

Under the Patronage  
of the Ministry of Public Health

# Wellness and Mental Health Week

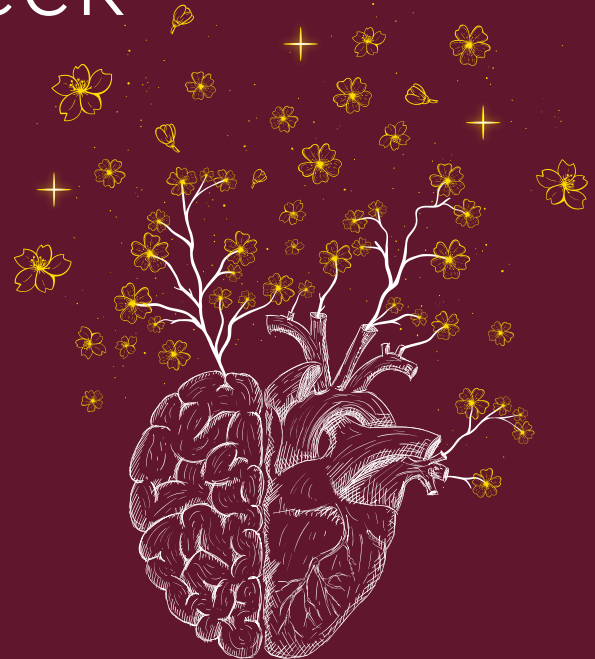
**THE POWER OF HOPE:**  
LET YOUR MIND AND HEART BLOOM

Fifth Edition

October 5–10, 2026



Part of the  
UA Plus Program





*“Every day begins with an act of courage and hope:  
getting out of bed.”*

**(Mason Cooley)**

# SUMMARY

- 4 THE POWER OF HOPE:  
LET YOUR MIND AND HEART BLOOM
- 10 SYMBOLISM OF THE 2026 WMHW  
VISUAL IDENTITY
- 12 UA PLUS PROGRAM
- 14 WELLNESS AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY
- 16 THE POWER OF HOPE AND WE4LEAD:  
ONE COMMON PULSE
- 17 THE UA SEED CENTER
- 18 HACKATHON 2026 - DESIGNING HOPE IN ACTION:  
DIGITAL SOLUTIONS THAT HELP US BLOOM
- 20 WELLNESS FAIR - BRINGING WELL-BEING  
INTO DAILY PRACTICE
- 25 DAY 1: MONDAY, OCTOBER 5
- 39 DAY 2: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6
- 49 DAY 3: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7
- 55 DAY 4: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8
- 61 DAY 5: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9
- 67 DAY 6: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
- 74 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
- 78 OUR PREVIOUS EDITIONS

## THE POWER OF HOPE: LET YOUR MIND AND HEART BLOOM

*"Yet there is **hope**, and there is **hope** within you! You have a gift that many times we adults seem to have lost. You have **hope**! You have time!"*

On December 1, 2025, during his visit to Lebanon under the theme "Blessed are the peacemakers," **Pope Leo XIV** addressed the youth of Lebanon in Bkerké with words that resonated deeply across the nation.

Spoken in a country still enduring economic collapse, political paralysis, forced migration, and the lingering consequences of conflict, these words were not abstract. They were addressed to a generation navigating daily uncertainty, asked to build its future amid scarcity, disruption, and fatigue. In this light, to **let the mind and heart bloom** is not a poetic image, but a call to inner growth that resists stagnation and despair.

Today, education in Lebanon is called not only to inform, but to **accompany**; not only to prepare for professions, but to **nurture resilient and responsible human beings**.

### Hope as a Vital Human Resource

Psychological research shows that hope is often strongest in times of uncertainty. It allows individuals to focus on what can be shaped, influenced, and transformed, rather than on what feels uncontrollable (Tomasulo, 2023).

Hope is **not** passive. It

- supports **mental well-being**,
- sustains perseverance,
- enables continued engagement during instability, and
- buffers the effects of adversity (South Southwest PTTC, 2021).

It allows individuals to move forward without denying the reality of difficulty.



In this sense, hope is not merely a coping mechanism. It is a dynamic force that fosters resilience and inspires constructive change (Bernstein, 2023). It creates the conditions in which **thought can expand** and the **heart can remain open**—even in uncertainty.

## The Educational Responsibility of Hope

This understanding of hope requires a clear educational stance. Contemporary reflections on higher education affirm that mental health and well-being are not peripheral concerns, but **core responsibilities** of universities, directly linked to student success, engagement, and the quality of academic life (Lane, 2021).

Universities do more than support individual students. They are institutions capable of generating hope at a broader societal level: places where knowledge, research, and community engagement converge to address uncertainty and contribute meaningfully to the common good (Baty, 2021). In this light, investing in well-being is not an overextension of the educational mission; it is a faithful expression of it.

As **Pope Francis** affirms, education is always an act of hope: an expression of faith in human potential and in the possibility of growth, renewal, and transformation. Research further indicates that hope flourishes most powerfully within communities that cultivate belonging, shared responsibility, and relational engagement (Search Institute, 2022).

## The Meaning of This Year's Theme

Within this horizon, the theme of this year's Wellness and Mental Health Week, "**The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom**," takes its full meaning.

Hope is often misunderstood as vague optimism or denial of hardship. Yet contemporary reflections within the Church present a different vision: hope is an active virtue that calls individuals to responsibility, commitment, and concrete action rather than resignation or passive waiting (Wooden, 2024). It refuses despair without ignoring reality and sustains the courage to act even when outcomes remain uncertain.

The Jubilee Year decree ***Spes non confundit* "Hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5)** further affirms hope as the central message of Christian life, calling believers to become tangible signs of hope for those experiencing hardship (O'Connell, 2024). This call is addressed with particular urgency to young people. In a world marked by instability, pressure, and discouragement, they are reminded that there remains time to **dream**, to **plan**, and to **do good**, and that hope becomes real only when translated into choices that serve life and community (Gussie, 2025).

This message takes on particular resonance in our context, especially through the visit of **Pope Leo XIV** to Lebanon, which inspired the orientation of this edition. When such words are spoken in fragile settings, including our own, they carry symbolic weight beyond circumstance: hope does not erase suffering, but insists on meaning in its midst (Tornielli, 2025).

This edition takes place in a context that cannot be ignored. As our country continues to endure the realities of **war and instability**, the decision to gather, reflect, and act around well-being becomes all the more meaningful. It affirms that even in moments marked by disruption and uncertainty, the commitment to human dignity, mental health, and collective resilience must remain. Held in October, the month dedicated globally to **mental health awareness**, this Week stands as a deliberate act of presence and responsibility: a reminder that care for the mind and heart remains essential, especially when circumstances might suggest otherwise.

## Hope Within a Holistic Vision of Well-Being

This edition translates hope into a structured and formative journey rooted in integral human development and attentive to the realities facing our community.

Hope cannot be reduced to an inner disposition alone; it is inseparable from a holistic vision of well-being. As **Pope Francis** emphasizes, the human person cannot be fragmented. The health of mind, body, and spirit is deeply interconnected and must be approached accordingly (Chacko, 2021).

Well-being is therefore not a momentary state. It is a continuous journey shaped by relationships, environments, values, and shared responsibility.

Within this perspective, hope is not accidental. It can be intentionally nurtured, cultivated, and strengthened within educational and relational environments (Whitehead, 2025). It grows where individuals are supported, challenged, and invited to develop their full potential.

## The Contributions of This Edition

For this reason, the **Wellness Wheel** presented in this booklet is more than a visual representation; it is a lens that helps us name the dimensions of human flourishing and understand how they influence one another.

*Discover how each session and initiative is situated within the framework of the eight dimensions of the Wellness Wheel in the **UA Plus Program** section.*

## Wellness and Mental Health Week: An Institutional Commitment

The Wellness and Mental Health Week is not a pause in academic life nor a collection of isolated events. It is a visible expression of our educational mission: to form individuals who succeed academically, act with compassion, lead responsibly, and contribute meaningfully to society.

This mission is embodied in initiatives such as:

- **UA Plus Program\***
- **UA SEED Center\***
- **WE4LEAD Initiative\***
- **Hackathon 2026 - Designing Hope in Action: Digital Solutions That Help Us Bloom\***
- **Wellness Youth Day\***
- **Entrepreneurial Youth Day - Well-Being in Motion\***
- **Wellness Fair - Bringing Well-Being Into Daily Practice\***
- **The Levantine Oratorio of Divine Love and Hope\***

*\*More on these initiatives in the following sections of the booklet.*

These efforts affirm that well-being must be addressed across multiple dimensions and through interconnected pathways. They align Antonine University's action with global responsibility and with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—especially **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)**, **SDG 4 (Quality Education)**, **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**, **SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)**, **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)**, and **SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**.

## A Shared Journey of Hope

This Week expresses a deeper conviction: education must form individuals who not only succeed, but also care, lead, and contribute meaningfully to society. It affirms that hope is not merely spoken. It is practiced—in dialogue, in creativity, in leadership, in service, and in shared moments of reflection.

As this fifth edition unfolds, it extends an invitation that is both simple and demanding. It invites each member of the University community, and all those who join us, to pause, reflect, engage fully, and recognize hope as a capacity that can be learned, strengthened, and practiced.

This invitation calls us to a shared journey, where well-being is not treated as an individual concern alone, but as a collective responsibility.

May this Week become a space where minds and hearts are reawakened, where hope takes root and begins to **bloom**, and where we renew the quiet conviction that, even in uncertain times, meaningful growth remains possible: for individuals, for our community, and for the society we are called to serve.

**Fr. Jean Al Alam, OAM**

Vice Rector for Integral Human Development, Antonine University

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*"Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Put your hope in God."  
(Psalm 42:11)*

## SYMBOLISM OF THE 2026 WMHW VISUAL IDENTITY

The visual identity of this year's Wellness and Mental Health Week (WMHW) is a powerful representation of **harmony, growth, faith, and renewal**. Set against a rich **burgundy background**, the logo conveys depth, strength, and resilience—qualities essential to mental health and well-being. Burgundy reflects healing, inner courage, and stability, creating a grounding foundation for the message of the week.

At the center of the design is a unified anatomical illustration combining **a brain and a heart**. The brain symbolizes intellect, reasoning, and mental health, while the heart represents emotion, compassion, and spiritual life. Joined as a single form, they illustrate the inseparable connection between mind and heart. This union emphasizes that true wellness is not achieved by nurturing one while neglecting the other; rather, balance between emotional and intellectual well-being is essential to wholeness.

The rhythm of the beating heart and the sparks ignited within the brain express hope as a **living, active force**. The heartbeat symbolizes perseverance, the courage to continue despite uncertainty or struggle. At the same time, the sparks represent ideas, clarity, and renewed vision that can arise even in the most difficult circumstances. Together, they illustrate that hope sustains both life and thought: it strengthens the heart to endure challenges and ignites the mind with light, creativity, and possibility, even when the path ahead seems unclear.

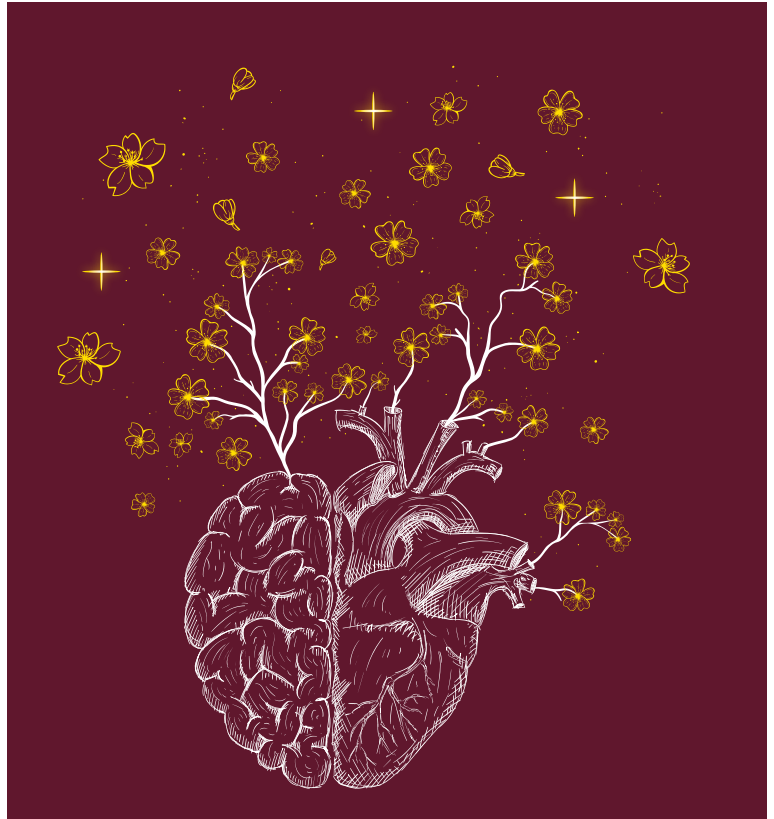
From the top of the brain and heart emerge flourishing branches adorned with **Forget-Me-Not flowers**. These delicate blossoms, though small in size, carry profound meaning. Traditionally associated with remembrance, faithfulness, enduring love, and hope, the Forget-Me-Not serves as a reminder that no one should feel unseen or forgotten in their struggles. In the context of mental health, the flower symbolizes awareness, support, and the importance of standing together as a community. Its blooming presence echoes the theme, "**Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom**," signifying growth through care, understanding, and encouragement.

The upward-reaching branches symbolize progress, resilience, and transformation. They suggest that healing is not static but dynamic; a continual movement toward light and renewal. Scattered golden blossoms and subtle star-like accents surrounding the central image represent hope shining even in difficult seasons. These small yet radiant details remind us that hope often begins gently and quietly, yet holds the power to illuminate our path forward.

The dispersed flowers surrounding the central figure further communicate that positivity does not remain confined. They are intentionally scattered rather than fixed in one place, symbolizing that hope and encouragement are contagious. Just as the blossoms extend outward, positivity spreads from one person to another, creating a ripple effect within the community. Hope, once ignited, naturally radiates and multiplies.

Integrated subtly into the upward movement are **Christian crosses**, symbolizing faith as a source of strength and guidance. Their presence affirms that hope is deeply rooted in spiritual assurance and trust in God's sustaining power. Emerging from both the brain and the heart, the three crosses, representing the Trinity, reinforce the message that faith supports both our thoughts and emotions, providing stability in times of uncertainty.

The use of **yellow and gold tones** introduces light, warmth, and optimism, as yellow often represents joy, positivity, and renewed hope. Against the burgundy background, these luminous elements stand out vividly, symbolizing light breaking through darkness and hope flourishing even in challenging circumstances.



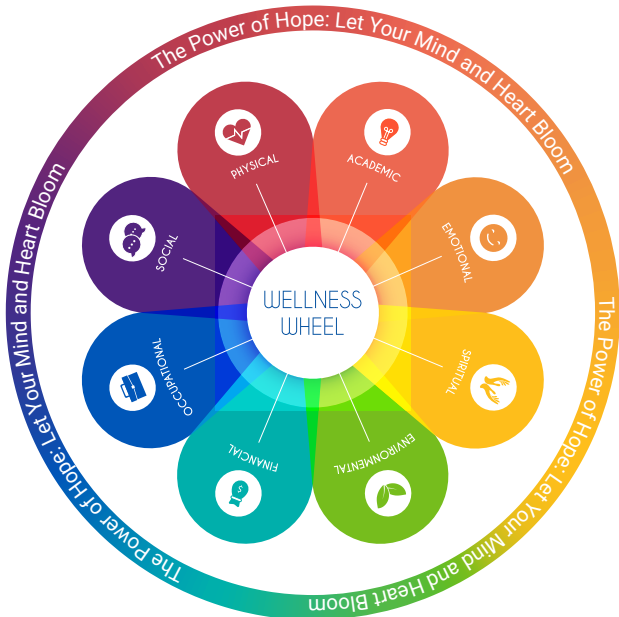
Altogether, the logo is a visual embodiment of this year's theme, **"The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom."** It calls upon each member of the community to nurture both intellect and compassion, remain anchored in faith, and trust that, with hope, healing and growth are always possible.



The UA Plus Program is Antonine University's structured initiative dedicated to students' **holistic development** beyond the academic curriculum. It complements classroom learning through extracurricular workshops, volunteering opportunities, and experiential activities that foster personal growth, professional readiness, and responsible engagement with society.

The **Wellness and Mental Health Week** is fully embedded within the UA Plus Program, ensuring that well-being remains a central pillar of the University experience. Through its diverse sessions and activities, students actively engage with the different dimensions of the **Wellness Wheel**. At the heart of the program, the **Wellness Wheel** encompasses the interconnected dimensions of **physical, academic, emotional, spiritual, environmental, financial, occupational, and social** well-being. These dimensions guide the design of UA Plus initiatives and ensure that student development remains balanced, intentional, and multidimensional.

Each session offered during the Week contributes to one or more of these dimensions. Together, they affirm Wellness and Mental Health Week as a flagship expression of UA's mission of **integral human development**, creating a space where each member of the community is encouraged to flourish, to blossom in dignity and freedom, and to realize the fullness of their potential.



**Step into the Wellness Wheel and discover which dimension of well-being you wish to deepen, develop, or rediscover:**



From Diagnosis to Resilience:  
The Healing Power of Hope (p.30)



The Fight for Hope (p.33)



From Adversity to Hope: Understanding  
Childhood Experiences, Mental Health, and  
Chronic Pain in Lebanese Adults (p.34)



Sexual Health With Hope: A Path to Dignity  
and Well-Being (p.40)



The Hospitality of the Heart: Accompanying  
Without Condemning (p.42)



Entrepreneurship Through  
a Well-Being Lens (p.56)



The Quiet Work of Hope: Accompaniment,  
Presence, and Relational Ethics  
in Uncertain Times (p.52)



How Service-Learning Can Promote Wellness  
and Prevent Mental Health Difficulties (p.50)



The Practice of Hope: Meaning, Beauty,  
and Resilience in Times of Uncertainty (p.58)



The Eternal Flame (p.62)



The Architecture of Hope: Building  
Psychological Strength in Unstable Times (p.64)



Hope in Times of Crisis:  
Why Mental Health Matters (p.29)



Hope as a Spiritual Anchor: Restoring the  
Heart When Life Feels Heavy (p.32)



Beyond the Struggle:  
Voices of Hope (p.28)



Hope and Mental Health in Contexts  
of Chronic Crisis (p.36)



Where Light Begins: Crafting Candles,  
Cultivating Hope (p.41)



Cultivating a Culture of Hope: Reimagining  
Equality in Higher Education (p.44)



Tune In to Hope (p.51)



Hope as a Path out of Despair: Three Ways  
to Cultivate Hope in Higher Education (p.53)



Letting Hope Bloom Through Sports (p.57)



The Power of Manifestation:  
The Mind–Body Connection (p.59)



1564 – A Line of Hope,  
A Path to Healing (p.63)



Hope in Times of Uncertainty: Challenging  
Cognitive Distortions (p.65)



Train Your Mindset Like a Champion (p.72)

## WELLNESS AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

At Antonine University (UA), the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are not external benchmarks, but a shared framework that guides how we educate, conduct research, and engage with society. They ensure that our initiatives align with a broader vision of **sustainable well-being** and **integral human development**.

The Fifth Edition of the **Wellness and Mental Health Week** continues this commitment by embedding global responsibility within campus life. Through its sessions, innovation initiatives, interdisciplinary dialogue, and community partnerships, the Week reflects how **well-being, education, and social impact** are deeply interconnected, reinforcing communal hope.

In particular, the Week contributes to:



Promoting mental health awareness and holistic well-being across campus life.



Promoting inclusive economic participation and preparing students for meaningful, sustainable careers.



Advancing equity and ensuring inclusive opportunities for all members of the community.



Empowering lifelong learning rooted in purpose and responsibility.



Harnessing technology and innovation that respond to genuine human needs.



Building meaningful collaborations that extend impact beyond the University.

Sustainability at UA is grounded in the **dignity of the human person** and lived in service of the common good. Wellness, in this vision, is not isolated from global responsibility; it shapes individuals who act with awareness, resilience, and ethical commitment within society.

Discover how we are *mapping the SDGs at UA*.



## THE POWER OF HOPE AND WE4LEAD: ONE COMMON PULSE



The theme of the Wellness and Mental Health Week, “The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom,” resonates profoundly with the European project for **Women’s Empowerment for Leadership and Equity in Higher Education Institutions (WE4LEAD)**, which falls under the Erasmus+ programme. This convergence is not accidental; it reflects a shared institutional vision rooted in **human flourishing, equity, and sustainable transformation**.

Beyond its concrete efforts to strengthen **women’s participation in university leadership**, WE4LEAD, now a **completed project** and firmly embedded within the **Antonine University (UA)** ecosystem, embodies a defining conviction: **hope is a catalyst for change**. It is a transformative force capable of reshaping institutional cultures, expanding opportunities, and empowering individuals to envision broader possibilities for themselves and their communities.

At UA, this conviction is translated into tangible action. It takes form through a structured **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)**, the establishment of a dedicated **Listening and Support Unit**, and a series of targeted initiatives designed to restore trust and bring each member’s achievements into greater visibility.

The connection with the Wellness and Mental Health Week becomes evident within UA’s broader commitment to **integral human development**. Sustainable and inspiring leadership cannot thrive without strong **mental and emotional foundations**. By linking **equality, leadership, and well-being**, the University affirms that institutional excellence and personal fulfillment advance together.

The synergy between “The Power of Hope” and WE4LEAD reminds us that hope is not passive. It is expressed through **structures that empower**, policies that protect, and actions that uplift. Through this alignment, UA reaffirms that **equality-driven leadership** is a contagious form of hope, one that improves the well-being of communities, enriches university life, and nurtures a culture where **diversity** becomes a source of resilience, motivation, and shared growth.

Though distinct in scope, these two initiatives move forward together, demonstrating that **academic excellence** and **human well-being** advance hand in hand.

Learn more about the completion of the WE4LEAD project and its implementation on [ua.edu.lb](http://ua.edu.lb).

## THE UA SEED CENTER

The Center for **Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (SEED)** is **Antonine University's** dedicated incubator, supporting students and alumni in transforming ideas into **concrete, socially responsive solutions** that address real-world challenges.

The UA SEED Center strengthens **entrepreneurial skills**, fosters **innovation and sustainability**, and promotes **social responsibility**, while ensuring that **well-being remains central to the entrepreneurial journey**. In alignment with UA's holistic vision of **integral human development**, SEED empowers students and alumni to design products and services that contribute to the well-being of others, recognizing that mental health, balance, and personal fulfillment are essential foundations for learning, creativity, growth, and responsible engagement with society.

As a key partner in **Hackathon 2026** and **Entrepreneurial Youth Day**, the SEED Center provides guidance and mentorship to help participants translate **hope into action**. This mission resonates strongly with this year's Wellness and Mental Health Week theme, "The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom."

Through its initiatives, the SEED Center contributes to a university culture where **well-being, innovation, and social impact** are interconnected, empowering individuals to become balanced, responsible, and engaged contributors to a more sustainable and equitable society.

# HACKATHON 2026

## DESIGNING HOPE IN ACTION: DIGITAL SOLUTIONS THAT HELP US BLOOM

Within the framework of the **Wellness and Mental Health Week**, hope is explored across academic, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. **Hackathon 2026** extends this reflection into the **technological sphere**.

Organized by **Antonine University (UA)** in collaboration with the **Faculty of Engineering and Technology (FET)**, **Upscale Hub**, the **IEEE ComSoc Lebanon Chapter**, and the **Center for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (SEED)**, the Hackathon translates the Week's theme, "The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom," into a structured innovation challenge.

This year's edition invites students to translate hope into practice by developing software and/or hardware solutions that strengthen mental health and overall well-being within the Lebanese university context. Hope is approached not as a passive sentiment, but as a learnable and actionable capacity nurtured through thoughtful, ethical, and inclusive innovation.

Open to students from **all universities in Lebanon**, the Hackathon brings together interdisciplinary teams to respond to pressing real-world challenges. Over three intensive days, selected teams will design, prototype, and refine their projects with the support of mentors in engineering, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Proposed solutions may take the form of mobile applications, web platforms, IoT devices, interactive systems, chatbots, or serious games.

All solutions are expected to encourage small positive actions and self-empowerment; foster connection, creativity, and resilience; remain realistic, accessible, and ethically designed; and address challenges relevant to university students and the Lebanese context.

Projects may align with one or more of the following sub-themes:

- 1. Hope Through Self-Empowerment:** digital tools supporting goal-setting, stress management, and personal agency.
- 2. Hope Through Connection and Belonging:** solutions that reduce isolation and strengthen peer and community support.
- 3. Hope Through Creativity and Expression:** platforms leveraging art, music, storytelling, or play for emotional expression and growth.
- 4. Hope Through Daily Micro-Actions:** technologies encouraging sustainable habits that build resilience through small, consistent practices.

**5. Hope in Times of Uncertainty (Lebanese Context):** context-aware innovations addressing financial stress, academic pressure, instability, and limited access to mental health resources.

Aligned with **Sustainable Development Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**, the Hackathon reflects UA's commitment to technology that serves human flourishing.

Following the submission deadline, a jury will select **10 finalist teams** based on innovation, feasibility, impact, and alignment with the Hackathon's objectives. During the Closing Ceremony, teams will present their projects through live demonstrations and structured presentations before the jury and audience.

Outstanding projects will be recognized through three awards:

- **First Prize – Best Overall Project** (\$1,000), with mentorship by **Upscale Hub** and development support from the **SEED Center**;
- **Best Promising Idea Award** (\$750), for the project with strong future potential, scalability, and sustainability;
- **Best Social and Human Impact Award** (\$500), for the project demonstrating outstanding social, human, and community impact, aligned with the values of wellness, hope, and inclusion.

For the winning team, the journey continues beyond the competition through continued mentorship and incubation support to transform a prototype into a **scalable solution**.

By empowering students to design technologies that respond to real human needs, Hackathon 2026 embodies UA's broader mission: to cultivate proactive citizens capable of applying knowledge responsibly, ethically, and creatively in service of society.

**Innovation begins with an idea. Hope begins with action.**

# HACKATHON 2026

**DESIGNING HOPE IN ACTION:  
DIGITAL SOLUTIONS THAT HELP US BLOOM**





## WELLNESS FAIR

### BRINGING WELL-BEING INTO DAILY PRACTICE

OCTOBER **5–6**  
11:00 AM–5:00 PM

Embedded within the fifth edition of the **Wellness and Mental Health Week**, the **Wellness Fair** serves as the operational extension of the Week's theme. While conferences and workshops create space for dialogue and reflection, the Fair translates these discussions into tangible resources that can be integrated into everyday life.

Bringing together a diverse range of services, organizations, and initiatives, the Fair aims to support mental, emotional, physical, and social well-being. Members of the UA community and the wider public are invited to explore mental health resources, preventive care information, fitness and nutrition guidance, stress management tools, mindfulness practices, and community-based support networks.

More than an exhibition space, the Fair is structured as an interactive environment where participants can engage directly with professionals, ask questions, and identify support pathways suited to their needs. This direct engagement fosters awareness, reduces stigma surrounding mental health, and strengthens connections between individuals and support systems within and beyond the University.

Reintegrating the Wellness Fair into the Week reflects UA's conviction that well-being is a **shared and sustained responsibility**. Wellness is approached as multidimensional, requiring collaboration among institutions, professionals, and community actors. By making resources visible and accessible, the Fair promotes a culture in which mental health is supported consistently rather than episodically.

Aligned with the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, including **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being**, **SDG 4: Quality Education**, **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**, and **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**, the Wellness Fair positions access to care, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration as essential pillars of sustainable development.

Through this initiative, UA reiterates that well-being is not peripheral to academic life; it is foundational to **integral human development** and to the cultivation of a resilient, supportive community.

## Discover the participants in the Wellness Fair:

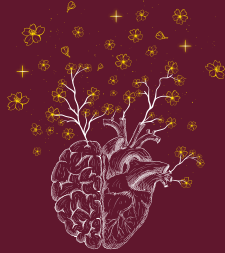


## Monday, October 5

## Tuesday, October 6

## Wednesday, October 7

10:00 AM till  
12:00 PM



26

Official Ceremony

10:00 till  
11:00 AM



40

**Mr. Patrick Farah**  
Sexual Health With Hope:  
A Path to Dignity and Well-Being



50

**Prof. Thierry Magnin**  
How Service-Learning Can Promote Wellness  
and Prevent Mental Health Difficulties

11:30 AM till  
12:30 PM



41

**Ms. Manal Abou Aoun**  
Where Light Begins: Crafting Candles,  
Cultivating Hope



51

**Ms. Rawane El Dimachki**  
Tune In to Hope

2:30 till  
3:30 PM



34

**Dr. Charbel Najem**  
From Adversity to Hope: Understanding Childhood  
Experiences, Mental Health, and Chronic Pain  
in Lebanese Adults



42

**Fr. Gabriel Tabet**  
The Hospitality of the Heart:  
Accompanying Without Condemning



52

**Mr. Marquis Bureau**  
The Quiet Work of Hope: Accompaniment,  
Presence, and Relational Ethics  
in Uncertain Times

5:00 till  
6:00 PM



36

**Dr. Smyrna Khalaf and Dr. Ki Chae**  
Hope and Mental Health  
in Contexts of Chronic Crisis



44

**Prof. Selim Mekdessi, Dr. Huguette Abou-Mrad,  
and Ms. Micheline Sammour**  
Cultivating a Culture of Hope: Reimagining  
Equality in Higher Education



53

**Dr. Bianca Briciu**  
Hope as a Path out of Despair: Three Ways  
to Cultivate Hope in Higher Education

Thursday, October 8

Friday, October 9

Saturday, October 10

10:00 till  
11:00 AM



56

**Dr. Lynda El Achkouty**  
Entrepreneurship Through  
a Well-Being Lens



62

**Dr. Wadih Nassour**  
The Eternal Flame



**Wellness and Entrepreneurial  
Youth Day**  
9:00 AM till 2:00 PM

11:30 AM till  
12:30 PM



57

**Ms. Gaelle Khoury**  
Letting Hope Bloom  
Through Sports



63

**Ms. Jessica Maria Ghoussoub**  
1564 – A Line of Hope,  
A Path to Healing



72

**Ms. Nicole El Beyrouthy**  
Train Your Mindset  
Like a Champion  
9:00 till 9:45 AM

2:30 till  
3:30 PM



58

**Dr. Ines Yagi**  
The Practice of Hope: Meaning, Beauty,  
and Resilience in Times of Uncertainty



64

**Ms. Nada Koussa**  
The Architecture of Hope: Building  
Psychological Strength in Unstable Times

5:00 till  
6:00 PM



59

**Ms. Mira Abou Jaoude**  
The Power of Manifestation:  
The Mind-Body Connection

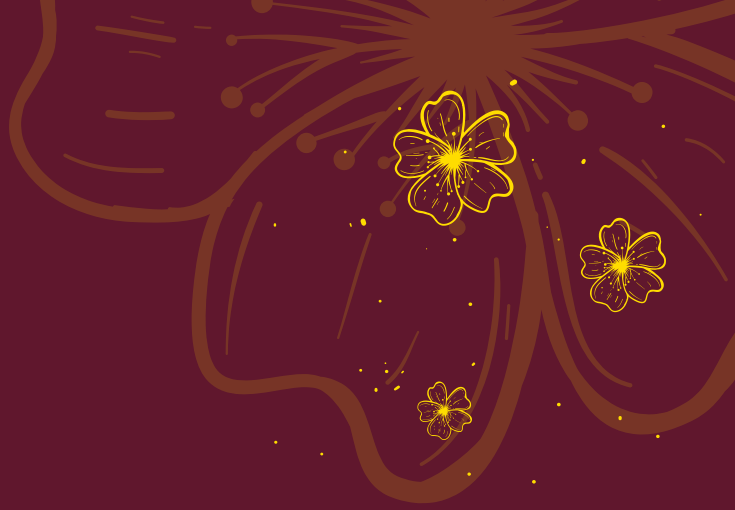


65

**Prof. Ghassan El-Baalbaki**  
Hope in Times of Uncertainty:  
Challenging Cognitive Distortions

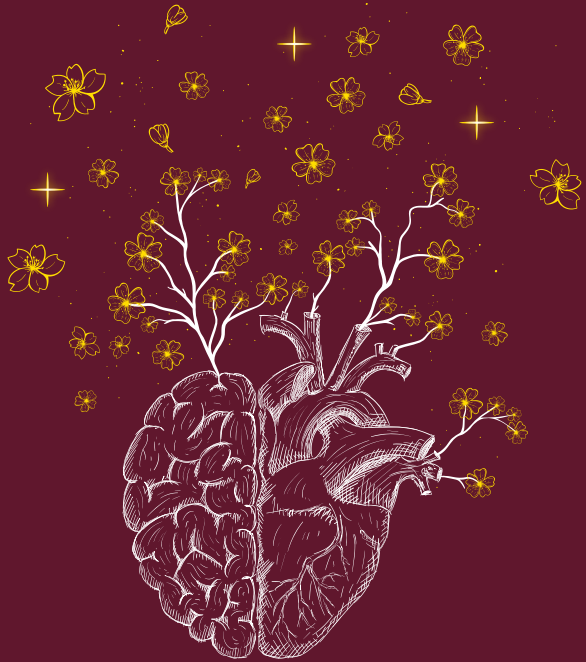


*"Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord."  
(Psalm 31:24)*



MONDAY, OCTOBER **5**

**DAY 1**



# OFFICIAL CEREMONY

OCTOBER 5  
10:00 AM–12:00 PM

- **Welcome Speech of the UA Rector**

Fr. Michel Saghbiny, OAM

- **Speech of the Minister of Public Health**

Dr. Rakan Nasreddine, MD

- **Beyond the Struggle: Voices of Hope**

UA Students Panel Discussion

- **Hope in Times of Crisis: Why Mental Health Matters**

Dr. Rabih El Chammay, Director of the National Mental Health Programme, Ministry of Public Health

- **From Diagnosis to Resilience: The Healing Power of Hope**

Dr. Maroun Sadek, Medical Oncologist and Hematologist

- **Hope as a Spiritual Anchor: Restoring the Heart When Life Feels Heavy**

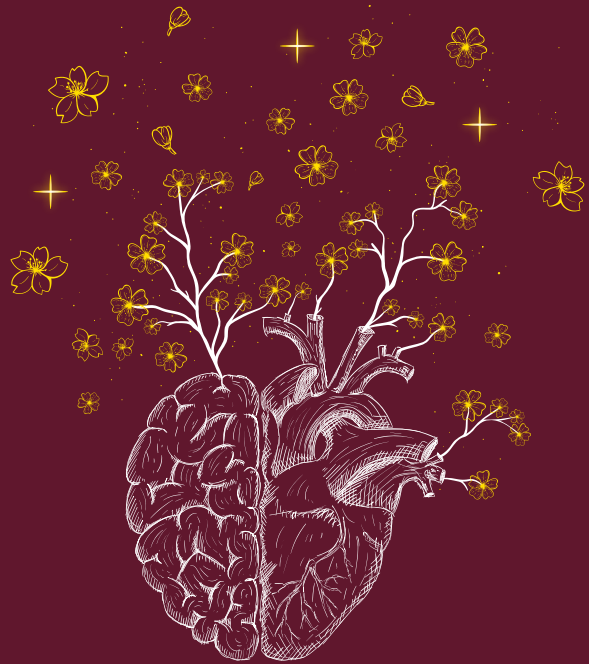
Rev. Abbot Joseph Bou Raad, Superior General of the Antonine Maronite Order and UA Chancellor

- **Testimonial | The Fight for Hope**

Messrs. Giovanni and Charbel Lteif, Founders of Eastern Christians

- **Opening of the Wellness Fair**

*From inspiring videos to stirring musical performances and joyful surprises, every moment of the ceremony will be crafted to instill hope and create an unforgettable experience*



*"Hope is being able to see that there is light  
despite all of the darkness."*

**(Desmond Tutu)**

# UA STUDENTS PANEL DISCUSSION

28

OFFICIAL CEREMONY  
TESTIMONIAL



## Beyond the Struggle: Voices of Hope

This panel offers a reflective and experiential space where UA students share their journeys with the **UA Counseling Service**. From the initial decision to seek support—often accompanied by hesitation, uncertainty, and mixed expectations—to the gradual formation of a therapeutic alliance with their counselor, students will speak openly about their **personal growth**.

Through their testimonies, students will describe how, session after session, they learned to face obstacles and embrace change with greater patience, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and self-confidence. They will reflect on challenges such as anxiety, low self-esteem, academic pressure, relational conflicts, physical concerns, and personal hardship.

The discussion will also highlight how commitment to the counseling process strengthens what is often referred to as the **“healthy adult” within**: the capacity for self-reflection, responsibility, and balanced decision-making. In their stories, students remind us that hope is not always loud or immediate; it is often rebuilt gradually, through courage, trust, and perseverance.

This panel stands as a living example of how **hope can be actively cultivated**, even in the presence of adversity, and how seeking support can become a powerful step toward resilience and growth.

DR. **RABIH  
EL CHAMMAY**



OFFICIAL CEREMONY  
INTERVENTION



## Hope in Times of Crisis: Why Mental Health Matters

In this keynote address, Dr. Rabih El Chammay explores the central role of mental health in sustaining individuals and communities during periods of profound social, economic, and political instability. Drawing on global evidence and Lebanon's lived realities, the session examines how crises amplify psychological distress, widen inequalities, and disrupt pathways to recovery, while also highlighting the protective factors that foster hope, social connection, and collective responsibility.

Grounded in public health science and aligned with a recovery-oriented approach, this intervention articulates why investing in mental health is not a secondary priority in times of crisis, but a foundational pillar for human dignity, resilient systems, and sustainable development.

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**Rabih El Chammay** is a leading psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and global mental health expert. He is the founding Director of the National Mental Health Programme at Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health, which received the United Nations Mental Health Award in 2023 for its innovative work in developing and scaling up a WHO evidence-based guided self-help application.

He served as Chair of the first WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Brain Health from 2022 to 2024, and is currently serving a second term as a member (2025–27). The STAG brings together independent experts who provide recommendations to the WHO Director-General on global mental health strategy and policy.

Dr. El Chammay holds a teaching position in the Department of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine at Saint Joseph University of Beirut. He is involved in international research on mental health policy and service delivery, with a special interest in humanitarian crises and health system strengthening. With nearly 20 years of experience working with UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and universities, he remains a highly dedicated mental health advocate.

DR. **MAROUN  
SADEK**



OFFICIAL CEREMONY  
INTERVENTION

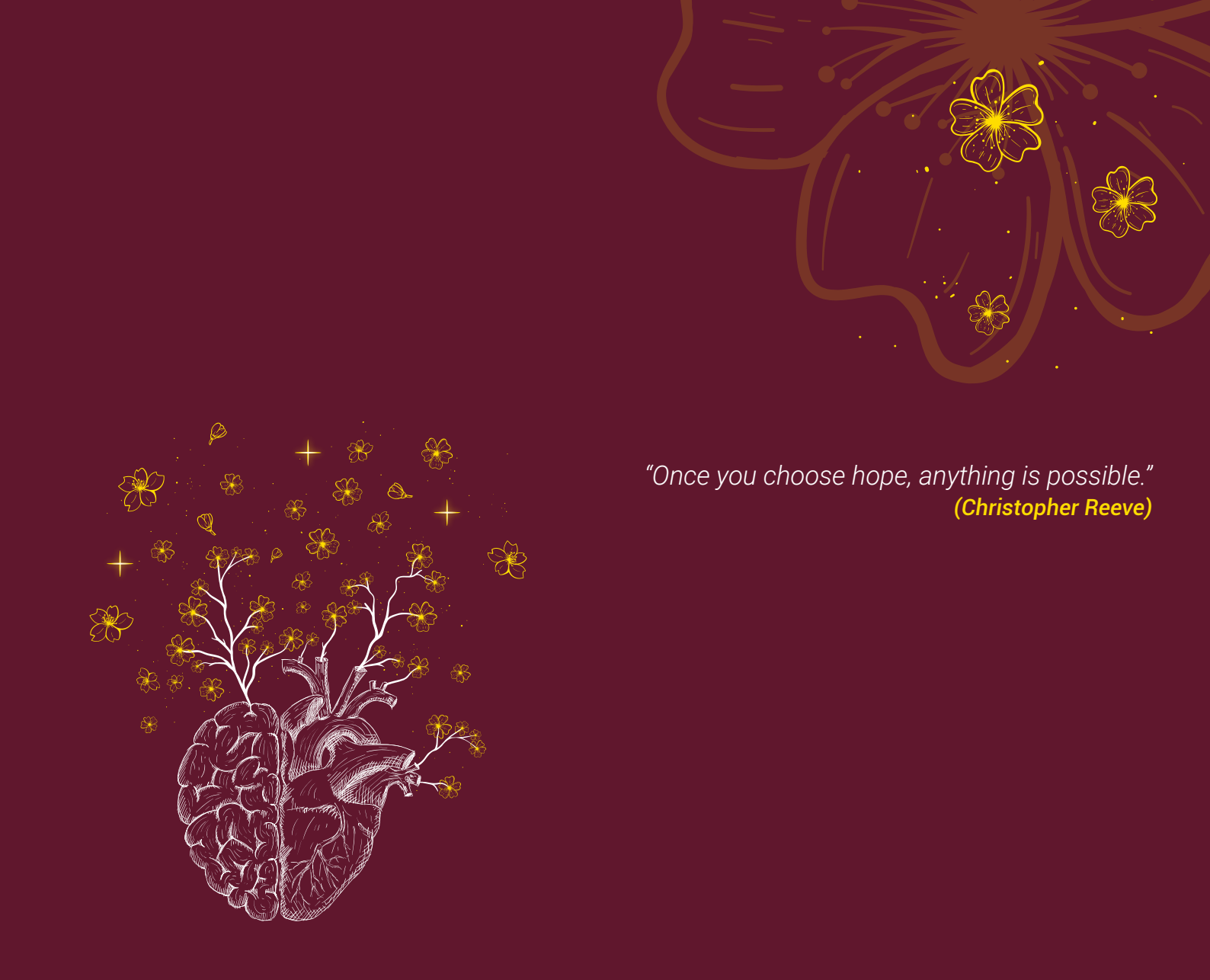


## From Diagnosis to Resilience: The Healing Power of Hope

This intervention examines **hope as a measurable and clinically significant construct** within oncology and psycho-oncology. Drawing on research in psychoneuroimmunology, the presentation explores how cognitive-emotional states, such as hope, influence neuroendocrine stress responses, cortisol regulation, inflammatory pathways, and immune functioning—factors known to affect symptom burden, recovery, and overall health outcomes. Grounded in clinical **oncology** practice, the session highlights evidence linking higher levels of hope with improved treatment adherence, adaptive coping strategies, reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms, and enhanced quality of life in patients facing cancer and other serious illnesses. Hope is framed not as denial or unrealistic optimism, but as a **dynamic cognitive-motivational process** that supports goal reorientation, meaning-making, and psychological flexibility, even amid medical uncertainty. Drawing from meaning-centered therapy, cognitive-behavioral approaches, and compassionate communication models in oncology care, the intervention presents practical, evidence-based strategies to cultivate **realistic hope**.

Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the **biopsychosocial mechanisms** connecting hope to resilience and clinical outcomes, and will leave with research-informed tools applicable in both healthcare and non-clinical contexts.

**Maroun Sadek** is a Medical Oncologist and Hematologist, currently serving as Head of the Hematology–Oncology Division at the Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui (UMC) and Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine, Balamand University. He is deeply involved in patient care, medical education, and academic leadership, with extensive experience in managing complex oncologic and hematologic conditions. Beyond his clinical expertise, Dr. Sadek has a strong interest in the psychological and emotional dimensions of healing, particularly the role of hope, resilience, and human connection in the patient journey. Through daily interaction with patients facing life-threatening illnesses, he has witnessed how mental strength, faith, and hope influence coping, adherence to treatment, and overall well-being. He is actively engaged in teaching and mentoring medical students and residents, and participates regularly in national and international conferences. His approach combines scientific rigor with empathy, emphasizing that healing extends beyond medicine to include emotional support, purpose, and hope.



*"Once you choose hope, anything is possible."  
(Christopher Reeve)*

REV. ABBOT **JOSEPH  
BOU RAAD**



OFFICIAL CEREMONY  
INTERVENTION



## Hope as a Spiritual Anchor: Restoring the Heart When Life Feels Heavy

This intervention invites participants to reflect on **hope as a spiritual force** that sustains the heart in times of suffering, uncertainty, and emotional burden. Rooted in the biblical understanding of hope, it explores how faith does not deny pain, but gives meaning and direction within it. Drawing on Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see,” the session presents hope as an **inner confidence grounded in trust**, even when outcomes remain unclear. Through Hebrews 6:19, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure,” hope is portrayed as a **spiritual anchor**, offering stability amid life’s storms.

Abraham, the father of believers, will be considered as a **model of hope** and a lasting example that **true hope** begins precisely when human possibilities end. He trusted God when every visible circumstance contradicted the promise. God had told him he would become the father of many nations, yet he was old and Sarah was unable to have children. According to human reasoning, there was no future in that situation. Nevertheless, as Paul writes in Romans 4, Abraham “hoped against hope”: he did not deny reality, but he chose to rely on **God’s faithfulness** rather than on probability. His hope was not optimism or wishful thinking; it was confidence that God can bring life where there seems to be none. Through guided reflection and discussion, attendees will explore practical ways to restore the heart, nurture hope, and cultivate a grounded sense of peace, learning to carry hope as a sustaining force in their daily lives.

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**Rev. Abbot Joseph Bou Raad** was elected Superior General of the Antonine Maronite Order (OAM) in July 2023 for a six-year mandate. He also serves as Chancellor of Antonine University (UA), embodying the spiritual heritage of the Order. He holds Bachelor’s degrees in Philosophy and Theology from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome, a Diplôme d’Études Approfondies (DEA), and a PhD in Biblical Sciences from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, as well as a degree in Music (Solfège). Throughout his priestly and academic journey, Abbot Bou Raad has held numerous leadership positions, including Assistant Novice Master at Saint Isaiah Monastery, Director of Formation for seminarians in Rome, Dean of UA’s Faculty of Theology (2005–11), and Superior of Saint Elias Monastery in Antelias (2014–17), among other pastoral and administrative responsibilities. He has guided clergy and lay communities through preaching, theological formation, and leadership training. As a scholar, he has published and edited works in Arabic, French, and Italian. His lectures have reached audiences in Lebanon and abroad, including Ukraine and Georgia.

MESSRS. **GIOVANNI**  
AND **CHARBEL LTEIF**

OFFICIAL CEREMONY  
TESTIMONIAL



## The Fight for Hope

Giovanni and Charbel grew up seeking hope in the country and community they love. At just **19 years old**, in 2023, they decided to take action by creating an online platform to amplify the voice of their homeland and faith community. What began with a single phone gradually evolved into a global initiative, supported by volunteers and teams across Lebanon, Syria, Australia, Iraq, Palestine, and beyond.

Their journey was marked by challenges: limited equipment, financial constraints, academic and professional pressures, and a country navigating profound crises. Yet perseverance shaped their path. In their second year, they were honored by their Church in Lebanon and later invited to the Vatican by the Dicastery for Communication to attend the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries, where they were asked to give a reflection.

Today, they affirm that falling in love with the journey itself was the key to sustaining hope and seeing their vision take form.

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**Giovanni** and **Charbel Lteif** are Lebanese twin brothers and the founders of Eastern Christians, one of the largest digital platforms dedicated to the heritage, faith, and present-day realities of Christians of the East. Raised in Lebanon within the Maronite Christian tradition, their work is rooted in lived faith and cultural identity.

Their platform has reached over **700 million views** and more than **one million followers** worldwide. Through their content, they have contributed to raising awareness about Christian communities in the region, encouraging interest in tourism to Lebanon. Their efforts have been recognized through honors from the Maronite Patriarch, the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon, and features by Vatican media outlets.

*"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

**(Matthew 17:20-21)**

DR. CHARBEL  
NAJEM



34

OCTOBER 5  
2:30–3:30 PM

70 PERSONS



EN

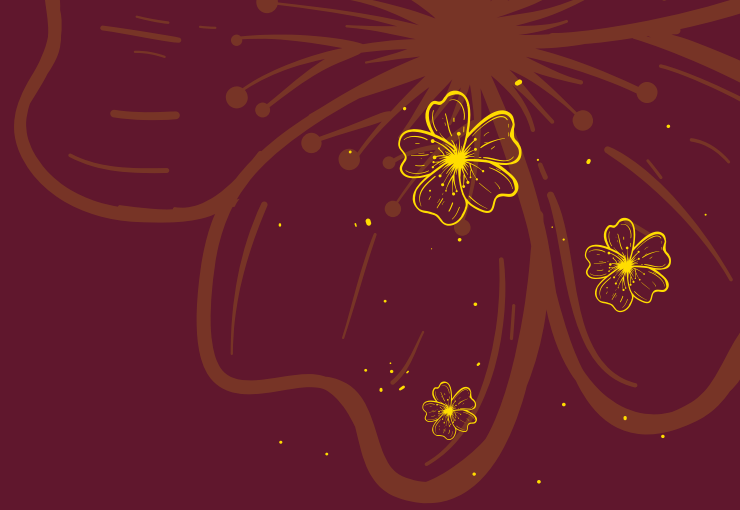
## From Adversity to Hope: Understanding Childhood Experiences, Mental Health, and Chronic Pain in Lebanese Adults

In collaboration with the research team: Honoré Char, Anthony Atallah, Sama Khater, and Nour Hoyek, this workshop explores how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) shape mental health and chronic pain across the lifespan, with a specific focus on the Lebanese cultural context. Drawing on recent research and local data, participants will examine the biopsychosocial pathways linking early adversity to depression, anxiety, and chronic pain, including stress dysregulation and central sensitization. Special attention is given to how cultural norms related to family, silence, and resilience influence both the experience and expression of childhood adversity in Arab societies. The session also introduces culturally validated assessment tools, including the ACE Arabic, PHQ-9, GAD-7, and the Central Sensitization Inventory (CSI), highlighting their clinical and community applications.

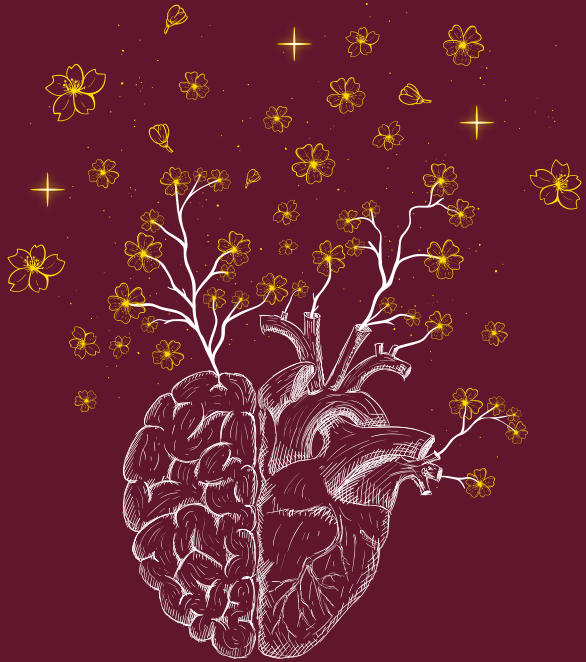
### Learning Objectives

- **Clinical Application in Arabic-speaking Settings:** Practical guidance on integrating ACE and CSI tools into routine clinical interviews to open safe conversations about trauma, pain, and stress while respecting cultural norms.
- **Bridging Physical and Mental Health:** Using ACE and CSI findings to connect chronic pain symptoms with underlying psychological and trauma-related factors, supporting a holistic biopsychosocial approach to care.
- **Trauma-informed, Integrated Care:** Translating assessment results into collaborative treatment planning that addresses both physical symptoms and emotional well-being, fostering understanding, validation, and hope.

**Charbel Najem** was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1981. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy from the Lebanese University (LU) in 2003, followed by a Master's degree from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, in 2004. Committed to continuous professional development, he completed a Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy at Saint Joseph University of Beirut in 2019, and in the same year obtained a PhD in Health Sciences from Ghent University, Belgium. Throughout his academic career, Dr. Najem has held multifaceted roles, including Clinical Coordinator, Clinical Assistant Professor, and member of the Scientific Committee at Antonine University (UA), Lebanon. He brings over 19 years of academic and clinical teaching experience, having been actively involved in higher education since 2007. Dr. Najem has also served as an advisor for numerous research projects at undergraduate, master's, and clinical doctoral levels, supervising bachelor's and master's thesis research at UA, LU, and Saint Famille University, Lebanon.



*"Education is always an act of hope."*  
**(Pope Francis)**



DR. SMYRNA  
KHALAF



DR. KI  
CHAE



## Hope and Mental Health in Contexts of Chronic Crisis

In the Middle East, and particularly in **Lebanon**, individuals and communities continue to experience **prolonged crises** marked by instability, loss, and uncertainty. In such contexts, **hope becomes scarce**, and feelings of **hopelessness** and **uncertainty** take over, directly affecting mental health and collective well-being.

This session explores how chronic crisis impacts individuals and communities, and how shifting from a **victimized mindset** toward a **more positive and empowering perspective** can foster hope and resilience. Participants will reflect on reframing the narrative from “What happened to me?” to “How did I survive?” as a foundation for growth and empowerment.

The workshop also examines a **paradigm shift** from a predominantly **Western, individualistic approach** to mental health toward a **community-based model** as a source of hope. Special attention is given to **integrating hope as a faith-informed element**, highlighting practices that support resilience, meaning, and healing in communities facing sustained adversity.

OCTOBER 5  
5:00–6:00 PM



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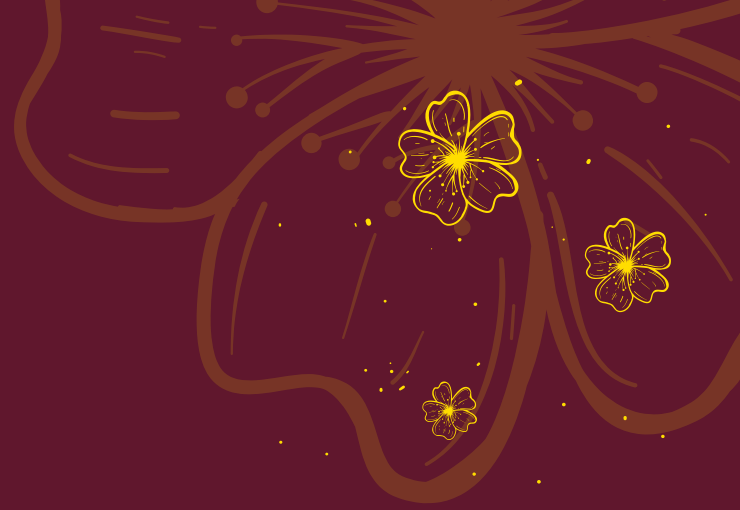
**Smyrna Khalaf** is a National Certified Counselor with a PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision from Regent University (Virginia) and a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling from Southwestern Theological Seminary (Texas). Having lived most of her life in the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, she brings over 14 years of experience in counseling, teaching, and supervision within Middle Eastern contexts. Dr. Khalaf trains and supervises mental health professionals and lay people who work directly with refugees and trauma-affected populations. She enjoys connecting with her students and brings a global perspective to the classroom. Her research interests include positive virtues, trauma, cross-cultural supervision, and global counseling and education.

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**Ki Chae** is Program Director and Associate Professor in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Wheaton College. He holds a PhD from William & Mary (Virginia) and is a licensed clinical professional counselor in Illinois. His clinical and academic work focuses on couples and family therapy, attachment-based approaches, immigration, family systems, addiction, trauma, and culturally responsive, faith-informed practice. Trained in Emotionally Focused Therapy and the Gottman Method, Dr. Chae is committed to helping individuals, couples, and families strengthen relationships, improve communication, and build resilience. He teaches courses on family systems, counseling theories, assessment, and addictions, and remains actively involved in clinical supervision and direct clinical care in both community and faith-based settings. His research interests include family therapy, counselor supervision, multicultural counseling, mental health in underserved communities, global perspectives in counselor education, and addiction and trauma. He has led multiple projects supporting families, churches, and communities through mental health education and intervention.

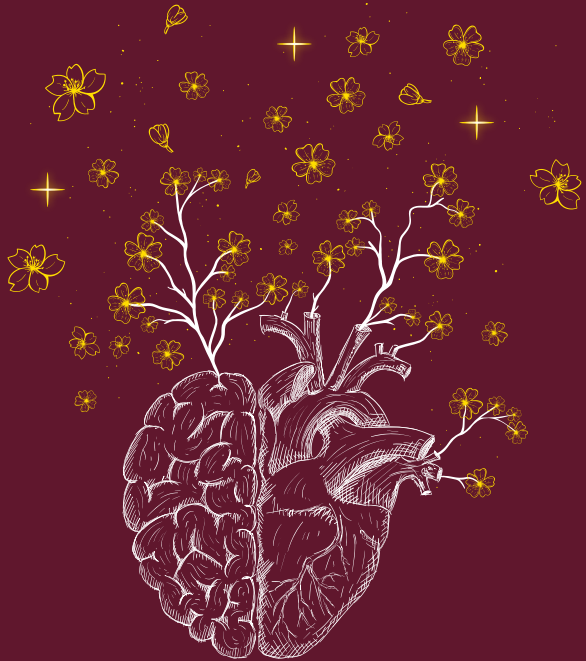


*"Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see a shadow."*  
**(Helen Keller)**



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

DAY 2



MR. **PATRICK FARAH**



40

OCTOBER 6  
10:00–11:00 AM

25 PERSONS



EN

AR

## Sexual Health With Hope: A Path to Dignity and Well-Being

The session invites students to understand **sexual health and sexuality as holistic dimensions of well-being**, and to explore how hope and dignity influence healthy decision-making. Participants will develop a clearer understanding of sexual health and recognize its physical, emotional, relational, and psychological aspects.

Through guided discussion, shared perspectives, and open dialogue, the workshop encourages reflection on responsible relationships, personal boundaries, and informed choices. Special attention is given to the role of **hope** in shaping behaviors and outcomes, emphasizing that self-respect, awareness, and agency are essential to overall well-being.

By the end of the session, participants will be equipped with knowledge and practical insights to take ownership of their sexual health as an integral part of their personal growth and well-being.

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**Patrick Farah** serves as a Sexual Health Services Coordinator and Project Coordinator at the Lebanese NGO Society for Inclusion and Development in Communities and Care for All (SIDC). With a background in Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT), he supports individuals through HIV follow-up care and sexual health advocacy initiatives.

He is experienced in facilitating the "Looking In, Looking Out" (LILO) manual and is trained to lead workshops centered on personal identity and empowerment.

To further deepen his impact in the field, Mr. Farah is currently pursuing a degree in psychology at the Lebanese University. His work is driven by a commitment to empowering key populations in accessing services, inclusive humanitarian response, and psychological support.

MS. MANAL  
ABOU AOUN



OCTOBER 6

11:30 AM–12:30 PM

 30 PERSONS



EN

AR

## Where Light Begins: Crafting Candles, Cultivating Hope

### Part 1: LUEUR and the Candle-Making Journey

Participants will be introduced to **LUEUR**, a volunteer-based social enterprise that creates handcrafted candles to support the **education of differently-abled students at the “Ensemble pour une Éducation Spécialisée” (EPES) School**. This segment explores how LUEUR began and walks participants through the **candle-making process**, from inserting the wick to designing and shipping the final product. Particular attention is given to the use of **natural, health-appropriate raw materials**, and how working with these materials supports **fine motor skills, self-esteem**, and a **sense of purpose** among EPES students. Through this journey, participants are invited to reflect on how creativity, dignity, and hope can be cultivated through meaningful work.

### Part 2: Practical Candle-Making and Creative Expression

Participants will recreate LUEUR's very first candle model, originally designed by **EPES students: a rolled beeswax candle with a honeycomb texture**. Guided demonstrations will support each step of the process. Participants will then personalize their candles through **mini designs**, using premium beeswax, allowing for emotional expression, identity, and creativity through a mindful, hands-on experience.

---

**Manal Abou Aoun** is the founder of LUEUR, the volunteer-based candle-making social enterprise dedicated to promoting education, dignity, and hope. She holds a degree in finance and brings over 21 years of professional experience, including several years as Head of the “Ensemble pour une Éducation Spécialisée” (EPES) School, where she worked closely with differently-abled students and their families, particularly amid Lebanon's ongoing socio-economic challenges. Her journey is deeply rooted in volunteerism. She began as a volunteer and continues to be actively engaged with faith-based communities, where service, solidarity, and human dignity are central values. Alongside her academic background, she has completed over 100 hours of practical self-guidance training, supporting individuals in identifying personal goals and taking meaningful steps toward change. Inspired by a hands-on candle-making workshop, Ms. Abou Aoun founded LUEUR as a sustainable initiative that supports EPES students' education while actively involving them in the creative and production process. Her work is guided by inclusivity, education, and hope, ensuring that children remain active contributors to the impact created. All decisions at LUEUR are shaped by the students' best interests, well-being, and long-term development.

FR. **GABRIEL  
TABET**



42

OCTOBER 6  
2:30–3:30 PM



## The Hospitality of the Heart: Accompanying Without Condemning

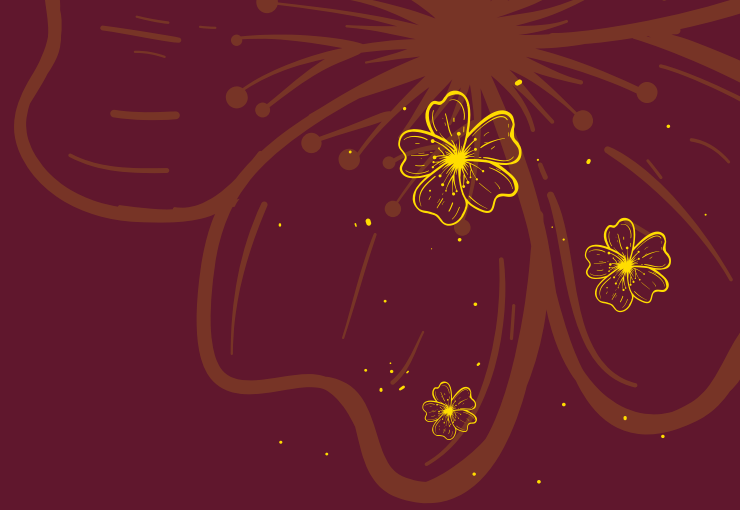
This session explores a compassionate vision of accompaniment rooted in **human dignity**, openness, and genuine encounter. Inspired in part by the pastoral insights of **Fr. James Martin, SJ**, it invites participants to reflect on what it means to welcome others with respect, sensitivity, and humility, especially those who have experienced misunderstanding or exclusion within society or the Church. The workshop emphasizes that authentic pastoral presence begins with listening. Through theological reflection and personal testimonies, participants are encouraged to see each person not through the lens of judgment, but as a unique individual carrying a sacred story. In this spirit, hope becomes a lifeline for those who experience marginalization, including individuals whose sexual orientation has led to misunderstanding or exclusion. Hope is not the denial of struggle, but the conviction that every person is worthy of accompaniment, dignity, and belonging.

Guided by **respect**, **compassion**, and **sensitivity**, the session calls for a shift from fear to encounter, and from distance to dialogue. It seeks to inspire a ministry of presence marked by humility and tenderness—one that reflects the welcoming heart of Christ and fosters spaces where every person can be seen, valued, and accompanied without condemnation.

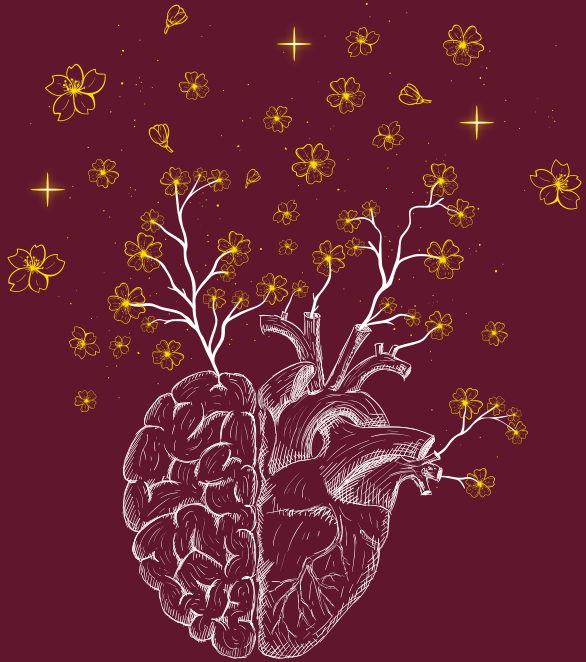
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**Fr. Gabriel Tabet** holds a Bachelor's degree in Theology from the Institut Catholique de Paris, and has later completed a Bachelor's degree in Canon Law at La Sagesse University, Lebanon. Ordained a priest in 1993, Fr. Tabet has devoted his ministry to pastoral and educational service. He served as Head of School within the Sagesse network and has ministered as parish priest in several communities. He currently serves at Saint John the Baptist Parish in Achrafieh.

In 2023, he was appointed Director of the Support Office for Vulnerable People at the Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut. In this role, he works to ensure that every person feels welcomed and included in the life of the Church. This initiative establishes pastoral foundations to accompany individuals with homosexual orientations, as well as their families, moving beyond a moral framework toward a compassionate human perspective. Rooted in mercy, it promotes empathetic dialogue and attentive listening to stories of suffering and isolation, affirming that every person is created in God's image and called to salvation.



*"The miserable have no other medicine  
but only hope."  
(William Shakespeare)*



PROF. SELIM  
MEKDESSI



DR. HUGUETTE  
ABOU-MRAD



## Cultivating a Culture of Hope: Reimagining Equality in Higher Education

This session explores the connection between **institutional equity** and this year's theme, "The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom."

Dr. Abou-Mrad will present the vision behind the **WE4LEAD project** as **hope translated into institutional action**. Framing injustice as a source of stress and equity as its remedy, she will highlight how higher education can reinvent itself by making **equality** the foundation of well-being. By replacing the exhausting struggle against **glass ceilings** with supported and valued career pathways, WE4LEAD seeks to cultivate a culture where every woman can affirm: "I belong. I am heard. I can lead."

Prof. Mekdessi will explore how **gender equality** can function as a **strategic lever for institutional transformation and sustainable hope**. Drawing on governance frameworks, quality assurance systems, and inclusive leadership models, he will analyze how embedding equality into policies, decision-making processes, and leadership pathways strengthens **institutional resilience**, fosters **participatory cultures**, and enhances **collective well-being**.

Ms. Sammour will examine how formal equality may unintentionally reproduce **psychological and structural disparities** when institutions overlook embodied, social, and emotional realities. Through a psychotherapeutic lens, she will address the mental health impact of chronic stress, invisible emotional burdens, and gender role conflict, proposing systemic "**pillars of hope**" that promote **psychological safety**, **institutional responsiveness**, and **human-centered equity**.

## MS. MICHELINE SAMMOUR



OCTOBER 6  
5:00–6:00 PM



**Selim Mekdessi** is a Full Professor of Finance and Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the Lebanese University (LU). He holds a PhD in Business Sciences from Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University, France, and a Habilitation to Supervise Research (HDR) in Business Sciences. His leadership integrates institutional reform, quality assurance, sustainability, and inclusive governance. At LU, he founded the Center for Careers, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Centre MINE), the Center for Sustainability and Gender Equality, three Generation of Innovation Leaders (GIL) programs, and two FabLabs established in partnership with UNICEF.

His work promotes participatory governance and institutional cultures that foster inclusion, resilience, and long-term well-being. An international accreditation expert and coordinator within UNIMED's Employability Sub-Network, Prof. Mekdessi bridges academic excellence with institutional transformation. His research and professional engagement focus on sustainability, firms' global performance, innovation, and the role of higher education institutions in cultivating equitable, hopeful, and resilient academic communities.

**Huguette Abou-Mrad** holds a PhD in French Literature from Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ) and brings over 30 years of experience in teaching French and teacher training. Since 2021, she has served as Director of the Language Center at Antonine University (UA), where she has also taught French and prepared students for the Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELFF) examinations since 2006. She currently coordinates the WE4LEAD project and serves as the gender referent at UA.

In parallel, Dr. Abou-Mrad teaches at USJ as a lecturer in popular literature, after previously serving as Director of Research and as a jury member at the Faculty of Educational Sciences. Her areas of expertise include active pedagogy, the communicative (action-based) approach, interculturality, and educational technologies.

She also holds a degree in mediation and conflict management and has completed specialized training in nonviolent communication and conflict resolution. In October 2025, she was elected Vice-President of RESUFF.

**Micheline Sammour** is a Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist at Antonine University and Therapy Circle. She is a member of the International Society of Schema Therapy (ISST) and serves as a Supervisor at the Lebanese Order of Psychologists within the Early Career Development Program.

She specialized in the Analytico-Systemic Model at TABYEEN International Center, in Family Psychotherapy at the Institute of Studies of the Family and Human Systems (IEFSH) in Brussels, and in Schema Therapy at ISST in Quebec.

As a psychotherapist, Ms. Sammour provides therapeutic support to individuals from early childhood through university age. Her integrative and developmentally oriented approach combines individual therapy and family intervention with prevention-focused, evidence-based practices. In addition to her clinical work, she offers parental guidance, educational training, and workshops, and regularly contributes to awareness podcasts and interviews.

## UA'S FACULTY OF MUSIC AND MUSICOLOGY

The **Faculty of Music and Musicology (FMM)** at Antonine University is dedicated to excellence in **music education, artistic creation, research**, and professional formation. It prepares students for careers that integrate a strong musical dimension in teaching, performance, healthcare, research, and technology.

Rooted in the rich musical traditions of the **Levant and Europe**, the Faculty promotes their study, preservation, and creative integration into contemporary educational, therapeutic, and technological practices. Its programs are accredited by **MusiQuE**, affirming their quality and alignment with **international standards**.

Beyond academic training, the FMM fosters **interdisciplinary and innovative research** centered on music's cultural and societal impact. Through performances, publications, therapeutic practice, multimedia production, and technopedagogical developments, including applications of **artificial intelligence** in music-related fields, the Faculty contributes to **sustainable well-being** and cultural advancement.

Among its distinguished programs, the **Department of Music Therapy** reflects the Faculty's commitment to integrating musical expertise with **human development**. Combining musicology, psychology, and neuroscience, it prepares professionals to use **music as a therapeutic tool** supporting physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Explore our [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) programs.



# THE LEVANTINE ORATORIO OF DIVINE LOVE AND HOPE

OCTOBER 6  
7:00 PM



As part of the **Wellness and Mental Health Week**, themed “The Power of Hope: Let Your Mind and Heart Bloom,” Antonine University (UA) presents “**The Levantine Oratorio of Divine Love and Hope.**”

In harmony with this Week’s focus on hope, this evening highlights the **spiritual dimension of well-being** and honors the enduring legacy of **Islamic-Christian encounter**, embodied in mystical chants in *maqām* music celebrating Divine Love. It offers a space where faith, culture, and community come together in a shared act of contemplation and upliftment.

## The Spiritual Vision

At the head of the three great spiritual virtues—**faith, hope, and love**—Saint Paul places love, to which he dedicates the most beautiful hymn in spiritual literature (1 Corinthians 13). It is around this hymn that **The Levantine Oratorio of Divine Love and Hope** is built, bringing together, in a convergent and convivial spirit, a prayer by Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, Sufi poems by Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīyya and Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, a hymn by Saint Ephrem the Syrian, and an *Alleluia Ave Maria* (in Gregorian chant).


Rooted in the **Maqām art music of the Mašriq**, the composition and improvisation unfold in dialogue with ecclesiastical chant (from the Levant and Europe) and Islamic chant and cantillation, creating a deeply contemplative and interfaith musical experience.

## Musical Performance

Composed by **Prof. Nidaa Abou Mrad**, Dean of UA’s Faculty of Music and Musicology, the Oratorio is performed by the **Antonine University Ensemble of Classical Arabic Music:**

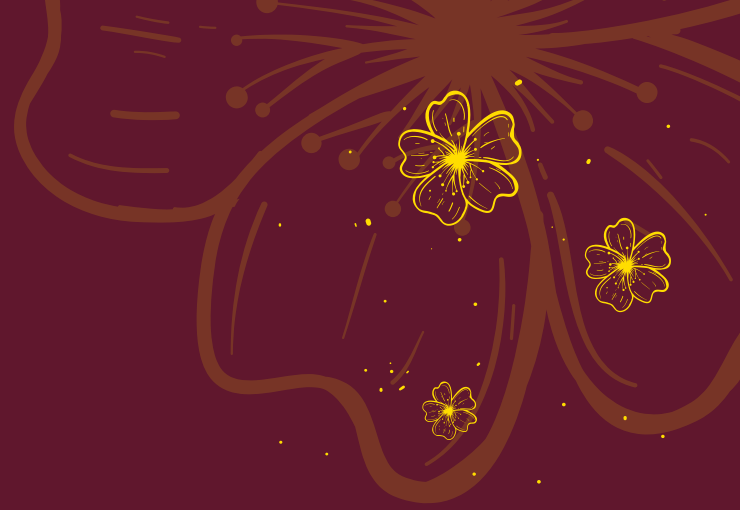
- Direction and violin: Prof. Nidaa Abou Mrad
- Chanting and *riq*: Rafka Rizk
- Chanting and *‘ūd*: Ahmad Amro
- *Qānūn*: Dr. Ghassan Sahhab

More than a concert, this Oratorio is a shared moment of deep meditation for the audience—a moment where music becomes prayer, dialogue becomes harmony, and **faith, hope, and love resonate in both heart and mind.**



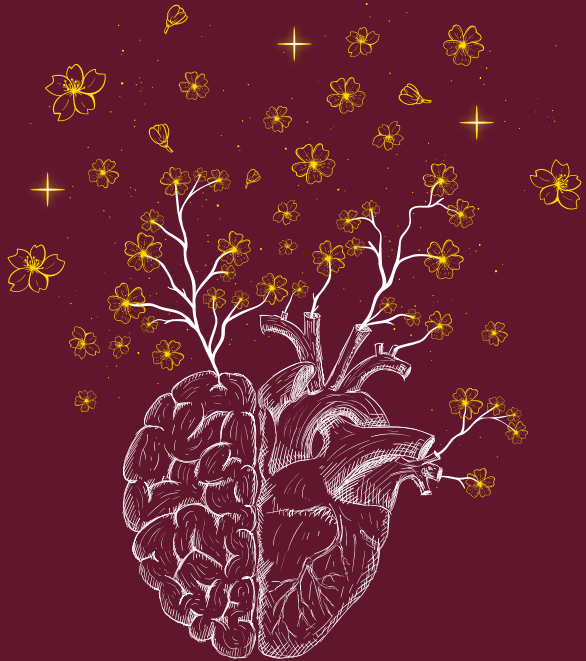
*"Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song."*

**(St. Pope John Paul II)**



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

**DAY 3**



PROF. **THIERRY  
MAGNIN**



50

OCTOBER 7  
10:00–11:00 AM



## How Service-Learning Can Promote Wellness and Prevent Mental Health Difficulties

Service-learning is a pedagogical approach in which academic courses integrate **community service** offered to underserved populations, aligned with the **professional skills and learning outcomes** targeted by the course. By combining academic knowledge with meaningful social engagement, service-learning opens pathways to **hope, purpose, and human connection**.

This workshop explores how service-learning can become a **powerful educational experience** that supports **mental well-being** and contributes to the **prevention of mental health difficulties**. Participants will examine how engaging in service fosters **self-worth, empathy, and social responsibility**, while helping them reconnect learning with meaning.

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**Thierry Magnin** is a French Catholic priest, physicist, theologian, and academic whose work bridges the worlds of science and faith. He holds a Doctorate in Physical Sciences and spent over 20 years as a researcher and professor in materials physics at institutions such as the École Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Saint-Étienne and the University of Lille. His scientific excellence has been recognized with the Grand Prix of the Académie des Sciences and membership in the Académie des Technologies.

Ordained a Catholic priest in 1985, Prof. Magnin also earned a Doctorate in Theology focused on the relationship between science and faith, a theme central to his career. He served as Vicar General of the Diocese of Saint-Étienne and later held major academic leadership roles, notably as Rector of the Université Catholique de Lyon (2011–19). Since 2020, he has served as President–Rector delegated to Humanities at the Université Catholique de Lille, leading the integration of humanities, ethics, and meaning-centered reflection across all academic programs. He promotes dialogue between science, technology, ethics, and faith, helping students develop critical thinking, social responsibility, and respect for human dignity in response to contemporary societal challenges.

Among his recent publications:

- "Service-learning et transformation humaine," with Yves Vendé, in *Études*, 2023/12 (December), pp. 57–66.
- "The Relevance of the Christian "Body-Psyche-Spirit" to Analyse Service-Learning Experiences," with Sophie Izoard, Hope University, 2024.
- "Service-Learning et expérience de Charité éducative," with François Prouteau, Yves Vendé, and Sophie Izoard, Université Catholique de Lille, exemple d'une Église en sortie, *Parole et silence*, 2025.

MS. RAWANE  
EL DIMACHKI



OCTOBER 7  
11:30 AM–12:30 PM

 15 PERSONS



## Tune In to Hope

This active and experiential music therapy workshop is designed to help participants **reconnect with their emotional world** and develop practical tools for **stress regulation** and **resilience**. This session explores how music can illuminate emotional experiences and support adaptive coping.

Through **group rhythm exercises, guided listening, creative sound-making, and collaborative lyric expression**, participants will engage in a dynamic process that moves from tension to regulation, from emotional awareness to empowered self-expression. Musical activities are intentionally structured to foster body awareness, expand emotional vocabulary, encourage co-regulation, and strengthen collective connection, all of which are essential components of **psychological resilience**.

By the end of the workshop, participants will have experienced hope as a lived process and will leave with practical strategies they can apply beyond the workshop. These include rhythmic breathing for stress relief, music-based emotional check-ins, expressive writing prompts, and the use of personally **meaningful music as a tool for grounding and motivation**.

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**Rawane El Dimachki** is a music therapist, academic leader, and PhD candidate in Music and Musicology at Sorbonne University, France. She holds a Master's degree in Music and Musicology with a specialization in Music Therapy and a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Antonine University, where she currently serves as Chairperson of the Department of Music Therapy.

Her work bridges academic leadership and clinical practice. As department chair, she oversees curriculum development, coordinates internship placements through partnerships with institutions and clinical centers, and ensures alignment with professional and ethical standards.

Clinically, Ms. El Dimachki works with children presenting diverse needs, including autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, psychosocial trauma, and pediatric oncology cases. Her approach integrates structured and improvisational methods, interdisciplinary collaboration with expressive arts and movement-based therapists, and individualized, goal-oriented interventions.

Her research interests include music and neuroscience, pain and anxiety management, emotional regulation, and the role of receptive processes in therapeutic contexts. She is committed to advancing ethical practice, high-quality clinical training, and inclusive music therapy education.



## The Quiet Work of Hope: Accompaniment, Presence, and Relational Ethics in Uncertain Times

In contexts marked by prolonged uncertainty, institutional fragility, and emotional fatigue, hope is often treated as an **individual psychological resource** to be strengthened through motivation, resilience, or goal setting. While useful, these approaches can become limited, and sometimes ethically problematic, when clarity, control, and predictable outcomes are no longer available. This workshop invites participants to rethink hope as an embodied, relational, and ecosystemic phenomenon that emerges through practices of **accompaniment** grounded in presence, listening, and ethical attentiveness. Drawing on perspectives from psychology, sociology, ethics, and leadership studies, the session explores accompaniment not as a technique or intervention, but as a **posture of being with others** that sustains dignity and relational vitality.

Through **guided reflection** and **dialogical exchanges**, participants will examine how hope can remain viable without being imposed, promised, or instrumentalized. Attention is given to the relational and institutional conditions that allow hope to arise quietly within educational, organizational, and community settings, even when certainty is absent. Participants will leave with a reframed understanding of hope as a **shared relational capacity**, along with reflective anchors that support presence, ethical restraint, and faithful engagement in accompaniment practices.

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**Marquis Bureau** is a university instructor, researcher, and community accompanier specializing in relational accompaniment, listening practices, emotional intelligence, and ecosystemic approaches to well-being. He teaches at Saint Paul University in Ottawa in the areas of human relations, leadership, spirituality, and community practice. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in interdisciplinary research on contemporary social issues, focusing on accompaniment of caregivers in rural areas.

With over 20 years of experience in higher education, public leadership, and community development in Canada and internationally, Mr. Bureau has held senior academic and executive roles and worked as a consultant with international organizations, including UNESCO and the World Bank. His professional trajectory bridges academic inquiry, institutional leadership, and grassroots community accompaniment.

His work is grounded in interdisciplinary dialogue across psychology, sociology, ethics of care, and leadership studies, with particular attention to accompaniment as posture, resonance, presence, and dignity. A certified humanistic coach and group facilitator, he develops and teaches embodied, reflective, and dialogical approaches that support individuals and groups navigating uncertainty, vulnerability, and transition.

DR. **BIANCA  
BRICIU**



OCTOBER 7  
5:00–6:00 PM



## Hope as a Path out of Despair: Three Ways to Cultivate Hope in Higher Education

Hope offers a path beyond the despair that often emerges from the loss of meaning and connection caused by trauma. In times shaped by violence, injustice, and loss, hope orients us toward a kinder and more just future. This workshop presents three ways to cultivate hope through education.

First, the workshop explores **brave practices for emotional processing and trauma integration**. Engaging with difficult emotions in a trauma-informed and compassionate way is a necessary step in freeing the heart from suffering. Violence and oppression often create trauma adaptations marked by disconnection, despair, and powerlessness. By “staying with the trouble,” educators and students can witness and honor difficult emotions, creating space for reconnection and hope. Second, the workshop examines how education can **nurture hope through inspiring examples**. Stories of courage, transformation, social justice, love, and healing help counterbalance despair and powerlessness. Such examples remind students that the force of good remains active in the world and that they are not alone in their struggles. Third, the session focuses on **cultivating agency** by aligning students’ values, intentions, and actions. This alignment supports active hope and encourages meaningful engagement with the world.

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**Bianca Briciu** is an Associate Professor at the School of Leadership, Ecology and Equity at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. Her work focuses on integral leadership development through emotional and spiritual intelligence, mindfulness, compassion, and systems thinking. She is particularly interested in transformative leadership and the cultivation of human potential across multiple forms of intelligence.

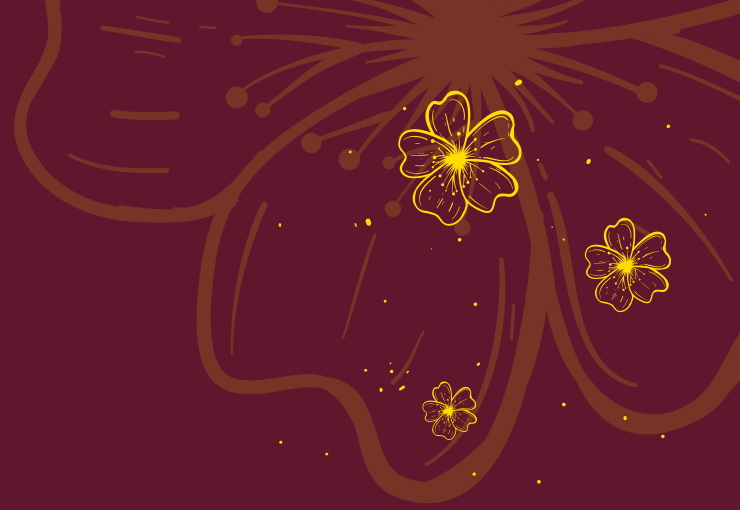
Dr. Briciu has authored over 20 peer-reviewed publications on mindfulness, compassion, spirituality, trauma integration, and transformative learning, with a focus on resilience, care, and human flourishing. She currently leads “Education for Human Flourishing,” a collective research project aimed at restoring connection and well-being within academic environments.

She is also a certified coach in Emotional Intelligence and the author of the book “The Revolutionary Art of Love: From Romantic Love to Global Compassion.”



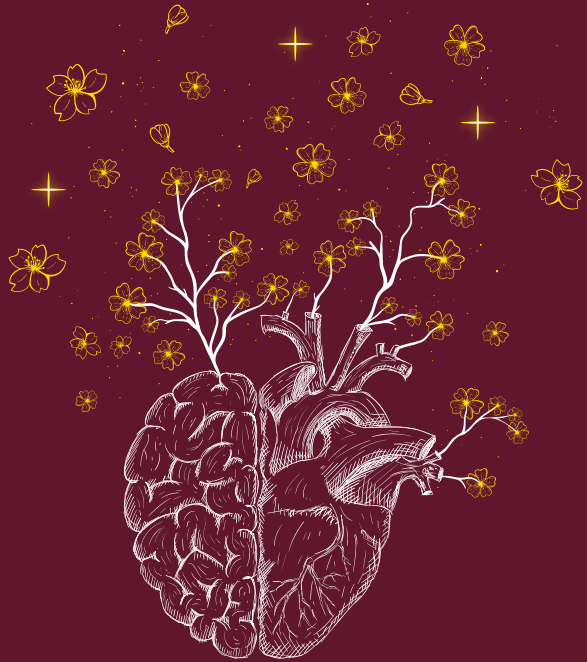
*"Healing doesn't mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls your life."*

**(Akshay Dubey)**



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

DAY 4



DR. LYNDA  
EL ACHKOUTY



56

OCTOBER 8  
10:00–11:00AM

20 PERSONS



EN

## Entrepreneurship Through a Well-Being Lens

This workshop aims to help students develop a deeper understanding of the link between **entrepreneurship, mental health,** and **overall well-being.** While entrepreneurship is often associated with innovation, ambition, and achievement, it also involves uncertainty, pressure, and emotional challenges that can significantly affect psychological and emotional health. This session explores how entrepreneurial activities can influence mental health, both positively and negatively, and why well-being should be considered a core component of **sustainable entrepreneurial success.**

Students will be guided to identify common **stressors** and **pressures** faced by entrepreneurs, including fear of failure, financial uncertainty, workload intensity, time pressure, and social comparison. By recognizing these factors early, participants will be better equipped to approach entrepreneurship with greater **awareness** and **balance.**

The workshop also emphasizes the importance of recognizing **early signs of burnout and overwhelm,** such as chronic fatigue, loss of motivation, decreased concentration, and emotional withdrawal, which are often overlooked or normalized in high-pressure environments.

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**Lynda El Achkouty** is an Assistant Professor at the Antonine School of Business and the Director of the Center for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (SEED) at Antonine University, with expertise in entrepreneurship, business coaching, and university-level teaching. Her profile is strengthened by over 12 years in the automotive industry and nine years of local and international experience in coaching and soft-skills training. She has supported startups, mentored aspiring entrepreneurs, and contributed to several prominent international projects. Dr. El Achkouty's work reflects a strong commitment to sustainable development, green entrepreneurship, and innovation. She has completed multiple international Training-of-Trainers certifications, and her multidisciplinary experience, combined with her academic background and doctoral research, supports her engagement in promoting sustainable entrepreneurship and empowering emerging innovators.

MS. GAELLE  
KHOURY



OCTOBER 8  
11:30 AM–12:30 PM



## Letting Hope Bloom Through Sports

The session explores sports beyond scores, trophies, and statistics. From a journalist's perspective, **hope in sports** is found not only in victory, but in unseen moments: **resilience after defeat**, discipline behind preparation, and the courage to rise again. Through sports storytelling, participants will discover how journalism can shed light on **mental health struggles**, personal battles, and the human strength behind every athlete and every game. It also addresses the impact of **social media** on athletes' mental health. In a world of constant exposure and public judgment, maintaining **healthy boundaries** and practicing mindful digital use are essential. Protecting well-being is no longer optional; it is part of performance and **personal growth**. Real-life examples highlight athletes who turned injury, pressure, criticism, and self-doubt into journeys of growth. Their stories remind us that setbacks are often the beginning of **transformation** and renewed hope.

Ultimately, the discussion reflects on the **power of the mind**. Belief, vision, and intention shape our future in sports, media, coaching, and beyond. When we nurture the right **mindset**, individuals can achieve their goals and truly bloom. Sports are not just games; they are platforms for **hope, resilience, and possibility**.

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**Gaelle Khoury** is a Lebanese TV presenter, reporter, and content producer recognized for her dynamic presence and versatility across multiple media platforms. Specializing in sports journalism, she is widely known for her extensive coverage of the Lebanese Basketball League and for presenting sports news on MTV Lebanon. With a confident on-screen presence and deep understanding of the game, Ms. Khoury has established herself as a trusted and influential voice in Lebanese sports media. Her credibility, energy, and ability to connect with athletes and audiences alike have positioned her among the prominent figures covering basketball in Lebanon. Expanding beyond traditional reporting, she created and hosted her own show, "Podcast with Gaga," engaging in insightful conversations with key figures from the sports community. Alongside her media career, she serves as General Secretary and Media Officer at Sagesse Sports Club, playing a central role in shaping the club's communication strategy and organizational coordination. Throughout her career, she has presented and produced programs spanning social, entertainment, and sports content, reflecting her versatility and passion for impactful storytelling.

DR. INES  
YAGI



58

OCTOBER 8  
2:30–3:30 PM



## The Practice of Hope: Meaning, Beauty, and Resilience in Times of Uncertainty

Hope is often reduced to optimism, yet in times of uncertainty it becomes a **practical and learnable skill** that helps regulate stress, restore meaning, and support action. This one-hour workshop offers a **holistic approach to hope** by integrating mind, body, relationships, and the restorative power of beauty and creativity.

Drawing on research on **beauty and art as pathways to healing** across different cultural contexts, the session explores how aesthetic experiences, such as music, nature, art, storytelling, and compassionate connection, can support emotional regulation, dignity, and renewed purpose. Participants will engage with evidence-informed practices designed to be accessible, trauma-informed, and immediately applicable.

The workshop introduces practical tools including **micro-hope mapping** (identifying meaningful goals and one achievable next step), brief **beauty-based sensory or awe practices** to reduce stress, **creative re-authoring reflections** to shift from threat to meaning, and simple **community hope scripts** for strengthening connection and asking for support. The session is designed for students, staff, and community members seeking realistic ways to sustain hope and resilience in challenging times.

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**Ines Yagi** is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Human Sciences, Counselling and Spirituality at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, and a registered psychotherapist with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. Her clinical work focuses on individual, couples, and family therapy, with particular expertise in trauma and sexual violence across genders.

Dr. Yagi works from an integrative, evidence-based perspective that combines systemic, emotion-focused, and trauma-somatic approaches. She also provides clinical supervision to qualifying and registered psychotherapists. As a researcher, her work centers on gender-based violence against men. She is the author of "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Men in the Democratic Republic of Congo" (2023), published by Peeters.

MS. MIRA  
ABOU JAOUDE



OCTOBER 8  
5:00–6:00 PM



## The Power of Manifestation: The Mind–Body Connection

This workshop explores the powerful relationship between the **mind and body**, and how conscious awareness can shape **healing, growth, and personal transformation**. Inspired by Mira's journey of resilience and recovery, the session highlights how reconnecting with the mind–body connection can become a turning point in rebuilding **strength, clarity, and purpose**.

Through guided exercises, reflection, and simple neuroscience-based techniques, participants will learn how **thoughts, emotions, and physical states** continuously influence one another. Manifestation is approached not as wishful thinking, but as a practical process rooted in **intention, focus, and aligned action**.

By understanding how the **nervous system** responds to beliefs and emotions, attendees will discover ways to regulate stress, increase energy, and cultivate a mindset that supports both **mental and physical well-being**. The workshop blends **mindfulness, visualization, and body-awareness practices**, offering a grounded and empowering experience.

This session invites participants to reconnect with their inner resources, trust the body's intelligence, and recognize their ability to actively participate in their own growth.

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**Mira Abou Jaoude** is a wellness and personal growth advocate, public relations and marketing expert, and speaker known for bridging the worlds of science, healing, and self-empowerment. After transforming her personal health journey into a mission to inspire others, she now focuses on the mind–body connection, mental resilience, and holistic well-being.

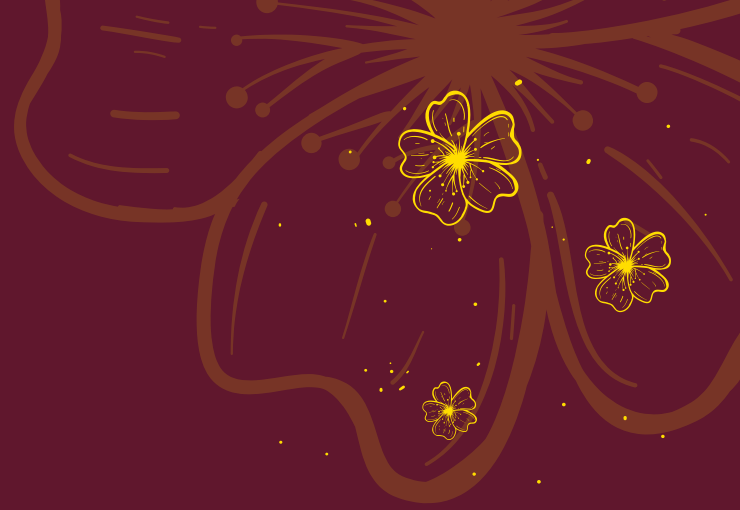
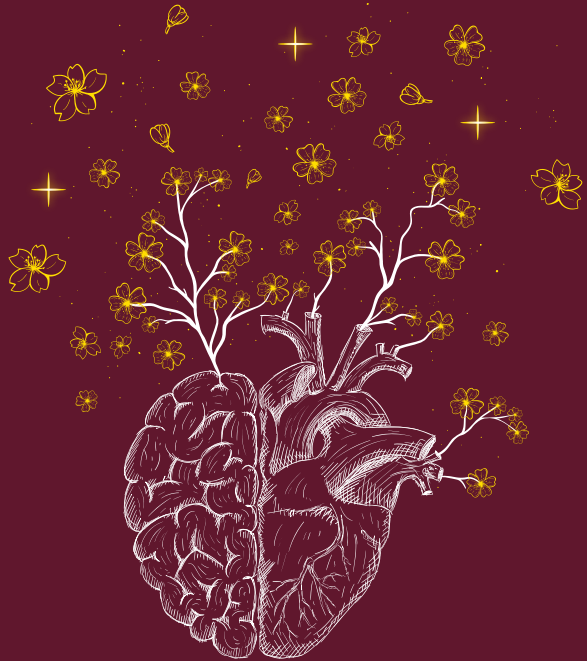
With a background in luxury fashion and communications, Ms. Abou Jaoude brings a unique perspective that blends creativity with evidence-based wellness practices. Through workshops, talks, and digital platforms, she empowers individuals to reconnect with their inner strength, cultivate positive mindset shifts, and actively participate in their own healing and growth.



*"There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't."*  
**(John Green)**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

DAY 5



DR. WADIH  
NASSOUR



62

OCTOBER 9  
10:00–11:00 AM



## The Eternal Flame

In a world dominated by competition, material success, and frantic consumption, our mental health is often put to the test. This workshop proposes to redefine success by placing the **acceptance of our weaknesses** and shortcomings at the heart of our fulfillment.

The goal is to break the toxic cycle of comparison and constant dissatisfaction. We will explore how to cultivate a **healthy form of ambition**: one that drives us to grow step by step, without denying our fragilities or sacrificing our inner peace. The session will address the quest for a delicate balance between our anxieties, unconscious desires, and the demands of reality.

The challenge is to progress **without losing one's personal identity** or disconnecting from the surrounding environment. Learning to savor the present does not hinder growth; on the contrary, **hope becomes the guide** for sustainable development and harmonious blooming.

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**Wadih Nassour** is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist holding a PhD in Psychopathology and Psychoanalysis from Université Paris Cité. Trained and certified in Psycho-Organic Analysis at the French School of Psycho-Organic Analysis (EFAPO), he specializes in psychotherapy for couples, children, and families.

He is the Founder and General Director of Phenix Group Homes, an organization dedicated to supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities and psychological disorders through therapeutic, educational, and social reintegration programs. He is also the President of the Lebanese School of Psycho-Organic Analysis (ELAPO) and a member of the Administrative Council of the Lebanese Order of Psychologists.

With over 30 years of professional experience, Dr. Nassour has worked across clinical practice, institutional care, training, and supervision. His work bridges psychotherapy, psychoeducation, human rights, and ecological awareness, promoting inclusive and dignity-centered approaches to mental health and social integration.

MS. **JESSICA MARIA**  
**GHOUSSOUB**



OCTOBER 9  
11:30 AM–12:30 PM



## 1564 – A Line of Hope, A Path to Healing

This interactive workshop introduces participants to **Embrace** and the **1564 National Lifeline**, a safe and confidential mental health support service. The session focuses on raising awareness about mental health, breaking stigma, and fostering hope and help-seeking behaviors.

Participants will gain a clear understanding of what **mental health** is and why it matters, along with guidance on recognizing common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges in themselves and others. The workshop also addresses suicide awareness in a sensitive, non-fear-based manner, emphasizing prevention, early intervention, and the importance of reaching out. Practical tools will be shared to help participants protect and maintain their mental well-being, including accessible self-care practices. The session highlights available sources of support, how to seek help confidently, and how to respond with empathy when someone around them may be struggling.

By the end of the workshop, participants will leave with increased awareness and the reassurance that **hope and support are always within reach**.

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**Jessica Maria Ghossoub** is a social worker specializing in mental health. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Medical Social Work and a Master's degree in Project Management from the Lebanese University. With over four years of professional experience, she has worked in both individual and group mental health interventions, supporting individuals facing a wide range of psychological and emotional challenges. She has completed specialized training in suicide prevention, crisis intervention, and mental health awareness. In recent years, she has focused on community awareness and outreach, driven by a strong belief that meaningful change begins with breaking stigma and promoting open, supportive conversations around mental health.

She joined Embrace in February 2023 as a Lifeline Operator for the 1564 Mental Health Lifeline, providing confidential support to individuals in distress. She currently serves as an Outreach and Awareness Officer, facilitating workshops and initiatives across diverse communities in Lebanon to promote mental health education and empowerment.

MS. NADA  
KOUSSA



64

OCTOBER 9  
2:30–3:30 PM



EN AR

## The Architecture of Hope: Building Psychological Strength in Unstable Times

This session explores **hope as a psychological skill**, not blind optimism, but a measurable process that strengthens **resilience**. Participants will examine how chronic stress can lead to learned helplessness and emotional shutdown, and how to rebuild **motivation** through agency, flexible thinking, and meaningful goal setting.

Through **neuroscience** insights and practical exercises, attendees will gain tools for nervous system regulation, cognitive reframing, and future-oriented planning. By the end of the workshop, they will leave with a clearer understanding of how hope functions psychologically, along with concrete strategies to restore a grounded sense of control and forward movement.

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**Nada Koussa** is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist, member of the Lebanese Order of Psychologists. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Notre Dame University–Louaize and a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of Balamand. Crowned Miss Lebanon 2024, she represented Lebanon at Miss Universe 2024 and Miss World 2025, placing in the Top 20 globally and Top 5 in Asia. With experience across NGOs, private practice, and psychiatric hospitals, Ms. Koussa provides psychological support to individuals and couples of all ages. Her approach integrates evidence-based therapies including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, drama therapy, and psychoanalytic techniques, addressing concerns such as mood disorders, trauma, substance use, eating disorders, phobias, suicidal ideation, and personality disorders. During her reign, she delivered psychosocial support and psychoeducation sessions across NGOs, schools, universities, municipalities, private institutions, and shelters for displaced Lebanese during the war. She was awarded the Female Influential Award by WIBA Mediterranean and appointed the first Ambassador of Mental Health at Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health. She is also the Founder of Dew Apparel and an ambassador for World Vision's "Enough" Campaign, advocating against child hunger and malnutrition.

PROF. GHASSAN  
EL-BAALBAKI



OCTOBER 9  
5:00–6:00 PM



## Hope in Times of Uncertainty: Challenging Cognitive Distortions

This workshop presents **hope as a cognitive discipline and a deliberate practice**, essential for navigating the uncertainty that characterizes the contemporary Lebanese context. Drawing inspiration from **Stoic philosophy**, hope is approached not as a simple emotional state, but as an active force and a **skill developed through reflective action**. Emphasis is placed on distinguishing between what lies within our control—thoughts, choices, and actions—and what remains beyond it, particularly the broader socioeconomic and political context. The session examines key **“hope killers,”** especially **cognitive distortions** such as catastrophizing and overgeneralization, which can transform uncertainty into paralyzing fatalism. Through **cognitive restructuring**, participants will learn to limit judgment to observable facts in the present, thereby transforming perceived helplessness into concrete capacity for action.

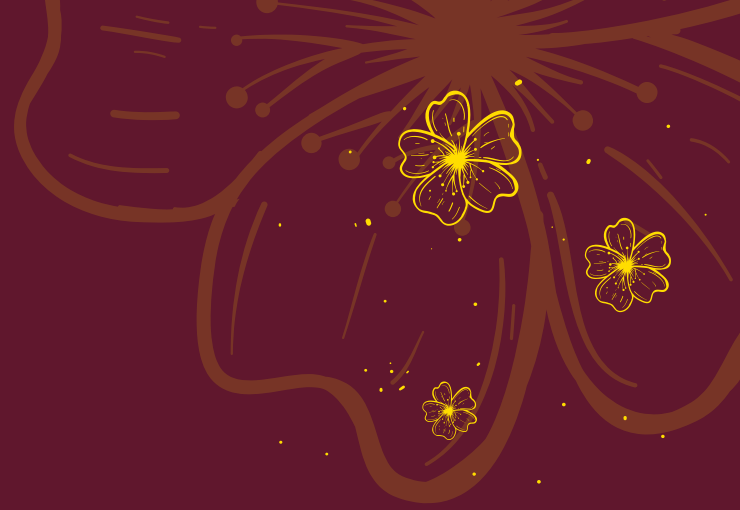
Grounded in **strategic planning**, this perspective illustrates how hope can become a **driver of engagement**, enabling forward movement in unstable contexts without denying the seriousness of ongoing crises. The workshop aims to demonstrate that, even in a world marked by conflict and fragility, individuals can cultivate **active and sustainable resilience**. Practical tools will be offered to anchor this **everyday Stoic hope** in daily life.

**Ghassan El-Baalbaki** is a clinical psychologist and professor based in Montreal. He completed his undergraduate studies in psychology at Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ), before earning a Master’s degree and a dual doctorate (PhD and PsyD) in Clinical Psychology at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). He later pursued a two-year postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University’s Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

He is a Full Professor at UQAM and served as Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Psychology from 2018 to 2024. Prof. El-Baalbaki’s clinical work is grounded in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and clinical hypnosis, with interests in anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, couples, physical illness, and personality dynamics. His research and publications focus on marital interactions, social support in chronic illness, and evidence-based psychological interventions, reflecting a strong commitment to both clinical practice and academic training.

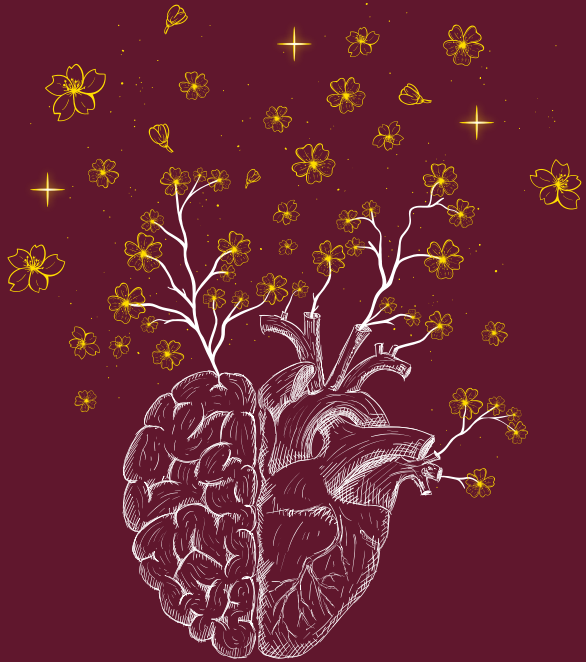


*"Hope is knowing that God is near and that love will win."*  
**(Pope Leo XIV)**



SATURDAY, OCTOBER **10**

**DAY 6**





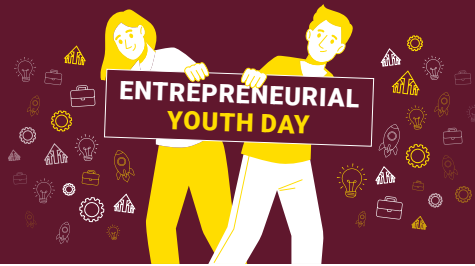
## PROGRAM

- **Introduction to the Wellness Youth Day**
- **Awareness Session: Train Your Mindset Like a Champion**  
by Ms. Nicole El Beyrouthy
- **Introduction to the Faculty of Sport Sciences**
- **Physical Activity Competitions**  
Climbing, Badminton, Basketball, Futsal, Vortex Throw, Relay Race, Long Jump, Shot Put, Table Tennis
- **Closing Ceremony and Winners Announcement**



# ENTREPRENEURIAL YOUTH DAY

## WELL-BEING IN MOTION



70

OCTOBER 10  
9:00 AM–2:00 PM



As part of the fifth edition of the **Wellness and Mental Health Week**, **Entrepreneurial Youth Day** is organized in collaboration with the **Center for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (SEED)** at Antonine University (UA). The initiative welcomes Grade 11 and 12 high school students for a full-day entrepreneurial experience grounded in well-being, innovation, and leadership.

Throughout the day, participants will identify a common source of student stress and design a **sports-based entrepreneurial solution** that promotes resilience and healthy coping strategies. Working individually and in teams, they will move through a structured process that includes **problem analysis**, **design thinking**, **lean canvas modeling**, and **pitch preparation**, transforming ideas into actionable concepts within a competitive, educational setting.

By combining entrepreneurial thinking with mental health awareness, the program strengthens **teamwork**, **leadership**, **critical thinking**, and **communication skills**. The day culminates in a pitching session where participants present their projects before a jury, reinforcing confidence, clarity of vision, and structured problem-solving.

The winning team will receive a **financial prize**, and all participants will be awarded certificates of participation in recognition of their engagement and effort.

## Sustainable Development and Youth Empowerment

Entrepreneurial Youth Day aligns with the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly **SDG 4: Quality Education** and **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**. By introducing high school students to entrepreneurial thinking within a supportive academic environment, the initiative encourages informed career exploration, responsible innovation, and long-term socio-economic contribution.

Through this initiative, UA reaffirms its commitment to empowering young individuals to transform challenges into opportunities, positioning **well-being as a foundation for sustainable leadership and impact**.

## PROGRAM

- Introduction to the Entrepreneurial Youth Day
- Awareness Session: Train Your Mindset Like a Champion  
by Ms. Nicole El Beyrouthy
- Icebreaker Activity
- Key Concepts, Objectives, and Selection Criteria
- Problem Tree Activity
- Design Thinking (Five Stages)
- Lean Canvas (Value Creation Model)
- Pitch Deck Preparation and Rehearsal
- Final Pitching Session
- Winner Announcement and Certificate Distribution



MS. NICOLE  
EL BEYROUTHY



72

OCTOBER 10  
9:00–9:45 AM



## Train Your Mindset Like a Champion

### What if hope were not just a feeling, but a skill you could actually train?

In this interactive workshop, participants will discover how hope works like a mental superpower, helping them take smart action instead of feeling stuck. This session is hands-on and fast-paced, with no passive lectures. Participants will:

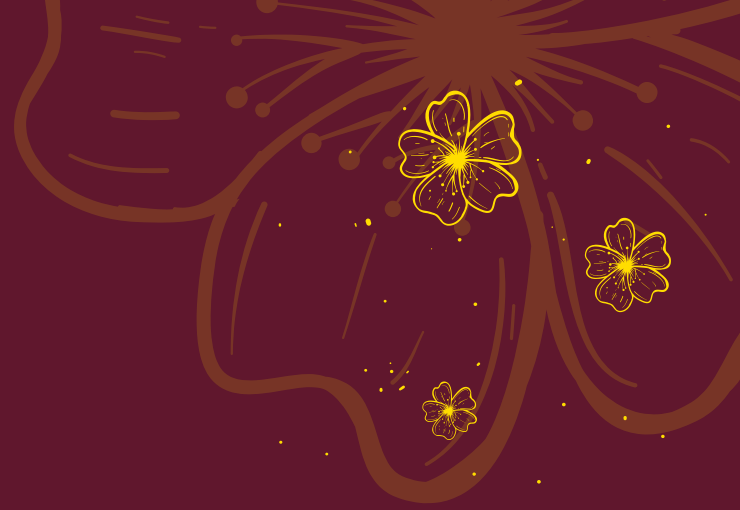
- work in small teams to crack challenges and solve puzzles;
- explore how mindset, environment, and emotions shape performance;
- learn how stress can either block performance or boost it;
- discover how athletes prepare mentally before a big match, and how those same strategies can be applied to exams, competitions, and everyday challenges.

Through guided discussions, participants will connect these concepts to real-life situations, from friendships and school stress to sports and competitive challenges. By the end of the workshop, they will leave with a clearer understanding of well-being and practical tools to **regulate emotions** under pressure, **build resilience** after setbacks, **think more flexibly** in difficult situations, and **perform with confidence**, whether in class, on stage, or on the field.

**Nicole El Beyrouthy** is a licensed Educational Psychologist accredited in Psycho-Organic Analysis (APO), with extensive experience across clinical, educational, and community settings. She holds a Master's degree in Educational Psychology and has completed advanced training in APO, Schema Therapy, Creative Arts Therapy, and trauma-informed interventions.

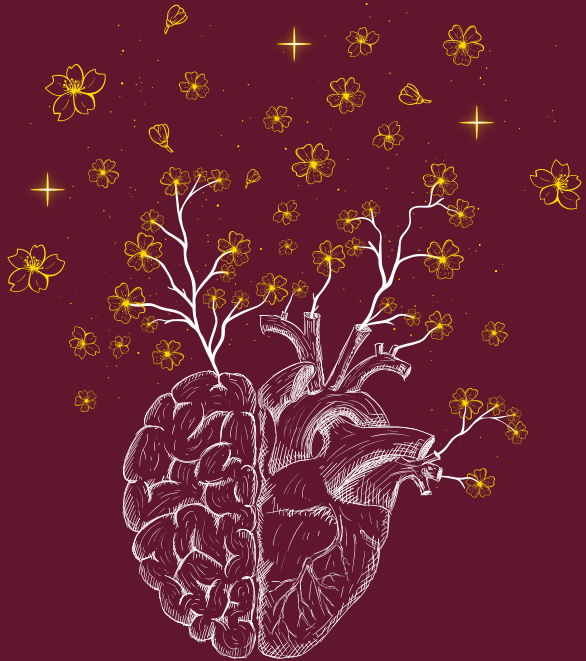
She is also a certified mediator, trained in family accompaniment, and an active member of professional associations, including the Lebanese Order of Psychologists and the Lebanese Association for Psycho-Organic Analysis (ALAPO).

Her professional experience spans universities, hospitals, NGOs, schools, and private practice, where she has provided individual, family, and group therapy; peer-support training; and workshops in mindfulness, restorative practices, creative arts, and psychological first aid. Ms. El Beyrouthy employs experiential, metacognitive, and psycho-educational methodologies to cultivate resilience, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. By integrating clinical expertise, academic knowledge, and community engagement, she empowers individuals and groups to strengthen mental health, adaptive functioning, and psychosocial growth.



*"Emotion turns knowledge  
into understanding."*

**(Carl Jung)**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This year's **Wellness and Mental Health Week** bloomed into a vibrant testament to hope, growth, and shared purpose. Its strength lay not only in the richness of its program, but in the dedication and collaboration of the many individuals and institutions who joined hands to bring this vision to life.

At the heart of this collective effort stands the **Ministry of Public Health**, whose patronage and unwavering support continue to advance mental health initiatives across the nation.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Regional Office in Beirut**, whose collaboration with Antonine University marks a meaningful first partnership in support of well-being, education, and integral human development across the region.

The **Official Ceremony** set the tone for the Week and was graced by the presence of **Rev. Abbot Joseph Bou Raad**, Superior General of the Antonine Maronite Order and Chancellor of Antonine University, **Dr. Rakan Nasreddine**, Minister of Public Health; **Dr. Rabih El Chammay**, Director of the National Mental Health Programme; **Dr. Maroun Sadek**, Head of the Hematology–Oncology Division at the Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui; and **Ms. Raghida Chalhoub**, Master of Ceremony. Their participation reflected the unity of vision that underpins this initiative. Special recognition is owed to **Messrs. Giovanni and Charbel Lteif**, Founders of Eastern Christians, and the **UA students** who bravely shared their personal journeys. Their testimonies were living proof of the Week's theme, instilling hope and courage in every heart present.

The **Wellness Fair** unfolded as a space of generosity and inspiration, where organizations and professionals offered their expertise, services, and products, weaving together a tapestry of collective well-being.

The spirit of openness was further enriched by the contributions of distinguished **international speakers**, whose global perspectives illuminated the event. We were honored by the participation of **Dr. Ki Chae** (South Korea); **Prof. Ghassan El-Baalbaki**, **Dr. Bianca Briciu**, and **Mr. Marquis Bureau** (Canada); **Prof. Thierry Magnin** (France); **Dr. Ines Yagi** (Democratic Republic of the Congo); and **Dr. Smyrna Khalaf** (United States).

Equally invaluable were the voices of our **national speakers**, including **Fr. Gabriel Tabet** (Director of the Support Office for Vulnerable People, Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut); **Prof. Selim Mekdessi** (Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Lebanese University); **Dr. Wadih Nassour** (Founder and General Director of Phenix Group Homes and President of ELAPO); **Dr. Huguette Abou-Mrad** (Director of the Language Center and WE4LEAD Coordinator, UA); **Dr. Charbel Najem** (Assistant Professor at UA and Founder of Rehab Zone Clinic); **Dr. Lynda El Achkouty** (Director of the SEED Center, UA); **Ms. Gaelle Khoury** (Sports Journalist and TV Presenter, MTV Lebanon); **Mr. Patrick Farhat** (Sexual Health Services Coordinator and Project Coordinator, SIDC); **Ms. Manal Abou Aoun** (Founder of LUEUR); **Ms. Micheline Sammour** (Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist, UA); **Ms. Jessica Maria Ghoussoub** (Outreach and Awareness Officer, Embrace); **Ms. Mira Abou Jaoude** (fashion, beauty, and wellness creator); **Ms. Nada Koussa** (Clinical Psychologist and Miss Lebanon 2024); and **Ms. Rawane El Dimachki** (Chairperson of the Department of Music Therapy, UA). Their expertise and generosity grounded the Week in professional excellence and heartfelt commitment.

Music and reflection found their highest expression in the **Levantine Oratorio of the Annunciation**, composed and directed by **Prof. Nidaa Abou Mrad**, Dean of UA's Faculty of Music and Musicology. The concert was enriched by reflections from **Fr. Michel Saghbiny**, UA Rector; **H.E. Sheikh Rabih Koubayssi**, President of the Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue; and **Fr. Stefano Cecchin**, President of the Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis (Italy). The performances of **Mr. Mohamad Ayach**, **Ms. Rafka Rizk**, **Mr. Christo Almawi**, and **Dr. Ghassan Sahhab** elevated the evening, reminding us that art and spirituality are powerful companions in the journey toward healing.

**Hackathon 2026** became a thriving hub of innovation and creativity, brought to life through the collaboration of the **Faculty of Engineering and Technology**, **Upscale Hub**, the **SEED Center**, the **IEEE ComSoc Lebanon Chapter**, and the participating students from Lebanese universities. To each of them, I extend my sincere gratitude.

The vitality and promise of youth shone brightly during **Wellness Youth Day**, shaped by the contributions of **Ms. Nicole El Beyrouthy**, the **Office of Athletics**, the **Office of Orientation and Admissions**, and the enthusiastic participation of high school students. Their energy and engagement gave the day its spirit of renewal and discovery.

Equally impactful was the **Entrepreneurial Youth Day**, led by **Dr. Lynda El Achkouty**, Director of UA's SEED Center, whose dedication continues to empower the next generation to transform ideas into action. Together, these initiatives embodied the essence of hope and growth, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to all partners whose coordinated support made them possible.

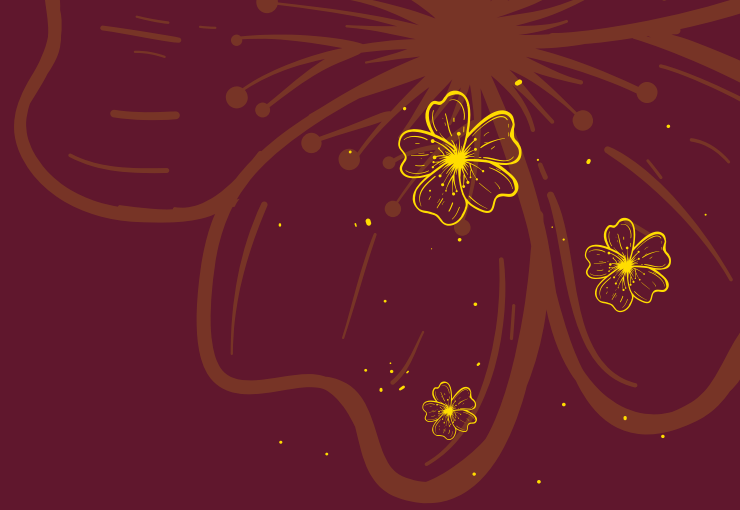
Within Antonine University, the successful execution of the Week was made possible by the tireless efforts of the **Office of Communications**, the **Office of Event Management**, the **Office of Information Technology**, the **Office of Procurement**, the **Office of Student Affairs**, the **Office of Logistics and Facilities**, and our devoted **student volunteers**. Their behind-the-scenes dedication ensured that every moment unfolded with care and precision.

A special acknowledgment is extended to **Ms. Jocelyn Saab**, Director of the Office of Student Affairs, whose collaboration and devotion were instrumental in shaping the entire Week, and to **Ms. Micheline Sammour**, UA Counselor, for guiding students in transforming stressors into positive actions.

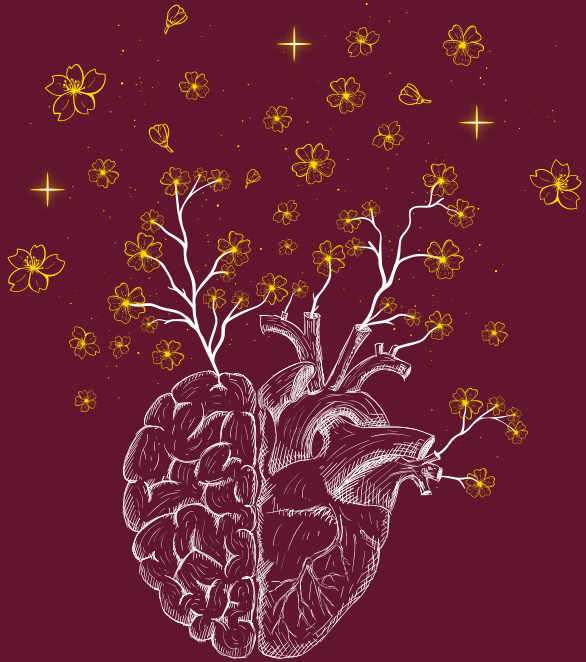
To every speaker, partner, and contributor: your commitment to wellness and mental health continues to inspire and uplift communities far beyond this Week. Together, you have shown that hope is not merely a theme, but a living force—one that enables minds and hearts to bloom.

**Fr. Jean Al Alam, OAM**

Vice Rector for Integral Human Development, Antonine University



*"The human spirit is stronger  
than anything that can happen to it."*  
**(C.C. Scott)**



## OUR PREVIOUS EDITIONS

Since its launch, the **Wellness and Mental Health Week** has grown as a living expression of Antonine University's commitment to integral human development. Each edition has responded thoughtfully to the realities of its time, equipping the community with tools for awareness, resilience, and transformation, while bringing together nearly 25 international and national experts whose contributions enrich dialogue and broaden perspectives.



### Becoming My Best Self (2019)

Launched as the University's first dedicated initiative focusing on mental health and well-being, the inaugural edition aimed to raise awareness about psychological wellness within the academic environment. Through introductory sessions and open discussions, it laid the foundation for a campus culture rooted in care, dialogue, and mutual support.

### Flourish Your Well-Being (2022)

Building on this foundation, the second edition emphasized empowerment and personal growth, particularly in the aftermath of the Beirut Port explosion, the COVID-19 pandemic, and national unrest. The theme of flourishing became essential, encouraging the community to nurture well-being through positive psychology and daily practices that restore balance and meaning, in order to support a healthier academic and personal life.





### Turn Your Ill-Being Into Well-Being (2023)

The third edition addressed mental health challenges directly, reframing ill-being not as stigma, but as a starting point for transformation. It highlighted coping strategies, self-awareness, and the importance of seeking support, inviting participants to turn accumulated trauma into a source of strength and reaffirming that healing begins with recognition and courageous action.

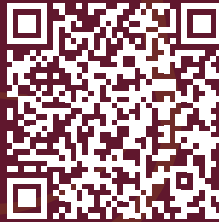
### Beyond War: Nurturing Your Well-Being in an AI-Driven World (2025)

The fourth edition responded to a context marked by war, uncertainty, and rapid technological change. It invited reflection on resilience, balance, and human-centered values while navigating both the psychological impact of conflict and the growing presence of artificial intelligence in daily life.



*Discover past editions, watch previous sessions, access press coverage, and browse earlier booklets.*

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