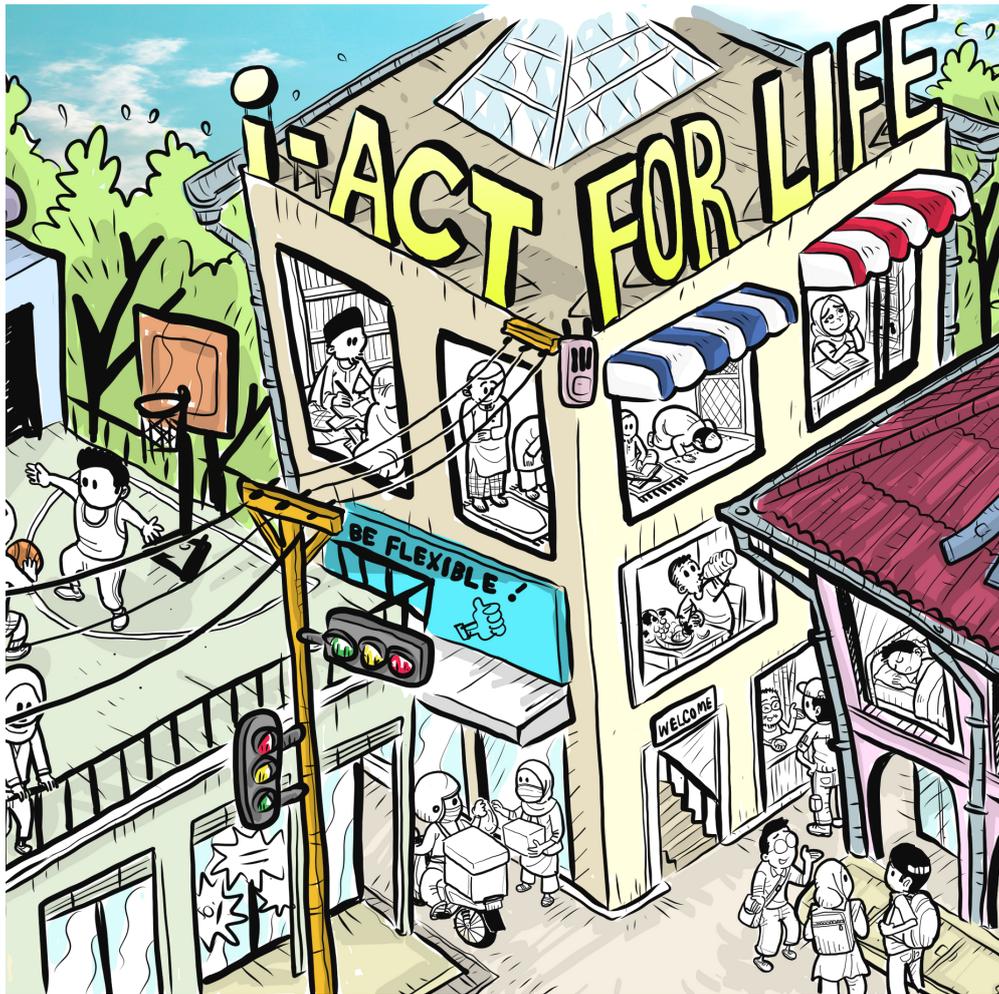


i-ACT For Life

A prevention module featuring integrated elements of Islamic Spirituality and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)



Practitioner's Manual

**Jamilah Hanum Abdul Khaiyom,
Amani Fadzlina Abdul Aziz,
Ahmad Nabil Md Rosli, Che Amnah Bahari,
Nur Sakinah Thomas Abdullah**

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The publication contains the holy verses of the Quran. Readers are requested to handle this publication in the best possible way so that the purity of the Quranic verses contained is preserved.

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ACCOLADES

“A very interesting, informative, and interactive psychotherapy book. The examples and illustrations used in this book made the understanding of ACT in the Islamic way of life become easy. The simple exercises are very helpful to enhance further understanding of the terms and concepts used in *i-ACT for Life™*. The book also showed that there are similarities between concepts in Islam and ACT and how to apply *i-ACT for Life™* in daily life. Therefore, every Muslim should get it.”

Nurul Izzah Binti Shari

Senior Lecturer and Clinical Psychologist at the Lifestyle Science Cluster, Advanced Medical and Dental Institute, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. She has 7 years of experience in practicing Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and completed her PhD on the efficacy of brief ACT on subjective impairment in patients with breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy.

“The first thing that attracted me about the manual, are the goal-directed contents. It gives an instant motivation to the therapist for complete each week, thanks to the warm illustrations with light and easy language and techniques. It is user friendly and has a step-by-step approach, which is vital for therapists to guide patients in a systematic manner. I congratulate Dr Jamilah and all co-authors for maintaining an ACT-consistent module while infusing basic yet important Islamic concepts. Well done! I look forward to applying the manual with my patients in near future. A highly recommended manual even for beginners in ACT.”

Nor Jannah Nasution Binti Raduan

Psychiatrist at UiTM Private Specialist Center and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sungai Buloh Campus. She has 4 years of experience in practicing Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

“This manual is a dream comes true for mental health workers, especially Muslim psychologist, in this COVID-19 pandemic era. It has almost everything a therapist would want to see in a guide to mental health promotion, prevention programme, or even short-term supportive, psychological treatment. The strength lies on the selection of ACT-friendly-to-conduct techniques for the clients, presented in concise, sequential order, with audio and video resources, as well as a workable daily exercises. Off course, the added value is a pinch of Islamic elements in it. Hats off to the team for designing this in form of instant messaging applications too. The most awaiting manual – Congratulations!”

Azizah Binti Othman

Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist at the Department of Paediatrics, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kelantan. She has nearly 15 years of experience with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and is currently leading the translation and reproduction of the Malay version of WHO’s “Doing What Matters In Times of Stress.”

ACCOLADES

“Islam and ACT have a lot in common, and this book offers a clear practical guide on how the two entities can be integrated into an effective intervention. On top of creatively adapting a couple of classic ACT metaphors to suit the local context, the authors also uniquely included Islamic teachings and practices in the manual to further facilitate and promote psychological flexibility. There’s a balance of quizzes, pictures, videos, audio and simple texts that keeps the intervention engaging for clients when done digitally. Highly recommended.”

Nur Amni Aqilah Binti Mohamed Izam

Clinical Psychologist with 3 years of practice and training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

“I get very excited to know about the development of this module by Dr. Jamilah’s team. Two important characteristics of this module is (1) It’s integration of Islam and ACT principles, and (2) tailored to local population of Malaysia. Indeed from the first time I’ve been introduced to ACT, the principle of the presence of uncomfortable feelings, emotions and thoughts are normal and part of life is the one that particularly attracted me as it is very much acknowledged in Islam. That made me immediately feel close to ACT.

This module is very well organized and the instructions are very clear. I love how it tries not make the participants feel less burdensome of the the time it has to take yet still firm on executing the activities. The structure of introducing the concepts and later the activities to make the understanding better is awesome as the concepts of ACT might not be easy to be explained with plain words.

Finally, I pray to Allah that this module will very much benefited the participants and further applied to wider population and nation.”

Shahidah binti Mohamed Makki

Clinical Psychologis at the Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta, Perak, Malaysia. She has 3 years of experience in practicing Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and has completed her PhD on the efficacy of brief ACT on the psychological well-being of unmarried pregnant adolescents.

“The Practitioner’s Manual of *i-ACT for Life*TM is a ground-breaking book for practitioners that actively combines ACT and Islamic teachings. It is packed full of bite-sized activities that aim to teach the principles of ACT which helps one develop psychological flexibility for improved mental health and at the same time, deepen one’s relationship with Islam. The manual uses simple language to explain important principles and incorporates engaging activities, imagery, and mini-quizzes to make learning and understanding fun. I am proud to say this Malaysian-made manual is an important contribution to the field of mental health and ACT/Contextual Behavioural Science.”

Farah Gulamoydeen

Psychologist, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Practitioner and Trainer at Forepsych Pty Ltd, Perth, Australia. She has 6 years of experience in practicing Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

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I said: what about my eyes?

He said: Keep them on the road.

I said: What about my passion?

He said: Keep it burning.

I said: What about my heart?

He said: Tell me what you hold inside it?

I said: Pain and sorrow.

He said: Stay with it. The wound is the place where the Light enters you.

— Rumi

PREFACE

“How can we help our young adults to thrive during COVID-19?”

It all started with this question. As academics and mental health professionals, we observed that university students struggle with multiple responsibilities, expectations, and the need to adapt fast during the early COVID-19. Many try to get help. Unfortunately, resources such as psychological services were scarce. For many months, one-on-one, face-to-face psychological services were halted during the early pandemic.

Understandably, everybody was adjusting and trying to adapt. It does not exclude mental health professionals. In our region, not many were trained to conduct psychological services online. Ethical issues such as confidentiality and threats to the security and integrity of information were some of the challenges faced by mental health professionals. This slowed the transition process to e-psychosocial services.

Nevertheless, we learn, and we learn fast. We embody resilience. We continue reaching out to our young adults. Guided by the stepped care model, we believe the first step is to empower young adults to self-help using the tools in their hands – digitalized technology. Self-Help Plus (SH+) WHO’s 5-session stress management course, with pre-recorded audio and an illustrated guide (Doing What Matters in Times of Stress), is the perfect module to be adapted and utilized. Moreover, many people turn to religion and spirituality in times of crisis; hence, the promotion of mental health and prevention of mental disorders must be integrated with spiritual elements.

Knowing that people are overwhelmed with information during the pandemic leads us to believe that the services we want to provide must be simplified following a micro-content framework. It must also not take much of our young adults’ time to learn and practice the skills. Yet, we believe it must be frequent.

With the above plan, we crafted the *i-ACT For Life™* module and designed it to appeal to young adults. Then, we piloted it and found it was feasible, appropriate, and, most importantly, accepted by our young adults. We further tested it in a Randomized Controlled Trial, and we found positive results. *i-ACT For Life™* was able to reduce the psychological distress of our young adults. Not only that, but it also increases their self-compassion, psychological flexibility, and resilience!

We hope to continuously run the programme using digitalized technology and move towards more sustainable services. Meanwhile, we know we must not stop. This self-help book is published to materialize our *i-ACT For Life™*. So, while reaching our goals to digitalize it permanently, we hope the materials here will be helpful for people who find it beneficial in this format.

INTRODUCTION

What is *i-ACT for Life*™?

i-ACT For Life™ is a remote psycho-spiritual modular prevention programme targeted for young adults aged 18-30. Largely adapted from the World Health Organization's *Doing What Matters In Times of Stress*¹, the module features integrated elements of Islamic spirituality and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

A 5-week randomised controlled trial conducted on 93 high-risk university students in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that *i-ACT for Life*™ was effective in significantly improving scores in measures of stress, anxiety, depression, psychological flexibility, self-compassion, and resilience.² Future efforts will be done to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of *i-ACT for Life*™ programme across different samples and settings.

Objectives of *i-ACT for Life*™

Young adults face many challenges and instability in their lives, and these include educational, financial, and social adversities. Facing these challenges are not easy, and over the years it has been increasingly shown that young adults are more vulnerable to mental health problems than other age demographics.³⁻⁴

i-ACT for Life™ is designed to help young adults build the psychological skills needed to face their challenges more effectively. These skills will not solve or remove their problems, but they designed to give young adults the ability to face their problems better by:

- Improving their psychological flexibility, so that they become more open to facing future challenges.
- Increasing self-compassion, so that they are kinder to themselves in facing stressful times.
- Increasing resilience, so that they may easily bounce back on their feet after facing difficulty.

1 *Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020).

2 Jamilah Hanum Abdul Khaiyom et al., "A randomised trial to evaluate the effectiveness of an Islamic psychospiritual ACT-based prevention program for at-risk young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic." Unpublished manuscript, 2021.

3 Theo Vos et al., "Global Burden of 369 Diseases and Injuries in 204 Countries and Territories, 1990–2019: A Systematic Analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019", *The Lancet* 396, no. 10258 (2020): 1204–22.

4 Institute for Public Health, National Institutes of Health, *National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019: Vol. 1: NCDs – Non-communicable diseases: Risk factors and other health problems* (Malaysia: Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2019).

Programme Length

The *i-ACT for Life*TM programme was designed as a low-intensity 5-week prevention programme. During those five weeks, daily exercises are given from Monday to Friday for the participants to follow. Weekends are free time for the participants meant for recuperation and reflection.

Programme Format

The *i-ACT for Life*TM programme was specifically designed for delivery through instant messaging applications (e.g., Whatsapp, Telegram, WeChat). This medium was chosen specifically for its accessibility and convenience, allowing practitioners to reach much wider audiences.

This manual provides instructions and guidelines on how to conduct the *i-ACT for Life*TM programme through its intended medium. Included are descriptions of the audio-visual materials used, text captions or instructions provided to participants, as well as recommendations for timing and scheduling the delivery of the programme. It is important that, throughout the delivery of the programme, personal communication with the participants be kept at a minimum, and be restricted to only matters related to the programme.

Adherence to manual

For research purposes, it is recommended that adherence to the manual is strictly followed. Timings of the daily exercises may vary to suit your preferences. However, it is best not to modify the content and arrangement of the daily exercises. If you are conducting the programme on a group of participants, it is important that the use and scheduling of content be the same across all participants.

Handling a crisis

This programme is not meant for those with a past or present diagnosis of mental or neurological disorders. Specifically, this programme was designed to prevent high-risk young adults from developing more severe psychological distress. In the case of emergencies, you should direct your participants to qualified practitioners (either in your research team or outside of it) to stabilise the participants and ensure their safety.

Training

This manual is intended for researchers who wish to conduct a remote modular prevention programme on high-risk young adults. Anyone with a basic understanding of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, knowledge of Islamic practices, and technical knowledge of instant messaging platforms may be able to conduct and implement the *i-ACT for Life*TM programme.

Using the *i-ACT For Life*[™] manual

General guide

This manual provides instructions on how to implement the *i-ACT for Life*[™] programme through instant messaging applications. The manual contains the recommended timing for delivery of the materials, and depending on the choice of application, delivery of the materials may be automated or scheduled in advance.

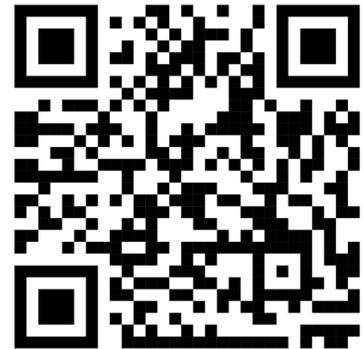
The materials for each day come with a corresponding caption or instruction for the participants. To preserve the efficacy of the program, it is best not to adjust or modify any of the captions or instructions provided in this manual.

The images found in this manual serve only as a reference to guide users in implementing the programme. For a full-sized view of the images used in the programme, users may access the link below.

Materials

Images used for the programme can be obtained from scanning the QR code or clicking the link below it. All third-party audio and video materials can be obtained by clicking the links provided throughout the manual.

For the interactive quizzes or exercises included in *i-ACT for Life*[™], it is recommended that the content of the exercises be uploaded onto an online interactive quiz platform, such as Quizizz or Google Forms.



[Programme Materials](#)

PROGRAMME OPENING

First Day

Schedule: Sunday, 1600 hours.

Caption: *Al-Salām ‘alaykum* and Welcome to *i-ACT For Life™*, a modular prevention program featuring integrated elements of Islamic Spirituality and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy!

As young adults, you may face educational, financial, or social challenges that can negatively affect your mental health.

In facing these challenges, you may feel:

- Anxiety: Feelings of intense worry, fear, and uncertainty
- Depression: Feelings of hopelessness, loss of motivation, and low moods
- Stress: Overwhelming pressure to meet increasing academic, financial, and professional demands.

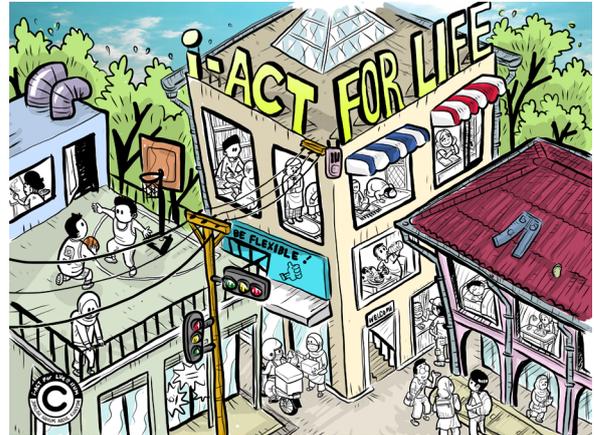
Caption: To help you face your challenges more effectively, we have designed this psycho-spiritual programme especially for you!

Designed by experts in their fields, this programme features psychological and Islamic spiritual elements that aim to build psychological skills within you that will help you face stressors more effectively.

These skills will not solve all your problems, nor will they make your life instantly better. But, they can help by giving you the ability to face your problems better by:

- Improving your psychological flexibility, so that you may be open to facing future challenges.
- Increasing your self-compassion, so that you may be kind to yourself as you face stressful times.

Photo:



- Increasing your resilience, so that you may easily bounce back on your feet after facing difficulty.

Photo:



First Day

Schedule: Sunday, 1600 hours.

Photo:

Caption: To fully gain the benefits of this program, you will need to commit 10-15 minutes of your day for the next five weeks.

These daily exercises are specifically designed to help you build the needed skills in order to thrive against future challenges.



WEEK 1
GROUNDING

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jamilah Hanum Abdul Khaiyom, PhD

Dr. Jamilah Hanum currently serves as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and in ISTAC-IIUM. She also provides psychological services at the Psychology Services Unit in the department and the IIUM Mental Health and Psychosocial Care Team (IMPACT). The team was recognized as Honourable Mention - SDG 3 in the 2020 RCE Award for RCE Greater Gombak. In addition, she is a recipient of many research grants such as the Transdisciplinary Research Grant

Scheme (TRGS), Translational Research (TR@M), Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS), Knowledge Transfer Programme (KTP), International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Communication (MCMC), and LESTARI SDG Research Grant. Furthermore, she has presented her work at many international conferences, and her work has been published in high refereed journals. She also has published six books, and the most recent ones are *Spiritual Therapy: An Islamic Perspective* and *Manual of Spiritual Therapy: Islamic Perspective*. Due to her active role as a researcher, she has been awarded a few awards nationally and internationally (e.g., Top Researchers of Joint Publications from 2019-2021 and Best Poster Award at the 7th Asian Cognitive Behavior Therapy Conference). In terms of consultancy, numerous organizations regularly invite her to conduct workshops in her area of specialization (i.e., Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Relaxation Training, Mindfulness-based Intervention). She is currently focusing much of her time researching integrating Islamic psychospiritual elements with conventional psychotherapy in promoting mental health and well-being. She also enjoys watching movies, coloring, swimming, decluttering, talking to plants, and playing with cats in her free time.



Amani Fadzlina Abdul Aziz

Amani Fadzlina graduated with a Bachelor's in Human Sciences (Psychology) from the International Islamic University Malaysia in 2021. Her main achievements include presenting at the 17th International Postgraduate Colloquium, developing and testing the effectiveness of *i-ACT for Life™* as part of her Final Year Project, and receiving recognition for her writing in numerous writing competitions. She enjoys reading, writing, embroidery, and playing chess in her free time.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Ahmad Nabil Md Rosli, MD

Dr. Ahmad Nabil is an assistant professor of psychiatry at Kulliyah of Medicine, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He received his Doctor of Psychiatry degree from University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in the year 2017. He has a special interest in religion, spirituality, and mental health. He obtained a formal accredited training in spiritual care from the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), Central California, US. His interest in writing and research is evident from his various scientific publications, locally and internationally.

He has been invited annually by the Persatuan Dokter Spesialis Kedokteran Jiwa Indonesia (PDSKJI) to deliver talks or workshops on spiritual care and mental health. His recent contribution is a chapter in a book recently published by Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM); *Waswas dan Kecelaruhan Obsesif Kompulsif Menurut Psikiatri Moden dan Ulama Silam* (2020) and another one published by Universiti Islam Malaysia (UIM); *Medical Wisdom and Ar-Ruqyah Ash-Shar'iyah* (2018).



Che Amnah Bahari, PhD

Dr Amnah Bahari is currently teaching at the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science, IIUM. She graduated from Kulliyah of Economy and Management, IIUM and continued her post-graduate studies in Islamic studies focusing on the ḥadīth methodology at IIUM and ISTAC. Her interest areas are in ḥadīth studies and their methodology, Islamic Ethics, Islamic Thought, contemporary moral issues, and spirituality. She has written books like *Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth: An annotated*

Translation and Ketokohan Ibn Qutaybah Dalam Ilmu Kalam. Sharing her thoughts with other authors, she has contributed to the writing of Prophet Ya`qūb parenting style; *IIUM Sejahtera Profiling*; *Spiritual Therapy: An Islamic Perspective and A Manual of Spiritual Therapy*. She also contributed to several article writings, and the recent is: "Work-life faith balance: the relevance in verse 77, Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ, in the context of Covid 19."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

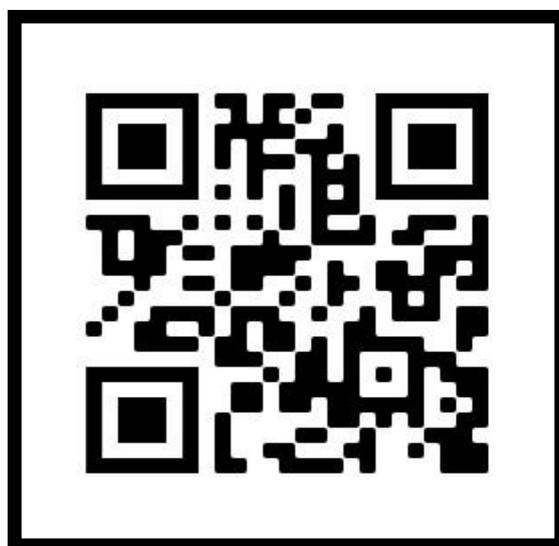


Nur Sakinah Thomas Binti Abdullah, PhD

Nur Sakinah Thomas has been teaching since 1994 in various institutions in Malaysia and Turkey. She has completed her PhD, Master and Bachelor of Education in Universiti Putra Malaysia. Her areas of expertise are teacher education as well as teaching and learning. She is currently specialising in Educational Psychology in Universiti Putra Malaysia as her main area of research interest is reducing and preventing teacher burnout. Currently she is working as a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, Education and Languages, HELP University, Malaysia.

Experience i-ACT For Life or ACT For Life in Malay version through the SELANGKAH application.

Scan the QR code below.



Or get it on Google Play, App Store, or AppGallery.

We face many challenges in our lives, and these include educational, financial and social challenges. Facing these challenges are not easy, especially when they affect you in the following ways:

- Anxiety: feelings of intense worry, fear, and uncertainty
- Depression: feelings of hopelessness, loss of motivation, low moods
- Stress: overwhelming pressure to meet academic, financial, and professional demands.

To help you cope with the challenges, *i-ACT For Life* has been designed exclusively for you. Designed by experts in their fields, this programme features psychological and Islamic spiritual elements that aim to build psychological skills within you that will help you face stressors and challenges more effectively by:

- Improving your psychological flexibility, so that you may be open to facing the future challenges in your life.
- Increasing your self-compassion, so that you may be kind to yourself as you face stressful times.
- Increasing your resilience, so that you may easily bounce back on your feet after facing future difficulty.

Go through the experience with *i-ACT For Life* to help you be better prepared to face challenges in the future.

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