

Why it is okay to want a spam account

MALIK ARAF

My recent rampant addiction to social media made me realise a couple of things.

First of all, I finally agree with my mother. Sorry mother, I should have listened to you when you said my phone was the root of all my problems. Secondly, I realised that not everyone on my friend list should see what I post and share. Yes, I am no longer in high school, and the number of followers I have on social media doesn't seem intriguing anymore. So, it is time I keep some of my connections the way they are.

To explain further, I feel like my family or my colleagues don't need to see the things I share all the time. Since they don't know my intentions, or the context, there's a high chance they might misinterpret it.

This means working on my follower list. And I thought about it. Filtering through the list and deciding upon who to keep and who to drop feels like an ordeal. Eventually, I decided to make a spam account. And I think all of you should have one too. Hear me out.

Spam accounts are great filters to social media. You see less content since you



DESIGN: MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

follow less and let a small number of people follow you. You can post anything, share silly selfies, and remember the good old times without worrying about who might judge you. You can rant, post your frustrations, and seek help, too. You also don't need to worry about what your family might think since they won't see

what you share.

You can open a spam account for other reasons too. For example, you can use your spam account as a portfolio for what you do besides your academics. You can use it to keep a tab on the world since good news articles can be easily clustered among a sea of content.

However, there are some downsides to opening a spam account. To start with, you should know where opening one is safer. Many social media platforms have restrictions that don't allow users to create accounts that match with existing accounts. As in, you can't open one because an account by that same name or photo exists.

Furthermore, people who know you but don't know you have multiple accounts may report you, which is an issue in itself. Finally, when your friends or close ones see you unleash every bit of sanity you have in your spam, there's a chance they may think you lose it.

Spam accounts are honestly fun. Even if you don't find any necessary advantage for opening one, you could do it for the experience. Handling social media, and being constantly aware of other people's perception of you can be a real hassle. Opening a spam account might actually help you handle these, just like it helped me.

Malik Araf is seriously confused right now. To make him more confused, send him a text at arafmalik04@gmail.com



SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

People who are overly critical of others are usually ruthless to themselves. This practice is quite common in our house. We stand in front of the mirror to tear ourselves apart verbally. When we accomplish something, instead of appreciating it, we try to find out how much better we could have done.

I have heard my family members pointing to their flaws often in the past. It never struck me as anything out of the

OUR INSECURITIES, WHEN HANDED DOWN TO OTHERS

ordinary until I heard my little sister speaking unkindly about herself. I kept recalling that; I, too, speak a lot about that particular imperfection. I had never realised that I was unintentionally teaching her to see herself through my self-conscious lens.

It is normal, and truthfully, unavoidable, to sometimes feel insecure.

However, when you are verbal about your insecurities in front of children, they tend to pick it up as well. We all know that they learn by example. Imagine pointing out particular features you are unhappy

about, such as your height or thinning hair, in front of a child. Even though it is about your own body, it might make them aware that these things can be the subject of insecurities. So, they start to notice if the same things apply to them.

Pulling a stop to talking about your insecurities is hard, especially if it is an old habit. Not speaking about them does not essentially make them disappear. The best solution would be to learn to think about these insecurities healthily.

As a curvy person, I grew up being told

that I should lose weight to wear certain clothes. My friend grew up hearing that she should put on some weight so that she can find clothes more easily. This concept in itself is wrong because none of us had much control over the shape of our bodies. Instead of thinking that we need to change ourselves to fit into a dress, we should have been taught that dresses should be made to fit us.

The uniqueness of our beings is one of the most beautiful things about us. So, as hard as it is to believe it sometimes, we should gradually try to accept the things that we have been hard-wired into believing are flaws. Self-affirmation meditation can be a helpful tool in this case.

The same idea applies to your accomplishments. When you catch yourself trivialising your achievements, think about how you would feel if your friends or siblings achieved the same thing. You would probably be happy for them. Learning to give yourself credit teaches you to be less critical of others, and this inspires children to be more empathetic.

We should be softer to ourselves and others for the ones you're an example to, but most importantly, for ourselves. We deserve kindness, today and every day.

Shimin reads everything she can find, talks to cats, and writes a lot of letters. Send her a book at shim.mush@gmail.com

The tug of war between academics and work

TAHMIM HASSAN

Is a student's only responsibility towards their academics? In a perfect world, it probably is. In reality, students are also required to work jobs to secure their financial independence, contribute to their family, and sustain their education.

However, balancing work and academics is not easy. With the constant stress of academics coupled with regular deadlines at work, it becomes quite difficult for a student to find the right balance. With each end demanding full dedication and effort, a tug of war emerges for them between academics and work.

Rashidul Hassan, an engineering student at North South University (NSU), works as a remote content writer in a reputed software company. For him, managing both work and academics has not come easy.

"My work hours are from 1 PM to 8 PM. I have to attend classes while working. When classes were online, I was able to manage working simultaneously, but I actually do not know how I will manage now that classes are offline. Transport will take a lot of time and I'll have to go to work with a tired body and mind. Amidst this, I have to hold on to my academics as it matters a lot to me and my future goals," he says.

While it may not be part of the dream we are sold as children, it's quite common to come across students who have to pay their own cost of education. "I have to pay a sizable portion of my tuition fees, and so working is imminent to me," adds Rashidul.

Many jobs require flexible timings from students, often calling them to attend office at odd times. These really hamper the other activities a student might be involved in, personal or familial concerns, and especially their academics.

For Faiyaz Hossain, a computer engineering student at NSU and a home tutor, it's a similar story. "Even on days when I had an important exam the next day, I was called suddenly by my students to go and teach them or take extra classes. I could not refuse because it is my responsibility to teach them. Also, I did not want to give the wrong impression, which could later result in losing the job," Faiyaz shares.

Stories like Faiyaz's are not a one-off, as often the rigours of a job get in the smooth maintenance of studies. It takes a lot of

support from faculty members to walk this tightrope, but the stances of faculty members vary on this.

Tanvir Rahman, former lecturer of BRAC University, believes that even while working, the first priority for a student must be their academics.

"In any situation, work-life balance is very important for a student, as students become industry-ready by the time they graduate. Industry-ready graduates get a head start which cannot be said for those who do not work on the side while studying," he says.

"The first priority should be studying," Tanvir asserts.

"Being industry-ready and gaining knowledge about real world tasks will only come to use if someone has decent results to be called up for interviews. Decent results also show whether a student was sincere or not, a quality recruiters often look for when they seek potential employees."

Mehetaz Chowdhury, a lecturer at BRAC University says, "Students should not put pressure on themselves by working if they have the choice of not doing so. Working definitely teaches you a lot of skills, and gives you a sense of responsibility, but many students fall prey to the allure of earning money."

Echoing Tanvir's statement, Mehetaz says, "If someone is working for financial independence, it is important that they keep a hold on their academics, too. Academics is important, and it opens a lot of dimensions for a student. They get to learn about which subjects their interest lies in, and work on that."

Speaking about what faculty members can do to accommodate students who work, Mehetaz adds, "A faculty member will always understand if you can absolutely demonstrate that you are passionate about your work. We have the best interests for students."

However, this hasn't been the experience for all students. Shimin Mushsharat, a former CSE student from NSU, shares,

"Many teachers assume their courses aren't being prioritised if they find out students are working. Teachers often don't consider pushing dates for tests even if they clash with other courses."

Reaching out to faculty members for help often feels difficult for students.

Shehrin Kazi, a student at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka, made the mistake of not communicating her work pressure. "I never let any of my teachers know the problems I

told me about his issues on the last day. I did all I could to help him, but by then it was too late."

She does have some advice working students, "Start balancing work and study from the beginning of the semester rather than cramming at the very last moment. Students should communicate with their respective faculties and department beforehand rather than at the last minute. Finally, take less credits which will ensure reduced stress."

Employers too can play a crucial role in making sure working students get to strike a healthy balance between these two facets of their life. Providing flexible work hours, and discussing the scope of responsibilities beforehand to make sure the pressure doesn't break the student are among some of the most basic things in this regard.

Samaha Tahsin, CEO and co-founder of Bonton Connect has experience being on both ends of this situation, having launched her start-up during her undergraduate years and now having students working for her company. Talking about hiring students, Samaha says, "Even though academics is very important, a lot of the time it is up to how skilful the student is at their job."

"The biggest challenge of dealing with part-timers who are key factors in full-scale operations is that the span of control they have on their own routine is very little," explains Ashraful Haque Emu, Deputy Manager at 10 Minute School.

"These are highly ambitious and passionate students who already want a part of the big changes. We have to be very considerate towards their academics while keeping the operations intact. As most of our operations can be run online, we have a lenient schedule to figure out the free time and work accordingly. As long as the deliverables are arriving on time, we don't need any hard and fast office hours to maintain integrity," Emu says.

It takes as much understanding on the part of employers and faculty members to accommodate working students, as it takes excellent planning and work ethic by the students to make this situation work.

Regardless, when societal expectations and personal needs give no option but to take on the challenge of juggling both roles, communicating actively with everyone around seems like the best route to take on this journey.

