

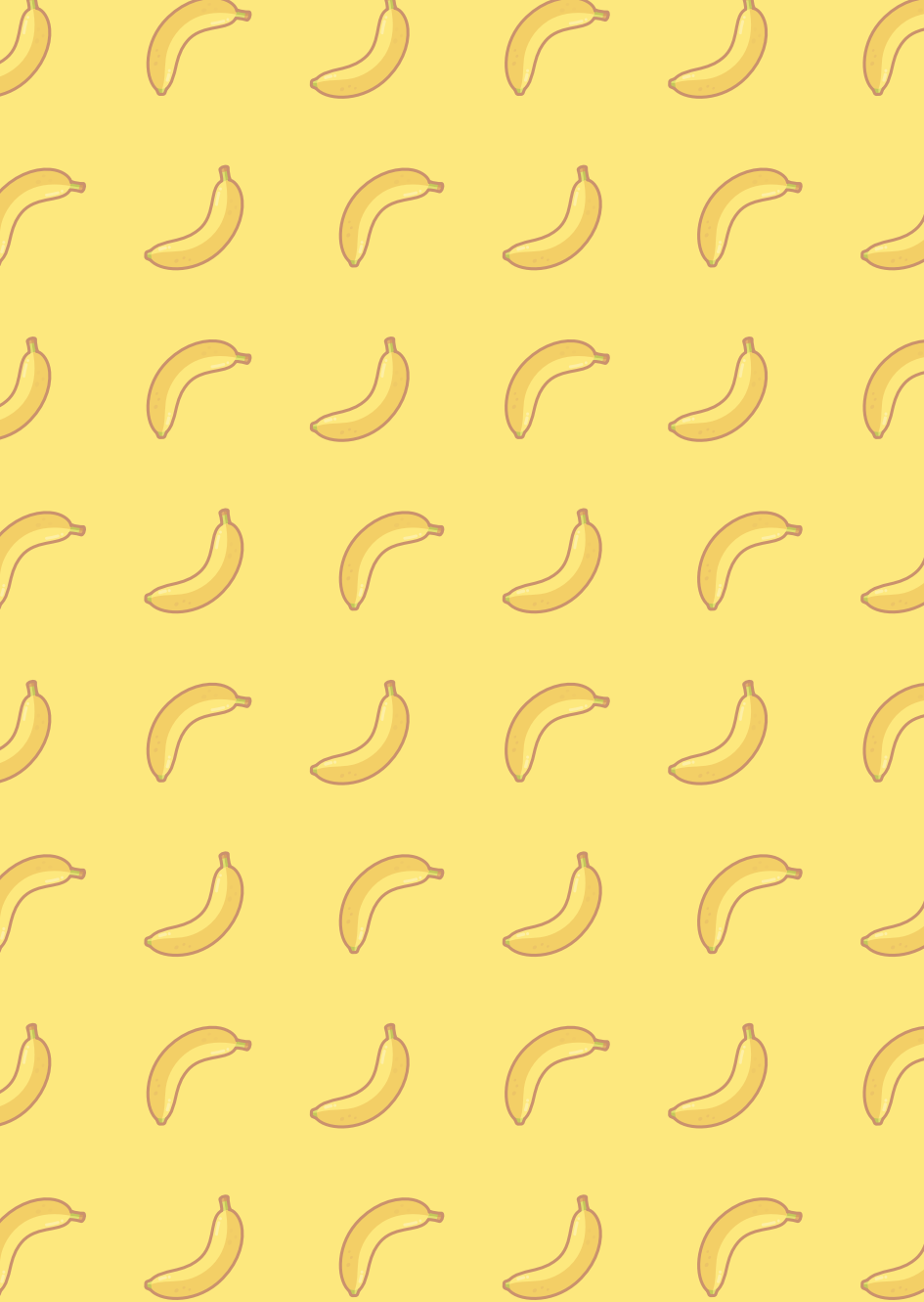
'Happy banana is perfect for these difficult times...what a lovely resource'

— Dr Gira Patel MB, Chb, MRCPsych (Psychiatrist)

Happy Banana



DYLAN KIDSON



DEDICATION

**This book is dedicated to my incredible
mother Lois, my wonderful wife Mariam
and my son Aden James. May he face
a kinder world.**

HAPPY BANANA

**50 NO-NONSENSE WAYS
TO DEAL WITH DEPRESSION**



DYLAN KIDSON

ILLUSTRATED BY PETRA BIRO

FOREWORD

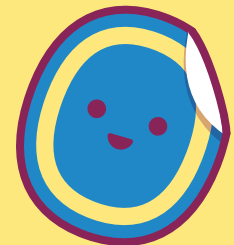
Taking care of your mental health is incredibly important, and whilst more people, celebrities included, are speaking out there is a lot more work to be done to reduce stigma and discrimination. **Happy Banana** is packed with sound advice that avoids any complicated jargon. And it's in a great format, delivered with a touch of well-placed humour. For anyone living with depression, these handy, no-nonsense tips are ideal. They serve as a reminder to take care of yourself and provide a very useful guide to lifting your mood during difficult times and come out smiling on the other side.

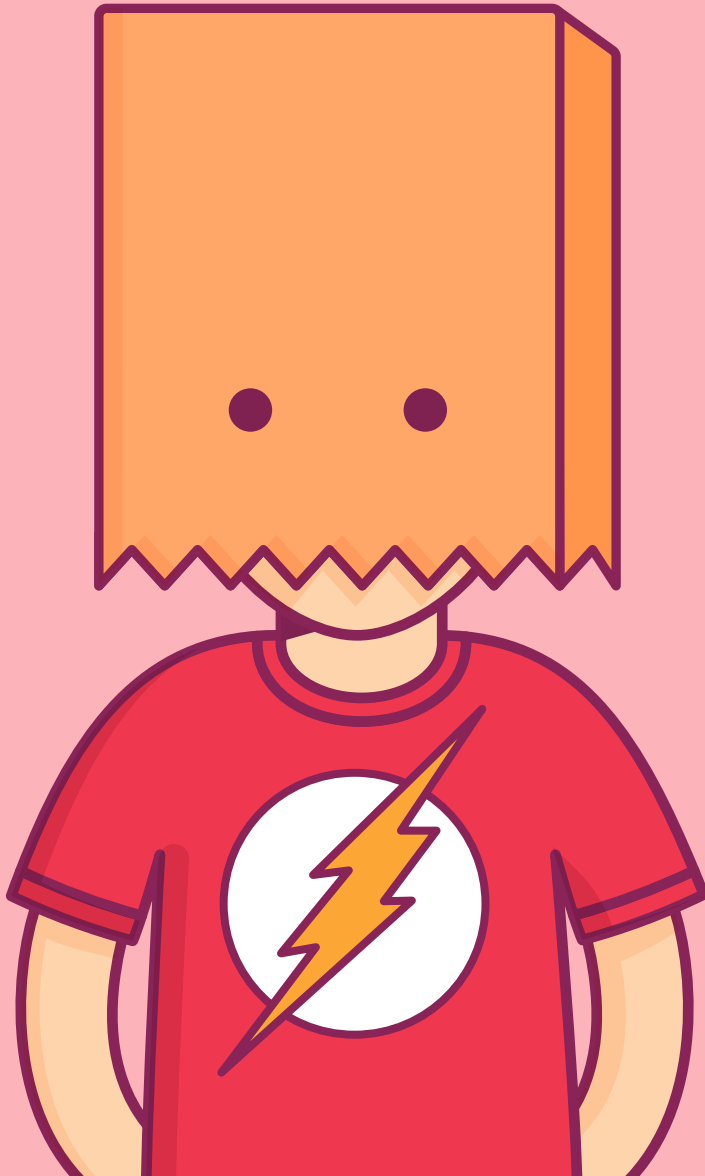
— Dr Hayley Skarda MB; ChB; MRCPsych



INTRODUCTION

Depression is a serious illness, but a sense of humour is also a great weapon to keep it at bay. This book is meant as a complementary aid to coping with depression. In no way is it supposed to replace your medication or therapist. They are both extremely important components for mental health. But in order to stay happy you need to take responsibility for yourself. (And often the hardest discipline in life is self-discipline). This book will make that much easier and ensure you have the last laugh.





NEVER BE EMBARRASSED

Suffering from depression is not a weakness or a character flaw. And don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Plenty of famous, successful people have struggled with depression, including Olympian Michael Phelps, Lady Gaga, Jim Carrey and JK Rowling to name a few. Seeking help is your first step to wellness.

DUMB DOWN

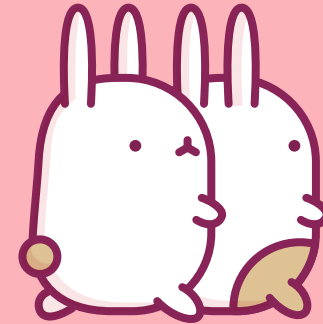
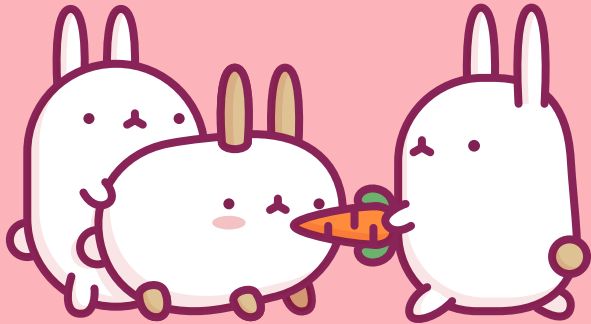
Someone once said 'stupid people live longer'. I know it isn't politically correct, and probably isn't even true, but what he meant was that you should stop overthinking and worrying about every small thing in life. Let some of it go and you may well live a longer, happier life. (A good therapist can help you with this.)





WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

Skipping meals can trigger mood swings. Eat three healthy meals a day and keep emergency snacks on hand. (Bananas have the amino acid tryptophan, which is thought to help boost serotonin, the 'happy chemical' in your brain.) Try to also cut down on sweets, sugar and too much caffeine - they give you a temporary lift, then cause a crash.



HAVE SEX

Not random sex with strangers. That leads to all sorts of other trouble. Find a stable, loving partner and you'll find the sex and intimacy will boost your serotonin and lift your mood to get you through trying times. Depression can, however, often cause people to lose interest in sex. It's OK - chat to your doctor or therapist about how to fix it.





SLEEP A LOT

Power naps are the way to go. If you're feeling frazzled or your mood is in a downward spiral, grab a pillow and have a five-minute power nap, even if it is under your desk. Your brain will reboot, and you'll feel like a winner when you wake up.



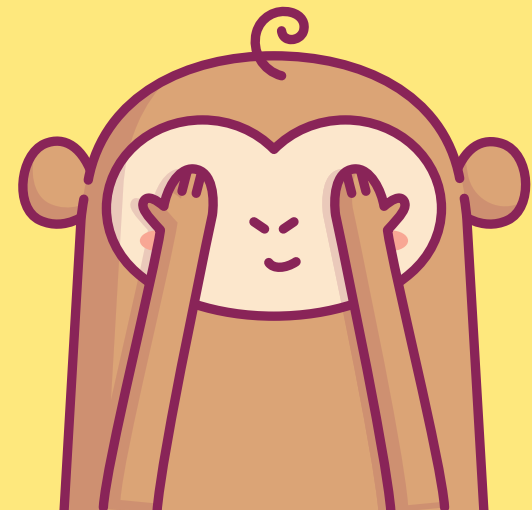
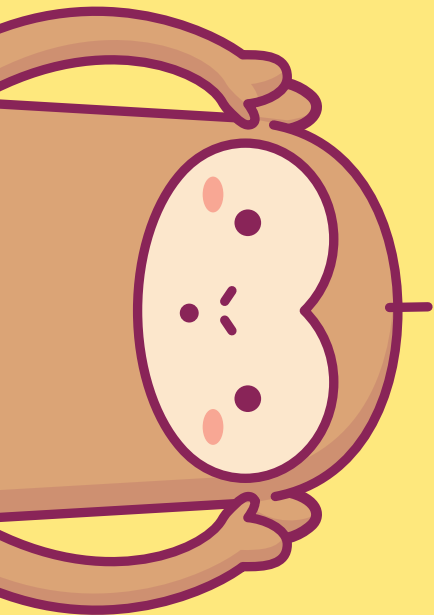
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SILENCE YOUR CRITIC

Stop trying to be perfect. You're not. But here's the thing, neither is anyone else. There's no such thing as perfect. All of us are unique, but we all have good attributes and we all have flaws. That's OK. Learn to love yourself, because if you don't, who will?





**I've met
some pricks
in my time
but you sir
are a fucking
cactus.**

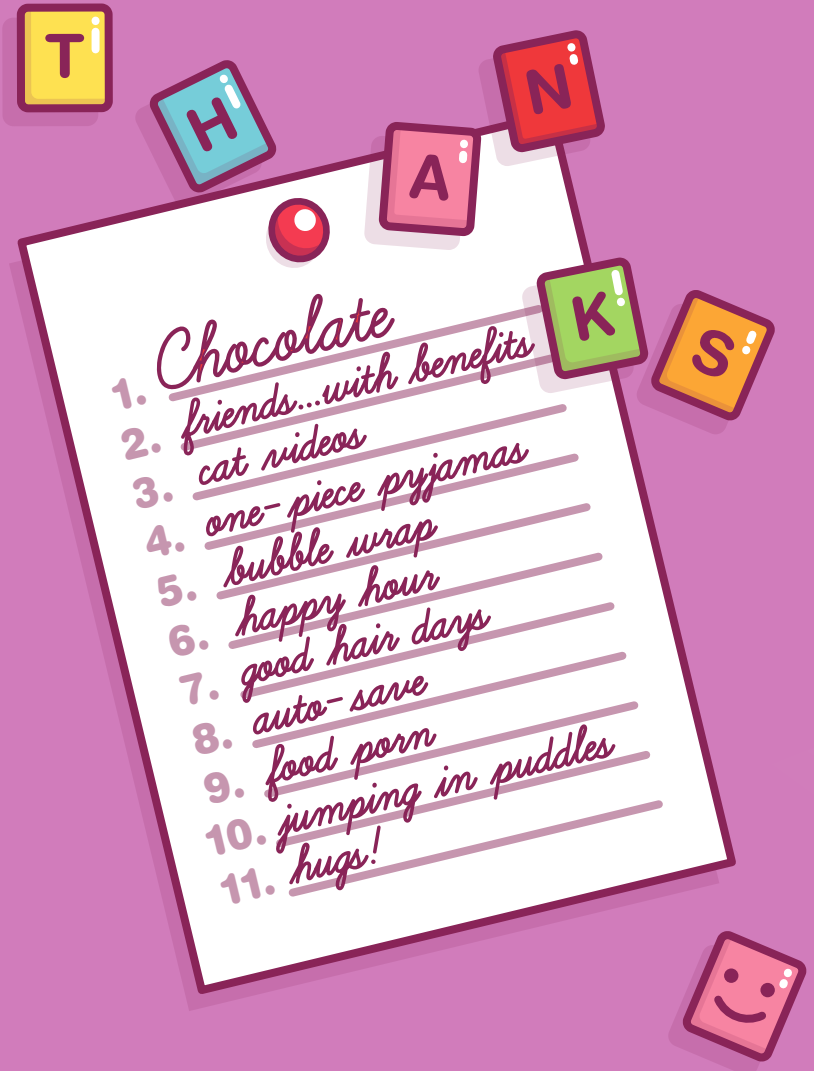
Love

WRITE AN ANGRY LETTER

Write a letter to someone who has really pissed you off. It can be a teacher from your childhood, or it could be a colleague at work. Write it all down. Swear, curse, rant and rave. Get it all out. Then when you're done, burn it, and let it go. You no longer have to carry that anger with you.

MAKE A THANK-YOU LIST

It's too easy to find things we're unhappy about. Every now and then we have to stop and remind ourselves what we should be thankful for. Write a list and carry it around, or stick it on your fridge, and when you're feeling low, read it and reread it.



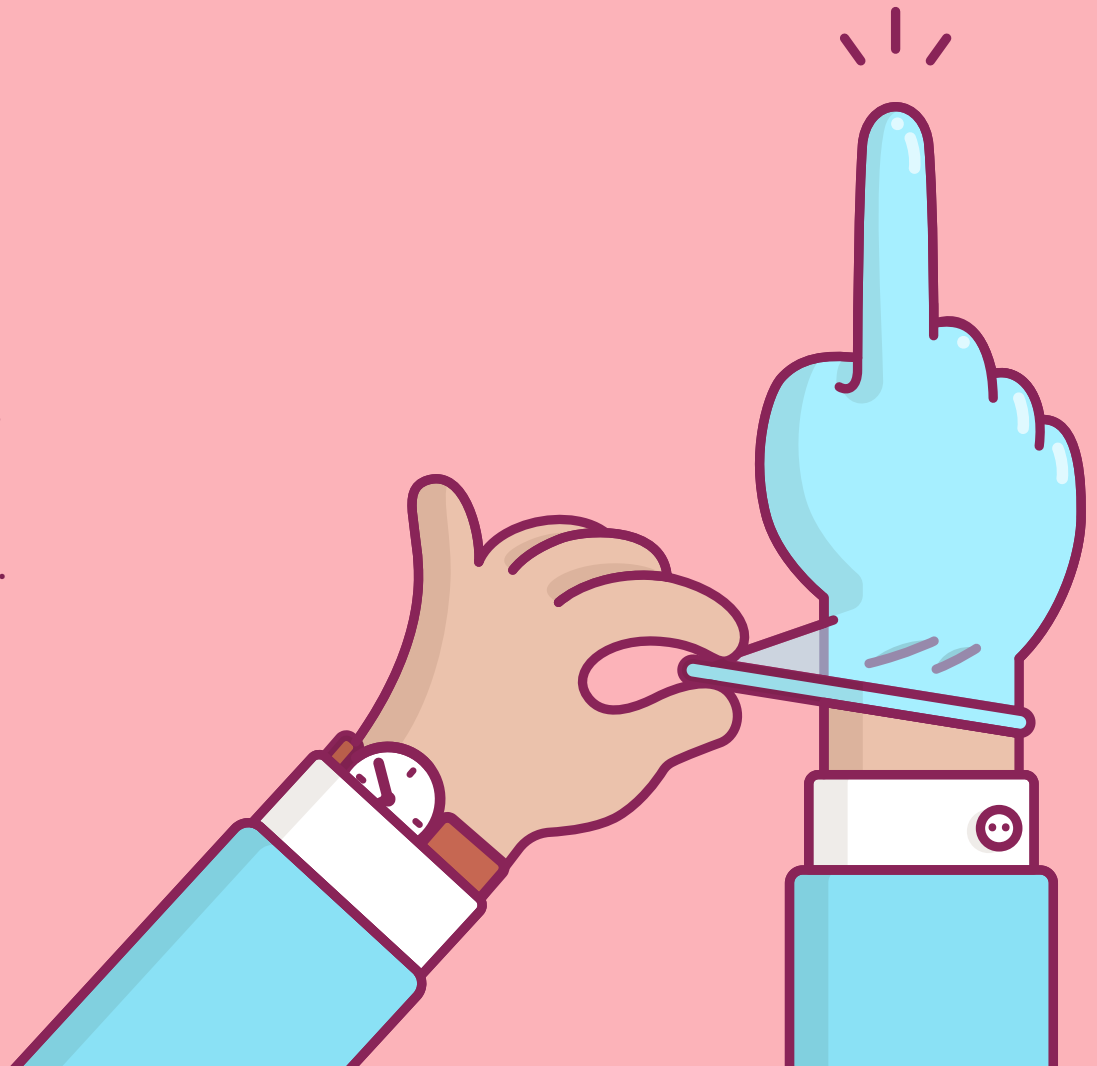


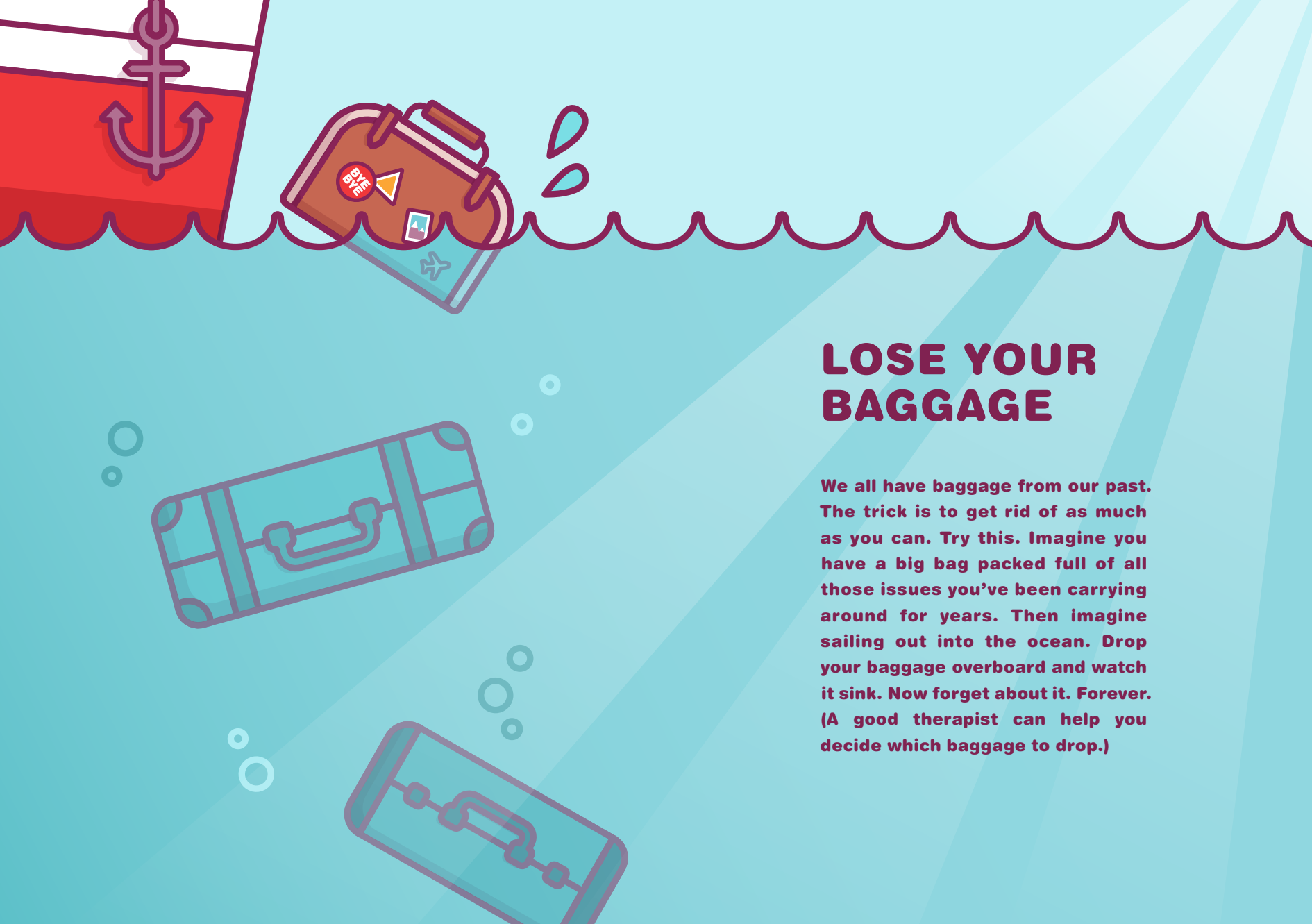
SCREAM BLUE MURDER

If you feel an incredible sense of frustration building up, and your mood spiralling out of control, find a place to scream. Out loud probably isn't best, so scream into a pillow or go to the bottom of a swimming pool and let it all out.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

Your health is the most valuable thing you have, and you owe it to yourself to keep it that way. Firstly, find a doctor you like and trust. Find out your family medical history, get regular check-ups and make sure your doctor always does the necessary age-appropriate tests. You don't want anything else to worry about.



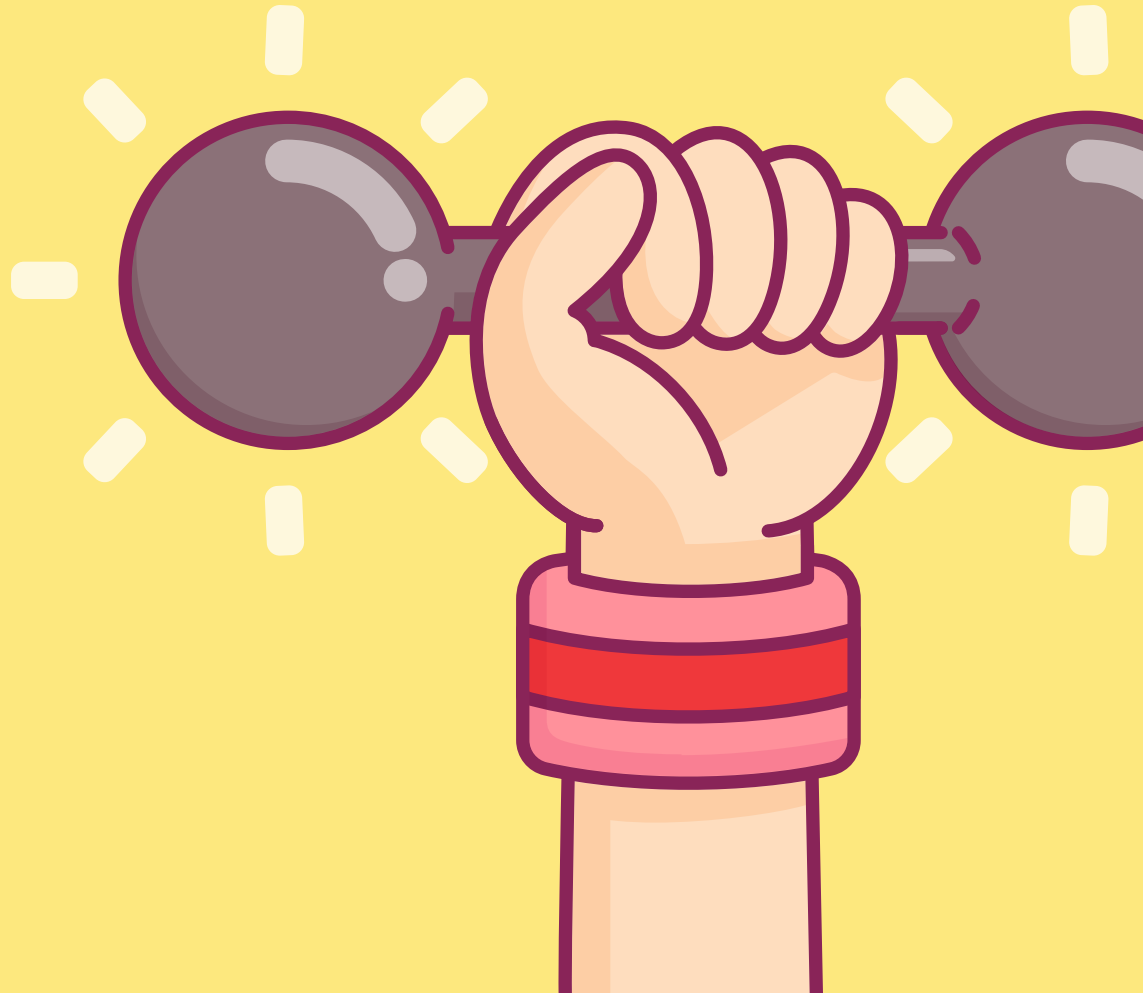


LOSE YOUR BAGGAGE

We all have baggage from our past. The trick is to get rid of as much as you can. Try this. Imagine you have a big bag packed full of all those issues you've been carrying around for years. Then imagine sailing out into the ocean. Drop your baggage overboard and watch it sink. Now forget about it. Forever. (A good therapist can help you decide which baggage to drop.)

EXERCISE EXERCISE EXERCISE

This is one of the single most important points in this book. There are no ifs or buts about this. You need to exercise. It can be as effective as light medication. Do gentle exercise like cycling or swimming a couple of times a week and you'll have half the battle won. If you don't like gyms, remember that going for a long walk is free.





SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

If you feel overwhelmed with everyday life and its responsibilities, consider living in a smaller, neatly contained home. Try a lock-up-and-go lifestyle, and if you can afford it, hire people to clean and help maintain your home.

DRINK LESS ALCOHOL

This is another extremely important point. If you can't stop drinking alcohol, make sure to drink very sparingly. Nothing triggers depression faster than an alcohol binge. And you'll get caught in a cycle of drinking to make yourself feel better when you have a hangover, then feel worse again. The same obviously goes for drugs.



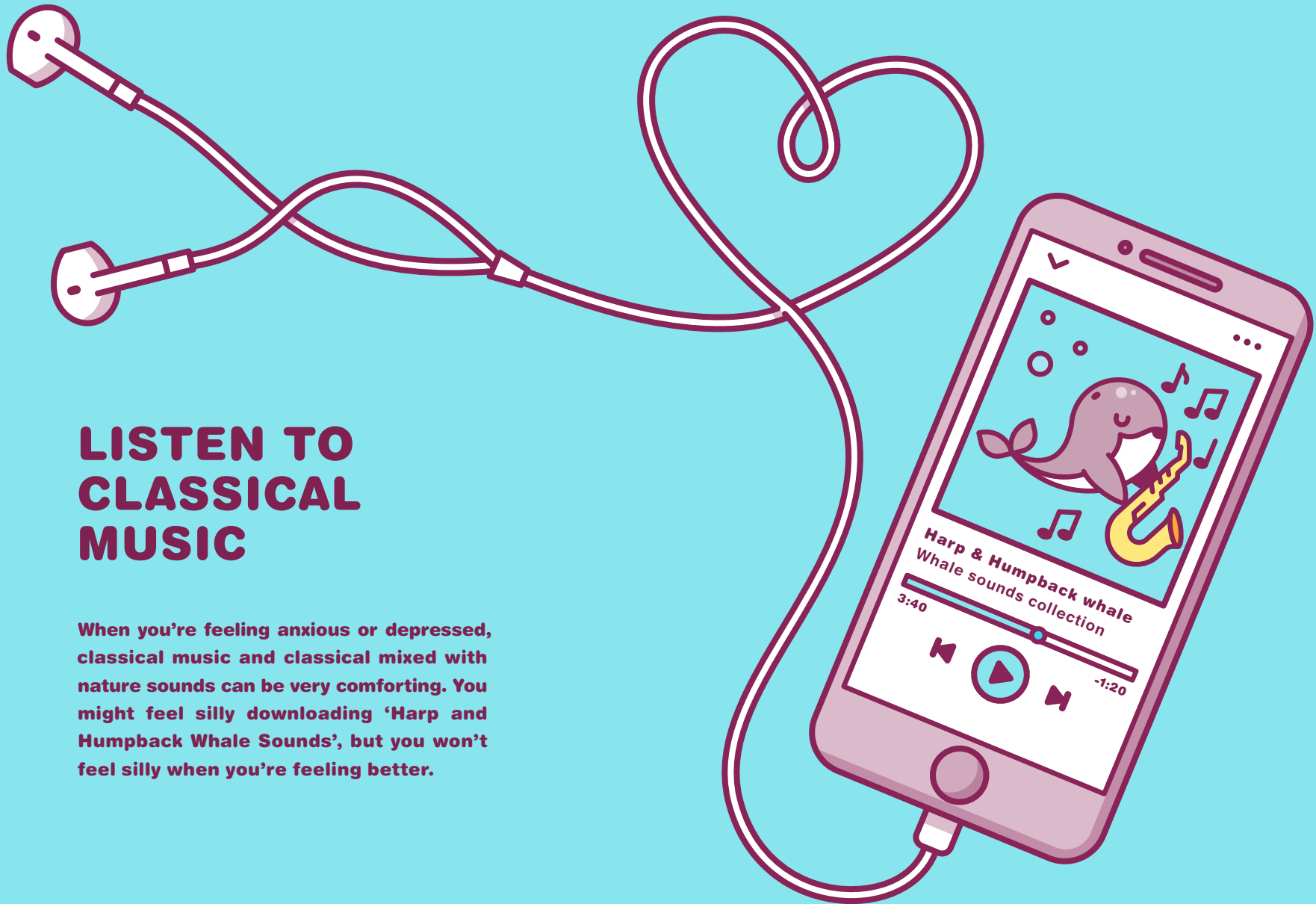


APPRECIATE LIFE'S SMALL SUCCESSES

Life can be disappointing if you only chase big goals. Learn to appreciate the smaller wins, like finding a book you love, having a family day out, ticking an item off your to-do list, or even making it through the day without any drama. It will give you far more successes worth celebrating.

LISTEN TO CLASSICAL MUSIC

When you're feeling anxious or depressed, classical music and classical mixed with nature sounds can be very comforting. You might feel silly downloading 'Harp and Humpback Whale Sounds', but you won't feel silly when you're feeling better.



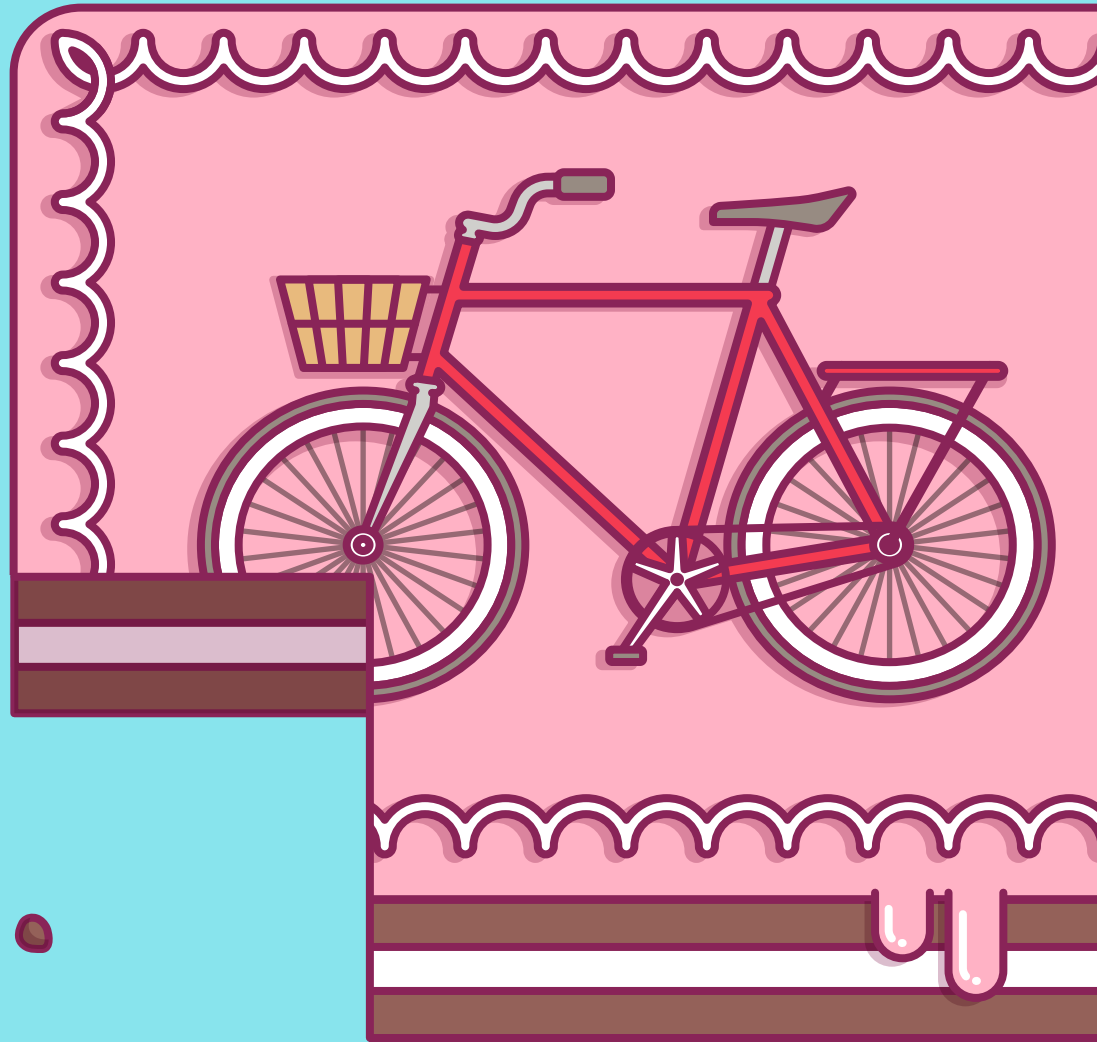
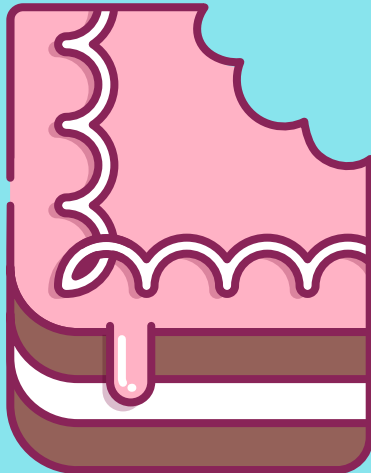


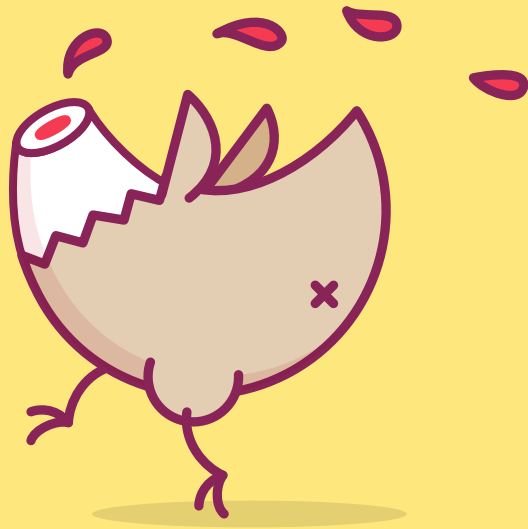
AVOID TOXIC PEOPLE

Toxic people will slowly kill your enthusiasm for life. Get rid of them. Now. Whether it's someone in your family, or a friend, they're doing you harm. Avoid them. If you can't, then spend as little time with them as possible.

BREAK THINGS DOWN INTO BITE-SIZED CHUNKS

It is very easy to be overwhelmed, and that's when we panic, and spiral downwards. Remember everything is manageable if we deal with it in bite-sized chunks. Ask the guy in the Guinness Book Of World Records who ate a real bicycle, piece by piece.





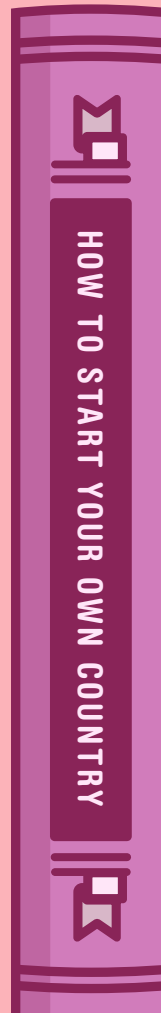
TAKE A MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Everyone seems to think that their company will collapse if they aren't there for the day. Newsflash – it won't. If you feel like you're losing your mind and you need to take time out, do it. You'll be far more useful to yourself and the company when you're feeling stronger again.



SPEND TIME IN A BOOKSTORE

Bookstores are very peaceful (and they're making a comeback). Browsing through the wide range of books will also stimulate your brain and help lift your mood. It's a mini-break from life. So get in there, read a little and dream a lot.





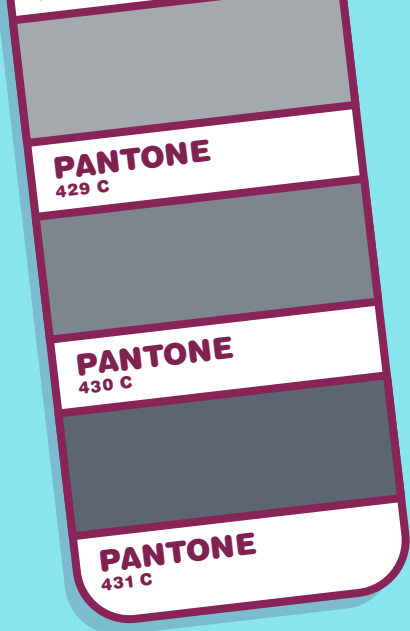
BE SILLY

This is one of the biggest mistakes we make when we grow up. We forget how to be silly and have fun. Somehow we think we have to be serious and grown-up all the time. Says who? Have you ever noticed how happy kids are?

FORGIVE YOUR PARENTS

Raising kids is not easy. And no two people do it the same way. Your parents did the best they could. Accept it, forgive them for some of the mistakes they might've made and move on.





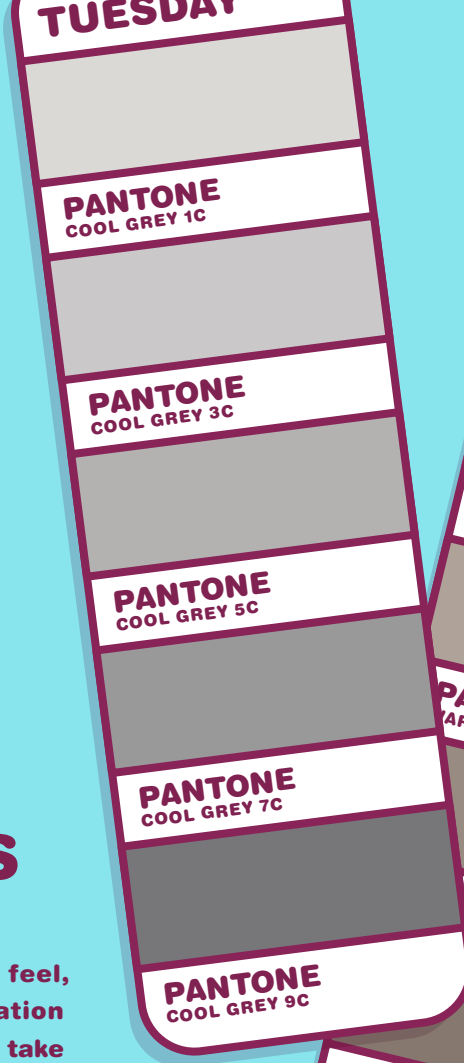
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429 C

PANTONE
430 C

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431 C

THIS TOO SHALL PASS

No matter how terrible you feel,
and how disastrous the situation
appears, remember that it may take
time, and sometimes a long time, but
the sun will come out again. It will.



TUESDAY

PANTONE
COOL GREY 1C

PANTONE
COOL GREY 3C

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COOL GREY 5C

PANTONE
COOL GREY 7C

PANTONE
COOL GREY 9C



WEDNESDAY

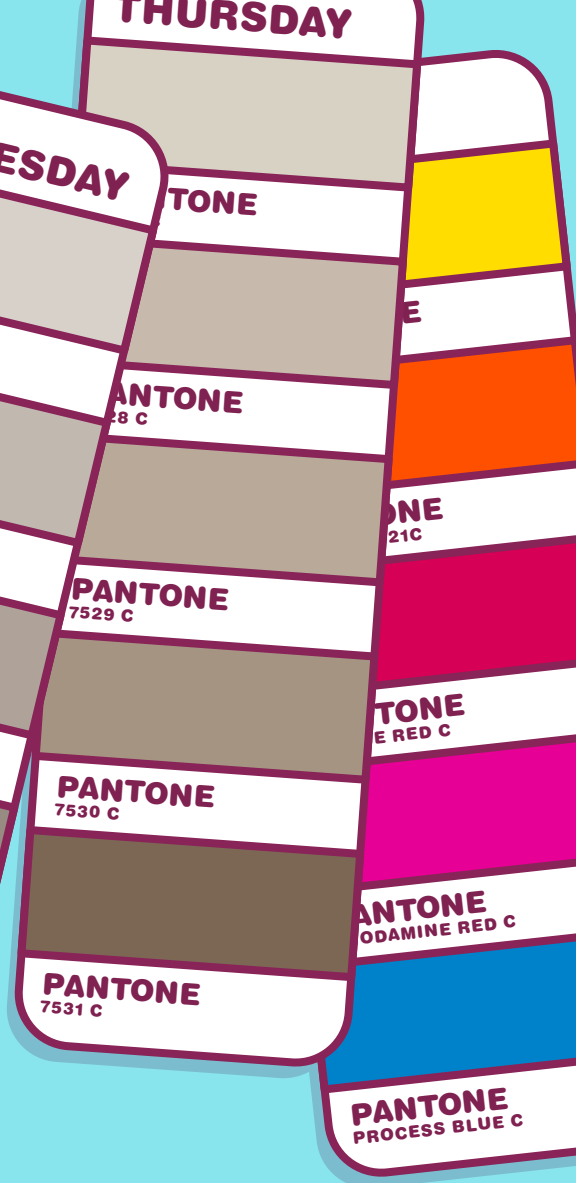
PANTONE
WARM GREY 1C

PANTONE
WARM GREY 3C

PANTONE
WARM GREY 5C

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WARM GREY 7C

PANTONE
WARM GREY 9C



THURSDAY

PANTONE

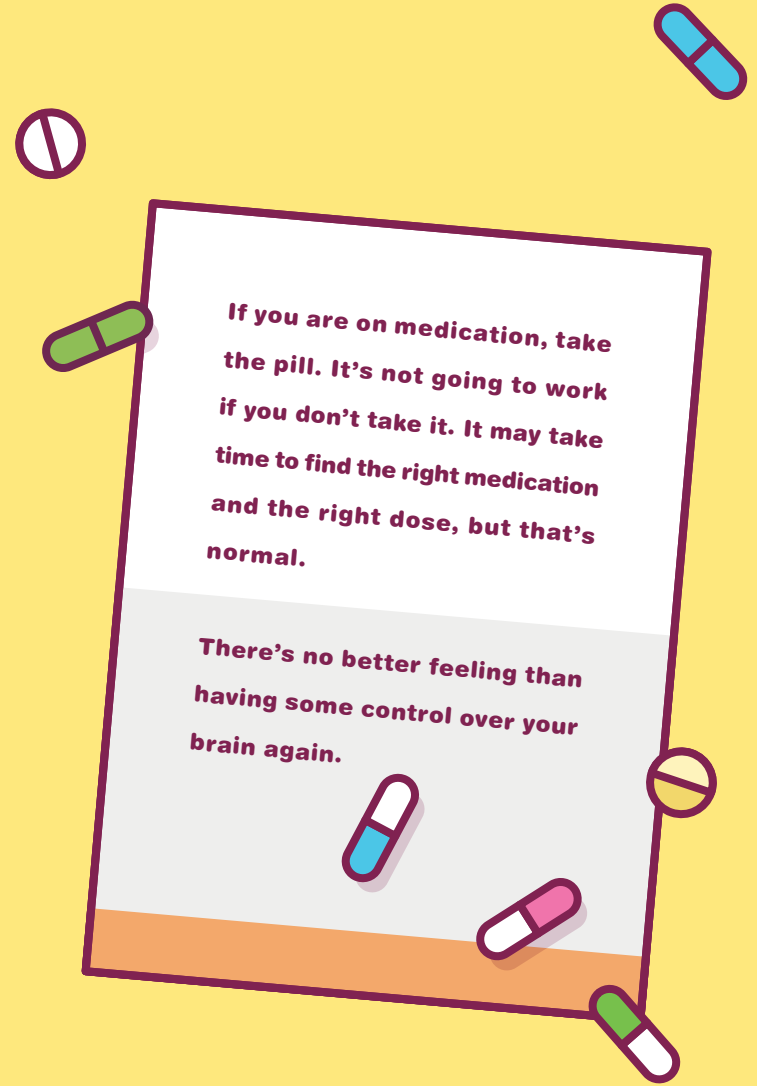
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28 C

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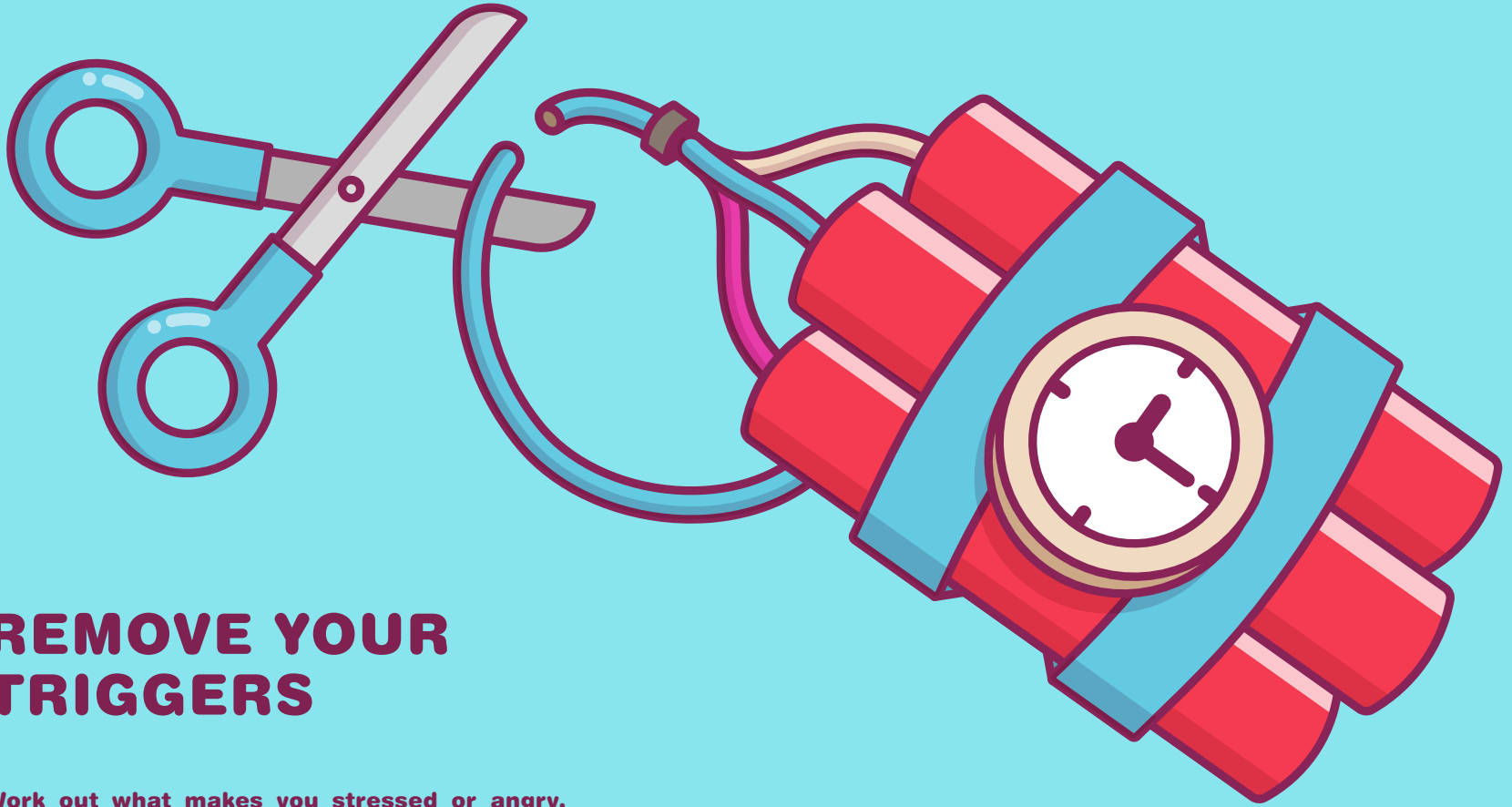
PANTONE
PROCESS BLUE C





BECOME MORE RESILIENT

There is an old Japanese proverb that says: 'Fall down seven times. Get up eight.' Resilience, being able to bounce back, to get up to fight one more round – that's what separates those who succeed from those who don't. And those who are happy and those who aren't.



REMOVE YOUR TRIGGERS

Work out what makes you stressed or angry. The less triggers you have, the more stable you'll become. Often, deeply buried issues are triggered by something seemingly unrelated. Therapy can help. No one likes to think they have issues to work through, but most of us do. There's no shame in talking about them.

An illustration of five hands of different skin tones (light orange, peach, and pink) stacked in a circle, palms facing up. Each hand is wearing a different accessory: a blue and white beaded bracelet, a black watch with a white face, a red and white beaded bracelet, a red and white beaded bracelet, and a brown watch with a white face. The hands are set against a solid teal background.

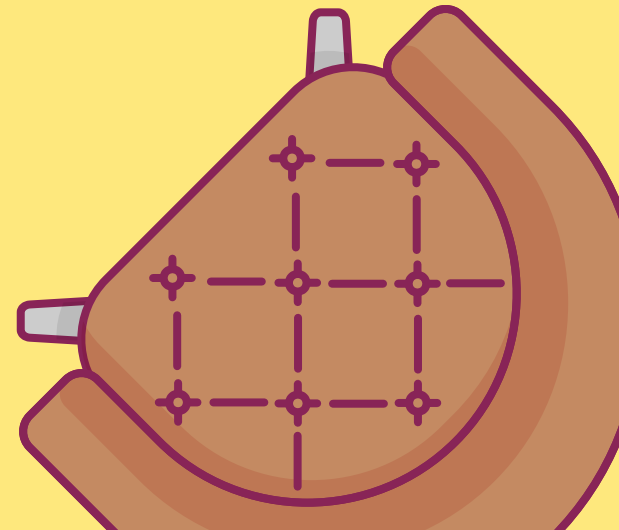
BUILD A STRONG SUPPORT GROUP

People who don't suffer from depression usually don't really understand it fully. And you'll only receive empathy for so long. So create a strong support network with your closest friends, family, doctor and therapist. Keep them updated and they'll always be there when you need them.



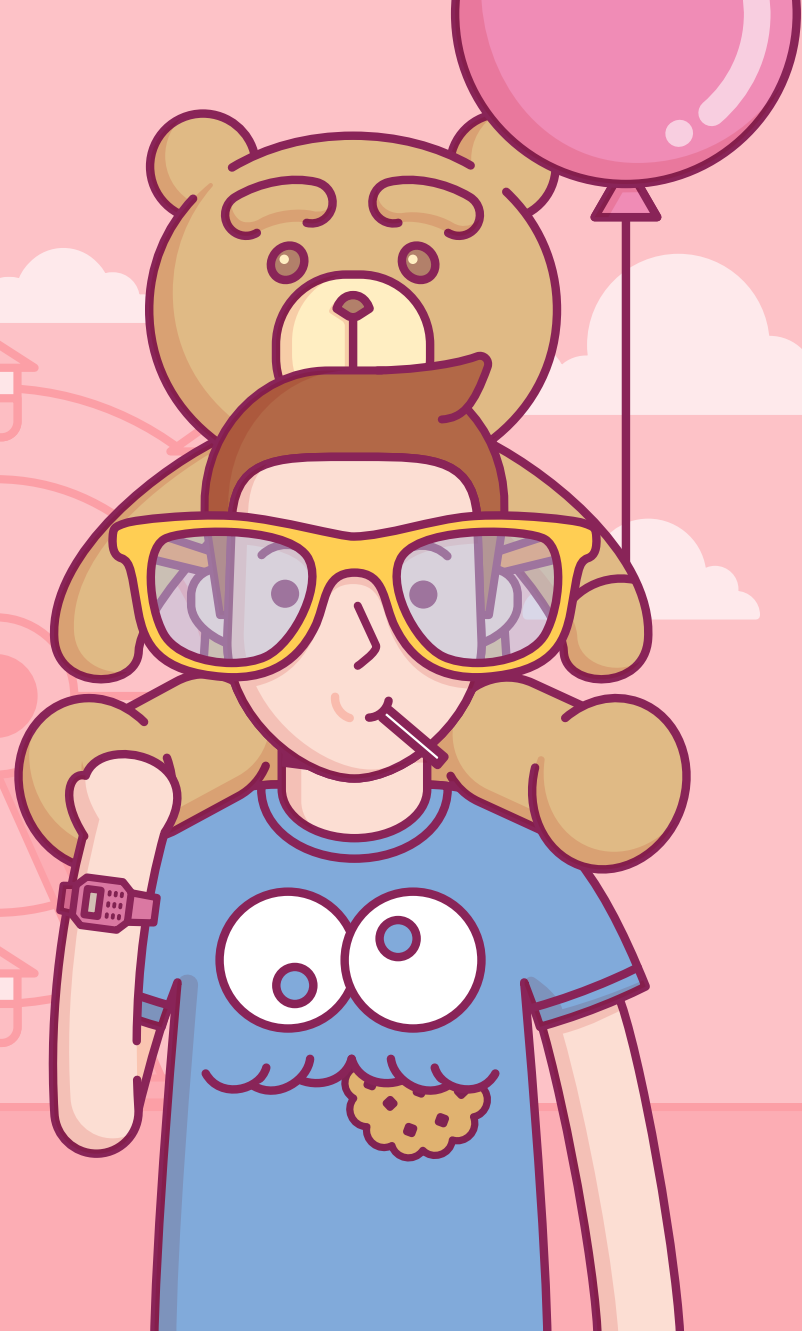
CHAT TO A THERAPIST

Not your spouse, cousin or favourite pill-popping aunt. They're not objective. Find a therapist you're comfortable with. And one that's willing to have a normal conversation with you. Not one who simply sends you home with an armful of drugs, or expects you to do all the talking while the clock ticks down.



YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO HAVE A HAPPY CHILDHOOD


Some people have had horrific childhoods and don't suffer from depression, and others who have had great childhoods do. Life is like that. (And depression is a complicated beast). You can't, of course, relive your childhood, but the thing to remember is that you are now in charge of your own happiness, and that gives you the power to finally experience those things you may have missed out on.





OVERCOME YOUR FEAR OF FAILURE

You have to know that, to get ahead, you will fail many times. It's a natural and important part of personal development. Think about it: it's exactly how you first learned to walk, and look at you now.

An illustration of a matchbox and several matches. The matchbox is red with a yellow label that says "LIGHT THE TUNNEL" and "SAFETY MATCHES" around a central image of a lit lantern. The box is tilted and surrounded by several matches, some of which are lit. The background is a solid yellow color.

**DON'T WAIT
FOR THE LIGHT
AT THE END OF
THE TUNNEL**

**GO DOWN
AND LIGHT
IT YOURSELF**

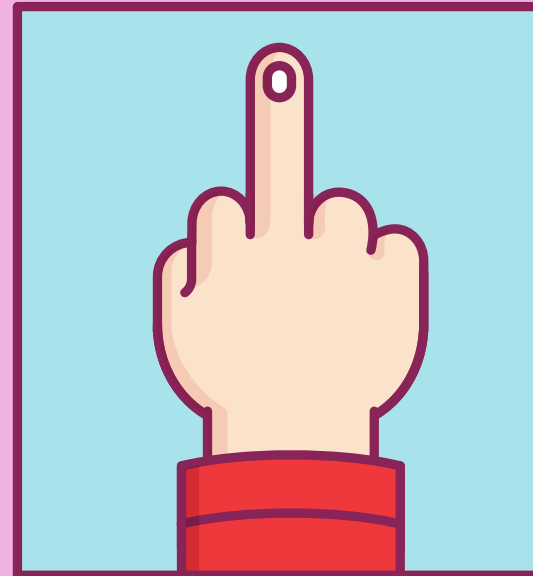
This is great advice. If you're always sitting around waiting for good things to happen, they may never come. You need to take responsibility for your own happiness and success. Grab a matchbox and start walking.



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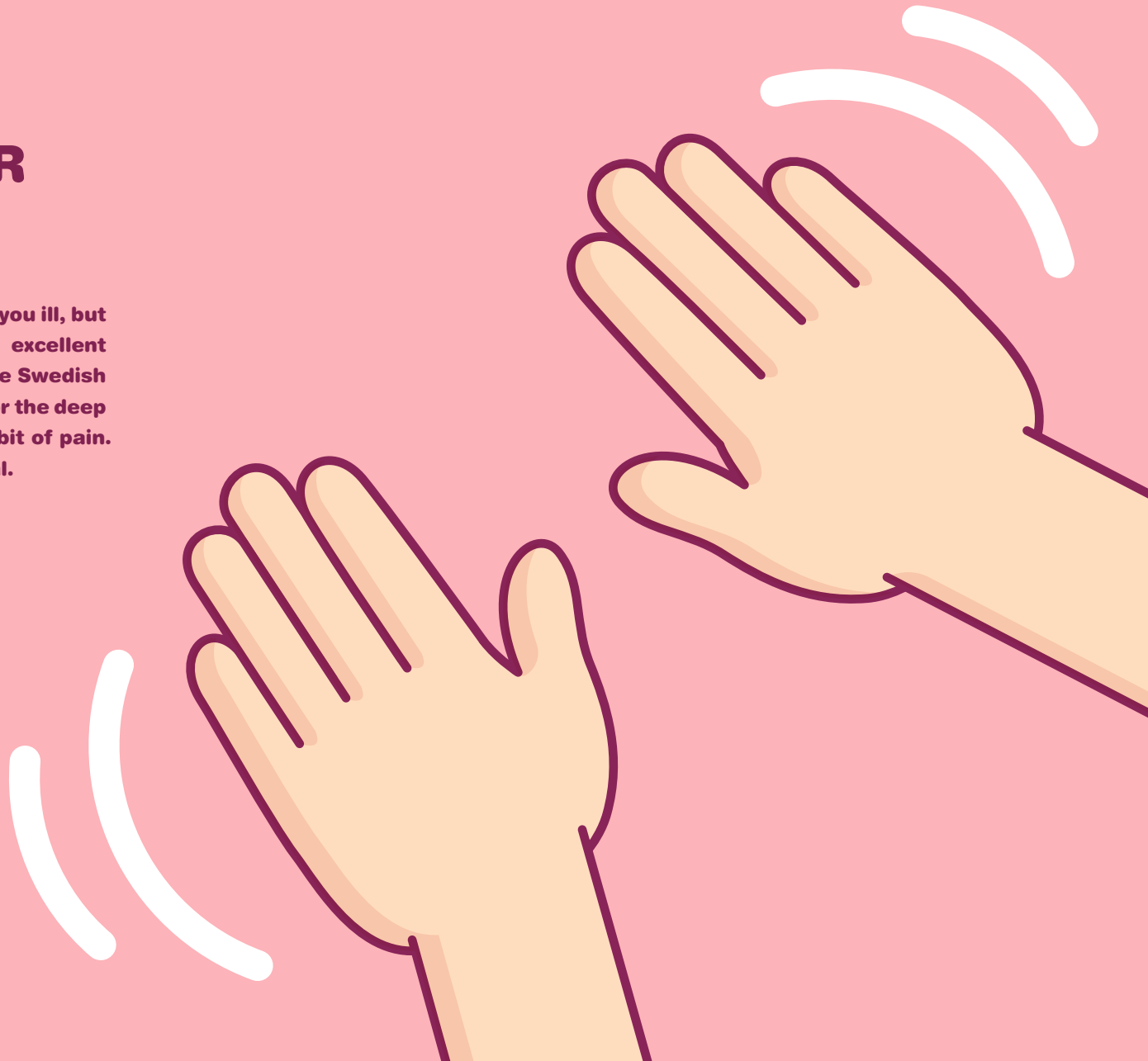
CREATE YOUR OWN RANT BLOG

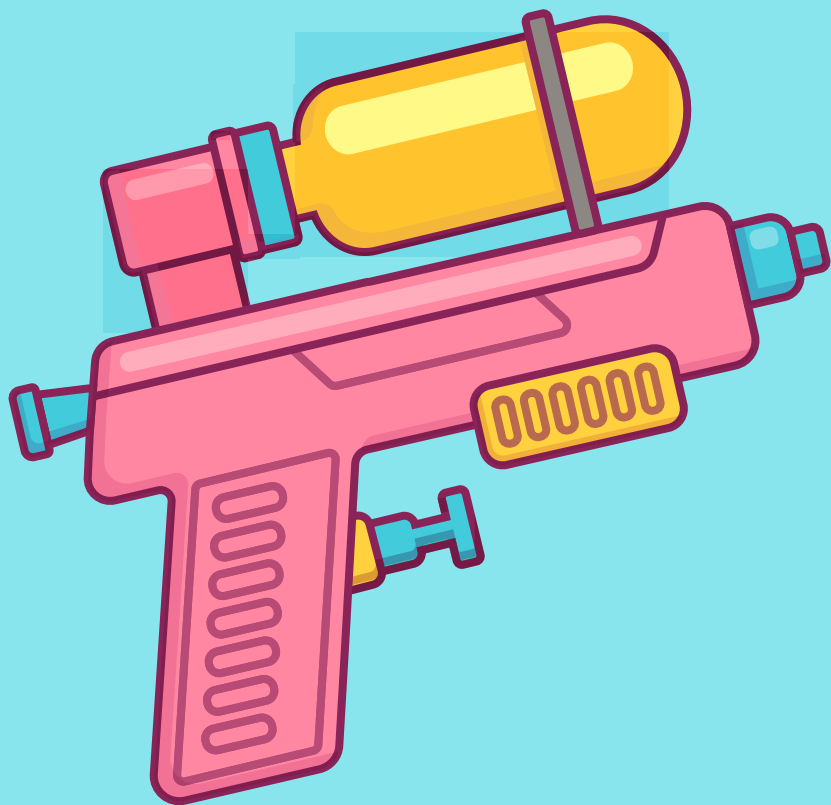
If you have plenty of pent-up anger about your life (or your favourite useless football team), set up an online blog or podcast, and rant away. It will be cathartic. But if you want people to read it, try adding a touch of humour. Even dark humour will do.



GO FOR A REGULAR MASSAGE

Too much stress will make you ill, but thankfully massage is an excellent way to de-stress. Try gentle Swedish or aromatherapy options, or the deep tissue if you don't mind a bit of pain. Happy endings are optional.





SHOOT NEGATIVE THOUGHTS DOWN WITH POSITIVES

This is a twist on the old positive versus negative list people often use. List all the things you're unhappy about, and then find something positive about the situation to cancel the negative out. Yes, it's very simple. It also works.

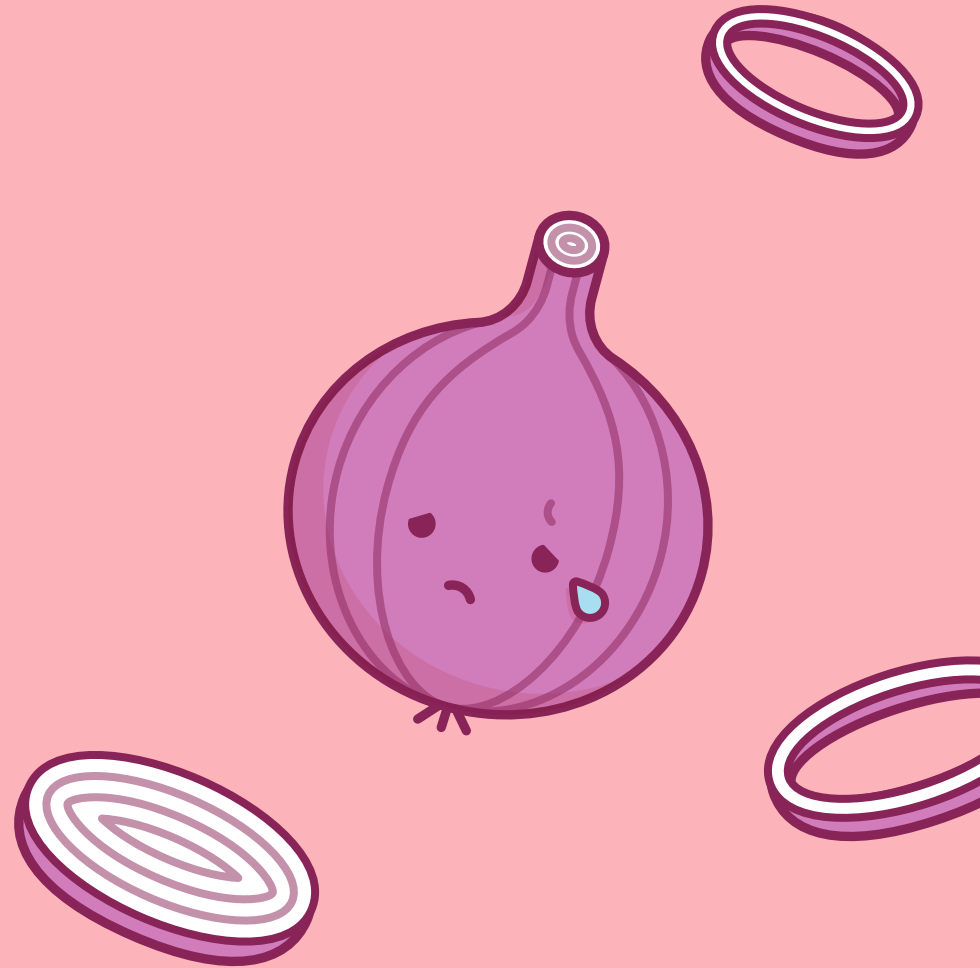


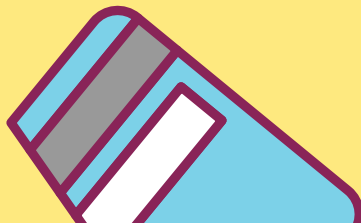
ADOPT A PET

Animals aren't judgmental. They offer unconditional love, are an instant mood lifter and an incredible source of comfort. If you don't think you can cope with a pet, try a goldfish or something really low maintenance. At least you'll have someone to talk to.

CRY. IT'S OK

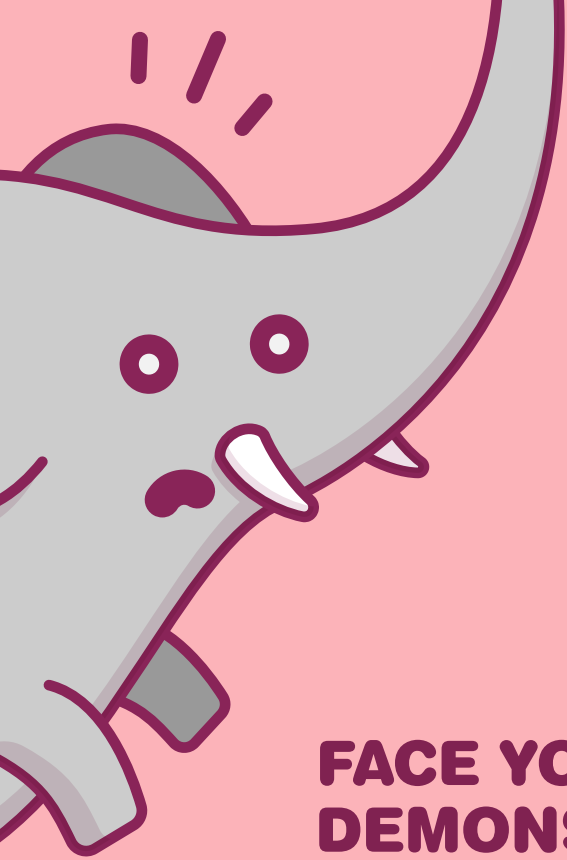
Women seem to get this. Men don't. That's why women live longer. The old adage that 'cowboys don't cry' is nonsense. Crying is an extremely effective tool to relieve sadness, frustration and anger. Do it more often and you'll probably also live longer.





TRY TO GET RID OF DEBT

Money is a great source of stress to many. Learn to live on less, or manage your finances properly so that you aren't continually facing an uphill financial battle. Few things make you depressed faster than a mountain of bills and no money to pay them.



FACE YOUR DEMONS

Spend time reflecting on what scares or upsets you. As soon as you write them down, and bring them into the open, they begin to lose their power over you. Suddenly they're not nearly as scary anymore and you can send them packing.



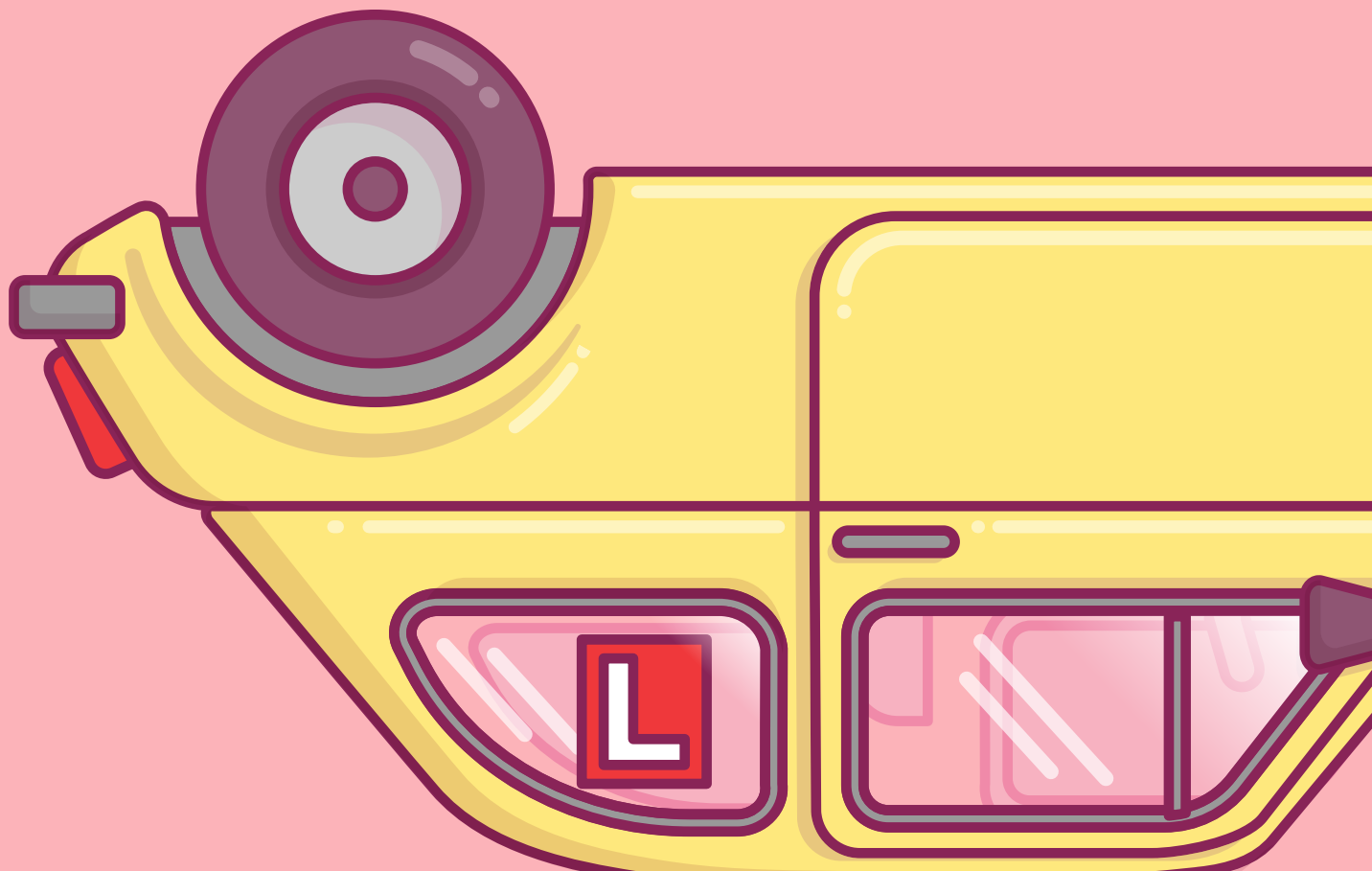


SPOIL YOUR INNER CHILD

Sometimes that little child inside you, and we all have one, really wants to be spoiled. They want a brat moment. So give it to them. Buy an ice cream, go to a movie, take a holiday and stay in the penthouse suite. Your inner child deserves it.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT RELAPSES

Depression is a resilient bastard. You need to be diligent and disciplined about keeping it at bay. You will have relapses. Don't beat yourself up about it, but try to work out what went wrong. In time, you'll have fewer relapses and they won't last as long or hurt as much.



CONTROL YOUR REACTIONS

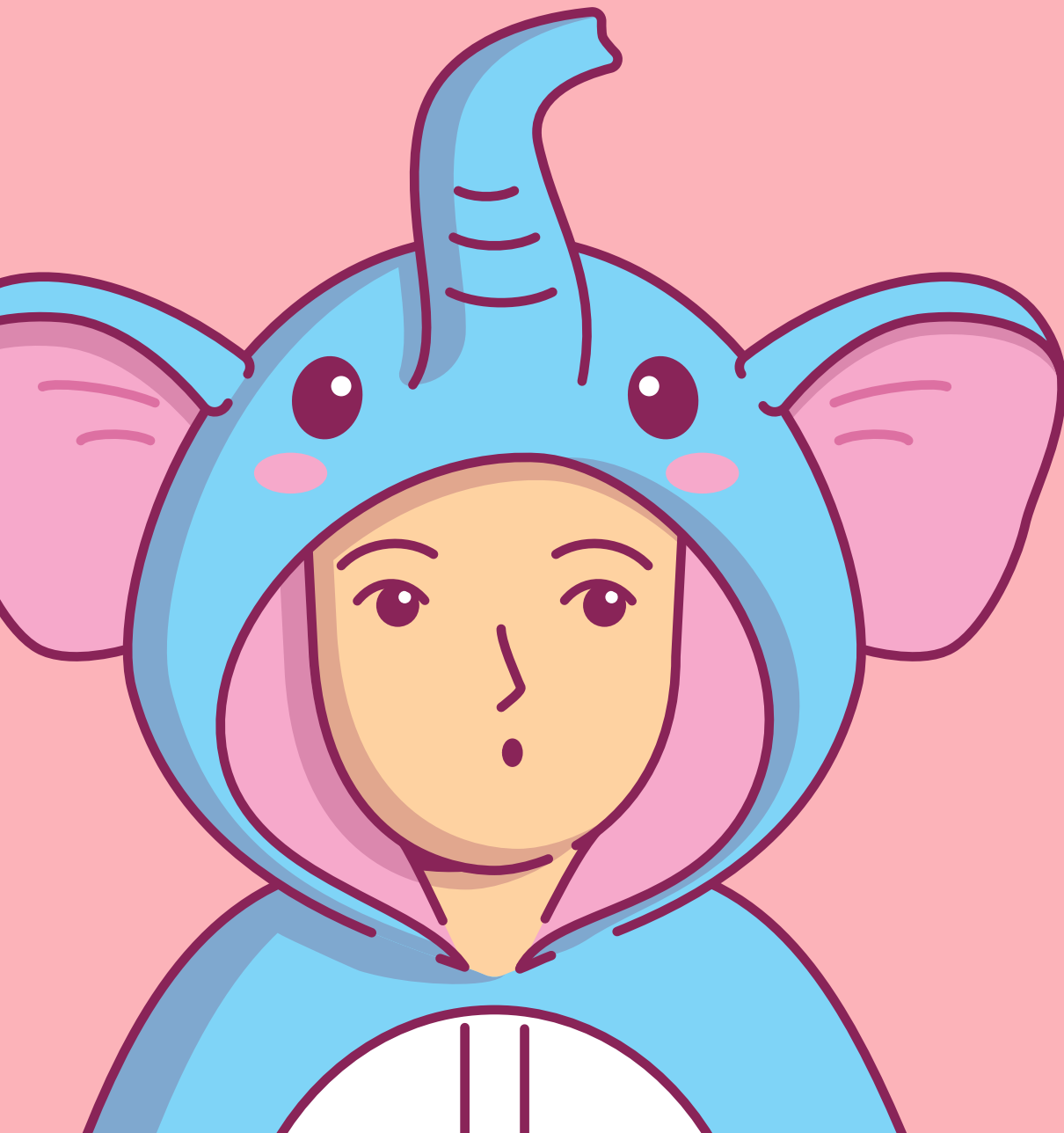
You can't control what happens in life. What you can control is how you react. You can choose to freak out, or try to deal with it calmly and get on with your day. Each time you don't overreact, you'll feel a little more empowered and better able to cope in future.



YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK

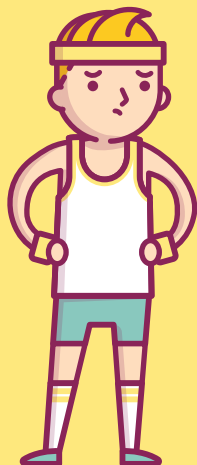
Your subconscious doesn't have a sense of humour. Seriously. If you keep telling yourself you're a loser, you will be. And if you keep telling yourself you're a winner, you will be. Pick positive affirmations and they'll make a huge difference to your self-esteem, and your life.





GROW A THICKER SKIN

Unfortunately life is tough, and no matter how much you try to hide from it, you will go through tough times. The faster you can grow a thicker skin, the less it will hurt.



DON'T OVER-EXERCISE

If you're going to use a personal trainer, don't get a drill sergeant. They'll overwork you and leave you feeling exhausted and depressed. It's counterproductive. A frequent moderate routine is better. Try swimming - it's easier on the body, offers all-round fitness and you can still do it when you're 105.



LAUGH AT YOURSELF

Laugh a lot. Hang around with friends and family who love to laugh. And learn to laugh at yourself. You'll have fewer hang-ups and people will enjoy your company more. There's a wonderful saying: 'laughter is a tranquiliser with no side effects', and who doesn't want that?

**THIS
IS LIKE
A ROUND
RAINBOW**



CHAT TO CHILDREN

Children are amazing. They don't know how to be cynical, and they're curious about everything. Never lose your childlike manner - it's one of the best qualities you can have. Because let's face it, nobody likes a grumpy old bastard.



MONITOR YOUR SELF-PITY

Too much whinging isn't good for you, or anyone around you. Feeling depressed doesn't mean you get to complain about everything, or be rude to people around you. It will also make you feel worse if you moan all the time, so hard as it may be, always try to find a silver lining.



ALWAYS BE OPTIMISTIC

It's difficult to be around someone who's always pessimistic. Focus on being optimistic, no matter what, and it will carry you through many a dark hour. It worked for a depressed Winston Churchill in the Second World War. It will work for you.



- ☐ half empty
- ☐ half full
- ☐ cat pee



STAY CONNECTED

When you're really depressed, you often can't leave the house and don't want to see other people. You don't have to. Stay connected with your friends and family through message (or video chat) if you feel you can face people. It stops you feeling lonely and will lift your mood.

SPEND TIME IN THE SUN

The sun is an instant happy-maker, so spend more time in it, even a few minutes a day. If you can find a pool or an ocean, even better – there's nothing more relaxing than bobbing about on water. Off you go, but don't forget the sunscreen.



MONITOR YOUR MOODS

Use these charts to monitor and manage your moods every week or month. If you're reading the paperback, photocopy them, or use a pencil, so you can reuse them in the book. If you're reading the digital version, you can download the charts at dylankidson.com/happybanana. Filling the chart out daily will help you learn a lot about yourself and eventually lead to more smiley days.

TODAY I FEEL:



**Awesome,
Energetic,
Excited**



Unmotivated, Tired, Dull, Bored



Happy, Relaxed, Content



Sad, Lonely, Anxious, Depressed



Neutral, Uneventful, Meh



Angry, Frustrated, Annoyed



MON

TUE

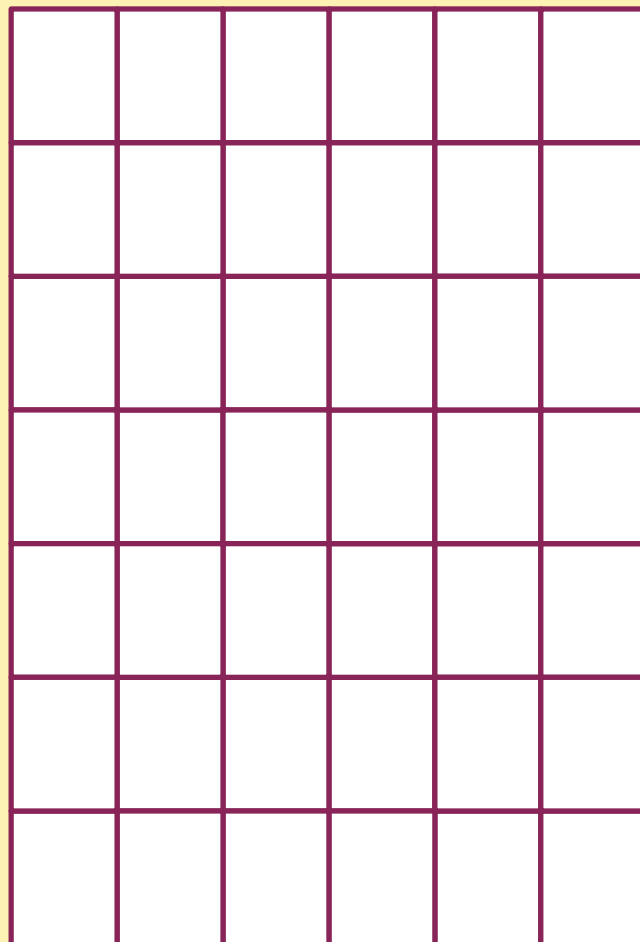
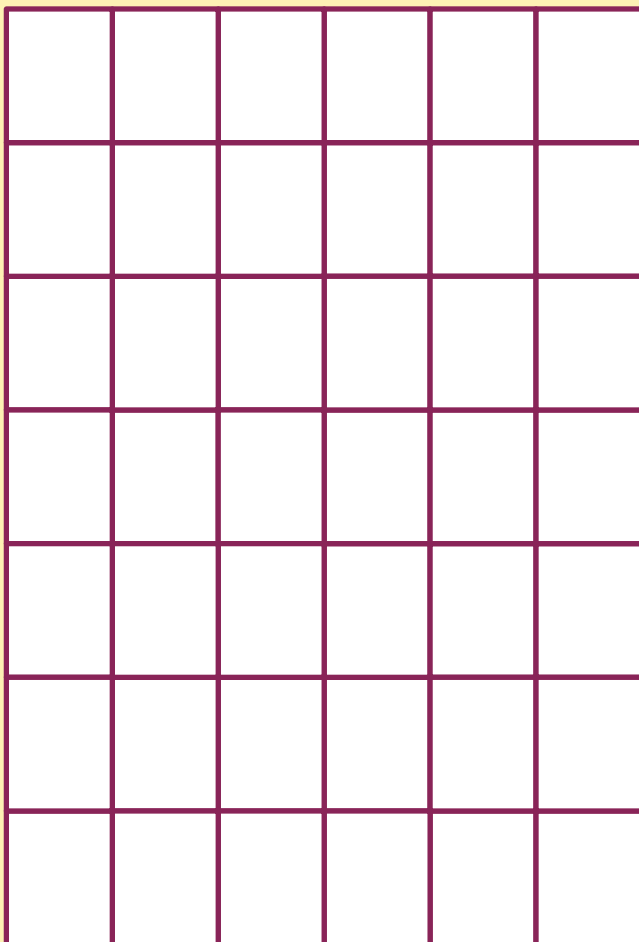
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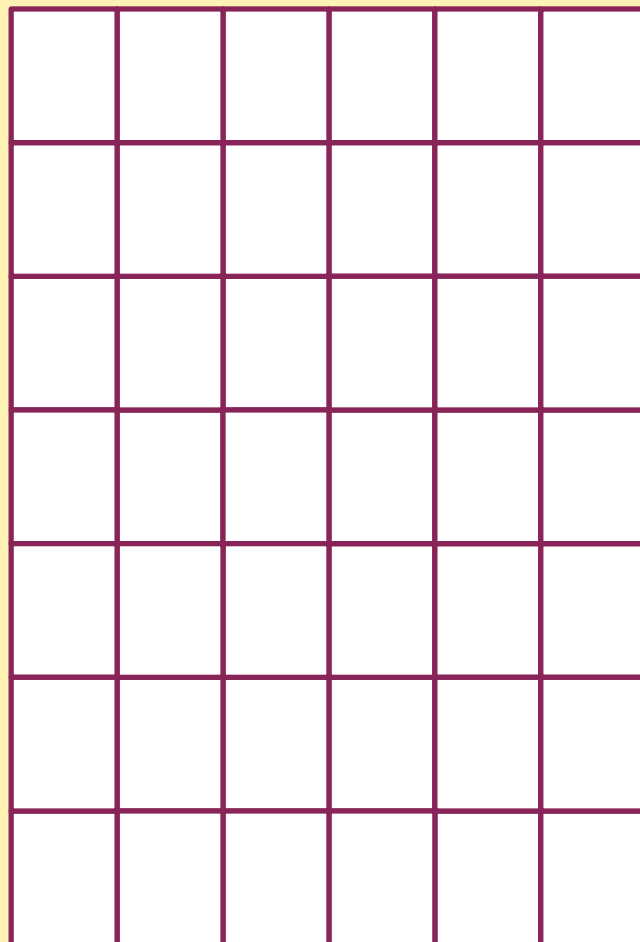
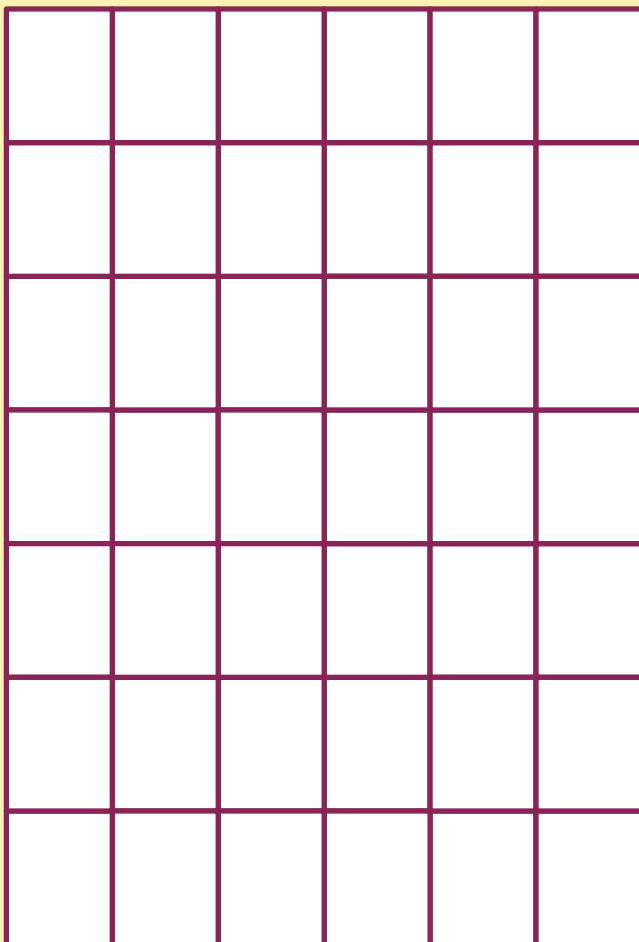
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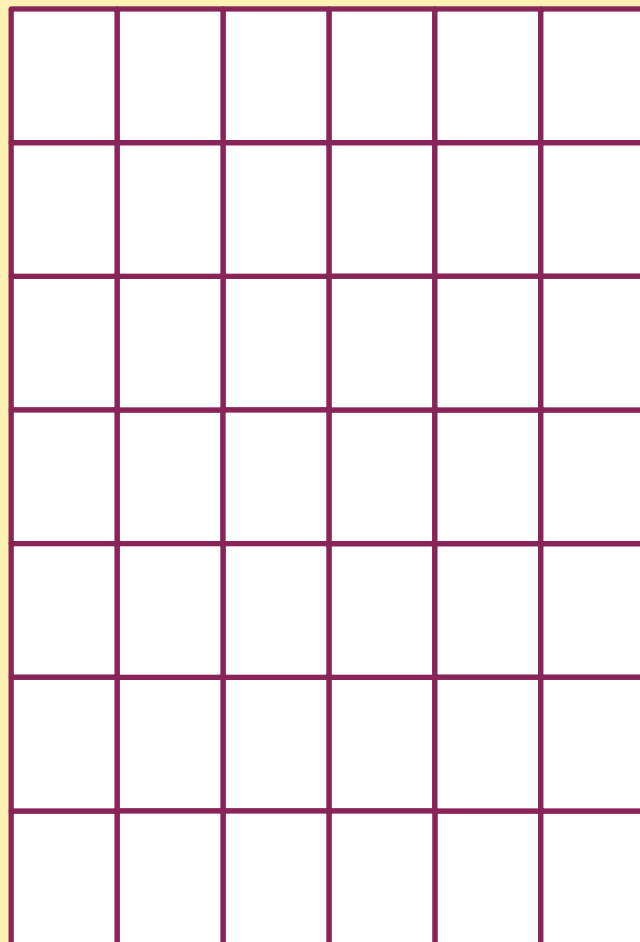
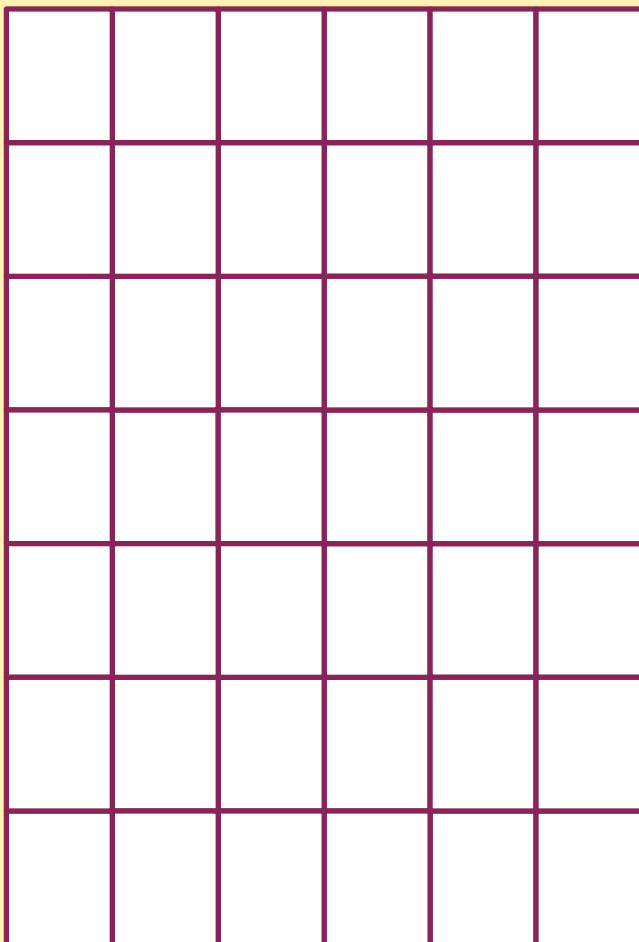
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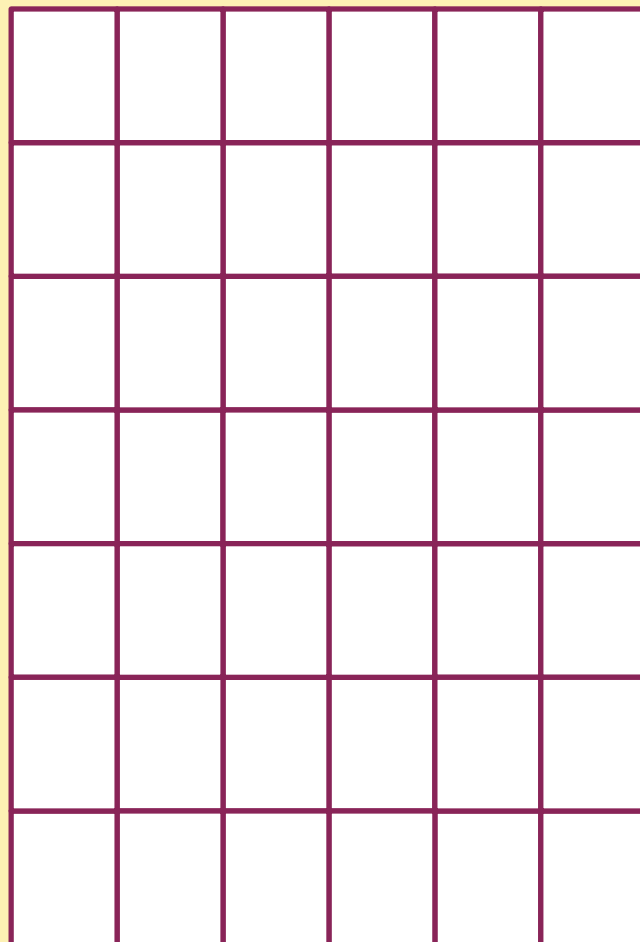
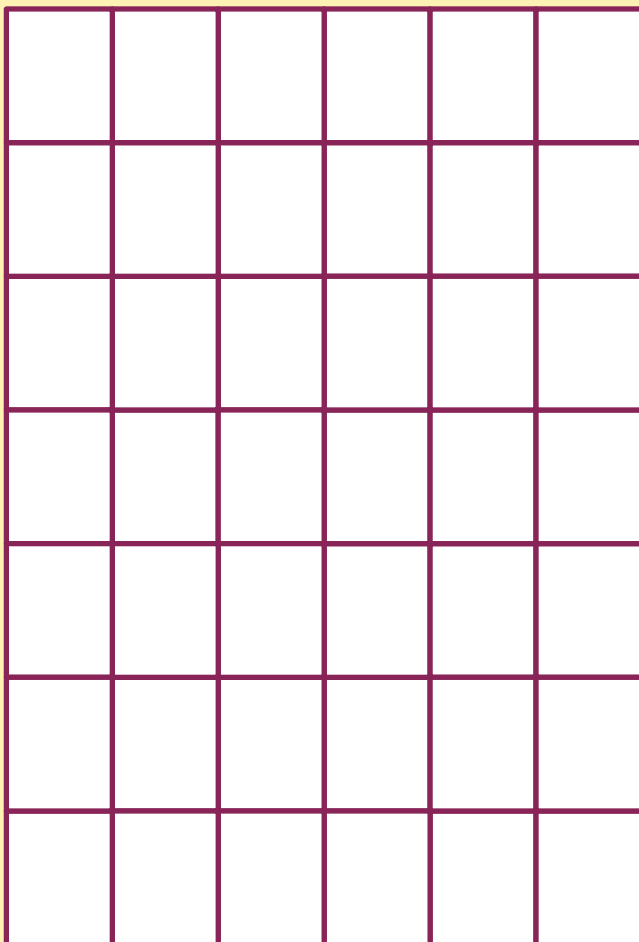
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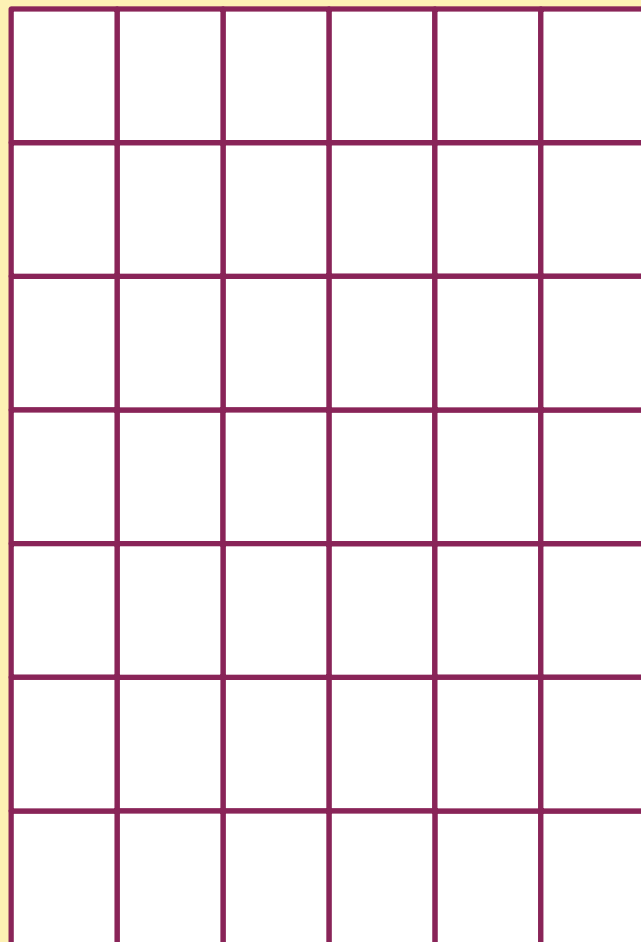
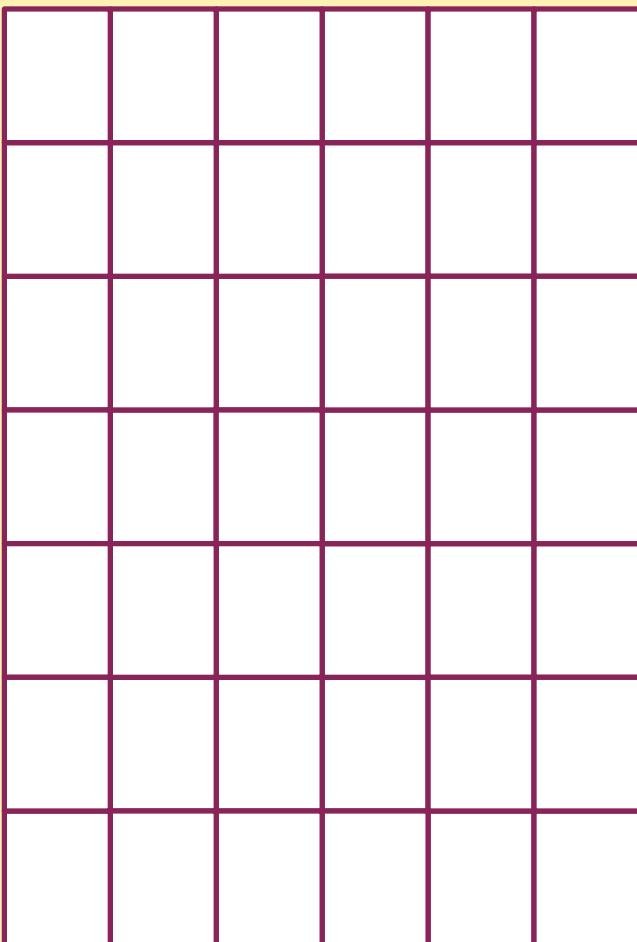
SUN













ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I have suffered from major depression since I was a small child and have spent a lot of time and effort battling those damn demons, to get well and stay that way. These are the tips, tricks and tools I've learned and developed over the years that really do work. I'm sharing them all with one main aim, and that's to help you lead a happier, healthier and more productive life.

Onwards and upwards.

Dylan



**‘For anyone living with depression, these
handy, no-nonsense tips are ideal’.**

**— Dr Hayley Skarda MB; ChB; MRCPsych
(Psychiatrist)**

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