

# GROWING UP SHELTERED

**NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY**

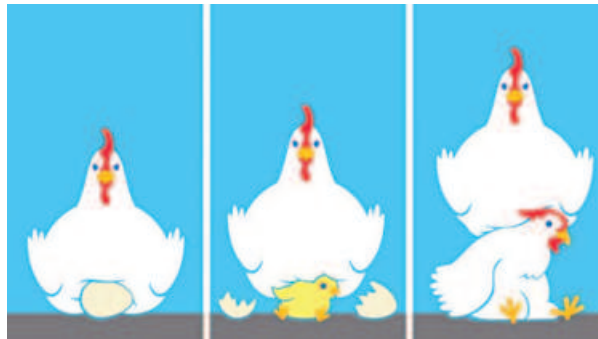
Growing up sheltered can feel comfortable in the beginning, but with time, most people start to realise that this detachment from the “real world” and its complications can prove to be a major disadvantage in life.

I grew up pretty sheltered. I never did anything remotely rebellious and never attempted to create fun memories because I either wasn't allowed to, or was too afraid to step out of my comfort zone.

My parents used to follow the infamous “not allowed to have fun two days in a row” rule when I was in school. Even for most of my university life, I had a pretty early curfew. I was asked to focus only on academics and not worry about anything else, and so that's what I did. I have studied hard and been praised by many of my professors, but that's where the rewards for my one-track mind ends.

I've always been an introvert, but I didn't notice my lack of social skills until way later in life. Not only was I not comfortable with actively trying to make new friends, I also didn't know what to say when talking to a new person.

Now, I realise that I have no fun stories to tell from my school or university days like many of my friends do.



Even employers all around the country seem to take an interest in hearing about extra-curricular activities that make you not only a suitable, but also an interesting, candidate.

I wouldn't blame it all on my parents. I, too, was often unable to convince myself to try new things when I had the opportunity to, simply because I didn't know what to expect out of it. Additionally, I understand that it can be difficult for parents to keep calm when their biggest fears regarding their kids' safety is broadcasted on the news daily.

I started taking baby steps to becoming more independent a few months after joining university. At first, it was daunting because I wasn't familiar with things that I felt like I should have learned by then such as using banking services, navigating crowded places and commuting alone to places that are more than 20 minutes away from my house.

Since then, I've become more confident and I no longer dread doing things alone. Even when I have to do something I've never done before, I now take it as a challenge that I can figure out along the way rather than something that will stop me from moving forward. I'm still very much an introvert, but my social skills have improved drastically since I started expanding my friend circle and spending more time with people with diverse personalities.

My biggest takeaway has been that convincing yourself to take the first step is often the most difficult part of the process. However, it is definitely worth it. Nothing beats the feeling of independence and proving to yourself that your will to grow and learn is greater than your fears.

*Nuzhat zones out every ten minutes. Tell her to snap out of it at [nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com](mailto:nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com)*

## No open spaces, nowhere to go

**TANZIM NOOR TANMOY**

Another exhausting week of classes and quizzes ends, and the longed awaited weekend finally arrives. I'm planning to go somewhere, to take a break from the monotony, to kick back and relax with some friends.

I'm looking for a place that isn't another four-walled concrete establishment. But wait, does such a place exist?

This was the story of my attempt – nay, failure – at trying to find somewhere to be on weekends that is not either a restaurant, a movie theatre or a shopping mall.

After being locked down indoors for more than a year, I've been trying to utilise all my weekends to the fullest now that I could finally go out. I went out every chance I got – whether to grab a bite, window shop or just walk outside.

The more I went out, the more I realised how limited my options

were. It felt like I was just leaving one indoors for another.

However, an entire day would be wasted if I decided to go to somewhere off the well-trodden path. And if I did go somewhere close to home, the walk becomes a survival mini-game on high difficulty, with uneven pavements, reckless driving and continual honking.

Commuting is inconvenient; streets are not walkable. Couldn't I just go to a park? Well, probably not.

Dhaka is staggeringly scarce of open and green spaces – parks, if you will. The conversation about the sorry state of both number and condition of parks and playing fields isn't a new one. According to urban planners, there should be around 15 to 20 parks and or playing fields in each ward of Dhaka's two city corporations, whereas there are many with none at all.

The detrimental impacts on children's physical and mental health caused

by an urban planning failure such as this have been thoroughly studied and proven. Adults aren't in great shape either, being in closed spaces all the time means lack of fresh air, which can cause significant breathing problems.

I'm not here to regurgitate the age-old argument that rapid commercialisation and deforestation are bad and have diminished our open spaces and greenery. I'm just a person who wants an actual change of pace from the indoors sometimes, who wants to walk under the warm sun, breathe in the fresh air, and not have to worry about time constraints or commuting if I do find an open space, which is not just another concrete jungle. And I'm sure there are many more who want the same.

With the current state, maybe that's just too much to ask for. There are too many problems, and

question marks remain over whether the efforts that are being made will be enough.

At this point, we can only hope that those in power pay heed to an issue that's often goes undiscussed in our city of problems.

### References

1. The Daily Star (April 19, 2021). *All work, no play makes Dhaka an unhealthy city*
2. ISSE ([isse.org.uk](http://isse.org.uk)) The Institute of Specialist Surveyors and Engineers. *Lack of fresh air*

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