

# ClearMinds



Issue 8

**MAGAZINE**

December 2025

## Peek Inside

December : A month of achievements for the team

How Joyful Memories Can Be A Source Of Pain

Trauma-Informed Coping Tools Adults Can Use in Daily Life

What Can I Do If Someone Is Bullying Me at School?

Third Culture Kids : growing strong roots in a mobile world



# What Have We Been Up To?

## December: Achievements, Outreach, & Impact

It has been a meaningful and busy season for our team at ClearMinds, filled with academic achievements, community outreach, and global impact.

**Dr. Nardus** has been invited by the Psychology Department at the University of Columbia in New York to write a chapter for an upcoming book on Neurodiversity, contributing his expertise to the growing field.

His children's book, *Fin and Gill*, is also being translated into Arabic. The story follows two young fish with different temperaments, and teaches children about understanding and appreciating differences, introducing themes of neurodiversity and acceptance.

**Ms. Hacer** is nearing a major milestone in her PhD journey as she finalizes the statistical analysis portion of her dissertation and moves into writing two research articles based on her work.

**Ms. Dure** and **Ms. Sara** represented ClearMinds at Amity University, participating in a panel discussion on mental health through cultural lenses and highlighting the importance of culturally informed therapeutic practice.

Our team continues to grow, contribute, and serve, locally and internationally, with dedication and heart!



## A HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO EGYPT Dalea Alawar, Psy.D.

Dr. Dalea recently joined the other three founders of Keif, a humanitarian working group, on a mission to Egypt, providing psychological support to children and adult refugees from Gaza. The team offered trauma-focused care, reaffirming Keif's commitment to accessible, compassionate mental health care.



# Did you know – joyful memories can be a source of pain?

I can't count the number of clients who tell me: "Why does my brain only bring back negative thoughts?" – let's explore the opposite route this time.



Yassine Tayi, MSc

I can't count the number of clients who tell me: "Why does my brain only bring back negative thoughts?" – let's explore the opposite route this time.

We tend to think in terms of positive and negative, yet therapy – or life – often teaches the opposite.

In clinical work, especially around relationships and break-ups, what triggers distress is not always the painful moments, the conflicts, or what caused the separation. Those elements are often kept at a safe distance because they are too distressing. What remains accessible instead is the positive material – detached from its context, isolated from the rest of the narrative – and this is what becomes the trigger.

You think about the last trip you took together. This memory should, in theory, make you feel good. Yet you're surprised to see that it's followed by discomfort, sadness, or disturbance. What is also present is the information of a lost access to that positive experience. The memory remains unprocessed, and the mind tries to understand how this happened.

Information is not stored chronologically, but **associatively**. The mind and body link experiences they believe to be similar. A present disturbance can therefore connect to earlier experiences – for example, childhood moments where being "wrong" meant being left alone.

When faced with a relational rupture, the mind seeks **quick coherence**: "There is something wrong with me," "I can't keep relationships," "I always come second."

Avoidance strategies to maintain the coherence often follow: avoiding dating, social gatherings, or certain places.

Yet the break-up itself remains unprocessed. Clinically, we often observe that what causes distress is not only the loss, but the idea that it was perfect before. The mind may then operate through cleavage – isolating good and bad, black and white.

This mechanism is well known in early attachment and appears clearly in situations of emprise or domestic violence: **"They are bad only when they drink,"** yet **"loving and caring when they don't."** In this configuration, positive memories can become powerful triggers, or serve as a psychological grip.

Thinking of joyful moments brings sadness because the negative material remains at a safe distance.



The same logic appears in thoughts such as: “If this had never happened,” “If I had different parents,” “If I hadn’t met this person.” The information stays frozen, not integrated into the broader narrative.

In **EMDR**, this is precisely what is targeted: experiences that remain **isolated and unprocessed**. What makes an event distressing is not whether it is “positive” or “negative,” but how it has been experienced and integrated. In some cases, even a positive memory can be worked on to reduce disturbance.

*Why do these memories keep coming back, or why is there a need to look up for them?*

*Well what repeats itself is not what was met, but what was missed. A helpful metaphor is that of a video game: we rarely replay the levels we succeeded at. We replay the ones we failed, in an attempt to make sense of them. In break-ups, joyful memories are often brought back not to relive them, but to understand the loss.*

The mind is not revisiting the moment to relive happiness, or sadness but to understand what no longer exists and why. From this perspective, suffering is often less about the event itself than about the meaning attributed to it — a meaning shaped by earlier experiences.



Therapy is less about erasing memories, and more about restoring movement, context, and integration within one’s narrative



# Micro-Recovery: Trauma-Informed Coping Tools Adults Can Use in Daily Life

Micro-recovery refers to brief, evidence-based strategies that help the brain and body return to a regulated state in seconds or minutes.



**Dure Najaf, MAP**

Our nervous system is under constant pressure and stimulation. When you add the layer of trauma and stress, we can predispose ourselves to emotional overload, irritability, or shutdown.

In some situations, it is not always possible to access support externally or disengage in meaningful ways. For example, you can be in the middle of a work meeting and feel your heart racing or your mind going blank, but you can't step out or talk to someone for support. Alternatively, you could be caring for a child who needs immediate attention and that leaves you no time to decompress or attend to your emotions in that moment.

Micro-recovery refers to brief, evidence-based strategies that help the brain and body return to a regulated state in seconds or minutes.

Research in neuroscience shows that small, frequent acts of grounding, sensory regulation, and controlled breathing can interrupt the threat response and promote cognitive clarity.

These micro-reset moments work because they gently signal safety to the autonomic nervous system, supporting long-term resilience without overwhelming the individual. Let's go through some techniques practically.

**1. THE 30-SECOND GROUNDING RESET:** Grounding is supported by trauma neuroscience and is frequently used in trauma therapy to reduce amygdala activation and restore cortical control.

- o **Practical Example:** When feeling overwhelmed at work, place both feet on the floor, look around the room, and identify five neutral objects. Then take one long exhale.
- o **Internal Script:** "My feet are steady. I am noticing the room. Nothing is dangerous right now. I can slow my breath."
- o **Practical Example:** You're standing in a supermarket queue and suddenly feel overstimulated by noise, lights, or crowding. Gently shift your attention outward: notice the colours on a nearby shelf, feel your feet pressing into the ground, and take one long exhale.
- o **Internal Script:** "I am here in this moment. My body is steady. I can slow my breath, even in this busy place."

This simple technique disrupts rumination and reduces physiological arousal by activating the prefrontal cortex.

2. **NAME AND NOTICE TECHNIQUE:** Evidence-based research has shown that naming emotions reduces amygdala activity and increases regulation through the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex.

- **Practical Example:** During an argument or moment of tension, pause and internally label what is happening: "I feel frustrated... intensity is about a 6/10."
- **Internal Script:** "I am noticing anger rising." or "This feeling is strong, but it will pass."
- **Practical Example:** You receive a text that triggers anxiety. Instead of reacting, pause and label your internal state "My chest feels tight; that's anxiety. It feels like a 4/10."
- **Internal Script:** "This is anxiety showing up. Naming it helps me create space. I can choose my next step."

3. **POLYVAGAL SAFETY CUES:** This technique highlights how the vagus nerve influences emotional state and how specific cues can shift the body from threat to regulation.

- **Practical Example:** Hum quietly for 10 seconds to soften sympathetic activation.
- **Internal Script:** "I am sending safety signals to my body. My breath is steadying me."
- **Practical Example:** You're preparing to walk into a difficult conversation. Before entering, relax your shoulders, gently hum once, and lengthen your exhale.
- **Internal Script:** "I'm signalling safety to my body. I can enter this space with steadiness."



4. **MICRO BOUNDARIES:** reduce cognitive load and increase perceived control, which are key factors associated with lower stress reactivity.

- **Practical Example:** Say, "Let me think and get back to you in 10 minutes." Put your phone face down when completing a task, or close one task fully before opening another.
- **Internal Script:** "I can pause before responding. I can choose one thing at a time."
- **Practical Example:** You're juggling multiple tasks, and someone approaches you with a new request. Instead of absorbing the pressure immediately, pause, take one breath, and set a gentle boundary: "I'm currently focused on something important. I'll review this later today."
- **Internal Script:** "I can slow the pace. I don't have to absorb this all at once. A small boundary is enough for now."

Micro-recovery does not replace therapy, but it strengthens the nervous system between sessions. Small actions, repeated consistently, create meaningful shifts in resilience and wellbeing.

"I'm signalling safety to my body. I can enter this space with steadiness."



# What Can I Do If Someone Is Bullying Me at School?

Sometimes school feels fun and exciting. You laugh with friends, learn new things, and enjoy your day. And sometimes, school feels hard.



**Hacer Subasi, MSc**

If someone keeps being mean to you, teasing you, hurting you, or leaving you out on purpose, this is called bullying. Bullying can happen at school, on the playground, or even online. And there is one very important thing you should always remember:

Bullying is never your fault.

## **This Is Not About You**

When someone bullies you, you might start wondering if there is something wrong with you.

You may think, “Why me?” or “Did I do something bad?”

The answer is clear: **no.**

People who bully are making a poor choice. What is happening is about their behavior, not your worth. You do not deserve to be treated badly – not by anyone, ever.

## **Using Your Strong Voice and Brave Body**

If you feel safe enough in the moment, your body and your voice can help protect you. Standing tall, looking calm, and using a short, clear sentence like “Stop,” “I don’t like that,” or “Leave me alone” can be very powerful.

You do not need to explain yourself.

You do not need to argue.

After speaking, walking away is often the strongest choice you can make.

## **Staying Where You Are Not Alone**

Bullying happens more easily when a child is alone. Staying close to others can make a big difference. Spending time with at least one friend during breaks or choosing places where adults are nearby can help you feel safer.

Sometimes, even one kind friend is enough to remind you that you are not alone.

## Telling an Adult Is a Brave Choice

Some children worry that telling an adult means “snitching.” It does not. Telling an adult means you are taking care of yourself.

You can talk to a teacher, a school counselor or psychologist, a parent, or another trusted adult. Adults are there to help keep you safe, and they want to know when something is wrong.

## Listening to Your Body

Sometimes children do not talk about bullying right away, but their bodies do. Your body might tell the story before your mouth does.

If you notice stomachaches or headaches, trouble sleeping, feeling scared or sad about school, or not wanting to go to school anymore, these can be signs that you need support. And support is something you deserve.



## When Bullying Happens Online

Bullying does not always happen face to face. If someone is mean to you online, remember that you do not have to handle it by yourself. It helps not to reply to hurtful messages. Saving messages or screenshots, blocking the person, and showing everything to a trusted adult are important ways to protect yourself.

## Remembering Your Strength

Bullying can sometimes make you forget how strong you really are. Doing things you enjoy – like sports, drawing, music, building, or dancing – helps you feel like yourself again. These moments remind you that you are more than what one person says or does.

## A Message Just for You

You deserve to feel safe at school.  
You deserve kindness and respect.  
You are not alone, and help is always available.

Asking for help is not weakness. It is courage.



## Third Culture Kids: Growing Strong Roots in a Mobile World

*Third Culture Kids are not missing roots. Their roots grow through relationships*



Sara Caroppo MSc

In a city like Dubai, it is not unusual to meet a child who has already lived in three countries, attended four different schools, and speaks multiple languages before even reaching their adolescence.

These children are often confident, socially savvy, and remarkably adaptable.

In the world of child psychology, we call them: *Third Culture Kids*. They are children whose upbringing bridges multiple cultural worlds. Growing up across cultures brings extraordinary advantages. These children often develop deep empathy, curiosity, and an instinctive awareness that there is more than one way to think, live, and belong.

Yet this life of constant movement also shapes how *Third Culture Kids* understand safety, connection, and identity. When change is the norm, a child's sense of self tends to grow internally rather than being anchored to a single place.

I often meet children who, even at a young age, have a clear sense of who they are and what matters to them, despite never having lived in the same city for more than a couple of years. These children often carry with them a remarkable inner compass: they know what makes them feel secure, who they can trust, and what values guide their choices.

This internal grounding can become a profound strength, equipping them to navigate uncertainty with resilience and confidence.

For *Third Culture Kids*, home is defined less by geography and more by the relationships that provide continuity and comfort. Family often serves as the emotional anchor in a life that can otherwise feel transient. Parents, siblings, and close relatives become the constants, offering reassurance when schools, neighborhoods, or even entire countries change.

Friendships, too, take on a special significance. Bonds with peers who share similar experiences and who understand what it feels like to move mid-year or to miss 'home' can be deeply validating.

I still recall a young girl who, after relocating yet again, told me that her “real home” was not even a city or a house but the circle of friends she could call at any hour, no matter where she was. Such friendships often carry an intensity and loyalty that are unique to children who have learned the value of connection in the midst of change.

Of course, challenges do emerge, particularly during adolescence. Questions about belonging, identity, or stability can feel intense and sometimes confusing.



A teenager may struggle with the thought of forming new relationships when past friendships are scattered across continents, or may feel uncertainty about where they truly “fit in.” These moments are not indicators that something is wrong but natural responses to a complex upbringing.

What makes a difference is the support they receive: adults who offer curiosity rather than assumptions, consistency rather than rigidity, and safe spaces for reflection rather than quick solutions.

Providing validation for both the joys and the losses inherent in a mobile upbringing allows children to process change while strengthening their sense of self.



Third Culture Kids are not missing roots. Their roots grow through relationships, meaning, and connection rather than geography. With understanding, encouragement, and stability where possible, these children often develop into resilient, reflective, and compassionate young adults, capable of thriving anywhere in the world. Their experiences equip them with empathy, cultural awareness, and flexibility. These qualities allow them not only to adapt but to flourish in a world that is increasingly interconnected and mobile.

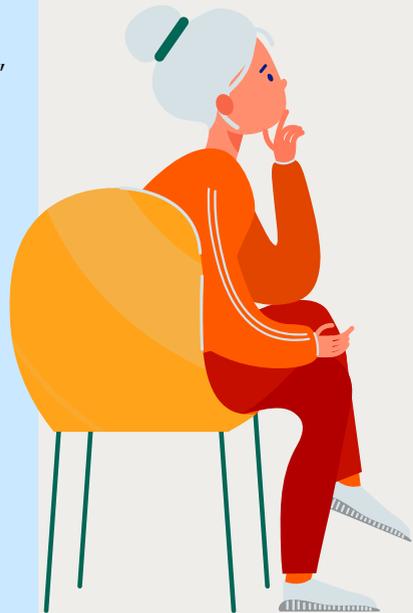
*For Third Culture Kids, home is defined less by geography and more by the relationships that provide continuity and comfort.*



## End-of-Year Mini Reflections!

**Complete the following sentences... no overthinking, just whatever comes up first:**

- "Lately, I've been needing more..."
- "One thing that calms my body instantly is..."
- "When I'm overwhelmed, I usually..."
- "Something I want to unlearn in 2026 is..."
- "I feel most like myself when..."
- "A moment this year that surprised me was..."
- "Something I want to carry with me into the new year is..."
- "One thing I'm finally ready to let go of is..."
- "This year taught me that I'm capable of..."
- "In the new year, I want to feel more..."



# Connect With Us!

---

## Follow us on Social Media



## Read our Blog



## We'd Love to Hear from You

Loved this issue? Feel free to submit your ideas or questions for the next one.

Send us a message at [info@clearmindscenter.com](mailto:info@clearmindscenter.com) - We actually read them!