

UNSW COLLEGE

*The Bloom Edition*

September 2025

# In The Know





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## *Editor's Note*

Spring has sprung! After what feels like days and weeks and months of rainy weather it is finally time for the sun to come out and play! I wonder if any of you have been noticing the new buds that are growing on trees, ready to bloom in a few weeks' time.

When we think of something "blooming" I think most people would think of a flower. But I also like to think of "personal growth". Together with the flowers that are starting to sprout, we can also think about coming out of hibernation (if you too, were also hiding under the bed covers like I was for most of the cold seasons) and sow the seeds of self-improvement. After all, there is a famous saying: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now".

Yours truly,

**Vivian He**  
In the Know Editor  
UNSW College





# Highlighted events

## Eora by Michael Riley

Eora by Michael Riley is showing at the Museum of Sydney from 11 September until 31 December and is a must-see for students who want to experience art that is both visually striking and deeply meaningful. The 20-minute digital triptych uses moving imagery of natural landscapes, bustling cityscapes, colonial archives, and artworks from Riley's peers to reflect on the experiences of Sydney's First Nations people before and after colonisation. Originally commissioned in 1995 when the Museum of Sydney first opened, the work has recently been digitised so that new generations can engage with it in its full power.

Because it is free and compact, it is easy to fit into a busy student schedule, making it the perfect way to learn more about Indigenous history and culture while spending time in the heart of the city.



## Ur Wayii (Incoming Tide)

Ur Wayii (Incoming Tide), showing at the Australian National Maritime Museum from 11 September through to March 2027, is an expansive and imaginative exhibition by acclaimed Torres Strait artist Brian Robinson. Through sculpture, printmaking, video installations, and bold graphic design, Robinson combines Torres Strait Islander mythology, cosmology, and everyday traditions with unexpected influences drawn from popular culture, such as video games and films.

This unique blend of ancestral knowledge and contemporary creativity produces an exhibition that is playful, thought-provoking, and culturally rich. Free to enter, it offers students the opportunity to experience Indigenous storytelling on a large scale, explore new ways of thinking about culture and identity, and enjoy a day at one of Sydney's most iconic waterfront museums.



# WHO'S HUNGRY?

BRINGING YOU  
THE BEST EATS IN  
SYDNEY

## NOTEWORTHY EATERIES



### Towzen

*346-348 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000*

One of Japan's longest-running vegan ramen restaurants has made its way to Sydney so now there's really no excuse not to pay this establishment a visit! Towzen's founder, Minoru Yonekawa ensure that in these meals there are no animal products and alliums so that each dish nourishes the customer's body and spirit. The dishes are a feast for the eyes too, with carefully placed vegetables that carefully retain their freshness and colour.

### 24 York

*24 York St, Sydney NSW 2000*

Is the biggest challenge of your day deciding what to eat? Do you spend what feels like eternity leafing through menus stumped with the options that are presented to you? 24 York solves all those problems by offering only one dish: steak-frites. You know that when a restaurant only offers one option, that means they have perfected it to allow for a plate of consistent perfection whenever it leaves the pass.



Image credit: 24 York website





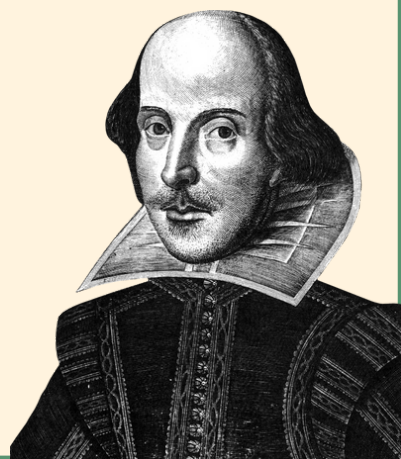
I take my hat off to those of you who have come to Sydney on your own, away from home, away from parents and friends to study in a foreign language – English.

You are probably wondering what on earth does 'take my hat off to you' mean? It's an old expression from when most men wore

hats and would raise their hat to show respect, but today it's translation is, I admire you (for the courage you have shown by coming to learn at UNSW College).

The English language is made up of many foreign and indigenous languages, idioms, slang and colloquialisms. As well as English being a 'mishmash', a large number of the words we use were invented by William Shakespeare back in the late 1500s and early 1600s in England.

If you say, 'I feel lonely, gloomy and I'm in a hurry to go down the road to my accommodation', you are using words from Shakespeare. Try googling the expressions or words which Shakespeare created, or made popular because he used them in his plays, and you will hear them frequently in the English language.

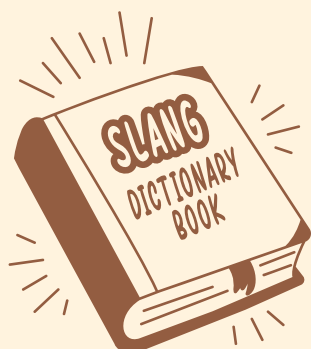




Now you're living in Australia, I wonder if you've noticed how Aussies speak? Obviously, they have an Australian accent and speak English but some of the terms they use take a while to understand. Aussies are fond of abbreviating words so you might hear, arvo for afternoon, avo for avocado and barbie for barbeque. They also use a lot of slang.



Try to work out what these words mean:  
**brekky chook, durry, dag and coldie**



The use of prepositions is also important. Excuse the language, but if someone tells you to '**piss off**' they want you to go away, but if they say, '**we're going to a piss up**' they're going to a party and you may be invited. If you go to the party and '**get pissed**' it means you were drunk.

Two of the most common expressions in Australia are '**no dramas**' and '**no worries**'. Both mean there is no problem and everything is okay. So, if an Aussie says either of these expression to you, there is no need to be concerned.

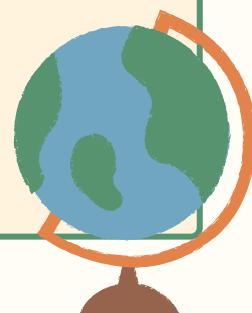
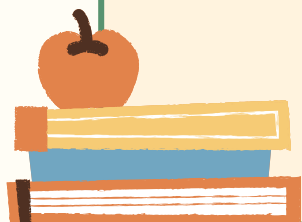
I'm going to finish my language rant (Shakespeare again) and say 'T.T.F.N.' which is the opposite of 'g'day'.

Have you worked out what TTFN means? 'Ta ta for now' is the translation and 'ta ta' means goodbye while 'g'day' is hello or more formally, 'good day'.

Anyway, 'mate', I hope 'youse' are 'flat out' studying and not eating too many 'lollies' to keep you awake.

Remember, don't be an 'ocker' by using Aussie slang when you are writing an academic essay or giving a presentation at university.

**YOU WON'T GET BETTER ADVICE THAN STRAIGHT FROM THE  
STAFF AT UNSW COLLEGE**





# Through the Lens

*presented by the Photography Club*



Photos by Jiayi Peng





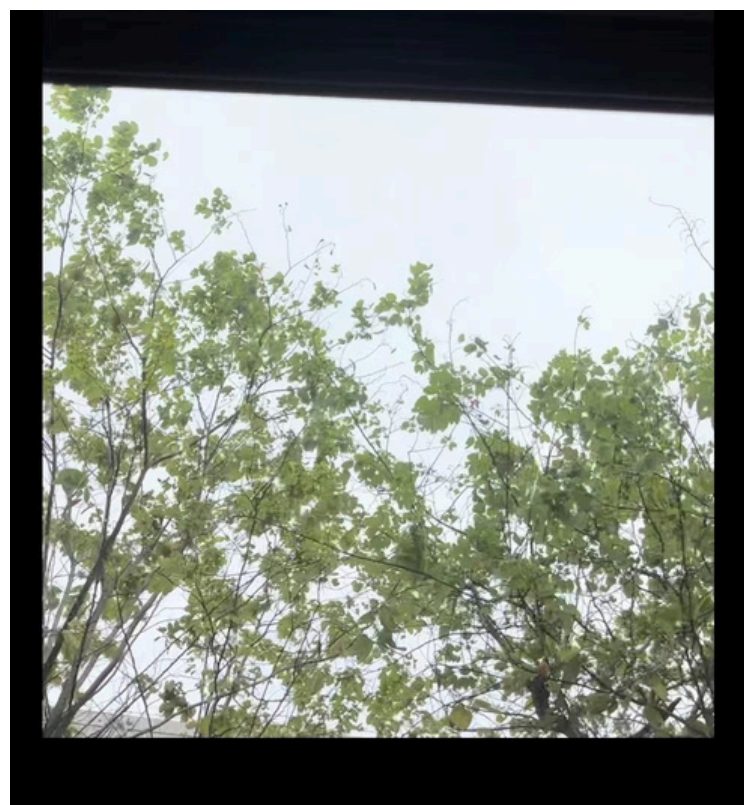
Photos by Qile He





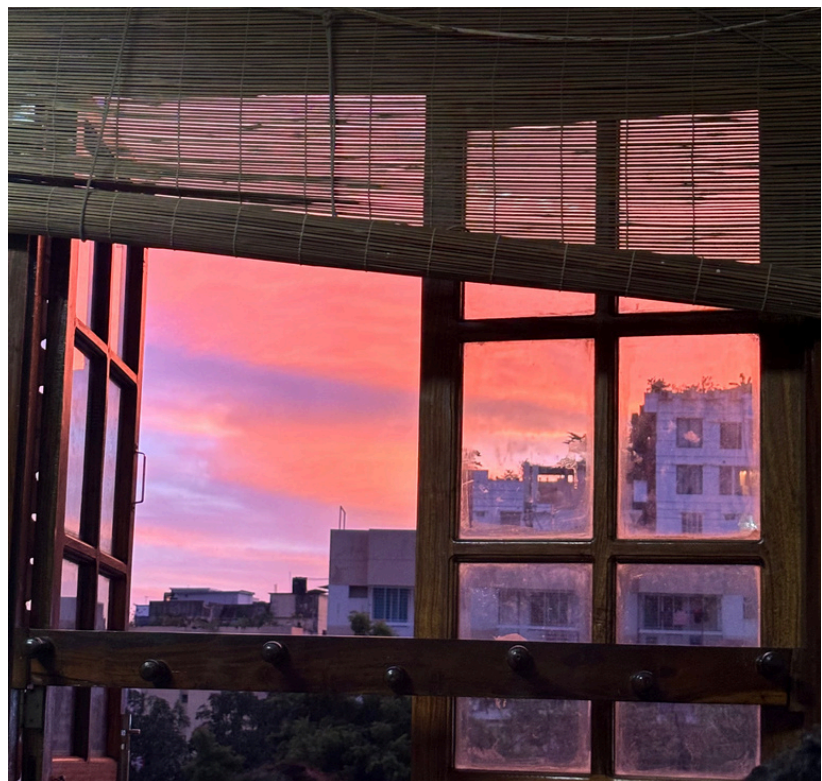
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Photos by Zhiyao Zhu





Photos by Prajukta Paul Raka





Photos by Prajukta Paul Raka





Photos by Keiko Tah



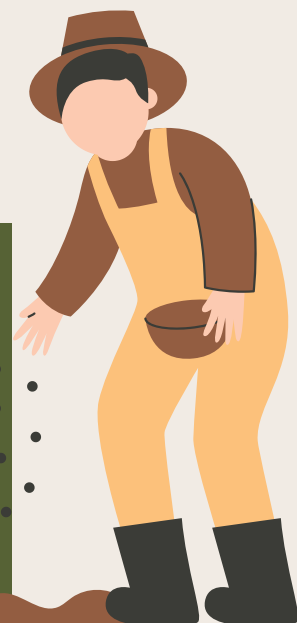


Photos by Jiayan Guo



# PLANTING SEEDS OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT FOR SUCCESS

Within personal growth, self-improvement is much like the process of gardening. Both require patience, care, and a willingness to put in the work without expecting instant results. The seeds you plant today will eventually grow into the success you desire tomorrow. But like any garden, the process of growth is not always linear. So, how do we cultivate the right mindset for success?



## START WITH THE RIGHT SEEDS

When you begin a new self-improvement journey, you must start with the right seeds. These are your goals, intentions, and values that you want to nurture. Just as every plant has its own specific requirements for growth, your personal goals need to be carefully chosen. A seed planted without proper planning and attention is unlikely to flourish.

This is where goal-setting comes in. Rather than focusing on vague aspirations like "I want to be healthier" or "I want to improve my career," be specific. Set clear, measurable goals.



For example, instead of saying, "I want to get fitter," commit to "I will walk for 30 minutes every day" or "I will complete three strength training sessions each week." Clear, actionable steps provide structure and purpose, making it easier to monitor progress and adjust as needed.

## TEND TO YOUR GARDEN REGULARLY

Once you've planted your seeds, you need to tend to them consistently. In gardening, this means watering, pruning, and removing weeds. In the context of personal growth, it involves daily habits and routines that keep you moving toward your goals. Self-improvement isn't a one-off event but a daily practice. Building habits that support your goals will ensure that you don't just talk about growth, but you actively engage with it. This might involve carving out time for self-reflection or engaging in activities that challenge your current mindset.



# UNDERSTAND THAT PATIENCE AND RESILIENCE COME HAND IN HAND

Gardening teaches us one of life's most important lessons: patience. You don't see immediate results from the moment you plant a seed, and the same is true in personal development. You might not see overnight changes in yourself, but that doesn't mean the work isn't paying off. Growth takes time, and no doubt your journey of self-improvement will involve setbacks and hurdles.

It's essential to embrace resilience during these moments. In fact, the setbacks you experience might be the very conditions that help you grow stronger. Learning to handle adversity, whether it's a failure or a delay in progress, is part of the process. You wouldn't expect a plant to flourish in poor soil, and similarly, your mindset needs to be cultivated in a supportive environment to thrive. That means choosing not to give up when things get tough and being patient with yourself as you navigate the challenges along the way.

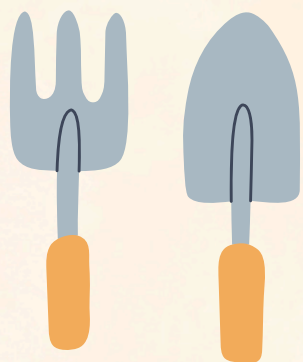
## CELEBRATE THE SMALL BUDS

Every gardener knows that not every plant will bloom at the same time. Some seeds will sprout sooner, while others take a little longer. Similarly, in the world of personal growth, it's important to recognise that progress comes in many forms. Don't wait for a massive achievement before you celebrate. Small wins should be celebrated just as much as the big milestones. Celebrating these wins not only boosts your confidence but reinforces the habits and mindsets you're cultivating. By acknowledging small successes, you're encouraging yourself to keep going, even when the end result feels far off.

The journey of self-improvement is similar to the journey of tending to a garden. It requires thoughtfulness, planning, and consistent care. By planting the right seeds, tending to your goals, embracing patience, and celebrating small wins, you're cultivating a mindset that will eventually lead to the success you desire. Remember, growth takes time — but with the right mindset, persistence, and care, you will bloom into the person you aspire to be.







# THE THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF GARDENING



There's something deeply healing about being in a garden, whether you're tending to a patch of herbs, watching flowers bloom, or simply breathing in the fresh air. Gardening isn't just a pastime; it's an activity with significant mental and emotional benefits. In today's fast-paced world, many of us spend more time indoors staring at screens than connecting with nature. Yet, research shows that spending time in the garden, or even just being in a green space, can have profound effects on our well-being.

We often talk about mental health in terms of therapy, medication, or mindfulness practices. But there's another approach that's frequently overlooked: gardening. Numerous studies suggest that being in nature or spending time with plants can reduce stress, lower anxiety, and improve mood. In fact, studies have shown that even a short walk through a green space can reduce levels of cortisol, the hormone associated with stress.

Gardening encourages mindfulness, drawing your focus away from daily worries and onto the present moment. As you pull weeds or water plants, you're engaging in a soothing, repetitive task that helps calm your mind and centre your thoughts. This simple act of connecting with nature helps reduce mental fatigue and promotes a sense of well-being.

While gardening is often seen as a relaxing hobby, it's also a great form of physical exercise. From digging, planting, and pruning to weeding and harvesting, gardening involves a variety of physical activities that get your body moving. This is especially beneficial for mental health, as exercise has been proven to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

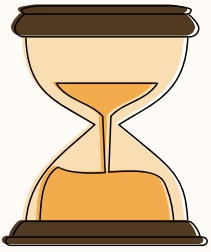
Being outdoors also allows you to soak in some much-needed Vitamin D, which plays a vital role in mood regulation. Gardening provides an excellent opportunity to get active, enjoy fresh air, and experience the therapeutic effects of being in nature, all of which contribute to improving your overall mental health.







One of the most powerful aspects of gardening is its ability to evoke a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Plants are living organisms that need care and attention to thrive. As you tend to your garden, you witness the tangible results of your efforts. This feeling of accomplishment can boost self-esteem and give you a sense of control, especially during times of uncertainty or stress.



Gardening also fosters patience. Plants don't bloom overnight. When you garden, you learn to appreciate the slow, steady progress of growth. This can be deeply gratifying, as it encourages you to slow down and enjoy the process, rather than focusing only on the end result. It also teaches you to embrace the natural rhythms of life, understanding that growth often takes time and can be influenced by factors beyond your control.



Gardening doesn't have to be a solitary activity. In fact, many people find joy in sharing their gardening experiences with others. Community gardens, for example, provide an opportunity to bond with like-minded individuals while contributing to a shared space. The social aspect of gardening can combat feelings of isolation and foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, working together to create a garden can be a great way to connect with family members, friends, or neighbours.

Even if you're gardening alone, you can still connect with others through online communities, garden clubs, or workshops. Sharing gardening tips and celebrating the success of your plants can help you feel more connected to the world around you.

Gardening is more than just a way to beautify your outdoor space. It's a therapeutic activity that offers numerous mental, emotional, and physical benefits.



By nurturing plants, you are also nurturing your own well-being. Whether it's through reducing stress, improving mood, or fostering a sense of accomplishment, gardening provides a unique and rewarding way to enhance your mental health. So, the next time you find yourself feeling stressed or overwhelmed, consider taking a moment to step outside and plant something. Your mind will thank you.





# THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS AND COMMUNICATING WITHOUT WORDS

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*In a world that often feels dominated by technology and instant messages, sometimes the most meaningful communication happens without uttering a single word. Enter the fascinating world of floriography, or the language of flowers, where blooms serve as silent messengers of emotions, intentions, and sentiments.*

*For centuries, people have relied on flowers to convey messages that words could not express, and their symbolic meanings have woven themselves into countless cultures around the globe.*

*In this article, we'll explore what some popular flowers symbolise and how they allow us to communicate in the most beautiful and subtle way.*

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## Roses

### *The Symbol of Love and Passion*

No flower is as synonymous with love and romance as the rose. With its deep symbolism and wide array of colours, roses have been used for centuries to convey messages of affection, admiration, and desire.



Red roses are universally recognised as the symbol of passionate love. Whether for a lover or a partner, sending red roses communicates "I love you" in the most timeless and heartfelt way.



White roses represent purity, innocence, and new beginnings. They are often used at weddings or to convey the hope of a fresh start. A bouquet of white roses can also be a symbol of respect or remembrance.



Yellow roses, in contrast, express friendship, joy, and appreciation. These vibrant blooms are often given to friends and loved ones to celebrate companionship and happy occasions.



Pink roses are seen as a symbol of admiration, gratitude, and elegance. They're perfect for showing appreciation or offering a gesture of admiration to someone you deeply respect.

The rose's ability to communicate such a broad range of emotions makes it one of the most popular and versatile flowers in the language of blooms.



## **Daisies**

### *Innocence and Loyal Love*

Simple yet utterly charming, the daisy has long been associated with innocence, loyalty, and true love. Often seen as a symbol of new beginnings, daisies are perfect for expressing heartfelt emotions in an uncomplicated manner.



White daisies signify purity and innocence. They are often used to convey a simple, unspoken message of sincerity or to express the quiet joy found in love.



Gerbera daisies, a more colourful variation, are seen as symbols of happiness, cheerfulness, and optimism. Their bold colours and striking appearance make them ideal for sending a message of joy or congratulating someone on a happy occasion.

There's something inherently playful and charming about daisies, making them the perfect gift to send to someone who brings light and happiness into your life.

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## **Lilies**

### *Grace, Elegance, and Purity*

The lily is an elegant flower that has long been associated with purity, grace, and renewal. Its delicate petals and fragrance often convey deep, sincere emotions, making it a fitting choice for more solemn or respectful occasions.



White lilies are often used to symbolise purity and virtue, and they are a common flower in bridal bouquets. They are also often sent to mourners as a symbol of respect and remembrance.



Pink lilies, on the other hand, convey prosperity, abundance, and femininity. They're commonly given to someone as a gesture of admiration and appreciation, making them ideal for a birthday or a special celebration.



Tiger lilies, with their bold orange hues and spotted petals, symbolise confidence, passion, and wealth. Their striking beauty can make a powerful statement when you want to communicate admiration and respect for someone's strength or achievements.

Whether for a wedding, funeral, or a special celebration, lilies carry with them messages of grace, elegance, and deep emotional resonance.



## **Tulips**

### *Perfect Love and Comfort*

A classic flower that is synonymous with the arrival of spring, tulips are often used to convey messages of perfect love and comfort. Their smooth, elegant petals and vibrant colours make them an appealing choice for any occasion where you want to express admiration or affection.



Red tulips are a declaration of perfect love, often sent to express deep feelings for a romantic partner. They are the go-to flower for a heartfelt confession of love.



Purple tulips symbolise royalty, elegance, and dignity. They make for a sophisticated choice when you want to convey admiration and respect.



Yellow tulips represent cheerful thoughts and joyful beginnings. They're often used to celebrate new opportunities, friendships, or to offer a comforting, sunny message during times of change.

The tulip's simplicity and grace make it a fitting way to communicate feelings of warmth and affection without the need for words.

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## **Orchids**

### *Exotic Beauty and Strength*

For those looking to express rare beauty, strength, and refinement, the orchid is the perfect choice. Known for their delicate yet striking appearance, orchids are often used to convey admiration for someone's unique qualities and resilience.



Purple orchids are typically linked with admiration and respect. They're ideal for showing appreciation for someone who embodies grace and elegance, making them a popular choice for formal occasions or milestones.




White orchids, like many white flowers, symbolise purity, innocence, and beauty. They can also convey a sense of new beginnings or rebirth, making them a beautiful gift to celebrate significant life changes.



Pink orchids represent femininity, grace, and joy. They can be sent to celebrate a person's strength or beauty, or simply to express admiration and respect.

With their exotic and timeless beauty, orchids allow us to send messages of admiration, respect, and strength, all while remaining subtle and sophisticated.





## Sunflowers

### Adoration and Happiness

The sunflower is one of the most cheerful flowers in the world, symbolising adoration, happiness, and longevity. With its bright yellow petals and large, radiant face, the sunflower is impossible to miss — just like the warmth it exudes. Sending sunflowers is a way of saying, “You make my world brighter” or “I admire your strength and positivity.”



Yellow sunflowers are the classic choice, symbolising joy, happiness, and loyalty. They're often given as a gesture of encouragement or as a reminder to embrace life's positive moments.



Red sunflowers, though rarer, convey passion and deep admiration, making them perfect for expressing love or gratitude.

Sunflowers are a reminder to focus on the light in life and to communicate positivity and appreciation to those around you.

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Flowers have long been recognised for their ability to convey emotions that are sometimes too difficult to put into words. The beauty of floriography is that it provides a universal means of communication, where each bloom carries with it a deep, symbolic meaning, making flowers an excellent tool for sending heartfelt messages, no matter the occasion. So if you're ever stuck on how to convey a message to someone, or you want to package your words in a more special way, try a flower.



# How to Let Yourself Bloom

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the verb “Bloom” can have two meanings. First, is the one we all know, which is to produce flowers. When spring arrives, we can see the trees blooming with flowers everywhere around Sydney. While the second meaning of Bloom can be to flourish in beauty and mature into achievement of one’s potential. This spring, flowers aren’t the only thing blooming, but so can you.

Finding out how to let ourselves bloom fully into our potential isn’t easy, but having a good self-esteem helps. Self-esteem is the way we think about ourselves, including how much we believe we deserve good things in life and how we feel about who we are. If you’re asked to list some positive qualities about yourself, how would you respond?

## What causes low self-esteem?

Someone who has a high self-esteem tends to be more confident and resilient than others. However, many of us are still trying to grow our self-esteem and that’s perfectly fine. We are all learning to become the best version of ourselves and we can find out together what’s affecting our self-esteem in order to improve it.

The [Centre for Clinical Interventions](#) found that low self-esteem often begins from negative early life experiences such as:

Difficulty in meeting other’s standards or expectations

Not fitting in at home or school

Comparing yourself to others on social media

Stressful life event such as financial trouble

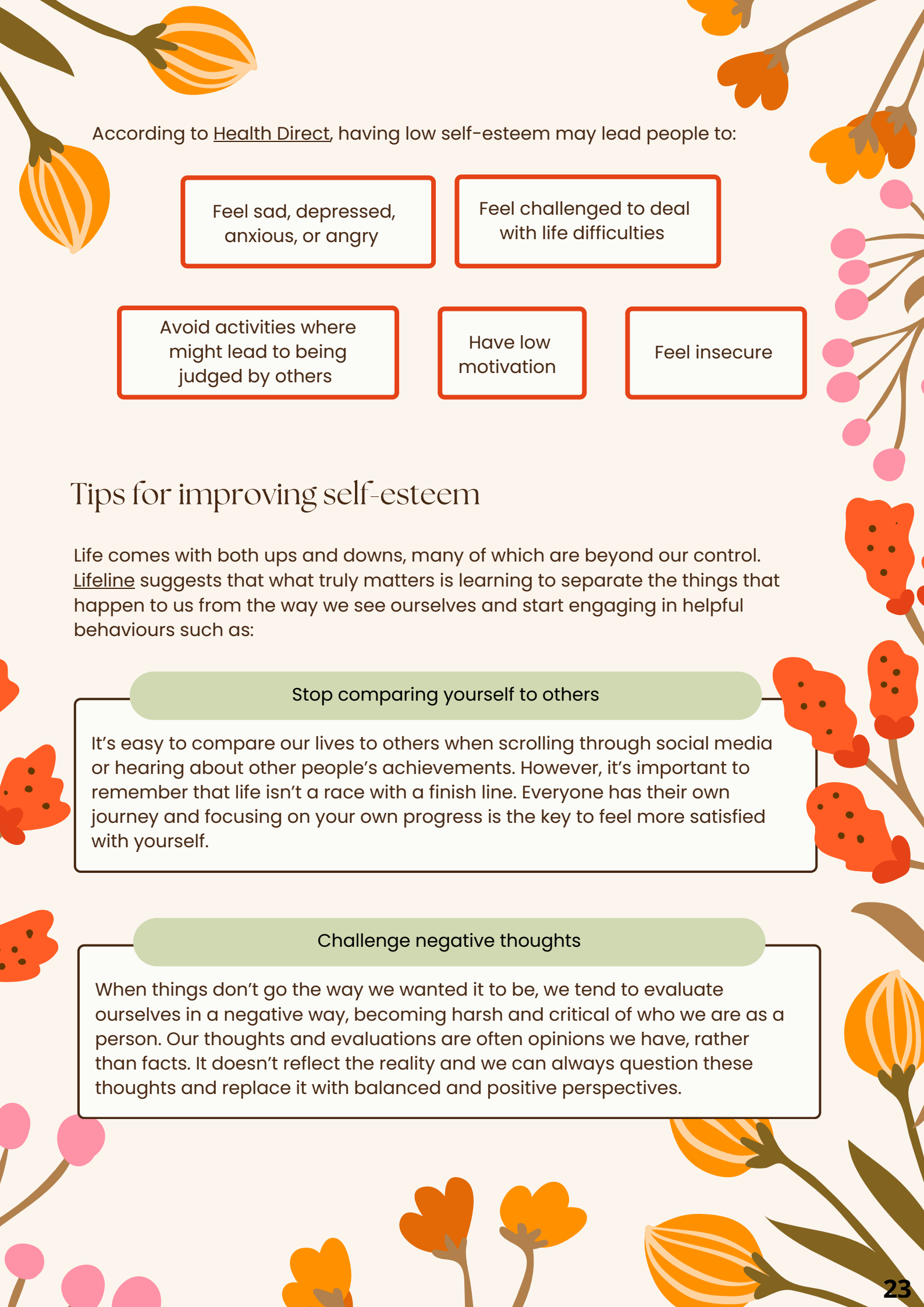
It can then develop into negative core beliefs such as:

I’m not good enough

I’m worthless

I must please other people to make them like me





According to [Health Direct](#), having low self-esteem may lead people to:

Feel sad, depressed,  
anxious, or angry

Feel challenged to deal  
with life difficulties

Avoid activities where  
might lead to being  
judged by others

Have low  
motivation

Feel insecure

## Tips for improving self-esteem

Life comes with both ups and downs, many of which are beyond our control. [Lifeline](#) suggests that what truly matters is learning to separate the things that happen to us from the way we see ourselves and start engaging in helpful behaviours such as:

### Stop comparing yourself to others

It's easy to compare our lives to others when scrolling through social media or hearing about other people's achievements. However, it's important to remember that life isn't a race with a finish line. Everyone has their own journey and focusing on your own progress is the key to feel more satisfied with yourself.

### Challenge negative thoughts

When things don't go the way we wanted it to be, we tend to evaluate ourselves in a negative way, becoming harsh and critical of who we are as a person. Our thoughts and evaluations are often opinions we have, rather than facts. It doesn't reflect the reality and we can always question these thoughts and replace it with balanced and positive perspectives.



### Embrace your positive qualities

Some people might find talking about their positive qualities uncomfortable because they're scared of being seen as arrogant. However, you're allowed to celebrate your positive achievements and feel great when you receive a positive praise!

### Journaling your thoughts and feelings

Sometimes organising everything inside your head can get overwhelming and confusing. To help you through the process, the best way is to write it down. We can also journal by keeping daily or weekly gratitude lists.

### Ask for help if everything becomes too much

Reach out to the Student Wellbeing Team whenever you need support and book an appointment for a safe space to discuss your concerns with the Student Wellbeing Advisors!



Don't forget to check out the other support article on the Current Students Website below:



Embrace Reflection  
and Gratitude



View all Health and  
Wellbeing support  
articles

*Love,  
Jolin*



# BOOKS OF THE MONTH

September

## THIS MONTH'S GENRE

This month's picks celebrate growth, transformation, and the small steps that lead to big change. Each story explores how we learn, adapt, and find the courage to embrace new beginnings.

## THE SECRET GARDEN

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

This timeless novel follows Mary Lennox, a lonely and spoiled girl who is sent from India to live with her uncle in a large, gloomy estate in England. At first, Mary is unhappy, isolated, and unsure how to connect with anyone around her. Her world begins to change when she discovers a hidden, neglected garden tucked away on the property.

As she tends to the garden and helps it bloom, Mary begins to grow as well, learning how to care for herself and others. Along the way, she forms deep friendships, uncovers family secrets, and finds a sense of belonging she never knew was possible.

The Secret Garden is much more than a story about plants and flowers. It is a celebration of personal growth, resilience, and the quiet power of nurturing the things and people that truly matter. The novel gently reminds readers that even in the darkest or loneliest moments, life, hope, and joy can flourish when we give them attention and care.





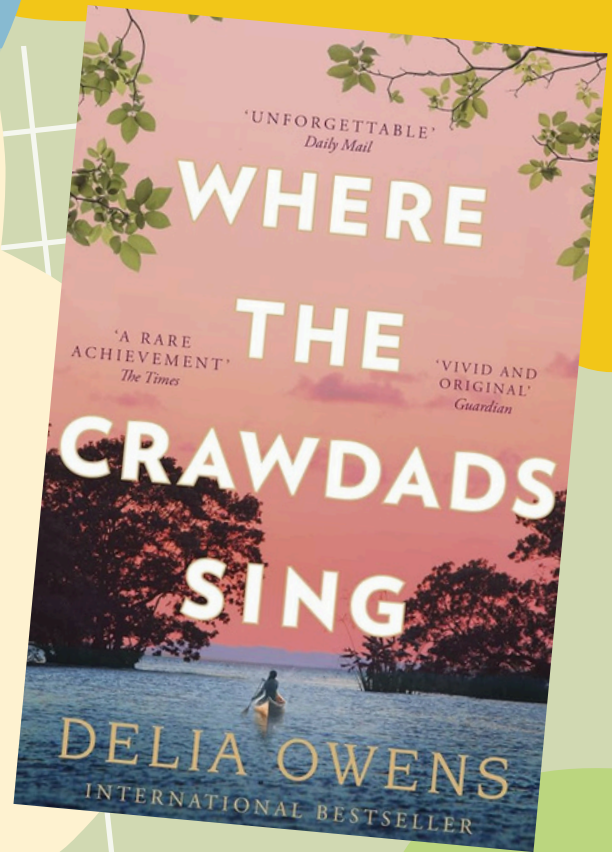
## WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING

DELIA OWENS

Set in the rich, wild marshlands of North Carolina, *Where the Crawdads Sing* tells the story of Kya Clark, known to the townspeople as the "Marsh Girl."

Abandoned and left to grow up on her own, Kya faces loneliness, prejudice, and the harsh realities of survival. Yet in her isolation, she finds solace and wisdom in the natural world around her. Through seasons of hardship, heartbreak, and unexpected friendships, Kya discovers her own strength and resilience, learning to trust herself and embrace her unique gifts.

The novel is a moving exploration of self-discovery, survival, and the quiet ways life can bloom even in unlikely places. It shows that growth does not always follow a straight path and that sometimes the most extraordinary strength comes from learning to rely on oneself while remaining open to the world around you.



## BIG MAGIC

ELIZABETH GILBERT

Elizabeth Gilbert offers an inspiring guide to creativity, curiosity, and living a life full of possibility. Drawing on her own experiences as a writer, she encourages readers to approach their passions without fear, to take risks, and to embrace the joy that comes from exploring new ideas. Gilbert reminds us that creativity is not just about making art, it is about living fully, noticing the small wonders of life, and giving ourselves permission to grow.

Through stories, practical advice, and reflections on courage and failure, the book shows how curiosity and determination can help us unlock our potential and transform the ordinary into something remarkable. *Big Magic* is a celebration of growth, experimentation, and the courage it takes to follow your curiosity, showing that even the smallest steps toward your passions can lead to meaningful change.





# THROUGH THE STUDENT LENS:

## GRADUATE NARRATIVE



Hello, everyone! To be honest, this is my first time standing on a stage, facing so many familiar faces, and giving a speech in English. And that's exactly why I chose "courage" as the topic today — not the big, heroic kind, but the small, everyday kind we've all practiced here, together.

I think we all remember those quiet early days of the course, right? Group discussions where we'd stare at our notebooks instead of speaking up, worrying more about "sounding perfect" than sharing our ideas. But look at us now — we raise our hands, we debate, we finish each other's sentences when someone fumbles for a word. Courage doesn't mean we never mess up; it means we show up even when we're scared. Take today, for example: I spent last night going back and forth — "Should I do this speech? What if I stumble?" But here I am, and even if I trip over a word, I'll give myself an A — because this is growth, not a test.

I still laugh when I think about our first day. When Angelo asked us to introduce ourselves, my hands got sweaty. A simple "Hi, I'm Wendy" felt like climbing a mountain! But today? I can say it loud and proud: My name is Wendy, I'm from China, and I'm so glad I got to learn with all of you. See that? That's courage paying off — one small step at a time.

Three cheers for  
**Wenxin (Wendy) Wang**

2025 UEEC GRADUATE



And let's not forget our "late dancer" rule! Remember how we'd shout "Aha, dancer!" when someone walked in after 9am? It was always funny... until it was my turn. I stood at the door for 10 seconds, thinking, "Maybe I can pretend I'm in the wrong class?" But then Angelo smiled and said, "You've got this — just have fun with it." That's what I love about this class: it wasn't just about learning English; it was about having a place where we could be messy, and still feel supported. We even joked that we had a "class celebrity dancer" by week 8 — who would've thought being late could turn into such a fun memory?

These 15 weeks in UEEC were amazing, but let's be real — they were tough, too. There were nights I stayed up practicing essays, days I felt like I'd never get the hang of pronunciation. When we complained to the teachers, they'd just say, "You know what to do — just start." And when I told my mom how stressed I was, she laughed and said, "Welcome to growing up!" She was right — stress isn't a bad thing; it's a sign we're pushing ourselves, which is exactly what courage is.

Big goals — like "speaking English fluently" or "finishing this course" — can feel overwhelming. But what I learned here is that courage isn't about reaching the top overnight. It's about showing up to class even when you're tired. It's about asking "Can you repeat that?" instead of pretending you understand. It's about making a mistake in a discussion, and then trying again. Because when you look back, those small, brave moments are the ones that add up to something big.

Today, I'm not here to give a perfect speech. I'm here to say thank you — for laughing with me when I messed up, for cheering me on when I was nervous, for being my classmates, and my friends. So if you think I've got a little courage today, could I get some applause? (Thank you!)

Finally, I want to say a proper thank you to the people who made this journey so special. To Angelo and Andrew — thank you for making English fun, for never giving up on us, and for turning "I can't" into "I'll try." To my partner Mirikia — thank you for staying up with me to practice dialogues, and for always saying "Let's do this together." To Jay and Jiaqi — thank you for the coffee runs, the study sessions, and for reminding me to breathe when things got too stressful. I wouldn't have made it through without you.

So, my friends, as we finish this course and move on to the next thing, let's keep that courage with us. Encourage yourself when it's hard. Embrace the messy, imperfect moments — they're the ones you'll remember. The future isn't something we wait for; it's something we build, one brave step at a time. Let's go out there and prove to ourselves that we're capable of more than we think.

Thank you all, and let's keep growing — together!





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## Welcoming all submissions to the newsletter!

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