



SMU SIKKIM
MANIPAL
UNIVERSITY

Established under Govt. of Sikkim, Act 9 of 1995, recognised under 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956



FEEL.

DEAL.

HEAL.

**Your Survival & Sanity
Toolkit at SMU**

DEDICATION

*To all the students we once were...
To the ones who stayed up all night before an exam,
who cried silently behind closed doors,
who felt alone in a crowd,
who questioned their worth despite giving their best,
who smiled through burnout,
who dared to dream even when afraid.*

This booklet is for you.

*And for every student today walking the same corridors of self-doubt,
pressure, hope, and discovery—*

We see you.

We remember.

We stand with you.

With Empathy, Experience, and Hope!

Developed by

Dr. Harshavardhan & Dr. Geeta, Psychiatrists @SMIMS, SMU.

(Created after years of listening, learning, walking alongside, & being students like you!)

Why "Feel. Deal. Heal."?

We chose this title because real mental health isn't about pretending to be fine—it's about learning how to feel what you feel, deal with it with compassion and courage, and slowly begin to heal.

These three words reflect the honest, messy, and hopeful journey every student faces.

In college, you're not just building a career—you're also building an inner life.

This guide is here to help you with both.



Message from the Honorable Vice Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University

Dear Students,

At Sikkim Manipal University, we've always believed that real education doesn't end at the last slide of a lecture or the final mark on an exam. It begins when learning shapes not just your knowledge, but your values, your resilience, and your ability to navigate life with wisdom and empathy.

The FEEL. DEAL. HEAL. mental health guide has been created with this spirit in mind. It's not just a resource—it's a reminder: that your emotional well-being is just as important as your academic achievements. That knowing yourself is as valuable as knowing your syllabus.

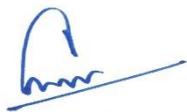
You are living in a time of incredible freedom—more choices, more voices, more chances to shape your path than any generation before you. But freedom without discipline can lead to chaos. And success without self-awareness rarely brings satisfaction.

You will have moments of doubt. You will be tested—not just by exams, but by life itself. That's normal. It's also necessary. What matters is how you respond: with honesty, with effort, and with the willingness to learn from discomfort instead of running from it.

So take care of your mind—don't fill it only with information, but also with reflection. Take care of your time—it's your most precious asset, even if it doesn't feel like it yet. And take care of your friendships—because in the end, it's the people around you who shape the journey.

We are proud to walk alongside you in these formative years. May you learn with curiosity, lead with humility, and live with purpose and integrity.

Warm regards,



AVM (Dr.) Dilip Chandra Agarwal, VSM (Retd)

Vice Chancellor

Sikkim Manipal University

Message from the Honorable Pro Vice Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University

Dear Students,

At Sikkim Manipal University, your well-being is as important to us as your academic success. We understand that college life is not just about lectures, exams, and assignments—it is also a time of immense personal growth, self-discovery, and sometimes, emotional turbulence.

This booklet, *FEEL. DEAL. HEAL.*, is a heartfelt effort by our mental health team to walk beside you on that journey. It offers practical tools, insights, and simple yet powerful strategies rooted in psychological science to help you build resilience, manage stress, and stay connected to what truly matters.

Mental health is not a luxury—it is a foundation for learning, living, and thriving. And seeking help, learning to care for your mind, and supporting others along the way is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Over the years, experience has taught me that life rarely unfolds exactly as planned—and that's perfectly alright. The ability to pause, reflect, and adapt is often more valuable than having all the answers. It's not perfection that defines us, but how we respond to challenges, stay grounded in our values, and continue moving forward with purpose.

I encourage you to spend time with this guide. Let it be your companion in moments of doubt, and a resource you return to—not just in difficult times, but as part of your ongoing journey toward growth, purpose, and well-being. Take care of yourself. We are here for you.

Warm regards,



Dr Muralidhar V Pai

Prof. Dr. Muralidhar V Pai

Pro Vice Chancellor

Sikkim Manipal University

Why This Booklet Exists

College is a strange in-between place. You're no longer a kid, but not quite the fully-figured-it-out adult either. Whether you're training to heal bodies, build bridges, or lead businesses, one thing's for sure—life doesn't slow down just because you're learning.

And while you're figuring out chemical formulas, business models, or clinical signs, no one really teaches you how to deal with you—your thoughts, your fears, your off days, or that inner voice that says, “I'm not good enough.”

This booklet was created because we see you. We've seen students break down during exams, lose sleep over relationships, fake smiles during mental health awareness week, and say, “I'm fine” when they're not. We've seen perfectionists burn out, introverts disappear, and high-achievers feel like imposters.

So here's something different. This isn't a textbook or a lecture. It's a mental fitness guide. A short, honest, no-fluff resource to help you:

Cope better with stress and pressure

Understand what you're feeling and why

Discover what truly matters to you

Learn how to take action—even when things aren't perfect

It brings together:

Mindfulness and self-awareness tools from *The Mindful Medical Student*

Life strategies from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)—not to “fix” you, but to help you live meaningfully

Practical life advice & wisdom inspired by Jordan Peterson's 12 Rules for Life

Whether you're thriving, just surviving, or somewhere in between, this is for you. Let's help you stay who you are while becoming who you want to be!

A Short Note from the Mental Health Team

Hi there,

We're your dedicated Student Mental Health Support Team—approachable, experienced, and here for you. (Don't worry, we won't read your mind... unless you forget to eat or sleep, in which case, we'll probably know!)

Together, we've got decades of experience in counselling, listening, reassuring, decoding life messes, calming exam anxiety, and walking alongside hundreds of students just like you.

We work across SMU's campuses, supporting students in MBBS, Nursing, Allied Health, Engineering, Technical, and Management programs. If you're part of the SMU family, you've got us in your corner.

We know college life in India can feel like a roller coaster—equal parts thrilling, confusing, exhausting, and meme-worthy. Some days are about chasing dreams, and others are about dragging yourself out of bed (or not). And that's okay!

This booklet isn't a lecture, a diagnosis, or a therapy session. It's more like a flashlight to help you see yourself more clearly, hold on to what matters, and make it through tough days without losing your spark.

You don't have to be “broken” to seek support. You just have to be human. And guess what? You qualify.

We hope you find something here that makes you smile, reflect, or breathe a little easier.

Stay kind to yourself,

**The Student Mental Health Support Team,
@ Sikkim Manipal University**

Mind Zone 1

Staying Who You Are While Becoming Who You Want to Be!

In school, you were probably told to “study hard and get into a good college.”

And now that you’re here in medical, nursing, engineering, physiotherapy, paramedical or management streams - you might be wondering “What next? What now? Who even am I anymore?”

Between internals, clinicals, labs, campus fests, hostel drama, WhatsApp/Instagram pressure, exam preparations, family expectations, and the daily stress of being a young adult in an Indian college, life can start to feel like one giant JEE-NEET-CAT-NEXT puzzle.

Somewhere in all this, it’s easy to forget you. The version of you that once loved sketching, dancing, writing poetry, or quietly sipping chai while watching the rain. The version that felt emotions deeply, asked weird questions, or wanted to make a real difference. The version that wasn’t always chasing the next deadline or doubting their every move.

College life in India, especially in professional courses often demands that you “toughen up,” “adjust,” and “focus only on career.” While growth and discipline are important, losing your sense of self is not part of syllabus.

This booklet is here to tell you something simple but radical:

You can grow into your future without losing your present self!

You can learn anatomy or algorithms, management strategy or microbiology without sacrificing your values, your kindness, or your inner compass!

Staying who you are doesn’t mean staying the same.

It means remembering: Why you started. What matters to you beyond marks or placements.

That you are more than your course, your branch, or your marks.

Whether you wear a stethoscope, ID badge, lab coat, business suit, or college hoodie, this journey is yours. Let’s make sure you stay in the driver’s seat. If you’ve ever sat quietly on your hostel bed wondering, “Is this really me anymore?” you’re not alone.

Let’s take a deep breath together. Reconnect, Reflect, & make space for you to grow - not just Professionally, but Authentically.

Mind Zone 2

Common Emotional Challenges in Indian College Life

(a.k.a. What's going on inside your head when your face says "I'm fine")

Let's face it—college life in India is not all chai, campus fests, and gully cricket.

Behind the selfies and submission deadlines, there's often a hidden emotional syllabus nobody really talks about.

Here's a quick tour of what students across MBBS, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Allied Health, Engineering, and Administration programs have shared with us over the years.....

Stress, Exams & That Constant Pressure

"You just need to study a little harder." (said every parent, relative, teacher ever).

Whether it's an MD seat, a placement dream, or just clearing biochemistry, pressure is the National Anthem of Indian student life. The stress isn't just academic—it's cultural, emotional, and sometimes, generational.

What it feels like: Racing heart, blanking out in viva, mood swings, procrastinating for no reason, and then panic-studying at 2 AM!

Loneliness in a Crowd

Yes, you're surrounded by people. Group chats. Roommates. Cafeteria buzz.

And still, some days feel like you're on silent mode inside.

Whether it's homesickness, difficulty fitting in, or feeling "different" because of your language, gender, background, or interests—it's common, and it's okay.

Anxiety & Overthinking Olympics

"What if I fail?" "What if they're judging me?" "What if I never get a PG seat and end up running a momo stall?"

Welcome to brain hyperdrive ! If you've ever replayed an awkward conversation 57 times, planned for imaginary disasters, or googled "how to stop thinking" at 3 AM, you're not alone.

Low Mood & The "What's the Point?" Feeling

Sometimes it's not sadness. It's emptiness. A kind of emotional buffering.

The subjects feel dry. Your motivation runs away. The things you loved don't spark joy anymore. You scroll endlessly on your smartphone but feel nothing.

This isn't laziness. It's your mind telling you it's running on low battery. It could be burnout. It could be depression. Either way—it's treatable. And you don't have to handle it alone.

Love, Breakups, and Relationships

Ah, young love—the emotional rollercoaster!

But when things go wrong, heartbreak can hit harder than your toughest exam.

Ghosting, betrayal, one-sided feelings, long-distance struggles... these aren't "silly problems."

Your pain is valid, and there's support.

Family Expectations & "What Will People Say" Syndrome

"You're my only hope."

"We took a loan for this course."

"Beti/Beta, we didn't send you to Sikkim to sleep."

Indian families mean well. They love you. But sometimes their hopes can feel like tons on your shoulders. Especially if you're struggling quietly or trying to explore something different.

Learning to manage expectations—without losing your mind or your dreams—is an emotional skill.

Identity Confusion & Imposter Syndrome

"Do I even belong here?" "Everyone else is doing better." "I don't feel like a real adult."

Welcome to the inner dialogue of 90% of students. (The other 10% are faking it really well.)

Whether you're figuring out your career path, your sexuality, your faith, or just your inner voice—it's okay to not have it all figured out.

You're allowed to be ***a work in progress...***

The Good News?

None of these struggles mean you're weak or failing. They mean you're human.

And now that we've named them, we can work on understanding them—with tools, support, and a little humour along the way.

"No matter what happens, I have come this far—and I'm still standing. That's more than enough!"

Mind Zone 3

The ACT Triflex: Build Psychological Flexibility & Thrive in College

Why Psychological Flexibility Matters in College Life

College can be a pressure cooker. You juggle studies, relationships, deadlines, identity issues, family expectations, and your own hopes for the future. It's easy to get overwhelmed or stuck. Psychological flexibility is the superpower that helps you respond to this chaos with courage, clarity, & commitment.

So where does ACT come in?

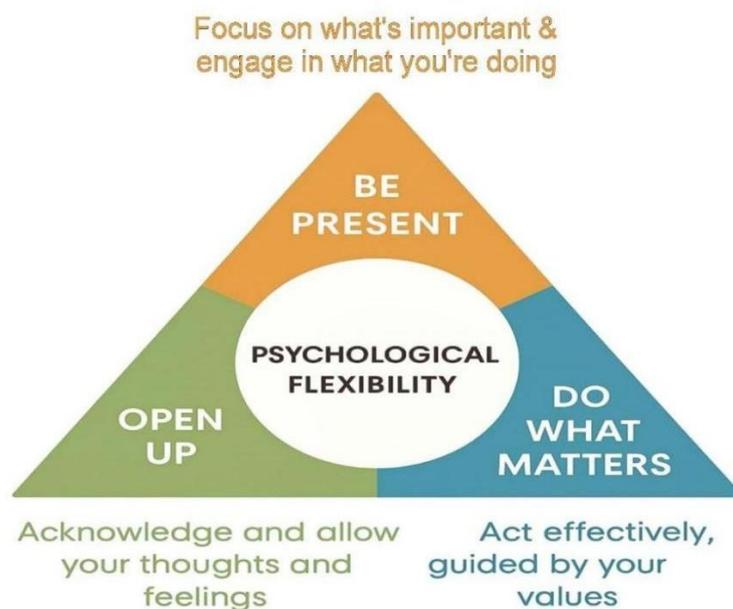
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a modern, science-backed approach to mental health that helps build resilience through psychological flexibility. Just like physical fitness helps you stay strong and agile, ACT helps you deal with difficult thoughts and feelings without getting overwhelmed. Instead of trying to “fix” your mind, it teaches you to:

Be present (focus instead of spiraling)

Open up (make space for uncomfortable emotions)

Do what matters (take action guided by your values)

These are the three powerful moves in the **ACT Triflex**. You can't control the storm, but ACT gives you a mental surfboard so you can ride the waves with balance, clarity, and courage.



These skills help you face the storm, rather than avoid it, and still steer your life in a direction that matters to you.

⚓ BE PRESENT

“Your mind may wander. But you don’t have to follow it.”

✓ What It Means

Being aware of what’s happening here and now—inside you and around you—with openness and curiosity. Not lost in past regrets or future fears.

✗ When You Are Inflexible

| Inflexibility Pattern | What It Looks Like in College Life |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mind-wandering | Reading the same page 5 times before realizing nothing went in. |
| Rumination | Replaying a breakup or embarrassing moment endlessly. |
| Disconnection | Zoned out in class or conversations. |
| Automatic reacting | Snapping at roommates, skipping class impulsively. |

Why It Matters for Mental Health

Being Present here-now reduces anxiety, helps focus, lowers reactivity, and makes space for wiser choices under stress.

Try These Exercises

| Exercise Name | What to Do | When to Use |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Drop Anchor | Push your feet into the ground. Notice 5 things you see, 4 you hear, 3 you can feel. | During panic or overwhelm |
| 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding | Notice 5 sights, 4 sounds, 3 touches, 2 smells, 1 taste. | Before a viva, in a crowd |
| Mindful Micro-Moments | Sip tea without scrolling. Walk without music. Shower mindfully. | Any daily activity |
| 3-Breath Check-In | Breathe in... breathe out slowly... feel your breath. Repeat 3 times. | Before an exam or presentation |

OPEN UP

You can't control the weather in your mind, but you can surf the storm!

✓ What It Means

Allowing thoughts and feelings to be present—even when they're painful—without being overwhelmed or fused to them. Creating space instead of struggle.

✗ When You Are Inflexible

| Inflexibility Pattern | What It Looks Like in College Life |
|------------------------|---|
| Experiential avoidance | Skipping class due to anxiety, bottling up feelings. |
| Cognitive fusion | Believing "I'm not good enough" means it's true. |
| Suppression | "I shouldn't feel like this." "This is stupid." |
| Escape behaviors | Doomscrolling, binge-watching, over-sleeping to avoid discomfort. |

Why It Matters for Mental Health

Suppressed emotions grow louder. Opening up allows healing, self-understanding, and forward movement.

Try These Exercises

| Exercise Name | What to Do | When to Use |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Name the Story | Say: "I'm having the thought that I'm a failure." → "I notice I'm having that thought again." | In moments of self-doubt |
| Expansion | Close eyes. Feel where anxiety lives in your body. Breathe into that space. Make room. | When feeling emotionally overwhelmed |
| The Struggle Switch | Ask: "Am I resisting this emotion, or can I allow it for now?" | When anger, sadness, or guilt shows up |
| Compassionate Touch | Place hand over your heart or tense area. Imagine warmth. Say: "This feeling is hard—and I can hold it gently." | During intense stress or sadness |

✦ Remember: You don't need to *like* the feeling. You just need to *make space* for it.

DO WHAT MATTERS

Don't wait to feel motivated. Start small—and let values lead.

✓ What It Means

Acting with purpose, even when it's uncomfortable. Choosing steps that align with your values—not just your moods or fears.

✗ When You Are Inflexible

| Inflexibility Pattern | What It Looks Like in College Life |
|-----------------------|---|
| Values confusion | “What’s the point?” or “I don’t know who I am anymore.” |
| Inaction | Waiting for motivation that never comes. |
| Avoidance of goals | Not applying for internships due to fear of rejection. |
| Impulsivity | Making choices to please others, not from clarity. |

Why It Matters for Mental Health

Living in line with your values boosts self-worth, clarity, and long-term well-being—even if progress is slow.

Try These Exercises

| Exercise | What to Do | When to Use |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Tiny Towards Moves | Choose one 5-minute action linked to your values (message a friend, revise one topic). | When feeling stuck, lazy, or demotivated |
| Bull’s Eye Values Tool | Draw a bullseye with 4 domains: Relationships, Health, Learning, Fun. Plot where you stand. | When needing clarity |
| Choice Point | Ask: “Is this action moving me toward or away from who I want to be?” | Before reacting, quitting, procrastinating |
| Future Me Letter | Write to your future self: What would I be proud of what I did today? | When unsure of direction or after setbacks |

Summary: ACT Triflex in Student Life

| Triflex Skill | When To Use | What It Builds |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Be Present | Overthinking, distraction, stress | Focus, clarity, calm |
| Open Up | Emotional pain, anxiety, self-doubt | Resilience, self-compassion |
| Do What Matters | Feeling stuck, low, or purposeless | Direction, meaning, motivation |

Psychological Flexibility = Mental Strength

College life is full of chaos—assignments, emotions, expectations, identity questions.

ACT says: You don't need to feel "okay" to take meaningful steps.

Every time you:

Choose presence over autopilot

Make space instead of fighting your feelings

Take one small value-driven action

...you build mental strength.

*You don't need to feel better to start living better.
You just need to get present, make room, & do what matters—
especially on hard days.*



Mind Zone 4

12 Rules for Life (College Life Remix Edition)

✓ Rule 1: Stand Up Straight with Your Shoulders Back

Why it matters: Body language doesn't just reflect how you feel—it shapes it. Standing tall signals to your brain & others: "I belong here." *Show up like the person you want to become.*
Try this: Walk into class like you're the main character even if you feel like a sidekick today.

✓ Rule 2: Treat Yourself Like Someone You're Responsible for Helping

Why it matters: You'd never tell a friend, "You're useless." But you say it to yourself? *Self-compassion isn't weakness. It's a superpower that fuels growth.*
Next time you mess up, ask: "What would I tell a friend?"—then tell yourself that.

✓ Rule 3: Make Friends with People Who Want the Best for You

Why it matters: Toxic "friends" drain energy. Good ones hold your truth, pain, & dreams. *Values-based relationships matter more than popularity.*
Try this: Do a "vibe check" on your friendships. Do they align with who you want to be?

✓ Rule 4: Compare Yourself to Who You Were Yesterday, Not to Others Today

Why it matters: There will always be someone "better." Focus on progress, not perfection. *Values are lived through consistent effort, not competition.*
Try this: Journal one way you've grown in the last 3 months—even if no one noticed.

✓ Rule 5: Don't Let Your Phone Replace Your Life

Why it matters: Scrolling for "5 mins" at 10:30 PM? Suddenly it's 2 AM and your brain's a dopamine wasteland. *Choose presence over passive numbing. Screens can't fulfill values.*
Try this: Have one screen-free hour daily. Just one. Start there.

✓ Rule 6: Pursue What is Meaningful (Not What is Easy)

Why it matters: Comfort zones feel safe, but they shrink your world. Growth is uncomfortable & worth it. *Choose values-driven discomfort over meaningless distraction.*
Try this: Write one thing you keep avoiding that would make your future self proud.

✓ Rule 7: Tell the Truth (Or at Least Don't Lie to Yourself)

Why it matters: Pretending you're fine when you're not? That's emotional gaslighting—by You, to You! *Honesty with yourself creates the foundation for change.*

Try this: Sit down and name your current emotion. No filter. No denial. Just name it.

✔ **Rule 8: Take Responsibility Before You Blame**

Why it matters: It's easy to blame your roommate, your professor, the system.

But power comes from asking: "What can I control here?" *You don't control feelings—but you control actions.*

Try this: Next time something goes wrong, ask: "What's one small thing I can do differently?"

✔ **Rule 9: Keep Your Room (and Mind) in Order**

Why it matters: Messy bed, messy head. Organizing your space = calming your brain. *Action brings clarity. Clean environment = clearer thinking.*

Try this: Tidy one corner of your room before a big assignment or exam.

✔ **Rule 10: Be the Person You'd Respect**

Why it matters: What you do when no one's watching shapes who you become. *Align daily actions with your core values, not momentary moods.*

Try this: Choose one value you admire (e.g., integrity, courage, empathy).

Ask: "How can I live this value today—in a small way?"

✔ **Rule 11: Take Breaks, Not Just Burnouts**

Why it matters: You're not a robot. Rest isn't a reward—it's fuel. *Committed action includes committing to self-care.*

Try this: Instead of collapsing after burnout, schedule micro-breaks during the day. Stretch. Breathe. Step outside.

✔ **Rule 12: Remember: This is Your Journey**

Why it matters: Whether you're from Gangtok or Gurgaon, Chhattisgarh or Chennai—your story is yours to write. You don't have to follow anyone else's map. *Live your own script, guided by your values—not just expectations.*

Try this: Ask: "If no one were watching, what would I still want to do with my life?"

"The purpose of life, as far as I can tell, is to find a mode of being that's so meaningful that the fact that life is suffering is no longer relevant."

— Jordan B. Peterson

Mind Zone 5

Everyday Mindfulness for Real Life

(a.k.a How to Stop Autopiloting Through College)

Ever feel like...

Your body's in class but your brain is on a beach in Goa (or in an existential hole)? You finish scrolling for 2 hours and can't remember a single meme? You can't tell if you're bored, anxious, tired, or just emotionally dehydrated? That, my friend, is mindlessness. And it's incredibly common. Enter: Mindfulness—your brain's version of “drink water, sit down, breathe.”

What is Mindfulness (and what it's not)?

You don't need a meditation app or a mountain retreat to be mindful. You just need to notice what's happening while it's happening—without judgment.

Mindfulness is the art of catching yourself in the moment. It's how you move from autopilot to actual presence.

Unlike the deeper ACT skills from Mind Zone 3, this section is about simple, sensory, daily-life habits to stay present and recharge your mental batteries.

Try These Mini Mindfulness Habits

| Mindful Moment | What to Do | When to Use |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Mindful Chai Break | Sip slowly. Taste, smell, and notice. No screens. | Between classes or during hostel chill time |
| 3-Breath Reset | 3 deep belly breaths. Feel your feet. Look around. | Before a viva, class, or when your brain races |
| Grounding Walk | While walking, name 1 thing you see, hear, and feel. | On your way to class or the canteen |
| Screen-Free Hour | 1 hr/day with no phone. Walk, sketch, write, talk. | Evening reset or pre-sleep routine |
| Gratitude Glimpse | List 1 thing you're grateful for. | Before bed or after a tough day |

***“You don't need to feel peaceful.
You just need to pause, breathe, and begin again.”***

Mind Zone 6

Practice Zone – Build Your Daily Mental Fitness

ACT and mindfulness are not one-time fixes. Like brushing your teeth, they work best when you do a little every day. This zone is your self-care lab. A place to track, reflect, and stay consistent with tiny, intentional habits that build resilience over time.

Your Mental Fitness Daily Habits

| Habit | What to Do | When |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Morning Intention | “What value will I live by today?” | After waking |
| 3-Breath Reset | Calm your system with 3 slow breaths | Pre-exam, conflict, stress |
| 1-Line Journal | “Today, I felt ____ because ____.” | Before bed |
| Tech Pause | Go screen-free for 30+ min | Evening or break time |
| Name the Emotion | Say: “I feel ____ right now.” | When overwhelmed |
| Reach Out | Check in with a friend or family | Every 1–2 days |
| Hydrate + Nourish | Eat and drink real stuff | Throughout the day |
| Wind-Down Ritual | No screens before sleep | 30 min before bed |

Weekly Self-Check (Use This Page Weekly)

- ✓ How Did I Feel? Focused Overwhelmed Grateful Lonely Hopeful
- ✓ One Thing I Handled Well: _____
- ✓ One Value I Lived: _____
- ✓ Thoughts on Repeat: _____
- ✓ One Kind Note to Myself: “Dear Me, remember...” _____

***This isn't about perfection. It's about practice. Start where you are.
Keep going...***

Mind Zone 7

Emergency Reset – 5-Minute Tools for Meltdown Moments

(a.k.a. What to Do When You're Spiraling)

Sometimes, you don't need deep insight. You need a quick reset—a 5-minute lifeline to stop the emotional free-fall. This zone is your emergency kit.

Common Crisis Scenarios + What You Can Do

Panic before a viva

Take 3 slow breaths

Ground yourself: Name 5 things you see

Say: "I can feel anxious and still do this."

Feeling Numb or Empty

Splash cold water

Step outside for 2 minutes

Text or call someone safe

Do one kind thing for someone else

Stuck in Overthinking

Say out loud: "I'm having the thought that..."

Write it down

Ask: "Is this helping or hurting?"

Pick 1 tiny values-based action

Reminder:

This isn't about solving everything. It's about interrupting the spiral.

Breathe. Pause. Move one small step forward. 3 deep belly breaths

Grounding: Name 5 things you can see

Tell yourself: "I can feel anxious and still do this."

Mind Zone 8

Reminders to Come Back To (Especially When It's Too Much)

(Pin it to your wall, cupboard or book)

1. Breathe. Seriously. Just One Deep Breath.

You don't need a 10-step plan. Start with breathing.

2. Thoughts Are Not Facts.

Just because your brain says "I'm failing at life" doesn't mean it's true.

3. You're Allowed to Feel This Way.

Stress, sadness, and confusion don't make you weak. They make you human.

4. You Still Have Choices.

Even if everything feels out of control, you can always choose your next small step.

5. Progress Isn't Linear.

Healing, growth, and self-respect all take detours. It's okay.

6. You Are More Than Your Grades, Mistakes, or Mood.

Your worth isn't tied to your marks, entrance ranks, or last WhatsApp reply.

7. You Don't Have to Do This Alone.

Talk to a friend. Message a mentor. See your counsellor. Let someone in.

8. Rest is Productive Too.

It's not lazy to recharge. You can't pour from an empty brain.

9. Use Your Tools.

Breathe. Pause. Journal. Take a walk. Do that one tiny thing. It matters.

10. This Moment Isn't Forever.

You've survived every hard day so far. You're doing better than you think.

*Sometimes, just standing your ground—when your mind wants to flee—
is a quiet act of strength.*

*Sometimes, taking a small step back—when your mind tries to pull you into
the black hole of hopelessness—is an act of deep courage.*

You don't need to be charging forward every day.

You just need to stay in the game.

And that, friend, is more than enough!

Mind Zone 9

Daily Mindfulness Routine for Busy Students

Even 10 mindful minutes can reset your brain, your body, and your bandwidth.

Use it as a daily mental check-in.

MORNING – Start with Intention

✓ Breathe Before You Scroll

Take 3 deep belly breaths before reaching for your phone.

✓ Morning Intention

Ask: “What value do I want to live by today?” (Kindness? Focus? Courage?) → _____

✓ Gratitude Glimpse

Write 1 thing you’re grateful for: _____

MIDDAY – Regroup Between Classes

✓ 3-Breath Reset

Inhale. Exhale. Repeat 3x. Ask: “What matters most in this next hour?”

✓ Ground Yourself

Name: 3 things you see, 2 things you hear, 1 thing you feel

✓ Mini Tech Break (15–30 min)

Go screen-free. Choose: Walk Chat Journal Just Rest

EVENING – Unwind with Awareness

✓ Reflect: What went well today? _____

✓ Name Your Emotions: Joy Frustration Stress Calm Confusion Hope

Others: _____

✓ Value Check-In:

“One value I lived today was...” _____

✓ Let Go Before Sleep:

“What am I carrying that I want to release?” _____

Tip:

You don’t have to follow this perfectly.

Just check in with one box from each section—and that’s enough.

Mind Zone 10

When to Ask for Help - You Don't Have to Do This Alone

College teaches you many things—how to cram at the last minute, survive on Maggi and Chai, make slides no one will read, and occasionally, write 5000 words the night before submission. But one thing it rarely teaches you is how to ask for help when you are tired!

1. “Do I Need Help... or Am I Just Lazy/Weak/Being Overdramatic?”

Let's clear that up once and for all. If you're asking that question, you already deserve kindness—and maybe support.

Here's a simple checklist:

If you're feeling like this more often than not over the last 2+ weeks:

- You feel tired all the time—even after sleeping
- You cry more than you used to (or feel numb)
- You can't concentrate, no matter how hard you try
- You're withdrawing from friends or avoiding people
- You feel anxious or panicky a lot
- You've lost interest in things you used to enjoy
- You feel hopeless, empty, or like nothing will change
- You've thought about hurting or harming yourself or disappearing

Then this isn't about being weak or lazy. It's about being human and overwhelmed. And that means it's okay—smart, even—to ask for help.

No matter your background, gender identity, religion, or language—your mental health matters, and help is here for you.

2. “But What If People Judge Me?”

They won't. And if they do, they're wrong.

Mental health struggles are as real as dengue, appendicitis, or a fractured wrist.

Asking for help is not a sign of failure. It's a sign that you value yourself enough to want to feel better.

So... What Does “Getting Help” Actually Look Like?

At SMU you can:

Visit the Psychiatry OPD (Level 3 CRH) where a Dedicated Team of Psychiatrists, Psychologist & Social worker will help you OR Contact the Student Wellness Cell helpline OR

Visit the Counsellor at SMIT campus OR Ask your class coordinator or warden to connect you to us—confidentially.

What we don't do:

Judge you

Call your parents (unless there's serious risk—then we involve them with your well-being in mind.)

Force you to take medication

Assume something is “wrong” with you

What we do:

Listen with empathy

Help you understand what you're feeling

Offer support, options, therapy, or strategies

Walk with you until you feel steadier again

You don't have to “hit rock bottom” to ask for help.

You don't need a diagnosis to talk.

You don't have to suffer in silence just because you're good at hiding it.

If your heart hurts, talk.

If your brain feels foggy, talk.

If you just need a quiet space and someone to hear you, talk.

We're here. That's what we're for.

Emergency Contacts

| Support | Details |
|---------------------------------|--|
| SMIMS Counselling Helpline | 9733187064 |
| SMIT Student Counselling | 9620062209 |
| Hospital Psychiatry OPD | Level 3, Central Referral Hospital |
| Warden/Class Mentor | Reach out if you're unsure how to contact us |
| National Mental Health Helpline | 1800-599-0019 (Free & confidential) |

Mind Zone 11

To Our Faculty Allies: How to Support Without Burning Out

Dear Teachers, Mentors, and Faculty,

You are not expected to be counsellors. But you are often the first line of recognition when a student is struggling. And how you respond — even in passing — can either open a door or shut it tight. Here's a brief guide to supporting students in distress, without overstepping or burning out.

✓ How to Support Students in Distress

1. Be Present, Not Perfect

You don't need to have answers. Just be there — with eye contact, gentle tone, and openness. Say "You seem off today. Want to talk?" is more powerful than 10 lectures.

2. Use Acceptance Inspired Curiosity

Encourage values-based reflection, not forced optimism.

Instead of: "Why are you anxious again?"

Try: "What matters to you right now, even though it's hard?"

3. Listen Without Trying to Fix

Students often need space to process, not solutions.

Silence + warmth is Greater than Advice overload.

4. Model Mindful Boundaries

Acknowledge the student's pain without absorbing it.

You can care without carrying. Try saying "That sounds really heavy. Thank you for trusting me. Let's think together about what support might help."

5. Normalize Struggle — Don't Minimize It

Say: "It's okay to not be okay right now." "Many students feel this way. You're not alone."

Not: "But you're so smart!" or "Just focus and push through."

6. Know When to Refer

Your job is not to diagnose. It's to connect and guide.

Say "Would you like me to help you speak to the counselling team?" "We have people who are trained to help — and they're kind."

How Not to Respond

- ✗ “You need to toughen up.”
- ✗ “We didn’t have this luxury in our days.”
- ✗ “If you can post on Instagram, you can come to class.”
- ✗ “Don’t overthink. Just study.”
- ✗ “Are you taking this seriously or just making excuses?”

These might come from frustration, but they shut down trust. They push students deeper into silence.

Final Thought

You don’t need to fix students. But if you can create even one safe moment in a difficult day, you become part of their healing — and their hope.

**With Respect and Partnership,
The Student Mental Health Support Team @ SMU**



Keep Growing: Books, Apps & Resources

Watch: ACT Tools by Dr. Russ Harris

Russ Harris—international ACT trainer explains key psychological tools using animations and simple metaphors. www.youtube.com/@dr.rusharris-acceptanceco972

A powerful technique for Grounding Yourself when anxiety hits: Dropping Anchor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDcKRNfchcY&pp=ogcJCdgAo7VqN5tD>

Recommended Apps for Mental Wellness

ACT Companion – ACT-based mental health support (by Russ Harris)

ACT tools, values reflection, guided exercises. Available on Google Play or iOS

ACTing Minds: Mental Health Game Based on ACT

A narrative-driven game that teaches you how to handle difficult thoughts and emotions using skills from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Download on iOS: Android version not yet listed. <https://apps.apple.com/in/app/acting-minds/id1624067849>

Book to Read or Listen to (eBook, Print, & Audiobook versions):

The Happiness Trap (2nd Ed) by Dr. Russ Harris

A student-friendly guide to learning ACT skills like defusion, values, and acceptance backed by science, not fluff.

12 Rules for Life by Jordan B. Peterson

Explore the full version of the life principles we adapted in this booklet. Thoughtful, challenging, and useful—especially if you enjoy reflecting deeply.

“You don’t have to wait for the storm to pass to begin. Even in moments of pain, confusion, or numbness, you can choose to plant tiny seeds of care. A sip of water. A message to a friend. Sitting with your breath. These choices don’t erase the struggle—but they keep you connected to life, to values, and to the possibility of healing.”