

Spiderman has a great way of dealing with anxiety. He tingles in the head. Then he shoots a web and engages in a fight full of snappy comebacks. I always related to Peter Parker because anxiety would cause the pit of my stomach to tingle uncomfortably. And then my arch nemesis 'What Are You Doing With Your Life' would show up. We would fight valiantly. But then, his co-villain 'Future Plans' would show up to give me a zinger, paralysing me.

My comebacks were at best like the ones thrown about by the geeky kid in the beginning of teen movies: forehead scrunched up, heart stampeding, mouth vaguely making out the words 'urm' and 'um'. This is not a good way to fight back.

People have suggested many solutions for anxiety. Some smart people have suggested, 'Don't be.' It is mind over matter. Well, that really did not work. Because the next time I felt a little tense, I decided Not To Be. And my stomach refused to listen. It played the same old tingly music. My stomach and mind simply refused to be in sync, very much like our traffic lights.

A friend stated I needed to relax. She told me I should try meditation and deep breathing. Stress results in a greater chance of heart disease, asthma and an increased chance of catching a cold. To reduce sneezing wetly into people's faces, I tried to meditate.

I calmed down for a few minutes. Seemed for a moment this may be the magic ticket. My head felt clearer, emptier. And then someone poured a box full of spiky ping pong balls into that newly created open space. These spiky thoughts kept bouncing around the inside of my head the more I relaxed. It seemed I was only creating a wider, more vacuous environment for my worries to populate. Much like rat babies hiding inside the foam-filled warm heat shield over my car engine.

A heavily buff uncle suggested I should work out more. I was told bending

down to open the refrigerator door simply wasn't enough. I should try running. Apparently, it metabolises the stress causing hormones bringing about equilibrium. Also releases chemicals such as dopamine that bring about peace, love and all things flowery. A five minute stint of running that causes the body to heat up and release sweat is extremely beneficial. I turned off the fan. The anxiety went up with the sweat. So I ran. Sure, that worked, until I stumbled gasping for breath a block later wondering why the cool pavement felt so good on my face.

Okay, so exercise works just as long as you start gradually. But then you stop and that is like Superman deciding to stop being all protective of Earth. The moment you stop, the anxiety villains are back and this time with spears of Kryptonite.

So what worked? I started to rely on the five-year rule. It is like the five-second rule employed by students and dads the world over. If a dry food item falls on a known dry surface for five seconds, it is safe from germs and can be eaten without death resulting. Well, the five-year rule deals with every spiky, ping pong ball shaped thought that bounces around my head. Will it matter five years down the line? Most things end up piling in comparison. Five years later, will it matter that my car doesn't have the bigger brakes I so want but do not need? Will my son become homeless if I do not send him to school one day? This puts things into perspective. Is the wife calling for a meeting? Just go. Worrying will not result in a change in outcome.

What the five-year rule does is reduce the number of ping pong balls bouncing around inside my head. And that is a great start. Now I can be anxious about all new things.

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## 3 WAYS TO BEAT ANXIETY (WELL, ONE THAT ACTUALLY WORKS)



ABOUT  
TOWN



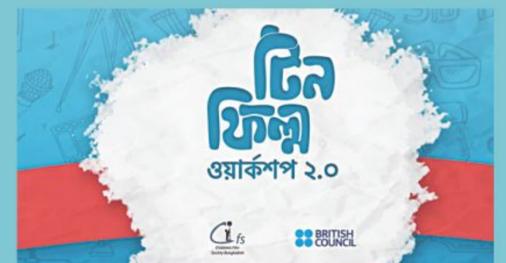
### WOMEN OF INSPIRATION AWARDS

Organiser: Bangladesh Organization for Learning & Development (BOLD)  
August 25, 6-10.30 pm, Spectra Convention Centre, Gulshan 1



### NOVERA

Organiser: Dhrupodi Acting & Design School  
August 22, 7-8.30 pm, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segunbagicha



### TEEN FILM WORKSHOP 2.0

Organiser: Children's Film Society Bangladesh  
August 18, 3-7 pm, British Council Bangladesh, Fuller Road