



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services

The Honourable Vandana Mohit

MINISTER

**Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family
Services**

on the occasion of the

Launch

Mindful Me Journal

Wednesday 28th January, 2026

@10:00 am

**Chaguanas Borough Corporation Administrative
Building - Auditorium**

Salutations

- Senator Dr. Natalie Chaitan-Maharaj, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services
- His Worship the Mayor of the Borough of Chaguanas, Mr. Faaig Mohammed
- Ms. Vera Deonanan-Balkaran, Deputy Permanent Secretary, MPSDFS
- Dr. Ayinka Nurse-Carrington, Manager, Student Support Services Division
- Mr. Bertrand Moses, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF and other representatives of UNICEF
- Ms. Alicia Hospedales, Child Protection Project Manager, Child Affairs Division, MPSDFS
- Ms. Shelley-Ann Hart, Director of Gender Affairs, MPSDFS
- Heads of Division and staff of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services.

Good morning.

Distinguished guests, and our partner agencies, colleagues from the Ministry of Education, principals, teachers, stakeholders, and a very special greeting to the primary school students from the Caroni Education District who are with us today. I am truly pleased to be here with you as we officially launch the Mindful Me: A Journal to help Students Cope with School and Test Stress.

Today, we gather not simply to launch a journal, but to make a powerful statement, that the mental and emotional wellbeing of our children is a national priority.

It is our Government's declaration that the mental and emotional wellbeing of our children matters, and that it must be protected, nurtured, and prioritised.

It is in this light that in collaboration with UNICEF, this Government has moved deliberately to develop a National Child Poverty Reduction Strategy, informed by the findings of the 2023 Multidimensional Child Poverty Report.

This report did not emerge overnight. It was submitted, available, and left unattended by the former administration, shelved while children continued to cycle through deprivation, exclusion, and inherited disadvantage.

This Government chose a different path. Upon assuming office, we acted where the Opposition hesitated. We recognised that evidence ignored is opportunity lost, and so we elevated the Report from a dormant document into a living policy instrument.

Many children and adolescents experience mental and emotional challenges. These challenges are often intensified by academic demands, examinations, and broader societal pressures.

This reality reminds us that supporting mental wellness is not optional, it is essential.

In our country, academic achievement is rightly valued. We want our children to succeed. We want them to excel.

But we must also acknowledge the weight that expectations can place on young minds. The pressure surrounding examinations, particularly at the primary and secondary levels can be overwhelming.

Stress, anxiety, and fear of failure often become silent burdens carried into classrooms, homes, and exam halls.

The Mindful Me Journal is our way of putting people first, and ensuring that our children, our future, are included in that process.

Developed by the Child Affairs Division of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, this journal is a practical, age-appropriate tool.

It is designed to help children understand their emotions, manage stress, and build resilience, particularly during examination periods.

It offers reflection exercises, coping mechanisms, and stress-management strategies that carry one powerful reminder, your worth is not defined by a single exam, a grade, or a result.

UNICEF reminds us that there is no health without mental health. When children are supported emotionally, they learn better, cope better, and grow into healthier adults. Mental wellness and academic success are not separate journeys, they are deeply connected.

This initiative aligns squarely with the Government's mandate to promote the holistic development and wellbeing of our children.

When we equip young people with tools for emotional awareness and self-care, we are investing not only in their present wellbeing, but in the future strength and resilience of our nation.

Today's launch also reflects the strength of our partnership with UNICEF, whose financial and technical support has been instrumental in advancing children's development across Trinidad and Tobago.

Through this partnership, we have implemented and promoted critical initiatives including the National Child Policy, the Child Rights Ambassadors Programme, U-Report Trinidad and Tobago, the National Child Safeguarding Strategy, child protection and mental health training, the ongoing Child Poverty Reduction Strategy, and reforms to systems supporting children in care.

We are especially grateful to UNICEF for supporting the printing of Five Hundred (500) copies of the Mindful Me Journal, ensuring that this resource reaches children who need it most, particularly those preparing for the Secondary Entrance Assessment in March 2026.

UNICEF has also supported the printing of one hundred (100) specially branded Mindful Me bottles, reinforcing the importance of self-care and wellbeing.

To the students here today:

- You are not alone.
- Your feelings matter.
- It is okay to feel nervous.
- It is okay to feel stressed or overwhelmed.
- And it is okay to ask for help.

Strength is not found in silence. Strength is found in speaking up, reaching out, and caring for your mind as well as your body. Strength is telling someone when you feel sad, angry, or fearful about your schoolwork or any challenge you may face. It is okay to say you are not okay.

To all teachers, I say thank you.

You are our partners in this journey.

Your encouragement, patience, and reassurance can make all the difference in a child's life. You help shape not only academic success, but confidence, resilience, and self-belief.

As the late Nelson Mandela once said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Today, through the Mindful Me Journal, we demonstrate our commitment to treating our children with care, compassion, and dignity.

The Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, through its Child Affairs Division, plans to bring this initiative to every education district in Trinidad and Tobago, and into Tobago. We will also engage parents, empowering them with strategies to help their children cope with examination stress and life's challenges.

Let us continue to work together, government, educators, parents, partners, and civil society, because we all have a role to play. Together, we must ensure that every child in Trinidad and Tobago is supported, protected, and given the opportunity to succeed.

To our students; dream big, believe in yourselves, and remember, no matter how hard or challenging the journey may seem, you are capable of great things.

I thank you all for being part of this important milestone, and I look forward to the positive impact this initiative will have on the lives of our children.

Thank you.