

# 'Embracing minimalism good for mental health'

IN TODAY'S fast-paced and high-pressured 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 be calm and maintain focus?

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

"When the number of posses-

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

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

Dr Nurul Ain said a study published in 'ScienceDirect' in 2021 showed that the minimalist lifestyle had a positive impact on emotional well-being.

"It helps enhance emotions like being content and calm and reduces symptoms of depression.

"In another study by the 'International Journal of Applied

Positive Psychology' (2020), individuals who practised minimalism also experienced benefits such as autonomy, heightened awareness and more stable emotions," she said.

Decluttering is a form of self-reflection that helps people identify 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, Dr Nurul Ain cautioned that minimalism should

be practised 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 agreed that the minimalist lifestyle not only has a positive effect on one's mental health, but also contributes to physical and social well-being.

A cluttered environment or one filled with too 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.

Norezzati added that minimalism could also help individuals appreciate the belongings they owned, 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.