

23

RELAX AND
EMPTY YOUR
MIND

VOID –
CHAN KAI HO HERCULES



“ A quick search on the Internet will show you many reports on Hongkonger’s mental health conditions, such as the overwhelming stress level and having the highest depression rate in the world. Mental health is as important as physical health, but it is often overlooked. Some see suffering under stress as being “inadequate” and suffering from depression as being “pessimistic”. Hercules Chan, a student at the University of Science and Technology, has launched a mobile app to help and encourage people to take some time for themselves, whether it is just to relax or to space out, and to pay attention to their mental health. ”

A HOLISTIC APPROACH IS NEEDED FOR MENTAL HEALTH

What is mental health? According to the World Health Organization, mental health refers to a state where a person is aware of their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of daily life, can do productive activities such as work, and can contribute to their community. Health is a holistic concept; it is not simply defined by whether someone is ill, but also their ability to derive satisfaction from relationships, have fulfilling outcomes, and adapt, change, and cope with adversity. Mental health enables thinking, communicating, and learning; it allows us to grow emotionally and empowers us with resilience and self-esteem.

Hercules has always had an interest in mental health and counselling. He was introduced to psychology in secondary school and hypnotherapy a few years ago. He became a certified hypnotherapist and began doing hypnotherapy for friends. He claimed that since learning hypnosis, he has not fallen ill much and he can relieve his own symptoms when he does. “One-on-one therapy is very useful, but there are too many people in Hong Kong. I wanted

to find a more efficient way.” That was why he and his friends looked into developing a mobile application infused with hypnosis and psychotherapy theories, hoping to help users relieve stress and raise public awareness on mental health. Hercules has already won many awards for this project and participated in the Good Seed competition twice. He lost the first time but tried again, which resulted in him meeting his current partners and receiving funding for the project. “I’m glad I didn’t get the funding the first time because people are really important, and money can’t buy them.” In his second Good Seed event, Hercules’s idea attracted new members to join the team, including Samuel Chan, who is in charge of programming, as well as Iris, Polly, and Agnes, who are in charge of publicity and paperwork. They are all very interested in mental health; they have experienced mood swings and think that people need to learn to relax and pay attention to themselves. Samuel has also studied hypnosis; he performs hypnosis before going to bed, which helps him regulate his state of mind.



Iris pointed out that during the examination season, the library is full of people and many of them get insomnia, but instead of looking for solutions, they take medication, which is not a cure — they need to look inwards to find the root of the problem.

The app is finally on the right track after numerous attempts and failures, as well as changes in team members. For the time being, the app has two parts. The first part is a finger game designed by Hercules, as various studies have shown that slow finger movements can slow down the body's rhythm, helping the user relax. The second part is a recording section which helps the user relax and fall asleep, with a different recording each day. The team values users' feedback highly — they were replying to inquiries even during the interview. Samuel pointed out that with the feedback, they can address

the users' concerns and make decisions that meet the market needs. "Many similar apps exist overseas, and many people use them. It's just that there's no Cantonese version catered for Hong Kong, and hypnosis is best done in the mother tongue." Hercules said that it was a big challenge to translate the English wordings into Cantonese, as there were fewer words to choose from to convey the meaning, and it also had to rhyme. With the new team's efforts, the app has gained more media coverage and public awareness. Agnes said that she wants to learn how to package it so that it will continue to draw attention.

"After all, many people still think that having mental health issues mean you are ill. There is a lot of misunderstanding and resistance. Education is needed."

Most of the current team members are still students, so how do they treat the app? "I think of it as a business, though it may not grow into an actual one," Hercules laughed. Other members feel that being able to work together as a team with the same goal in mind is something hard to come by. Polly, the newest member of the team, agrees with it and thinks that it is a good idea to be adventurous in university when the opportunity cost is low. "I don't think students should only think about what career path they want to pursue. We should think about what value we can create." Hercules agrees that the most important thing is to create value. He hopes to turn Hong Kong into a happy city where people can relax and let the "space" add colour to their lives. "Everything has its priorities, and I will stick to this project until I can't find a way to do it anymore."

“ To put it plainly, life is a choice. ”

