

Don't Do This, My Friend

MASHIAT LAMISA

There are certain things we never do without taking our friends' opinions. Take uploading a profile picture, for example. The struggle of going through several thousand pictures of your birthday party and choosing that one, precious profile picture is real. And guess who come forward making that job easier for you? Your friends. No wonder you have spent so much time of your life giving choosing credits and writing the term "#CauseMaishaSaidSo"; it's the least you can do in return. Statistics say your present profile picture might be the deciding factor of who you will marry in the future- so think about how important a role your friends are playing in your life.

Jokes apart, the idea of counseling or advising your friend to do or to not do something isn't new. In a world where we are connected with our friends 24/7, it is difficult to not let them into our deepest secrets, or share almost everything with them. In most colleges abroad, there are peer counseling groups where people of same ages counsel each other. Although we have nothing close to that here, peer counseling is something we might have done at one point or other. Whether it's about giving your troubled friend a giant list of why he/she shouldn't start smoking, or encouraging them to approach their crush, it's always great to give and take advices from peers.

It is true that parents are our biggest strengths, and we are to go to them whenever we need help, support or anything at all. But there are certain things we can never comfortably share with our parents. When we are



sad and the only thing that makes sense in the world is to go under the

blankets and never come out, it's often difficult to make parents understand that it's not something we are doing as an excuse for not studying. That's when friends can be comforting, because they might, more or less, be facing the same things as we are. The problems which might seem trivial to your parents can be of great intensity to both you and your friend. To which, Armin, 19, says, "You never get to see your parents as confused teenagers. To you, they are always composed and collected and they don't deal with "insignificant drama" that drives you insane. It's freeing to tell your peers."

As teenagers, we are more connected to our friends than to anyone in our families. We send them 7 second snaps of even the littlest details of our lives, or we simply take classes together; we are

kind of in sync all the time. So, rightly, when your friend is troubled, or needs to talk to someone, you're the first to know. Similarly, it is your advice that your friend will value most. So the next time you see a friend starting to get hooked on a bad habit, remember you can stop him first hand.

On a lighter note, peer counseling is something we do almost every day. When was the last time you told a friend, "Don't do this, dost. Don't share those posts from Filmygyan anymore"? For me, it was an hour ago.

So, go, talk to your friend and hear them out. Make your brains work together. Like Arisha, 18, says, "To me, talking to peers and exchanging opinions is like a give and take of hope."

But sometimes, things aren't that easy. Come to think of it, we are only as experienced as our friends are. Yes, you can

tell your friends about your daily problems, and your daily dramas, and how you just broke up and patched up with your boyfriend over the last one hour but on a wider scale of problems, your friends are just as incapable of making sense of things as you are. It is at this time when someone older than you can give you legit guidance; whether that's a parent, or a sibling, or even your teacher. When friends tell you how awesome you are, your parents will let you know the piece of \$#!+ you actually are. This might seem awful for the time being, but it is this \$#!+-y feeling that will honestly let you know about your mistakes and errors.

In spite of that, since communication and who you spend the broader part of your day with matters, it is your friend who can give you a shoulder to cry on or a pat on the back when all else has failed; unless you are friends with the white witch from Narnia. That's a no-no.

When we are friends with someone, it is that certain selectively permeable boundary that we need to cross to have a more in-depth conversation than our usual "Dost, kalke class koytay?" But really, who will tell your friend, "Don't do this, my friend. You deserve better.", if not you?

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A List of Reasons Why I'm Sick of List Articles

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Whenever we go online these days, or flip through magazines even, we see articles or blog posts with obnoxious clickbait titles such as "7 Ways to Meh". Though these list articles (or listicles) make the writer's work easier, I've recently started to resent them. Here's a list why.

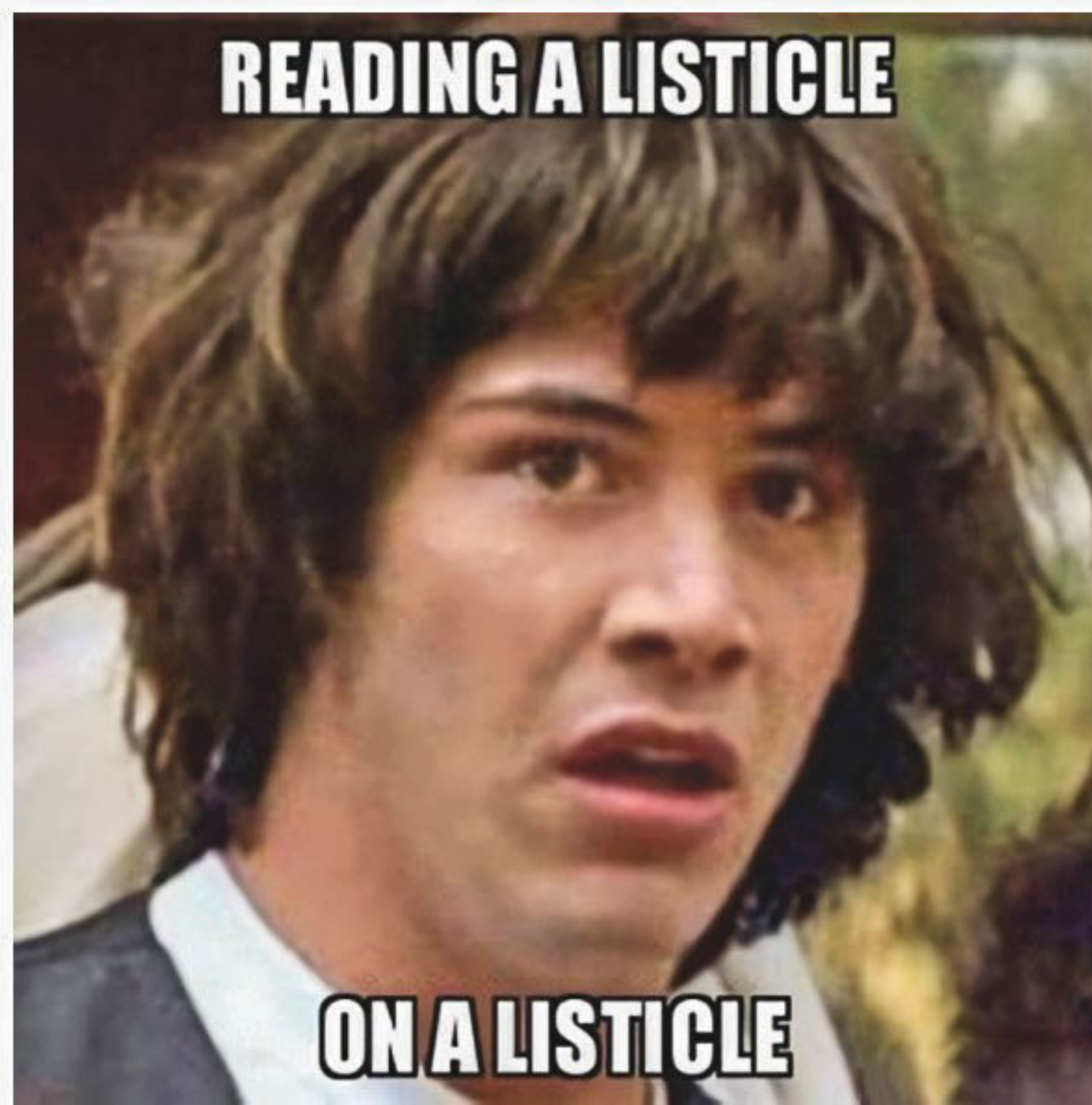
1. AN INCESSANT CYCLE OF RECYCLING. As far as listicles go – especially when it comes to helpful articles – there is hardly any original content. Most of the advices are readily available on other websites. In fact, writers of such articles take one sample article on the same topic from the internet and paraphrase. So you read the same advice over and over that don't really help your cause. Essentially, they are telling you what you probably know already.

2. AMBIGUITY IS COMMONPLACE. Listicles are aimed to generate readership or clicks for a particular website. In order to do so, writers tend to write multiple articles on the same or very similar topics. The bite-sized advices, therefore, usually get quite generic. They will tell you what to do, but on a very superficial level, without delving into the exact details of what you are looking for. So in the end, there really isn't much to learn in most cases.

3. BUZZING WITH KEYWORDS. Search engine optimisation is very important for the websites to generate a larger audience. One of the primary means of doing so is

to use keywords or phrases by strategically placing them throughout the article. In an attempt to do so, writers often force the keywords in places where they don't necessarily fit, making for an incoherent read that degrades the reading experience.

4. THIS IS WHERE LITERATURE DIES. Like I mentioned previously, listicles make the work of writers very easy as



they are quite easy to write. Pretty much anybody with a basic idea of grammar can write one, thus the quality of writing falters.

But there's another reason for that – in most cases, listicles are written by freelance ghost writers for people who pay them to do so on the internet. Having been a freelancer myself who has written many listicles over the years, I can say from experience that the compensation is quite low – sometimes as low as \$1 for an article if not less. For such low pay, you can't really expect the writer to produce a good quality, informative and profound piece. This is where the paraphrased rewriting of articles mentioned earlier comes in play. In fact, some freelancers are required to write several such articles on daily basis, and they tend to slack off and just meet their deadlines by hook or by crook.

Don't get me wrong, I am not against listicles – I do enjoy reading (and writing) an occasional listicle, provided that it's good. Sometimes you do need to read listicles, especially if you're impatient and really need even the most generic of advices real quick. Having said that, the trend of list articles that has become so popular lately is something that I personally dislike for the reasons cited.

By the way, can you figure the keyword in this article?

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