

# Minimalism key to mental well-being

➤ Organised physical space reduces visual distractions

**I**N today's fast-paced and high-pressure world, the minimalist lifestyle is gaining popularity as an effective way to enhance mental well-being.

One of the key aspects of this lifestyle is the intentional reduction of personal possessions. But, why does owning less have such a profound impact on our ability to find calm and maintain focus?

Hospital Canselor Tuanku Muhriz consultant psychiatrist in general and psychogeriatric psychiatry Dr Nurul Ain Mohamad Kamal said reducing personal belongings is not merely about discarding unnecessary things, but about wisely choosing what holds value and meaning in one's life.

"When the number of possessions

decreases, our physical space becomes more organised and free from clutter, thereby reducing visual distractions that can lead to stress and anxiety," she said.

She said owning things in moderate quantities also helps reduce mental burden as one no longer needs to worry about maintenance, storage or making unnecessary purchases.

Nurul Ain said a study published in *ScienceDirect* in 2021 showed the minimalist lifestyle has a positive impact on emotional well-being.

"It helps enhance positive emotions such as a sense of contentment and calm (flourishing) and reduces symptoms of depression. In another study by the *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology* (2020), individuals who practiced minimalism also experienced benefits such as autonomy, self-efficacy, heightened awareness and more stable emotions," she said.

Pointing to KonMari, a popular decluttering method introduced by



Minimalism is particularly suited for urban living as residential spaces are increasingly limited. – PICS FROM PEXELS

Japanese consultant Marie Kondo to "keep only items that spark joy", Nurul Ain said it is a form of self-reflection that helps people identify the real values in their lives and rebuild healthy relationships with their surroundings and emotions.

"When we keep something solely out of guilt or fear of letting it go, it may stem from unresolved unconscious emotions. On the other hand, when an item is truly used and serves a real function, then its presence is justified," she explained.

However, she cautioned minimalism should be practiced in a moderate and balanced manner as discarding items excessively without considering their value can lead to a loss of identity, especially if those items represent relationships or important parts of one's life.

Hospital Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, Universiti Putra Malaysia psychology officer Norezzati Md Hanafiah also agreed the minimalist lifestyle not only has a positive effect on one's mental health, but also contributes to physical and social well-being.

According to her, a cluttered environment or one filled with too



A minimalist lifestyle can have a positive impact on emotional well-being.

many things can negatively impact a person's emotions and productivity. It can trigger stress and anxiety due to being overwhelmed by visual clutter, along with the feeling that there are unfinished tasks.

"Individuals are also more likely to feel mentally exhausted, have difficulty focusing and experience reduced productivity because a lot of time and energy is spent managing disorganised items," she said.

She explained minimalism can also improve social relationships and

overall lifestyle by helping individuals appreciate the belongings they own, focusing on quality rather than quantity.

"This lifestyle also encourages more mindful spending and helps avoid impulsive purchases, making one more prudent.

"It is particularly suitable for urban living today, where residential spaces are increasingly limited and require smart and efficient management of belongings," she added. – Bernama



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