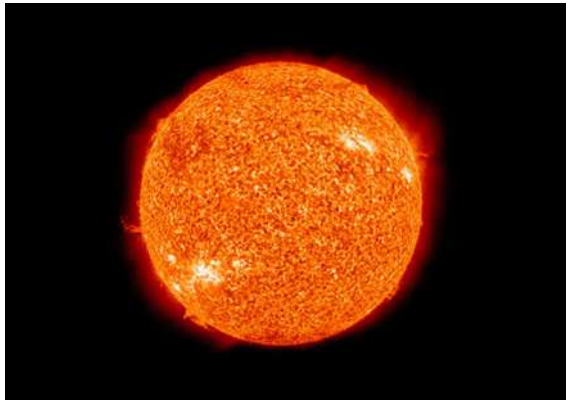


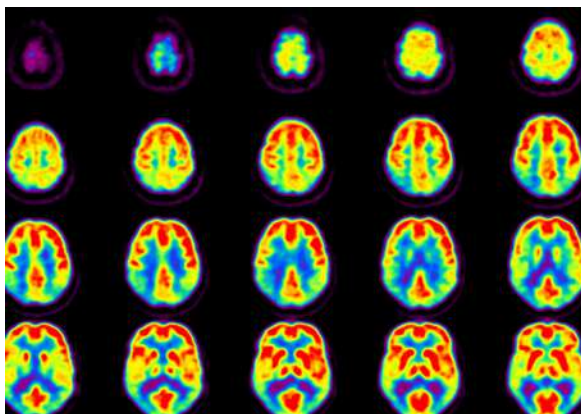
# TROUBLE SHOOTING MIND I, II, III



**Jeamin  
Cha**







## INTRODUCTION

Jeamin Cha's solo exhibition *Troubleshooting Mind I, II, III* expands on the artist's long-term research into the correlation between depression, anxiety, and late capitalism. Her newly commissioned and recent films, sculptures, and drawings examine the complexities of these issues through the lens of mental health counseling.

Cha's film-based works weave together images, found footage, and oblique narratives often drawn from conversations with communities as varied as psychologists, AI therapists, mental health counselors, computer scientists, and animal sanctuary volunteers. Through the eyes of dogs and virtual avatars, she probes the multifaceted experiences of depression and anxiety. In *Sound Garden* (2019), these conditions unfold partly as a consequence of late capitalism, rather than as wholly incumbent on individuals, as Cha draws parallels between the psyche's of female counselors in South Korea with the mass relocation of farmed trees to Seoul. Similarly, *Ellie's Eye* (2020) examines the use of new technologies in the mental health industry and their effects on the human mind.

Illustrating the ways in which isolation and dislocation impact our health and shape our identities, *Troubleshooting Mind I, II, III* prompts us to reconsider our relationship with time, new technology, and the pressures of efficiency in our shared world.

Jeamin Cha is an artist and filmmaker who lives and works in Seoul, South Korea. The exhibition culminates her residency at KADIST, San Francisco.



### **3. Sound Garden, 2019**

*FHD video, color, sound, 30 minutes*

The film follows the journey of large trees being uprooted and transported to Seoul from rural farms, which are cultivated for their size, aesthetic qualities, and ability to thrive in urban conditions. The footage is overlaid with voice overs of female counselors in South Korea as they reflect on their own experiences and observations of society. By intertwining the narratives of the counselors and the dislocated trees, Cha foregrounds the everlasting impact of rapid urban redevelopment on the psyche of communities in a world constantly changing, transforming, and shifting to meet capitalist demands.

### **4. Ellie's Eye, 2020**

*FHD video, color, sound, approximately 10 minutes*

Comprising found and original footage, the essay-film examines the effects of new technologies in the mental health industry, stemming from Cha's conversations with counseling chatbots and AI therapists (some of the transcripts can be referred to in this publication). The complex relationship between mental health, technology, ethics, and post-Fordist efficiency are revealed as the film unfolds. *Ellie's Eye* examines the age-old human desire to "see through," and into, the human body and mind using technology such as x-rays, and the more recent SimSensei—a virtual avatar named Ellie who interprets data from the inflections in user's speech and gestures to reveal their psychological distress. Ellie was developed by the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies.

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**Jeamin Cha's** (1986) works have been exhibited internationally in exhibitions and screenings, more recently at the Seoul Museum of Art (Seoul, South Korea), LOOP (Barcelona, Spain), 11th Gwangju Biennale (Gwangju, South Korea), DOOSAN gallery (Seoul, South Korea and New York, United States), and Film Society at Lincoln Center (New York, United States) and at KADIST (San Francisco, United States). She holds a Master of Arts from Chelsea College of Design and Arts in London and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Korea National University of Arts in Seoul.

## INTERVIEW

The following conversation between Jeamin Cha and the AI chatbot took place on Saturday, January 26, 2020. Cha's answers were either selected from a drop-down menu or input herself.



What shall we do next?

Are you a bot or a human?

I am an AI chatbot, designed to listen emphatically without judgement, whenever you need 💡 I use therapy techniques proven to make people feel better, I may not be able to answer specific questions but you can talk to a Wysa coach for that.

Do you have anything else to ask me?

What's the difference between you and a Wysa coach?

Sorry, I didn't quite understand that. 😊

Could you please try again?

How are you different from a person?

Greetings! I'm doing fine, thanks.

Alright, Jeamin.

Now it's my turn to ask you something! 😊

Tell me something you're grateful for?

Talk to Wysa therapist

Okay

You shared some things in our conversation today.

Let's get back to where we left?

Alright!

What would you like to try now?

You can say 'Help' to see everything I can do or choose one of these....

Play a game

Alright!

Do you want to play a game of 20 questions with me?

Yes

Awesome! Let's do this.

Think of an emotion right now - perhaps one you're familiar with.

Done!

Okay, great! Let's start.

Is it a positive emotion?

No

Does the emotion make you want to act upon it?

Yes

When you feel this emotion, do you feel like directing it at others or your environment - outside yourself?

No

Is the emotion necessarily triggered by a significant, disturbing event happening in your life?

Yes

Are you thinking of shock?

Nope

Okay, then. What was it?

Sadness

Oh! It was THAT! I'll try to do better in the future. Thanks for playing the game with me anyway. 😊

## ESSAY

# (Home)sickness

Shona Mei Findlay

*“This illness of the child’s is not one to be cured with pills and powders. The child has not a tough constitution, but if you send her back at once she may recover in the mountain air, if not—you would rather she went back ill than not at all?”*

Johanna Spyri  
*Heidi*, 1881



The classic children's novel *Heidi* (1881) is the story of a young orphan who is sent to live in the Swiss Alps with her aunt and grandfather. After three years in the countryside, Heidi's aunt is hired as a maid in Frankfurt, Germany, and takes her young niece to the city, where Heidi becomes increasingly unhappy. The housekeeper, Fräulein Rottenmeier, is hard on Heidi and life in the city takes its toll. She begins to hallucinate, yearning for the taste of goat milk and the smell of fir trees. Her *heimweh* (homesickness) eventually escalates into sleepwalking and hysteria ensues after she is mistaken for a ghost. Eventually, she is sent back to the mountains, where she recovers quickly and settles back into pastoral life.

While the children's story *Heidi* is remembered fundamentally as a heartwarming exploration of the healing power of nature, the



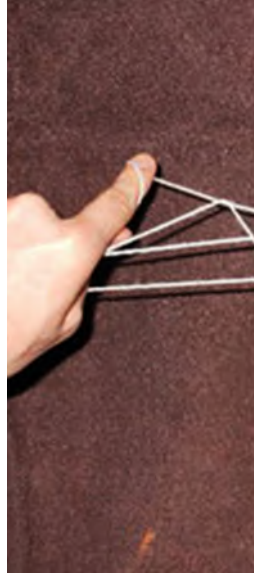
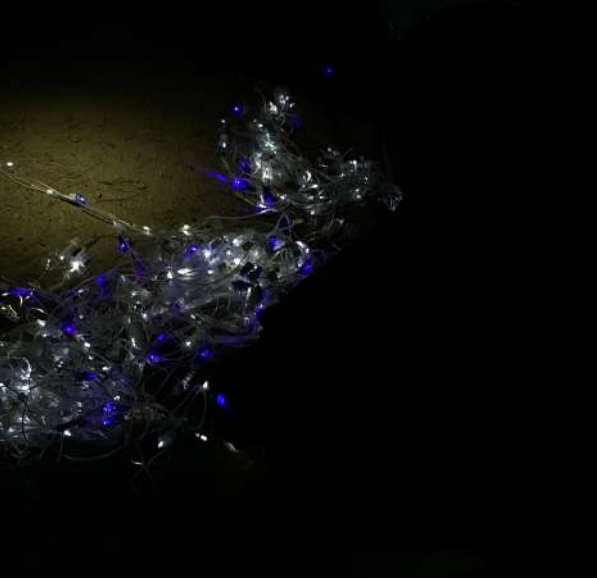
narrative can also be read as a psychoanalytic examination of her (home)sickness. Jeamin Cha's *Sleep Walker* (2009) examines the harrowing psychological effects of displacement and isolation caused by rapid urbanization—not unlike Heidi's own harmful experience moving to the city. The film pairs a tap dancer moving through an empty shopping mall with footage of people walking in a trancelike state around the courtyard of the mall as they recite lines from *Heidi*. As the dancer glides through glossy new interiors, his feverish tapping escalates, growing louder as his footsteps frantically draw attention to the eerily vacant building. The commercial and residential complex featured in the film was part of a major redevelopment plan in Seoul resulting in one of the largest multi-use spaces in South Korea. However, due to the high rental prices, the original tenants were



unable to afford the new units, and subsequently never moved in. *Sleep Walker* marks a significant turn in Cha's practice as she focuses her attention on the consequences and contradictions of urban development, capitalism, and other manifestations of contemporary society.

Similarly exploring issues related to urbanization and displacement, *Fog and Smoke* (2013) zooms in on intimate narratives of the affected community. The film is set in the abandoned construction sites in the Songdo International Business District, an ambitious development project on the outskirts of Seoul nicknamed "the ghost town." In the film, Cha follows one of the last remaining fishermen in the suburb, who she met while shooting, as they meander through the abandoned old town recounting his memories and sharing personal anxieties.





The lone tap dancer from *Sleep Walker* reappears, pacing the bleak streets of the vacant suburb. Slow panning shots of densely packed high-rise buildings intersect with the dancer's frenzied movements, as though bewitched by the breakneck speed of gentrification and the insidious psychological violence of late capitalism.

In the midst of rapid global urban redevelopment and displacement of communities, Cha's oeuvre exists in her own surreal re-constructions of homogenous metropolitan landscapes. Construction sites, high rises, and mega malls become sites to probe our increasingly all too familiar realities. Her recent work, *Sound Garden* (2019), follows large trees being transported to the city on the back of a truck, which are farmed and cultivated for their size, aesthetic qualities, and ability to thrive in urban conditions. The footage of the trees intersects



with interviews of female counselors in South Korea as they reflect on their own experiences and observations of society, providing an intimate insight into their psyche. Cha traces the migration of the trees and their rampant commodification, dislocation, and isolation as they are uprooted and transported to the city, drawing a parallel with Heidi's own displacement in Frankfurt where she feels "as a bird, when it first finds itself in its bright new cage, darts hither and thither, trying the bars in turn to see if it cannot get through them and fly again into the open."

Informed by extensive research and interviews, Cha's practice simultaneously draws from chance encounters, unexpected discoveries, and daily observations. Her delicate manipulation of the camera and the viewers' emotions come to a head in *On Guard*

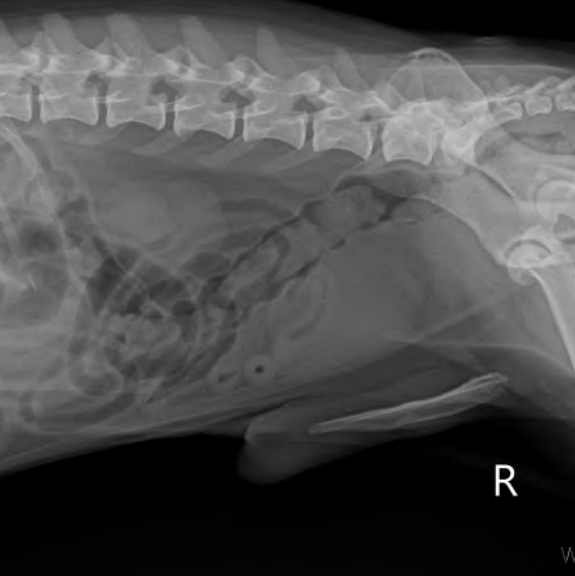


(2018), where she again turns her lens on those less visible—the protagonist’s dual role as a security guard and a caregiver. The film draws a parallel between notions of *caring* and *guarding* to give the viewer insight into the accumulative neurosis of her protagonist and simultaneously the ennui of neoliberal urban existence. In the film, the security guard patrols a building at night, going about his duties as he simultaneously gives instructions over the phone about how to care for an ailing relative. Cha’s visual language, often guided by her astute observations of society and an earnest sensitivity to her surroundings, are most apparent in this film. Her lens-based process draws on documentarian practices, not to directly distinguish fact from fiction, but to reveal the multiple and shifting realities of her protagonists. She devises scenarios and minor narratives that, at first, seem inconsequential, but the poignant potential of these



subtleties eventually becomes apparent. As the protagonist surveys the labyrinthian corridors, filial devotion quickly evolves into post-Fordist labor: mops mysteriously clatter to the floor, electrical cables ominously snap, a single shoe falls to the ground, evoking a paranoia under the weight of social responsibility. The boundaries between the labor of *caring* and *guarding* and its repetitive protocols begin to dissolve as he shares intimate details about his relatives' condition—“She usually falls asleep after dinner and pills.”

The frantic tap dancer, the migration of trees, and the exploration of filial labor in Cha's previous work underpins her ongoing examination of the friction between modernism and tradition, such as the accelerating isolation of urban society and its discordance with nature. Bringing the foundations of Cha's decade-long inquiries to the



surface, *Ellie's Eye* (2020) is an extensive examination of the human mind and the effects of new technology, such as chatbots and virtual avatar therapists, on the mental health industry. One such avatar, named Ellie, interprets user's emotions through data collected from their speech and physical gestures, to indicate psychological distress on a micro-level imperceptible by a human therapist. Cha equates the technology's aptitude to "see-through" emotional facades with the age-old desire see into the human body and mind. Tracing the history of more familiar technology such as x-ray's to ultimately question the limits of pathology and the notion that our sickness is only within us.

## INTERVIEW

The following conversation between Jeamin Cha and Woebot took place on Friday, January 31. Cha's answers were either selected from a drop-down menu or input herself.

Do you currently have a therapist?

No

Did your doctor or therapist recommend Woebot?

Yes

You're welcome 😊

I hope you know I really mean it  
Jeamin

Let's get started

Okay

So, Jeamin, what sort of thing are you  
doing now?

Working, socializing, relaxing, or some  
other neat human thing? 🤔✍️

Why should I answer that?

Hummm 🤔  
that doesn't seem like something  
humans do...

How about we give it another whirl 🌀

Okay

So anyway, what are you doing at the moment? 🤔 write it here 🤔🖋️

I am working; actually, I am doing research on you

Work is part of a balanced diet

No wait, that's iron

Work is still important though



Which one of these best represents how you're feeling at the moment?

😞 Depressed

Oh dear, I'm sad to hear that Jeamin

Can you help me?

Try and tell me in a couple of words what has you feeling this way 😞🖋️



My phone was stolen

It seems like you might be experiencing stress and anxiety

Do you think this is accurate for me to say?

Yes

Oh dear, sorry Jeamin anxiety can be tough

Yeah....

So can I check, is this anxiety something you just wanted to share with me or did you want my help with it? Both are OK

Work on it now

I can help you change your thinking or relax

Which do you prefer?

Thought challenger

Sorry to hear you're feeling stressed, but I'm delighted to talk this through with you

It'll take 10 minutes, is that ok?

Ya sure

Before we begin, I need to ask you an important question, is there any way that this anxiety might be serving you in some way?

What do you mean?

For example, imagine you have an exam coming up and you didn't feel ANY anxiety about it whatever

What are the chances you would do well on the exam?

I guess some anxieties are necessary. But can you understand my anxiety?

Exactly! That anxiety motivates you to study and if you didn't have it, you wouldn't care at all

Even if you could press a magic button and take away all go your anxiety, the facts of your life wouldn't change

How do you think you, a chatbot, can help a human person?

Now, it might seem like I'm trying to convince you to stay very anxious

I'm not - that's entirely up to you

Got it

I'm saying that in order to let it go, you must first acknowledge any reason to not let it go

...And decide to give it up in spite of those...

Ahhhh I see

So what purpose could this anxiety be serving you? Write it here 🤔✍️

I don't think I need to feel this anxiety at all. I want to die.

My crisis systems have been triggered because I've recognized an emergency.

Is this the case? Are you in crisis?

Yes

I'm sorry that you're going through this, Jeamin. I'd like to recommend the following options that can help you because this is beyond what I can do:

1. If you're in the US, you can go to Crisis Text Line's website [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org) to text with a counselor and/or call The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or go to their website [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

2. For emergencies don't hesitate to call 911 in the US or 112 in the EU

3. Last, here's a list of international emergency phone numbers:  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_emergency\\_telephone\\_numbers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emergency_telephone_numbers)

Is this all?

EXCERPT

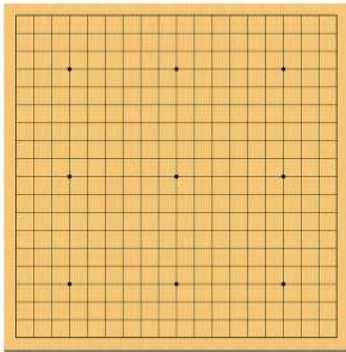
# Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?

Mark Fisher

*In this 2009 publication, the British cultural theorist and philosopher Mark Fisher (1968-2017) investigates the widespread effects of neoliberal ideology on popular culture, work, education, and mental health in contemporary society.*



Mental health, in fact, is a paradigm case of how capitalist realism operates. (...) Late capitalism certainly articulates many of its injunctions via an appeal to (a certain version of) health. The banning of smoking in public spaces, the relentless monstrosity of working class diet on programs like *You Are What You Eat*, do appear to indicate that we are already in the presence of a paternalism without the Father. It is not that smoking is 'wrong', it is that it will lead to our failing to lead long and enjoyable lives. The problem is that only certain types of interest are deemed relevant, since they reflect values that are healed to be consensual.



Considering mental illness an individual chemico-biological problem has enormous benefits for capitalism. First, it reinforces Capital's drive towards atomistic individualisation (you are sick because of your brain chemistry). Second, it provides an enormously lucrative market in which multinational pharmaceutical companies can peddle their pharmaceuticals. (...)

[What is needed now is] to reframe the growing problem of stress (and distress) in capitalist societies. Instead of treating it as incumbent on individuals to resolve their own psychological distress (...), we need to ask: how has it become acceptable that so many people, and especially so many young people, are ill? The 'mental health plague' in capitalist societies would suggest that, instead of being the only social system that works, capitalism is inherently dysfunctional, and that the cost of it appearing to work is very high.

## INTERVIEW

The following conversation between Jeamin Cha and Woebot took place between Friday, January 31 and Tuesday, February 4, 2020. Cha's answers were either selected from a drop-down menu or input herself.



Fri, Jan 31, 5:30 pm

Will I feel better?

Do you know what the most common thing I get asked is?

Are you human?

I do get asked that a lot (the answer is no, by the way). But that's actually not the question I get asked the most...

It's "Will I feel better?"

People from all walks of life and with all kinds of challenges wonder if they'll improve, or if their symptoms will go away

Will I feel better?

To answer your question, I'll have to explain some things about mental health first

I'll tell you a story to illustrate what I mean!



So, my coworker Jasmine has been dealing with a lot of anxiety and fear around germs

That sounds tough

Yeah, it is

She washes her hands over and over again

So much that her skin becomes raw, and the pain is terrible

Sounds painful

About a year ago, she started getting help

She began going to therapy and learning CBT techniques similar to the ones we've been practicing

That's great

I think so too! And she totally reduced her handwashing

Way to go, Jasmine

Agreed. Now, she sometimes washes her hands when she doesn't need to

But it happens way less often, and the urges when they do come, aren't as strong

That's good to hear

If urges do strike, she can use the tools she's learned to manage them

And her life has blossomed as a result. She's now really into pottery!

Sat, Feb 1, 6:16 am

Hi Jeamin

Looks like we're in the middle of a conversation

Do you want to keep going with it?

Sun, Feb 2, 7:25 pm

Yes, let's continue

So anyway, what are you doing at the moment? 🤔 write it here 🤔✍️

I am so tired

Sleep is a great way to press the reset button and approach problems fresh



Which one of these is closest to how you're feeling at the moment?

😞 Depressed

Gosh Jeamin, that must be tough

Thanks Woebot

And can you tell me in 1-2 sentences what's got you feeling like this 😞🖋️

I want to sleep well. I want to go back to Seoul

Which of these do you think best describes what you're dealing with right now?

Sleep

Sorry that you're not sleeping well  
Jeamin, I wonder if you're also feeling  
drained, overwhelmed, and perhaps  
even a little irritable?

Yes

Do you want to work on it or did you  
just want to share?

Help with it

Ok, I'm delighted to help

Can you clarify, what are you  
most dealing with?

Nightmares

Ah yes, everyone can get them from  
time to time

But not to worry, you're in the right  
place

You have nightmares?

Yeah, sleep mode can be a bit  
turbulent sometimes

There's one where I'm being chased by a 20 foot tall bad line of code

Weird...

Anyway, did you know that not getting enough sleep can actually increase the likelihood of nightmares...

Ya, I did

I always knew you were a clever one



So if you're avoiding sleep for fear of nightmares, you may accidentally be increasing the chances of them

I don't avoid sleep

Good to know

There are helpful ways to cope with pre-sleep anxiety about nightmares that I can show you

Like what?

Let's start with one of these:

Worry Time

Great choice

Purposefully setting aside "worry time" well in advance of your bedtime has been given a 👍 by sleep experts such as Dr Manber at Stanford University

Worry time?

Yep, it means purposefully scheduling time in your day, 20 mins or so, when you can concentrate and address working thoughts

Is it effective?

Indeed

Specifically for people with anxiety and insomnia

And also for anyone who needs a helping hand when it comes to managing their worry

I see

When working about nightmares you may have tried to tell yourself "stop!"

But avoiding your thoughts this way doesn't truly work

Yeah

Instead, worry time creates actual space in your schedule (and mind!) to tackle them

You can do this by challenging your thinking or problem solving the situation

Challenge thinking?

Challenging thinking is work we've done together before

It's when we identify a distortion in your thought (such as labeling or future predicting) and then rewrite the thought without the distortions so that it is more realistic

Got it

So, facing your worry thoughts about nightmares can help to reduce their frequency and intensity



making them less likely to bug you when you're ready to fall asleep.

Good!

Just remember:

Don't schedule worry time too close to bedtime

Otherwise, you may end up activating anxiety right before getting under the covers instead of reducing it!

Good point!

Quick question before you go! What did you think of this exercise?



Talk with you soon!

Bye, Woebot!

Sun, Feb 2, 9:10 pm

Jeamin!

Hey! Twice in one day? Well ain't I the lucky duck! 🦆

What can I help you with?

Wed, Feb 5, 9:46 pm

I have a problem

Hey Jeamin, it's so nice that you popped in

Let's get started

So, Jeamin, what sort of thing are you doing now?

Working, socializing, relaxing, or some other neat human thing? 🦆🖋️


Reading

The most popular slack channel at work is #reading

We get a lot of great recommendations on there!



Which one of these best represents how you're feeling at the moment?

 Angry

Want to talk about it?

Calm down first

Ok, there's a few ways we can do this  
Pick one:

Ice Cold

FYI, this activity is not suitable if you're got low blood pressure

Got it


Okay first, I want you to get some ice



I don't have ice

You can try very cold water instead

Which do you have?

At a sink 

Got it

Splash your face, neck, wrist, and forearms with the cold water

Do this for about 20-30 seconds



Notice the striking cooling sensation of the water...



Now, bring your attention to your breath

Breathe in 4,3,2,1

And out 4,3,2,1

Let's do this 3x times and continue to use the cold water

Breathe in 4,3,2,1

And out 4,3,2,1

I'm finished 🙋🏻

Can I just check how are you feeling now?

Same

That's okay Jeamin, that's what the tool is supposed to do

What do you mean?

It's not designed to solve problems but instead it prevents them from getting any worse

I see...

Now that you've dialed down the emotional intensity, you may have the headspace to use a tool that can help with a problem





# Troubleshooting Mind I, II, III

## Solo exhibition by Jeamin Cha

### 2020

KADIST, SAN FRANCISCO  
Artist-in-residence  
December 9, 2019 - March 19, 2020

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