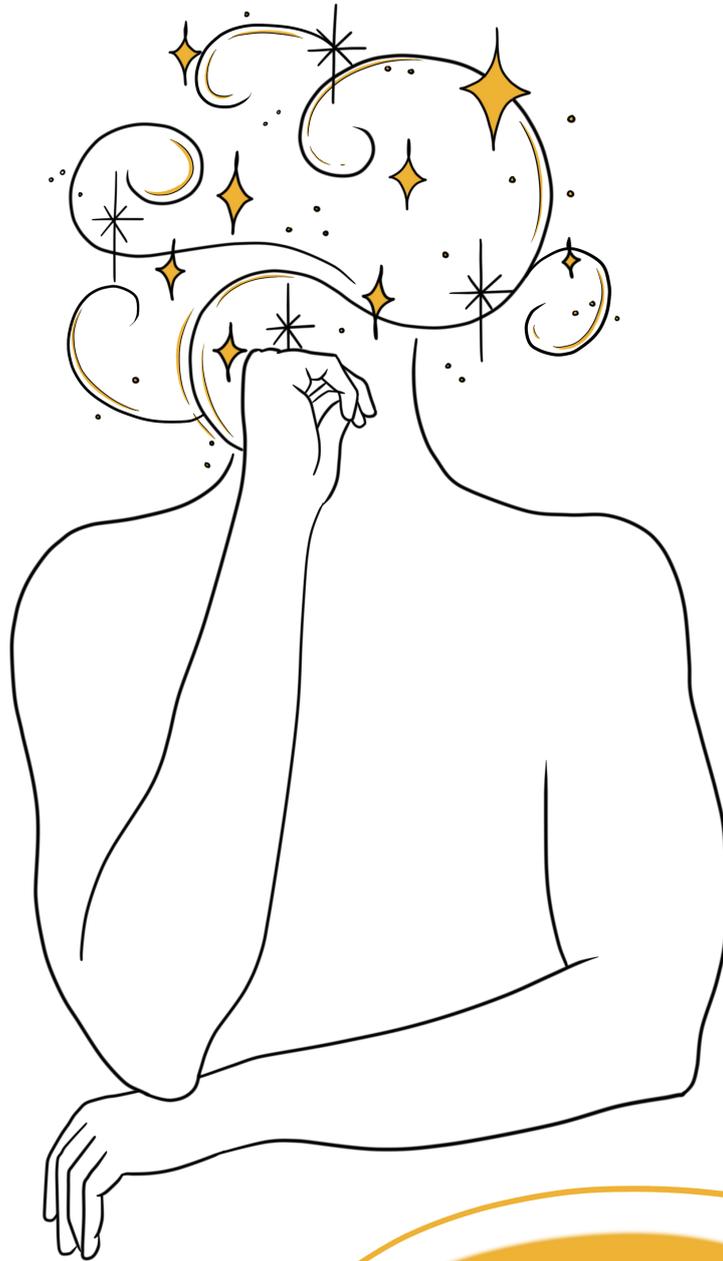


# **COLLECTIVE** *thoughts.*

"It felt like a breath of fresh air, not being listened to for the sake of furthering a conversation but effectively communicating with an individual that is actively listening"



"Studies show that three-quarters of Australian study participants believe that the disorder is over-diagnosed."

"Body positivity, in essence, should mean that every body type regardless of shape, colour, size, scarring, or other flaw is beautiful."

# Note From the Editor

Welcome to *Collective Thoughts*, our magazine focused on highlighting creative and personal writing. Over the past two years, the Collective team has grown, and our brand has morphed. We are excited to embrace the new changes, which include two versions of our magazines.

This renewal comes at a time of change for many of us. University is a time of development, many of us begin our educational programs as one version of ourselves and leave as another. This change is not bound to our ages (since we begin our educational journeys at differing life stages and ages), because change, as many of you know, can happen at any time. This development occurs when we are faced with a new reality, and range of perspectives. University, internships, and graduation are all times of change. These steps force us to see ourselves through a new lens, to become a different version of ourselves. But this change is not only linked to these 'milestones'. More often than not, we are changed by the experiences we have, the friends that come in and out of our lives, and the shifts in perspective we endure. These changes can happen at any time, expected and unexpected. Covid times have had an obvious impact on the type of experiences we have, yet it has not completely eliminated this notion of experience linked to change. Rather, it has altered the extremity to which these events have an impact and the frequency to which they take place. When I look around at my peers, I see people who are undergoing varying levels of change. For some, this comes from a new sense of independence or a change in appearance which mirrors their internal self-development. All equally have an impact on their sense of self and development into young adults. I've often had conversations with friends and peers about the fear associated with change. So many of us have a natural push back towards the unknown, despite that same unknown being the gateway into our renewal. I know how challenging it can be to let go of control and embrace what comes into (and out of) our lives. However, letting go is one of the only ways to let in this natural renewal, and development of self. There are parts of ourselves that fall outside our control, and this new person you are becoming will only come fully into form if you allow yourself to live free of this pushback and judgement of self-development. We are slowly coming towards the end of the year, and although I am not one who likes New Year's resolutions, I do think that a new year can be seen as a blank slate from the natural judgement we have of ourselves. Pushing the boundaries away from the person we believe ourselves to be towards the person who we are becoming.

Like us all, *Collective* is embracing this stage of development. I would like to thank the amazing team for creating yet another beautiful edition and helping in bringing *Collective* into this new stage. The words and perspectives of the authors bring us new perspectives and insights into the world around us. I truly hope you enjoy this edition and join me in embracing a new lens. Wishing you a happy read!

Fenna Millbauer

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**Rumbidzai Mudzongo**



Everybody seems to be looking for their place, that one spot in this big scary world that we can call our own. Sometimes it's where we happen to be when we need it, sometimes we need to search for it and other times our home is not even a place, but rather an idea, a person, an activity, or a community.

***“Will we ever be able to connect so deeply, so fully with someone who does not understand the tiny details that made us us?”***

Many of us moved here because we were looking for somewhere we can belong -or maybe even for ourselves- and we needed the freedom of the unknown to allow us to explore and be courageous enough to go the distance to find it. Most people describe the feeling of being lost as scary and uncertain, but there is more to be said about it. First, when you have nothing to lose, you have everything to gain. Yet even more importantly, when you have no one to hold on to -whether it is other people or the identity that outside gazes pushed you to adopt-, then you fall into an abyss. However dreadful this might sound, it is in that descent into something new, with nothing certain, that we are attempting to find ourselves.

So we moved here, each from our own corner of the world -some more distant, some just a few hours away- with the intention to reclaim our identity; our possibility to grow into ourselves. Some of us were also escaping from something we wanted to leave behind and others were moving towards something they had been hoping for. Whatever the reason may have been, most of us got off the plane and hit the ground running, because all of the plans that had been in the making for the longest time were finally boiling,

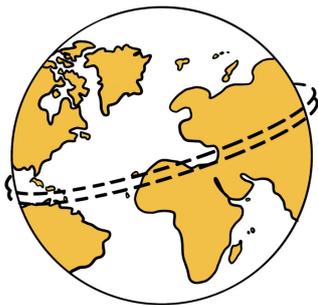
ready to be taken off the stove and used. We could not help but feel bubbly with emotions that were constantly on the very edge of overflowing: first with heartfelt goodbyes, then with the pink-tinted glasses and the many “hello”s and finally with the nostalgic phone calls, the missed events, and the nights we had to cry ourselves to sleep.

Some of us are sure we will lose some friends and loved ones along the way, while others disagree, but there is one thing we have in common: we all miss something from “home”. It might be the tiniest detail, the most random smell, or that day-to-day situation that we had never really paid attention to, but now crave for deeply. It seems to be the things we took for granted are the ones we miss the most now: such as the deep, unique connection we could fairly easily achieve with those who are from where we are, understand our references, and grew up doing the same things we did. It is not even enough to be from the same country, for many of us it is a bond that we have only ever built up with people from our city, our neighbourhood; and when we find someone from that specific place here or there (if we are able to go back), that feeling only intensifies. Will, we ever be able to connect so deeply, so fully with someone who does not understand - or maybe does not even care- about the tiny details that made us us?

***“We needed the freedom of the unknown to allow us to explore and be courageous enough to go the distance to find it.”***

The answers to this are as diverse as the amount of people asked, but what we can definitely agree on is that this loss did not come

without its gains. Being far away from “our people” gave us the chance to meet so many new individuals. Every day, every week we continue to get to know our new friends and their cultures better and, as unbelievable as it sounds, we continue to participate in daily introductions that transport us back to the by-now-too-familiar “What’s your name?”s and “Where are you from?”s that have helped us get in touch with all the amazing things this foreign, new, exciting city has to offer.



And despite all of these intense challenges, we grew as we had never grown before. The first two weeks felt like months and the first month like a life-long experience, throughout which we picked the parts of our cultures and our “home selves” we wanted to bring with us and left behind those we did not feel ours to begin with.

We chose how to present ourselves, how to portray our countries of origin, and brought our traditions, food, and music with us so that we could share them with our new friends. But at the same time, we found in that exchange that some of the things others had to offer were so amazing and resonated so much with us that we could not let them go and so they became a part of us. It might be in the form of a song, a meal,

drinks, words in a language we had never encountered before, or a trip to someone else’s city that we expand our perspectives and broaden our horizons with, constantly building the intercultural selves we are starting to become.

**“Everybody seems to be looking for their place, that one spot in this big scary world that we can call our own.”**

Looking back, it is crazy that we had the courage to come this far and the strength to keep overcoming all the obstacles, but still, here we are. Some of us feel they’ve found their forever place, some know as a fact that this is only a transitory setting in their journey, while others are still hesitant or torn about it, and that is okay, we have a lifetime to figure ourselves out. We might be a bit of a mess sometimes, but that is only part of the journey and one thing is for sure: whatever our definition of “home” is, we are finally starting to be able to find in this city a home we can truly belong to.



*Ju Laclau Massaglia*

**Ju likes to describe herself as a work in progress. Being a person with an multicultural background who gets bored easily, she learnt at a young age that the best to stay entertained is to look for the next adventure, which she might find in fiction or in real-life. One thing is for sure, she can't image her life without writing. She is always carrying some book and a notebook with her "just in case". Her love to meet amazing people, such as the ones she found in Collective, is only surpassed by her desire to get to know them over a cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate.**



# the art of BEING HEARD

Being heard is something that everyone might truly desire, however, how do you know when you are genuinely being heard?

When I talk about being heard I mean having someone present that is actively listening to what you are saying, understands it, and does not judge in the process. Being heard entails someone comprehending what you mean and accepting it for what it is. When you've never had these types of conversations with people actively practicing effective communication it can be quite moving and eye-opening when it does happen. The feeling of not being heard can be quite disappointing and when it does happen the following thoughts tend to run through my mind; Maybe I am just exaggerating?, Am I being weak? I guess this isn't as much of a hardship as I thought it was or experienced it to be? Does this person not know how to effectively communicate?

**"Maybe I am just exaggerating?, Am I being weak? I guess this isn't as much of a hardship as I thought it was or experienced it to be? Does this person not know how to effectively communicate?"**

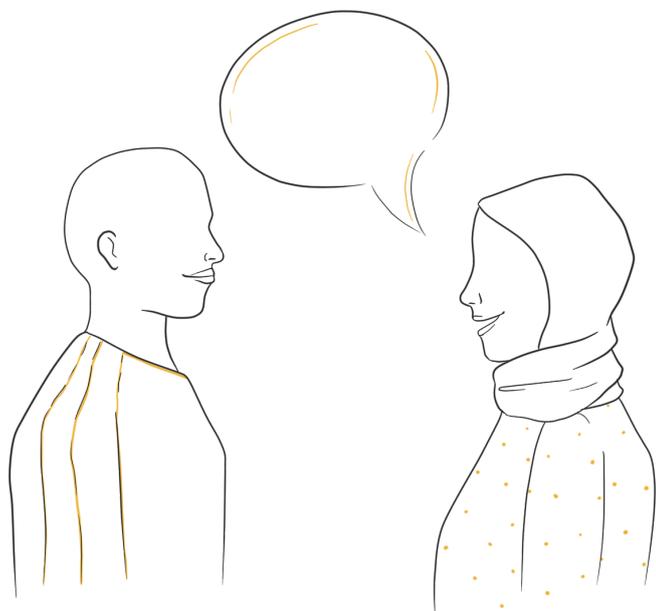
Once in a while, there are other instances where you see it happen to someone else. For instance, when you see it happen to someone in your friend group when they're opening up and allowing themselves to be vulnerable. To the point, where they are sharing their story and hardship with us and want it to be acknowledged. In that situation, another individual could interrupt and start talking

about their own experiences. Unfortunately, they're not interrupting to try and relate but to just talk about themselves. The thoughts that run through my mind then are; In my experience, this has always led to me not opening up to people and not deeming my opinion or experiences to be shareable. Interpreting that my hardships are not seen as actual hardship cause there was always someone else out there having a tougher time than I was. This does not only have to occur when you are sharing life experiences but also when you're having a conversation in which people are sharing their opinions.



When it is your turn it could be that you will not be met with the same courtesy you extended to someone else. In this case, you could be met with someone interrupting you whilst speaking, projecting their view on you and your opinion therefore, it can feel as if your opinion becomes invalid. This can result in one having to realize that not only one person's opinion or experience is valid. As a result, the feeling of being unheard can continue to grow.

I remember the first time I had a conversation after continuously being misunderstood and feeling unheard. A friend who noticed my silence and sensed my withdrawn stance from certain conversations said that I was worth listening to, that I had a lot of knowledge and wisdom to share, and I had a safe space where I would always be heard. At that point, it dawned on me how these experiences truly affected me. Hearing someone say I had a lot of knowledge and wisdom to share made me think, "What? Me? Since when?". It was then that I realized how negative and detrimental these experiences were to my self-confidence and the want to express myself.



This revelation and insurance truly made me realize how much I have been withholding. The thought of not having to defend yourself or receiving unsolicited advice, and truly just being heard. It felt like a breath of fresh air, not being listened to for the sake of furthering a conversation, but effectively communicating with an individual that is actively listening and vice versa. After not having experienced that in a long time, I started to value the people around me a lot more in ways I should have done before. Not only that, it made me want to strive to become that person for others as well.

The consequences of not being heard can express themselves in many ways; someone becoming more isolated, their want to speak reduces, distancing themselves from the individual, withholding their thoughts, experiencing a lot of emotional frustration, and if someone truly starts withholding themselves their conversational and debating skills can deteriorate. To the point where, if someone's opinion truly gets asked and listened to, the person might experience a hard time and some anxiety expressing themselves.

My best advice to overcome situations like these is to actively communicate to the individual what it is you need and want from this conversation. You can start it off with "Can we talk about (insert topic) I need someone to listen to me and hear me out". Directly mention you don't want or need advice, but just want to be heard. At times people do not realize that they are only listening to respond and not listening to hear and comprehend. To ensure that you are actively listening to the individual, start by just listening, focus on the individual, do not think about how you will reply, what your response could/will be, or what advice to give them. This does not benefit anyone, therefore it is best to avoid this at all costs.

**"It felt like a breath of fresh air, not being listened to for the sake of furthering a conversation but effectively communicating with an individual that is actively listening and vice versa."**

However, if this does occur, that doesn't necessarily mean they aren't well-intentioned, but it does mean that they are not showing up for the person in the way they need them to. Therefore, even though you are trying to be of help, you, in actuality, are not. To avoid this, the following list of actions describing what to do might be of help;

- Ensure that you are letting the person speak,
- Actively listen to them by focusing on what they are saying,
- Acknowledge their feelings and
- What they are saying through verbal/non-verbal gestures,
- Paraphrase to see if you truly understand what they've told you,
- and lastly if by any chance something is not clear ask for clarification this in turn will showcase that you are actively listening.

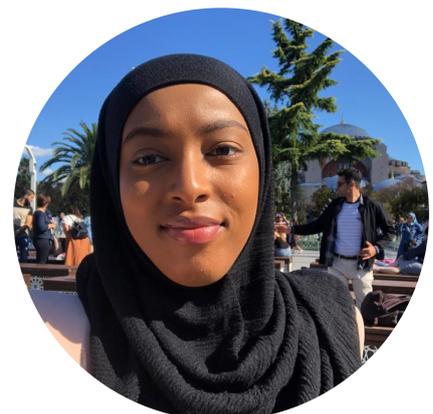
On the other hand, clear actions that are not beneficial to a conversation and should be avoided are; firstly, do not interrupt when the individual is speaking, do not judge or jump to conclusions, and lastly do not impose your opinions nor solutions on the other.

Sometimes, they might follow up with "What should I do?" this is when you start thinking about advice. By practicing active listening through focusing on the individual. And truly trying to comprehend the information relayed, that is when you are benefitting another individual and yourself. When you apply these methods yourself, you slowly start to realize whether someone else is actively listening to you or not.

A beautiful analogy inspired by a great friend of mine on a crucial part of active listening is "focus". When you see a beautiful artistic picture or a beautiful painting, you tend to look at every inch to see what is in the picture or what the painting is trying to relay. Art gives you a lens to see things through, take for example photography. Through photography, you look at an individual in a moment in time - a photo makes you focus on one point of view/one person. At that moment in time, you are hyper-focused on the individual or what that picture is saying to you. This act in itself when used during a conversation can be experienced and seen as active listening by solely focusing on the other person and what they are trying to relay.

*Amaal Ali*

**Amaal is a fourth-year IPM student, born and raised in the city of the Hague. As a hobby, she loves to read books and watch tv shows, from which she reads the reviews online. The different views on tv shows and movies are intriguing to her. Her interest in Collective grew when she noticed the variety in stories, such as articles mentioning social justice, sexism, and mental health. She feels that the articles are crucial as they cause people to be more understanding.**



# the mesmerizing art of music

With the help of today's technology, we are fortunate enough to be able to listen to music whenever we like. We can listen to an Opera by Giacomo Puccini or to a Travis Scott song just by the click of a button, the options are endless. Music has become a constant companion, and we are the composers of our own personal soundtrack. Humans seem to always have had a special connection to music, for example, the oldest found instrument is a 60 000 years old neanderthal flute. In the first millennium music was seen as a mirror of the heavenly world and music as a mover of earthly passion. (Sparshott and Goher 2001) When we engage with music we can feel the significance of it and feel our emotions being stirred. It is truly a human phenomenon, many philosophers and sociologists tried to understand.

Anthony Storr discusses in his book, *Music, and Mind*, that the primary function of music in societies is to bind people together. In every culture dancing and singing is celebrated and is rooted in old traditions. Ethnomusicologists were able to detect a trance state triggered by music in almost every culture but also other settings such as concerts. Trance can be defined as a state in which the emotional state is altered, and autonomic effects are triggered leading to altered states of consciousness. Music also seems to cause activity in certain brain structures that are known to regulate our emotions. Studies show that sad music can evoke or deepen feelings of sadness. At the same time music can be a source of happiness and inspiration brightening the mood of people. Pleasant music may calm our mood and reduce anger, while provoking music can lead to more negative feelings. So, what type of music we listen to clearly affects us.

This is maybe also why a lot of students like to listen to classical music while studying, since it seems to help them concentrate better. This is true to a certain extent. Classical music lowers the blood pressure other than music like jazz or pop, this may lead to lower levels of stress and anxiety. Listening to classical music may also improve some cognitive functions related to studying because the same areas of our brain are being used. Additionally, if someone genuinely enjoys listening to a certain type of music dopamine is released and can make study sessions, therefore, more rewarding. While classical music can be beneficial when working, popular music makes problem-solving and cognitive tasks more difficult. The vocals can be very disruptive when one is trying to concentrate. However, music with lyrics has a different strength and is very motivating. The brain tries to predict the pattern in music, is this pattern interrupted through unexpected changes dopamine is released and a strong emotional response is triggered in the listener. Humans are prone to move their bodies to external rhythmic stimuli, which is also caused by the great connection between the auditory and the motor system in the brain. So when we listen to music we almost automatically start moving to the beat. The beat also makes it easier for us to remember the lyrics of a song.



Music is perceived differently by everybody. That is also why we all have our own taste in music. However, we all share the feeling of nostalgia when it comes to music. We listen to a song and suddenly a memory pops up in our head. We connect the song to a feeling we felt in that moment and listening to this song again later in time brings forward these explicit memories. So not only is music a carrier of emotions but also of memories.

Research suggests that our taste in music says a lot about one's personality. Based on our ten favorite songs, researchers can make accurate judgments on how extroverted, creative and open-minded a person is. This makes sense since music is a way of expressing yourself.

***"We connect the song to a feeling we felt in that moment and listening to this song again later in time brings forward these explicit memories. So not only is music a carrier of emotions but also of memories."***

Another immense part of music is of course the lyrics. Obviously, they are part of how the artists express their thoughts and feelings. Listeners may be able to see things from their perspective or relate to them. The words create another layer of emotional depth and meaning. Songwriters write about everything, from love to personal struggles or even social issues. Many artists like Childish

Gambino or Little Simz make waves with their lyrics. For Example: *"Every day gets hotter than the one before. Running out of water, it's about to go down...I really thought this world could change. But it seems like the same."* (Childish Gambino, Feels like summer) *"Fuck those who don't believe. They will never wanna admit I'm the best here. From the mere fact that I've got ovaries. It's a woman's world, so to speak. Pussy, you sour. Never givin' credit where it's due 'cause you don't like pussy in power. Venom."* (Little Simz, Venom) They both created powerful messages, addressing different problems of today's society. They make their listeners think about these issues and maybe even inspire them to act. Songs can be very powerful; some would even argue that they can be lifesaving.



Music is an incredibly complex thing, which leaves everybody in awe. It has the power to connect, inspire, transform and trigger emotions and memories. It is rooted in tradition and is part of human heritage. Music speaks differently to each person and plays an important role in everybody's life. It quickly fades into the background or into white noise but we should try to consciously let ourselves hear the music.

*Elisa Klaffus*



**Elisa is a 20 years old, second-year ICM student. She was born in Paris; however, she is mostly German. She has lived in Germany, France, Belgium, U.S. and The Netherlands. She has always liked writing, but mostly wrote for herself. By joining Collective she wants to develop this skill. Besides writing she also enjoys reading, cooking, painting, trying new things, and hanging out with friends.**

# a letter that will be sent someday

Dear You Know Who,

I have lost my ability to express myself in writing because of various circumstances. I do not have the words by my side anymore. I tried to find solutions... and here is one of them. I will let a story talk for me this time. Let's hope that I will be able to give it enough life.

I look at my grandparents and see how love is developed over time. I know I am lucky that I managed to see that, and that I had a chance to admire them and to have a relationship with them. I look and see how deeply they take care of each other. Time is their only fear because they know that they are short of it. They've never stopped working one day in their life, but that never stopped them from falling in love over again. Here my story is going to be split into two.

***"I want to seal their love in these words in order to make sure that it will live on forever, or how long that forever wants to be."***

My grandparents from my father's side are special in their own way. They have their garden and they will never stop to make it perfect, or at least try to make it perfect. They are waiting for me to come and visit, hug them and smile, laugh and explain to them how my day was. When I was little I used to help them and play there and run around everywhere. When I got a bit older, I did not understand why their love was not like in movies. Why are they not holding hands, why do they not say "I love you" to each other? Because they did not have to. My grandpa used to have tears in his eyes when my grandma was a little sick or if she was in pain because of muscle ache or anything specific to her age. He had tears in his eyes because he could not take her pain away.

My grandma is the one that never shows/shares her feelings of concern, she keeps them to herself. She pays attention to the details. She always cooked the food that my grandpa likes for example. One time, he tried to do it himself, but it was a mess in the end. She always waited for the end of the day to stay inside with him, drink a glass of wine and talk about everything that crossed their minds. They used to always have a plan for the next day.

Now they talk only in my grandma's dreams. Because he is no longer with us for 5 years now. I remember that on the day of the funeral it rained. In my culture, if it rains, it means that the spirit wants to stay in this world longer. My grandma suffered a lot, she still does. One time I asked her if he visited her in her dreams. She said: "Yes. That is the reason I stopped crying. We can still have our talks at the end of the day. I wish I had more time to... waste with him. But I can still feel his love, and that love is what protected me for so long. I got over that heart attack because he took care of me in some way. My mission now is to love you and your cousin for the both of us for as long as I can in this world, and he has a lot of love to give you alone."



My other grandparents, the ones from my mother's side have so much love to share with everyone. They wake up in the morning and drink their coffee together. They talk a lot and afterwards, my grandpa leaves the house and he comes back in the evening. They eat their dinner together and talk again. My grandma is taking care of the papers (for their little construction firm) and the garden during the day. When I go and visit them I always see the way they look at each other and joke with each other. I always hear "You know how much I love you, right?" every time my grandpa makes a mistake. When he is talking about her, you can see how proud he is that he has her by his side. "I never knew what luck was until I met her". My grandma is strong, she can tackle anything as long as they are together. The only time I heard her say "I need a few moments to be myself again" was when my grandpa was in the hospital. That was the only time. In that second I understood what true love is. I asked her what she wished for. She told me "I want more and more time with your grandpa. I know it's selfish, but I have everything I need, except that. I want more time with him and spend our moments travelling, being happy that we have this family. I want to always drink our coffee or whiskey together. Everybody has a watch, but it doesn't have a second to spare when it comes to the moments that really matter, like being happy that the person you love in your life is right next to you. I always do that in the morning, stealing some seconds to look at him and smile that we managed to get where we are today. I know he loves to work and I want to see him happy."

***"Time is their only fear because they know that they are short of it. They've never stopped working one day in their life, but that never stopped them from falling in love over again"***

My words are meaningless to describe them. I am struggling to put my mind at work and make this story special. I want to seal their love in these words in order to make sure that it will live on forever, or how long that forever wants to be.

Love comes in different forms: honesty, a flower, a smile, a look, a second, a minute, an hour, a choice. I know so little about love. I feel like an impostor writing about it. But I am writing it to you. I do not feel like an impostor loving you.

There is a constant fear that I have... the fear of losing you. I am not the type of person who says "Stop, don't go", but I know that for you I would do that. Sometimes I feel that there is not much that I can teach you. I try to describe human interactions in the best way I can, maybe we can understand them better together. Love is something similar to... remembering the small details that make the other person happy, being open to a hug no matter the circumstances, being in a race against the clock to steal more and more seconds, calling in the morning and seeing if they woke up and everything else that can bring a smile.

Love is a balance between abstract and concrete. And every human has a different balance point. Some may need more abstract than concrete, some are the other way around. There is no exact formula. Why and how it happens cannot be described. But I want to offer you the love that you will never forget. I learn fast. Like my grandparents, I want to find with you the love that suits us, the love that makes us happy and the love that we want to share. I do not know how much time we have, but I want more for sure. I want to admire you more, I want to feel your love more, I want to be present in your life for as long as you want me to and more. I have my faults... a lot of them. And sometimes I feel like I am taking more from you than I give you. This can be the end. I make mistake after mistake. I want to be better, but who knows if I will be better fast enough not to lose you? I was told that I am not capable of loving, that I will spend my life as an invalid when it comes to emotions, but here I am, surprising myself, loving you.

I do not know what the future holds. But if the sky decides to fall over us, I know for sure that I will hold you in my arms till the end. We have the power to create a world that only we know how to live in. If the time takes us where it knows, I won't feel sorry for myself. I will be glad that ... (I wanted to say "that I fell in love with you", but we know that.. It is a lie)... I will still have the best time falling in love with you continuously, no matter the distance.

***"Love is a balance between abstract and concrete. And every human has a different balance point. Some may need more abstract than concrete, some are the other way around. There is no exact formula."***

I hate clichés and I feel like this letter is one. I want to apologise in advance. I tried to tell you a story... maybe ours, but I will never get to the end of it because I will be stuck in my absurd ambition of trying to explain what is happening. I can go in-depth about my emotions, maybe not competent enough to explain them with words, but with gestures. I want to go more in-depth about your emotions. I want to get to know them deeper. I respect the amount that you want to keep for yourself, and I will not get inside that world without permission. What is it like for you to feel? For me, it is like finally being alive.



I am patiently waiting to see how time will treat us. By then, I will live in the moment and enjoy every smile that you have to offer, every look that I can admire, every touch that is making me nervous, enjoy being next to you.

Till Forever Falls Apart and afterwards,

*You Know Who*

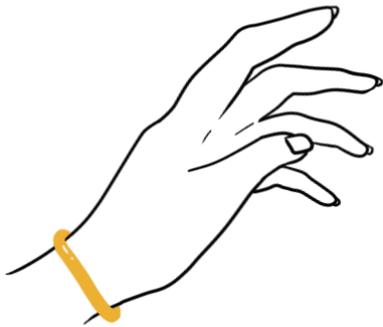


*Flavia Ioana Tofan*

**Flavia is an International Business student in her third year. She loves to read, play basketball, write and make her loved ones smile. She tries to describe the interaction between people and their feelings, even if sometimes it seems that there are no words for it.**

# The Importance Of Destigmatizing ADHD

I've been bottling up my thoughts on the stigma surrounding ADHD for a little while now, because I felt like no one would really take the time to actively understand how great of an impact it has had on so many individuals, in the past and now. But that is exactly where the problem lies for a mental disorder that is so often undermined and misunderstood.



In the upcoming age where mental health is prioritized more than ever, it's about time we teach people that ADHD needs to be taken seriously as a justified reason to not be able to keep up with the fast-paced life designed by and for neurotypical people that is normalized. The stigma on ADHD often demotivates people to get the help that is needed for a diagnosis or proper therapy due to feelings of shame for having a lower capacity. This becomes dangerous when that shame evolves and depressive or anxious thoughts sneak in.

In the past, ADHD was always stapled as a label for kids who liked to cause trouble and couldn't sit still. Specifically, in women, ADHD was rarely ever diagnosed as the symptoms differ greatly for men and women. Because of this, many people were ashamed to get help and therefore have accepted to deal with their issues on their own.

Throughout the last 4 decades, as more research was done on mental disorders, it became normalized as a disorder and young individuals generally feel more comfortable addressing mental health-related topics to their parents, teachers, and friends. More schools now offer facilities as well that make studying a little easier.

Some of the most important symptoms of the disorder are still unknown to most people—which is one of the main reasons it is so misunderstood. Symptoms such as intense mood swings, sensitivity to boredom, executive dysfunction, anxiety, and self-deprecating thoughts are common in many people diagnosed with ADHD, but often written off and downplayed as something that can be fixed.

**"Studies show that three-quarters of Australian study participants believe the disorder is overdiagnosed."**

This only adds to the spiral of negative thoughts as people are taught from a young age that these symptoms are their own fault; symptoms that inherently are not even right or wrong, but simply decided so by neurotypical standards because the world is not designed for brains that are wired differently and require different needs.

This problem can easily be identified in students suffering from a deeply rooted and overlooked issue in the educational system. Often, people with ADHD tend to perform very well in school at a young age and are encouraged to pursue a higher level of education. However, once planning and organizational skills are expected without the help of teachers, it's often found out too late that that level of education is simply too demanding. Without proper help, students with brilliant minds fall behind quickly and are left to blame themselves. And so, assignments remain undone until the last minute, healthy sleep cycles are difficult to keep up with and life just seems to go one pace too fast.

A good example of how untreated ADHD can have a big impact on the rest of someone's life is due to high sensitivity to boredom. Say, you manage to get your degree after conquering all your challenges- congratulations! You did it! The next chapter of life is right around the corner where you'll start your career, which doesn't mean it'll get any easier. Due to a lesser diffusion of dopamine in the brain, people with ADHD simply do not get the same level of satisfaction from doing ordinary tasks, which is experienced as boredom and gnaws on your motivational levels.

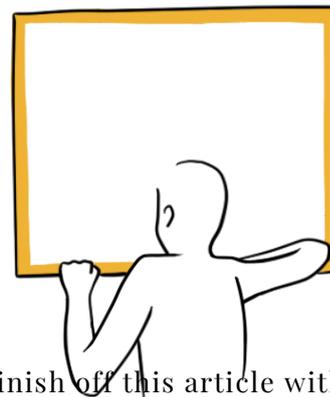
**"Executive dysfunction can express itself in the inability to start a task, resulting in hours, days or months of procrastination for something that could be finished in minutes."**

Because of this, people with ADHD often tend to get bored quickly in their careers and either switch jobs frequently or are more likely to become depressed if the job is too understimulating.



What can help make this manageable, though, is to find a career path that is diverse and stimulating enough that change is not needed to keep the brain engaged. Unfortunately, this is often not realized by young individuals until work-life has begun, and change becomes a lot harder to pursue.

This issue does not only cover ADHD, but many other individuals that suffer from mental issues. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, roughly 1 in 5 adults were diagnosed with a mental illness in 2019 in the United States. The most commonly diagnosed of which are anxiety disorders and mood disorders, which both greatly impact the ability to accomplish tasks and succeed in an educational or career-focused environment. If we want to create equal opportunities for everyone, we should not abandon those who are struggling mentally. It's high time for a change.



I'd like to finish off this article with a quick note to everyone that has not been doing so well lately. If you have been struggling with mental issues, please remain kind to yourself and seek help wherever you can. Whether you can get professional treatment or simply the support of your friends- you deserve to get yourself the help you need to grow!

*Murell Zwerus*

**Murell is a second-year European Studies student with a big amount of love for politics and a passion for mental health improvement. She believes that self discovery is life's most important purpose. In her free time, she loves scouring second hand stores and making art with friends.**

# Body Positivity

## A MOVEMENT OR MIRAGE?

### **When did it start?**

We've all heard of the #bodypositivity movement or just the phrase body positivity. Depending on what you look like, feel about yourself, or even the corner of social media you frequently visit, it means something different to all of us. This movement didn't just start with a single post on Instagram a few years ago to make people feel good about having a stretch mark or a slightly pudgy tummy. It can be traced back to the 60s, at least one of its roots can be traced back to when the National Association to Aid Fat Americans (today known as the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance or NAAFA) was started.

### **What does it mean?**

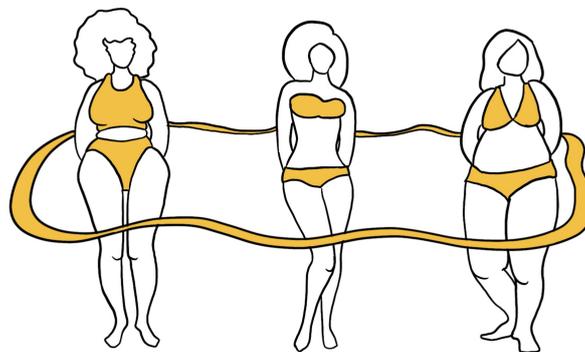
NAAFA was started in America to help educate, bring acceptance, and advocate for the rights of fat people in America. Over 50 years later, a movement with a much broader scope in terms of whom it represents and where it operates has/d emerged. Body positivity, in essence, should mean that everybody type regardless of shape, colour, size, scarring, or other flaw is beautiful. We live in the golden age of social media, where we can lighten or darken our skin, we can create or accentuate curves with an app or hide flaws and scars with filters. Yet somehow at this point, 50 years later, we shouldn't need to still be championing loving yourself as you are right?

### **What has it achieved?**

Has the movement really achieved anything? Has it helped reach greater acceptance of different body types? I think this is a discussion with many different answers that depend on what you feel the movement is about. For some, it has helped make it easier for them to feel comfortable in their own skin, for some, it has promoted a culture of unhealthy eating and obesity, for others, it hasn't really achieved anything because we all still want to change something about ourselves. I do feel that this movement has helped many people of different body types feel more confident with themselves and be more visible in society. However, there is still a long way to go in terms of representation and systemic change. Whilst it's nice to be able to see a picture of a plus-size woman in a crop top not receiving hateful comments online, it does nothing if that same woman isn't able to get a job because a company feels that she doesn't really fit their image or that she is not competent enough to do the job because of her 'health'.

**"Body positivity, in essence, should mean that every body type regardless of shape, colour, size, scarring, or other flaw is beautiful."**

Even though this movement was started to represent all body types, many groups of people still aren't represented. Visibly disabled people rarely get to be on the front cover of fashion magazines, men with big stomachs or 'dad bods' aren't seen as the love interest in most romantic movies, and many clothing stores, brands or chains still don't carry sizes above a large! These three examples have often been brought up and used to argue against the movement, some have said that maybe there aren't enough disabled models, or movies are just fiction, and if a store doesn't have your size shop somewhere else! These, however, are struggles that marginalised groups frequently talk about, that because of something they may or may not have control over they aren't represented or compared to conventionally attractive or able-bodied people. The goal isn't to elevate or diminish any body type, isn't to force inclusion, and it certainly isn't to glorify bad health, but it is to ensure equal treatment of people without bias because of physical appearance.



### **Body positivity is for who?**

A question that comes up a lot during discourse around this movement is who this movement is for. Who is represented by this movement? Some people argue that it is for fat people only because they are the most affected group of people, others argue that it is predominantly for women who have for years been preyed upon by the beauty and diet industries, or that it is for any and every person who feels that their intrinsic value as a person is diminished because they aren't conventionally attractive. Again, who is the face of the body positivity movement? Many people have claimed that there is a lack of intersectionality in the movement. The way a black woman, a disabled non-binary person, a white woman, a transgender person, view their bodies and how society views them is very different. To view beauty and to an extent health through one lens is to erase the struggles of many other people.

Body positivity doesn't just refer to the body but to all aspects of our physical body, our noses, eyes, our hair, our legs and everything in between make up our bodies. That is why not including visibly disabled people, people with skin conditions, or those with amputations in those represented in the movement is wrong. All bodies should be accepted and embraced because we are more than just what we present on the outside. Our value as members of society should not be determined or valued based on what size jeans we wear.

### **How many ways can we interpret it?**

The way in which we view something determines how we react and interact with it. A question I've always wondered about/asked myself is: whether this movement was meant to make society view certain body types more positively or for people whose bodies have been viewed as undesirable and ugly to view themselves positively? If it was meant for society to have a positive perception of some people then I don't think that goal has been achieved. Bodies that aren't runway model thin or Instagram influencer curvy still aren't considered acceptable or beautiful. I think sometimes people conflate acceptance with attraction, meaning you don't need to be attracted to someone to respect their humanity and dignity. If the movement was intended to let people view their bodies positively then I think we are closer to that than we were a decade ago.

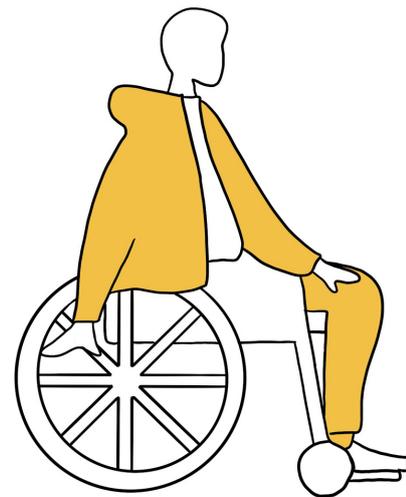
**Do fashion trends dictate/reflect body positivity aims or the other way around?**

A good indicator of how far we have come in terms of acceptance of all body types is to look at fashion trends. From the styles and sizes that the fashion industry pushes on us, we can see what type of body is trending, and there might be where the problem lies, that a body type can be trending or popular. Many brands, whether high-end or more affordable, haven't always been inclusive in terms of sizes for clothes and undergarments (particularly for women in terms of lingerie). Although various brands have taken steps to be more inclusive and more companies have started to cater specifically to plus-size people, there is still the issue of how these bodies are treated outside of social media. Systemic changes are the only way we'll be able to achieve any lasting results. We need to make sure that we all have access to healthcare, healthy food, face real consequences for discrimination based on physical appearances, accommodations made to schools and offices for those who need them, etc. in terms of fashion trends and clothing, everyone should be able to buy clothes that fit them and make them comfortable without feeling like they do not fit an aesthetic or trend.

**"Systemic changes are the only way we'll be able to achieve any lasting results."**

**Has it made a difference?**

Whilst the pessimist in me believes that nothing has gotten better and there is still rampant discrimination, a part of me does acknowledge that steps have been taken to address these issues, that the movement has made a difference in some people's lives. No movement is perfect because we as human beings are not perfect, that said we can still make an effort to be more inclusive and ensure that even if we don't fit a certain look or aesthetic, our inherent value as people is still acknowledged and respected.



*Rumbidzai Mudzongo*

**Rumbi is a bookworm who is obsessed with history and crime documentaries. She is in her second year of International and European Law. Rumbi is from Zimbabwe but she has been living in the Netherlands for about a year now. Her favourite quote is "life is too short to be at war with yourself, be at peace from within."**



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**OMBUDSMAN**

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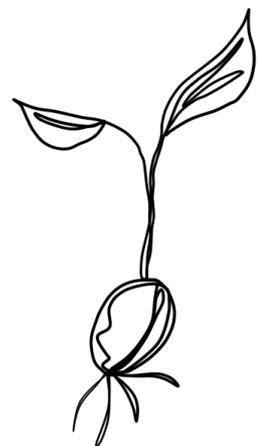
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