

A Socially Anxious Person Walks Into a Restaurant...

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Being a person with social anxiety, my life is quite the adventure. For instance, I don't have to spend a fortune doing extreme sports for adrenaline. I can just decide to go eat somewhere I'll have to place the order myself.

You see, ordering at a restaurant, all on my own, is not an *in-the-moment* thing. For it does not simply begin when I see the waiter approaching my table, but actually when a friend first mentions wanting to check out a restaurant I've never been to before.

So, what do I do then to make sure that I act like a normal human being?

I strategise. I practice. I prepare, with at least a whole week in hand.

First order of action, flip through the said restaurant's social media handle in search of the menu. My textbooks watch me from under layers of dust as I scrutinise and memorise every inch of the menu. I cram for the ordeal which involves asking for less sauce on my burger.

Mirror recital, playacting with my cat as the server; I do it all.

As the day arrives and I'm on my way, I give it another thought. Do I really have to go to such lengths to humiliate myself? Why can't restaurants have a text option with the waiters the way most food delivery apps do?

As I glance towards my friend who has no clue about the spiral I'm stuck in, I contemplate making them order for me instead... But, no. I'm an adult.

I can do this. I can do this. I can do this but *can I really?*

Once there, I must look at the menu as if I haven't routinely checked it every night for the past week to drill it into my memory.

"May I take your order, ma'am?"

There they are, the dreaded words.

That is when I nod in approval and do a second round of a quick skim through. Only this time, I'm not pretending. I'm trying desperately to hold on to the last shreds of information my last two functioning brain cells had retained — and yet I fail miserably.

"O-one cheeseburgerwithlessauce-andfriesonthesideplease" I blabber and cringe internally right away. Is that even on the menu?

In the moment of silence that ensues, I pray hard for anything but a requested repetition of my order, to all the divine entities there might be.

"One cheese burger with less sauce and fries on the side, ma'am?"

"Yes!"

I've done it! However, it's not over. I prepare once again for the finale.

As my food is served, I clench my jaw and bite my tongue and wait for them to say it.

"Enjoy your meal, ma'am."

I won't. I will NOT say it. I fight my will and my reflexes like never before.

"You too!" I failed, once again. I hang my head in shame as the server walks away with an awkward smile. You really can't win them all, can you?



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



What Ride Do Your Thoughts Take?

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I hate it when having something is considered a norm, when only a privileged few actually have access to said thing. A train of thought, for instance, is one of those things.

Every time we say "I lost my train of thought", it fuels the narrative that all thought processes look the same. A notion that enforces the idea that thoughts follow a specific track, are orderly and conclusive. You see, that's not the case for everyone.

Here is some alternative transportation you can use to describe your thoughts when you (yet again) lose track of your thoughts.

NAGORDOLA OF THOUGHT

Is your mental state stuck in a constant loop of highs and lows? Boy, do I have just the ride for you.

Notice how it's a nagordola and not a merry-go-round? Well, that symbolises the creaking sounds your mind makes every time you try to make decisions because we can all admit, the worst thing people with nagordola thinking can face is having to make decisions.

Hoping to ever reach any conclusions at all? Forget it.

AIRCRAFT OF THOUGHT

Children's thoughts probably travel in some kind of aircraft, head in the clouds, up above in a world of their own. There's no traffic, their imaginations are undisturbed by the worldly demands.

Upon growing up, our aircraft lands, hails whatever rental car is available at the airport, and goes out into the congested roads. The few with aircraft that never land grow into adults who are either creatively inclined, people frequently accused of being distracted and impractical, or are just struggling.

TRUCK OF THOUGHT

If the first thing you want to say is "utter chaos" when asked what's on your mind, your thoughts probably ride trucks. They are out of control and this results in a reckless disposition and emotional instability.

When it's time to make decisions or reach conclusions, you might succeed, but only after a venturesome journey with a high likelihood of crashing. If disorderly thoughts of yours are most active at night, as they often are, your thoughts probably ride the cargo trucks cruising around the city — a wild nocturnal ride.

RICKSHAW OF THOUGHT

If your reaction to this article so far is "You guys are having thoughts?", your mind has probably been hailing rickshaws.

Maybe that your thoughts are only active in regards to niche areas of interest, but when it comes to important things, like navigating the highways of life, your mind is blank. And when you desperately need your brain to work? It performs remarkably, demonstrating how devoid of activity it truly can be.

Your pattern of thought might not resonate with any of the rides mentioned above, but now you know that the possibilities are endless. Not having the purposeful train is okay, it's also okay to not be able to categorise your way of thought into any one type of ride.

Spread the word, pick your ride, and embrace diversity.

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