

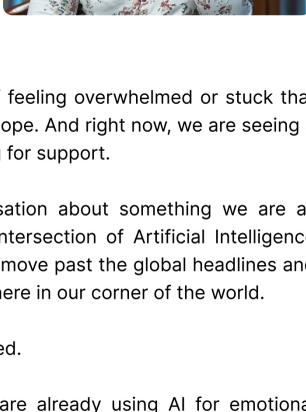


Are machines replacing therapists? The data is in.

Hello

Welcome to the second issue of Iyashi Pulse.

By now, the January adrenaline has faded, and whether it is a lapsed resolution or a lingering heartbreak, you may find yourself self-blaming for being stuck. Take a breath. This pause is not a failure; it is part of the process.



And it is mostly in these moments of feeling overwhelmed or stuck that we begin searching for new ways to cope. And right now, we are seeing a huge shift in where people are turning for support.

Last month, we launched a conversation about something we are all navigating but rarely measure: the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and our mental health. We wanted to move past the global headlines and understand what this looks like right here in our corner of the world.

So, we asked, and 103 of you answered.

You told us that while 74% of you are already using AI for emotional support, the majority (64%) are not looking to replace their therapist; they are looking for a partner to support them between sessions. Whether students or CEOs, your candid responses validated what we have believed all along: that the future of mental health care is not robot vs. human. It is hybrid. This vision of a safe, hybrid future is what drives our work, and the world is already taking notice.

Project RISE—our AI-powered child safety platform—was recently selected as a Top 10 Global Winner for the AI by HER IndiaAI Impact Challenge held in New Delhi in February. This huge win is not just for Iyashi, but for African innovation. It validates what we have always believed: our solutions may be built in Kenya, but they are world-class.

Additionally, on Safer Internet Day, I was named a Fellow for the Childhood & AI Lab. This fellowship will allow us to deepen our work on Project RISE, ensuring that as we build this hybrid future, we are building safety nets for our children alongside it.

None of this work happens in isolation and we want you alongside us every step of the process. I invite you to continue to follow our building journey and behind-the-scenes updates on our social media pages

As you dive into the rest of this issue, I hope you feel seen and supported.

Wishing you a great month of March.

Emily Mbelenga

Founder, Iyashi Wellness Centre

IN THIS ISSUE:

1 The Mandazi Trap 🍌

Why your New Year's resolutions failed (and why you are not lazy, you are just fighting your environment. We explore the science of willpower (and why you should not feel guilty about the March slump).

2 The 4-Year Heartbreak 💔

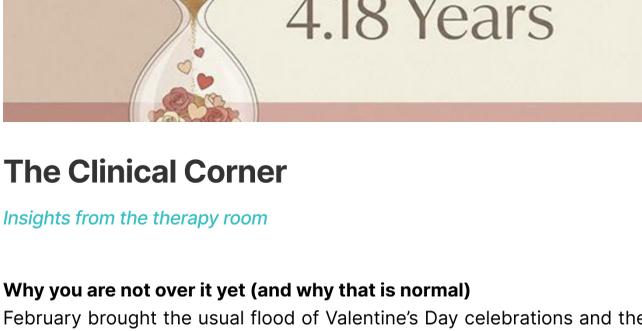
Society expects you to bounce back and get over it in 3 months. Science says it takes 4.18 years. We explore the neuroscience of heartbreak and why your brain struggles to let go of a past attachment.

3 The AI Pulse Check 🗣️

The official report is live. We surveyed over 100 Kenyans, and 74% are already using AI for emotional support. We break down the data and explore why the future of mental health care in Africa is hybrid.

4 Premiere: Iyashi Conversations 🎧

A special preview of our brand new video podcast that launch on March 20th during international day of happiness. We are moving beyond clinical jargon to talk about the cost of the hustle, unlearning toxic habits, and finding everyday healing.



Practical Psychology

Actionable tips for resilience in a changing world

The 'mandazi trap' (and why you are not lazy)

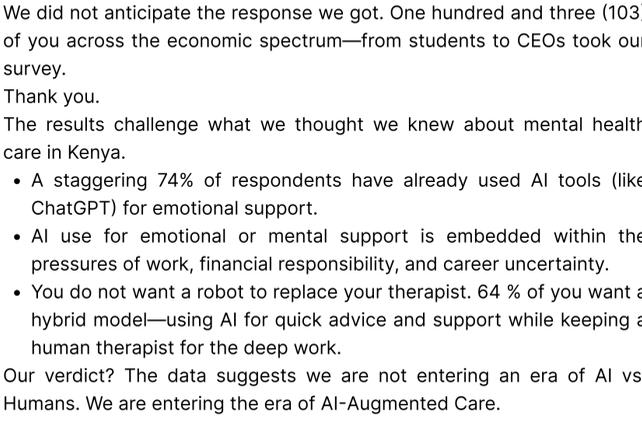
We are halfway through March, by now, statistically, the healthy gyms are empty, the "read more books" plan has stalled, and the healthy eating resolution has been replaced by office tea-and-mandazi. When this happens, the default response is guilt. We tell ourselves, "I just lack discipline."

But you are wrong.

Research suggests that 43% of our daily actions happen on autopilot. You are not fighting a lack of motivation; you are fighting 'choice architecture' Willpower is a finite resource, and if your environment (or your office culture) is designed against you, the environment will win every time.

In this issue, we break down the friction strategy and share the science of why Silicon Valley apps and office cafeterias defeat your willpower; and how to redesign your space so the healthy choice becomes the easy choice.

👉 Read the full article [Here](#)



The Clinical Corner

Insights from the therapy room

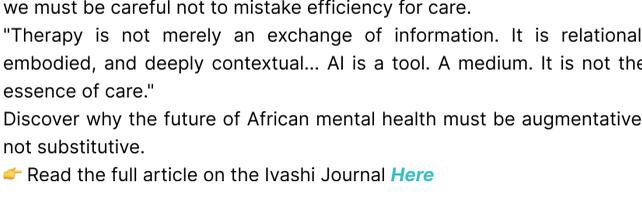
Why you are not over it yet (and why that is normal)

February brought the usual flood of Valentine's Day celebrations and the heavy societal pressure to be happily coupled; or at the very least, fully healed. But even if you did not celebrate the day, you may be in the middle of a heartbreak right now. If you are still grieving a relationship that ended in 2024 (or even 2023), you might feel a lingering sense of shame, quietly asking yourself, "Why am I still stuck?"

The answer is in neurobiology.

A groundbreaking new study suggests that it takes an average of **4.18** years for the human brain to fully 'un-love' an attachment figure. Society gives you three months; your nervous system takes four years.

In this issue, we revisit our Valentine's Day article exploring why your brain treats a breakup like a survival threat, and the one behaviour keeping you stuck in the past. If you or someone you know is navigating a heartbreak or struggling with letting go, [read the full piece here.](#)



Innovation Watch

Navigating the future of mental health

The Results Are In: Is AI the new therapist? 🗣️

Last month, we launched a pulse-check to answer a critical question: Are Kenyans using AI for mental health support?

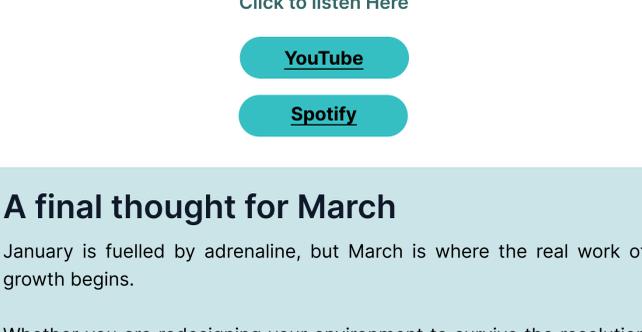
We did not anticipate the response we got. One hundred and three (103) of you across the economic spectrum—from students to CEOs took our survey. Thank you.

The results challenge what we thought we knew about mental health care in Kenya.

- A staggering 74% of respondents have already used AI tools (like ChatGPT) for emotional support.
- AI use for emotional or mental support is embedded within the pressures of work, financial responsibility, and career uncertainty.
- You do not want a robot to replace your therapist. 64 % of you want a hybrid model—using AI for quick advice and support while keeping a human therapist for the deep work.

Our verdict? The data suggests we are not entering an era of AI vs. Humans. We are entering the era of AI-Augmented Care.

👉 Download the Full Report and read our analysis here: <https://www.iyashiwellness.org/research>



Expert Spotlight: James Letoo

We are privileged to feature [James Letoo](#), a Board-certified Clinical Psychologist with nearly two decades of experience, as our guest expert for March.

In this issue, we revealed that 74% of us are already using AI for mental health support. But while the adoption is high, the implications are complex.

James joins us to provide the clinical counterweight to this rapid digital expansion. In his exclusive piece, "**Beyond the Hype: The Real Opportunities and Risks of AI in African Mental Health**," he explores the tension between access and ethics.

James argues that while AI can help Africa leapfrog infrastructural gaps, we must be careful not to mistake efficiency for care.

"Therapy is not merely an exchange of information. It is relational, embodied, and deeply contextual... AI is a tool. A medium. It is not the essence of care."

Discover why the future of African mental health must be augmentative, not substitutive.

👉 Read the full article on the Iyashi Journal [Here](#)



Service Spotlight: Premiering Iyashi Conversations

Listen. Unlearn. Heal

We believe that healing should not be confined to the therapy room and this is why we are mapping out mental health conversations that we know our community is quietly having behind closed doors.

On the International Day of Happiness, March 20th, we officially launched our brand-new video podcast: Iyashi Conversations.

Hosted by our Founder and Clinical Psychologist, Emily Mbelenga, this podcast bridges the gap between clinical jargon and real life. We are sitting down with everyday people to have honest, unfiltered conversations about their mental health journeys. We are moving beyond the surface to unpack the mental health cost of farming in the context of climate change, understand the mental health toll of building an organization from the ground up, hear about the challenges of single parenting, among other conversations.

Whether you are commuting, taking a walk, or unwinding after a long day, we want to be right there with you.

Click to listen Here

A final thought for March

January is fuelled by adrenaline, but March is where the real work of growth begins.

Whether you are redesigning your environment to survive the resolution slump, giving your brain the grace and time it needs to heal from a past love, or finding new ways to speak openly about the weight of your struggles, remember this: **Resilience is not about being perfect; it is about being honest about what you need.**

If you find yourself slipping on your goals or seeking new tools for emotional support this month, do not punish yourself. Instead, adjust your environment, embrace the solutions available to you, and extend yourself grace.

You are not behind. You are on your own journey through life.

Here is to a month of kindness, open conversations, and steady progress.

Team Iyashi Wellness Centre

Coming in the April Issue

Building a safety net and understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

This month we celebrated the global recognition of Project RISE, in April, we will be pulling back the curtain on the build. In this issue we will be sharing behind-the-scenes updates and introducing the incredible new team of clinical and technical experts joining our mission to turn this digital platform into a reality. Thank you for being part of this community.

See you next month.

Iyashi Wellness Centre
Healing Body, Mind and Spirit

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