

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE
SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 3, 2020, BHADRA 19, 1427 BS

A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star



CAN NIGHT OWLS LEAD A
HEALTHY LIFE?

PG 3

THE TERROR ON APP
STREET

PG 6

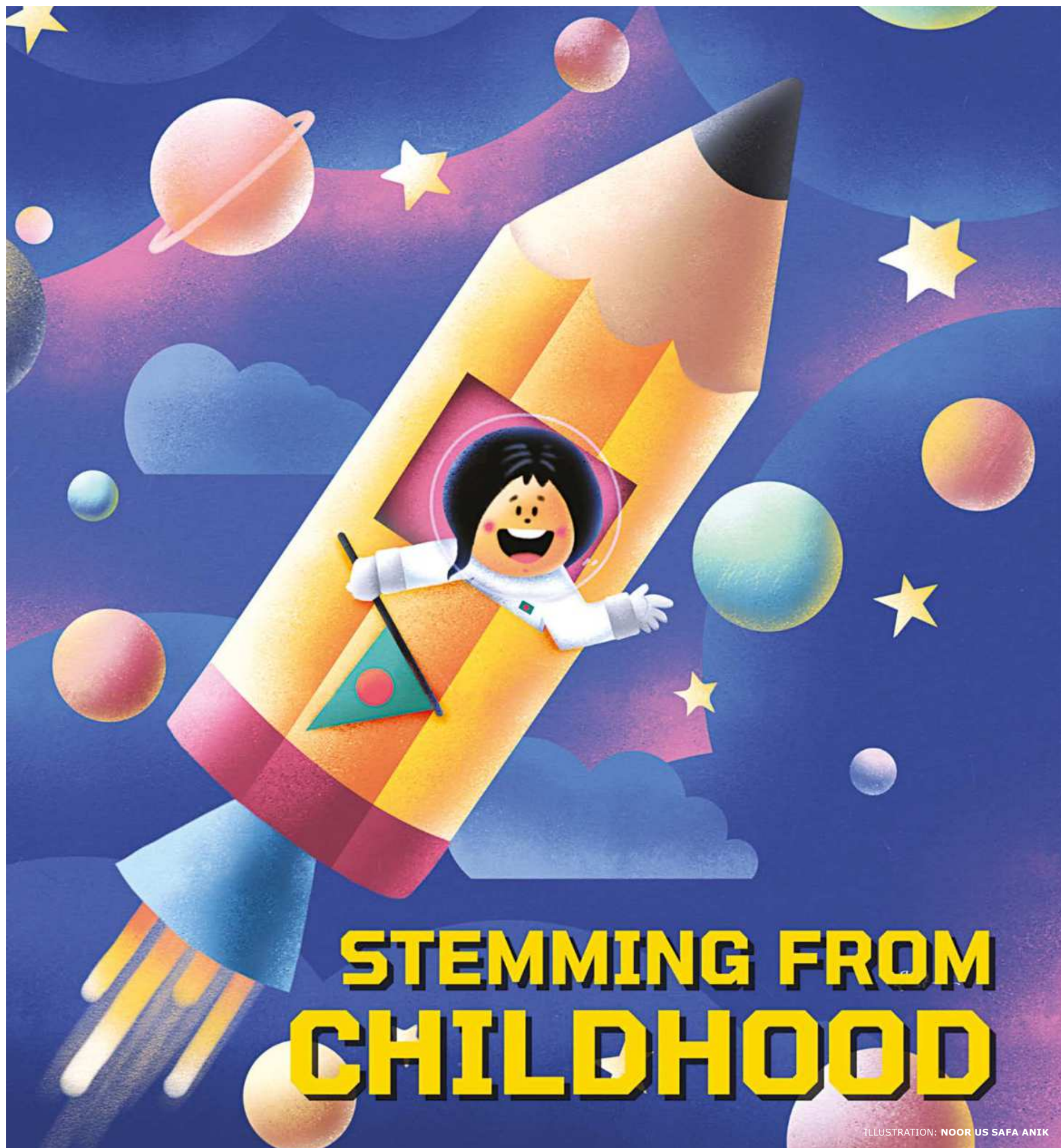


ILLUSTRATION: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

EDITORIAL

It's gotten to a stage where reality is becoming hard to grasp. I know that sounds alarmist and people often say these things without meaning them, but let me explain. Think about your best friend. You've been in contact this entire time, but whenever you think of your best friend, you're probably still thinking about the person you knew in March, right? But here's the thing, time changes people. Time spent isolated changes people even more. Do you really know your friends anymore, if you haven't met them in such a long time? Do your friends still know you? Do you know yourself? Which version of yourself is the reality? The one on Facebook or the one on Instagram? Or is it the one in the group chat where you think you can be your "real" self?

This is all becoming too much. We need to keep in touch with real world things. Maybe the news will help, a daily dose of reality. But wait, no, none of these things look real anymore either. Did that person really say that? Are you allowed to say that? Did that really happen? What?

-- Azmin Azran, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH PODCAST REVIEW



The football podcast I needed, and deserved

AZMIN AZRAN

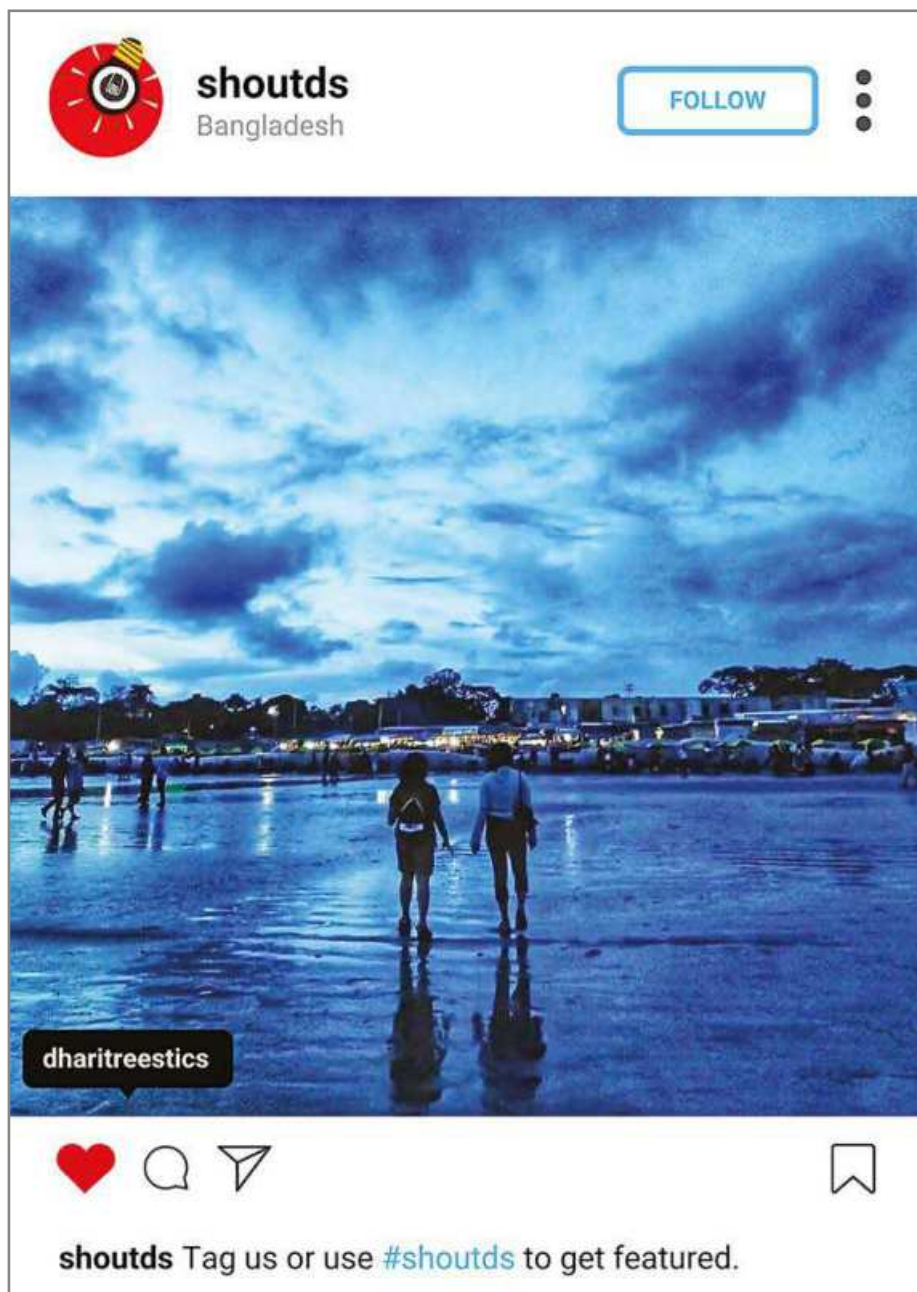
There's a subset of people who started watching Premier League football in the mid-2000s, whose first FIFA World Cup was Germany 2006, and who remember Peter Crouch really really well. He's a Premier League and England legend who's played for Queens Park Rangers, Portsmouth, Aston Villa, Southampton, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur, Stoke City and Burnley; he's also a comedy genius who's been doing one of the most brilliant football podcasts out there for the last two years.

That Peter Crouch Podcast is fundamentally just a show where a professional footballer talks about life as a professional footballer. Journalists Tom Fordyce and Chris Stark double as both fans and friends of Crouchie, and their ability to have fun on mic, or at least sound like they're having fun, is what makes the podcast. The early episodes had me worried that they were taking it a little too easy and maybe they eventually got cancelled, but it turned out quite the opposite. The podcast kept getting bigger and bigger as I listened to one episode after another, and you could tell that by the increasing magnitude of their running gags, as well as their end of season events. The fact that the listeners are made to feel involved in the growth of the podcast is a nod to the brilliance of the people behind it, and how meticulously they tapped into the market of people who

love football and footballers, and want to enjoy it as a human experience, a break from the commercialised product that's often on television.

I want to talk a bit about the running gags on this podcast, they have one or two every season, and they're all so ridiculous that it's brilliant. First, there was the search for the photo of Crouchie and Andres Iniesta that was taken at Ibiza, a photo that Don Andres allegedly asked for instead of it being the other way around. Then there was the manhunt for the footballer nicknamed "Parched", who was given that name because during breaks in training, he'd always be seen having a drink of water around the coaches and the manager. Unique details about a footballer's life are often revealed in this show, including but not limited to the fact that footballers have their underwear taken care of by the kitman.

The thing that I really love about That Peter Crouch Podcast is that the conversations sound exactly like what you'd imagine it'd be if you had a celebrity footballer as a friend. You'd ask stupid questions, they'd laugh at you, you'd laugh together, and then you'd be left flabbergasted at the answer because rich and famous people have crazy lives. That's the vibe of the show, and that's a big reason why I really love this podcast. The details and the insight on a footballer's life and struggles is what keeps me coming back. The fact that Peter Crouch is a bit like football's Forrest Gump is just the cherry on top.



Can night owls lead a healthy life?

H. RAINAK KHAN REAL

Lately my sleep schedule has been pretty messed up.

Being a night owl, it was always normal for me to stay awake until 3 AM and wake up early to catch the 7 AM bus to attend my 8 AM class. To make up for this sleep deficiency, I would take a 1.5-hour nap in the evening after getting back home, which kept me refreshed and active at night to continue the repetition of the cycle. On the weekends, I would sleep longer to compensate for the overall lack of sleep.

But ever since the university closed due to the pandemic, I stopped sleeping at night entirely and started going to bed early in the morning, thinking that getting plenty of sleep during the day would allow me to continue leading a healthy life. But there was this constant feeling of discomfort which I couldn't shake off, perhaps because sleeping during the day was anything but normal. I was also worried about the long term detrimental effects it might have on my body and so, I decided to investigate.

To my shock, I found from a study that mistimed sleep, such as sleeping during the day may disrupt and alter the rhythms of our gene activities (Archer et al., 2014). Another study suggested that rapid changes in more than 100 proteins in the blood can



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

occur if one sleeps during the day even for just one 24-hour period, and over time, these biochemical changes in blood protein levels may put us at a higher risk of being affected with obesity, diabetes, heart disease and even cancer (Depner, Melanson, McHill & Wright, 2018). Therefore, pulling

all-nighters and sleeping during the day is not a good choice, even more so if it's continued for a prolonged period of time.

However, sleep deprivation, a common phenomenon among night owls, is actually more detrimental than sleeping during the day. Researchers have uncovered evidence

indicating that individuals who go to sleep very late and in turn wake up very late tend to have lower brain connectivity and therefore, they are more prone to attention deficit, slower reaction time and increased sleepiness during working hours (Facer-Childs et al., 2019). The traditional 9 to 5 working hours can be tough for the night owl, because the sleep deficit may result in diminished performance during the morning.

But being a night owl isn't all bad, as they tend to be more creative and have higher cognitive abilities because of higher cortisol secretion within their bodies. Night owls have also been found to be risk takers and researchers have found no significant difference in overall performance between night owls and early birds.

New research indicates that resetting the late timing of such individuals has a positive impact on mental health and performance and it is possible to reset our internal biological clock within a week. So, adjusting the sleep routine and maintaining a healthy diet can help night owls to lead a healthy life.

H. Rainak Khan Real is working hard to create a nationwide transmutation circle that can speed up university graduation. Send him help at rainakkhanreal@gmail.com

The Dangers of Parasocial Relationships

ADHORA AHMED

If you're reading this, you're probably a fan of at least one individual in the public eye. If it's an athlete, you watch all of their games. If it's a musician, you listen to their songs on repeat. If it's a social media influencer, you like and comment on all of their Instagram posts.

These activities fall under *parasocial interactions*, a term coined by sociologists Donald Horton and Richard Whorl in 1956 to describe the one-sided relationship between the audience and celebrities with mass media exposure. For example, when famous guests recount anecdotes in a talk show, they're unaware of the millions of viewers watching them. On the other hand, the viewers learn details of their private lives.

When you admire someone, you devote time and interest in doing so because you can relate to their work on a personal level. It's a natural response. In dull and dark moments, these interactions can provide relief. However, if you become too emotionally dependent on someone who isn't even aware of your existence, there's a problem. You have entered the territory of a *parasocial relationship*.

In these relationships, some fans may suffer from the delusion that their favourite celebrities are their friends. As social media has made parasocial interactions more accessible, the gap between the two parties has been reduced. Public figures are able to share intimate details of their lives, and fans can easily interact with them through comments and private messages. Therefore, it has become easy for some fans to cultivate parasocial relationships.

What these fans forget is that they are a largely unknown entity to the figures of their admiration. They also fail to notice that the celebrity image is carefully crafted in order to *seem* authentic, which can never represent one's



entire personality. As a result, delusional fans may feel entitled over their favourite icon's personal lives. If this behaviour deteriorates further, fans might become obsessive and make unreasonable demands that intrude upon their favourite icon's privacy, not limited to stalking. Some fans might put themselves at great risk in order to draw the attention of the person they venerate.

This extreme emotional dependency not only takes a toll on the fan affected, it can also put a strain on their interpersonal relationships. When an obsessive fan gives all of their attention to hero worship, there's hardly anything left for family and friends – relationships that are comparatively more balanced and fulfilling. It might give way to resentment and finally abandonment, leading the fan to become more dependent on the idolised human they obsess over.

Therefore, it's wise to keep in mind in your future parasocial interactions that you don't know your favourite public figure personally, and vice versa – no matter how much you think you connect with them. Save some of that emotional energy for your loved ones; they need it more than your favourite celebrity does. It will do you good in the long run.

References

1. The Verge (September 17, 2018). *YouTubers are not your friends*.
2. Medium.com (May 26, 2017). *YouTube Celebrities Are Killing Our Ability To Make Friends*.

Adhora Ahmed daydreams too much. Send her reality checks at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com

STEMMING FROM CHILDHOOD

THE DEFINITIVE **YOUTH** MAGAZINE
SHOUT

HIYA ISLAM & MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

STEM has now become a buzzword in education, parents and educators are stressing over to such an extent that it has become a norm to pursue STEM. Short for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, the field is receiving attention that is justified in the sense that more and more careers are merging these disciplines and calling for critical and analytical skills. Its importance is emphasised because it generates critical thinkers and paves way to innovation for sustained growth and a stable economy.

For people aiming for a STEM field, cultivating a passion and understanding of STEM from an early age can be a good start. Surely, it is not mandatory nor important for every mind to enter such a field. However, honing skills in mathematics, natural sciences and technology will arguably help in any future career in the 21st century. Not to mention the significant amount of leverage it adds to classes taken in schools and colleges. Here is a guide to resources, both online and offline, that children of different age groups could use to build a strong foundation in STEM.

CLASSES IN DHAKA

SciTech Academy runs classes on the fundamentals of STEM and then specialised classes on robotics, programming and environmental sciences. Their classes touch on coding, animation, physics, chemistry, digital and media. They cater to 6 to 14 year olds with separate classes for 6 to 10 and 11 to 14 year olds respectively.

Each course runs for three months and their monthly fee is about BDT 5500 with an admission fee of BDT 1000. They aim to teach kids 21st century skills including problem solving, critical thinking, curiosity and creativity. Their office is at Gulshan 2.

Aloha Bangladesh teaches mental math to kids in a way that builds their computational ability for the long run. Kids learn to calculate faster and more confidently, without using a calculator. Aloha has almost 30 branches across Dhaka city and 15 more in different districts across the country. Their classes are split into Aloha Senior and Aloha Junior based on age range. Aloha's admission fee for their Dhaka centres ranges from BDT 4000 to BDT 5900 while their monthly fee ranges from BDT 1500 to BDT 2500. Prices vary in districts outside Dhaka. Currently they are running online courses through Zoom.

STEM 4 Future uses a multidisciplinary

format to teach kids STEM subjects and exposes them to the practical applications of the field. They have a “computing for kids” programme where 7 to 9-year olds are taught Scratch and 10 to 14 year olds Python. Kids learn coding, game development and design. They are located in Uttara Sector 4.

YOUTUBE CHANNELS

While kids being on electronic devices for significant amounts of time is generally discouraged, the limited time they are allowed can be used to gear them towards science-related YouTube channels which do a great job of explaining scientific concepts in a fun, learning manner.

Crash Course Kids uses animation to teach everything from space science to physical science and life science. *SciShow Kids* has a more practical approach and has a variety of content including fun segments such as ‘Science in the Kitchen’, and segments where they explain how everyday machines around us work. There

are also channels that are dedicated simply to inspire and engage girls in science, such as *Science With Sophie*.

Similarly, *CrashCourse* focuses on science but for an older age range. Their playlist is diverse: from World History to Chemistry, from Artificial Intelligence to Entrepreneurship, they have it all. While we are on the subject of super fun animated videos, *Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell* specialises in futurism, philosophy and of course, science!

Ever watched *Draw My Life* videos? We love it. Some of us just can't get over how aesthetically pleasing the doodles look. And you can get more of these while learning fun laws of science under 5 to 10 minutes. Follow *ASAPScience* or *minutephysics* or maybe both!

If you are clinging more on to humane tutorials, you could try *Physics Girl* or *Veritasium*. These are great channels for physics enthusiasts. But if you're more of a biology person, *Bozeman Science* could

soon become your most watched channel once you start.

BLOGS

Videos can only go so far. Not all can be covered. And long videos are likely to lose audience midway. Some people like to read. Behold, blogs.

For the little ones, curiosity never ends. These websites give answers to everything. Why does ice melt? What is a blood clot? Newton's cradle? Try out www.scienceabc.com or www.wonderopolis.org

Advanced learners can check out one of the following: www.livescience.com, www.howstuffworks.com, www.zmescience.com, or www.scientificamerican.com

AT-HOME ACTIVITIES

There are plenty of fun and feasible science experiments and activities that kids can do safely at home and with available household objects (with some adult supervision of course).

Playing around and having fun with science may create a liking for the subject once they realise how fun it can be.

Playlists of numerous ideas for such activities and experiments can be found at the following YouTube channels: *Nat Geo Kids*, *PBS KIDS for Parents*, and *SciShow Kids*. The show ‘Backyard Science’, is available on YouTube in the channel *Kids Science* and each episode is packed with many fun experiments that can be done at home.

GAMES AND TOYS

As a supplement to institutional science learning, board games and kits are a fun way to get kids interested in science while keeping them occupied.

Onnorokom Bigganbaksho has a range of kits that cover various aspects of math and science. Each kit comes with a range of tools and components that kids can use to experiment, build things or simply play around with. Each of their products cover a specific area such as measurement, magnets, electricity, light and sounds.

They have both English and Bangla versions of their products. The price for each box ranges from BDT 650 to 970 with only a few exclusive kits being priced at BDT 1450 to 2990. The boxes are sold online at Daraz and

develop counting skills, spatial skills and pattern identifying ability or helps them learn about structures, gravity and forces.

NETFLIX

The best titles on Netflix that'll inspire and educate kids are *Emily's Wonder Lab*, *Sid the Science Kid*, *Cutest animals*, *The Magic School Bus*, *Growing Up Wild*, *If I Were An Animal* and *Brian Child*.

On a different note, part of being a parent means spending time with your kids. Watching educational series can be a way to go

about doing that. While piquing an interest can be a tough job, make sure to start off with the right ones.

Our Planet is an award-winning show portraying the impact of climate change on the biodiversity of earth. *Explained* is another docu-series featuring science and much more. Episodes range from designer DNA to astronomy, from why women are paid less in K-pop. When science is integrated a little here and a little there, with other entertaining elements, the children are bound to stay back and watch.

Depending on the age range of the child, there are also toy abacuses, pattern matching card games, kid scientist kits, dominoes, Rubik's cubes and toy magnets for sale at toy shops around the city. These games help kids

Talking about commitment issues, try an

change), *Mission Blue* (on ocean exploration and protection rights) and *Ivory Game* (undercover film-makers' take on global ivory trafficking crisis) are a few starters available on Netflix.

IN CONCLUSION
Science is fun, especially when the knowledge comes from the right place. Most often, young students derive the firsts from schools where the pressure to ace is extreme and the want to dig deeper dies away. It diverts to gross memorisation without precise understanding of theorems, mechanisms or pathways. In the long run, passion to willingly pursue a STEM career fades. Even if they do stick to one, there are obvious differences between passion-driven and forced performances. It is a vicious cycle where they carry forward ingrained misunderstandings or animosity toward natural sciences causing demotivation. But learners would not be willing to correct these conceptual flaws unless they are motivated.

So, how should parents value their children's effort. By commendation. This is not synonymous with appreciation of good grades but of the effort they invested, the strategies they chose, their perseverance throughout and their intelligence over all. Bear in mind that children can sense when adults feign interest or approval. They also understand disappointment cues. Thus, genuinely get interested in what they do and want to do. Building a connection is key. If they have other pursuits, let them be. STEM and music can go along. So would STEM and sports. Coercion, discouragement and disapproval only set them up for failure in what they're “supposed” to pick and what they want to choose.

Science should not be a chore to children. It should be a favourite pastime; something they'd look forward to and make time for instead of dodging and dismissing.

Hiya finally has time to catch up with her book-reading goals. Suggest her something at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com

Mrittika Anan Rahman is a daydreamer trying hard not to run into things while walking. Find her at mrittika.anan@gmail.com



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

THE TERROR ON APP STREET



ROSHNI SHAMIM

I don't know if it is too late to tell anyone about this. Perhaps I am already doomed and there is not much left to do... But I must stop the others, I must stop *you* from falling in this trap and putting yourself in danger just like I inevitably have without realising.

It all began six months ago when I moved to this new area. Initially, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the neighbourhood was full of friendly faces and warm demeanours. Having lived as a recluse for years, it was a nice change to see how helpful and sweet my neighbours seemed. In the early days, all was going great until I met... her. Now, if you decide to continue reading this further, then you must remember from here on there is no turning back; you must finish reading this story until the very end if you want to save yourself, as well as your loved ones. You see, this spine-chilling tale is about my eerie neighbour, known as WhatsUp Aunty.

That should have really been my first indication about something being wrong here. For starters, nobody in the area knows WhatsUp Aunty's real name. She apparently earned this nickname initially as a joke; every time she would meet any of the neighbours, her style of greeting consisted of only two words: "What's up?"

At first, people didn't actually take her question seriously. However, her beady eyes and anticipative smile soon destroyed that illusion and gave way to people's realisation that she was indeed, very serious

about knowing *what's up*. I remember my first meeting with her as if it had happened just yesterday. I had opened the door in response to my ringing doorbell to be met by this sweet – or so I had thought at the time – Aunty standing there with a bright smile, her hands delicately holding a covered box which I naturally assumed was food of some sort.

"What's up?!" Those had been her exact first words as soon as she had laid her eyes on me. At the time, I had brushed it aside with a cursory "Oh, all well, all fine" waving my hands offhandedly in response. Her smile had faltered slightly hearing my words but she had hastily fixed her bright smile back in place soon enough.

"Not to worry, dear!" she had said then, "Soon we shall fix that too." I was confused about what she had meant by that but yet again, I had chosen to ignore it as an irrelevant eccentricity of this otherwise friendly neighbour. "This is a little housewarming gift for you!" WhatsUp Aunty had said at the time, placing the covered box in my hands. I remembered being surprised at how light the box was, figuring perhaps there were cookies inside or some basic lightweight food. "Thank you so much! Also I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name?" As soon as the words had left my mouth, WhatsUp Aunty had given a small chuckle and hastily walked away.

The real horror began though after she had left and I finally uncovered the box. Inside were these little sticky pads organised in categories that went: *MISINFORMATION*, *TEA*, *WISHES*, *HACKS*. Confused, I

had delicately picked the first pad labelled *MISINFORMATION* and began to skim through the pages. It was a thoroughly startling wad of information indeed or more like, *false* information. There were tips on guaranteed immunity against Covid-19 with garlic and lemon, how sleeping at a 45 degree angle with your right leg bent could cure osteoporosis, the benefits of chewing raw onion at 2 AM every morning for attaining rosy, glowing skin-oh and most ironically, understanding that phones were the number one reason for every failure in your life.

I wish it stopped there but the other bundles turned out to be just as scary. *TEA* consisted of every kind of brown family gossip to ever exist. Someone in the family was too fat for marriage while another was borderline anorexic and surely, dosing on some substance. *SATs* were the new judgement criteria and scores were being exchanged like laddoos on Eid. The *WISHES* category was really just ten-page letters going on and on about how much your presence means to the sender in question, life being a swing of ups and downs and if you love them back, you had better be resending this wish to ten other people! Perhaps the worst had turned out to be the *HACKS* category, which was really more to do with upgrading your life decisions so as to avoid a hacker who could potentially disrupt and take over all your data.

The box had left me so shaken that I had to sit down immediately after just to process all that I had just read. Was this some sort of joke? Surely, this woman

did not go around the neighbourhood welcoming new residents with so much misinformation in a box?! After endless days spent on trying to deduce this mystery, I had finally taken a step back from it and concluded that it was probably just some gag, a joke by Aunty. I was proven wrong soon enough when a new resident showed up a few months later and behold! There she was again. Standing at my new neighbour's porch with an eerily similar covered box, talking oh-so-warmly with the new, unaware resident. It hit me then that this was no joke and that WhatsUp Aunty was truly the underground terror that we all had to be careful from. I am happy to inform you that so far I have safely kept away from all links that could potentially lead back to her, and all has been good. Until now.

You see, rumor has it that WhatsUp Aunty's friend has just moved in. Nobody speaks about it yet the silent looks say enough. This time before things get out of hand again, I am writing all this down for you, dear reader, to be wary and make sure to mark yourself safe from a different kind of pandemic that may soon take over.

All you need to know now to keep yourself safe is that the new terror's name is TikTok.

Destroy this letter as soon as you have reached this line.

Post writing this article, Roshni was soon held captive by WhatsUp Aunty and her other buddies. Send her your escape routes from the internet at roshni.shamim@gmail.com

Slumber of Intoxication

NUJHAT ASLAM

A strange incense fills in,
Stars veiled by the cluster of clouds.
The roads that were to be taken,
Gradually gets cramped and dark.

A puff – to forget the past,
To erase all regrets
As it is slowly discharged.

A puff – ode to forgiveness
To forgive but to never forget,
A slight crack of sense.

A puff – to dream anew
As the foot lights up
A tiny firecracker falling apart.

A puff – held in gentry
To fathom why the tears roll down,
Ashes lingering in the heart must've been out.

A puff – to trade in
The slumber of intoxication,
A slice of life falls apart.



ILLUSTRATION: **RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS**

WHAT IS *OOMPH*?

TASNIM ODRIKA

Purple dyed sky lay bare as it slowly faded towards a muted ink. The whole neighbourhood lights arose from their deep slumber and trudged along the whole road. Through the cold hard metal, the voice spoke again. It was as though the transition of the sky was lending its iciness to the voice. It spoke again; this time, deeper and more slowly, repeating the same words to ensure it exerted its full effect on the listener.

"I just don't think there is any 'oomph' between us, you know?"

He didn't know. But he listened intently for more. After a minute of listening to the sounds of the passing rickshaws, he realised it was actually his turn to speak.

"I... yes. I understand. I get it," came out the distracted reply.

The conversation had started an hour before. The sky was bright then and the chirp of the birds returning to their nests had been an annoyance. He took one look around the murk now trying to find the right questions to ask. What is an "oomph"? How do you know it is there? And he was not looking for an "Oh, it's just something you feel" because if it's something you feel inside surely you should be able to describe it.

"Are you still there?"

"Yes."

"So, what is on your mind then? You seem awfully quiet. Is there anything you would like to

tell me?"

As his mind raced to take hold of that one perfect question which would be able to answer all his queries, his hands began to ache. They had been in that same position for a while now. Then, somehow, this hand ache became the most overcoming sensation that his body and mind could feel. He could feel the small beads of sweat forming on his palm even though it was a dry and crispy autumn night. The phone would lose its grip soon.

"No... yeah. I completely understand what you are saying."

"Okay, good. We'll talk later then. Goodbye."

The hand was finally allowed to rest. He let the phone down on the mosaics in hopes that the floor returns some of its coldness back. He had not noticed it before but the air was surrounded by an earthy smell. There was a name for it and although that word was right at the tip of his tongue, he could not recall it. There was also a word for this phenomenon where you could not recall words that seemed to be at the tip of your tongue. But, he could not recall that word either. Then from deep underneath the murkiness, fat droplets began to spill and clear out some of the void. As they fell against the steel of the balcony rails, they seemed to crash with a noise that sounded like the word "oomph".

Tasnim Odrika can be reached at odrika_02@yahoo.com



IT'S TIME YOU STARTED COOKING

Here's what you need to know

FARIHA S. KHAN

If I were asked by a survey to sum up my experience as an amateur cook into two words, I'd pick *laborious* and *worthwhile*. I think back to the times when the smell of my burnt brownies wafted through my house and when I fried an egg with the same oil my mom used to fry fish. But today, I could not be more proud of myself now that I've grasped most of the skills that a decent cook should have.

Cooking can be such a great way of showing someone you care about them, and amidst a deadly pandemic, we all need a little more love and affection than usual, so here are some tips for beginners. **START SMALL**

Break down your meals into many steps. If you feel like you can't coordinate well when you're cooking, sort your ingredients into little bowls. You'll hate yourself when the cleaning process starts, but it'll help you out during the first few weeks if you can't keep track of what ingredients you're supposed to put in.

HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS

It's quite easy to make a mess of a recipe if you don't have the right measuring tools. Don't spend years using a tea cup to measure before caving and buying the actual measuring cups. You'll want to have



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

teaspoons, tablespoons, and cup measuring tools at your disposal. If you can, get the exact measurements, like cups, ½ teaspoons and so on. Don't ballpark recipes either. Trust the process, you can ballpark a few months into cooking. Though this isn't absolutely necessary, I prefer having a spatula and non-stick pan for most of the cooking I do. I can undoubtedly say that

they're the best kitchen utensils ever made.

LOOKING FOR RECIPES

As a beginner, I swore by *Tasty* for most of the recipes I used. Their recipes are so simple yet so delicious, and you'll find many varieties on their app. I find that their video tutorials are very much catered towards cooks who are just starting out. Of course, you can't forget the classics: YouTube and

Google, so make sure you turn to those from time to time to learn.

WHERE DO I START?

Usually, I would advise people on starting with making yourself a packet of 2-minute noodles. It's pretty simple to navigate and given that my 17-year old brother couldn't do it, I assume others might not be able to either. After that, move on to salads, but not the basic ones, go for Greek, caprese, caesar or pasta. Whatever you're in the mood for. This will give you a good grip on what kind of ingredients might go well together and teaches you essential knife skills too! You'll also want to learn to make a fancy grilled cheese: pair sliced cheese, cheddar, parmesan, mozzarella or any other cheese of choice. Lastly, learn to cook eggs. No, not just fried, but hard (and soft) boiled, scrambled, sunny side up and if you feel like you're ready, try poaching one (make the Turkish ones)!

Now that you've mastered these four basic dishes, push yourself to move onto something a bit more strenuous. Don't fret, you'll make that *kacchi biriyani* in no time. Have faith in yourself.

Fariha enjoys binge-watching movies in the dark vicinity of her bedroom. Strike up a conversation with her at fariha.safa@gmail.com

How to Set Up a Blind Date on Zoom

MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

Once upon a time, I wrote an article called "When you're single, but your friends are not" which pissed off my friends to a great deal. But I think in that listicle where I mentioned what these not-so-single friends do to you, I can add one more thing that I have experienced in this current quarantine.

They set you up on blind dates. Where? *On Zoom.*

Let's convince you how great this is.

This is like the new normal, right?

I mean you can't just sit alone in your home, lounging, when you can be spending that precious time finding a significant other. It is so much fun and DEFINITELY not nerve wracking. You were single when you were meeting people, now you *certainly* can not be so single in this lockdown too. What would the neighbour aunties say? Tut, tut. Boys and girls, this is the most amazing thing ever. Why? Because you are meeting an unknown person *virtually*. And while their face might pop up on your screen with the stunning backdrop of floating planets in space, there will be a strong probability that a family member would walk in and see that person's face because there is no such thing as closed doors and privacy in Bangladeshi households. But you can



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

explain to them that you are just having a small chat with an extra terrestrial species you met. Exciting, isn't it?

Also, this genius plan does save you from the stress of pining about how to dress up. Just a few options to choose from like change into a cute outfit or

change into a better shirt, but without abandoning your comfy pajamas that you've been wearing for the last five days. Or should you entertain your date with your just-woke-up self? And you wouldn't want to miss out on having your own orchestra playing for you two: *the sound of*

a frying pan falling on cue, the whistle of a pressure cooker going off, heavily backed up with the amazing vocals of your siblings bickering and your Mom pulling off a high note to tell you to change from your PJs because that's nasty or else she'll have to kick you out of the house. Beethoven who?

Moreover, there will be a wide assortment of backgrounds you can choose for yourself instead of just spending money on overpriced coffee. Rather than sitting in the same, old boring coffee shops, you can place yourself in Hawaiian beaches, the Simpsons' living room, the space in which you'll be able to float and talk for hours with a spacesuit (that's just pure science, okay?), the Amazon forest, and of course, the moon. How many people can say that they went to these amazing places on their first date? Romantic much?

The cherry on top is that you can excuse yourself just by acting like your screen froze or you can totally show off your hidden talent of talking like a robot, when things go awkward, to hint that your Wifi connection is not taking this date well.

I think we can agree that this is better than an actual blind date. So who's up for it?

The author can be reached out at 01shreshtha7@gmail.com