

# LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

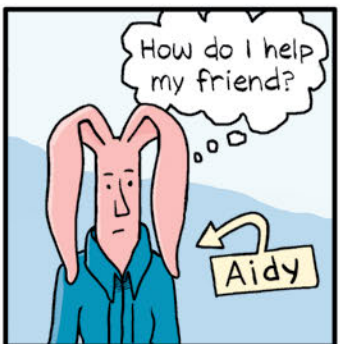
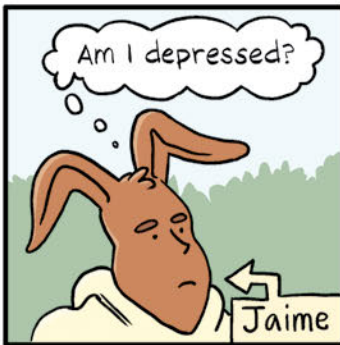
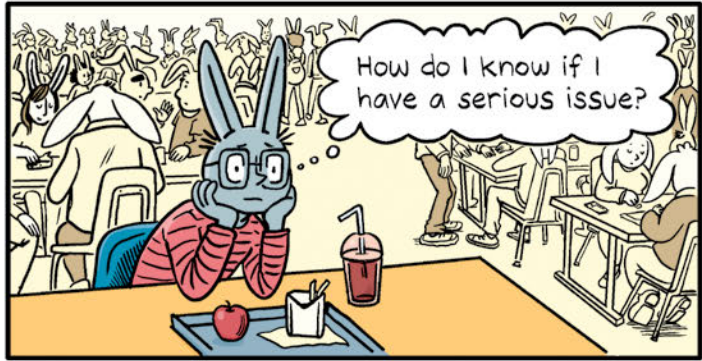


A GRAPHIC GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH



# TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CAN BE WEIRD

And what does it even mean to be mentally healthy?



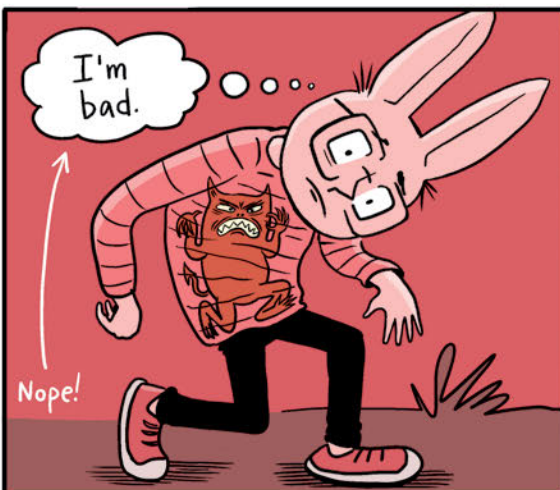


EMOTIONS CAN BE HARD TO TALK ABOUT, PARTLY BECAUSE OF STIGMA.

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



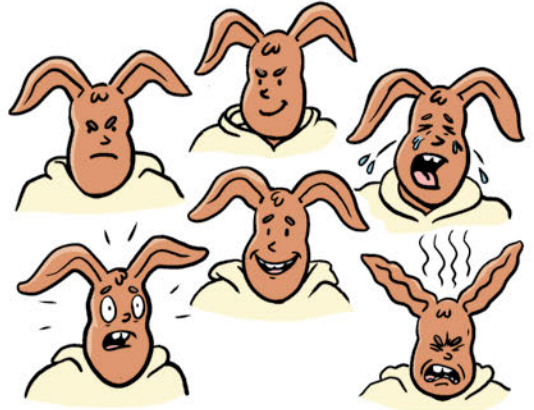
When we buy into these stigmas and stereotypes, we can develop shame and low self-esteem.



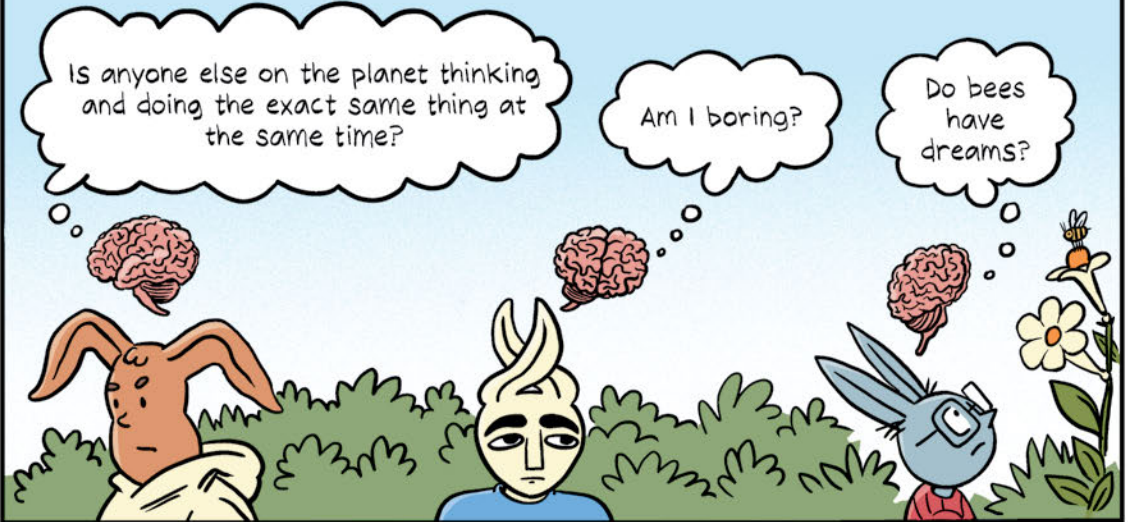
Let's talk about your brain.



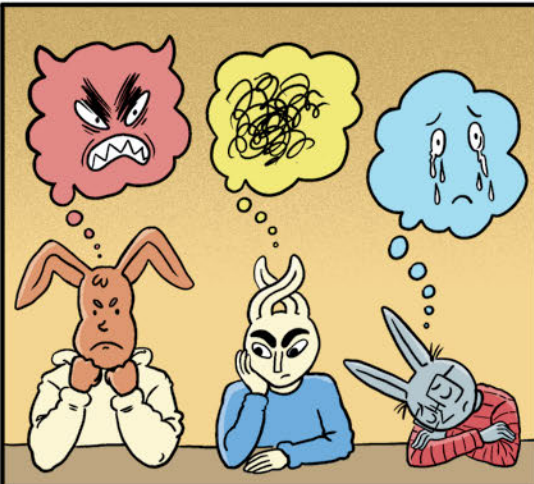
It's a place where emotions begin...



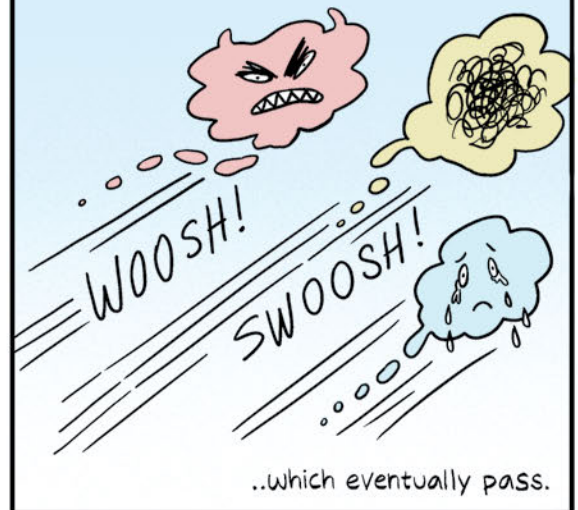
...and where thoughts take shape.



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...



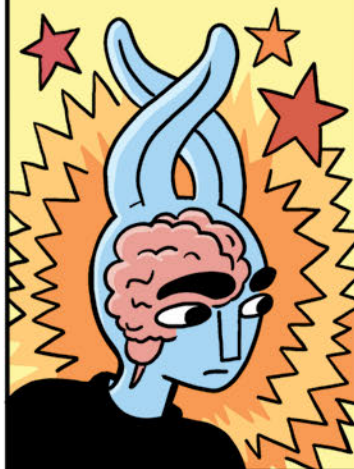
...and in short bursts can actually be a good thing.



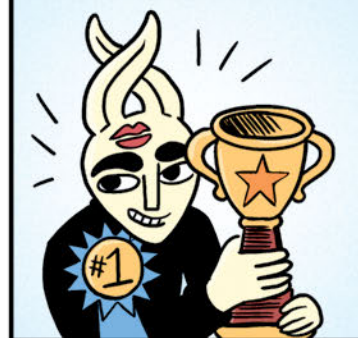
The stress response has evolved to keep us safe.



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

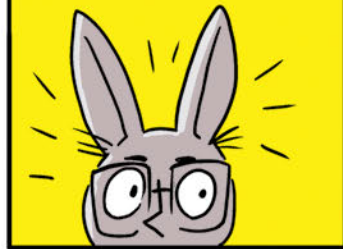
It is not good to be stressed all the time.



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



make art



Talk to someone you trust



Exercise



Make music



Yoga

Clean and organize



Spend time with pets



Make food



Listen to music



Dance



write about it



Laugh



Read

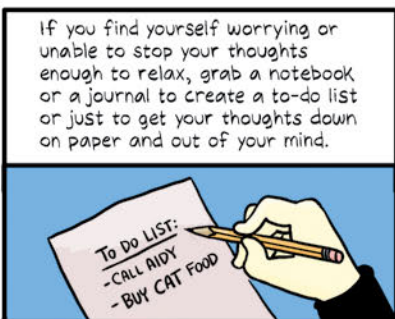
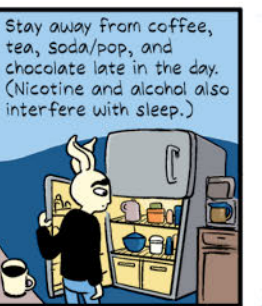
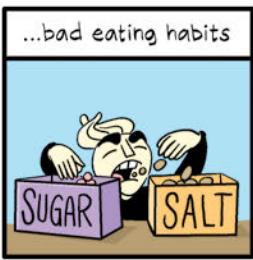
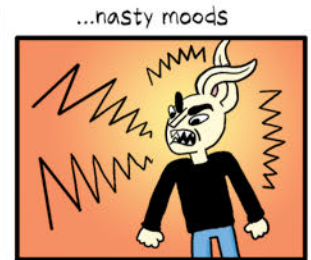
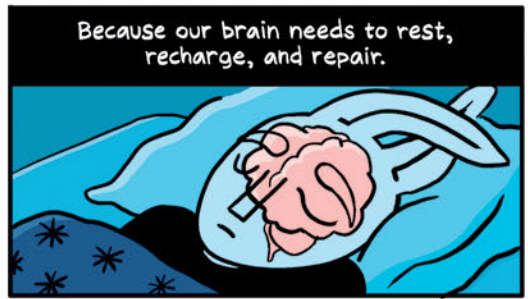
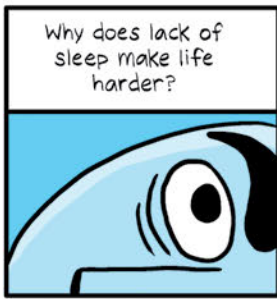


TAKE A SCREEN BREAK!



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





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

Establish a bedtime and waketime and stick to it.

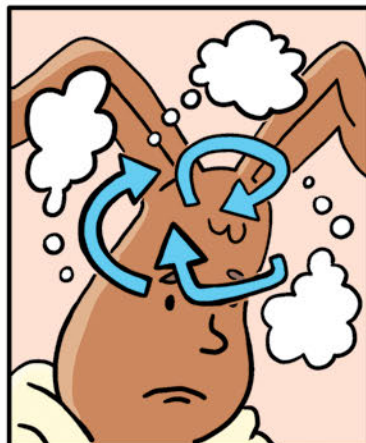
Try to stick to your schedule (or as close as you can) on weekends too.





# MINDFULNESS IS A STRESS-FIGHTING SUPER POWER

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

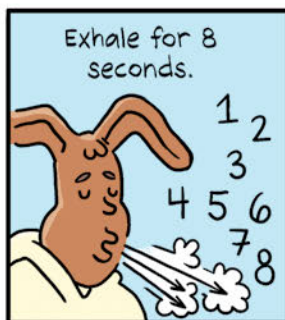
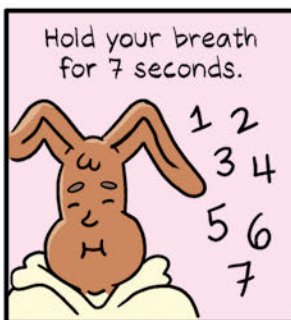
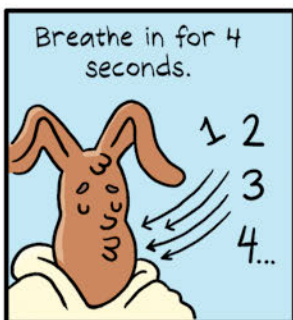


Slowing down and paying attention to your breath will calm you, even if your mind is all over the place.



Breathing is a powerful and convenient tool in a crisis or whenever you need it.

TRY THE  
**4-7-8**  
BREATHING  
EXERCISE:

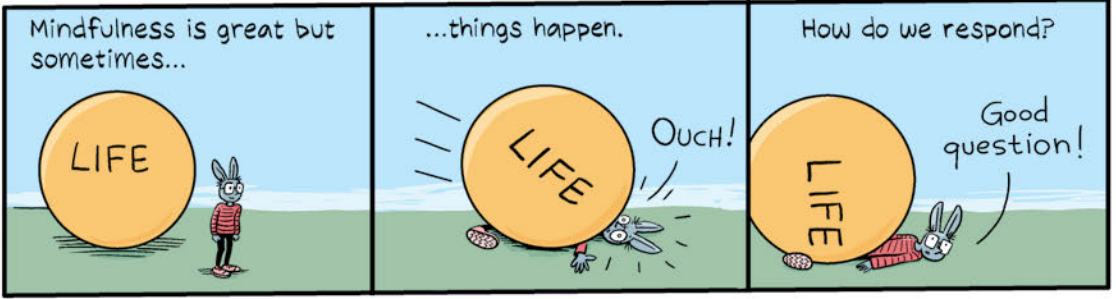


ANOTHER WAY TO BE MINDFUL IS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE

## FIVE SENSES

<p><b>TOUCH</b></p>  <p>Find something to touch.</p>	<p><b>HEARING</b></p>  <p>Listen to soothing sounds or music.</p>	<p><b>TASTE</b></p>  <p>Take a drink of water.</p>	<p><b>SCENT</b></p>  <p>Find a smell that you enjoy.</p>	<p><b>SIGHT</b></p>  <p>Look at something calming.</p>
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When your worries return to your mind, bring your attention back to your senses.

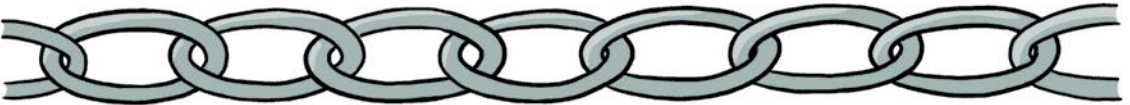


**RESILIENCE:** the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness

# BECOME MORE RESILIENT BY...



Being part of something makes you stronger.



**CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING TO HELP OTHERS...**

WHY?	BECAUSE KINDNESS REDUCES STRESS.
HOW COME?	IT TAKES THE FOCUS OFF OF YOURSELF.
REALLY?	YES! BECAUSE BEING HELPFUL FEELS GOOD. ♥



THE PEOPLE YOU  
ASSOCIATE WITH  
INCREASE OR DECREASE  
YOUR RESILIENCE.



Your friend group  
should provide more  
support than drama.



You are so cool  
and pretty. I feel  
so lucky to be your  
best friend.



Don't you think it's  
funny that I'm your  
best friend, but you're  
not my best friend.



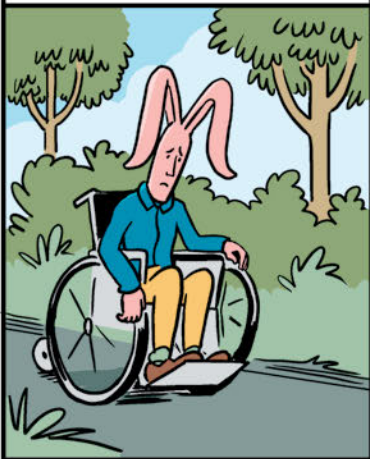
So, I'm telling  
my parents that  
I'm sleeping over  
at your house this  
weekend. Cover  
for me. Okay?



Having friends  
who constantly make  
bad choices may bring  
you down.



Having even one good  
friend can help you feel  
better and experience  
less stress.



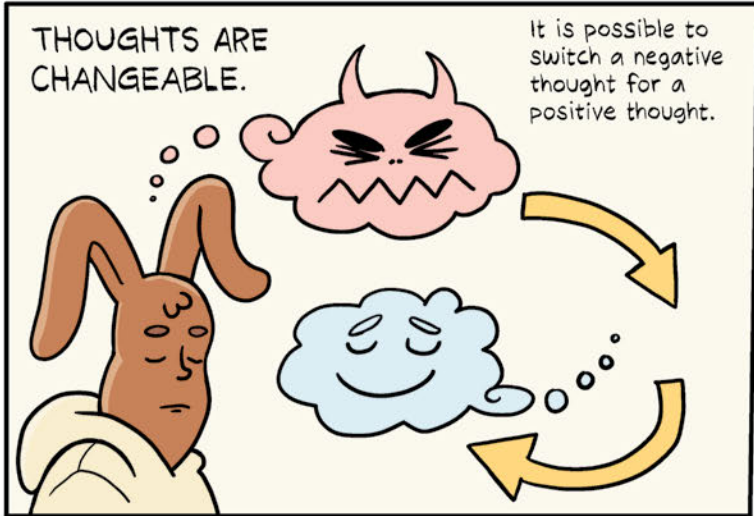
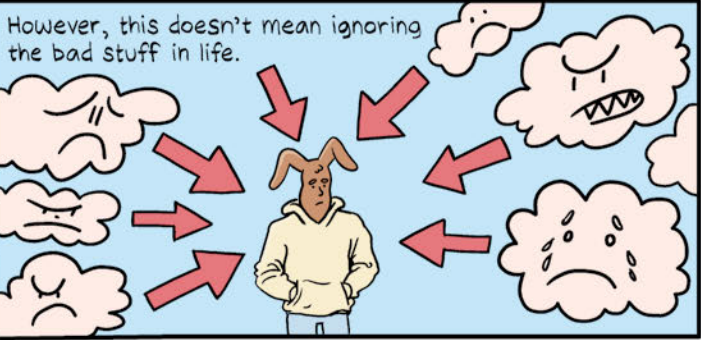
Hi Aidy!



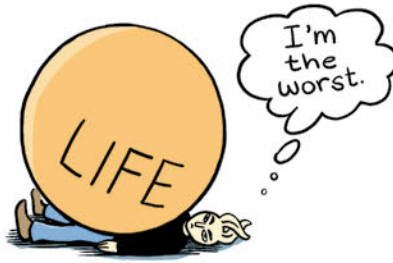
Hanging  
out with you  
is the best.




**CAN A POSITIVE MINDSET IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH?**



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



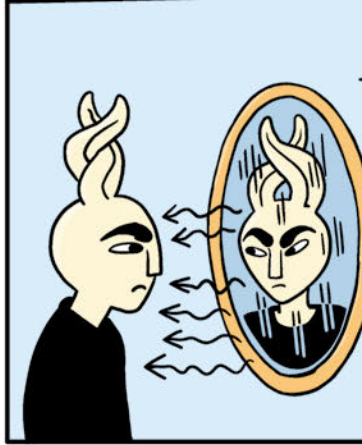
People often keep it a secret, but the urge to harm is common.



**HARM TO SOMEONE ELSE:**



**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.



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



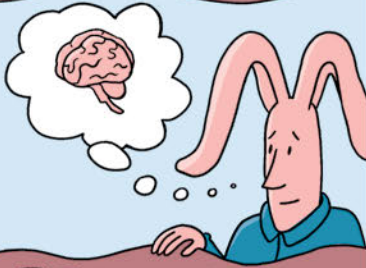
Reaching for harmful ways to cope is a sign that there is an unmet underlying need.



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

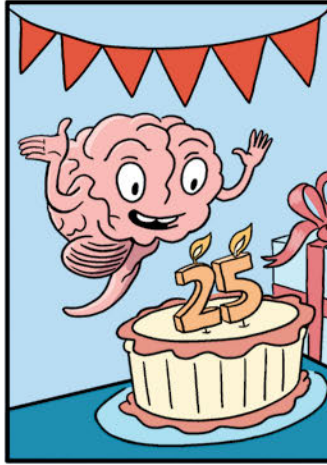


# THINK ABOUT YOUR BRAIN...



...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.

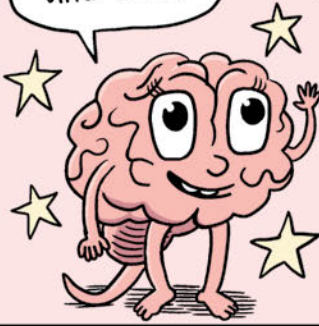


## YOUNG BRAINS

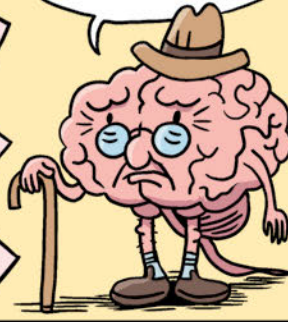
ARE VERY DIFFERENT FROM

## OLD BRAINS

I'm fresh and new!



I've been around for a while.



Teen brains have more intense emotions...

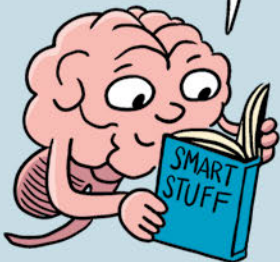
I LOVE YOU!

I HATE YOU!



...and powerful learning abilities.

Learning is easy!



(This will be important in a minute.)

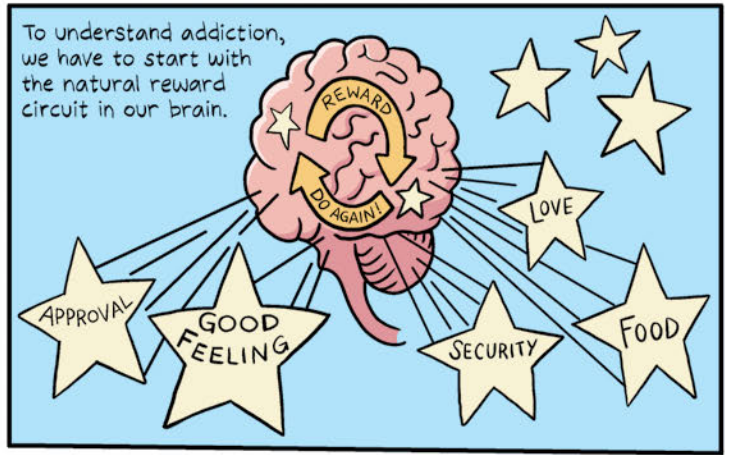
Adolescence also comes with intensified reward-seeking and risk-taking...



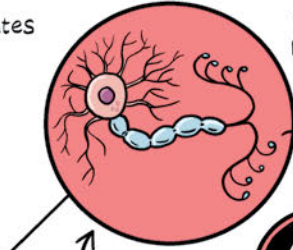
...which unfortunately can lead to substance abuse and addiction.



# SO WHAT ABOUT ADDICTION?



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

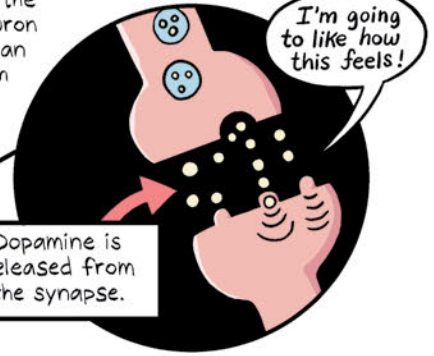


This takes place in a brain cell called a neuron. (We have billions of them in our brain.)

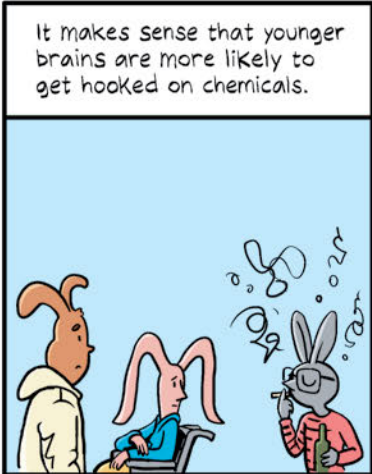
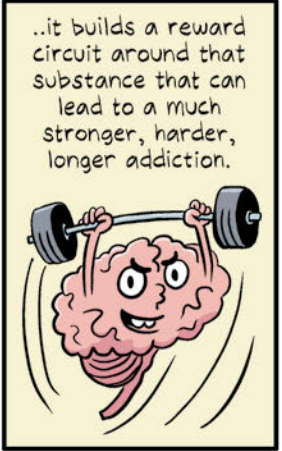
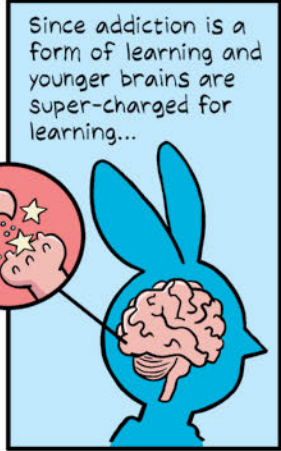
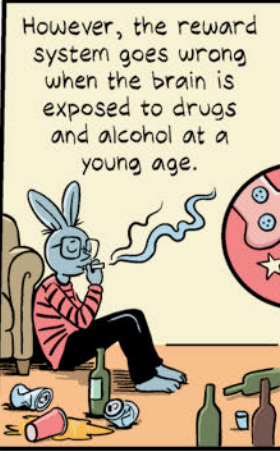
Synapses are the place on a neuron where cells can talk to each other.



Dopamine is released from the synapse.



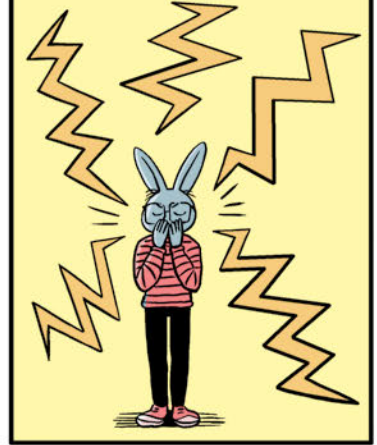
**DOPAMINE IS A GOOD THING BECAUSE WE NEED IT FOR SURVIVAL!**



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.





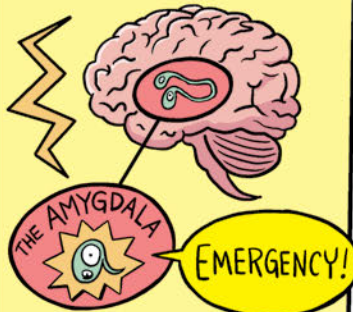
# LET'S TALK ABOUT ANXIETY

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

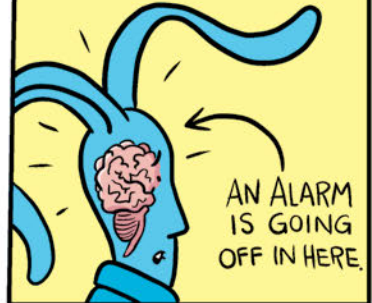


HIDE FIGHT RUN

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...

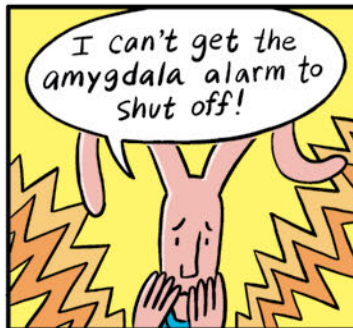


...or a severe experience like a panic attack.

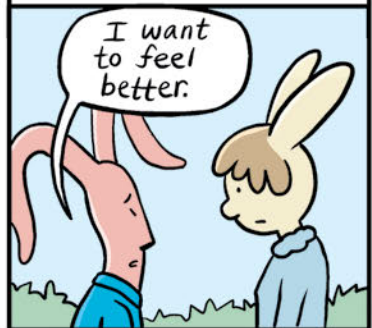


(Most panic attacks are brief, lasting less than 10 minutes.)

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!



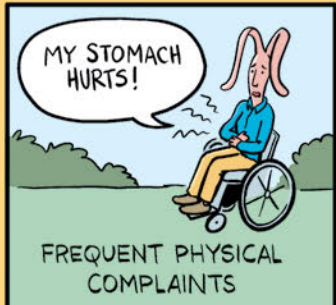
## SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY:



TROUBLE SLEEPING



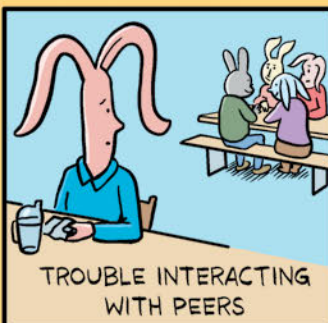
EXCESSIVE WORRY ABOUT EVERYDAY STUFF



FREQUENT PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS



DIFFICULTY PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL



TROUBLE INTERACTING WITH PEERS

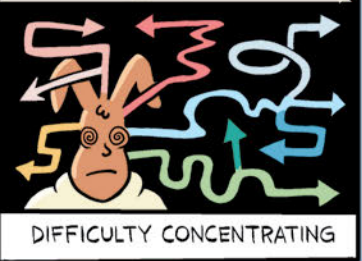
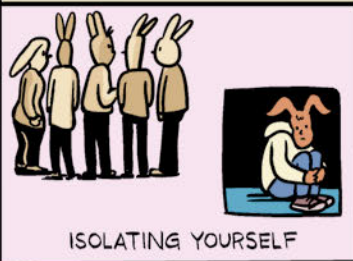
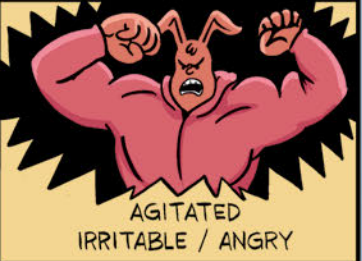


BEING OVERLY SELF CRITICAL

# LET'S TALK ABOUT DEPRESSION



## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION:



# Addressing Thoughts About Suicide



For some people, suicide is something they may actually begin to seriously plan.

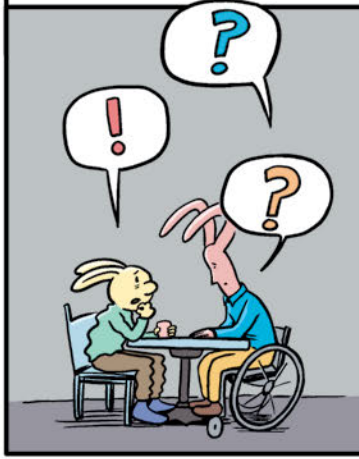


# A Conversation About Suicide

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



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



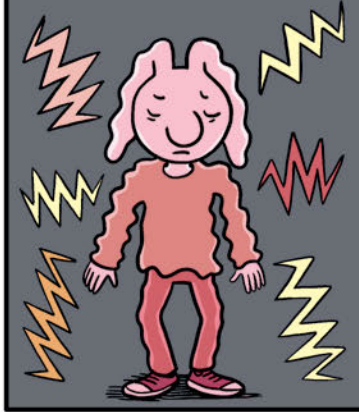
Don't keep secrets about suicide. Talk to a trusted adult if you are worried about your friend.



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.



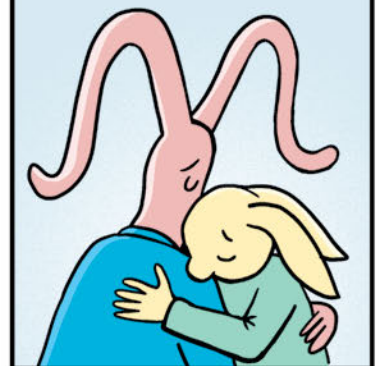
Remember that if you have immediate concerns, you can call 911 right away.



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.

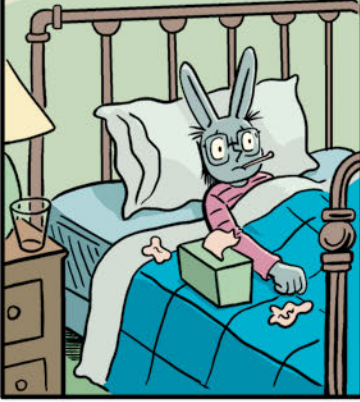


When you're in the middle of a crisis it feels like it will never end. But it does.

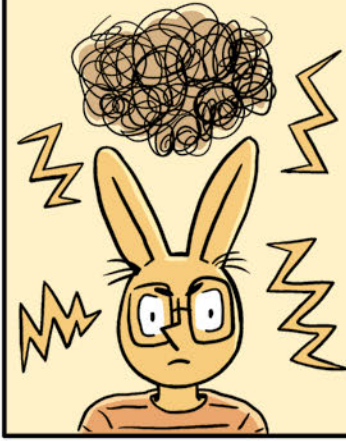


# Seek Help For Your Mental Health

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



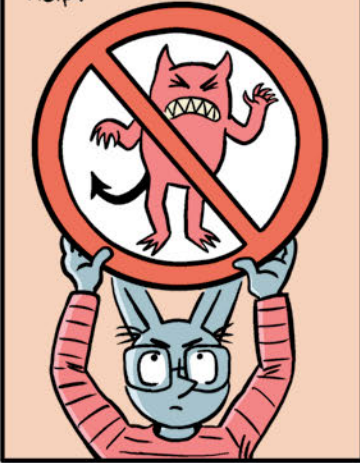
But what do we do when we are not feeling 100% mentally?



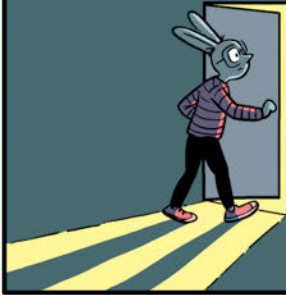
Like with any problem, it is best not to ignore these things.



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.

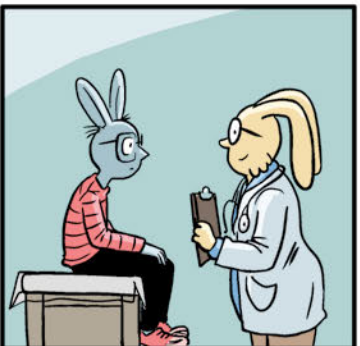


If you or your family are concerned about how to pay for mental health or substance abuse services, don't let that stop you from seeking help.

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.

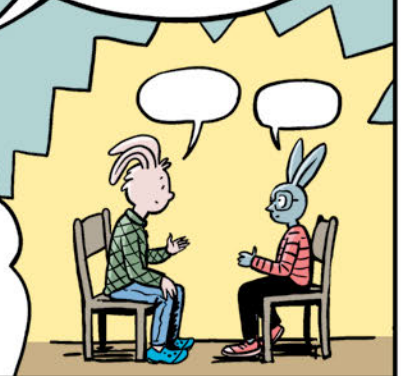


After medical disorders have been ruled out, then it's time to get referred to a mental health professional.



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.

This is an urgent situation.

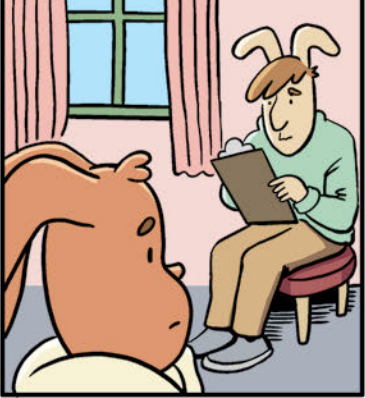


# How to Start Seeing A Therapist

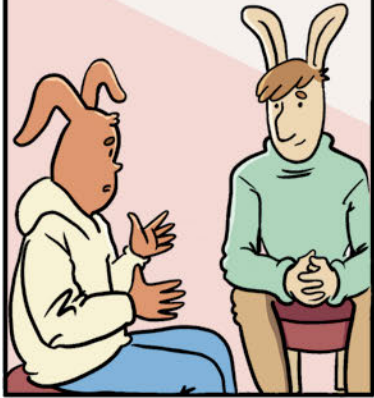
In the beginning you may be asked to complete a questionnaire or answer a series of questions.



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?

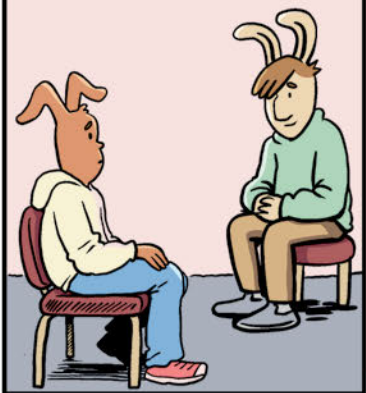
Do I have to take medication? What does it help with? What are the side effects?

What can I do between appointments if I need help?

How should I monitor my progress?

A cartoon illustration of a rabbit in a white hoodie standing in the center, surrounded by five speech bubbles containing various questions about therapy.

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



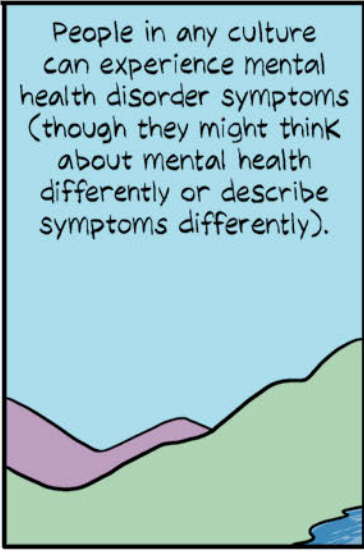
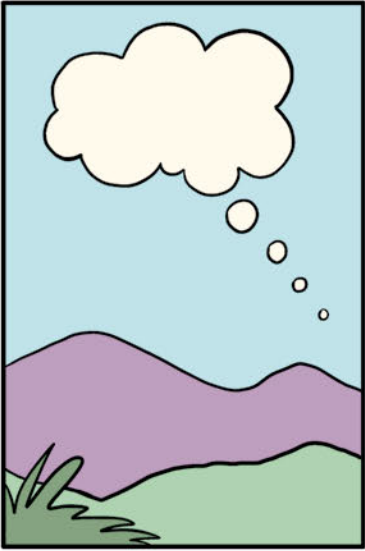
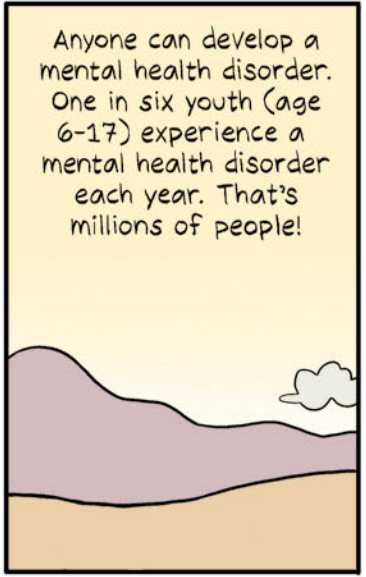
It's good to have someone you feel safe with who really listens.



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





# 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



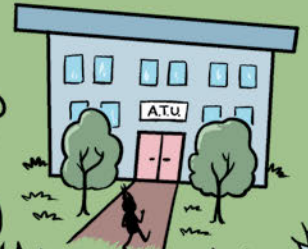
Bibliotherapy



Therapy and medication



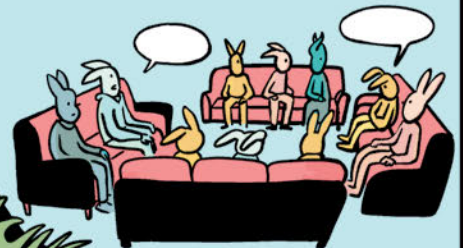
Residential Care



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...



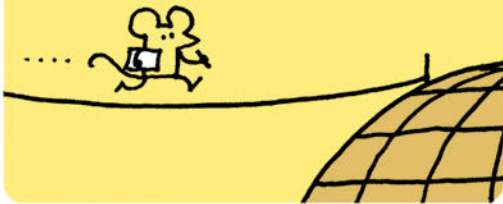
# TO THOSE WHO CAN OFFER SUPPORT...



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Drawing by Marek Bennett



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GOT MENTAL HEALTH QUESTIONS?

toll-free youth services info line

**833-MOSAICU**

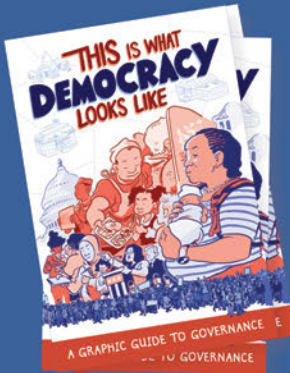
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FROM ROUTINE TO CRISIS



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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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STARK COUNTY  
MENTAL HEALTH  
& ADDICTION  
RECOVERY

the  
CENTER for  
CARTOON  
STUDIES

IN THIS VERY  
MOMENT...  
I'M OK.  
I'M HERE.

DON'T  
SUFFER  
ALONE, THERE  
ARE PEOPLE  
WHO CARE  
ABOUT YOU.

BREATHE

BAD TIMES  
WILL PASS.

THERAPY IS NOTHING  
TO FEEL ASHAMED  
ABOUT.

YOU  
GOT  
THIS!

YOU ARE NOT  
ALONE.

I WISH  
I HAD  
KNOWN THAT  
THAT I DIDN'T  
HAVE TO FEEL  
BAD ALL THE TIME.

YOU ARE  
VALID.  
YOU HAVE  
WORTH.

YOU  
CAN  
MAKE IT  
THROUGH  
THIS.

TAKE IT  
ONE DAY  
AT A TIME.

YOU  
ARE  
LOVED.

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