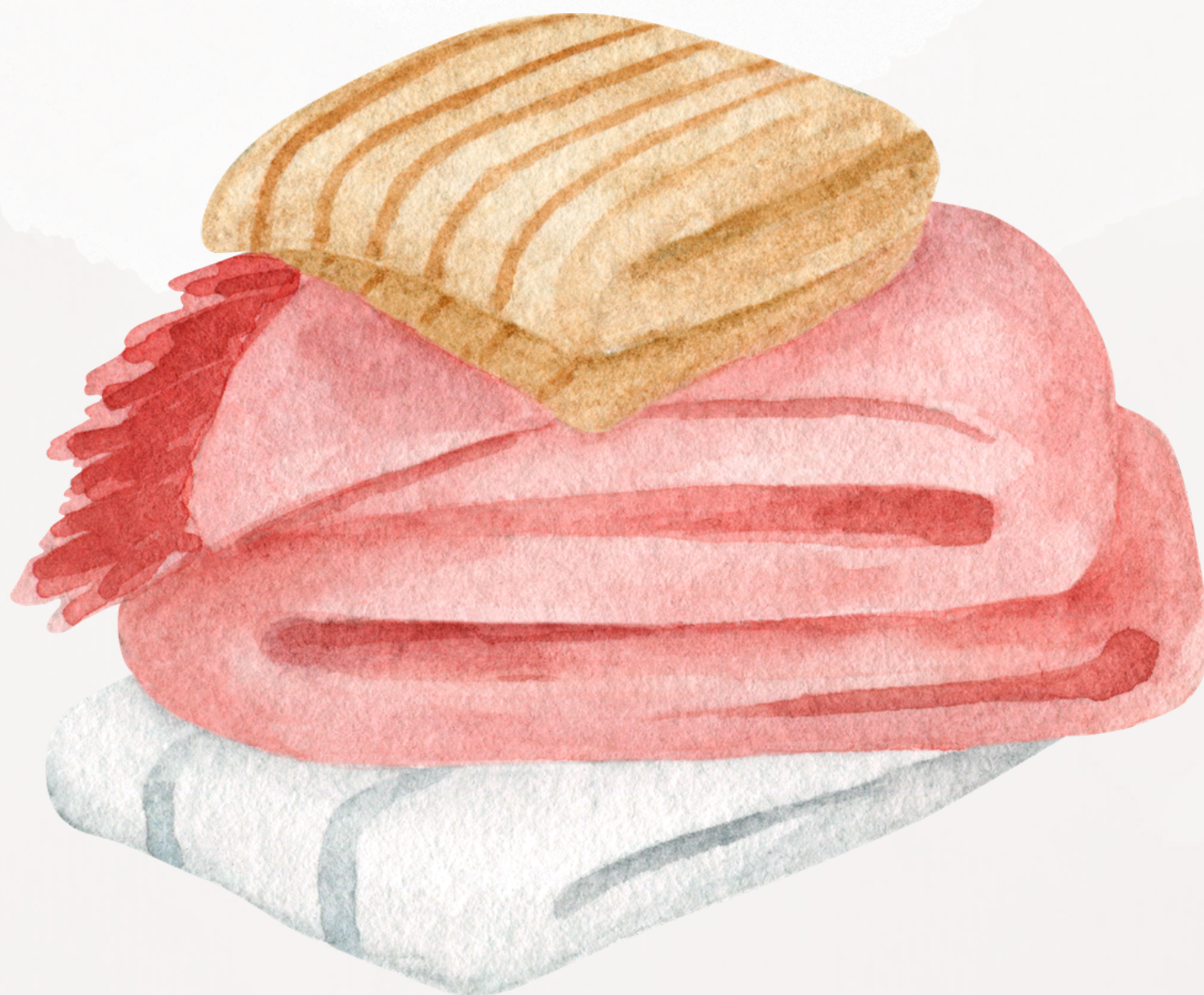


Bedtime Warmth

Soothing sentiments for
Expats, Nomads & Internationals



Diya John
Mental health therapist

Therapy Garden

WELCOME

I'd like to warmly welcome you to
Therapy Garden.

You can use this e-book as a companion on those nights when you could use a few kind words. It covers topics that expats, immigrants and internationals frequently bring up in therapy sessions. Each page includes an activity for you based on counseling approaches, primarily Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

This is not meant to be a replacement for face-to-face therapy, but I hope you enjoy the experience and learn a few things about yourself.

Take care,

Diya

Diya John

MS Psychology, Dip. Counseling



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WHAT'S IN YOUR SUITCASE





WHAT'S IN YOUR SUITCASE

Each of us has a special suitcase. In it lies all the messages we received about ourselves since we were born. These messages are usually shaped by how our caregivers interacted with us, impacted by the times we were praised and the times we were scolded.

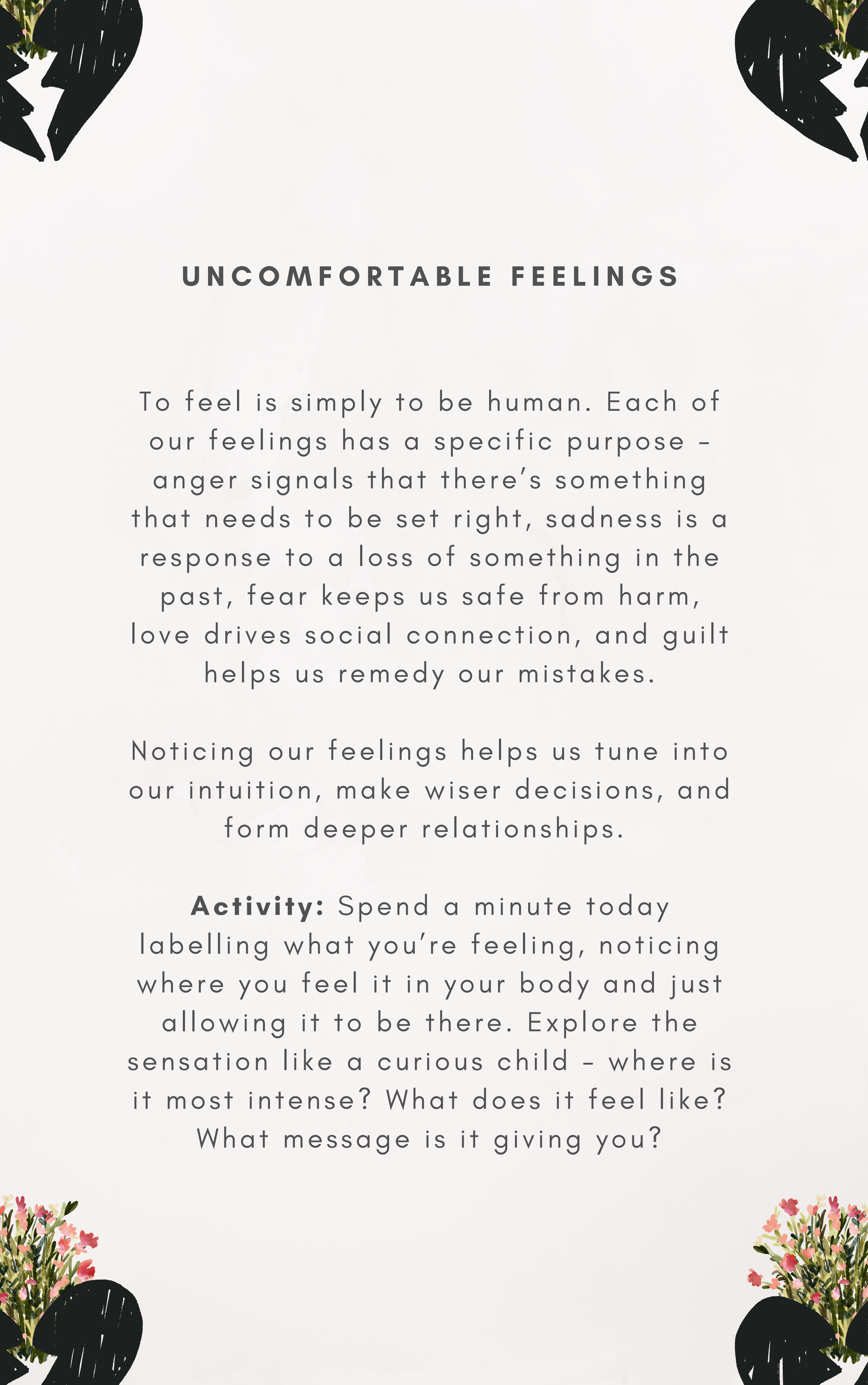
Most times we go through life without really taking a look inside this suitcase. By doing so, we carry the weight of the suitcase in our hands, which often gets in the way of us living our full lives.

Activity: Take a moment today to peek into your suitcase – reflect on one thing you were praised for and one thing you were scolded for in your childhood, and think about how that impacts your life today.



UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS





UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS

To feel is simply to be human. Each of our feelings has a specific purpose - anger signals that there's something that needs to be set right, sadness is a response to a loss of something in the past, fear keeps us safe from harm, love drives social connection, and guilt helps us remedy our mistakes.

Noticing our feelings helps us tune into our intuition, make wiser decisions, and form deeper relationships.

Activity: Spend a minute today labelling what you're feeling, noticing where you feel it in your body and just allowing it to be there. Explore the sensation like a curious child - where is it most intense? What does it feel like? What message is it giving you?

HOMESICKNESS





HOMESICKNESS

When we relocate to a new country or area, we are often caught between our feelings of excitement about starting a new adventure and the sense of loss over the past that we left behind.

We often believe we "shouldn't" feel those negative emotions, especially when we have made the deliberate choice to relocate. So we try to push them away, which causes us even more distress, because the feelings don't really go away. Over time we start living with one foot in our past, missing out on the joys that our present could offer.

Activity: If you are feeling homesick, know that it is natural. Embrace the part of you that misses home - what is one thing you can do to connect with your past today: call family/friends back home? Look at old photos? And what's one thing you can do to explore your new environment: try a new restaurant in your area?



UNCERTAINTY





UNCERTAINTY

The only thing we'll ever really know about tomorrow is that the sun will rise. Everything else is uncertain.

As expats or immigrants, some of the uncertainties we face include the question of adjusting to a new culture and language, building a social network in our new city, and navigating the job market.

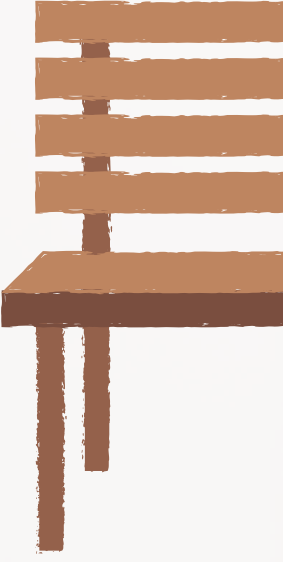
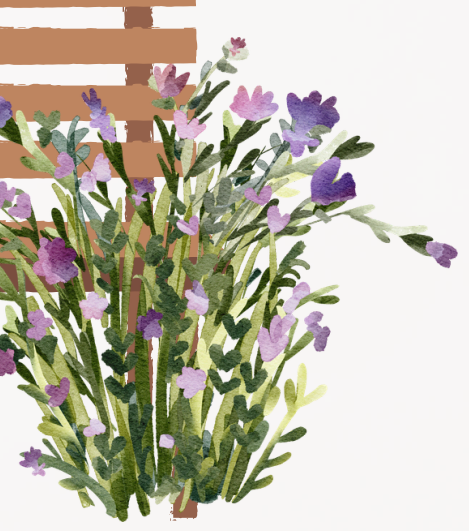
Add to this global political turmoil, rising prices, an unstable economy, and the threat of AI taking over our jobs, and we now have a potent cocktail of unknowns.

While there are several things out of our control, what we can control is how we choose to spend our days. **Activity:** Spend a moment today reflecting on what you value in terms of relationships, work, leisure and personal growth/health. In which of these areas of life are you living in sync with your values? In what areas is there a gap? What can you do to fill that gap, starting today?



LONELINESS





LONELINESS

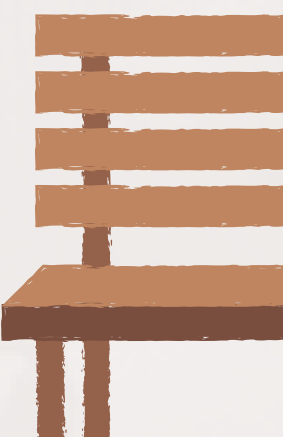
Each of us is capable of feeling lonely.

After all, it's a signal telling us to connect with others, which is essential for our survival as a species.

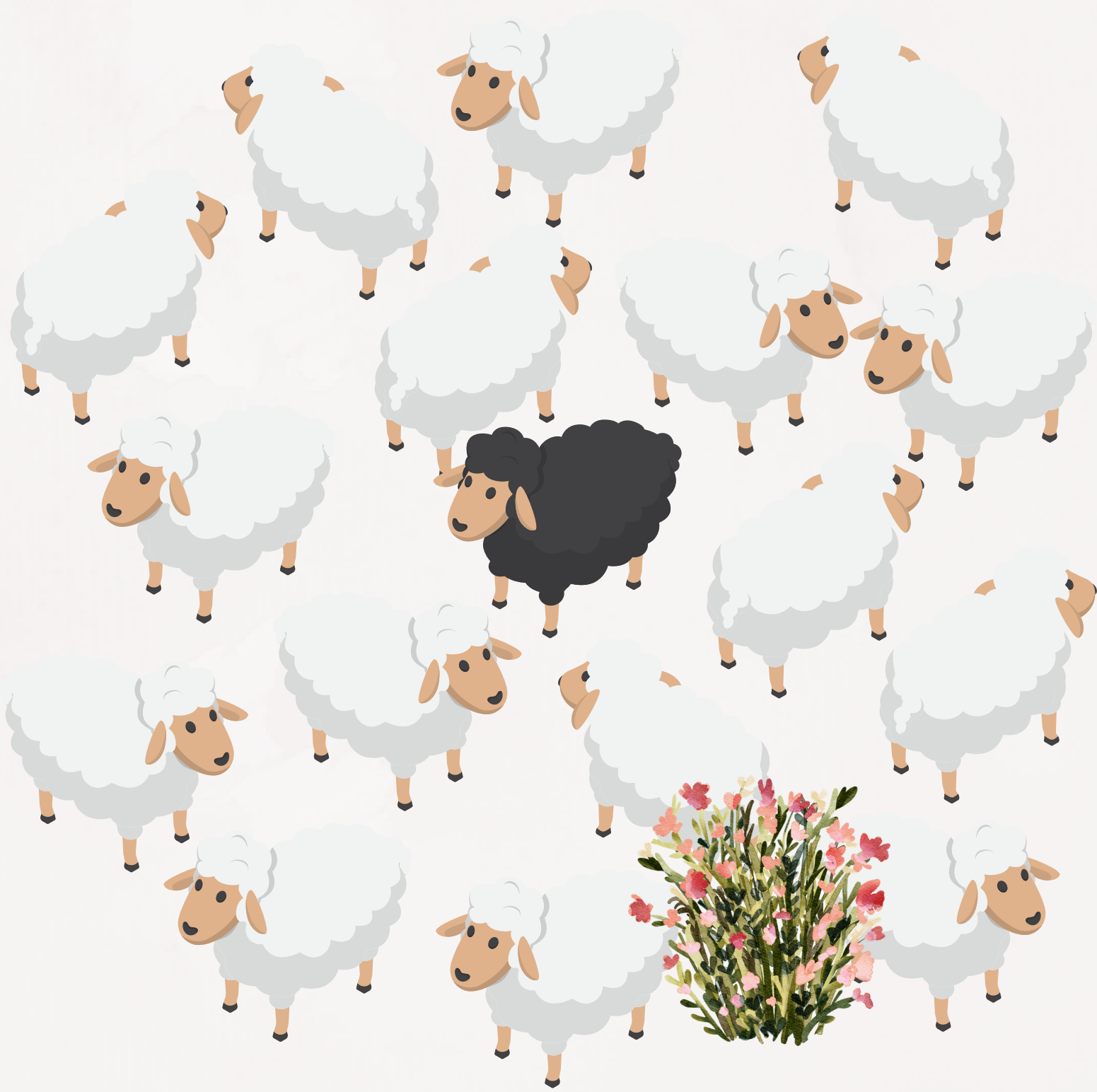
As expats, repatriates, or people who are culturally different in some way to others where we live, the feeling is very familiar.

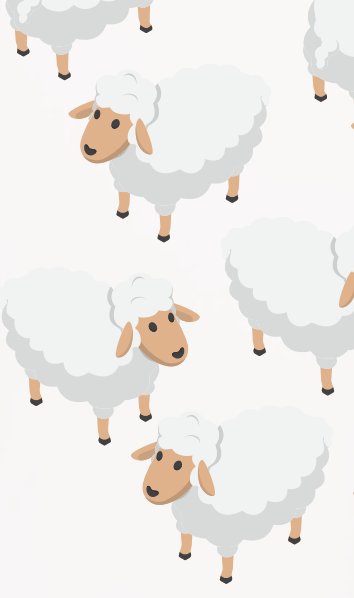
Research shows that when we feel lonely, we might start seeing the world as a more dangerous and threatening place. This can lead to a cycle where we expect negative interactions and remember negative social experiences, which only reinforces our feelings of loneliness. We might even start distancing ourselves from others, which only makes it harder to connect.

Activity: Spend a minute today reflecting on your perceptions of people and social situations around you. How much of that is based on evidence? And how much of that is based on your feelings?



BEING DIFFERENT





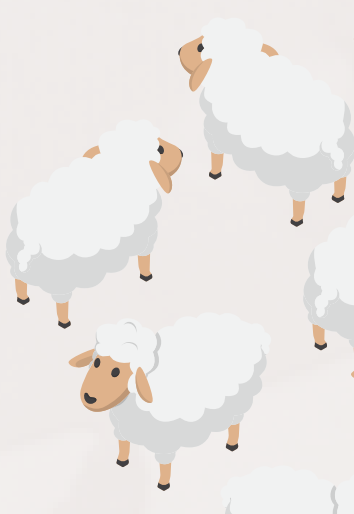
BEING DIFFERENT

As expats and internationals, we are the weavers of the world's cultural quilt, bringing with us vibrant threads and patches of diversity. Yet, our journey is often marked by the sensation of being 'different.'

We are constantly balancing the respect for our cultural heritage with the attempt to assimilate into a new one. It's like being a chameleon, forever adjusting, yet never fully blending in.

Social interactions can feel daunting, where a simple word or gesture could be misunderstood. The comfort foods that once soothed our soul might now be rare finds.

Activity: Take a moment today to reflect on how your difference has helped you on your journey. And what aspects of it have you tried to shut down? Which parts of you would you like to bring back?



THE IMPOSTER





THE IMPOSTER

Imposter syndrome is a topic that comes up a lot in the therapy room, with expats or internationals.

We often believe we're here because we "just got lucky" and we spend a lot of time wondering when this bubble will pop.

Activity: Spend a quiet moment today visualising your worst fear around this. It could be that you get "caught" for being a "fraud", "unqualified", "not good enough". Or that someone laughs at you once they "find out who you really are".

Imagine this scene as a video being played on a TV screen near you. Really visualize in as much detail as you can - what are you doing in the image, where are you, who's with you then, what are they saying or doing.

Let this play on the imaginary TV screen. And enjoy the distance between you and this image.



ACHIEVEMENT



ACHIEVEMENT

As expats, we often feel pressure to be 'overachievers'. We believe the standards are higher for us, because of our own self-imposed expectations, what others seem to demand of us, or a combination of both.

We subconsciously give ourselves labels like "star performer", "straight A student" or "achiever".

The problem with these labels is that when things don't work out for us or we face failure in some way, we question our whole being.

However there's a part of us that is more than all our experiences, like the sky. It's the Observer, noticing the wind and the rain, the achievements and the failures, and always remaining constant.

It's the part of us that is not attached to titles and labels. It just exists in the background, noticing life as it goes by.

Activity: Spend a moment as your Observer self today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diya John is a Japan-based online Mental health therapist (M.S. Psych, Dip. Counselling), a member of the Australian Counselling Association and the founder of Therapy Garden.

She specialises in helping **expats, nomads and internationals** conquer anxiety and feelings of being stuck. Her interest in Mental Health stems from her personal experience caring for loved ones with mental illness, moving to a new country in the midst of the pandemic, and navigating the demands of the corporate world for nearly 10 years.

You can book a free consultation on **therapygarden.jp**

