

satire.

Woman Actually Watches Friend's Movie Recommendation

MALIHA MOMTAZ OISHI

History was made yesterday. Ms. Woman, while lazily scrolling through her computer, received a text from a friend who suggested she watch a movie because it's "really good". Woman, without any further ado, grabbed a bowl of popcorn and sat down to watch said movie. This surprised her friend, Friend, greatly.

"People tell you things like 'I'm adding it to my list' whenever you tell them to watch something," said Friend. "But they never do, and you realise that there was no list. They just mentioned that as a decoy so that they could postpone it till you forgot about it."

"I was played for a fool, time and time again," adds Friend. "It changed my whole outlook on life. So yes, I was a little shocked when I heard that she actually watched my suggestion. I guess good people still exist."

Upon being asked about this, Ms. Woman responded, "Well, I figured, why not? I guess it was a little hard at first. Adam Sandler movies will do that to you. His characters are always portrayed as lovable buffoons who, for some reason, are always dressed the same. The character is on vacation, falls in love with a beautiful blonde woman, then it turns out she has



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

children. After that, all of them get up to some wacky hijinks, and then bam, the movie ends on some cheesy note about how family was the most important thing all along. Come to think of it, I'm a little concerned about how my friend thought

that the movie was good."

This event has already caused ripples globally. Friend has been ranked #1 on Orbes' *Top 10 People Who Literally Changed The World*, and awarded the *Friend Of The Year* title by Puzzfeed.

Here's what some people had to say after hearing of the incident.

"In my 18 years of life, I've never heard of anything like it," said a teen, in a state of total shock.

Another person commented, "We're living in an era where fast food joints won't add the extra cheese that you requested on your burger, where people use ellipses unironically, and where *Glee* is a thing. But when I first heard about the news, I thought, maybe there is some hope left for us."

While signing autographs, Ms. Woman told her fans, "I just hope that I was able to make my family proud, and I want all of you to remember that my book on friendship and keeping promises drops next month!"

We'll try to keep you folks updated on this. In the meantime, stay tuned for our next stories, "Company says it cares about employees, actually cares about employees", and "Teen's life ruined after not forwarding the chain text message to twenty other people".

Maliha Momtaz Oishi is a critically acclaimed writer, if you count full marks on 5th grade English tests. Mail her at malihamomtazoishi@gmail.com

LIVING LIFE AT 2X SPEED

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

My life changed forever when I discovered the power of 2x speed.

I was an average content consumer who used to watch videos at a normal speed. What always bothered me was the duration of the videos. I am the kind of person who looks at how many pages a book has before hopping onto it. So, naturally, I used to opt for 5 to 7-minute-long videos.

Over the years, I trained my brain into squeezing, say, a 10-minute-long video into a short and sweet timeframe.

At first, it seemed harmless. I was consuming a lot more content in a shorter period. It helped me discover more content to watch. On top of that, this crazy habit crept into my daily academic routine. When I watched tutorial videos at 2x speed, I felt like I had a productive time. I could cram in hours and hours of lectures in a few minutes. It helped me focus longer and retain more knowledge.

Personally speaking, it's better to pour 100 percent of your attention into watching a 15-minute-long tutorial than watching a 2-hour-long recording of your boring class lectures. It saves time, helps shuffle through different teaching styles, and shoves in a tremendous amount of productivity in a short amount of time.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

Apart from saving time on unnecessarily long videos with slow speakers, this practice is free from any technical difficulties.

Soon, my focus shifted to entertainment. I gradually started cranking up the

speed so much that I am now comfortable watching Netflix shows and movies at 2x speed. Slow-paced content makes me fidgety and uneasy. How bad can sped-up visual media be? Not that bad, I suppose.

But here's the thing, I don't feel any discomfort speeding things up; rather, it feels good that I can fly through all the long pauses and background music.

What's worse is that I don't get to enjoy a regular film nor sit through a whole movie in a theatre anymore. I miss the joy of watching an actor spew their well-versed lines into birthing an iconic scene.

Music is a grey area for me. I avoid listening to music at 2x because it ruins the temporal arrangement that the song is supposed to be in. I must admit, I have tried to speed up a few tracks from time to time. Podcasts are fun to listen to when sped-up.

My deduction from my eccentric habit is, whenever I listen to something at 2x speed for the first time, my brain registers it as normal. Real-life voices sound funny to me afterwards. The same goes for all the content I watched or heard before I picked up on this strange mannerism, they make me uncomfortable.

Studies show our brains can be rewired in two weeks. And I believe that I have certainly rewired mine. Although it has damaged my attention span substantially, I can't return to being my old self again.

Farnaz Fawad Hasan is a disintegrating pool noodle wanting to stay afloat. Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

How Much Screen Time Is Too Much?

SYEDA ERUM NOOR & HIYA ISLAM

The current pandemic has dramatically reshaped how we interact with the world from indoors to outdoors. Since the past year, there has been a massive surge in virtual learning amongst students of all ages. Learners, especially school students, are getting screen time now more than ever.

Owing to the pandemic, screen time has seen a hike of up to 60 percent. The increased screen time and its potential impact on school children leaves parents questioning how much screen time is healthy and how they could put justified restrictions in place.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has established a set of guidelines that recommends screen time, in hours, as per the age of the child. Generally, for children under five, the limit is less than an hour a day and only under adult supervision. Between ages 5 and 18, the screen time should be tailored to the child's needs.

Although online learning models have made it possible for education to continue in these struggling times, it does come at a price. Excessive screen time can lead to a number of detrimental health effects.

To begin with, too many hours spent staring at a screen affects the circadian rhythm of the body. The blue light radiated delays the release of melatonin, a hormone associated with the sleep-wake cycle and ultimately pushes back the bedtime. With schools starting at strict hours, later bedtimes cause less restful sleep and more next-day drowsiness.

children, and if staring at a screen for hours has any effect on us, we can only imagine what it's doing to our children."

Apart from online tutorials and homework, there is another element vying for a child's attention, often stronger than the former -- recreation and entertainment.

Samah says, "After school, I play online games with my friends and siblings. I often end up spending the rest of the day this way".

It seems that the added stress of online learning has not detached children from using the same devices as a way to get rid of boredom. As both factors are very demanding in a child's life, often kids do not think much about how much screen time is safe and healthy for them. Given the existing conditions of lockdowns, non-device alternatives for relaxation have become limited.

As a result, parents often opt to let their children stay online for longer hours.

When the time comes for limitations, most parents, including Sadia, are faced with the same question, "What should I do, then?"

With entertainment available at our



Fifth grader Samah Noor says that she spends "almost all of the day" engaged with electronic devices. She complains of headaches and irritable temperament. She also adds that her new routine consisting of increased screen time makes her lose track of time very easily which only adds up to her ill feelings.

Parents, similarly, have noticed severe shifts in behaviour. Sadia Sharmin, who works as a manager at a group of companies, reinforces Samah's comments telling us how her two children are suffering the same fate.

"They've been so moody, it's become increasingly difficult to manage them," says Sadia, "I can't blame them. They're only

fingertips, imagination and creativity have bred themselves differently in today's children. There was a time when a child was entertained by something as mundane as a stick; children today, in a world of flashing images and interactive screens, need more.

Both parents and teachers agree that this is largely affecting a child's growth. Apart from emotional, mental and physical growth, another major aspect of their lives that is being impacted is their social development. For growing children, social interaction and exposure to the outside world is an essential part of growing up. However, in light of recent events, social connectivity has seemingly become a thing of the past. While people in this day and



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

age may be the most connected through a virtual plane, they are disconnected in the ways that matter most. Many studies have suggested that increased screen time can also result in development of social anxiety later on in life which proves to be another matter of concern for the parents.

Sadia gives us some insight about how this is affecting her children's ability to socialise. Their worlds have shrunk down to one small screen. Social gatherings or simply meeting people outside of the ones in their own homes is becoming difficult for them.

"The quieter children are sinking right back into their shells. Without social interaction and a connection to the outside world, some children have more to lose," worries Jannatunessa Muna, a teacher at Stride International School. Several studies and experts discuss the direct relation between social interactions within young children and self-esteem and confidence.

However, she also stresses that it is not all bad, with this much interaction of technology, the children have become more tech savvy than anyone could have hoped, which, in present times is a necessary skill. While some children shrink in confidence, others have found confidence in their new development of skills in dealing with technology. So, as bleak it may seem, Muna chooses to have an optimistic outlook telling us that there is a silver lining.

Parents, however, are still worried. They worry about another impact on the children, this being their now close to nonexistent routines. With so much time spent on their screens, when it comes time to sleep, children often cannot.

Younger children have pent up energy from the lack of physical activity, inadvertently making them restless. Other times, they cannot sleep, despite being tired. This once again, can be directly linked to the amount of time they spend on their screens. In a study conducted by the Sleep Foundation, lack of sleep comes from the delay in the release of melatonin which causes sleep to be delayed along with it. This leaves children staying up for long hours of the night and sleeping through

most of the day which also contributes to their moods and irritability.

With the possibility of schools opening up for the children soon, parents and teachers are in doubt. While they agree there will certainly be a period of time when children will have to adjust to another new change, will things eventually be okay?

"Children will adapt to their new lifestyle, just as they did this one," believes Riffat Jafrin, teacher at an English medium school. "But it's our job, as parents and teachers, to make things as smooth as we can."

Teachers suggest that the opening be done in phases, easing the children back into this routine, rather than thrusting them back into it, which might be overwhelming. As for parents, Sadia suggests, they require guidance as to how to best deal with children, now and later. She suggests that professionals help guide the nation's parents as a whole, as they await schools to reopen and some form of normalcy to return to their children's lives.

References

- Frontiers (July 22, 2021). *Social Connectedness, Excessive Screen Time During COVID-19 and Mental Health: A Review of Current Evidence*.
- Sleep Foundation (February 5, 2021). *Screen Time and Insomnia: What It Means for Teens*.
- Reid Health (n.d). *How much screen time should kids get during the pandemic?*
- Kiddie Care Nurseries (January 12, 2021). *The importance of social interaction*.
- National Bureau of Economic Research (March, 2000). *Self-confidence and social interactions*.
- Online Psychology Degrees (n.d). *How Does Screen Time Affect a Child's Social Development?*

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com

Hiya loves food that you hate by norm – broccoli, pineapple pizza and Bounty bars. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com