

# LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

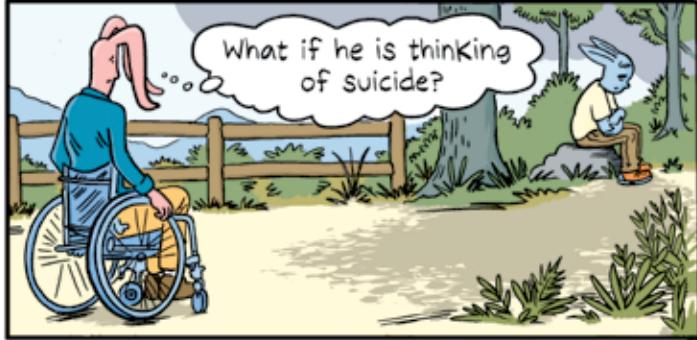
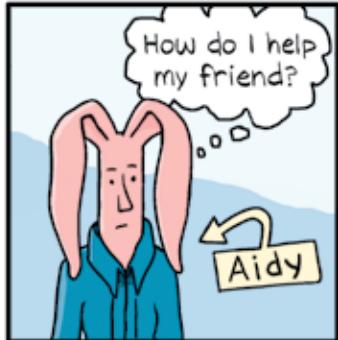
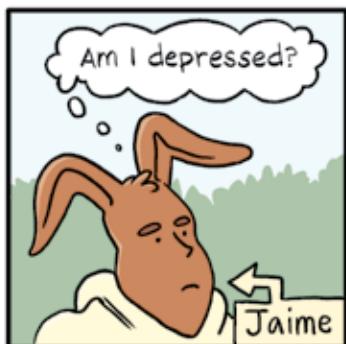
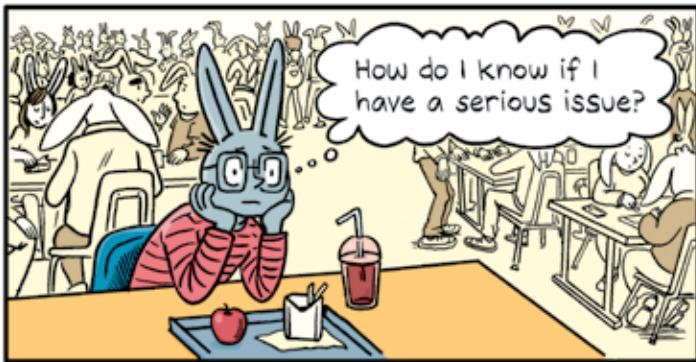


A GRAPHIC GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH



# TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CAN BE WEIRD

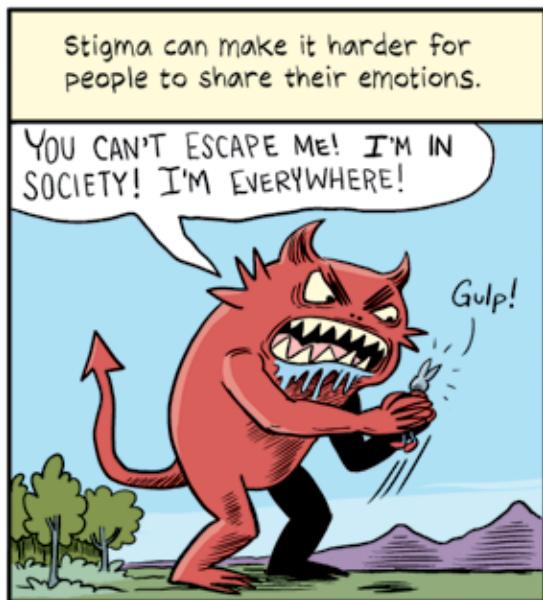
And what does it even mean to be mentally healthy?





EMOTIONS CAN BE HARD TO TALK ABOUT, PARTLY BECAUSE OF STIGMA.

A stigma is a negative label that sets a person apart from others and leads to discrimination.



When we buy into these stigmas and stereotypes, we can develop shame and low self-esteem.

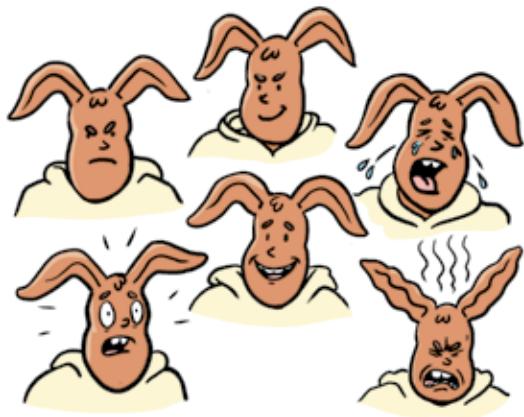


We can defeat stigma by realizing we are not alone, accepting help, and having conversations about what is going on mentally and emotionally.

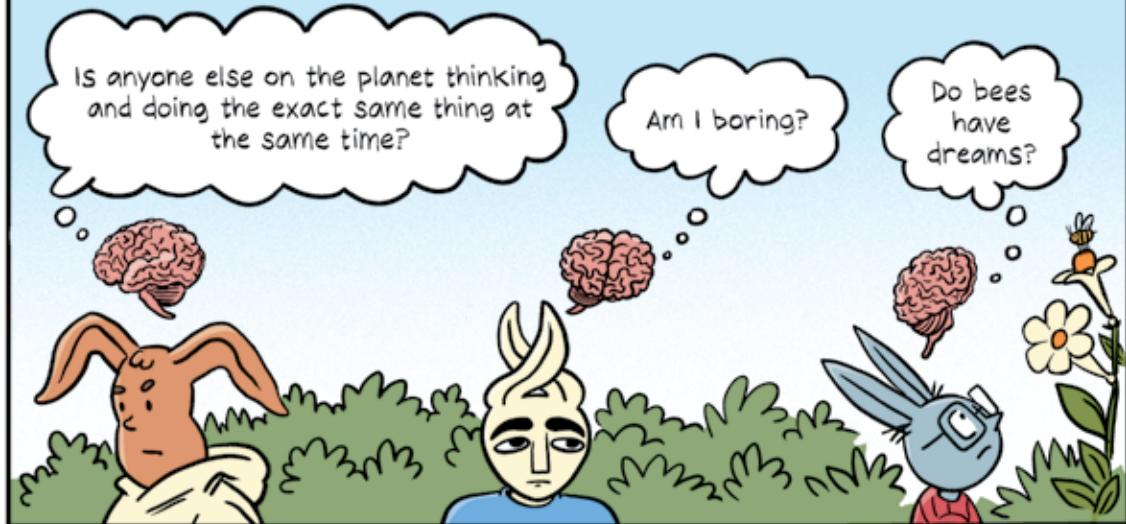


Let's talk about your brain.

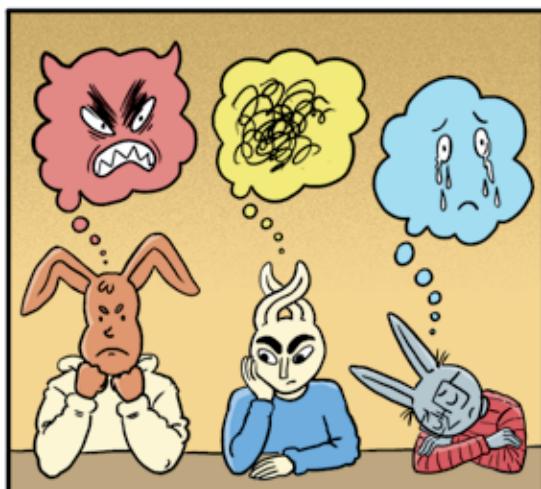
It's a place where emotions begin...



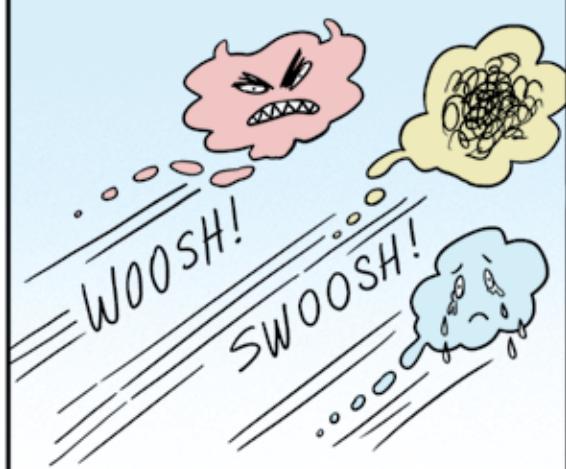
...and where thoughts take shape.



Sometimes our brains are going to create upsetting emotions and negative thoughts.



These are a normal part of life...



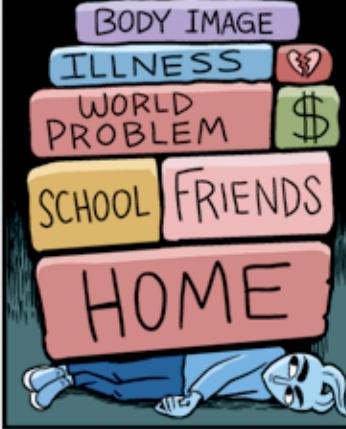
..which eventually pass.

# WHAT IS STRESS?

Is stress a feeling of being pulled in too many directions?



Is stress the pressure of daily life weighing you down?



Or is stress a presence lurking in the background as you go about your day?



Stress is mental or emotional strain. This is something everyone experiences.



It can cause physical changes in the body...



...and in short bursts can actually be a good thing.



The stress response has evolved to keep us safe.



Research shows that thinking skills improve as stress increases.



It can help us prepare for a performance, exam, or athletic competition. Usually, after a stressful event, the body returns to its normal state.

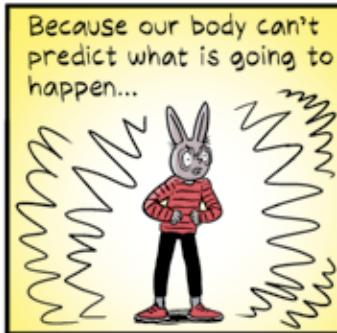


# WHAT TO DO WITH STRESS

It is not good to be stressed all the time.

Because our body can't predict what is going to happen...

...we go into a state of perpetual alertness.



If we aren't able to calm our body and brain, then this can cause problems.



Stress can make us physically and mentally sick!

There are many healthy ways to manage stress.

Be in nature



Breathe



Exercise



Make music



Spend time with pets



Make food



Listen to music



Dance



Read



MIND HABIT TIP



Using social media more than three hours a day can increase feelings of depression, anxiety, poor body image, loneliness, and stress.

REST.

# STRESS AND SLEEP!



Why does lack of sleep make life harder?

Because our brain needs to rest, recharge, and repair.



Lack of sleep affects memory and concentration and can lead to...



...weakened physical ability



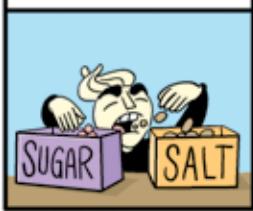
...skin issues like acne



...nasty moods



...bad eating habits



...unsafe driving



...and chemical dependence.



Missing sleep can make us physically and mentally sick.



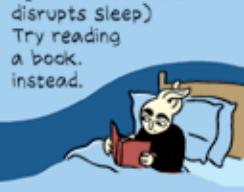
## BE NICE TO YOUR BRAIN!

HERE ARE SOME SLEEP HABIT TIPS!

At bedtime, try taking a bath or shower (this will leave you extra time in the morning).



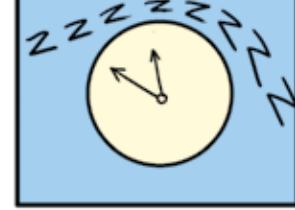
Avoid the T.V., computer, and your phone before you go to bed. (Blue light from screens disrupts sleep)  
Try reading a book instead.



Stay away from coffee, tea, soda/pop, and chocolate late in the day. (Nicotine and alcohol also interfere with sleep.)



Keep a sleep routine so that your brain learns the signals of when it is time to go to bed.



If you find yourself worrying or unable to stop your thoughts enough to relax, grab a notebook or a journal to create a to-do list or just to get your thoughts down on paper and out of your mind.



Make your sleep space a safe haven. Keep it cool, quiet, and dark.

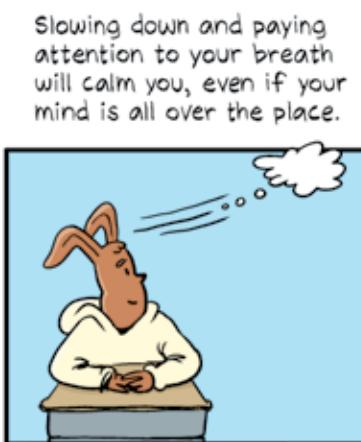
Establish a bedtime and waketime and stick to it.

Try to stick to your schedule (or as close as you can) on weekends too.

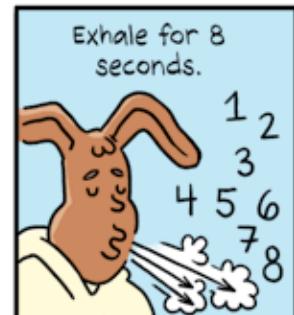
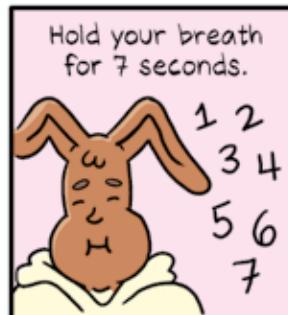
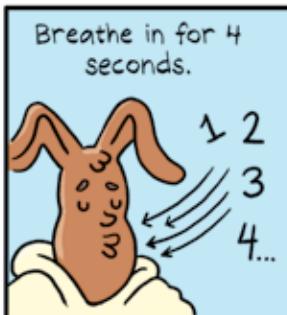


# MINDFULNESS IS A STRESS-FIGHTING SUPER POWER

Focusing on the present, the here and now, without judgment can help ground you.



TRY THE  
4-7-8  
BREATHING  
EXERCISE:



ANOTHER WAY TO BE MINDFUL IS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE

## FIVE SENSES

### TOUCH



Find something to touch.

### HEARING



Listen to soothing sounds or music.

### TASTE



Take a drink of water.

### SCENT



Find a smell that you enjoy.

### SIGHT



Look at something calming.

When your worries return to your mind, bring your attention back to your senses.

Mindfulness is great but sometimes...



...things happen.



How do we respond?



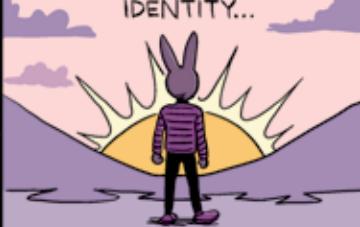
**RESILIENCE:** the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness

## BECOME MORE RESILIENT BY...

BEING CONNECTED TO OTHERS...



HAVING A POSITIVE IDENTITY...



FEELING SAFE...



TALKING TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST...



PARTICIPATING...



OR JOINING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.



Being part of something makes you stronger.



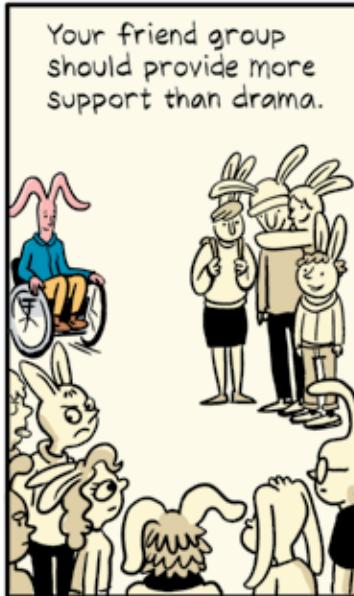
CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING TO HELP OTHERS...



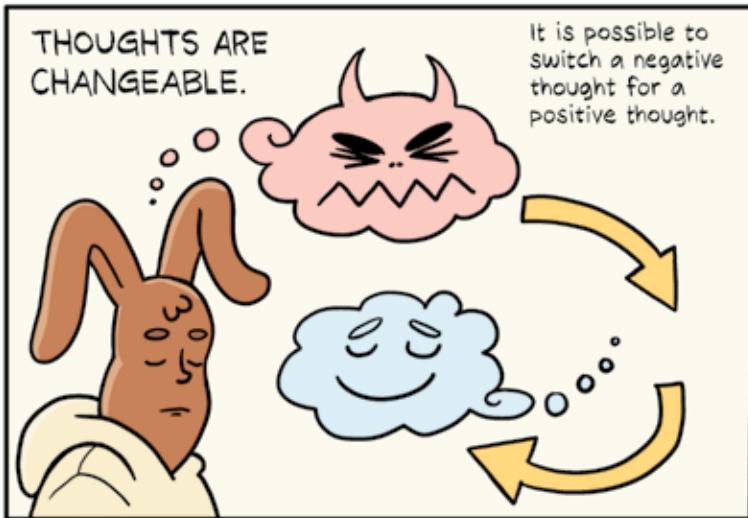
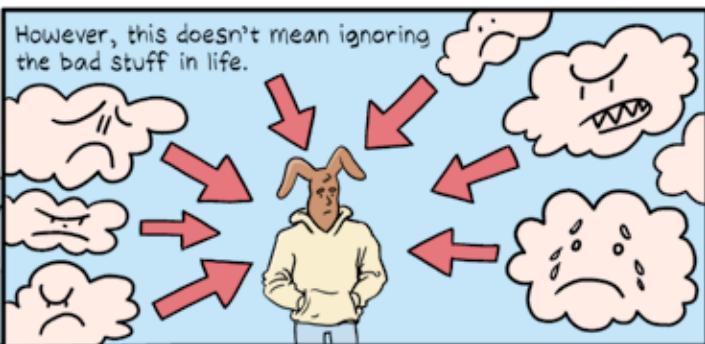
Also, spending time with a pet or friendly animal can reduce anxiety and lift your mood!



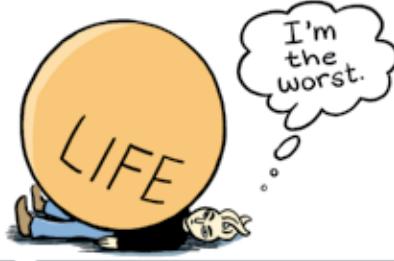
THE PEOPLE YOU  
ASSOCIATE WITH  
INCREASE OR DECREASE  
YOUR RESILIENCE.



# CAN A POSITIVE MINDSET IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH?



There are ways that people deal with stress, painful emotions, and negative thoughts that cause harm.



People often keep it a secret, but the urge to harm is common.

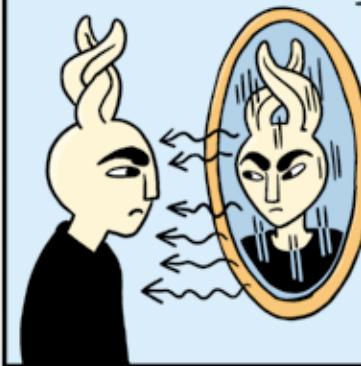


## HARM TO SOMEONE ELSE:



VIOLENCE  
YELLING  
BULLYING  
CRUELTY

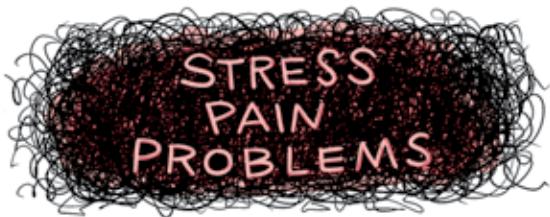
## HARM TO YOURSELF:



- AVOIDANCE
- EATING DISORDER
- CUTTING, SCRATCHING, PICKING...
- DAMAGING HAIR
- DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR
- SUBSTANCE ABUSE

(Any behavior that hurts your body or mind.)

Acting on negative impulses can distract you from bad feelings but it only offers temporary relief because the underlying reasons still remain.



And the longer this behavior goes on the more likely it becomes an...



Harmful coping mechanisms can be hard to quit on your own.



Reaching for harmful ways to cope is a sign that there is an unmet underlying need.



Speaking to someone about it is the first step toward understanding the behavior and finding relief.

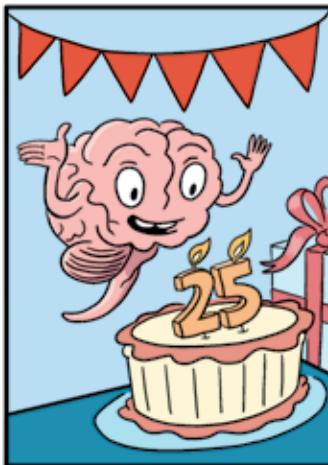


# THINK ABOUT YOUR BRAIN...

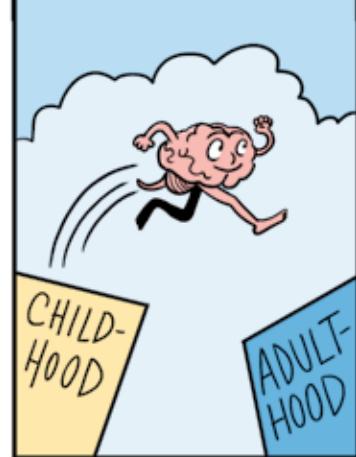


...BECAUSE YOUR BRAIN IS WHAT THINKS!

Did you know that your brain is not finished developing until you are around 25 years old?



A brain goes through a dramatic change as it ages.

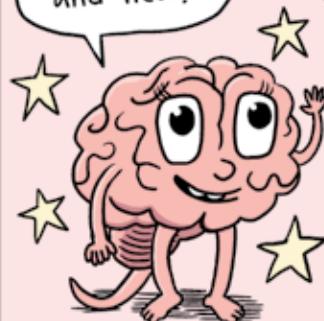


## YOUNG BRAINS

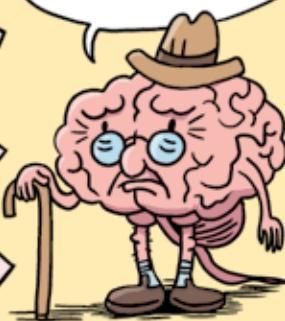
ARE VERY DIFFERENT FROM

## OLD BRAINS

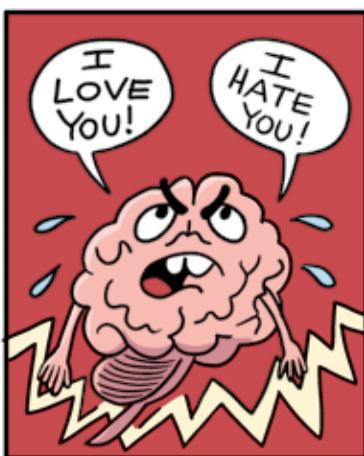
I'm fresh and new!



I've been around for a while.

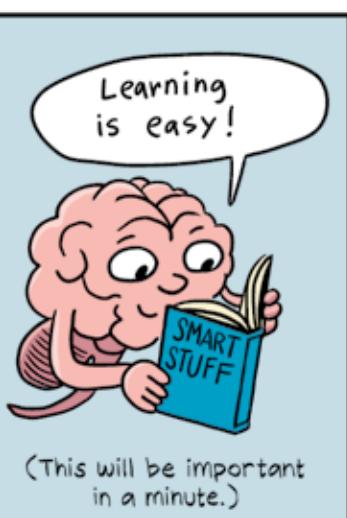


Teen brains have more intense emotions...



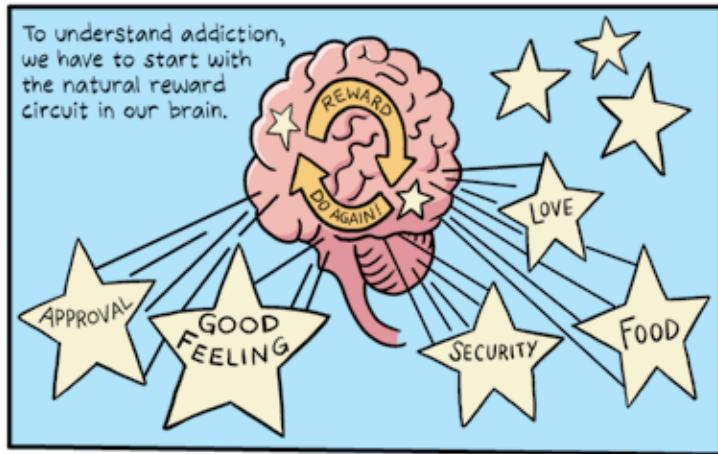
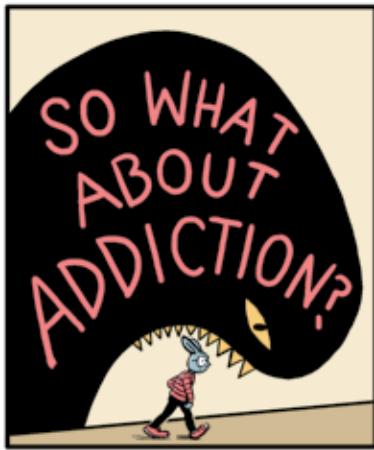
...and powerful learning abilities.

Adolescence also comes with intensified reward-seeking and risk-taking...

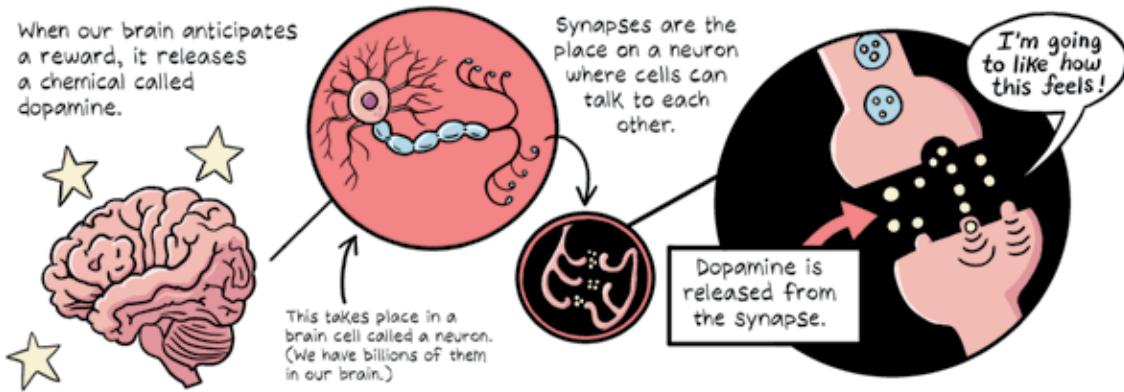


...which unfortunately can lead to substance abuse and addiction.





When our brain anticipates a reward, it releases a chemical called dopamine.

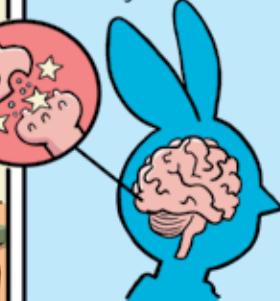


**DOPAMINE IS A GOOD THING BECAUSE WE NEED IT FOR SURVIVAL!**

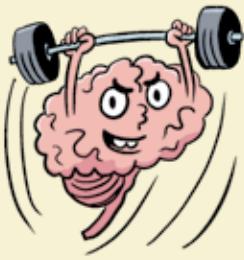
However, the reward system goes wrong when the brain is exposed to drugs and alcohol at a young age.



Since addiction is a form of learning and younger brains are super-charged for learning...



...it builds a reward circuit around that substance that can lead to a much stronger, harder, longer addiction.



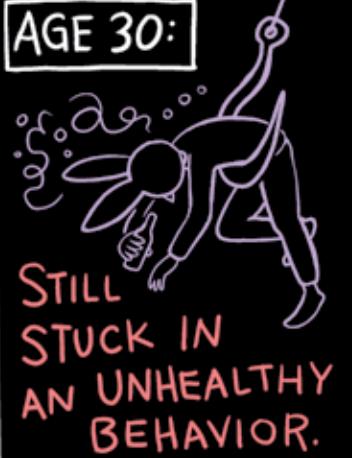
It makes sense that younger brains are more likely to get hooked on chemicals.



**AGE: 14**



**AGE 30:**



# BE AWARE OF THE RISK OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE WHILE YOUR BRAIN IS STILL DEVELOPING.

With repeated use, the chemicals in alcohol and drugs change the brain itself, making you less aware that your life is going off the rails.



Things may start to go wrong at home, school, work, and in your personal life.



Repeated use also makes your life situation worse, which increases stress and feeds into the negative loop.



Without a change, addiction can lead to broken promises, damaged relationships, and tragic deaths.



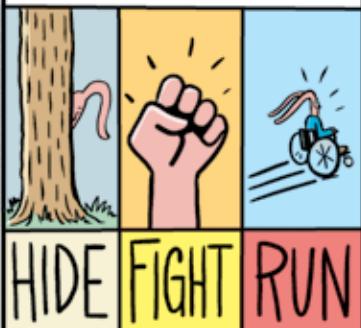
Learning to manage your emotions with healthy coping skills is better than risking brain damage.

The most reliable path for keeping your mind and body healthy and stable is to be sober by preference, choice, or necessity.



# LET'S TALK ABOUT ANXIETY

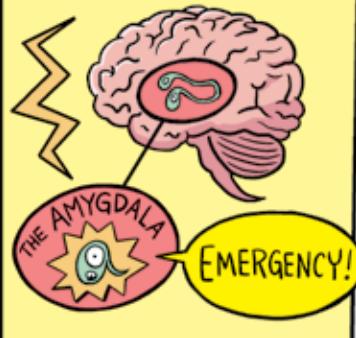
Anxiety is an alarm from our brain's fight, flight or freeze response.



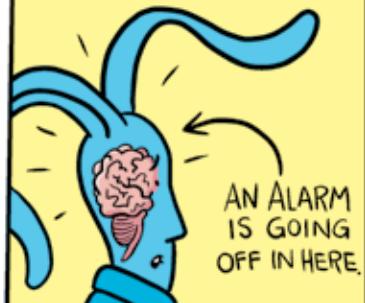
...or a severe experience like a panic attack.



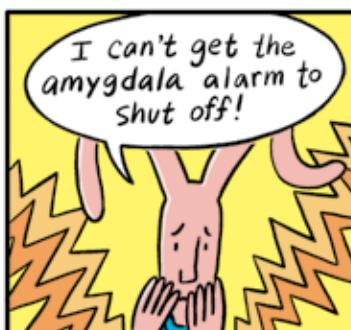
There is an area of our brain that can get stuck in emergency alarm mode.



Anxiety is a normal experience for all people living in this complex world. It can be a mild sensation of worry or fear...



There is a difference between anxiety and an anxiety disorder which does not go away on its own.



The good news is that anxiety disorders are treatable. The first step is asking for help!



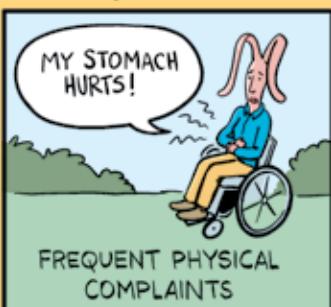
## SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY:



TROUBLE SLEEPING



EXCESSIVE WORRY ABOUT EVERYDAY STUFF



FREQUENT PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS



DIFFICULTY PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL

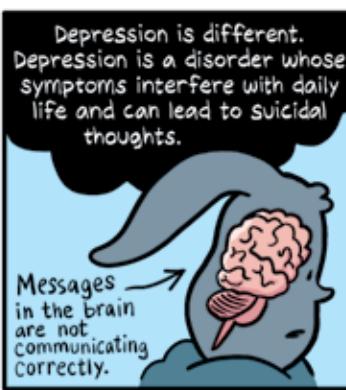
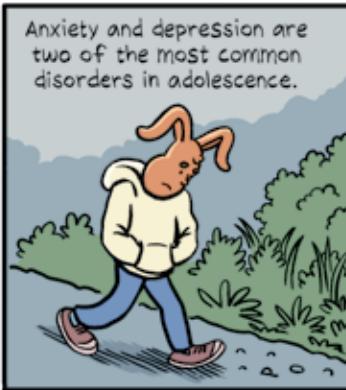


TROUBLE INTERACTING WITH PEERS

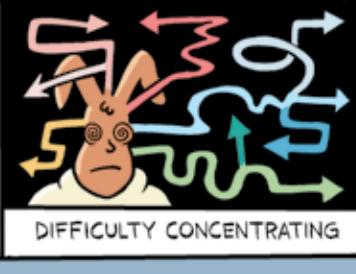
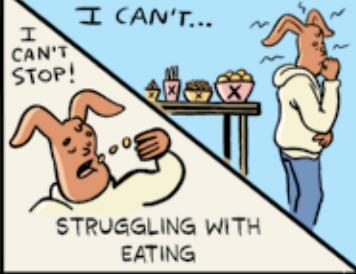
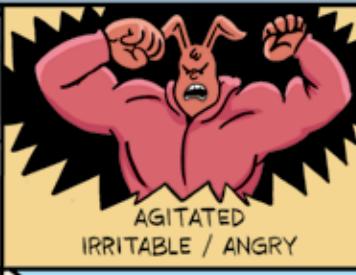
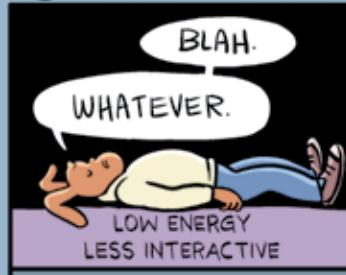


BEING OVERLY SELF CRITICAL

# LET'S TALK ABOUT DEPRESSION



## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION:



# Addressing Thoughts About Suicide



# A Conversation About Suicide

You might be the person someone reaches out to in a crisis.



Know that talking about suicide does not cause someone to be suicidal.



Don't keep secrets about suicide. Talk to a trusted adult if you are worried about your friend.



It is better to lose a friendship than a friend.



Most people want to live; they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems.



It's okay to ask directly.



Remember that if you have immediate concerns, you can call 911 right away.



You can encourage your friend to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at:

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

By taking the time to notice and reach out to a peer, you can be at the beginning of a positive solution.



There is help out there for you no matter what you're struggling with.



If you are ever in a crisis you can call a national hotline anytime, 24 hours a day.

1-800-273-8255

En español:

1-888-628-9454

Via TTY:

(Telecommunication for the deaf.)

1-800-799-4889

**OR TEXT:  
741-741**

TO REACH THE SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE.



If you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning, there is a hotline called...

**THE  
TREVOR  
PROJECT**  
CALL:   
**1-866-488-7386**

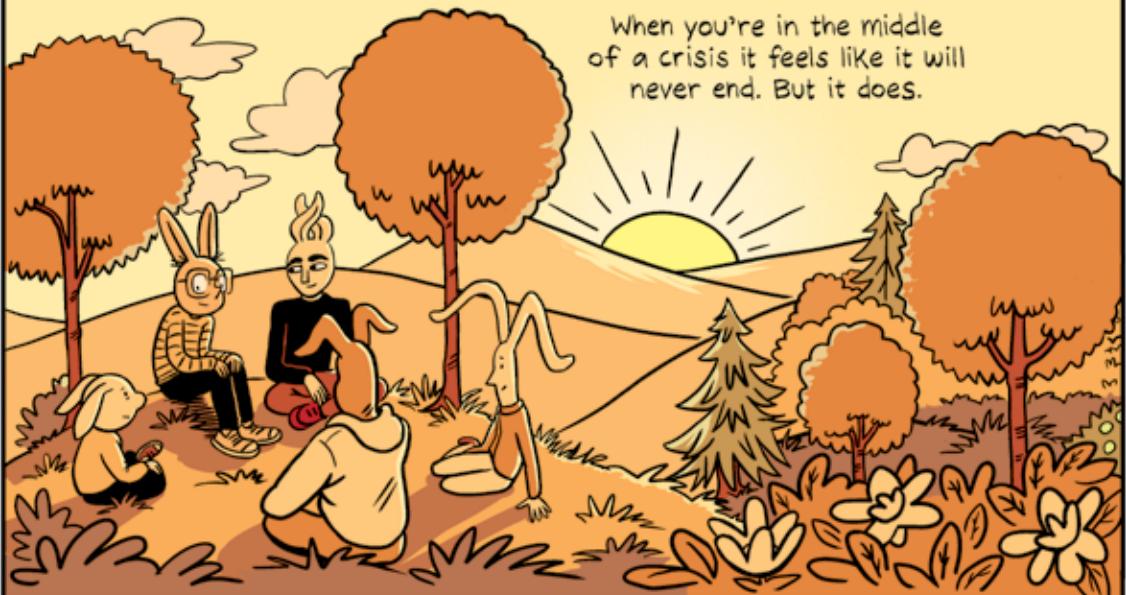
It is a safe and judgment-free space to talk. They can give advice about any issue.



We know that having support is important! Research has found that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans youth have much higher levels of suicidal ideation than their straight or cis peers.



When you're in the middle of a crisis it feels like it will never end. But it does.

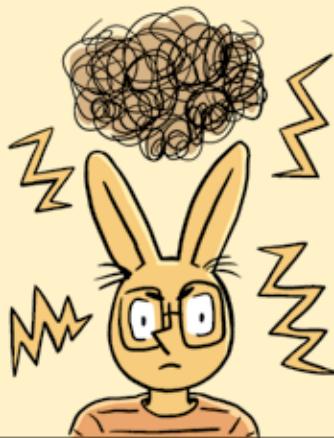


# Seek Help For Your Mental Health

We Know the routine when we get sick or injure ourselves physically.



But what do we do when we are not feeling 100% mentally?



Like with any problem, it is best not to ignore these things.



We can't let stigma stop us from seeking help.



Therapy can help us deal with intense emotions, get through a crisis, manage a mental illness, and create a better understanding of ourselves.



If you or your family are concerned about how to pay for mental health or substance abuse services, don't let that stop you from seeking help.

Talk to your local mental health/substance abuse board about options to help pay for services.



To begin, seek help from a trusted adult at home, school, etc., who can help you. Next, visit a doctor for a medical exam to check whether your symptoms could be related to a physical illness.



After medical disorders have been ruled out, then it's time to get referred to a mental health professional.



This is an urgent situation.

Keep in mind that it can take a while to get an appointment with a specialist. If you need to see a specialist right away, speak up to get an appointment sooner.



# How to Start Seeing A Therapist

In the beginning you may be asked to complete a questionnaire or answer a series of questions.



Be ready to talk about your health history and what you're experiencing.



Feel free to ask questions about what will happen in your treatment.



How long will it take for me to feel better—  
a few days, weeks,  
or months?

How often should we meet?

Do I have to take medication? What does it help with? What are the side effects?

What can I do between appointments if I need help?

How should I monitor my progress?

The goal is to connect with an adult in the field of psychology that you trust and can talk to.

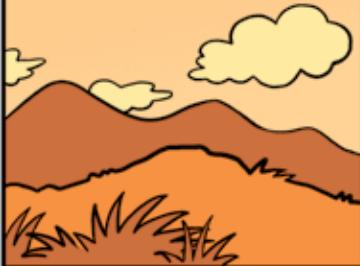
It's good to have someone you feel safe with who really listens.

Research shows again and again that the most important factor in positive therapy outcomes is the **RELATIONSHIP** between the therapist and client.

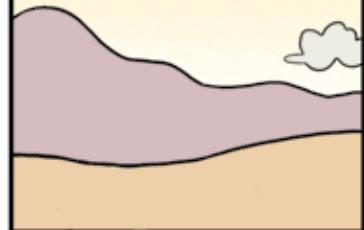


# IT IS OKAY TO HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER

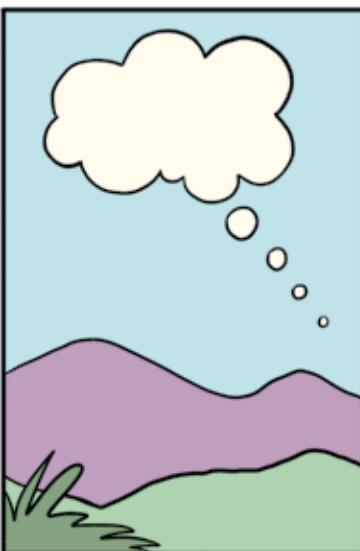
Having a mental health disorder doesn't mean that you are a bad person...



Anyone can develop a mental health disorder. One in six youth (age 6-17) experience a mental health disorder each year. That's millions of people!



People in any culture can experience mental health disorder symptoms (though they might think about mental health differently or describe symptoms differently).



The important thing is that you should get some help.



If treatment is needed, talking with a provider who understands your culture might be helpful.



Mental health disorders are treatable. Young people can recover.



# Mental Health Resources

There are many kinds of therapies and organizations that support mental health.



Each person's situation and experience is unique.



The important thing is to find the resources that work best for you.



Take time to research your options.



One-on-one talk therapy



Group Therapy



Telehealth



Bibliotherapy



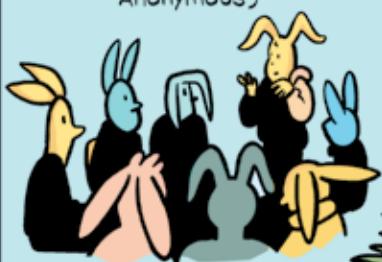
Therapy and medication



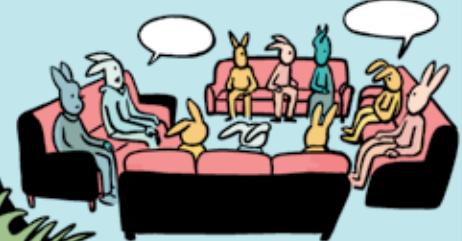
Residential Care



Twelve step groups (such as Alcoholics Anonymous)



Adolescent Treatment Units



## TO THOSE WHO WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT...

There are many ways to start a conversation about or advocate for mental health.



## TO THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING...



## TO THOSE WHO CAN OFFER SUPPORT...



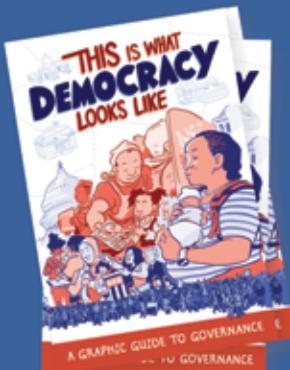
AT  
*The CENTER for CARTOON STUDIES*  
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## ABOUT THIS COMIC'S CARTOONIST

CARA BEAN is a cartoonist and art educator. She is excited about how the beginning of complex ideas can emerge from the simple act of doodling on paper. Cara provides workshops on creativity to various public forums. [carabeancomics.com](http://carabeancomics.com)



This comic book originated in Stark County, Ohio through the Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Board's System of Care Mental Health Awareness Campaign



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