

SPRING 2025 ISSUE 1

THRIVE

Sharing the wisdom of lived mental health experience



**CELEBRATE LOVE AND
SPRINGTIME WITH US!**

**LOVE OUTSIDE OUR
COMFORT ZONES**

**HOPE & MENTAL
HEALTH**

**A SPACE FOR
CREATIVITY**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LOVE

Love outside of our comfort zones 04

Love is the special key 06

Jonathan looks at the many different forms love takes in our lives. Spoiler alert: It's not all roses and candles! 09

HOPE

The unbreakable link between light and hope 08

CREATIVE CORNER

Unlock your creativity with games, crafts, and insights. 12

MY YOUNGER SELF AND ME

The TikTok trend...with a twist 17

A PROBLEM SHARED

Everyday problems with practical, actionable tasks to get yourself through. 19

BIG LOVE

Looking back at the Acts of Big Love Campaign 21

GROWING

Eanna's story of small changes for big impact 22

Cover Image by Tamara Dragovic



Photo by AnnaStills from Getty Images

ABOUT GROW MENTAL HEALTH

Grow Mental Health run free weekly mental health support groups in communities all over Ireland and online.

Friendship, Self-development, and Community are at the core of everything we do.

Our groups are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive. They are not counselling or therapy. Each group is run by the participants.

People report life changing effects often within months of joining a group. Many describe a newfound confidence, a new and growing trust in other people, and a more hopeful outlook on both their future and overall wellbeing.

Our support groups are free to attend for anyone over 18.



WWW.GROW.IE

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THRIVE is a collection of articles, poems, practical tips, and so much more. All of our content has been created BY and FOR people with lived experience of mental health challenges. Sharing the wisdom that we gain from going through the fire together has never been more important. Enjoy!



NOTES FROM THE CO-EDITOR

What is Grow Mental Health?

Grow Mental Health is a mental health charity running in Ireland for nearly 60 years. We provide a healing space where people can share their stories in a supportive and confidential setting. Our program of hope and recovery is based on decades of lived experience. In these pages, we share that hard-earned wisdom with you. We hope you find inspiration and comfort in our content.

"You alone can do it, but you can't do it alone."*

Why Thrive?

Don't we all want to be happy? To live a full life? To feel at home in this world? To love and connect and to be going somewhere? Our happy selves are our true selves. Many of us are challenged by anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges. We perceive these as obstacles on our path. However, these "obstacles" are the path to thriving. If you've got a problem... that's good! Our journey of recovery becomes a breakthrough into a new, freer life. We hope the content of this magazine reflects that aspiration and can inspire our readers. Our theme for this issue is LOVE and HOPE, inspired by the thawing after a long winter and the light of springtime. Please read and enjoy!

- *A phrase commonly used by our community. You will find these peppered throughout Thrive.*



Jonathan Mullen

EDITOR/CONTRIBUTOR

LOVE MEANS PUSHING OUTSIDE OF OUR COMFORT ZONES

We all crave love. That is why rom-coms, Valentine's Day and love songs are all so popular. However, for many of these clichés, love is often shown in a very limited light. It is not all rainbows and butterflies, sweet-nothings and serenading. Love in all its forms is far more complex.

It is much easier to love in ways that are romantic, gratifying, and even passionate. However, the true measure of love is being willing to push outside your comfort zone, when the relationship requires it. There is often a greater chance of getting hurt in the process. But that is the cost of being authentic with another. "Sufficient care, sufficient risk."*

Authentic love is letting the other person in to experience the parts of us we have deemed unfit for public knowledge. The parts of us that show our insecurities, fears, trigger-points, neurosis, etc. By revealing such, we may very well be judged unacceptable and unworthy of love, respect and friendship. That is what we fear.

However, the process is worthwhile. "You don't really know anyone until you know the ordinary human being in them—the one struggling to relate to life as a whole."*

When we drop our barriers and confide in another, we are demonstrating trust in this individual; hoping they will be gentle and non-judgemental with what we share. This act can facilitate their sharing, and we must actively listen, in turn. Such exchanges can be deeply validating and can create strong bonds between individuals. "Friendship is a love of intimate sharing between mature equals."*

As we enter different life phases, the commonalities that once brought us together can be lost. Unless our relationship has been nurtured by shared vulnerability, trust and empathy, it will remain one-dimensional. It probably won't stand the test of time. "To be personal and deep enough to endure, people must share their deeper thoughts ..."*

There are other acts of love that are equally challenging to negotiate. Good communication; namely being direct, clear and honest. "Clear understandings make for long friendships."*

Such qualities might lead to conflict. We know that muscles grow strongest by sustaining small injuries and healing from them. The same can be said about relationships, provided we do so with maturity, respect and a balanced perspective.

CONT.



If we avoid conflict, we are limiting the potential for growth. We are operating out of fear, and brushing inevitable hurts under the carpet. This is a perfect breeding ground for resentment. We are all individuals. No matter how similar, compatible or easy-going we may be, there will always be divergences between us, and that is okay. Therefore, it is inevitable that we will encounter conflicting values and attitudes, and misunderstandings. It is important to love people different from ourselves.

Avoiding conflict puts the health of the relationship in jeopardy. It means someone is holding back; keeping their cards close to their chest. The opposite can be said about clear communication and honesty, both of which develop intimacy and trust. It is more loving to confront what's bothering you, with an intent to resolve it together. "Healthy relationships are based on mutual respect and have good communication, share wisdom, love, strengths and weaknesses—and have the ability to effectively deal with conflict."*

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To be direct means not telling people what they want to hear, all the time. To only stroke their ego, preserve their feelings, and always give positive feedback, is not necessarily good for them. To tell them your honest opinion, when it matters, means you genuinely care about their wellbeing. "...love is the appreciation and affirmation of other human beings. It is the consistent, active care and concern for the whole welfare of another..."*

"Constructive" conflict shows a willingness to work hard for the relationship, or to disagree agreeably. In such cases, it benefits the relationship. It can be an opportunity to get feedback on what is and isn't working. It can also be an effective way of getting to know the person better, and to understand and empathise with them more.

- A phrase commonly used by our community. You will find these peppered throughout Thrive.



WORDS BY HOLLY DARRAGH-HICKEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GUSTAVO FRING
(P.4) AND MEDIAPHOTOS (P.5)

LOVE IS THE SPECIAL KEY

A safe, welcoming, healing, place of friendship and hospitality is my experience of my support group. I bring my humanity to our weekly meeting. We are each at different stages on our journey. Some have suffered in a way that is hard to put into words. Others have stumbled along sensing that there is more to living. A shared glimmer of hope brings us all together as we are.

Leonard Cohen on his album, Anthem, has a song with the words "There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." I've had a good few cracks in my life. It's fair to say, we are all cracked in some way. That's why we need somewhere like Grow Mental Health, so we can start to discover that there is a way through whatever is going on in our life.

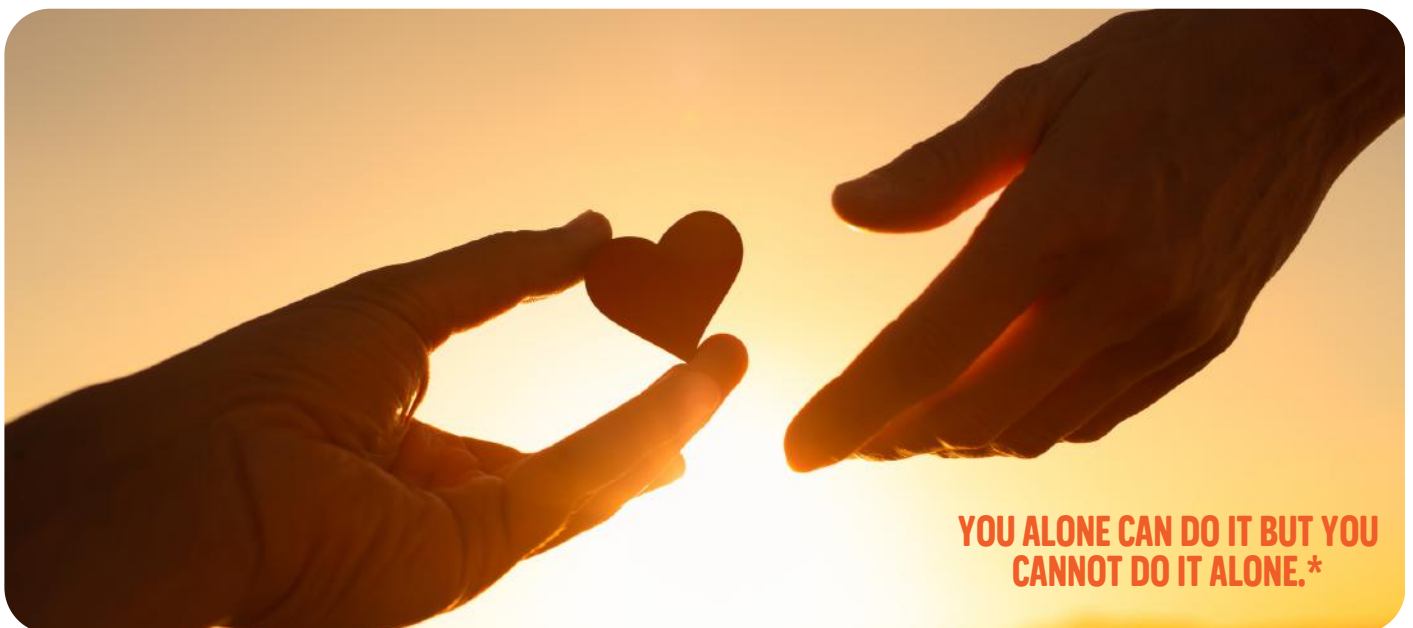
Grow is a community. Through our stories, our heartbreaks and our successes, we help each other find meaning and see a flicker of light and hope through our "crack". You need courage to come to a meeting – to overcome our fear of the unknown. Compassion creates that place where it is safe to share ourselves and be vulnerable. There is no pressure to share. We are encouraged to come to

a few meetings, to listen and observe before sharing.

Whether we are feeling strong or weak, the support meeting is a sacred space. A place for insight into ourselves and others. Your story can touch me when you share. I see your humanity in you. You recognise mine. Together we trust that we can share ourselves – where we are right now. I can learn from you.

There is risk at this time of revelation. I remind myself; we are all human and it is ok to be nervous. But we are non-judgemental. We accept each other as we are. In this caring place, healing happens. I have to silence my own inner critic. Instead, I keep hope alive by noticing your path to wholeness. I've been there. I have stumbled and fallen. I reached out in a cry for help. You welcomed me with loving kindness. I have been able to get up again. So can you. We are all lovingly interconnected and interdependent. Deep down we want what's best for each other. Confidentiality is the seal on the meeting and what is shared. The hardest part may be in the asking for help and support, but it is worth it. You are loved as you are.

[CONT.](#)



**YOU ALONE CAN DO IT BUT YOU
CANNOT DO IT ALONE.***

The wisdom of the group's voice comes through in the meeting - often prompted by previous healed experiences. A tailored task and piece of the program book is offered for each member. The task, however small, is a step towards being ordinary again. A task could be to changing out of your pyjamas three mornings in the week or to go out and meet a friend for a coffee. The piece from the Grow Program could be to follow step 7, ("We took care and control of our bodies"). These words remind me about self-care during the week. Again, something ordinary. Support for the week ahead is made real. One step at a time. One foot in front of the other, step after step. Nothing extraordinary. A stumble or a trip may happen, but persevere. This is a well trodden path. Others have left their prints before you. There is always support. You are not alone.

Socialising between meetings on an outing like a walk, or the cinema, can be a bit of fun and builds friendship. When you go to a Grow meeting - you can linger there for care, healing and support.



**I COULD WALK A MILE IN YOUR SHOES BUT I
ALREADY KNOW THEY'RE JUST AS UNCOMFORTABLE
AS MINE. LET'S WALK NEXT TO EACH OTHER INSTEAD.
- Lynda Meyers**

“
THE WISDOM OF
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You will be the better for it. You will be inspired by the sharing and make meaningful friendships. The tender love of the group will heal you.

The Grow program of hope and recovery has been tried and tested for over fifty years! Like many self-help recovery programs, it is rooted in Twelve Steps. The weekly routine of a meeting is an important habit. The meetings are free but I always come away inspired and richer.

The good news is that you will come to live the life that you love. (A cup of tea/coffee after the meeting also works wonders!!) As always, I wish you the very best in health, life, love and happiness.

- A phrase commonly used by our community. You will find these peppered throughout Thrive.

WORDS BY GEORGE LEIGH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEIFERPIX (P.6) AND
STEPHEN GEARY (P.7)



**HOPE IS A THING WITH FEATHERS THAT
PERCHES IN THE SOUL AND SINGS THE TUNE
WITHOUT WORDS AND NEVER STOPS AT ALL.
- Emily Dickinson**

LIGHT

Light is a universal symbol in all cultures. It extinguishes the darkness, whether that be ignorance, chaos, despair or the frightening. Like the spring and dawn, the light always returns. It falls from the sky to the ground. All faith traditions use light as a metaphor for that transcendent higher power. The Sun symbolises this joyous life-giving energy.

And as the Sun returns after winter, our spirits lift and we emerge out of hibernation to new life. Another meaning of the word Light is "not heavy". We feel lighter when we are our true selves. We are free from the heaviness of darkness.

Light illuminates. It symbolises understanding, insight and wisdom. Which are needed for a breakthrough into new life. When we are graced with an epiphany, what do we exclaim! "I have seen the light!" It turns chaos into order. The path is revealed.

And of course, Light is the symbol of Hope and Faith. To light a candle is universal too. So, on the darkest night, there is light. Hope to find our way through the maze of darkness as we wait for the dawn.

The psychologist Carl Jung wrote about our shadow or dark side. These are the parts of our psyche we do not want to look at or admit exist. We may not be aware of them in the first place. How is this shadow to be integrated? Through awareness, the light of our consciousness.

These days a lot of people are practising meditation and mindfulness, where they learn that we are not our thinking mind but the pure silent wordless awareness behind or above our thinking. Most of us believe our stream of thoughts are who we are. Not so! We are that pure consciousness that is aware of our thoughts, emotions and the world around us. Another word for consciousness is Light. This is who we truly are. Beings of light.

Part of the healing process is to be present and conscious with our emotions and pain. Not to repress or hurry the pain but be with it. To surround it with our awareness and our consciousness. And likewise, to grow as a person we need to cultivate awareness; to wake up and be conscious, to embody the light.

WORDS BY JONATHAN MULLIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZMEEL

LOVE: A MULTI FACETED THING



SO, I LOVE YOU BECAUSE THE ENTIRE
UNIVERSE CONSPIRED TO HELP ME FIND YOU.
- Paulo Coelho

I was asked to write about the different types of love that, well “grow” and flourish in our peer groups. I do not feel qualified, as we all fall far short of perfect love. However, I have been a member of a Grow group for a good while and bear witness to the love I have seen and felt. It is love that bonds the group and heals us.

Now, **EROS** or romantic love may happen in a Grow meeting, or anywhere for that matter. We give this love a lot of attention, poets and songwriters celebrate it. However, I’d like to emphasise other less appreciated forms of love. Types of love free of desire and just wish the wellbeing of another. I will now make a whistle stop tour of these other neglected loves.

Now **PHILIA** or affectionate love is sometimes called brotherly love is marked by deep feelings between friends or family. I have heard many personal group member stories, and nearly all are touched by the friendship in the group. And for many the group became their family or tribe.

“—
IT IS
LOVE
THAT
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THE
GROUP
AND
HEALS...

Then there is **PRAGMA** or practical love, based on duty, reason and shared goals. A long-lasting love. It may be in romantic relationships but is not limited to that type of relationship. In our support meetings we share common goals. To find and experience healing and to grow. We support and guide one another. Mysteriously it’s through helping another that we are more fully helped ourselves.

Then there is **PHILAUTIA** or self-love. This is where many of us are damaged and may have guilt. An underrated love. It’s about loving, appreciating and accepting who we are. A healthy form of love where we recognise our self-worth and value our personal needs. Here we can set an example for others in the group. And it’s easier to grow and heal when we have this strong base in place.

STORAGE or familial love is like Philia, it’s a strong bond in family or close friends. It has hallmarks like gratitude and gratefulness. Forgiveness comes easier. Where forgiveness reopens the gates of love and multiplies that love.

Then there is **GOOD WILL** where our hearts open and a flow of good will gushes to another. In that moment we appreciate the other. We smile and shine upon that person.

We have **COMPASSION** too. Where we feel another’s pain or passion and are filled with the need to ease and heal another’s suffering. We also identify with another’s pain. We are the same. Suffering is universal on this planet. We are all in this boat together! In a meeting we are “moved” by others. Our empathy unites the group.

CONT.

“

WE HAVE COMPASSION TOO. WHERE WE FEEL ANOTHER'S PAIN OR PASSION AND ARE FILLED WITH THE NEED TO EASE AND HEAL ANOTHER'S SUFFERING.

FAITHFULNESS, we keep the confidentiality.

FORBEARANCE, sometimes we struggle to understand perspectives of others. But they and we are only human after all. We need patient self control and tolerance. And to resist a harsh word. Resist the urge to attack.

Now a difficult one, **TOUGH LOVE**. I tread carefully here. When people are suffering, they are often very fragile and vulnerable and may not be able for tough love. They feel so badly about themselves already. There may come a time where they may be able to take on board a harsh truth. And it maybe a breakthrough. However, we can easily see and be angered by the faults and failings of others and feel superior. When given in this poor spirit all we give is another wound, often a deep one. So tough love needs to be given in the spirit of love, with warmth and friendship and from a position below or equal, not above. If the love is not there it maybe best not to address the harsh truth until another time or let it be from another person or go as gently as you can. We all need to be challenged sometimes. It's human and humbling and best done in the spirit of friendship.

I will go out on a limb and call **COURAGE** another form of love. It takes courage to face, recognise, claim and love our shadow. And to drop our masks, to be transparent. To be small and vulnerable. To show our heart and psyche. To drop our "fig leaves". We all feel shame. This can be terrifying when we first reveal ourselves. There's the risk we will not be received with understanding. For very personal wounds you may feel "safer" sharing with one trusted friend. The greater the intimacy and cost the greater the love released. When we are consumed with shadows its good to let the light in.



UNDERSTANDING. Maybe love and understanding are the same thing? You can't deeply love a person unless you understand them. Don't you feel loved when another listens and understands. And I have heard it said, "To understand all is to forgive all." It takes time and some effort to understand people (and yourself for that matter), its easier and effortless to judge. We are all difficult and inadequate in one way or another. If we understand why, the reasons, the wounds, the personal story and the temperament of another our hearts soften, and **CONT.**

“WE ARE GENTLE AND HELPFUL TO ANOTHER OUT OF GOODNESS OF HEART. IT OILS THE WHEELS OF HUMANITY.



Love looks like friendship, respectful challenge and so much more when peers commit to being there for the good and bad times.

we can accept and love them warts and all. And that includes loving ourselves too, hopefully the fruit of self-knowledge.

And now the highest love, **AGAPE**. A selfless love, offering love without expecting anything in return. Selfless at heart, the ultimate, purest form of love. It can flower in small acts. Where we can put others wellbeing ahead of our own and seek no recognition. Where we sometimes can do without so another can have. Where one is good to the good and bad alike. To go the extra mile. Or like a parent who wants only happiness for a child and for the other to reach their full potential, not what we think they should be or what we want them to be. A love with no attachments. Where we let them be. Where we prefer to listen over making hasty assumptions. Where we see the worth or good in another. With no need or desire demanded of them. A divine love.

However, I like to finish with the most unsung of all the loves, common as grass **KINDNESS**. Not many great works of art grapple with it. It is so simple. We are gentle and helpful to another out of goodness of heart. It oils the wheels of humanity. A balm to our cuts and bruises. It cheers our hearts up.

All these different types of love do bleed into one another. Love is so vast and mysterious that no words or definitions can do it justice. We hope we will grow in love, is not growing in maturity growing in love?

All this talk of love can seem beyond us. Maybe at the heart of the Grow Program is that we listen fully to each other, we are fully present and attentive. We listen without judgement. We witness our shared humanity. That is our **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**.

WORDS BY JONATHAN MULLEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES (P.9),
THUYHABICH FROM PIXABAY (P.10) AND STEPHEN GEARY (P.11)



CREATIVE CORNER

CURATED BY
HOLLY DARRAH-HICKEY
BARRY HURLEY

Written by
Mark, Southeast

Am I the ideal self ?
Whose heroic actions
Are shrouded in the mists of time
Or the dreaded self?
Whose cowardice and cruelty
Deny the comfort of amnesia

Or can I be the flawed self ?
Living in a flawed world
With flawed people
Who strives to engage
With the present moment

Sometimes connects with life
Sometimes not
But let not the fear of failure
Discourage me.

To practice any
art, no matter
how well or
badly, is a way
to make your
soul grow, for
heaven's sake.
So do it.
- Kurt Vonnegut



Written by
Holly Darragh-Hickey

Rebirth

I climb
from night-locked days,
my first full breath
after a deep dive.

I am frost-born,
starched skin, clenched fingers
softening in the light,
into salutation.

Expanding
into blue-burst skies,
where power lines
frame and punctuate.

I walk
storm edges, cloud
fattening like a whale
against the sun.

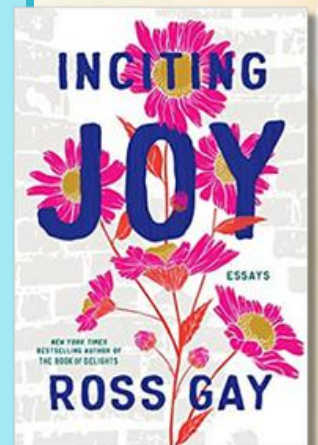
The trees
stitch bright, wet air,
map the winds,
staccato together.

After rain,
the light folds,
curling into prisms
over the burnished earth.

Inciting Joy: A Review

Written by Jenny Synnott

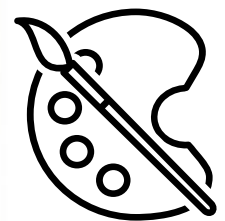
Things feel hard at the moment. I try to keep the news of the world away from MY world. I want to protect those I love from the division, the ugliness and the fear. It seems that Ross Gay has another idea! His book, Inciting Joy dives head first into the political mess, the climate crisis, the erosion of our communities and social fabric. I have been wondering for a long time about where to find more of this seemingly scarce commodity. And if it's even OK to be seeing it amongst the suffering of those around me and on the telly. Gay suggests that it is in this suffering...this fear..this shared erosion that joy flourishes. Joy triumphs and is the key to turning the tide on what seems to be the inevitable fate of humanity. Without giving too much away, it is our humility and our joy that fuel the revolution. While difficult to read at times (I mean he really does not shy away from the monster problems), I found Inciting Joy to be an important and soul-inflating book. It will change you.





PSYCHOSIS

BY JONATHAN MULLEN



Looking back now, from a brighter and higher place, I recall those difficult early years of dealing with psychosis as a young man. As the famous words say it was the worst of times and the best of times! I say the best of times because even though I lost hope at times I felt I was on a journey and hope did return.

When I was in psychiatric hospital in the hot summer of '95, I became good friends with a man my own age. Michael had a passion for writing short stories. He too suffered from schizophrenia, badly.

One story resonated with me, like a mirror in which I saw my own truth. It was the story of a man marooned on a far distant planet, far far away in the remotest corner of the solar system. He didn't know how to get home or if there was a home! I knew the loneliness and alienation of living in and with psychosis.

Even though I was in this world, I was not. I felt different, as if from somewhere else. Otherworldly. I was imprisoned. Maybe we're all imprisoned in our minds to a greater or lesser degree!

My psychotic episodes had a spiritual theme running through the madness. Of rebirth into a true self. Hence the candle.

When I painted the picture, some people said it was like the illustrations in the children's book, "The Little Prince." Yes, the little prince lives on a tiny planet too. But in Antoine de Saint-Exupery's illustrations there is no darkness, and the prince is innocent. In mine there is darkness, hoping for light and innocence.



PHOTO BY VLADYSLAV DUKHIN FROM PEXELS

**HOPE IS BEING ABLE
TO SEE THAT THERE
IS LIGHT DESPITE
ALL THE DARKNESS.
- Desmond Tutu**

SOPHIE IS HOPE

BY BARRY HURLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

Catherine had wanted to call the baby Hope, not Sophie as she now was. Catherine felt her luck was now turning, and her chance had come.

Ray lay on Sophie's bed, gazing out at the deserted street. He pulled baby's fluffy unicorn to his chest and turned to the wall.

"Would this ever end?" he choked.

When he awoke the SOPHIE wooden frame name over baby's bed came slowly into view. He absently studied the letters. S.O.P.H.I.E. He studied them again. He rearranged them in his head. All the letters were the same. Eyes wide, he shouted to the empty room, "SOPHIE ... IS HOPE, SOPHIE - IS HOPE!"

He bounded down the stairs. He swung the sitting room door wide. "Sophie is Hope," he announced again.

Baby looked up. Baby smiled. Ray's heart filled with joy. He knew then that life would go on. That Sophie would never really know what happened to them then. He stretched his arms out as if to grab the world.

"I love you guys," he said.

Tears filled his eyes. Tears of hope; tears of joy. He knew then that they would be ok. That we would all move on together like they always did. He laughed. Catherine smiled. Baby giggled and giggled and giggled in that uncontrollable way that only ever springs from unbridled happiness and HOPE and Sophie was Hope.





WORD SEARCH

c	k	a	c	o	m	f	o	r	t	n	w	v	p	l	a	y	b
o	s	l	e	e	p	e	x	e	r	c	i	s	e	p	a	d	x
n	o	l	p	a	t	i	e	n	c	e	f	u	n	s	c	h	j
f	k	x	t	e	p	k	p	o	w	e	r	i	f	h	c	e	o
i	u	n	d	e	r	s	t	a	n	d	i	n	g	q	e	a	u
d	z	z	b	r	c	o	m	p	a	s	s	i	o	n	p	l	r
e	j	f	x	o	c	o	n	t	r	o	l	w	d	z	t	i	n
n	u	e	s	h	s	u	p	p	o	r	t	n	k	c	a	n	e
c	h	o	m	e	a	a	e	q	n	c	a	k	m	a	n	g	y
e	f	r	i	e	n	d	s	h	i	p	h	s	k	r	c	w	h
d	g	r	o	w	x	h	e	l	p	d	x	x	q	e	e	s	u
s	q	t	w	o	r	k	q	f	b	m	o	i	l	o	v	e	w

Find the following words in the puzzle. Words are hidden

⬇️, ➡️, and ↘️

acceptance
care
comfort
compassion
confidence
control
exercise

friendship
fun
grow
healing
help
home
journey

love
patience
play
power
sleep
support
understanding
work



Did you know?

Studies have shown that memorising songs is very healthy for your brain and will improve your mental capacity. Spend 10 minutes listening to the song carefully and then try to sing along. Listening intently and then reconstructing the song engages the focus centre of your brain causing it to reduce a chemical called acetylcholine which enables brain plasticity and helps to make your memory more vivid.



MY YOUNGER SELF: INSPIRED BY TIKTOK

I took my younger self out for coffee. He ordered tea with 3-4 sugars. I ordered a decaf mocha. We dispensed with the small talk because I knew we both hated it, and I told him that I'm slightly frustrated with him. I told him that I've spent the better part of a decade cleaning up his messes. That I've been trying to clean up the damage he's done to me and to others. That I'm in therapy for how much his decision-making has messed the both of us up. He expressed delight that we're still in therapy nearly a decade later.

He clocks my nail varnish, and asks did we become a blue haired SJW. I corrected him - we became a salt and pepper haired Social Justice Warrior. I tell him that the greys are the only thing the two of us have in common at this point. Not even the cigars survived. He asks me with trepidation, did we go soft? I nod my head. I tell him that we care now, shock and awe. And just to watch him squirm, I tell him that the majority of people he makes friends with in college are either transgender, furies or both.

I told him that I felt anger towards him. But I don't hate him. I told him everything he believes about himself is a lie, and on some level, he already knows this. He's not a one-man content generator for his art. He's not superior to anyone. He's not an atheist. He's not heterosexual. But I also told him he's not an alien. Or a mutant. Or any type of subhuman. That he's trying to play a game that's not intended to run on the console he possesses. That it's not his fault. His responsibility, yes, but not his fault.



I told him that we go on amazing adventures, that we do things that fill our heart, give us life and make the suffering bearable. But I didn't lie to him. I also told him the suffering is just about to begin. I told him we have to learn to live without our childhood best friend. I told him that we get bounced around from one trauma to the next for the next seven or eight years without a break. I tell him we spend an inordinate amount of time trying to keep up with the Joneses. I tell him we eventually begin drinking, and that we start to abuse it to deal with our low self-esteem. I tell him we don't achieve happiness until 21, and that we then shortly run ourselves into the ground and wind up having a severe breakdown because of it. I told him that the joke he used to tell himself that going to college would probably kill him nearly came true.

But I also told him that we survive all of it. Fragile, damaged, but alive. And better for it. (And that we get diagnosed with severe ADHD.)

I told him I love him, and I forgive him. But to move forward, I've spent a year and change killing him.

And it wasn't a one-and-done; because he's still there. He's the one I fight for dominance over my head with. He's the origin point for many of my uglier spots. He's hateful. He gleefully imbibes the hater-ade and delights in the suffering of those he feels threatened by. He wants to be accepted and validated at any cost to his or others' well-being. He's terrified of rejection. He's scared. He's traumatised. He's my inner child, the embodiment of my ego.

"Sometimes the real enemy, is the inner me" - DMX

We left (he made me pay for his drink), and before we went our separate ways, I suggested that he go home and invest in bitcoin, but because of the time streams being out of sync, I knew he wouldn't. Damn.

WORDS BY AARON
PHOTOS BY FLÁVIO SANTOS FROM
PEXELS AND SERGEY CAUSELOVE

A PROBLEM SHARED: MY JOB IS WEARING ME DOWN



“
I’m so
overwhelmed in
work. What
should I do?
– Stephen

Our Grow support groups are where we share all kinds of life challenges in a safe, non-judgemental setting. The following fictitious scenario gives an idea of how we work in our groups when a problem is shared.

Stephen was under tremendous pressure at work. This is a problem that so many of us can identify with. This pressure can feel all-consuming and affect our well-being. After empathising with Stephen’s plight, Chris, John, Mary, and Aoife share some of the strategies they found helpful when faced with similar situations.

Chris wondered if Stephen might take a step back

When you’re overwhelmed, everything can feel urgent and insurmountable. Pause for a moment. If possible, take a day off or even a few hours to reflect and breathe. Creating distance can help you think more clearly.

John asked Stephen to identify the root causes

What’s overwhelming you the most?

- Is it the workload?
- Unrealistic expectations?
- A toxic work environment?
- Lack of support or resources?

Understanding the root causes can help you see whether changes can be made—or if leaving is the right choice.

In a similar situation, Mary found it helpful to prioritise and delegate

If your workload feels unmanageable, try breaking it into smaller, more achievable tasks. Ask yourself:

- What’s urgent?
- What can wait?
- Can I delegate or ask for help?

You’re only one person and there are only so many hours in the day.

Aoife encouraged Stephen to talk to his manager

If you feel safe doing so, try having an honest conversation with your manager. Share that you’re feeling overwhelmed and ask for support. You might suggest solutions, like:

CONT.

A PROBLEM SHARED: CONT.

- Adjusting deadlines
- Reassigning tasks
- Bringing in extra resources

Sometimes, managers are unaware of the extent of the pressure until you speak up.

John has learned the power of setting boundaries

If your workload has taken over your life, setting boundaries is crucial. For example:

- Avoid checking work emails after hours.
- Say no to additional tasks when you're already stretched thin.
- Protect your lunch breaks and personal time.

Remember, boundaries aren't selfish—they're necessary.

Over time, Chris has found small ways to recharge

Even in the busiest times, carve out moments to recharge:

- Take short walks.
- Practice deep breathing or mindfulness.
- Listen to music that calms you.

These little breaks can help reduce stress and improve focus.

Aoife wonders how Stephen might explore long-term options

If the overwhelm feels unfixable despite your efforts, it's okay to consider other opportunities. Start exploring new roles or career paths that align with your values and well-being. Update your resume, network, and research options without rushing into a decision.

It's always important to lean on your support network

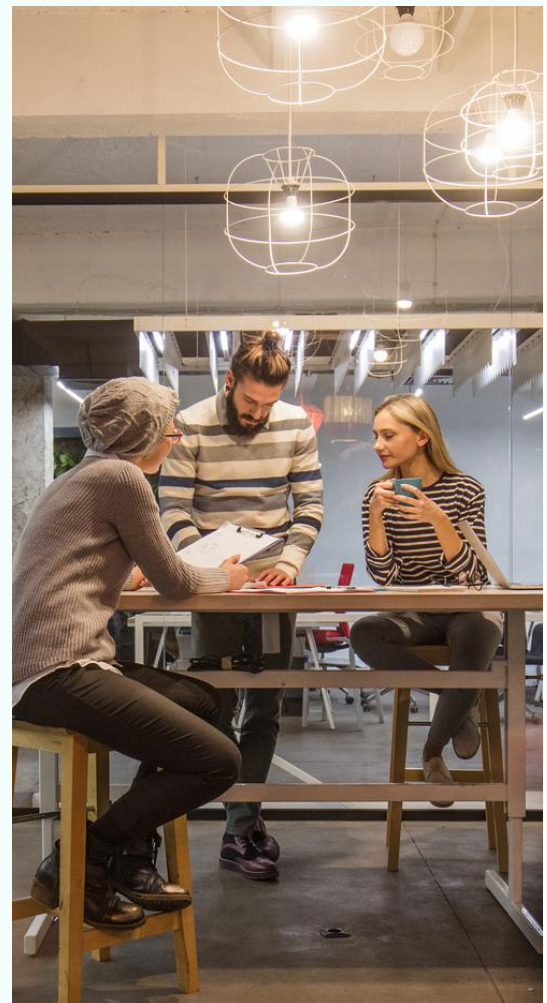
Talk to friends, family, or colleagues you trust. Venting and hearing others' perspectives can help you feel less isolated and might provide insights you hadn't considered.

And if you need to, seek professional support

If the overwhelm feels unbearable, consider speaking to your GP or joining a support group. They can help you process your feelings, build coping strategies, and make confident decisions about your next steps.

John finds it important to remind himself of his worth

We deserve to feel valued and supported in our work and outside of it. If the job isn't providing that, it's okay to prioritise your well-being and consider a change. Take your time to evaluate and trust that you're capable of making the right decision for yourself.



We welcome you
to share your
problem here.
Contact us
publication@grow.ie

February 14, 2025 - Grafton Street, Dublin

Acts of BIG LOVE: A concert in aid of Grow Mental Health

The very busy Grafton Street was the venue for the second annual Acts of BIG LOVE Concert. Between the singing and dancing, folks were more than generous with donations and purchases of the Grow Virtual Friendship Rose. Once again, we celebrated the love and friendships that help us feel supported throughout the year. When we lift each other up, we do better together. Acknowledging the relationships and people that keep us strong is so important. This Valentines Day we celebrated "our people". The ones who bring us joy, laughter, and love all year round.



Rathfarnham Ukulele Group and Irish Tenor Paul Byrom



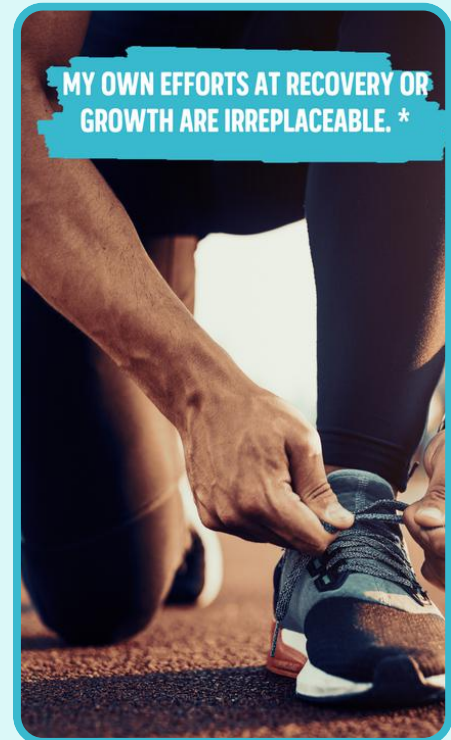
Singer Songwriter Luke Clerkin and generous support from our friends at Bewley's Cafe on Grafton Street. Thank you one an all!

EANNA'S STORY

You get on with your life! Do the best you can, right!? Who has time to reflect, to examine ourselves? Life is too busy and there are so many things to get done!

I've always considered myself pretty average. I worked a "normal" job, I enjoyed time with friends, I looked forward to the weekend. I thought the version of me I was, was all I could be.

It took a relationship breakup and a stressful work project to bring me to breaking point. My worst fear was realised. I felt weak, incompetent and useless and I felt the world could see this. My worth was tied to how productive I was. I was completely at the mercy of other people's approval. I realised that there was something fundamentally wrong with how I was thinking but reaching this new low forced me to stop, reflect and try to find a new way to look at life. A perspective that wasn't based on other people's validation.



MY OWN EFFORTS AT RECOVERY OR GROWTH ARE IRREPLACEABLE. *



GROWTH IS PAINFUL BUT PERMANENTLY REWARDING. *

I had joined a Grow Mental Health Support Group Online and I decided, like others in the group, to make small steps to change my life. Taking little tasks each week, I realised physical exercise was indeed my friend! Feeling good after a short run, gave me the energy to attempt cooking a healthier meal, which in turn made me feel I was worth taking care of. Keeping promises to myself was so important. I chose to make small enough changes to ensure I could keep them. It took little changes every day and I changed how I spoke to myself during daily tasks, giving myself an imaginary little pat on the back, made a huge difference. Changing how I perceived interactions with other people also helped. I'd make sure what people said was all I'd take from a conversation instead of taking what I felt they might actually think.

Unfortunately, there's no quick fix, no silver bullet. Establishing healthier boundaries and habits took me months, maybe even a year, but I am a different person because of it. When I couldn't run, I'd walk and when I couldn't walk, I'd crawl but I was always moving forward. One of the hardest but most important things, was not comparing myself to other people because they were running their own race. I explored what was holding me back and could see my blind spots for the first time.

[CONT.](#)

EANNA'S STORY, CONT.

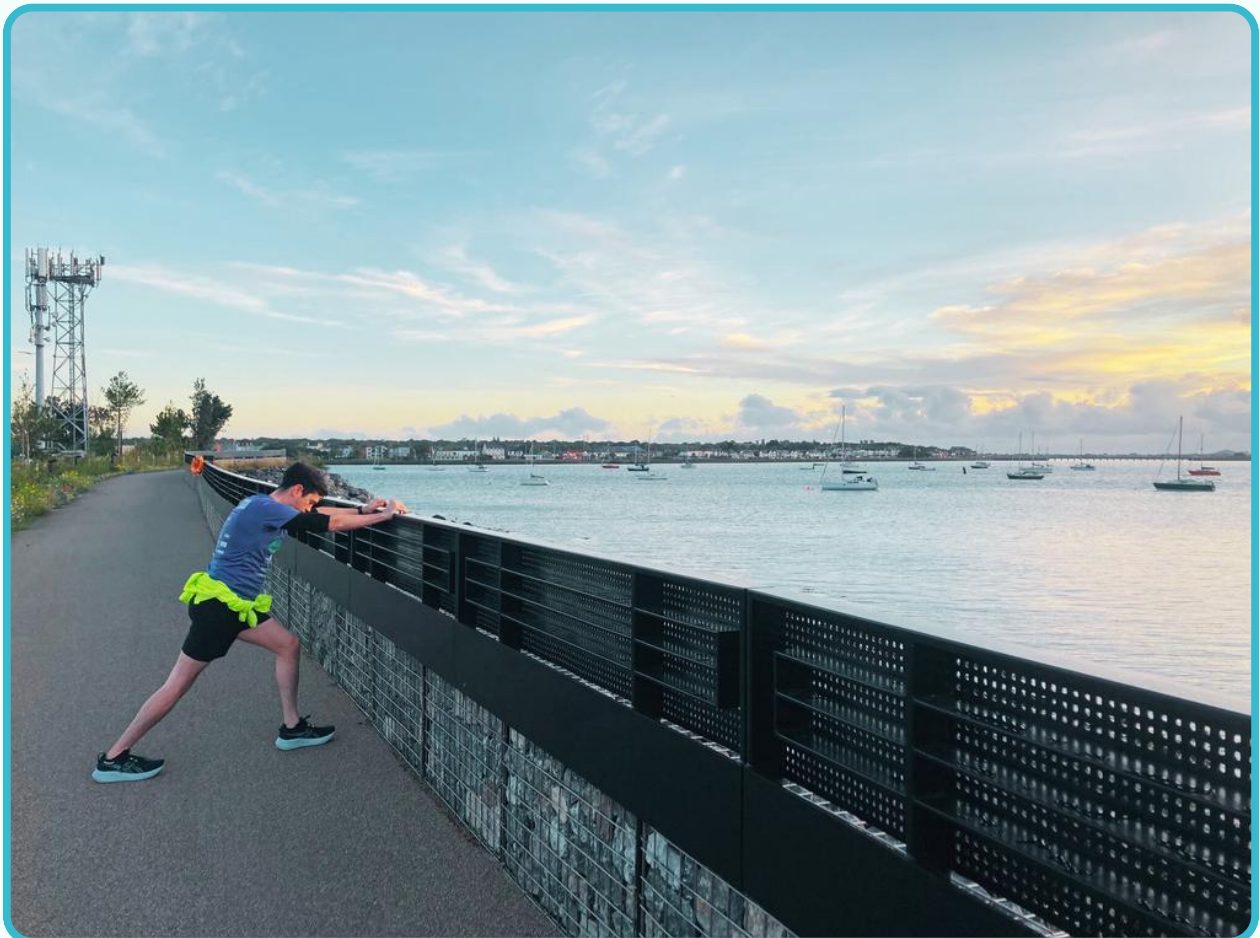
For me, the compounded benefits of all these little changes have been wonderful. I call myself a runner now and it shows me that I can do hard things. Even when my mind tells me I can't, I keep pushing and my body somehow keeps going. It's been a great lesson for difficult times. You don't just run a marathon, you start with small runs, you run for 30 seconds and wheeze and then you turn up again and walk it and run a bit. Small wins turn into big wins when you keep showing up and you get closer to becoming the person you want to be. It's made me a better brother, uncle, friend and I'm really proud to say, a marathon runner. It was great to complete such a challenge, one which wasn't for a medal or a fast time but to show myself I'm someone who does what he says he will, one step at a time.

Give time to your emotions. Emotions drive you in a positive direction. Explain your frustrations in a clear way. Let go of the little problems and the things outside of your control. Listen to what your feelings are telling you, pay attention to what is driving you, and learn from it. Start growing and keep growing!

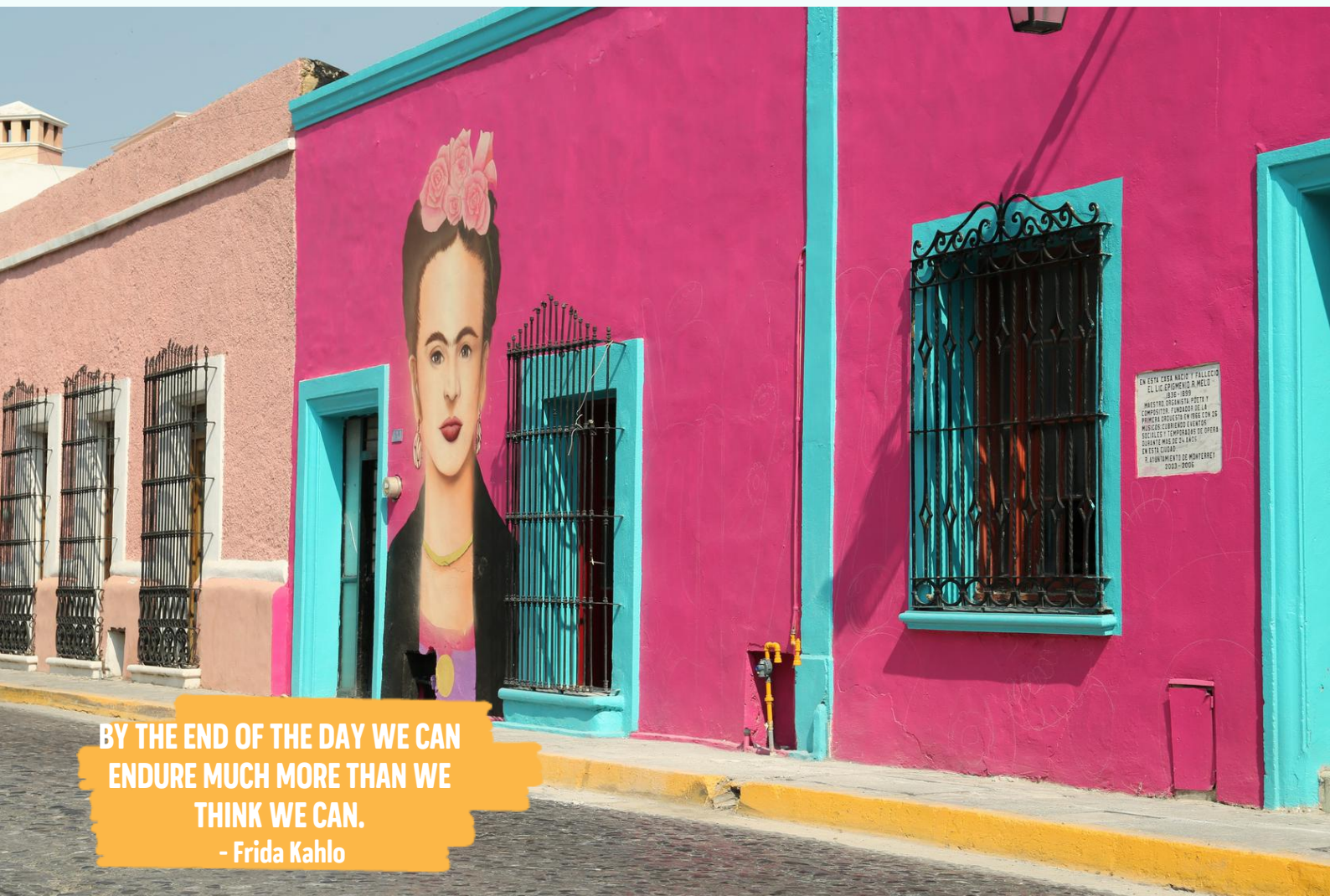
WORDS BY EANNA RYAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HRUAN AND IVANKO BRNJAKOVIC BY
GETTY IMAGES (P21 AND EANNA RYAN (P22))

“ —
I CHOSE TO
MAKE
SMALL
ENOUGH
CHANGES
TO ENSURE
I COULD
KEEP THEM.



Regular exercise led to a new way of thinking for Eanna.



**BY THE END OF THE DAY WE CAN
ENDURE MUCH MORE THAN WE
THINK WE CAN.**
- Frida Kahlo



LET'S TALK!

- publications@grow.ie
- Let us know what you think
- Submit your articles, art and ideas



VISIT US ONLINE

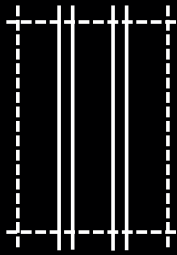
- Learn more about Grow Mental Health
- Find a free support group locally or online
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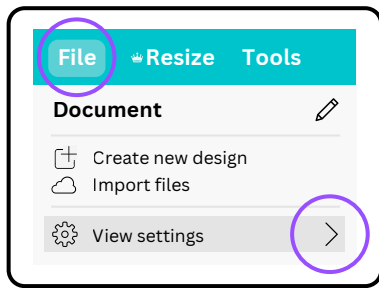




HOW TO USE: Canva Guides

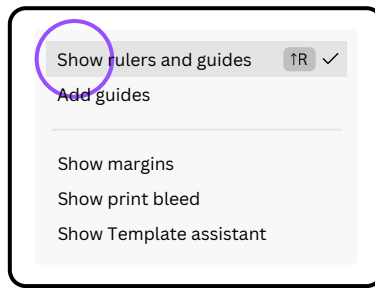
When working with **text-heavy layouts**, we can use **guides** to organize our headlines and body copy, and maintain a clean and balanced layout.

01



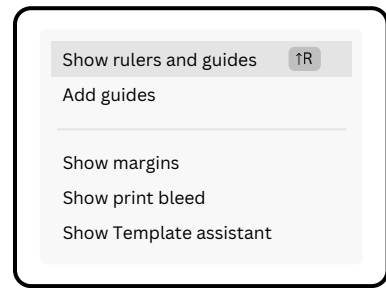
Select **File** on the top toolbar and hover over **View Settings**

02



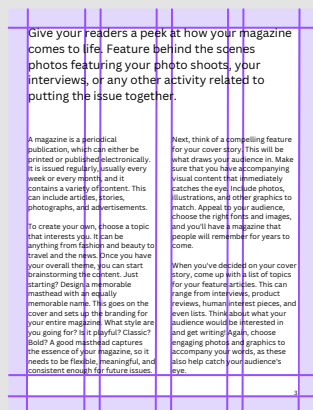
Select **Show rulers and guides** or use the keyboard shortcut **Shift + R**. The guides in the template will now be visible to you.

03



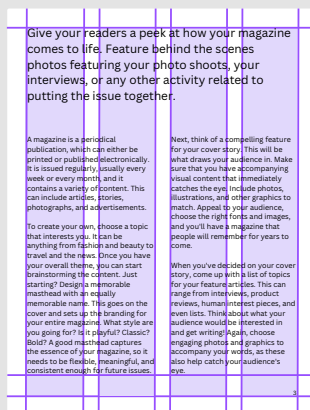
If you want to close the guides, select **Show rulers and guides** again or use the keyboard shortcut **Shift + R**

UNDERSTANDING THE GUIDES:



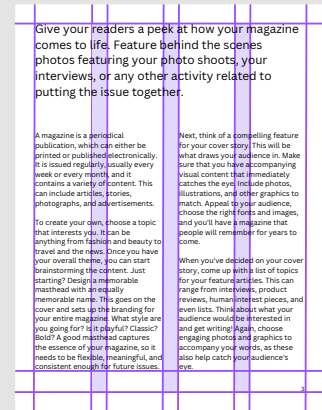
MARGINS

Margins define the boundaries of your page. Content placed outside the margins can be cut off in the printing process so it's best to **keep all important information within the margins**.



COLUMNS

Columns are vertical fields which elements and text are aligned to, to create a neat and organized appearance. You may opt not to use the grid all the time for a more flexible layout.



GAP

A gap is a vertical space used to separate columns of text or elements on the page, keeping your layout organized and readable.

Kindly delete this page before saving/printing your design. :)



HOW TO:

Generate QR Codes

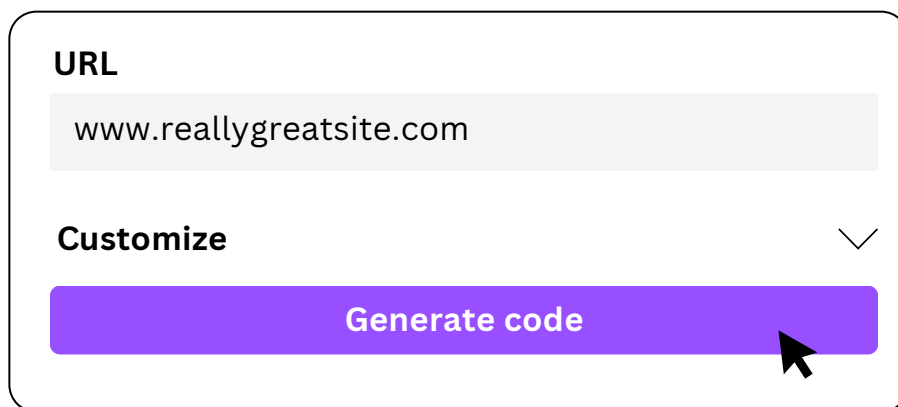
01

Click the **Apps** option on the left-side object panel. Search and select **QR Code**.



02

Paste your **website URL**.
Customize. Click **Generate code**.



(Delete this page before saving your design!)