

FAMILY ADVICE THAT NEVER WORKS



PICTURED: THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

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You're sitting squeezed in between your boisterous third cousin and an overweight khala during a family gathering. She just won't quit giving away unsolicited advice on the quickest way to lose weight (oh, the irony), while you struggle to get in a word edgewise. Sounds familiar? Growing up, I've received enough bad advice to fill the pages of a depressing Stephanie Meyer novel. Irrespective of whether you've asked for it, family members are quick to give their unwarranted advice on everything. Even though they might have your best interests at heart, there's no way to sugar coat it – sometimes, they give terrible advice.

I'm hardly an authority on advice, but it's hard not to be with all the nuggets of 'wisdom' I've received over the years.

"Meye beshi shikhhito hole biye dite problem hobe."

We all have that one relative who's the very epitome of antifeminism. Their rebuttal to your mother's glowing praises about your academic achievements is a disapproving shake of the head, followed by ridiculous statements like the one above. Much like an overly attached girlfriend, any attempt to reason with them is an exercise in futility. No amount of implied 'F### off's will help you shake off these impassioned zealots. In a world where women empowerment is making great strides, such advice seems designed to reverse progress tenfold. Wait, let me guess – the solution to all potential marriage problems is to adopt your archaic belief about the destructive influence of women's education? Hmm.....I think I'll pass.

"Ei shob depression tipression porte boshlei thik hoye jabe."

Let me paint you a picture. Your significant other leaves you. Consequently, you're left with the post-breakup blues – something your parents pickup on. If you're expecting a heart-to-heart that'll lift your spirits in no time, you're headed for disappointment. Instead, they brush you off with their best advice – studying. In fact, that seems to be their advice for most things—and it's not altogether surprising. We've been raised in a culture where expressing emotions isn't a norm. We're more accustomed to talking to friends than we are to parents. Hence, they get just as awkward as we do.

"Ei shob asthma allergy kichu na – ghum dile thik hoye jabe."

I'm sorry, alchemists –Bangali moms seem to have found the elixir of life before you. Apparently, it's sleep. Lots of it. Whether it's a common cold or a wicked migraine, count on your mom to suggest her one cure to every problem – a good shut-eye. There's



no denying the benefits of the occasional nap, but she might have taken this advice a little too literally.

It's a pity sleeping late into the morning doesn't count.

"Matha betha? Jor? Pet betha? Pora mon boshchhe nah? Pani khao."

What if I told you water isn't the solution to world conflict? Cue the angry-aunty-comebacks: "Pani khao nai dekhei ei obostha tomar!" It's astounding how grownups can make the most logical advice sound so irrational. Just like sleep, water is without a doubt a cure to many problems – but it definitely has nothing to do with procrastination! But some seem to think drinking lots of water can fix any and every problem you'll ever come across.

"Ai Samin tor theke lomba keno? Prottek din ak ghonta kore dorja theke jhulbi."

Yes, I know I'm short. Five feet two isn't exactly the height of the Eiffel Tower.

And no, I'm not going to hang comically from door stills in hopes of a growth spurt. To make matters worse, some people even advise you to play basketball. As if the mere mention of the NBA will enhance your genes.

"Ai porar notes diba na kauke. Bondhura bhalo korbe tomar theke."

If you were even remotely sincere as a student back in school, you're very familiar with this one. Your class notes were your mother's prized possessions; she wouldn't let you hand them out to anyone. Whether it was the life-struggles they had to face growing up or the general mistrust their generation harboured for others that cause it, our mothers seem to be convinced that your friends' sole mission is to outperform you.

On good days, they feared your friends would lose your copy. On bad days....well, let's just say, my mom wasn't the trusting kind.

Although I can't say the same for all the advice above, some of it is based on sound advice. Regular pull-ups can make you taller, sleep does catalyse your body's defence mechanism, water does cure many problems, and believe it or not, studying can distract you from post-breakup blues.

So why does it all sound so silly?

That's because we tend to resort to outrageous hyperbole to enforce our advice on others. In reality, people would listen more if we just told them - minus the theatrics.

But oh well, you know you miss the days when you used to be pestered about sleep.

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