

My Newfound Appreciation for Life at Home

AAHIR MRITTIKA

I've been in the same outfit for days now, and I wouldn't have it any other way. This oversized and worn-in t-shirt has seen me on my best and worst days, and offered comfort on both. It's my supportive companion, taking in my snot and tears as I wipe my hands on it for everything. There's a small hole on one of the sleeves where my finger gets stuck every time I try to get the shirt on; it's like a little joke between us. The material has the right amount of softness that can only be achieved by wearing it for months: it's light enough to let the breeze flow in, but stiff enough so it doesn't hang too loose. My mother has been trying to steal it forever to use it as a cleaning rag. But if I never take it off, she can't do that, can she?



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

The stripes of my pyjamas match the green accents of my t-shirt. They comple-

ment each other to create a harmony of cosiness. It's rather fashionable how the green stripes cross with the blue ones to form a checkered pattern. They've several coffee stains all over them that make me nostalgic about the late nights with looming examinations. Since then, my coffee has gotten better and exams harder. Spending so much time in quarantine, I've developed the perfect combination for coffee. I hum my favourite songs when I make it every morning and the glorious smell hits me. I often fantasize about opening up a little cafe serving this coffee in my pyjamas and t-shirt.

I had never realised my gratitude for these articles of clothing before. I only reached out for them when I was too tired, or when period cramps hit and I wanted to curl up and cry. Being in

quarantine gave me a lot of time to be thankful for the small things I have. The tiny plate from when I was a child that only I get to use, with Meena and Mithu on it, remnant of all the valuable life lessons this cartoon taught me; the light white shawl I wrap around myself like an embrace, when it's slightly chilly at night.

As I settle down on the sofa to watch the news, I realise this is what home feels like. Good coffee in the red mug I won at a lottery, my mother annoyed at me for putting my feet up on the cushion, my father worried about how dark my future is because I woke up at noon, and crunchy toast biscuits.

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Mohammadpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com

Keep Your MENTAL HEALTH in Check

ADHORA AHMED

As the death toll keeps rising and panic brews even more, we fear for ourselves and our loved ones. For those in self-quarantine or self-isolation, home can start to feel like a prison. While we are constantly being told to wash hands and check for physical symptoms—for good reason—the conversation surrounding mental health is painfully scarce.

During crises, experiencing stress and anxiety is almost always inevitable. News cycles contribute significantly to this, since most of the coverage is negative. If you feel dismayed by all the chaos, limit your exposure to news. Don't have the TV on all day or read the papers too often. Designate a specific time of the day to get updates.

Social media is no better, if not worse. As if the disheartening facts weren't enough, outlandish rumours like coronavirus "interviews" might confuse or scare you even

more. If this bothers you, take a break from social media. Rely on trusted sources like WHO, CDC and IEDCR for information.

It's okay to be clueless on how to spend all that extra free time in self-quarantine. Indulge in activities you enjoy to take your mind off of Covid-19. Read books, binge on Netflix or whatever floats your boat, as long as you stay indoors.

Social distancing might have put a temporary halt on hangouts. But, this is a time to feel grateful for technology. Connect with your friends or loved ones if you're feeling lonely; they're probably going through the same thing. Self-quarantine won't feel so bad anymore.

The body and the soul are intertwined, so eating healthy, working out, sleeping well and staying hydrated are important for your mental well-being. Doing breathing exercises and meditation also help to put your mind at ease. Better if it's in an area where you can access nature and sunlight,



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

like your balcony or rooftop.

This time is especially difficult for people with pre-existing mental health conditions. With additional anxiety induced by the Covid-19 pandemic, symptoms might worsen or new ones may appear. Keep an

eye on any of these signs and continue treatment, if you're undergoing any. If you're feeling overwhelmed by negative emotions, which may lead to thoughts of self-harm, seek professional help or contact any of *Kaan Pete Roi* hotlines, which are listed on their website <http://shuni.org>

If you really think about it, the basic precautions to combat Covid-19—washing hands, staying home—are easy to follow. If you're feeling sad, remember that you're saving millions of lives just by doing these. Take some pride in that. And remember, this too shall pass.

References

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51873799>

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