



SELF CARE

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GOOD POINT!

**There is no glory like
high-mindedness.**

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

SELF CARE

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CONTENTS

05 ■ Introduction

06 ■ Navigating Cultural Differences: A Guide for International Students

11 ■ Building Cross-Cultural Friendships: Fostering Connections Among International Students

15 ■ Finding Home Away from Home: Coping with Homesickness as an International Student

18 ■ Counselling Services

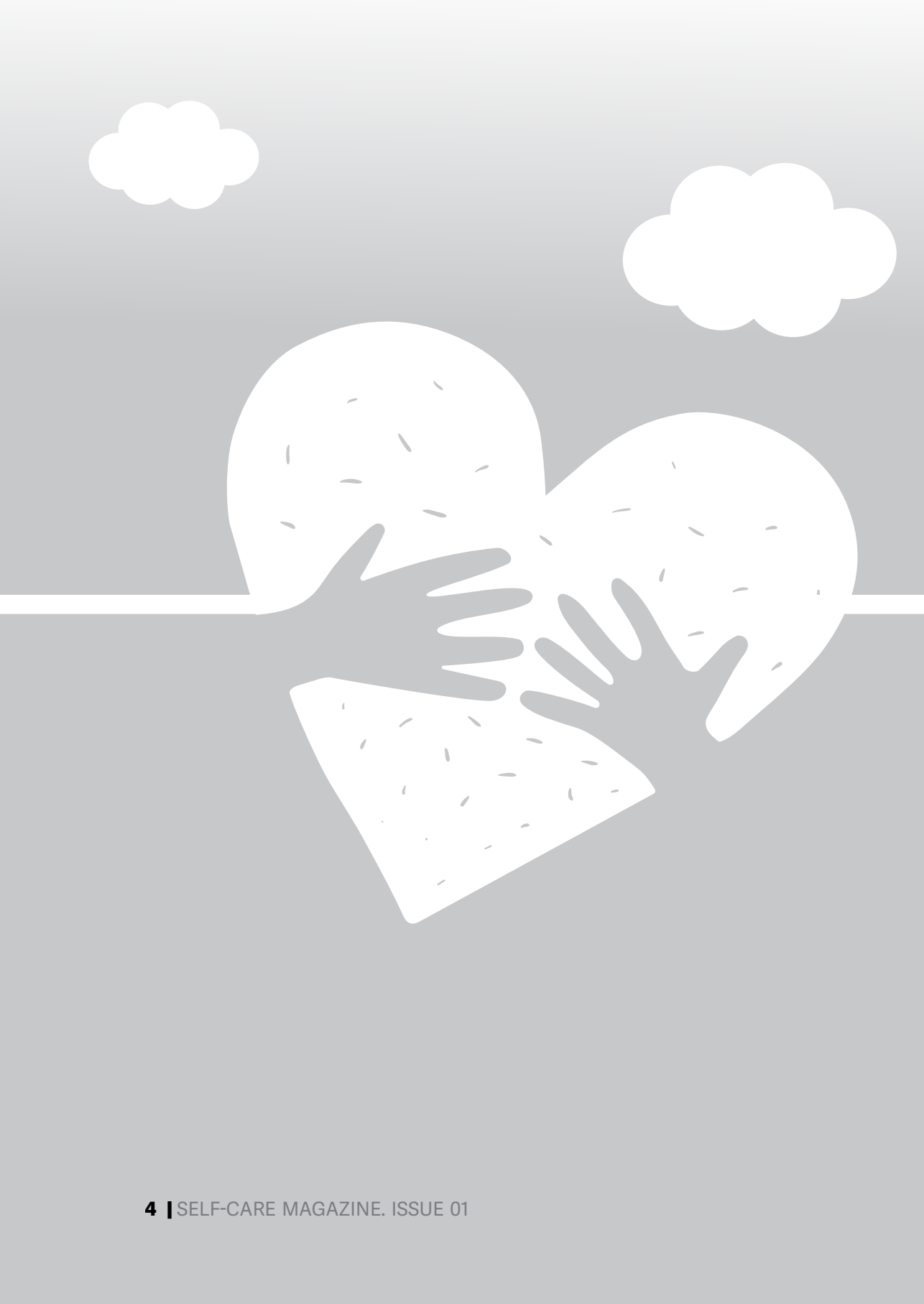
22 ■ Introducing "The Feeling Good Handbook"

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **self-care** journal, a dedicated space for exploring mental health within the international student community at the Iran University of Medical Science. Moving to a new country offers a wealth of experiences and possibilities, from exposure to diverse cultures and knowledge to the opportunity for personal growth and self-discovery. However, it also presents a myriad of emotional hurdles and stressors that can significantly impact an individual's mental well-being. Adapting to a different educational system, coping with cultural differences, and managing feelings of homesickness are just a few of the challenges that international students may encounter on their educational journey.

This journal aims to shed light on these experiences, providing insights, support, and resources to help international students navigate their mental health journey. Our journal strives to increase awareness about the mental health challenges faced by international students, such as stress, anxiety, culture shock, and feelings of isolation. We aim to provide practical advice and strategies to help students manage their mental health more effectively. Whether it's tips for managing stress, coping with homesickness, or seeking support, our goal is to empower students with the knowledge and tools they need to prioritize their Mental well-being and succeed academically.

Ultimately, our mission is to promote the well-being and academic success of international students, ensuring their educational journey is not only successful but also a positive and enriching experience. Join us in making mental health a priority, creating a community where every student feels understood, supported, and empowered to succeed.





Navigating Cultural Differences:

A Guide for International Students

Vahid Taghavi

Moving to a new country to study can be exciting. It's a chance to learn new things, meet different people, and see places you've never seen before. But it can also be tough, especially when you notice how different things are from what you're used to back home. This is what we call "cultural differences." For international students, understanding and dealing with these differences is a big part of adjusting to life in a new place.



What are Cultural Differences?

Cultural differences can include many things, like the way people talk, the food they eat, how they dress, and how they behave with each other. For example, in some cultures, it's common to be very direct when you talk, while in others, people might find this rude. These differences are normal, but they can feel strange or even scary when you're new to them.

Why It Matters?

Feeling out of place or not understanding what's going on around you can make you feel lonely or stressed. It's normal to feel this way. Everyone who moves to a new country goes through this at some point. It's part of the journey of living and studying abroad.

How to Deal with Cultural Differences?

■ **Learn as Much as You Can:** Before you go, try to learn about the country's culture. Read books, watch movies, and talk to people who have been there. The more you know, the less surprised you'll be by the differences.

■ **Keep an Open Mind:** Remember, different doesn't mean wrong. Try to see things from the other point of view. This can help you understand why people do things a certain way.

■ **Ask Questions:** If you don't understand why something is done a certain way, ask. Most people will be happy to explain their culture to you. This can be a great way to learn and make new friends.

■ **Be Patient with Yourself:** It takes



time to adjust to a new culture. It's okay to make mistakes. The important thing is to learn from them.

■ **Find a Support Network:** Look for other international students who might be feeling the same way. You can support each other. Also, many schools have clubs or groups for students from the same country. This can be a good way to feel less homesick.

■ **Celebrate Your Own Culture:** Share your culture with new friends. This can help you feel proud of where you come from and show others what's special about your home.

■ **Learn the Language:** Even basic proficiency in the local language can significantly ease your transition. It not only helps with day-to-

day activities but also shows respect for the host culture.

Finally, the journey of adjusting to a new culture is a profound aspect of studying abroad. While it comes with its set of challenges, the rewards are equally significant. By approaching these differences with an open mind and a willing heart, you not only enrich your educational experience but also prepare yourself for a global future. Remember, the aim is not to lose your cultural identity but to enrich it with new perspectives and understandings. This journey, with all its ups and downs, shapes you into a more versatile and resilient individual, ready to navigate the complexities of our interconnected world.





Look for other international students who might be feeling the same way. You can support each other.



Building Cross-Cultural
Friendships:

Fostering Connections Among International Students

Mohammadreza Hejri

Friendship knows no borders. Yet, for international students, forming meaningful connections in a new country can be both exhilarating and challenging. Building cross-cultural friendships not only enriches one's social life but also plays a crucial role in adapting to a new environment, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting overall well-being. In this essay, we explore the benefits, challenges, and strategies for cultivating friendships across cultural divides.

The Benefits of Cross-Cultural Friendships

Cross-cultural friendships offer a myriad of benefits that extend beyond mere companionship. They provide opportunities for cultural exchange, enabling individuals to learn about different customs, traditions, languages, and perspectives. Through these friendships, international students gain insight into their host country's culture, navigate cultural nuances more effectively, and develop intercultural competence—a skill highly valued in today's globalized world. Addi-

tionally, cross-cultural friendships offer emotional support, helping students navigate the challenges of studying abroad and mitigating feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

Challenges in Building Cross-Cultural Friendships

While the rewards of cross-cultural friendships are plentiful, they are not without challenges. Cultural differences in communication styles, social norms, and values can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or discomfort. Language barriers may also pose obstacles to forming deep connections. Moreover, cultural stereotypes or prejudices may hinder the initial stages of friendship formation. Overcoming these challenges requires patience, empathy, and a willingness to step outside one's comfort zone.

How to Develop Cross-Cultural Friendships

Approach interactions with an open mind and a genuine curiosity about different cultures. Be willing to ask questions, share experiences, and learn from one another.

Communicate Effectively: Be mindful of cultural differences in communication styles, such as directness, tone, and nonverbal cues. Clarify misunderstandings gently

While the rewards of cross-cultural friendships are plentiful, they are not without challenges. Cultural differences in communication styles, social norms, and values can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or discomfort.



and respectfully, and be patient with language barriers.

Be Empathetic: Recognize and respect cultural differences, even if they differ from your own beliefs or values. Practice empathy by putting yourself in the other person's shoes and seeking to understand their perspective.

Show Genuine Interest: Take an active interest in your friends' cultures, traditions, and experiences. Ask questions, attend cultural events, and be open to trying new things. Demonstrating genuine curiosity and appreciation fosters mutual respect and strengthens bonds.

Practice Patience and Flexibility: Building meaningful cross-cultural friendships takes time and effort. Be patient with yourself and others, and be willing to adapt and compromise when navigating cultural differences.

Cross-cultural friendships are a cornerstone of the international student experience, offering invaluable opportunities for personal growth, cultural exchange, and mutual support. By embracing diversity, communicating effectively, and cultivating empathy, international students can build meaningful connections that transcend cultural boundaries. These friendships not only enrich individual lives but also contribute to a more inclusive and interconnected global community. As we navigate the complexities of studying abroad, let us celebrate the diversity that surrounds us and embrace the friendships that bridge cultures and unite hearts.





Finding Home Away
from Home:

Coping with Homesickness as an International Student

Vahid Taghavi

Starting your studies in a new country is an adventure that brings new challenges, one of the most common being homesickness. Homesickness is a natural feeling of missing one's home environment and the comfort it brings. It can affect anyone, regardless of age or experience, and can be particularly challenging for international students who find themselves in a completely new setting, far from their familiar support systems. This

essay explores strategies to cope with homesickness, ensuring that students can enjoy their journey abroad while maintaining a healthy emotional balance.

Understanding Homesickness

Homesickness is more than just missing home; it's a complex emotional experience that can include feelings of sadness, longing, anxiety, and loneliness. It often strikes when we least expect it, maybe

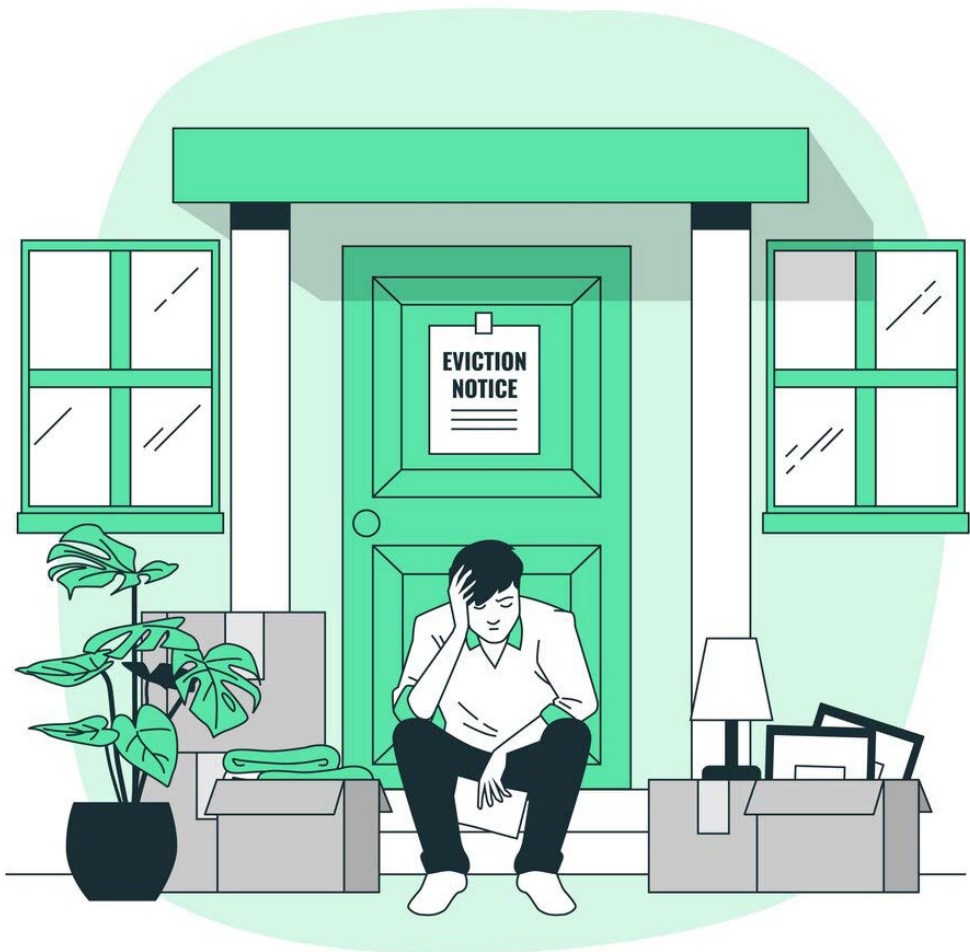
triggered by a familiar smell, a song, or even a holiday. While it's a common part of the international student experience, the intensity of these feelings can vary from person to person.

Strategies for Coping with Homesickness

Acknowledge Your Feelings: The first step in dealing with homesickness is acknowledging that what

you're feeling is normal and valid. It's okay to miss home, and it's okay to feel sad about it. Accepting these feelings can be a powerful step towards managing them.

Create a Routine: Establishing a routine can provide a sense of structure and normalcy in your new environment. Try to incorporate activities that you enjoyed back home



into your new schedule. Whether it's morning runs, reading before bed, or cooking a favorite meal, these small acts can bring comfort. **Stay Connected:** Thanks to technology, staying in touch with family and friends back home is easier than ever. Regular video calls, messages, or even sharing pictures can help bridge the gap between you and your loved ones. However, it's also important to balance this with living in the present and not spending all your time online.

Make New Connections: Building a new support network in your host country can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. Participate in university clubs, attend social events, or join study groups. These activities are not only a great way to meet people but also help you integrate into your new community.

Explore Your New Environment: Embrace the opportunity to explore your new surroundings. Discovering local landmarks, parks, and cultural activities can be exciting and divert your mind from homesickness. This exploration can also help you feel more at home in your new country.

Find a Piece of Home: Integrating elements of your home country into your daily life can also ease feelings of homesickness. This could be through cooking traditional dishes, celebrating national holidays, or decorating your space with items from home.

Give It Time: Remember, adjusting to a new country takes time. Be patient with yourself. As days turn into weeks, and weeks into months, you'll start to feel more at ease in your new environment.

Homesickness is a natural part of the journey for international students, but it doesn't have to overshadow your experience abroad. By acknowledging your feelings, staying connected with loved ones, building new friendships, and exploring your new environment, you can navigate through these emotions and find a new sense of belonging. Remember, every international student's journey is unique, and it's okay to seek help if you need it. With time and effort, you will find your place in this new chapter of your life, enriched by the memories and experiences you gather along the way.



COUNSELLING SERVICES

You can't handle all the various issues of life alone and that's a well-established fact. To solve your problem, you can ask for help from your family, friends, and the people around you. However, seeking professional support leads to better control of the problem with less room for error. That's because the expert consultant is properly equipped with the required knowledge and counts as a confidential and impartial person whose only intention is to help you.



Entering the university and starting your life as a student is stressful because of the major changes it brings to you in different aspects. Sometimes, it's due to the lack of access to support sources such as family and friends. On the other hand, finding yourself in a different cultural setting and a whole new lifestyle can be challenging too, making it difficult and exhausting for the student to adapt to the new environment and conditions. The counseling center of Iran University of Medical Sciences has been set up according to the aforementioned needs, to help and promote the mental health of students in facing the stress of student life and to provide plenty of services in different fields.

In the counseling center, different experts with different specializations work in a team and coherently. The presence of various specialists, including clinical psychologists, educational counselors, work assistants, psychiatrists, etc. allows clients to use the services of all specialists to solve their problems if it is necessary.

Specialized areas

Clinical Psychologist

Clients who are dealing with problems regarding thoughts, attitudes, feelings, behavior, or weakness in life skills and need psychotherapy

to investigate the causes of their problems will be under the supervision of our clinical psychologists. Counselor for family, marriage, and emotional problems

Clients who have family problems or have trouble communicating with other people such as family members, friends, colleagues, and professors, or need to consult about marriage are referred to these counselors.

Psychiatrist

Clients with neurological and psychological problems who need drug prescriptions will be treated by a psychiatrist. That includes people with depression, anxiety, or obsession.

Academic counselors

Academic counselors work in the field of educational issues, such as planning your study schedule, effective studying strategies, time management, training the cognitive and metacognitive skills, studying the causes of academic setbacks, guidance for solving and improving academic problems, changing majors, and choosing majors.

Social helper

Social helpers are fully familiar with the sources of social support. They implement different plans based on the specific condition of the client, such as psychosocial support, case management, advocacy, mediation

between the clients and various social resources, and simplifying the process of using the facilities and guiding the clients.

Psychometrics

Whenever counselors consider it essential to perform psychological and personality evaluations, they will perform the necessary tests.

Activities of the mental health unit
The goal of the mental health unit is to maintain and promote well-being and mental health. By holding special educational workshops for students, staff, experts, and professors, this unit tries to improve the awareness as well as the social and communication abilities of the participants. Among these educational seminars, there are workshops for life skills, pre-marriage education, correct study methods, and controlling the anxiety of exams. Also, this unit helps to increase awareness and promote well-being and mental health by compiling and publishing various publications, such as the monthly journal of mental health in Joree, as well as printing brochures. You can get these publications and brochures for free by visiting the counseling center or the website of the university counseling center.

Mental Health Associates

Mental health Associates are students who act as mental health liaisons to other students, contributing to the system of providing continuous, inclusive, and community-oriented services under the supervision of the counseling center. These people are selected students who, while being members of this group, are ready to perform services related to mental health, education, prevention, identification, assistance, and referral of students in need of counseling services and participate in the social activities of the counseling center.

Face-to-face consultation services and how to apply for a visit: When



a person goes to the counseling center, the counselor, or psychologist conducts an interview, takes a history from the client, and then refers the person to one or more specialists of the counseling center based on their type of problem, The counseling and psychotherapy process can go on as long as it's necessary.

Non-face-to-face consulting services: In order to make the counseling services more accessible to the students, this center covers the fields of marriage, emotional, academic, interpersonal relationships,

family, and psychiatry in a non-face-to-face, online, and free of charge communication through the Iran Hal application in a completely confidential manner.

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The Feeling Good Handbook

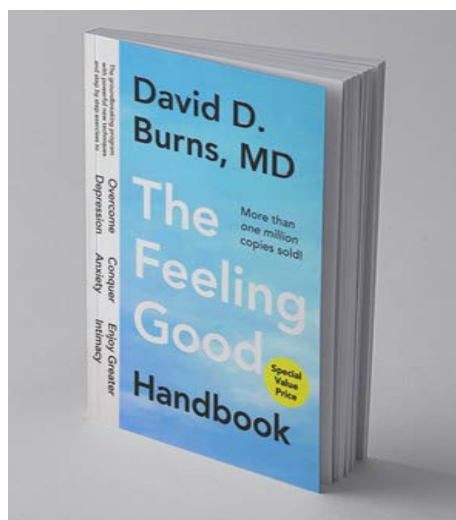
Author

DAVID D. BURNS, MD, is a clinical psychiatrist whose groundbreaking Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy was rated number one in a national survey of mental health professionals as the most frequently recommended self-help book on depression. The companion, The Feeling Good Handbook, was rated number two. Dr. Burns is a popular lecturer and guest on national radio and television. He is currently clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Stanford Medicine and is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Overview

From the author of the national bestseller Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy comes a guide to mental wellness that helps you get beyond depression and anxiety and make life an exhilarating experience!

With his phenomenally successful Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy, Dr. David Burns introduced a groundbreaking, drug-free treatment for depression. In this



bestselling companion, he reveals powerful new techniques and provides step-by-step exercises that help you cope with the full range of everyday problems.

- Free yourself from fears, phobias, and panic attacks.
- Overcome self-defeating attitudes.
- Discover the five secrets of intimate communication.
- Put an end to marital conflict.
- Conquer procrastination and unleash your potential for success.



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