

HOW TO STOMACH CRITICISM OF YOUR WRITING

**To avoid criticism,
do nothing,
say nothing,
be nothing.**

- Elbert Hubbard
Writer

WASIQUE HASAN

If you write, you will know the process of converting a random jumble of sentences into something cohesive and meaningful is extremely liberating. However, all too often other people will read your supposed masterpiece and tear it apart like the wrapping on wedding gifts. The following are some ways you can make the most of criticism.

You're not perfect: As flawless as your writing may appear at a cursory glance, closer inspection by a proof-reader will reveal that there are a host of problems with it. The only reason you think otherwise is because you wrote it. No parent wants to hear bad things about their kids, and no writer wants to hear bad things about their work. Even if their kid happens to be mugging people in Mohammadpur at night, parents will claim *fake news* and turn a blind eye to those indiscretions.

This is why you need to remind yourself that nothing is perfect, not even the fiction piece you've poured your heart and weeks into. There may be some plot points that sounded better in your head than on paper. You might also have forgotten to fill the reader in on some essential information, which is why they say your story has plot-holes. The sooner you realise that your work is imperfect, the better chances you have of improving your stories.

Change is okay: You may not be the biggest fan of change, but sometimes it is necessary. This goes for all aspects of your life, but is especially true when it comes to writing. In fiction, especially, people have a hard time letting go of things they've written. This attachment isn't doing a favour to you or your story.

I used to think the characters in stories would take offence if I changed their dialogues or actions. Eventually I realised (I think) that it makes more sense for my fictional characters to behave how I make them, and that there should be a limit to how far you take their personification. If someone says a paragraph isn't advancing the story, take their word for it. Your characters will be grateful for the increased clarity, as this ensures the focus falls squarely on their story.

Don't get angry at those trying to help: No one likes to be chastised, but sometimes there's nothing else to be said. In most cases, harsh criticism is delivered when people have higher expectations of you. Thus, instead of questioning people's judgement and calling them names, try to turn this criticism into something constructive. At least they cared enough to point out the mistakes, unlike those people who skimmed through and said "Good work, so proud of you!"

Criticism isn't fun, but it is important. Without it, you would be stuck in an endless cycle of mediocrity, never improving. Instead of balking in the face of criticism, take a deep breath, cry into a pillow, and get back to writing. You owe it to yourself to get better, and to do justice to the lofty expectations your friends and well-wishers have of you. Happy writing, everybody!

With a heart of ash and a PC of potato, Wasique Hasan could use some help. Send him memes to cheer him up at [facebook.com/hasique.wasan](https://www.facebook.com/hasique.wasan)

How to deal with a quarter-life crisis?

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The worst mornings are when you wake up to an epiphany that a quarter of your life is done and dusted with.

This panic-stricken realisation can occur in the foulest of times. It will keep you tossing and turning at 4 am, ruin your attempts to feel wholesome during a nice shower and can even attack you in the middle of the stage when you suddenly register that you are dancing not at your friend's elder sibling's holud but at your VERY friend's holud.

So how do we deal with these moments?

1. STOP COMPARING

Like the wise Meredith Grey once said, we love hitting ourselves with the hammer and this right here is a profound example. We keep forgetting that life cannot be graded and fall into the toxic allure of comparisons. Social media is one vital determinant in controlling our confidence bars. These days the catalysis has been enhanced more as people your age are getting promotions, graduating or tying the knot. It's a flood of congratulations out there and you are not receiving any of that which can cause your mood to take a nosedive. What we have to remember is that people only exhibit the best aspects of their lives on social media; their highlight reels. We tend to compare that to our very worst which does not even make sense.

2. ENGAGE YOURSELF MEANINGFULLY

One's life should be more than just waiting for the next episode of Game of Thrones. Letting routine become the focal point of one's days can get very dissatisfying. It is easier to get trapped in one's comfort bubble and laze around in it but embracing change and popping that bubble will be worth it in the long run. Get yourself a new hobby or try to learn something which intimidates you. The challenges you overcome will establish a sense of achievement. Keep yourself productively busy and not just busy. Often times,

we only focus on the results or the end-product of something but ignore enjoying the process of it.

3. DON'T LET FAILED RELATIONSHIPS OR SINGLEHOOD BRING YOU DOWN

The significant other is a very important stakeholder of one's life. These are the people you will be sharing most of your meals with. What you have to decide is if you like sharing meals with them or if it feels like a drag. All I am saying is, for those who are in relationships, do not let it feel like chewing gum stuck to your sole (soul).

For the ones who are single and operating in "looking for the one" mode, do not question yourself every time you become a third wheel. Don't let your time on earth get ruined by the delayed arrival of your love interest. In the meantime, get a dog.

4. KEEP TRYING!

Sometimes, the best source of motivation is yourself. Immersing yourself in what drives you can become a getaway from all this turbulence. Even, if you are still unaware about what exactly drives you, then that is okay too. Choose to face your life one day at a time and try to be the best version of yourself and not of someone else.

All these approaches do not come with a guarantee. The subjectivity of everyone's scenario does not allow any penned down thumb rules that you can simply apply to shake off this crisis. Still, try to perceive everything with positivity and acknowledge that your life has already begun. Becoming more aware of one's present can be a way to deal with this too. Take a moment to breathe, appreciate being alive, head over to your favourite coffee shop and try to smile at life until the poorly made coffee ruins it for you. Don't be so hard on yourselves, my precious earthlings.

Iqra suffers from wanderlust, dreams of discovering the Loch Ness Monster and occasionally complains about Economics. Tell her to get a life at iqra.kashmir53@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/iqra.l.qamari

crisis. bills.
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 panic. The quarter life crisis. money.
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