

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Can you read this?

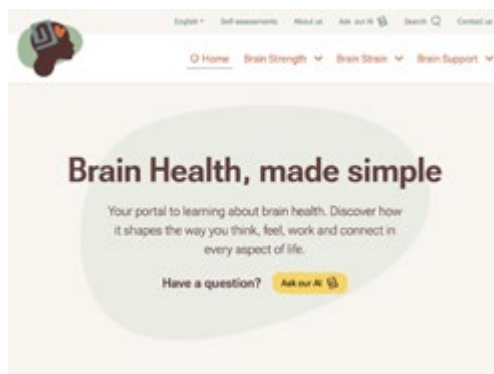
H\_\_lth inf\_r\_\_ti\_\_ is us\_\_\_ss if y\_\_ c\_n't r\_\_d it

That's what mental health advice looks like to millions of South Africans. Unreadable. Inaccessible. Unfair.

In a country with 12 official languages, most health information is still published in English, a language many do not speak fluently or confidently. The Behaviour Change Agency (BCA) recognised this as a significant barrier to public health and wellbeing – one that needed a practical, inclusive solution.

## A multilingual milestone for brain health

Launched by BCA in April 2025, Brain Matters is South Africa's first platform dedicated to brain health literacy – and it's just gone multilingual. Now available in isiZulu, Afrikaans and English, the project is reshaping how South Africans access and understand brain wellness.



Brain Matters offers evidence-based content, practical tools and everyday strategies to help people manage stress, anxiety, trauma and overall brain wellbeing.

"Nelson Mandela said: 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.' There's real science behind those words," says Jorique Fourie, neuroscientist and the project's research lead. "When we hear our mother tongue, the emotional centres of our brain light up differently. That emotional connection can be the difference between someone seeking help or suffering in silence."

## The cost of being lost in translation

Only about 8% of South Africans speak English as a first language, but nearly all health communication assumes they do.

“Even people with a Grade 12 qualification may only read medical English at a Grade 7 level,” says Pat Govender, Managing Director at BCA. “That language gap leads to misunderstanding, shame and missed opportunities to intervene early.”

But the problem goes beyond comprehension. It also involves how our brains process and retain information.

“Our brains are wired to retain information that comes in familiar patterns,” adds Fourie. “When someone learns coping strategies in their home language, those pathways are stronger. And when you’re having a panic attack at 2am, you need those tools to be automatic, not something you have to translate first.”

## What is brain health literacy?

Brain health literacy means:

- **Understanding your brain** Knowing how it works and what affects it.
- **Recognising early signs** Spotting stress, anxiety or trauma before they escalate.
- **Having practical tools** Knowing how to manage your mental wellbeing every day.
- **Speaking your language** Accessing all this information in a way that feels familiar, clear and meaningful.

## Don't just report on it. Experience it.

To mark the multilingual launch, BCA invites journalists to experience the platform's message firsthand.

**Read the full release and download the press kit in English, isiZulu or Afrikaans:**  
[brainmatters.info/press](https://brainmatters.info/press)

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