



ILLUSTRATION: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

AAHIR MRITTIKA

Podcasts are the rising medium of entertainment right now, and can be incredibly fun and informative to listen to. They are easy to put on as background noise and are mostly completely free. I launched my own video-podcast last year and learned the process through lots of trial and error. If you're a storyteller or a podcast enthusiast who wants to start your own series, keep reading from the *obviously* best host in town.

THE ABSOLUTE BASICS

Why do you want to have a podcast? Who do you want as your audience? What do you want to talk about? What's so important to you that you can spend hours talking about it? You could be selling a product or narrating spooky stories like Bhoot FM, but you should have a general theme and at least 10 episode ideas in your mind before starting. Start researching similar podcasts. This will help you decide whether your theme is viable, what your competition looks like, and the reaction of the audience. You should also research delivery and creative forces that go behind the content.

THE CONTENT

Write down everything under your overarching theme. If you want to stand out among millions of podcasts, you must have a niche! Narrowing it down also allows space for detailed analysis. Don't just discuss toxic parenting – discuss toxic Bengali parenting in a middle class household or with an only child or the effects of it on the eldest child. Use these nuances to create personalised and engaging content, and definitely plan ahead with notes and references.

THE TECHNICALITIES

Starting off actually isn't that expensive or difficult. Clip-on mics are cheap and available, and

any decent smartphone will do. There are loads of free user-friendly software like Audacity for audio and video editing. Look into streaming platforms you'll release your podcasts on, and the demographic of its audience.

There's always the option of adding to your setup as you grow, and this gives you an opportunity to be more certain about what kind of equipment you need before you invest. Plug and play mics and tripods are some basic examples. I found Bangladeshi YouTubers helpful while researching microphones and digital cameras, because they can point to a website or shop accessible to you.

THE EXECUTION

Spend some time deciding on your target audience and plan accordingly. A conversation styled approach is more suitable to unpack a topic, while an interview or narration is apt if your aim is to educate people on something. However, you should aim to find your own hybrid within these formats. I have informal discussions on my podcast, but it often overlaps with the interview format because I get to guide the direction of discourse happening. The setting is also essential -- how do you maintain social distance without making the episode a monotonous Zoom call?

And then, think about details like cover art and intro music. Getting art made for you is the best case scenario but free logo generators, Canva, and copyright free music can genuinely be good replacements if you look hard enough. Oh, you should probably come up with a name and episode duration by now too...

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Moham-madpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com

It's Not You, It's Me

NISHAT TASNEEM SHAHARA

If you are wondering why all your three-month long relationships have inevitably fizzled out, maybe, *just maybe*, a little introspection is in order.

You are not in touch with your own emotions

You don't know what you need from your significant other and you don't know what you want out of your relationships. It's not uncommon to go with the flow, but not knowing your wants and needs, hinders relationships from growing into something serious. In situations like this, you're most likely to follow what your partner wants, and that may lead to discontentment and further complications in the long run. Take some time off, learn to process your emotions and acknowledge any negative ones. You can't voice your own needs and feelings if you never learn what they are.

You need to learn effective communication

Once you're confident that you understand yourself and know your needs well, the next problem may lie in your communication skills (or lack thereof). If people often misunderstand your tone and you are constantly explaining yourself, you probably have to learn to communicate better. The most important and neglected aspect of effective communication is listening, and listening *with intent*. You need to be emotionally available and work on your ability to empathise to become a good listener. It's okay to not be good at this right away, but with time, practice and some Anna Akana videos, you can help your partner feel heard and cared for.

You don't take the time to understand your SO's love language

This can be a tricky one. Is your partner's way of showing affection different from yours, or are they just not that into you? Keep a look out for patterns. Do they actively make time for you? Do they hesitate professing their love for you in words but get you really personal, thoughtful gifts? We are often biased when it comes to showing love; we tend to assume there are certain ways of loving someone and even more specific ways of showing that love. We accept what's familiar to us, and forget to account for anything different. Some may prefer voiced affirmations through letters and voice notes, while others might like acts of service such as grocery shopping dates. Have enough patience to get to know your partner and their love language.

You have past trauma or unaddressed issues

This can manifest in your life in a variety of ways. Maybe your past experiences with unhealthy relationships have taught you toxic patterns, and you don't know how to get out of those cycles. Maybe you have a fear of abandonment because of some unfortunate trauma, and it is manifesting itself in the form of trust issues with your partner.

We learn everything about love and comfort in early stages of our lives, mostly from our primary caregivers. We accept the love we are familiar with, and it is very likely that many unhealthy patterns might have been passed off as the norm, and you have internalized them. There is no shame in accepting your issues, going to therapy, or working on yourself. You will be a better person at the end of it, and all your relationships healthier.

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