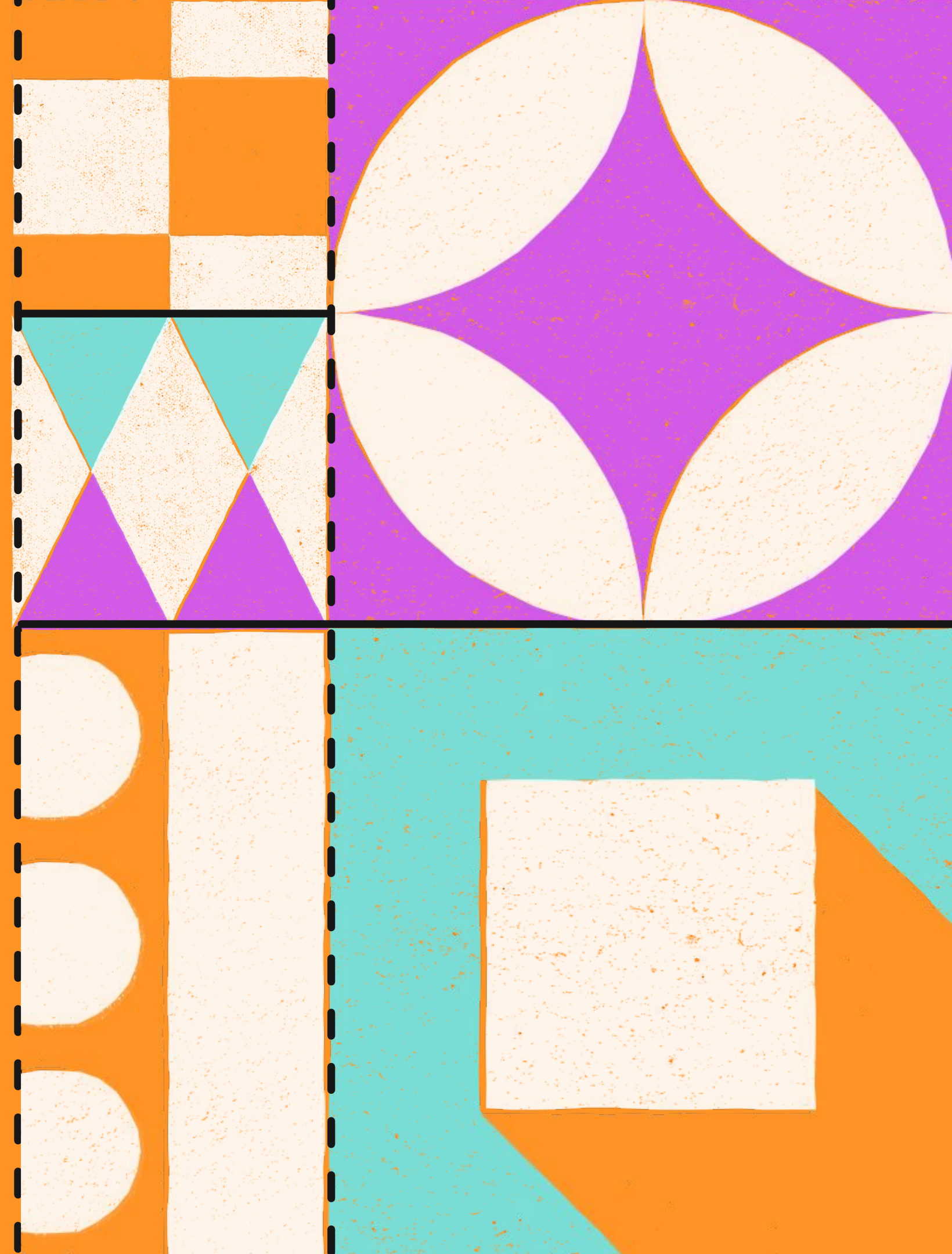


University of Pretoria

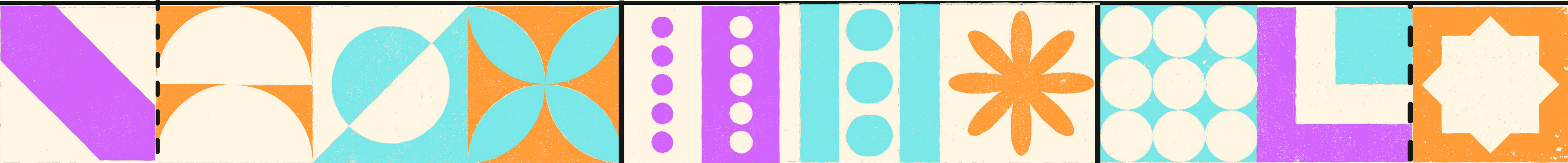
University life for individuals with mental illnesses.

Presented by the SCU



Overview

- Introduction
- The most common problems that students face in university
- University and mental health
- The effects of COVID-19
- Helpful tips
- References

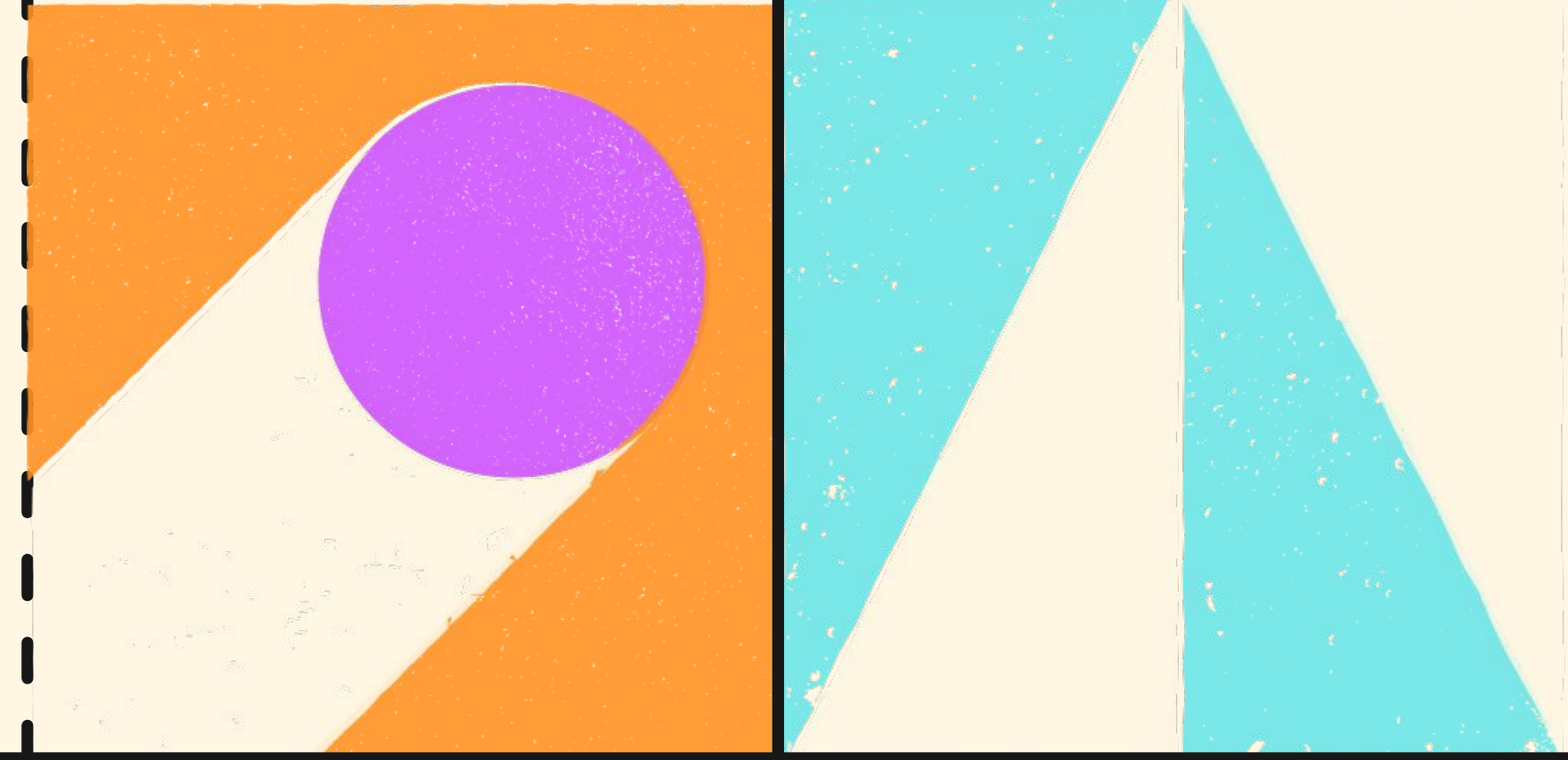


Introduction

- Those who are embarking on their academic journey for the first time are **not well aware** of the difficulties of university life.
- For many students, university is where they **begin to discover their identity and where they feel most at home as individuals in society.**
- The difficulties that students endure at university are **worsened by the conditions they find themselves in, but picture having a mental disorder that magnifies these already difficult obstacles.**

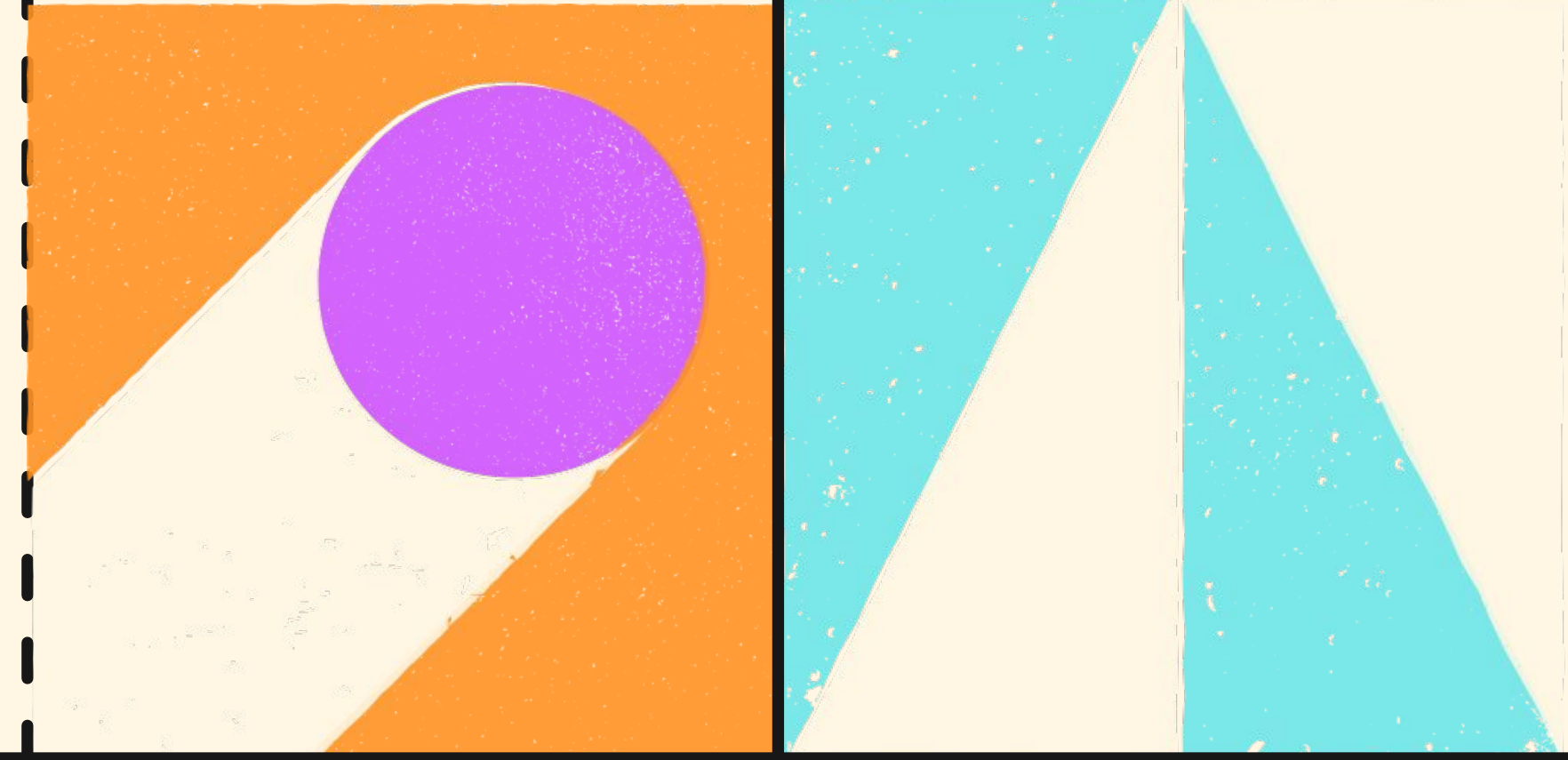


The most common problems that students face in university:



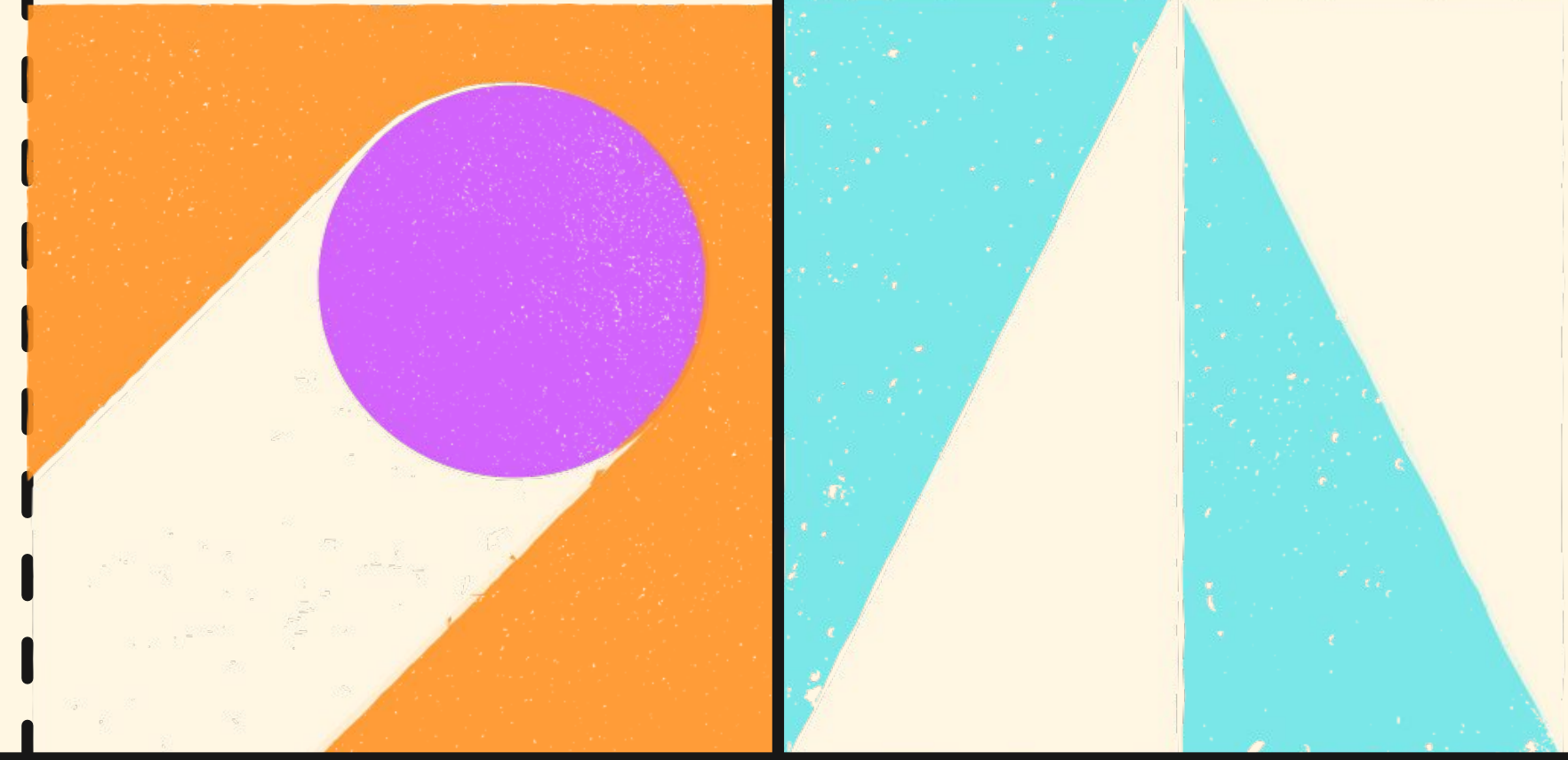
- Homesickness
- Adjusting to a New Life
- Pressure Arising from Studies and Education Costs
- Finding a New Set of Friends
- Culture Shock
- Housing Problems
- Time Management
- Choosing Your Preferred Major
- Relationships

Homesickness



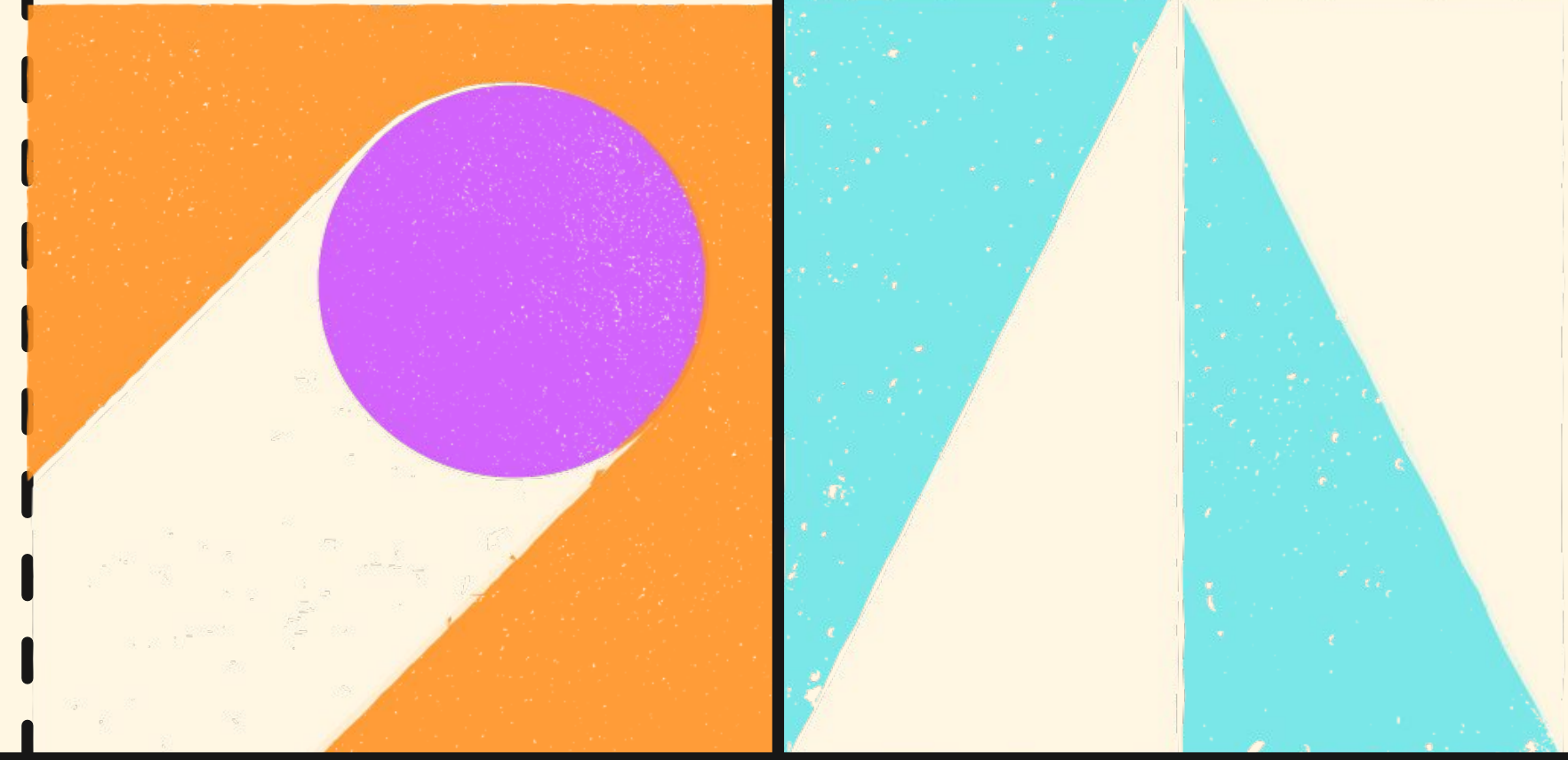
- Missing home may be one of the first obstacles you confront at campus.
- Even though you're meeting new people and trying new things, it's **natural to miss** your friends and family back home (and even your own bed).
- This is **quite natural**, and **many individuals experience it**.

Adjusting to a New Life



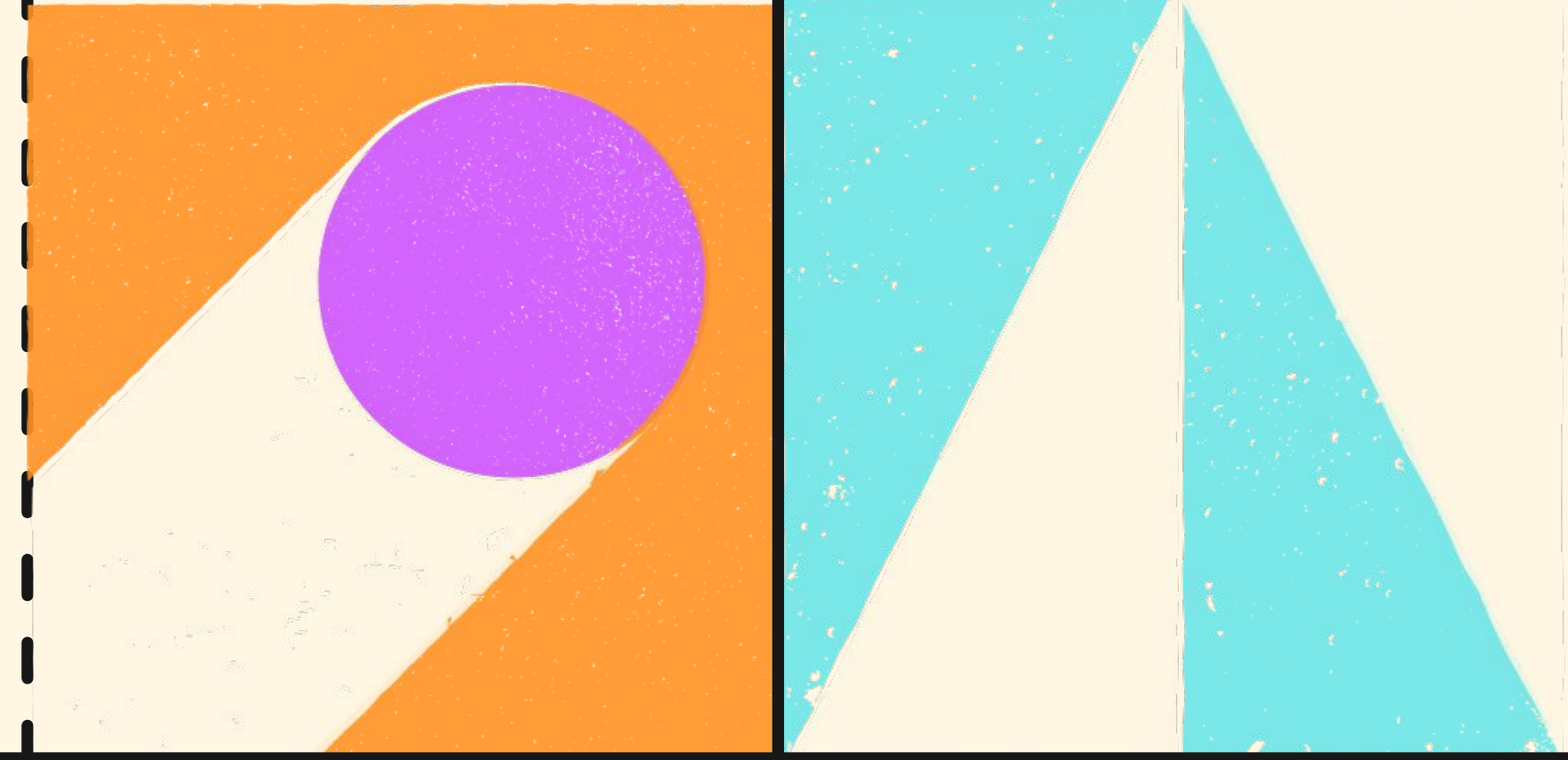
- Whether you're a first-year student at a university or returning to university after a long vacation at home, you'll need some time to adjust.
- The first year of university life can be particularly challenging due to a variety of factors, including a change in routine.
- Learning to acclimatize to the changes between university and high school is another major stumbling block. You might have more difficult classes, more assignments, and you're now in charge of your own time management.
- Because things are so different from living at home, you should expect a culture shock when you arrive at university.

Pressure Arising from Studies and Education Costs



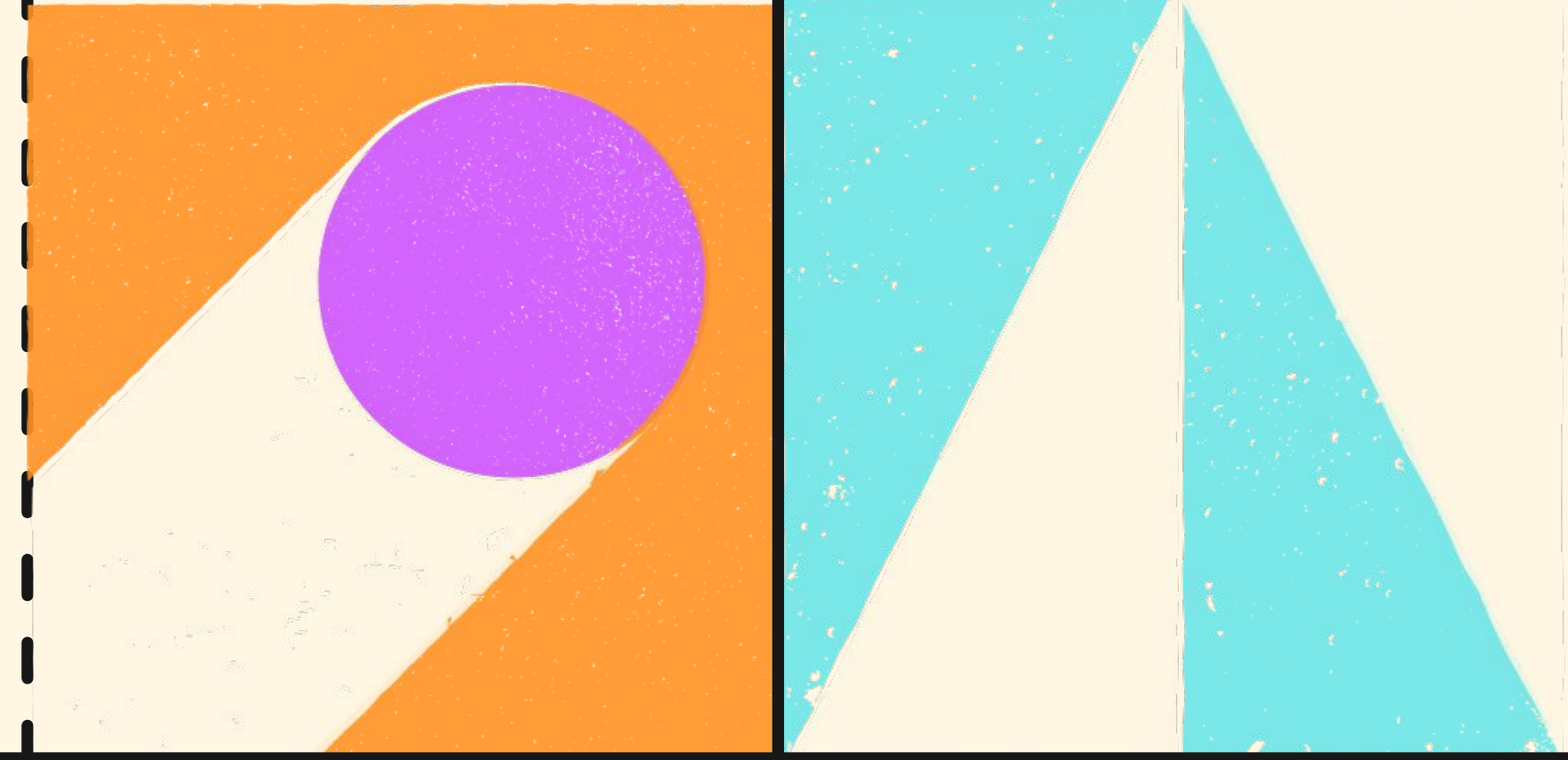
- Money can be a **huge stressor** when paying for your education.
- The majority of students around the world pay for their education on their own, **increasing the pressure** on them to get **good results** with each passing day.
- Even for individuals who cannot afford to pay for their own studies, **the possibility of severe scholastic and social consequences are overwhelming**, if they do not succeed in their studies exists.
- The majority of students in most institutions come from **low-income families**, which means they rely on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which is a government-funded student bursary and loan program, as well as other such funding programs.

Pressure Arising from Studies and Education Costs



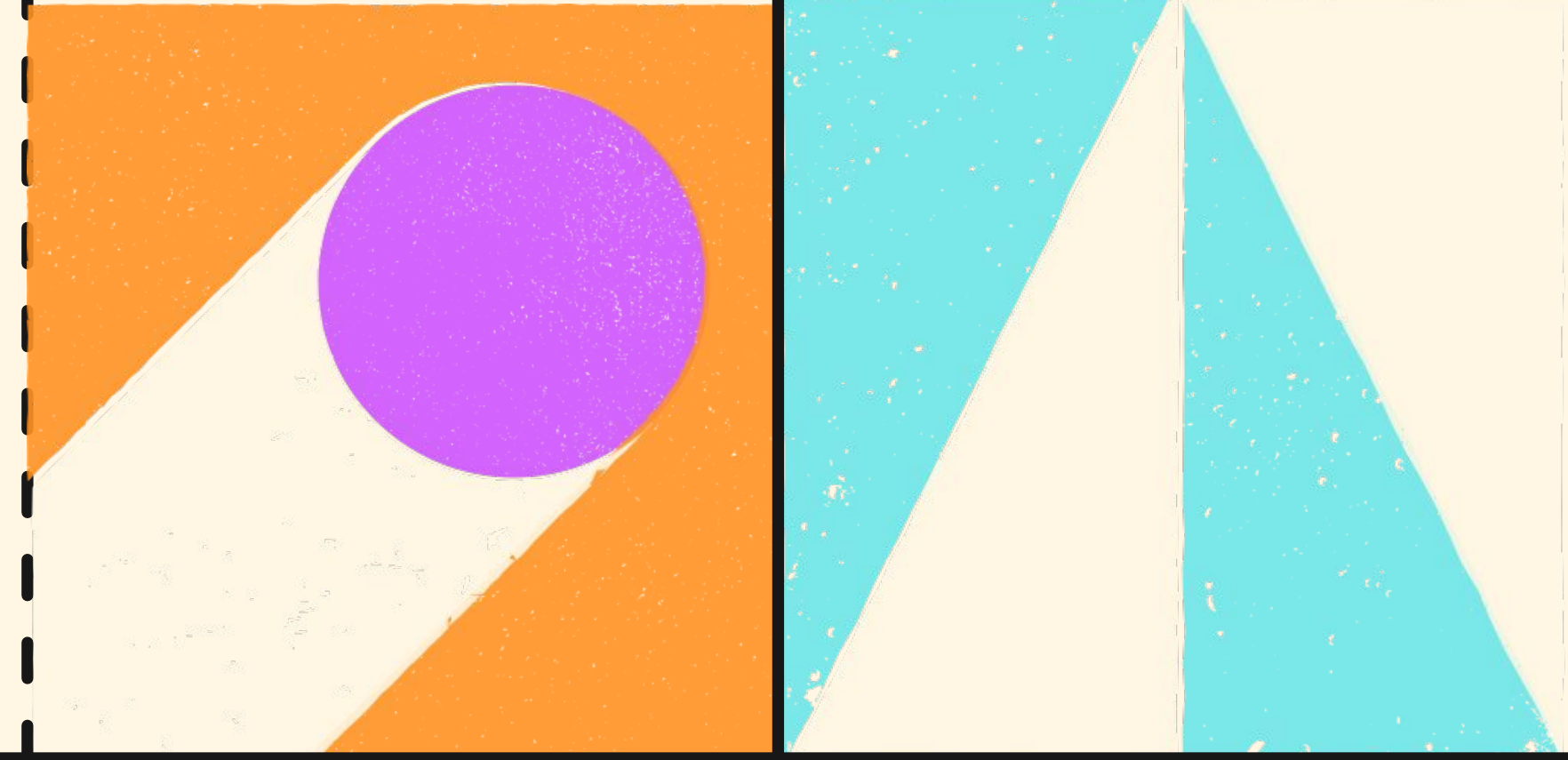
- Although there are options for part-time employment, **most students do not have the work experience needed to obtain such jobs** (i.e., students who came straight from high school).
- Furthermore, even in the case that a student is able to obtain part-time employment, there is **added pressure** to effectively manage studies, work and a social life.
- With that said, most families **hope** that their children will graduate with a degree, which will help **raise their family out of poverty**. This adds to the **pressure** on students **to perform well** because their performance at university will **affect more than just their own future**.

Finding a New Set of Friends



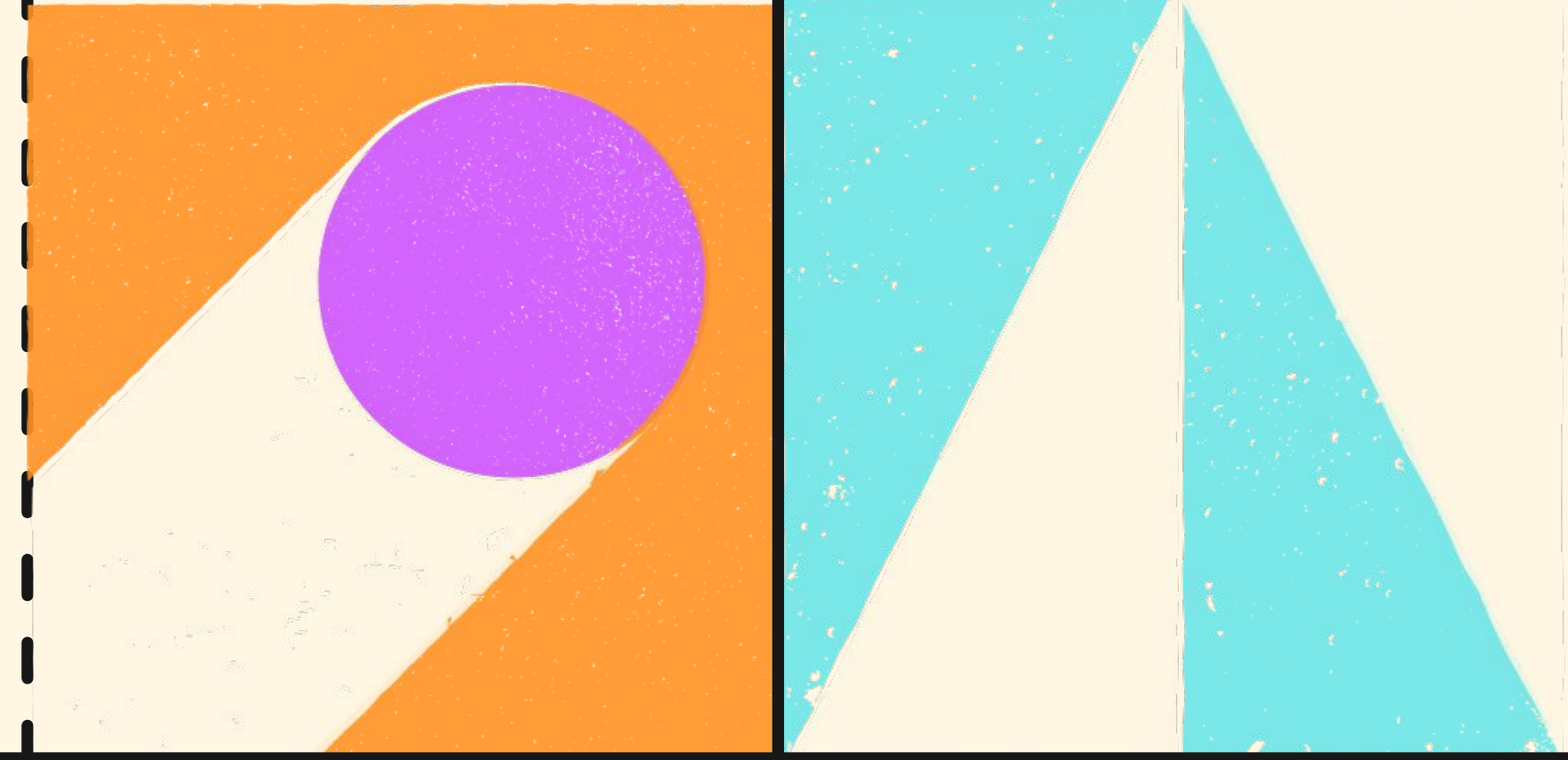
- It's difficult to create new friends, especially in **unfamiliar environments**.
- Most first-year students have had the same circle of friends since the beginning of high school, and others have known them since primary school.
- As a result, creating new friends has never been necessary, **implying that making new friends is a foreign concept to them**, especially since there is no guarantee that you will have anything in common with the people you approach.

Culture Shock



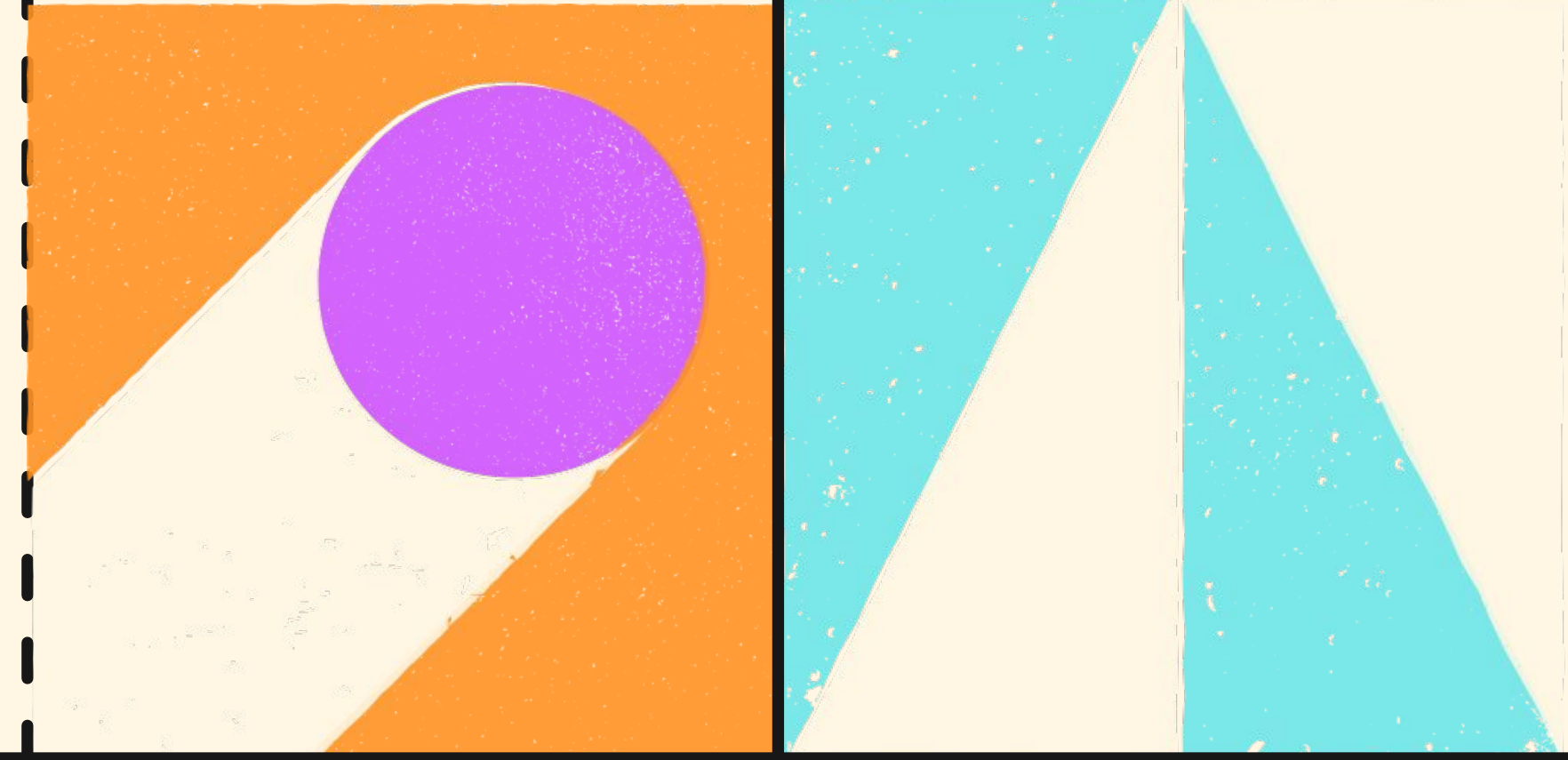
- A person may experience culture shock when moving to a **different cultural environment**; it is also the **personal disorientation** a person may feel when experiencing an **unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply transitioning to a different type of life.**
- **Frustration, anxiety, and even depression** are all **common symptoms** of culture shock.
- The process of adjusting to a new culture usually occurs in **stages**.
- There is a **honeymoon period** at first. Everything is **invigorating and exciting** for a student in a new nation, a new environment and a new social culture.

Culture Shock



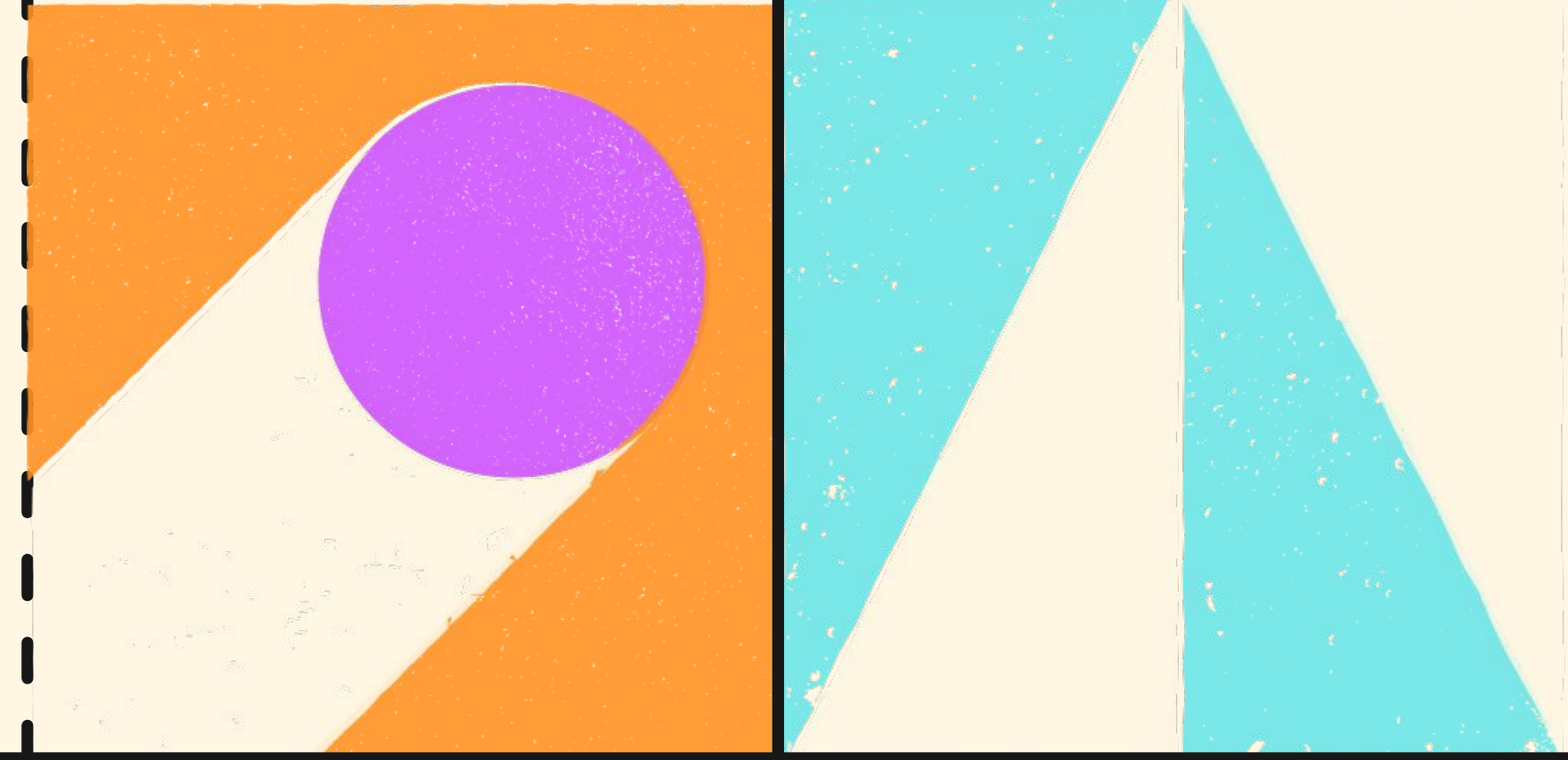
- Maybe they're in the middle of a rush of orientation and settling in, getting hosted about town or city. The sights, sounds, and flavors are all fresh experiences.
- At first, a student may **see more parallels than differences** between the host country and the home country or the new environment.
- The **initial excitement may wear off** after a few weeks, and a student may **begin to notice the deeper contrasts in their new environment**.
- Perhaps he or she will be sick of the food or find it difficult to communicate. Perhaps the university appears confusing and impersonal.

Housing Problems



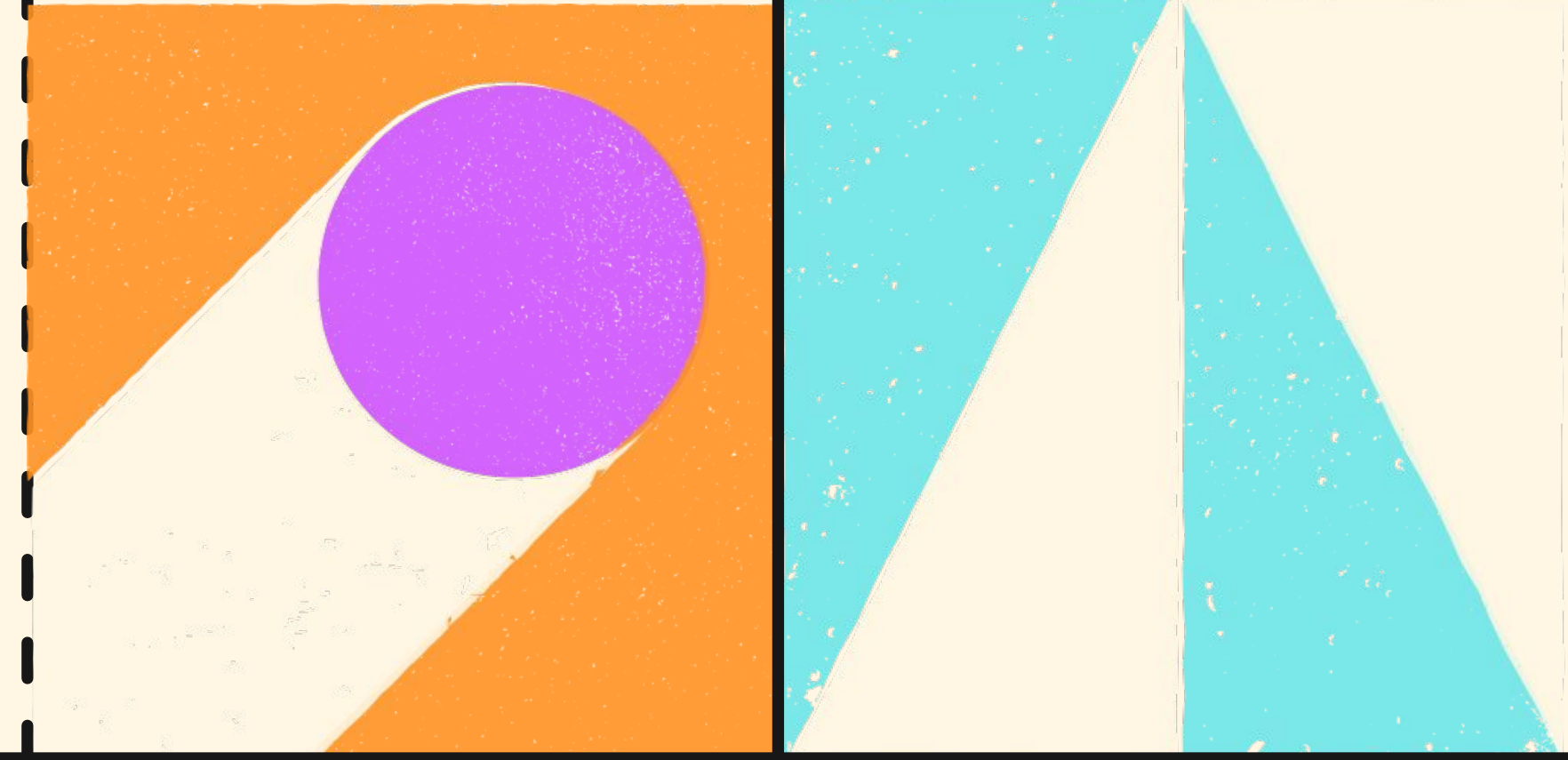
- While it is feasible to obtain a room in a dorm or a hostel, the truth is that finding the ideal living environment is a difficult undertaking.
- You must **examine a number of things**, including rent pricing, amenities, safety, roommates, and distance, among others.
- As a student, **you should be prepared to deal with housing issues.**

Time Management



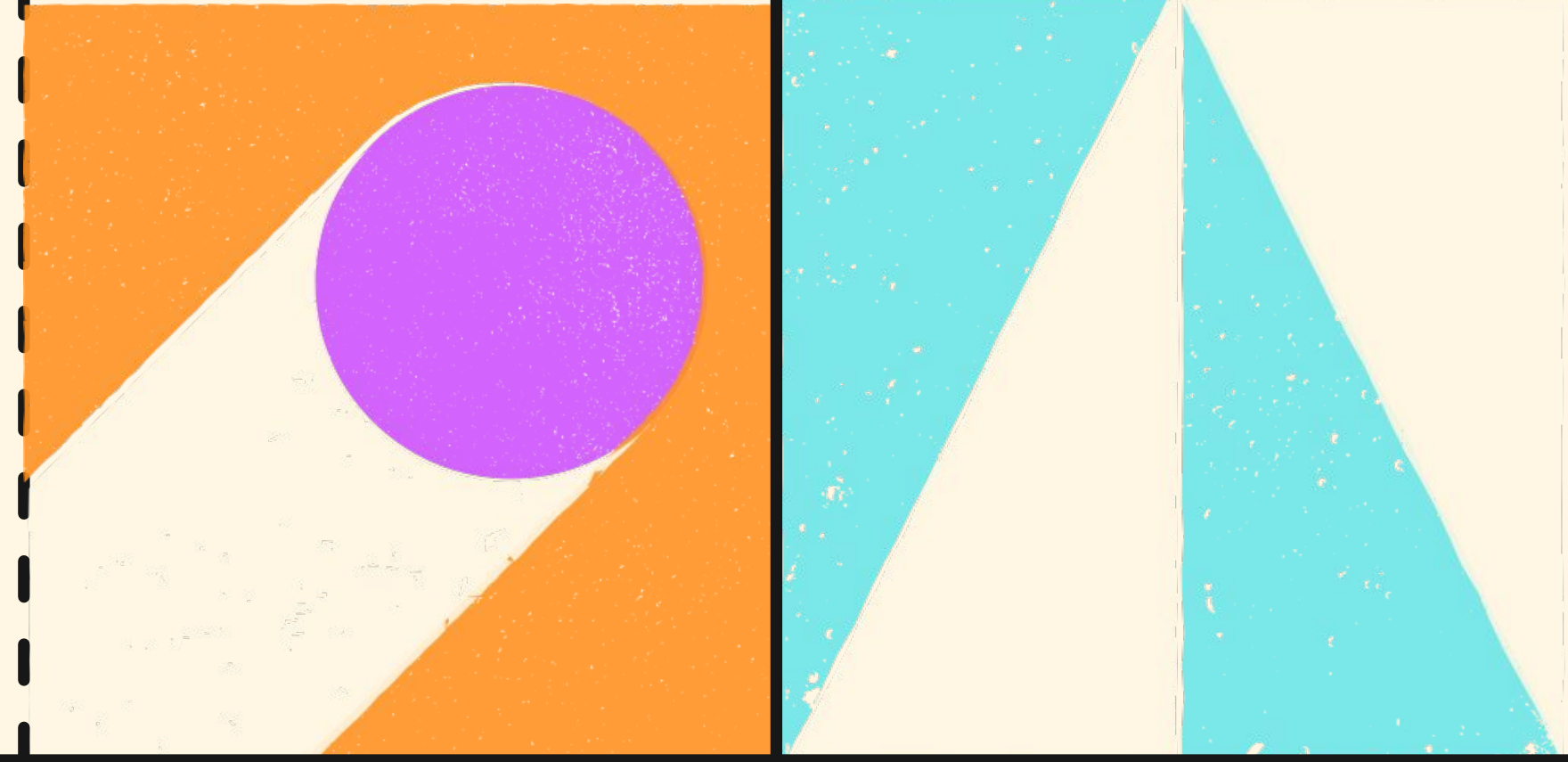
- University life might be one of the stages in your life where you want more than 24 hours in a day **due to the tasks that you are expected to complete**, from living alone to balancing chores and studying, among other things.
- The number of tasks you must complete in a single day **can be excessive**, to the point where you develop **irregular sleeping habits** and a **tendency of completing everything right before the deadline**.

Choosing Your Preferred Major



- When it's time to choose your major, you'll notice that there's a lot of **pressure** on you to make the **right decision**.
- The majority of this stress **stems from the fact that your future career, as well as the money you'll make at work, is largely dependent on this decision.**
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often the most **stressed out by this fact as many fear the outcome of achieving a degree but having no job to go to once it has been achieved.**

Relationships



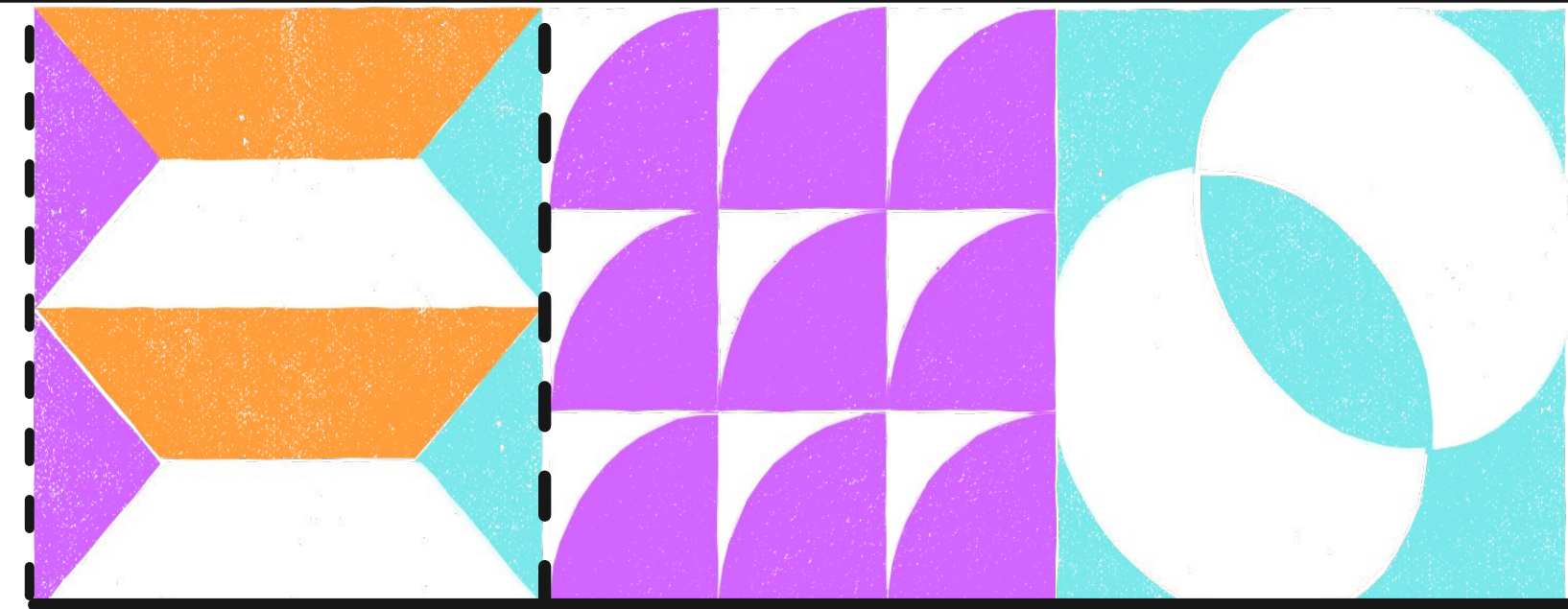
- Navigating the world of relationships in university is **tricky** for not only the reasons that I have mentioned, but also for the **questions that arise** while an individual is engaged in these relationships.
- "How much time should I be allocating to these relationships?; How important are the relationships I have created?; Should I study later and go to this party to please my friends?; Am I being a mood killer because I would rather study instead?"
- Relationships are **difficult to maintain**, especially while you are **still figuring out what sorts of relationships you want to maintain in your life.**



What are some difficulties have you encountered?

University and mental health

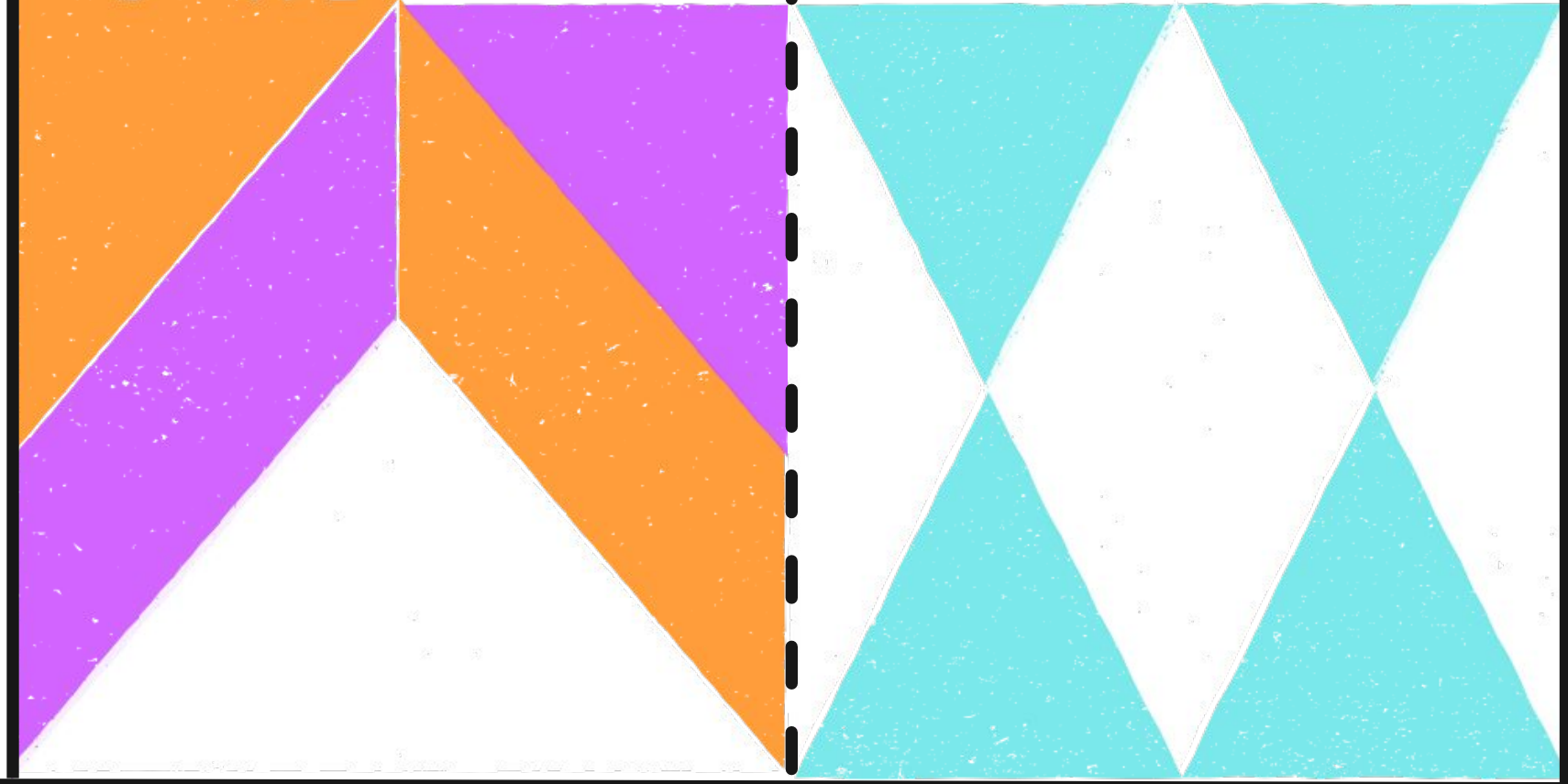
- Mood disturbances are **only one of the many mental health problems** that university students face.
- Suicide, eating disorders, and addiction are examples of major issues.
- Although mental health specialists **emphasize the need of talking about such concerns**, students often regard these **pressures** as a typical part of university life.
- In other circumstances, individuals may be **unable to seek help due to a lack of time, energy, will, or financial resources**.



How mental disorders prevent learning

- Mental illnesses make it difficult for students to be **completely engaged** in the classroom and to reach academic goals.
- A student suffering from a mental-emotional illness, for example, may **struggle** to find desire to finish daily classwork, homework, or class assignments.
- Low test scores, poor attendance, disruptive conduct, and a higher probability of dropping out can all **result from these barriers**.
- Reduced self-perception, insufficient social–emotional skills, and poor interpersonal connections are all **common symptoms** of mental illness.
- Anxiety and depression symptoms, that were elevated at the start of the academic career remain elevated **throughout** the academic years.

The effects of COVID-19



- According to a new WHO survey, the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed or suspended vital mental health services in 93 percent of nations globally, despite rising demand for mental health care.
- Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones.
- Many people may be facing **increased levels** of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, and anxiety.
- Meanwhile, COVID-19 itself can lead to neurological and mental complications, such as delirium, agitation, and stroke. People with pre-existing mental, neurological or substance use disorders are also more vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus—they may stand a **higher risk** of severe outcomes and even death.

The effects of COVID-19

- Young adults have experienced a number of pandemic-related consequences, such as closures of universities and loss of income, that may contribute to poor mental health.
- During the pandemic, [a larger than average share of young adults \(ages 18-24\) report symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder](#). Compared to all adults, young adults are more likely to report substance use and suicidal thoughts. Prior to the pandemic, young adults were [already at high risk of poor mental health](#) and [substance use disorder](#), though many did not receive treatment.
- Research from prior economic downturns shows that job loss is associated with [increased depression, anxiety, distress, and low self-esteem and may lead to higher rates of substance use disorder and suicide](#). During the pandemic, adults in households with job loss or lower incomes report higher rates of symptoms of mental illness than those without job or income loss.

The effects of COVID-19

- Research during the pandemic points to concerns around [poor mental health and well-being](#) for children and their parents, particularly mothers, as many are experiencing challenges with school closures and lack of childcare. Women with children are more likely to report symptoms of [anxiety and/or depressive disorder](#) than men with children.
- The pandemic has disproportionately affected the health of [communities of colour](#). Communities of people of colour are [more affected](#) by the Covid-19 pandemic. Historically, these communities of color have faced [challenges](#) accessing mental health care.
- Many essential workers continue to face a number of challenges, including greater risk of contracting the coronavirus than other workers. Compared to nonessential workers, essential workers are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder , starting or increasing substance use , and suicidal thoughts) during the pandemic.

Helpful tips

Homesickness

Fortunately, we live in a [digital age](#), so video calling can help you bridge that gap and stay in touch with your loved ones back home. Personally, I thought that adding my own personal touches to my room made me feel more at ease and at home.

Adjusting to a New Life

Allow for [some adjustment period and anticipate to have some unsettling situations](#), such as difficult exams. However, keep in mind that, despite all of these uncertainties, you [will](#) eventually adjust and fall in love with university life.

Pressure arising from Studies and Education Costs

[Expect university modules to be much more difficult](#) than those at other levels of school, and plan on putting in more effort to succeed in your university studies.

Furthermore, it is critical that you recognize that the [most reliable approach](#) of preventing mental anxiety while also making the most of these expenses is to love your academic life. You'll be on the [correct track](#) if you can get some [experience outside](#) of the classroom while still enjoying your academics.

Helpful tips

Finding a New Set of Friends

You can only [be yourself](#), and you'll make friends without having to wear a mask that isn't yours. [Patience](#) is a virtue to cultivate, as is becoming actively involved in activities that you enjoy.

Culture Shock

The positive aspect is that [humans naturally have the ability to adapt to their surrounds](#), it may [not](#) always occur as quickly as we would like it to but, we always eventually do. [Patience](#) is required. Almost always, initial difficulties fade away with time. The ability to laugh at yourself will resurface. Things that seemed weird or inconvenient at first will grow more familiar over time. This will allow you to be able to fit into the culture more easily.

Finally, there is the [adaptability or biculturalism stage](#). This when a student has [maintained his or her own cultural identity while acknowledging the right of other cultures to do so as well](#). The individual has a better awareness of themselves and others, and is better able to communicate and convey warmth and understanding across cultural borders.

Helpful tips

Time Management

Using **tools** such as a day planner, calendar, different colour sticky notes (the colour could determine the urgency and importance of the task),

Communicating with others in your class is also another way to always stay on track, and lastly studying effectively when you are suppose to be.

Housing Problems

As a student, you should be **prepared to deal with housing issues**. However, keep in mind that you must have made arrangements for a **safe comfortable place** to stay before leaving home, as this is the easiest approach to avoid major housing troubles.

Communicate to the housing departments to **ask questions** and those who perhaps lived in that particular residence before in order to have an understanding of the environment you are going to be residing in.

Helpful tips

Choosing Your Preferred Major

It is important to [research](#) the field you wish to go into, in particular the degree you want to study.

[Ask questions](#) to those who have walked that road before you, for example ask on social media platforms or even ask your lecturers.

Despite the reality that this is a stage that most students must go through, you should instead concentrate on [developing life skills and knowledge](#).

Relationships

University is a time to meet new people and have new experiences, from new friendships to love connections.

It's [critical to remember to love oneself first and foremost](#), rather than changing for others.

Make sure you're surrounded by individuals who [will encourage and support you and help you](#) have a good time at university.

Student Counselling Unit

- When you find that you feel **too emotionally overwhelmed** with everything happening.
- We are present to **assist all students registered** in the University of Pretoria.
- Just call **0800 747 747** or, if you want **someone to call you back**, send an **SMS to 31393**.
- This **24-hour service** is managed by our mental health partners at the **South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)**.
- You can also access **information about and referral to the peer support groups** by contacting this number.
- Peer support groups are **confidential** and run by students, for students.
- To **access therapeutic support** or find out about individual therapy: You can email us at studentcounselling@up.ac.za
- Send a **short message**, leave your **student number** and **cell phone number** and we can set up an online appointment.
- Visit <https://www.up.ac.za/student-counselling> for more information



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