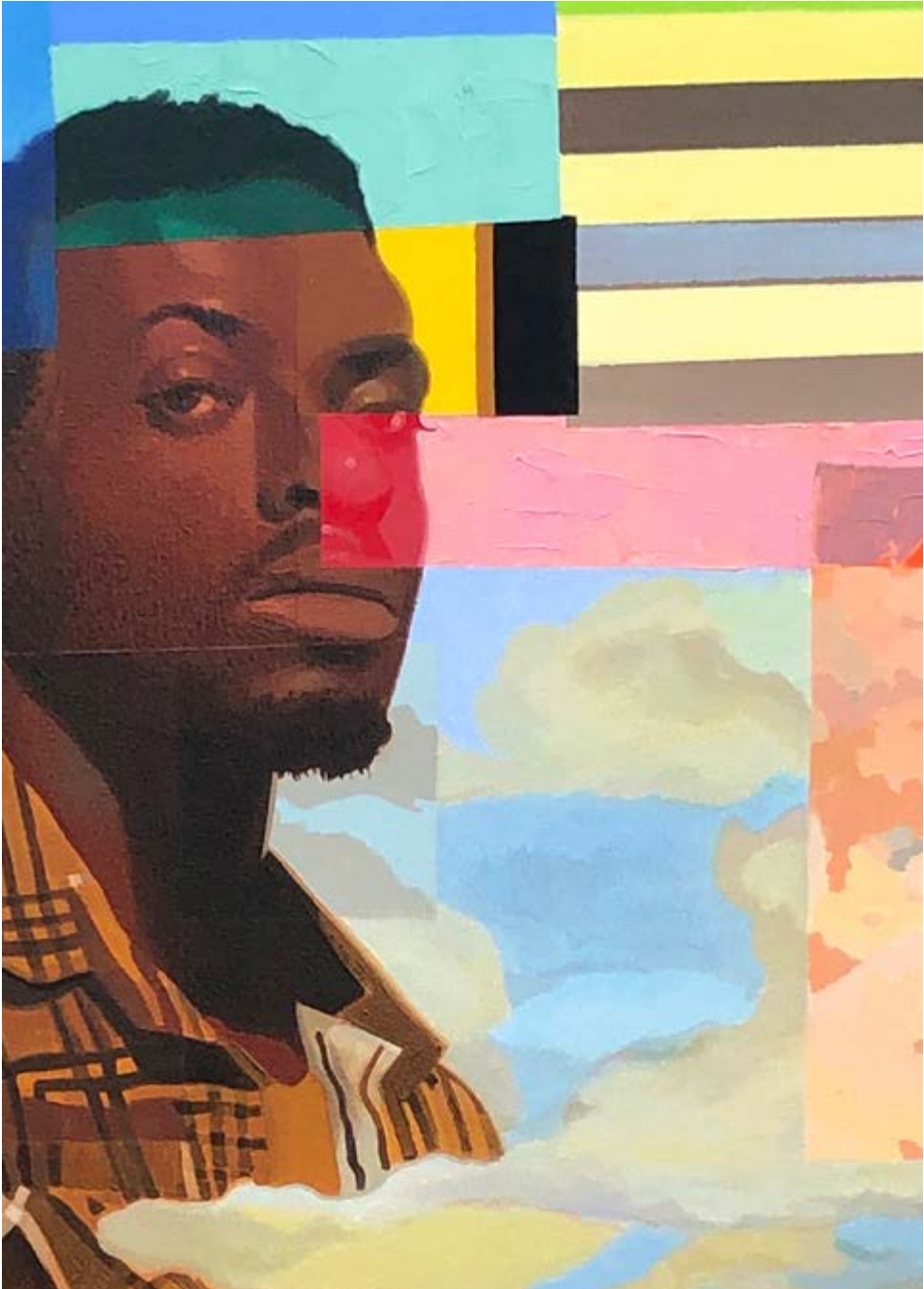
Finding the courage to create your own reality.

For advocate Emmanuel Asante, the journey from Africa to Australia was one shaped by struggle, self-determination, and the resolve to persevere. Despite being discouraged to pursue art, Emmanuel found comfort in painting and this drive to create not only helped him to recover from depression but also recreate his life as an artist. Through colour, shade and symbolism fellow artist Anton narrates Emmanuel's journey on to canvas in his painting 'Fortitude'. A testament to the power of the arts to heal and the courage within us to triumph over adversity.

Coming to Australia, I was told life would be easy because Australia is a land of opportunity. Little did I know that things are not handed to you on silver platter. I was asked to find a job and school at the same time. I was on temporary visa so I wasn't eligible for any government benefits and I did not have any experience therefore companies wouldn't hire me. Life was tough. I saved the little I had so that I could send money home to Africa. Art was my escape from reality. Practicing my art was the only thing that brought me comfort and yet I was asked to stop making art because art is not seen to provide a reliable source of income. However, I persevered. I started by going to art galleries, art shows and found myself mentors who guided me through my artistic journey.

Everything is possible if you have a clear goal. Even impossible says "I'm possible". Life can be a struggle but don't let your struggles or the naysayers stop you from going after your dreams and goals. Prove the people who did not believe in you, wrong, and the people who did believe in you, right. -Emmanuel

This portrait of Emmanuel depicts his life's journey in both figurative and abstract terms through intuitive interplays between shape and colour. The painting hints at different psychological states, times and places in Emmanuel's story. With Emmanuel's journey being the multi-layered and complex experience that it is, it called for an intuitive working process. I began to look at Ghana's history and other images to get an initial handle on how to respond. We met up and I posed Emmanuel in a series of poses that could express his strength in the face of adversity. The shapes inside the flannel shirt became markers for his life in Australia and hinted at the role of colour and shape in Emmanuel's own work. The brightness and high-keyed colour contrast of these shapes hinted at the complexity of Emmanuel's experience while emphasizing his triumph over struggle -Anton



***Fortitude*, 2021**
Painting

Artist: Anton Pulvirenti (he/him)
Advocate: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)





“Act as if what you do makes a difference.”

Fortitude, 2021
Painting

Artist: Anton Pulvirenti (he/him)
Advocate: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)

Namy
x Angela

**Learning to care sustainably
and empowering others to do the same.**

Migration from Cambodia to Australia saw Namy's role as a young carer push all of her needs aside as she carried the responsibility of supporting her family in a foreign world. As the pressure, exhaustion and resentment built up, Namy's world became clouded and she needed to find another way. Together with artist Angela, Namy shares a message of realistic hope for all the helpers in this powerful stop motion animation about growth and resilience. Reminding us that asking for help is resilience in action and that caring for ourselves is also caring for those around us.

Being a migrant child and navigating life in a new culture, the stress and responsibilities I was too young to handle caused many issues. It was a constant push-and-pull between gratitude that I 'had it better' than some and feelings of anger, resentment, and most of all, helplessness. I think the narrative we've been taught – that 'sacrificing' oneself to help others is the ultimate act of altruism, is problematic. It groups 'putting yourself first' as being selfish and 'sacrificing yourself for others' as being compassionate when it's not that black and white. As a consequence, I never learnt to set boundaries, ask for help, or entrust responsibilities to others. I came to recognise that helping or caring for someone isn't about relieving them of responsibilities or negative feelings. It's about being there to empower them to be independent and help themselves, even if we meet with resistance along the way.

One mantra that I keep close to my heart is that some days are dark, and some are cloudy and many times I don't see the sun but that doesn't mean it's not there — the sun will always rise. You are capable and resilient, and you hold the power to help yourselves and others. Taking care of you first is not selfish— remember the trees have to survive and be alive before they can give life. -Namy

This expression touches on the themes of hope, growth and resilience. Namy had said, "the sun will always rise at some point", and this was my initial inspiration. We watch as a seed falls to the ground and how it grows despite adverse weather. The pivotal moment is when a pair of hands, symbolising self-efficacy, reach out to part the skies, allowing hope to shine in. As a result, the seed emerges and it is able to grow into its potential – a young tree, with a bright future ahead. The bird that initially dropped the seed returns, bringing things full circle. -Angela

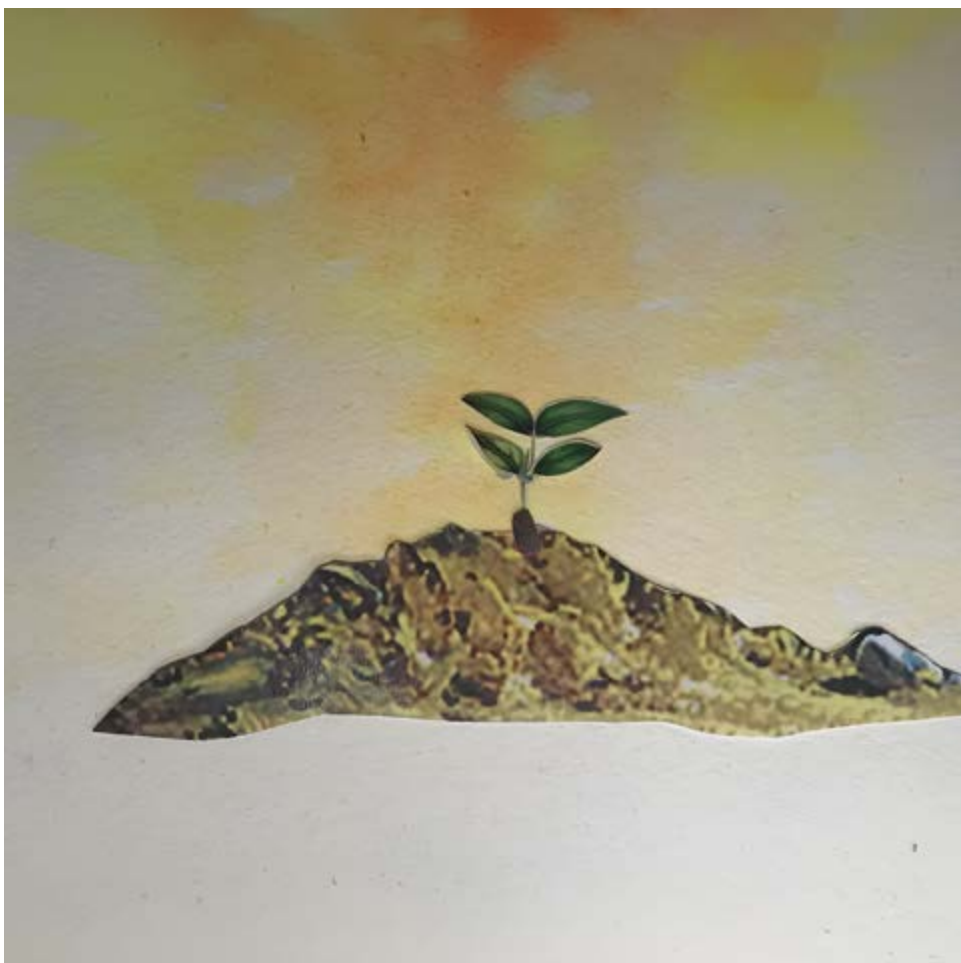


Emerging Resilience, 2021

Stop Motion Animation

Artist: Angela Zheng (she/her)

Advocate: Namy Touch (she/her)



"Be proud of how far you've come and remember that the sun will always rise."

***Emerging Resilience*, 2021**
Stop Motion Animation

Artist: Angela Zheng (she/her)
Advocate: Namy Touch (she/her)



Jacob

x Samuel

Finding family in friendship.

Growing up as a trans man in a rural town started out as an isolating journey for mental health advocate, Jacob. That is until he found family in friendship. Together with artist Samuel in this thoughtfully crafted illustration they share stories of childhood connections, chameleons, and the power of chosen family... with a sprinkle of trans magic.

This artwork was inspired by the importance of chosen family and how family is not just defined by the people you are related to, but by the people who show up for you, support you and love you unconditionally.

As a trans man who has experienced depression, anxiety, and family issues, I found support, acceptance, and a new definition of family in my friends.

This piece explores a childhood connection with someone I consider a brother who has continuously held space and embraced me for who I am. This new definition of family has allowed me to have a bigger family where I often experience gender euphoria as I am held in a space of support and safety. I think a lot of us hold onto the idea that family is the unit of people we were raised with and yes, they can have space in our lives, but it can often be our friends and community who create a space of safety, acceptance and unconditional love. My childhood connection is someone I hold very close to me, and I would be lost without them as this friend is a key member of my chosen family.

As a trans man, often I must outwardly change how people will perceive me to ensure I am safe or accepted in an environment. This chameleon expresses that while it can be OK to alter how people will perceive you, it is also important to allow your true colours to be seen. That is something I have been able to do with my chosen family. *-Jacob*

I focused on the theme of 'chosen family' and the significance of Jacob reconnecting with his childhood best friend since coming out as transgender. I used affirming items from Jacob's life, to form an overarching narrative of his experiences. The hands supporting Jacob represent his childhood best friend (Jayden). A car window signifies a time Jacob was gendered correctly as a 'guy' alongside Jayden. The chameleon represents Jacob changing over time on the surface, but deep down, his friendship with Jayden remained the same. Photos of them as young kids, teenagers, and now, today. A group chat with their friends, and Jacaranda flowers from Jacob's childhood home. *-Samuel*



Chameleon, 2022
Digital Illustration

Artist: Samuel Luke Beatty (he/him)
Advocate: Jacob Woodford (he/him)

A CHILDHOOD CONNECTION,

CONTINUING,

TO BE SEEN,

TO HOLD SPACE,

AS IF NOTHING CHANGED.





"Embrace chosen family and find the people who create a space where you can be yourself and feel completely accepted."

Chameleon, 2022
Digital Illustration

Artist: Samuel Luke Beatty (he/him)
Advocate: Jacob Woodford (he/him)

**Jacob
x Lyrical
Instinct**

Facing it can feel hard but it's a step towards healing.

Following the loss of his best friend/brother, proud Yawru and Nyul-Nyul man and mental health advocate Jacob found himself masking his pain from others as he struggled to make sense of his loss. Sharing his story with artist Lyrical Instinct, 'Face It' follows Jacob's journey of letting people in and coming to terms with his experience. Together through song, Jacob and Lyrical Instinct speak to the freedom that comes through sharing the struggle, and the strength and resilience we build when we face it.

This song was inspired by the importance of chosen family and how my first experience of mental health challenges arose after losing my best friend/brother to suicide. I remember going through a rollercoaster of different emotions and interrogating myself with questions I did not have the answers to. I started experiencing suicidal thoughts as I tried to understand how this could have happened. For a long time I could not comprehend it and coped by masking how I felt and not talking to anyone about how my grief was affecting me. I am grateful to have loving family and friends who noticed changes in my everyday behaviour and supported me patiently until I was able to reach out and ask for help. My difficult times helped me build resilience and a deeper understanding of how hard it can be for people following the loss of a loved one.

Because I now have a better understanding of the experience of grief and loss, I have the strength to get through difficult times that may come up again. And I know that I'll be able to look back on those difficult times with an even stronger toolkit. I want more young people in Australia to recognise the strength and resilience they have from their lived experiences. Once you decide to face your fears on your own terms, you can feel braver.

-Jacob

I structured the song around Jacob's key messages and tried to be poetic but impactful. The pre-chorus talks about change – being ready for it at any moment and always trying to make the best of it. The chorus then leads into 'facing it' by having the perseverance in your efforts to make a positive change. The first verse reminds us to help ourselves after taking care of others by recharging and refocusing. The second verse reminds us not to be consumed by rage, but to be calm and decisive. The bridge talks about the battles we all face, and how it can be easy to get lost in them. Its message reminds us to treat people and the land with respect, and always stand our ground. The outro is like the voice in the back of the mind. *-Lyrical Instinct*

Insightful
Excluded
MORE
Prevalence
of
of

**Listen to
your heart
and follow it
steadily.**

***Face It*, 2022**
Song (lyrics)

Artist: Lyrical Instinct (he/him)
Advocate: Jacob Corpus (he/him)

**Listen to your heart and follow it steadily
With a mind full of knowledge prepared for extremities
Complete never be, only as this entity
My body may die but never my energy**

**Imma live on, prolong and become
What I want my spirit will always be strong
So that it can keep up when destiny creeps up
Getting sleep? Nah, gotta be ready for when the time comes**

**Cause I'm certain that all this workin, it has a purpose and it
will lead up, with a, soul that's burning, I keep on learning
Never turning til I see it done
Cause nothing can ever, really be forced**

**When the time is right, it will speed forth
I can speak for, myself cause when I feel like I'm less than
before
Music always shows me I can be more**

**Cause we're all setting examples
For the next generation that will carry the mantle
All the battles we tackle will soon be theirs to handle
So let's be the guiding light while we still bare a candle**

**Cause it, could go dim at any second, so expect it
Notes will be taken down for a refreshment of where you're
headed
Like, wonder where I'm going next, life will always put us to the
test,
never getting any rest
Raise yourself out of the hell that you refuse to accept like
removing a hex or blades out of your chest**

**Cause there's no such thing as impossible
Unless you think it which is optional
Meaning there really shouldn't be a discussion at all
A dream is all it will be until it's on a roll
So go, and be the voice for the people
Whoever needs it, whenever they're fearful**

Face your fears

Face the storm

Face the dark

Don't have regret in your heart

Isaac

x Mitchell

**When it's hard to find the words,
music can be our language.**

For mental health advocate Isaac, difficult life experiences found him unmoored and lost for words. When speaking out felt out of reach, music provided a language that helped him sift through his experiences and bridge the divide he felt within himself. With composer and fellow music enthusiast Mitchell, Isaac explores the power music can have to hold memories and experiences that can help make sense of our inner landscapes, and offer us a language to share our feelings with others.

‘Unthought Known’ is a term coined in object relations theory. This work explores memory, subconscious processes and the experiences that shape stories about who we are, and our relationships to the world and each other. Isaac shared stories of his experiences and relationships to sound and music. We discovered that we shared a common practise of capturing incidental field recordings and videos, collecting and archiving moments in sound and video. We collated these experiences, reimagining them as something new and digesting them into an audio-visual collage; a space where we might find new understandings of our own experience. -*Mitchell*

My journey with my mental health started when I was 13. My friend died the morning before my birthday. It was one of those life-changing experiences that was full of confusion – where you cannot understand what is happening and you don’t know how to talk about how you’re feeling. Later down the track, I had my first serious relationship. When it ended, I felt like I lost who I was. I distanced myself from family and friends, I gave up uni, I gave up looking after myself – I became someone I didn’t like. I started having regular anxiety attacks. I often felt very lost in my thoughts, my memories felt blurred, and my emotions were overwhelming. During these times, I didn’t know how to talk about my emotions. I felt like I only had one outlet – music. Music was where I could go to express myself, and it saved me on many occasions. Connecting with people through music also supported me to open up about my feelings.

I wanted to create a piece inspired by the safety and support that music has played in my life – from when I had my first anxiety attack to the first time I spoke about what I had been feeling. Using voice memos and videos from my life, we created a work that cannot be replicated. I want the people who experience this work to make their own meaning, using their own experience. It is beautifully ambiguous and that is really intentional. I would love people to reflect on their memories, embrace the emotions they felt, and share them with someone. Sharing can feel scary, but there is always someone who will listen. -*Isaac*



Unthought Known, 2022
Soundscape, still from Video

Artist: Mitchell MacKintosh (he/him)
Advocate: Isaac Percy (he/him)



“Be the person you needed when you were growing up.”

***Unthought Known*, 2022**
Soundscape, still from Video

Artist: Mitchell MacKintosh (he/him)
Advocate: Isaac Percy (he/him)



Unthought Known, 2022
Soundscape, still from Video

Artist: Mitchell MacKintosh (he/him)
Advocate: Isaac Percy (he/him)

Zee

x Aseel

A celebration of culture and a journey of self-strength.

Growing in a diverse multicultural community, Zee found herself trying to balance multiple roles – advocate, healer, helper, daughter, sister, friend. Together with Palestinian artist Aseel, they celebrate the richness of their cultural heritage and the subtle dance of caring for community whilst also tending to the self. Through poetry and song, they stand proudly and say, Ana Houna... I am here.

Growing up I felt an immense sense of responsibility to be a leader and advocate – to support and help heal my family, my friends, and my community. The responsibility I placed on myself was heavy to carry. When I did not meet my own expectations, I felt guilt and failure; as a result, I lost sight of who I was and the story I wanted to lead. This expression is a multi-disciplinary art piece that reflects my self-strength, self-empowerment and cultural heritage in a way that I hope will empower and enlighten those who listen and view it. The piece began with me using my lived experience to create a poem, evoking my feelings of being invisible, and my journey to finally being ‘visible’.

انا هنا ‘Ana Houna’ translates in Arabic to ‘I am here’. It’s about the journey of once feeling invisible, insignificant, and unworthy. It represents my struggles of holding onto everyone’s traumas whilst also being an advocate in my family and community, looking after my own mental health, and carving a path for myself. You may not be able to understand the language, but it epitomises a melody of strength, hope and light. I wanted to build on where strength and light can come through. It can come through your family, your friends, your cultural heritage, the land on which you live on. ‘Ana Houna’ also serves as a strong message to young people, especially those of multicultural backgrounds, that they are not selfish for valuing their mental health and wellbeing. You can curate your own path, where you are visible. -Zee

Mental health is a thing we do not talk about enough. This project opened my eyes to the things young people in my own community face. Coming to Australia, I learnt that adapting to a space can be difficult. Being us – a Muslim, an Arab, a female, and everything around us can be a struggle. I learnt how important it is to listen, support and be there for our community. ‘Ana Houna’ is an artistic expression, that brings culture, emotions and sisterhood into one video. This expression is a combination of the past and future, while the present is full of hope. The music was made with my 4-year-old, whom I raise with all the love to grow and feel supported to be herself. -Aseel



أنا هنا **Ana Houna (I am here)**, 2023
Poetry and song

Artist: Aseel Tayah (she/her)
Advocate: Zee (she/her)

I am invisible
Like the sun behind the dark clouds
Hidden from all eyes to see

I am the burnt-out fire
Others have felt my warmth and seen my golden light
But I only see the fumes and ashes

I am the rain
Like tears and thoughts that fall down
Leaving me cold and alone

But one day
I realised that I was webbed into this land
I am the crystal light that flickered on the waters
I am the green life that rose from ground

But importantly that

I am the light
I am the hope
I am visible

أنا كالشمس خلف الغيوم

بات شروقي بدون عيان

أشعل ناري لأدفيء غيري

رماداً صرت أنا ودخان

أهطل بكاء السماوات

وحيداً أصحو بغير كيان

بذلت ذاتي ونفسي وروحي

لكني الآن أرى

أني البريق فوق المياه

وأنبع من الأرض الحياة

أنا النور وأنا الأمل

أنا في العاصفة ثبات

أنا في الاضطراب جمال

أنا قوة لا تُخفى

مهما واجهت في الدنيا

**Chantel
x Jovan**

**A cross-generational journey through loss, loneliness,
and the healing power of connection.**

For mental health advocate Chantel, navigating the complex emotions tied to grief after losing her mum as a teenager led to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Sharing her journey with filmmaker Jovan, this cross-generational conversation, captured within the comforting walls of Chantel's Nonna's house, delves beyond traditional narratives of grief, encompassing everything from the loss of loved ones to the loss of culture, pets, and even aspects of the self. Through the shared joy of cooking, Chantel and her Nonna create something beautiful, linking them to their culture, memories, and each other.

Growing up, my mom faced a long battle with a terminal illness, and she passed away during my teenage years, leaving me to navigate the ups and downs of adolescence without her, which often made me feel lonely. In this short film featuring me and my Nonna, we explore our experiences with grief and loss from a cross-generational perspective. Shot in my Nonna's house in south-western Sydney, it's a laid-back conversation while we cook a traditional meal we've been making together since I was 4 years old. While making gnocchi together, we acknowledge there's no 'right' way to grieve, and the impacts of loss touch people throughout life. The film looks at how both generations experience feelings of loneliness compounded by grief and how reconnecting with people, places, and cultures can be meaningful for healing.

Feeling connected to anything; people, land, culture, animals, and even to oneself, can be the antidote to loneliness, as it allows us to feel a sense of belonging. Home, I've learnt, isn't a place but rather a feeling created by the people you love. Across cultures, sharing a meal with others brings people closer; offering an opportunity to pause, enjoy, and be present. Gnocchi is also associated with a celebration in the family- eaten on Birthdays and Christmas; it's a reminder to appreciate the small things in life. -*Chantel*

In creating "Gnocchi with Nonna," Chantel wanted to explore feelings of isolation, loneliness, and loss through the simple act of cooking a meal with someone. Initially, Chantel wasn't sure if her Nonna would be up for it, but when our original plan fell through last minute, Chantel asked her Nonna, Maria, who happily agreed. It turned out to be the best choice as Chantel's journey, shaped by losing her mother at a young age, made the discussion of these themes with her Nonna more powerful and cathartic. The creative process involved exploring Chantel's ideas and giving her the platform to express them. Being able to discuss her mental health journey with her Grandmother seemed the most appropriate. I very much just let them speak (and make Gnocchi) and then in the edit, I tried to craft a narrative that captured the afternoon we all spent together. -*Jovan*



***Gnocchi with Nonna*, 2023**

Short Film

Artist: Chantel Bakac (she/her)

Advocate: Jovan Atanackovic (he/him)





***Gnocchi with Nonna*, 2023**

Short Film

Artist: Chantel Bakac (she/her)

Advocate: Jovan Atanackovic (he/him)

Community Expressions

In 2022, as the project evolved, a diverse new team of advocates came on board to take Visible to the next stage – shedding light on the shared experiences within communities. We wanted to emphasise that each unique story carries common threads that connect us all.

To bring these narratives to the forefront, we engaged in community-based activations that amplified the voices of often-overlooked groups of young people.

By facilitating workshops that connected young individuals from these communities with artists, we aimed to create a space for listening, engagement, and understanding; delving into the collective feelings and messages of hope that contribute to a broader conversation about mental health.

**Young
carers
x Ziggy**

Embracing the Caring Journey, Finding Identity, and Cultivating Strength Amidst Chaos.

This expression is a collaboration with Carer Gateway's first advisory group consisting exclusively of young people, all who have personal experience supporting loved, close and/or lost ones with mental health challenges, physical ill-health and/or disability.





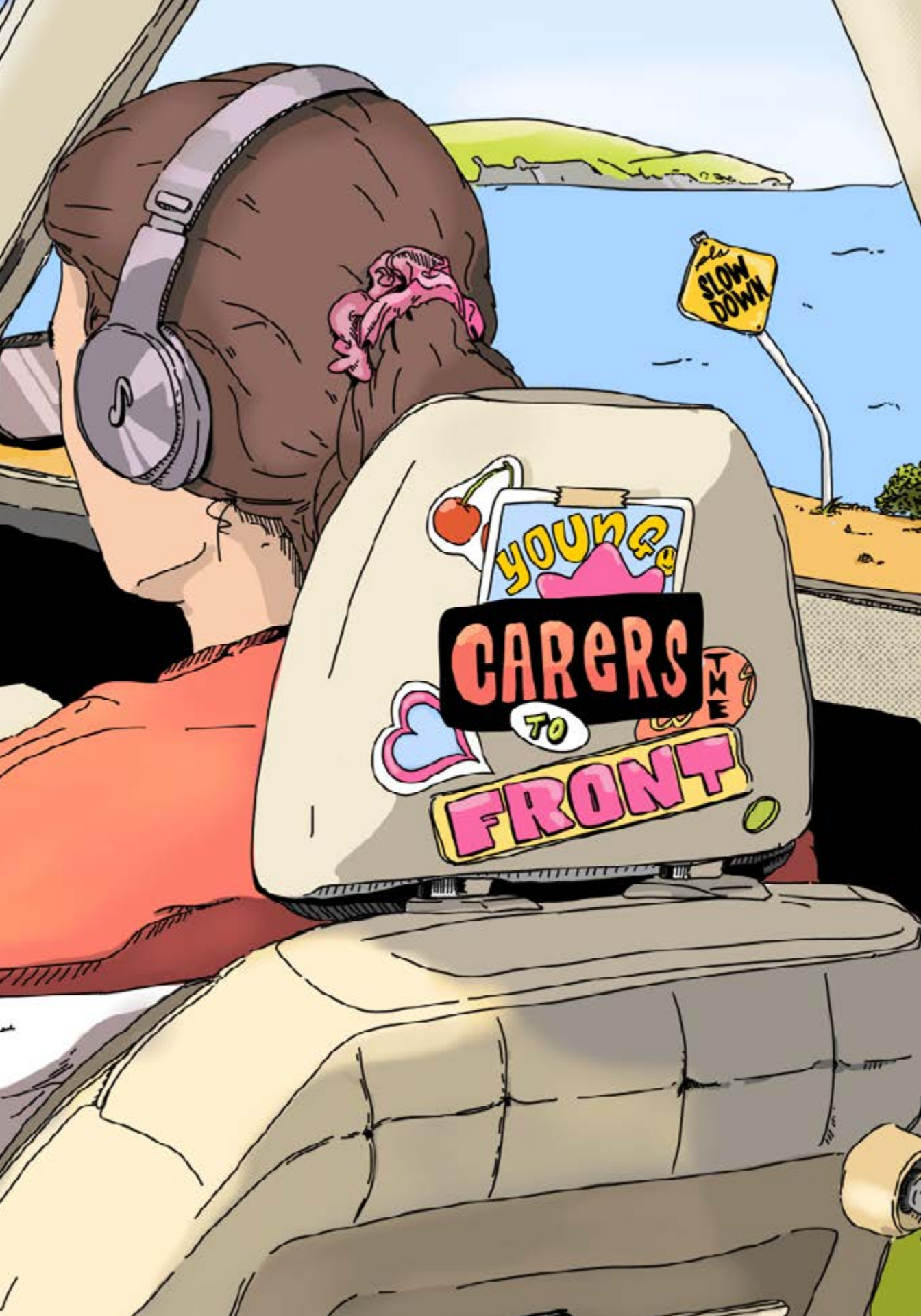
'Navigating Selfhood' from *Duality*, 2022
Illustration

Artist: Ziggy Grana (he/him)
Advocates: Carer Gateway Advisory Group



***'In pursuit of Rest'* from *Duality*, 2022**
Illustration

Artist: Ziggy Grana (he/him)
Advocates: Carer Gateway Advisory Group



For Young Carers, the intricate balance between supporting loved ones facing mental health challenges, physical ill-health, and/or disability while navigating the complexities of growing up has its challenges. In this pair of emotive illustrations, artist Ziggy Grana conveys the Young Carers shared lived experiences, shedding light on the duality between responsibility and identity, and emphasising the crucial pursuit of rest and joy.

Young carers play a vital role in society that often goes unnoticed, and this expression encompasses their diverse commitments and roles, with each advocate's story interwoven into the artwork. It celebrates their multifaceted identities, where their caring role is intertwined with their passions, choices, and selfhood. Sharing their perspectives and reflecting on how their journeys have shaped them as individuals, young carers emphasise that their caring roles and responsibilities defy a single definition. It showcases the challenges of navigating the demands of being a carer to a loved-one, whilst simultaneously exploring their identities as young people.

The two artworks tell connected but different stories. These illustrations focus on struggles with identity, as Young Carers are often putting others before themselves they can have little time to explore their own joy, which can lead to feelings of disconnection. However, these experiences can also bring maturity and unique strengths. I wanted the expressions to reflect the dualities of responsibility and identity, showcasing the adaptability and superpowers Young Carers possess. In the first artwork, the power bank strapped to the person is representative of all the time and energy dedicated to different aspects of their lives. The chameleon on top of the wheelchair is a representation of adaptability. In the second artwork, I drew my focus towards rest and replenishment. With little trinkets, instruments, photos, and books scattered around the artwork, I wanted to remind everyone of what it means to be a young person. -Ziggy

We want people to know that being a young carer is not something to be hidden or ashamed of. Despite the inevitable bumps along the way, being a young carer can foster resilience, the ability to face life's challenges head-on, and a deep appreciation for what truly matters. By sharing our stories, we hope to promote understanding and recognition, raise awareness of the role of young carers, and ensure other young carers know they are not alone in their struggles. Prioritising your own mental health and well-being should be a top priority, regardless of the number of responsibilities you carry. Seeking help and supports can equip you to take better care of yourself and the people around you. -Young Carer



'Duality' Artwork Reveal, 2022
Photo

Photographer: Bonnie Jarrett



'Duality' Artwork Reveal, 2022
Photo

Photographer: Bonnie Jarrett

**Western
Sydney**

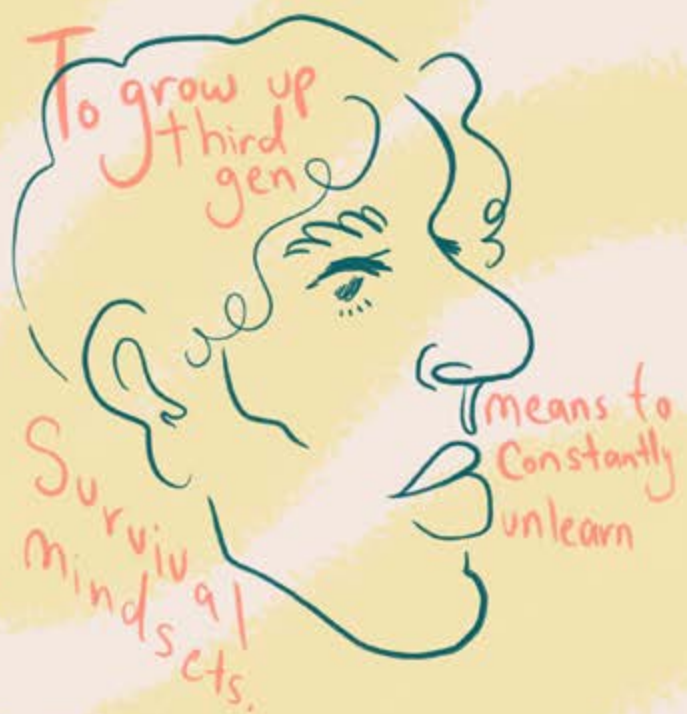
These expressions unfold in collaboration with headspace Bankstown's Youth Reference Group, a collective of young people living in Western Sydney, each proudly identifying as Refugee or Migrant. Each expression in this series explores the intricate interplay of mental health, illuminating the challenges faced by young Australians with multicultural backgrounds. The artworks provide a glimpse into the nuanced layers of cultural identity, the diversity of mental health experiences, and the collective humanity that binds us.

This isn't just about their stories; it's about all of us realising the beauty in our differences and similarities, encapsulating what it truly means to belong in a society marked by diverse, intersecting identities. This project represents the hope, strength, and love each of the young people have for themselves, their community, and their lives here in Australia.

**Each passer-by is living their own complex,
multifaceted and nuanced life of their own.**

***Sonder*, 2023**
Risograph-printed Zine

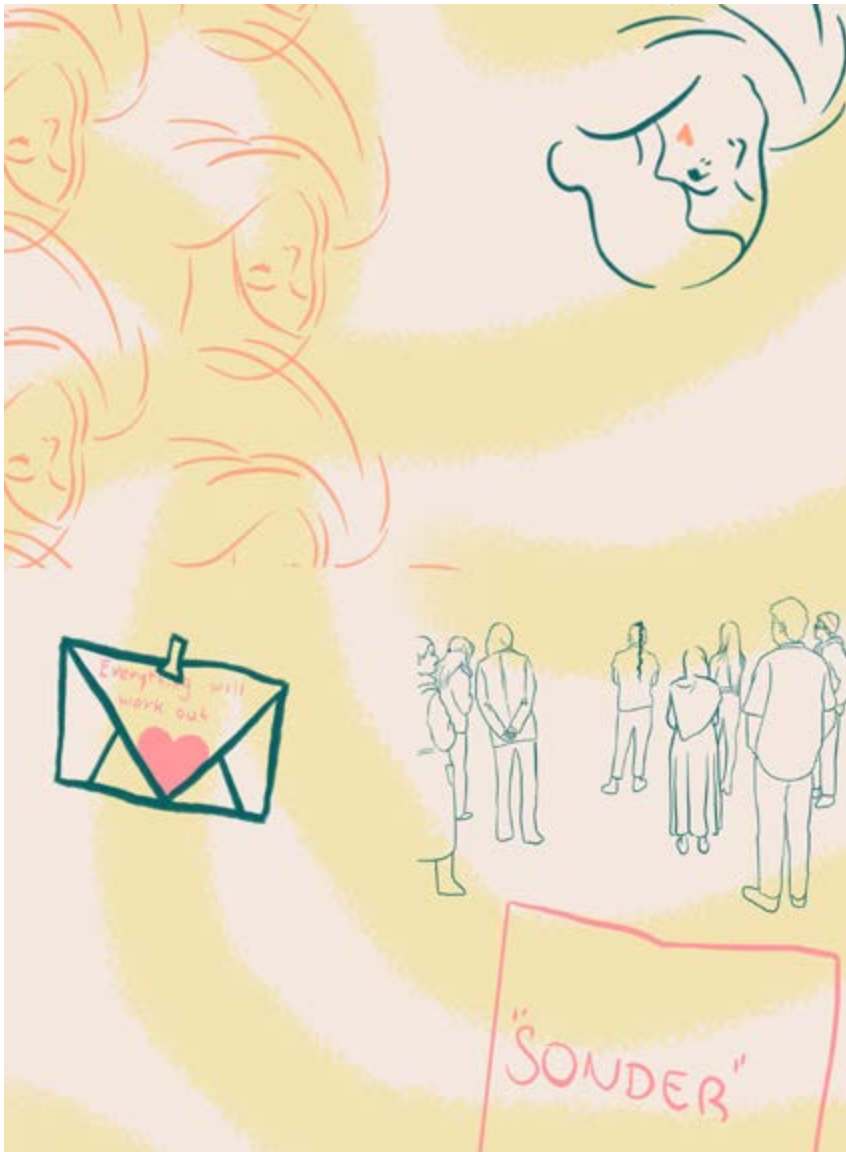
Artist: Oliver Vincent-Reyes (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers





Sonder, 2023
Risograph-printed Zine

Artist: Oliver Vincent-Reyes (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers



Sonder, 2023
Risograph-printed Zine

Artist: Oliver Vincent-Reyes (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers



Allowing
space to be
vulnerable

Means to
constantly
unlearn



This is how
we choose to
carry legacy.



For young Australians from Refugee or Migrant backgrounds, the tension between the autonomy to build their own identities and communities whilst navigating culture clashes and mental health challenges can be overwhelming. In this risograph-printed Zine, artist Oliver Vincent-Reyes delves into the intertwining stories and experiences of young people navigating life in Sydney's Western suburbs. Through intricate illustrations and overlapping visuals, Oliver brings to life the vibrant tapestry of cultural diversity, fostering a sense of belonging and community that transcends narrow definitions.

This combined zine and poster serve as a visual journey, offering a glimpse into the more nuanced aspects of intersectionality within young Australian diaspora groups, often unseen by external eyes. The exploration reveals common threads, addressing the duality of freedom faced by those displaced from their own culture, striving to establish belonging within Australian culture. Despite these challenges, the artwork reflects the resilience and introspection of these young people. Their shared aspiration to build a safe and inclusive community for themselves and their families emerges as a testament to their strength and determination.

Respecting and valuing diversity within our communities whilst being open-minded and empathetic towards others is important. Everyone is on a different journey and people encounter mental health in distinct ways, however, there often exists a shared experience. This emotional thread, whether it be sadness, burden, or the loneliness experienced during life's challenges, unites us. It forms a common ground among those navigating daily struggles with mental health. *Sonder* represents the different aspects and complexity of mental health and how it affects a range of people. This zine takes us into those 'softer' places that the external eyes may not be privy too. This is created through overlapping visuals, a minimal choice in the warm colour palette, as well as hidden symbols that the participants will connect in their shared memories. -*Oliver*

***Sonder*, 2023**
Risograph-printed Zine

Artist: Oliver Vincent-Reyes (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers

**The most beautiful lotus can only grow in
the darkest and dirtiest mud.**

Transformed by Grace, 2023
Acrylic Painting Series

Artist: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers





***Transformed by Grace*, 2023**
Acrylic Painting Series

Artist: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers



***Transformed by Grace*, 2023**
Acrylic Painting Series

Artist: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers



Exploring the tension between forging individual identities, building communities, and connecting to culture, this painted series by artist Emmanuel shifts the focus from the struggles faced by young Australians from Refugee or Migrant backgrounds to capture the warmth, healing, and growth that emerges from the struggle. The paintings aim to evoke nostalgia and create a space for dialogue and a celebration of diversity within the Australian experience.

It's okay to want help, a community is stronger when it shares the load. So many people, especially within CALD communities will keep their experiences to themselves and feel a shame/guilt in talking about their difficulties, it is so important to have conversations within your community about how they are doing, their mental health, and what they want from life.

While working with these young people, I saw a lot of my younger self in their stories. The experiences of young people who feel a disconnection from their culture and those who struggle to find their identity moved me. With the realisation that their struggles are close to home, I wanted to capture and communicate the feelings of warmth, healing, and growth that also came through in our discussions. The dog represents the inner child in all of us, and the lotus flower is an icon of peace. This, along with the tranquil and peaceful colour scheme aimed to bring a feeling of calmness.

Through this process I learned that the more you get to listen, the more you understand where people come from. These pieces speak to the feelings peace that comes from the understanding that sometimes you have to let people grow, you don't always have to constantly take their pain away, and sometimes you're just there to encourage and support them. But you have to let people grow on their own to learn from their own mistakes.

-Emmanuel

Transformed by Grace, 2023
Acrylic Painting Series

Artist: Emmanuel Asante (he/him)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers

**What would you say to your younger self
if you could go back in time?
What would you say to your future self
if you could travel forward in time?**

Note to Self, 2023
Digital Collage

Artist: Emily Unity (they/them)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers

YOU ARE ENOUGH

you are more than what you give to others

it is ok to miss someone and also not want them back in your life

Trust yourself a little more

YOU ARE NOT A MONSTER

it's never too late to be the person you want to be

IT IS NOT YOUR JOB TO FIX THE PERSON WHO BROKE YOU

fear doesn't have to overwhelm you but inspire you

You never deserved the harm you received

Take the lead. people will follow.

Love and give grace to all the versions of you

It's a hard time, not a hard life

fight with love

DO NOT SHRINK YOURSELF TO MAKE OTHERS FEEL BIG

DOING YOUR BEST MIGHT LOOK DIFFERENT EVERY DAY

DON'T STOP DOING JOYFUL THINGS

you can say no

you are allowed to outgrow people

VULNERABILITY IS A STRENGTH

Be beautifully loud

RESTING IS NOT QUITTING

Always follow your heart and gut

celebrate your wins!

it is okay to ask for help

being alone but happy is better than being around people that don't make you happy

speak even if your voice shakes!

All your experiences made you who you are

you are not "too sensitive"

Breathe

EMPATHY WITHOUT BOUNDARIES IS SELF-ABANDONMENT

SPEAK UP AND OUT

The best change is uncomfortable

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

people can only meet us at the depths in which we have met ourselves

YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH

Embrace the differences within you

you cannot heal in the same environment that made you sick

don't change

too late
the person
nt to be

IT IS NOT YOUR
JOB TO FIX THE
PERSON WHO BROKE YOU

fear doesn't have to
overwhelm you
but inspire you

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It's a hard time,
not a hard life

fight
with love

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DONT STOP DOING
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IS A STRENGTH

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don't make you happy

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LISTEN
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SELF-ABAND

cannot heal
same environment
made you sick

people can only
meet us at the
depths in which
we have met
ourselves

YOU ARE
ON THE
RIGHT P

don't

Through the lens of lived expertise, this digital collage/ collection of wearable and shareable artworks encapsulates the resilience, hope, and self-discovery of young people in Western Sydney who've navigated the complexities of mental health challenges. Crafted by artist Emily Unity, this powerful collage captures bittersweet messages—what advocates wished they heard in their youth and hopeful reminders for the future. These handwritten notes not only celebrate the lived expertise of young multicultural Australians but also allows the community to reflect on their own journeys, recognising the transformative power of shared experiences.

When one person opens up and is vulnerable, it gives permission and creates safety for others to as well. My mental health journey has been a rollercoaster of emotions, and I admit that sometimes it is hard to put things into words, but I want to encourage others to be open-minded and embrace diversity, realising that we all have something valuable to contribute. This artwork represents the struggles and growth in each of our stories, with the key symbolism being personal growth and introspection. Emily incorporated each of the storyteller's real thoughts, feelings, and emotions directly into their art as affirmations. -*Story Sharer*

We're young people, but we've been through so much in a short time. We've experienced depression, anxiety, suicide, eating disorders, family violence, homelessness, and more. Whilst these experiences have come with challenges, we've also gained incomparable wisdom or "lived expertise."

With this piece, I wanted to achieve three goals: authenticity, ownership, and accessibility. Each piece authentically preserves advocates' handwritten messages, honouring their ownership, and providing a low-barrier platform to share their lived expertise with their communities. -*Emily*

Note to Self, 2023
Digital Collage

Artist: Emily Unity (they/them)
Advocates: Western Sydney Story Sharers



Western Sydney Workshops, 2023
Photo

Photographer: Lehan Zhang (she/they)



Western Sydney Workshops, 2023

Photo

Photographer: Lehan Zhang (she/they)



Western Sydney Workshops, 2023
Photo

Photographer: Lehan Zhang (she/they)



Western Sydney Workshops, 2023
Photo

Photographer: Lehan Zhang (she/they)

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