

# Diet obstructions for an average Bengali

TAHMEED CHAUDHURY

One of the many factors that deter our already low self-esteem is the fact that many of us do not have the perfect body-mass index, all thanks to the Bengali tradition of having two rice meals a day. Some of us are too lazy to do anything about it and cry ourselves to sleep after munching on a full plate of *biryani* while others hit the gym and fork out diet plans.

Healthy eating and maintaining a proper diet is essential for you to look like your ripped next door neighbour. It's easier said than done, however. Keeping up with a strict diet for weeks can turn out to be a task more arduous than ever and some annoying factors contribute to the inability of reaching our goal.

#### Stress

Following a healthy eating plan while having too many things to do is something that many fail to accomplish. The weariness from being overworked induces hunger and thus the need for carb-rich food. Along with a diet, it is also necessary to be rested and to have the appropriate hours of sleep. It's only normal to assume that a busy person finds it hard to maintain their diet.

#### Boredom

As we easily get bored with too much of anything, the consumption of the same type of food for a long period of time can lead to monotony as well. Depending on mainly fruits and vegetables for all our



energy can often entice our minds into remembering the old delicacies we are forced to avoid. What other options do we poor souls have other than to dive into heavenly, unhealthy junk food?

#### Clumsiness

Most of us have only ourselves to blame

for failing to complete a scheduled diet plan. Carelessness and lack of persistence and will power others can be attributed to this. For those of you who fail to resist the temptation of munching on that last piece of pizza left in the fridge: learn to love your own fat self!

#### Family

Is it customary for our mums to cook all our favourite delicacies the day after we announce our intentions of eating healthy? As if force feeding yourself with unsavoury food is not bad enough, the sight and smell of the *biryani* your mum made makes you question the value of your very existence. *Dawats* and presence of unhealthy, scrumptious food in the fridge and others make life ever more complicated.

#### Friends

Friends are the worst. While other obstacles come in the form of life laughing back at you, your friends are your biggest enemies when you're trying to maintain a diet. Like forcing yourself to ignore all your favourite food is not bad enough, your friends eat junk food and all sorts of fattening tasty delicacies right in front of you to make it even worse. At times, they may tease you until you succumb to the pressure and break your diet. Readers are strictly advised to avoid friends in public restaurants while on a strict diet.

At the end of the day, it all comes down to determination. As long as you fight back against all the obstructions and remain positive for a better, healthier future, you'll get through.

*Tahmeed Chaudhury is bear who hibernates while dreaming of the pot of biryani he ate before sleeping. Do not disturb his slumber.*

# A f(l)ight with your stage fright

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*"His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy, there's vomit on his sweater already..."*

I'll stop here. You are either, if not both, familiar with these verses of Eminem or have gone through a similar predicament surrounded by trepidation. (Hopefully, with a clean sweater)

That agonizing throat-drying moment, right before a presentation or simply while emceeing a glitzy ceremony, weighs down on your knees as your whole body revolts against you. However, you still conjure some pathetic replica of willpower and tread up the stage. With wobbly legs, you turn to the friendly audience, and their soul-piercing eyes are enough to jumpstart your 'fight or flight' response. Now, this was all hunky-dory when this very mechanism would have saved your ancestors some centuries back from being devoured by a man eating T-rex, per say, but it's not very opportune on the present humid day, when this same ancient intuitive compulsion kicks in on the face of a room full of harmless potato-crazy humans. "Hello? Brain? Learn to distinguish already!"

So, yes, you are awkwardly positioned on the stage under an imaginative stark limelight when your inner voices start acting like your condescendingly cynical *chacha* and start whispering confidence-



shattering questions: So, what if you stammer? Or, or you might just forget your lines! Oh! I know! What if your crush thinks you are dimwitted? And then the worst happens. These actually happen.

#### Puke.

Some scientific studies have concluded that picturing your audience in their underwear helps. But let's face it, that would probably make you race for the fire exit instead. So let them be well clad. An evolved version of this approach suggests it is more agreeable to replace those God-awful faces with the face of someone you love. (\*cough\* Scarlett Johansson \*cough\*) Or in my case, imagining giant

pizza slices, occupying those seats instead.

An expert advice that tricks your brain into releasing less fear-inducing hormones into your neurons is to tell yourself that you are better than the rest, repeatedly. While this will not be the case in actuality, feed your ego with pretentious notions of how the audience is at awe with you. This will shift the dynamics and give you the upper hand in the room. If you are too frank to give a damn about this theory, then start doing it the old school way: Prepare.

Practice your speech, day in day out, in the presence of your soul-sucking friends to your doting mother who would even

find your mumbling charming. You can even practice your speech with bus conductor *mamas* and yourself in the mirror, even though it would probably tell how you are not the brightest of all. A well-prepared speaker is less likely to forget lines and *uh, um, you know, like* use filler words which disintegrate and scrape away at the content of your speech.

Take a pause instead, and in case you had forgotten it, breathe. Not with your nose, but with your diaphragm. A few respiratory exercises act as calming tonics for the anxious. You can take this up a notch and do some real time exercises which release the exact counter-hormones to make you feel like a Rap God (x2). Nothing like powerful cardio to make your confidence flex its muscles, eh?

Lastly, when all else fails, and you are turned into a wobbly jelly on jitters, take ownership of your miserable situation and crack a few jokes about your sweat-trickling condition. Make the audience laugh with you before they start laughing at you. This creates an invigorating energy across the room where you no longer have to be uncomfortable and the crowd no longer has to be naked.

*Iqra suffers from wanderlust, dreams of discovering the Loch Ness Monster and occasionally complains about Economics. Tell her to get a life at iqralaqa@gmail.com or https://www.facebook.com/iqra.l.qamari*