

Poly student, who used to cut herself when stressed, comes up with book to raise awareness about self-mutilation

# Confronting her inner monsters

**SIM YAN LING**

When she was 12 and her youngest sister was born, she felt unloved and cut herself repeatedly.

It began a painful four-year journey of self-mutilation which caused untold pain not just for her but her loved ones too.

When she realised what she had been doing was wrong, she sought help and is now sharing her experience through a school project.

Nanyang Polytechnic is hosting an exhibition which ends today, showcasing final-year projects from the School of Design at The Plaza, National Library Building.

It features 184 projects and is open to the public from 10am to 6pm today.

One of these is a self-illustrated, self-authored book titled *Our Inner Monsters* by Ms Juliet Peh, 20, a final-year student pursuing a diploma in visual communication.

In the book, she confronts eight inner monsters many young people like her face: Sadness, loneliness, failure, success, responsibility, friendship, relationship and negativity.

She hopes to raise awareness about self-mutilation and tell readers to love themselves for who they are.

Ms Peh has two sisters aged 18 and eight. Her issues started when the youngest was born.

She told *The New Paper*: "I felt like maybe I wasn't needed, like my sisters were more important than me."

Faced with the pressures of academic stress and having to care for her siblings, she turned to self-mutilation as a form of relief when she was 12, during her Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) year.

When her Secondary 1 teacher found out about it, Ms Peh was sent for counselling, which she continued for four years.

The turning point came when



In her book, Ms Juliet Peh confronts inner monsters such as sadness and failure, which many young people like her face. TNP PHOTO: SALWA NADHIRAH

her mother wept and told Ms Peh her self-mutilation was also hurting her.

Ms Peh then stopped.

She said: "I love to draw, sketch and design. It's a passion for me. Joining (the) visual communication (diploma course) made me feel positive, so I didn't

turn to self-harm."

Ms Lee Yi Ping, a senior youth support worker for the Community Health Assessment Team (Chat), which focuses on detecting symptoms of distress in youth, said those vulnerable to self-harm can try alternatives, such as holding an ice cube with

## Helplines

For a free confidential mental health check and mental health resources for young people, visit CHAT at [www.chat.mentalhealth.sg](http://www.chat.mentalhealth.sg).

- Samaritans of Singapore's (SOS) 24-hour hotline: 1800-221-4444
- Institute of Mental Health (IMH): 6389-2222

one's bare hand, or snapping a rubber band against one's wrist.

Loved ones should also not try to problem-solve as often, people in distress just need a listening ear and someone who can respect their space, she added.

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