LIFEHACK

Expand your toolbox of life skills and strengthen your mental wellbeing

Introduction Module

Let's go!

Contents

About Caring Universities

The Caring Universities project is embedded within the World Health Organization (WHO) College Student Mental Health Surveys (WMH-ICS). This international initiative aims at improving our knowledge on college students' mental wellbeing. Realizing the needs of students will help us in prevention but also in early detection and treatment of mental disorders during college years. Caring Universities takes it one step further by also offering free web-based interventions to students in need.

Primarily developed by Ms. Sevin Ozmen, Coach, UX Expert & Programme Creator, the online programmes introduce important life skills to college students who would like to improve mood, reduce stress, and overcome procrastination, etc..

For further details of Caring Universities, please visit
https://caring-universities.com.

With the permission from Caring Universities, Counselling and Person Enrichment Section of The Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) adapted the online programs into e-workbooks for promoting the mental health of students at The University of Hong Kong.

Acknowledgments
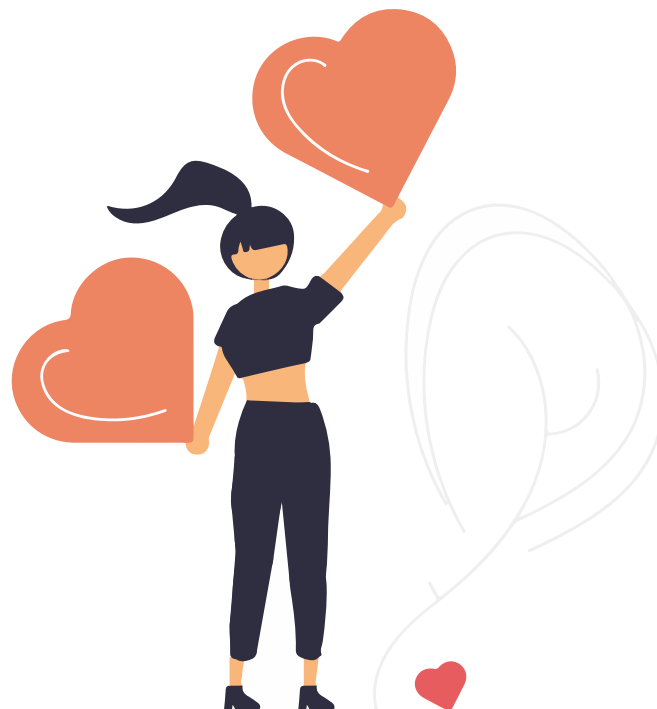
How to Use this Workbook

About LifeHack

Sometimes we kick ass in life, and sometimes it feels like life is kicking our butts. This programme exists to give you practical tools to navigate all sorts of life events successfully. It aims to teach life skills to feel happier and protect your mental health in more challenging times!

Main domains

Together with students, we've defined four important domains when it comes to mental wellbeing.

- Feeling good mentally/emotionally
- Your studies
- A healthy social life (for all sorts of relationships)
- Boosting your confidence/self-esteem

Each domain consists of **one main** module and **two related optional** modules.

The best way to do the programme is to complete one domain per week by doing the main module and any of the optional modules that seem relevant to you. Do them all or do none, you're in charge here! The following week, continue with the next domain.

Depending on your needs and interests, the programme will take 4-6 weeks to complete.

Check out all the different topics per domain

LifeHack

INTRODUCTION MODULE
Let's go!
- Evaluate your life
- Set goals for yourself
- 2 motivational hacks

---------- DOMAIN: EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING ----------

MAIN MODULE
Boost your mood

OPTIONAL MODULES
- Stress less & relax more
- 'Healthify' your lifestyle

-------------- DOMAIN: YOUR STUDIES --------------

MAIN MODULE
Study smarter, not harder

OPTIONAL MODULES
- Beat procrastination
- Boost your focus & productivity

-------------- DOMAIN: YOUR SOCIAL LIFE --------------

MAIN MODULE
Level up your social life

OPTIONAL MODULES
- Overcome social anxiety
- Express yourself & say 'no'

-------------- DOMAIN: SELF-ESTEEM --------------

MAIN MODULE
Grow confidence & self-esteem

OPTIONAL MODULES
- Impostor syndrome, begone!
- Overcome perfectionism & fear of failure

CLOSING MODULE
The finish line
- Evaluate your progress
- Recognise and celebrate your successes

Now let's explore what's going on in your life!

Let's go

Hi there!

Welcome to LifeHack. Good to see you here!

You probably heard that this programme might be useful in dealing with all kinds of life and uni challenges. And you'd be right! LifeHack will teach you a bunch of useful life skills to improve your mental wellbeing, and to hopefully have a happier and healthier life.
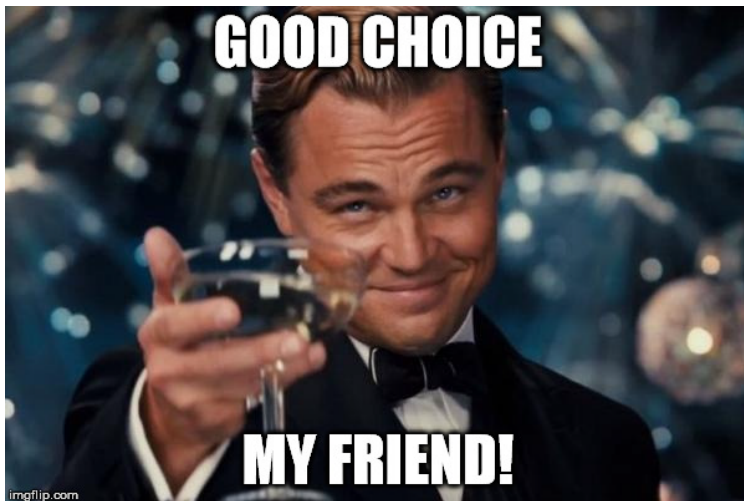
In this very first module, you will...

• Identify the things you want to work on, improve or change

• Set personal goals for these things

• Learn two motivation-boosting techniques to work on your goals

Let's go!

What's going on in life?

If you're like most other people, you'll be happy with some aspects of your life and a bit less so with others. To make the most of this programme we're first going to identify those domains that you'd like to improve.

It's totally normal that we rate some domains more positively than others. The goal of this first exercise is gain a broader understanding of what we're happy with, and what we could still improve.

What's important to you?

Below you'll find 6 important aspects of our lives that you can work on improving through LifeHack. Take a moment to think about each of them, and to rate how happy you are with each aspect as well as how important this aspect is to you.

1. Education / studies

Happiness (0 – very unhappy, 10 – very happy)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Importance (0 – very unimportant, 10 – very important)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

2. Friends & family

Happiness (0 – very unhappy, 10 – very happy)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Importance (0 – very unimportant, 10 – very important)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

3. Romance / significant other

Happiness (0 – very unhappy, 10 – very happy)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Importance (0 – very unimportant, 10 – very important)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

4. Physical & mental health

Happiness (0 – very unhappy, 10 – very happy)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Importance (0 – very unimportant, 10 – very important)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

5. Personal growth & development

Happiness (0 – very unhappy, 10 – very happy)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Importance (0 – very unimportant, 10 – very important)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

6. Self-love & acceptance

Happiness (0 – very unhappy, 10 – very happy)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Importance (0 – very unimportant, 10 – very important)

☐ **0** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **10**

Take a moment to look at your ratings again

Select one or two domains that you're unhappy with, that are highly important to you, and that you would like to work on through this programme.

Which domains would you like to work on through LifeHack? (answer A)

Explain your ratings: why are these domains the most important to you, and what makes you less happy with them? (answer B)

Let's set some goals

You probably saw it coming, but now let's look at what can be changed to improve your life!

These were the areas that you wanted to work on: (refer to answer A on p.8)

Be SMART

Now let's be SMART about these areas. Not smart as in clever, but by setting S.M.A.R.T. goals. Goal-setting is a great strategy to inspire change. Simply by setting a goal, we already trigger a change in our behaviour, gain focus and energy, and feel more motivated. Still, the exact goal we set matters. Goals that are vague or too challenging, for example, quickly start to feel like a burden that actually drains our energy. Which is why it's very important to make your goals SMART. (The video transcript is available on p.22):

Smart or not?

What do you think: do these goals meet the SMART criteria?

Scenarios	Smart or Not?
Find a fun and interesting job.	Not S.M.A.R.T.! What tasks do you find 'fun and interesting'? What's the timeframe? Also you can't control whether you find a job or not, so it's better to make a goal of the steps you need to take instead. Rephrased: "Send out 4 applications a week for a job as a bartender for the coming 3 weeks"
Make a weekplanning for the coming week every Sunday afternoon at 2 PM (right after lunch).	S.M.A.R.T.! The time and frequency are defined, it's not too difficult to achieve and it's very measurable. Since it's a recurring goal, it doesn't need a specific deadline.
Study for the upcoming exam for a few hours a day Monday through Thursday.	(mostly) S.M.A.R.T.! An exam provides a natural deadline (so the T of time-bound is covered), but it could be a bit more specific: what's a 'few' hours? And when (and where) will you study?

Let's set some goals!

Now it's time to write your own goals for these areas you wanted to improve upon:

(refer to answer A on p.8)

For each of these areas, write one goals that is SMART, meeting the following criteria:

S = specific

M = measurable

A = attainable

R = relevant

T = time-bound

NEXT LEVEL HACK

Short-term goals and long-term goals are both important, but for this exercise we suggest setting goals within the coming month. Attainable, 'smaller' goals are much easier to reach and will therefore quickly give you a boost of positivity and motivation!

Now define one SMART goal for each of the areas you wanted to work on: (answer C)

Let's set some goals

Time for action

Okay not real action, but an action plan. As you might know: it's easy to have all sorts of plans, but a bit more challenging to actually follow through. One thing that helps tremendously is to come up with an action plan. This simply means to write down all the concrete steps you need to take to reach that goal. Check out these examples of action plans:

Goals	Action plans
Hang out with study mates in the coming month at least once (1 on 1 or in a group setting).	• Research what kind of events are offered by my Uni and sign up for at least 2 events that seem interesting • Check out the sports-classes offered by my Uni, sign up for one (maybe dancing) • Keep an eye out for mentions of (social) get-togethers when in workgroups • Ask some study mates from the workgroup to work on our projects together
Save up €600 to buy a new laptop at the start of next school year.	• I'm going to make an overview of all my expenses of the past few months • Then I'm going to analyse where and how I could save money (like on gaming), for example: borrow a game from a friend rather than buy it new • As soon as I get paid (I already have a job), I transfer €50 to my savings account • I will not touch my savings account!!!

Include the programme!

You know what would be a great step in your action plan? To check out which modules (refer to p.4) might be relevant for you in reaching your SMART goals and include those in your action plan!

These were your goals: (refer to answer C on p.11)

Time to create an action plan!

Sometimes it can be tricky to specify **all** the steps needed to reach a goal in advance. In that case you can create a plan for what you can oversee right now (for example, an action plan for the coming 2 weeks), and expand on it as you get closer to reaching your goal. Just make sure all the steps in your action plan are concrete: make it clear what you are going to do and when.

For each SMART goal, come up with an action plan. What steps will you take?

NEXT LEVEL HACK

Keep your goals in sight! For example, write them down on a piece of paper and hang it above your desk. Then you'll get a nice motivation boost every time you see them, rather than forget all about them.

Motivation-booster

Lastly, we want to give you 2 simple motivation-boosting hacks you can use to get working on these goals: using pull thoughts and visualizing a positive future.

1. Using 'pull' thoughts

Here's a fact for you: most people try to motivate themselves with fear: by thinking about what they don't want to happen. For example: thinking "I don't want to get a bad grade" in order to make themselves study, or "I don't want to gain weight" as a reason to work out more.

These 'don't want' thoughts are also called push thoughts.

You're trying to push away from a possible bad outcome. The problem is, push thoughts make you linger in the negative zone because you're focusing on all the bad things you don't want to happen.

But research has shown the effect of **positive thinking** over and over. That's what pull thoughts are: thoughts that pull you towards your desired outcome. For example: thinking "I want to graduate and find a good job" in order to make yourself study, or "I want to feel fit and healthy" as a reason to work out more.

Pull thoughts are in the positive zone: the place of motivation and possibilities, and are way more effective than push thoughts!

YOUR GOAL
Example: "Work out more"

possible good outcome 👍

POSITIVE ZONE

Pull thoughts:
towards the good outcome

"I want to feel fit & healthy"

Let's practice using pull thoughts now

Take a minute to reflect on your own thoughts. Pick a moment from the past week in which you tried to make yourself do something you didn't really feel like. It can be something small: to cook dinner yourself rather than buy frozen pizza, get yourself to study on the weekend, get yourself to go to the gym...

What did you try to make yourself do?

What kinds of thoughts did you use to make yourself do this?

Analyse these thoughts: are they mostly push or pull?

Now reframe each of your push thoughts into pull thoughts and write them down below:

Examples of reframed thoughts:

Scenarios:	Reframed thoughts:
To cook a proper dinner rather than buy frozen pizza.	I don't want to eat unhealthy food > I want to eat nutritious (and tasty!) food so I feel physically better. I don't want to waste money on junk food > I can save money by preparing affordable food (like rice or pasta).
To get yourself to study in the weekend.	I don't want to fail the test > I want to pass this class and get my degree as soon as possible. I don't want to get into a time-crunch when the deadline approaches > I want to start early enough so that I have enough time to get everything done comfortably.
To go to the gym.	I don't want to get fat > I want to feel fit and healthy I don't want to have neck/back pains later (which I get if I don't exercise those muscles) > I want to ensure that my neck and back feel good so I can do whatever I want pain-free.

And just like that, you have mastered a simple tool you can implement any time you are trying to get yourself to take action. Keep an eye out for any push thoughts you might have, and reframe them into pull by thinking about what you DO want to achieve!

2. Visualizing a positive future

The second technique is called 'visualizing a positive future'. Visualisation has been proven to be an extremely effective strategy in all sorts of situations - and motivating yourself to work on goals is no exception.

Click here to solidify your resolve to do something by listening to a 2.5-minute visualisation exercise.

Written visualisation instructions:

> First, get a clear idea of what you want to achieve. This doesn't need to be a SMART goal, you can choose 'run a marathon' too. Feel free to think big. What is your goal? What are you striving for? Take a few seconds to formulate your goal.
>
> Now imagine the moment you actually achieved that goal. Don't focus too much on pinpointing the time, but rather focus on the event or experience of achieving the goal. In the 'run a marathon' example it could be the moment you cross the finish line. Take some time to think: what would be the exact moment you achieved your goal?
>
> Now start adding details to this moment to form a mental image. Where are you exactly? Who are you with? What's going on around you? What can you hear, see, smell? What are people saying to you? What might you be saying? Take a moment and make the mental picture as detailed and vivid as possible.
>
> Lastly, imagine how you'd feel in that moment. How proud, excited, satisfied... And in the marathon example: probably a little tired. What would you feel once you achieved your goal? Take some time to imagine being in that situation, and try to feel all those emotions.
>
> Now that you've visualised a positive future, you can do this exercise whenever you feel you need a motivation boost.

How did you like this visualisation exercise? How did it affect you?

If you liked it, do the exercise any time you can't bring yourself to get started on something. It can be a great way to boost motivation and generate positive energy!

Make a plan for the coming week: when exactly will you listen to the recording, and how will you remember it when the time comes?
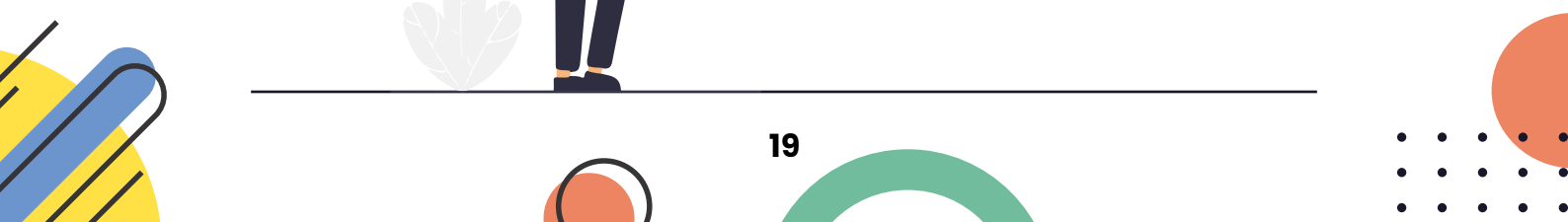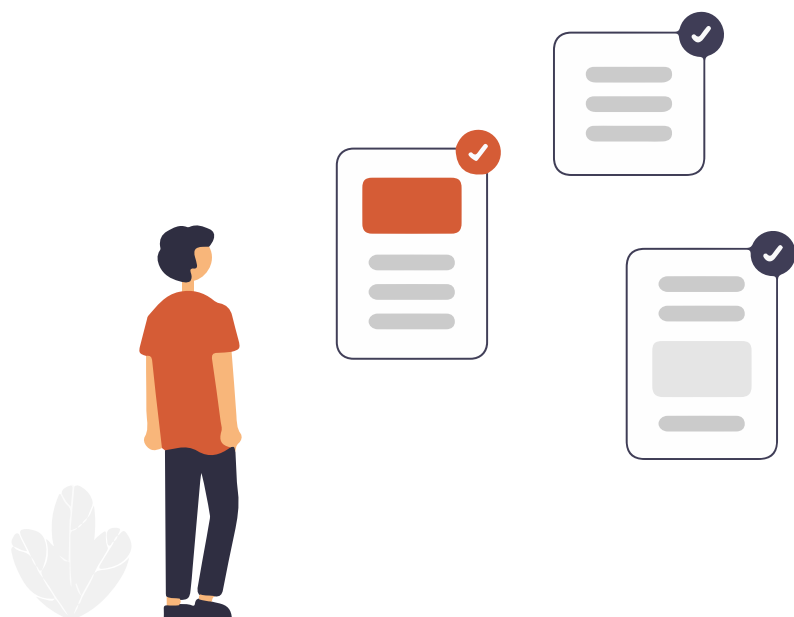
Wrap up

Awesome! You have arrived at the end of your very first module with a few new tools under your belt!

Earlier this module, you set yourself some goals (refer answer C on p.11).

How will you move forward with this goal, using the tips from this module?

This module in bullets:

• This programme is aimed at teaching you useful life skills to protect your mental health. There are 4 domains with several optional modules to choose from, so you can tailor this programme to your needs.

• You identified what areas of your life you'd like to work on.

• You learned how to set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound).

• You learned 2 motivation-boosting hacks: using pull thoughts and visualizing a positive future.

Next module unlocked!

Armed with your shiny new goals and plans, you can now continue with the next module: 'Boost your mood'. We'd recommend doing it straight away, to keep the momentum going!

Please click here to let us know your views.

You are highly encouraged to complete the next module.

Supplementary information

Video transcript of " SMART Goals"

An effective, well-formulated goal is a SMART goal.

S stands for specific. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. So make sure to identify what exactly you want to do in terms of behaviour. "Get in shape" is vague, whereas "Going for a half-hour run twice a week" gives a lot of direction.

M is measurable. You should have concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the goal. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as: How much? How many? How will I know that I'm sticking to it? How will I know when it's accomplished? So not "work out more" but rather: "work out 2 days a week".

A stands for attainable. Goals are most motivating when they are neither too easy (which is not challenging enough) nor too difficult (which can be demotivating). For example, if you hardly ever exercise at the moment, it's not very realistic to expect yourself to run a marathon in a few weeks. So make sure your goal is realistic.

R is relevant. Asking yourself what your reasons are for wanting to achieve this goal, can also increase your motivation. Why is this goal important to you? What will you gain if you succeed? Maybe you want to exercise because it relaxes you, makes you feel more fit or because it increases your self-confidence. Whatever your reasons, make sure the goal is meaningful for you!

And **T** stands for time-bound. A goal should be grounded within a time frame. Goals that can be reached in the short run are often more motivating than goals you know will take a long time. If you want to run twice a week, you could say you want to start this Tuesday and keep it up for the next three months.

And that's how you set a SMART goal!

Resources

Counselling and Psychological Services at HKU

If you would like to have a further discussion, feel free to make an appointment with the professional counsellors at the Counselling and Person Enrichment (CoPE) Section of CEDARS. It is free-of-charge, professional and confidential. Don't hesitate to seek help if needed. There are also services and support in the community. You may explore further with the community resources below:

Email : cedars-cope@hku.hk   Phone : 3917-8388

Community resources

Online Counselling	
Open Up - Jockey Club Online Youth Emotional Support	Website: www.openup.hk Facebook: www.facebook.com/hkopenup WhatsApp/SMS: (852) 9101-2012 WeChat: hkopenup
The Jockey Club TourHeart+ Project - self-help psychological interventions	Website: https://www.jcthplus.org/
uTouch online & WhatsApp counselling (Tue – Thur, 4:00 pm – 10:00 pm; Fri – Sat, 4:00 pm – 2:00 am)	Website: utouch.hk Facebook: utouch.hk Instagram: @utouch_hkfyg Whatsapp: (852) 6277-8899 Telegram: @utouchsocialworker
headwind - online service by Youth Mental Health Team, HKU Department of Psychiatry	Website: https://www.youthmentalhealth.hku.hk/
"Counseline@MHAHK" - mobile app of Mental Health Association of HK **Online counselling via mobile app** (Mon – Fri, 2:00 pm – 10:00 pm)	"Counseline@MHAHK" could be downloaded from Apple Store or Google Play for free
LevelMind@JC	Website: https://www.levelmind.hk/
Caritas Infinity Teens – Cyber Youth Support Team	Website: https://it.caritas.org.hk/ Instagram: @caristas.infinityteens Whatsapp / Signal: 9377-3666 Telegram: @caritasinfinityteens
Stewards - Teens Online　天使在線	Website: https://www.teensonline.hk/ Phone: 2648-0299 Whatsapp: 9734-8185 Email: teensonline@stewards.hk

24 Hours Hotlines

The Samaritans Befrienders Hong Kong	(852) 2389-2223
The Samaritans – 24-hour Multi-lingual Suicide Prevention Services	(852) 2896-0000
Suicide Prevention Services	(852) 2382-0000
Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre	(852) 18288
Social Welfare Department Hotline (will be transferred to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals hotline for certain hours)	(852) 2343-2255
Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs) CEASE Crisis Centre	(852) 18281
24-hour Hospital Authority Psychiatric Hotline	(852) 2466-7350

Counselling Hotlines

HKFYG U-Line (Mon – Sat, 2:00 pm – 2:00 am) (For university students)	U-Line: (852) 2777-0309 Hotline Counselling Services: (852) 2777-8899
YWCA Hotline (Mon – Fri, 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm)	(852) 2711-6622 Website: https://fwcyyc.ywca.org.hk/services/rexianfuwu
Joyful (Mental Health) Foundation (Mon – Fri, 10:00am – 1:00pm, 2:00pm – 5:00pm ; Sat, 10:00am – 1:00pm)	(852) 2301-2303 Website: https://www.jmhf.org/service

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