I took the vow of silence for a day

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

How important are words to you? With all the noise and chaos around me, I decided to go on silent mode for a day. Here's how it went.

The rule was simple. Don't utter a single word the whole day. My initial plan was to cease all communication which meant no texting, no eye contact, and no gestures but I had to bend the rules a little.

9 AM: I didn't plan to go all cold turkey on this specific day so my family and friends had no prior notice of my act. As soon as I woke up, my hands went straight to autopilot mode and I texted in bed. In consequence, I unintentionally broke the rule of not texting.

10 AM: By this time I let my mom know I was not going to be talking all day. I found myself getting more animated in conveying messages than I would if I had talked. The idea was to communicate as little as possible, ergo I had to do all my tasks by myself avoiding assistance from anyone around me.

12:30 PM: I was going strong as ever. I tried my best to keep away from my phone as much as possible and text only when needed.

3 PM: At around this time I realised that I was thinking a lot. Since one of my senses was diminished the others were heightened. Although I felt the urge to talk back when someone tried to strike up a conversation around me, I managed to suppress that desire.

DESIGN: **KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD**

5 PM: This is where my progress faltered. I got a call on my cell and without thinking, I picked up and said "Hello." My voice sounded alien to me and just then I handed over the phone to my dad. I was dreading my mistake but my family encouraged me to continue with the task.

6:30 PM: After that little hiccup, things got more real. I was more determined to finish this without any more obstacles. For some reason, I felt emotionally exhausted. My mind was going a million miles an hour. I was afraid that I was going to think out loud.

8 PM: Eating helps. It certainly does. Subconsciously I was forcing my jaws shut which resulted in a weird tightness around my mouth. Chewing helped ease the tension a little.

10:30 PM: I got used to not speaking but it still wasn't fun.

12 AM: All my effort built up to this very moment. It was the last stretch of my journey and I couldn't be more excited to get my speech back. So, I talked. Not because I had to but I wanted to.

Here's my takeaway. Words are definitely important. When you are stripped of the privilege of something, you understand how much value it holds. Through this experiment, I realised that listening is important too. Sometimes it's necessary to avoid indulging in topics that won't do you any good. While it was very hard to keep up, the task calmed my mind and helped me think about what's going on with myself and around me.

Would I do it again? Maybe. But from now on I'll celebrate silence more meaningfully.

The F in Farnaz stands for "Farnaz can't write a blurb". Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

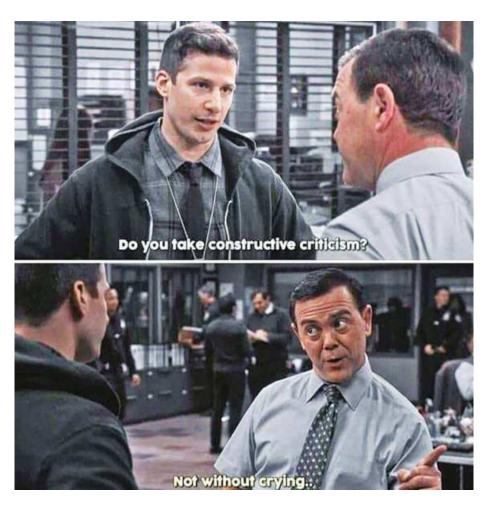# Give Constructive Criticism, *Constructively*

ANUSHA MOURSHED

In the age of social media, when platforms exist to voice any and all opinions, almost everyone's a critic.

With a sky rocketing number of talent groups showcasing all sorts of skills starting from dance, music, and poetry to even embroidery, quilting and voice impressions, the boundary is endless. However, with such massive exposure also comes huge waves of judgements – both positive and negative.

Going through the enormous province that is the social media feed, it is often observed that even the most extraordinary displays of art sometimes receive dissenting remarks. These judgements, although usually directed as an insult, are often passed in the name of "constructive criticism", a term that is so overused that it seems to have lost its meaning somewhere along the line.

Aside from the obvious confidence shattering effect, these comments are not only hurtful but also not helpful at all. If you genuinely wish to give effective feedback so someone can refine their craft, there are other beneficent ways to do so without it coming off as disrespect. To understand how, let us first comprehend what constructive criticism really is.

To put it simply, it is a thoughtful way of providing effective feedback that may include both positive and negative comments with good reasons so that one can improve their skills. It is meant to be specific and presented in a friendly

manner, entirely with the intention to help bring progress.

Before making any comments, you must first question your own intentions.

Ask yourself why you feel the need to share your criticism. If the answer is because you truly want to help, present your opinions with the attitude

you would like to be approached with yourself, if you were in their shoes. Being thoughtful of the little things can bring about much more productive results than careless, hurtful words.

Rather than blunt statements declaring a piece of content laughable or worthless, it is considerate to start with whatever positive side you can find and then making your way up to specific improvements. When giving feedback it is also essential to remember that you must comment on the craft and not the person. Remarks on physical appearance or any personal subject does not fall under constructive criticism. You must only focus on behaviour that can be changed. Besides, it may also be insightful to be open to the other person's perspective as well since art is often subjective.

Coming to the other side of the spectrum, it is also the creator's responsibility to be open to feedback. More often than not, many people also fail to understand the point of constructive criticism and misinterpret it as hate. It is vital to accept that there is always room for improvement and if someone is respectfully presenting their observation, you can always welcome it for your own benefit. There is no reason to cower at the mention of your shortcomings and take it as an insult because we all have our shortcomings.

Anusha often has a lot on her plate. Send her memes and motivation at anusha.mourshed11@gmail.com