



**ECHOES BY**  
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# A TALE OF TWO LAPTOPS

**I**  
 We have two laptops. One used to be mine. The other belonged to my father till he retired. My daughter would use that laptop when she got tired of her desktop. My wife never needed a laptop. She'd use her desktop for her school activities. I also had a desktop in my study. My dependence on my laptop was minimal. This is how life was moving on. Until the coronavirus came.

My wife and I started working from home. Our house-staff were advised to stay in their homes till things improve. The only person outside our family to stay with us was my father's nurse.

Two idle laptops and the coronavirus made us experience life in ways that would have been unthinkable in the beginning of 2020.

**II**

Soon after education institutes closed, I started working in our common living space with my father. My laptop became my workstation.

As I was developing video lectures, preparing Powerpoints, and writing notes, I spent more time with my father than I did in my whole life. My mother left us in



2007. Since then my father kept himself busy teaching in universities. After his second stroke in 2017 he decided to call it a day. I was busy with my life. I didn't focus on my father as much as I should have. Like many old people, he started leading a solitary life. Working from home made us develop a bond that didn't exist when I was growing up. It made me realise, old-age loneliness can be cruel.

**III**

What happened to the other laptop that was lying idle?

By June it became evident education institutes weren't going to open soon.

First my wife's school; then my daughter's school started online classes. The platform was Zoom. It coincided with my own experience of learning Zoom and alternative platforms to adapt in a changing world that may soon become reality. All of a sudden, the three of us started competing for two laptops.

My daughter starts Grade VIII in July. This is a critical year. Decisions taken now will influence the rest of her life. However, like all teenagers, she's developed a world of her own to which I seldom get access. Working from home and her tutor not coming created an opportunity for me to

become a part of her life once again. We started to re-discover each other. She's started to share her anxieties and her joys like she used to when she was a child always seeking my attention. Teen age is full of uncertainty. Uncertain outcomes can go either way, positive or negative, and leave a mark for the rest of one's life. Being able to talk with my daughter at this stage of her life has been more than a blessing in disguise.

**IV**

Age has made me appreciate, blowing up opportunities when I was younger was natural. It was a part of growing up. Age has also made me appreciate, opportunities don't appear every day. When they do, grab them while you can. As the famous last words of Sri Bhagvad Gita echoes, "What will happen shall happen for a good." Two laptops that were sitting idle for ages, were meant to be sitting idle to reveal a gift when the time came. Working from home turned out to be a good idea in the end.

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## How to make the most of online classes

**FAISAL BIN IQBAL**

As we enter yet another week of social distancing, and continue to try and embrace the "new normal", we must learn to adjust ourselves accordingly. One of the major shifts in this regard has been seen in the academic sector, where classes are moving online, and we're expected to attend them from the comfort of our home. Attending classes while sitting at home may seem like a dream come true, but certain adjustments need to be made to make these classes fruitful. In order to help you make the most of these online classes, here are a few things you should remember.

### SETTING UP A STUDY ROUTINE

This is something you need to ensure if you're working with pre-recorded lectures. The idea that the lectures are going to be there for as long as you need them might lead to procrastination. This in turn, creates a backlog before you can get started with assignments or quizzes. Hence, it's always a good idea to maintain a proper study plan. Fix up a dedicated time slot for each day or week during which you'll focus only on your studies and nothing else. Never allow yourself to think that you can always do something tomorrow when it needs to be done today.

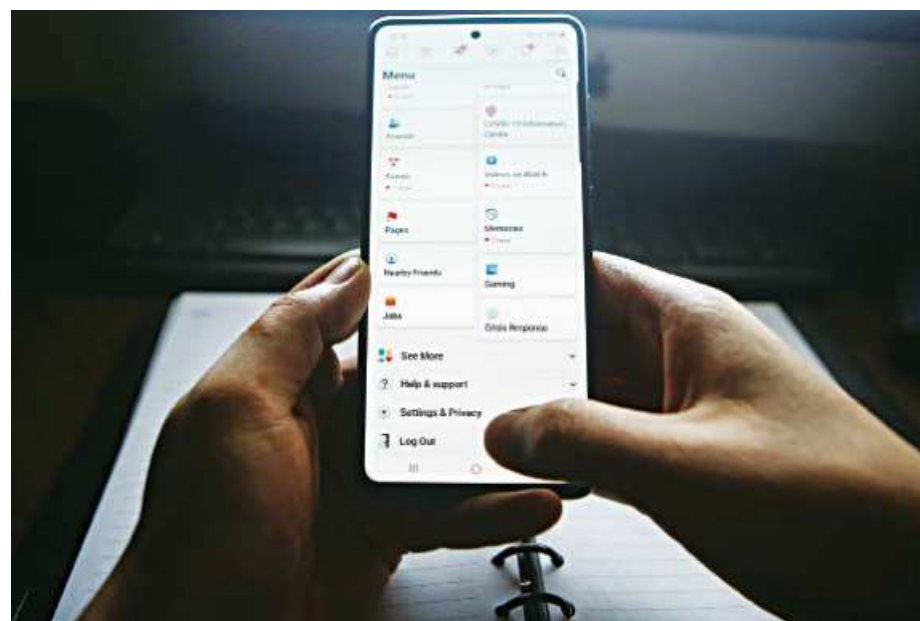


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### LOGGING OUT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Given that you'll have to attend classes on your computer or smartphone, there's a high possibility that you'll be distracted by the chime or a ding of a notification. The best way for you to avoid these distractions is by simply logging out of all your social media accounts prior to your

class or study time. Don't let such inconveniences hinder your academic progress.

### ESTABLISHING A 'DO NOT DISTURB' POLICY

Ask your family members or roommates not to disturb you during your class or designated study time, unless it's an emergency. If possible, you should try and

isolate yourself in your room or any other corner of your house.

### TAKING NOTES

Don't let online classes stop you from taking notes. It's a habit that's very helpful, especially in cases where you need to have a quick glance at the lecture or topic without having to go through the entire length of it. You should also consider taking notes on pen and paper instead of your computer. Numerous studies conducted over the years have suggested that taking handwritten notes can help you remember them better.

### A SMALL BREAK EVERY NOW AND THEN

No one enjoys studying continuously at a stretch. That's why, you should definitely consider taking short breaks at certain intervals. Have a quick snack, or scroll through your Facebook feed for a few minutes, and then get back to where you left off. Make sure you're keeping track of time, and not overdoing these breaks.

While we continue our academic activities online, we should also remember that this is uncharted waters both for us, as well as our institutions and instructors. Hence, we need to give each other the opportunity to make full use of this new method of teaching, and help each other as much as we can.