

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE  
**SHOUT**

DHAKA THURSDAY JULY 14, 2022, ASHAR 30, 1429 BS

A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star



HAVE WE BECOME TOO  
DESENSITISED TO TRUE  
CRIME?

**PG 4**

BEING A WOMAN WHO  
WATCHES (MEN'S) SPORTS

**PG 4**



# LIVING WITH AN EATING DISORDER

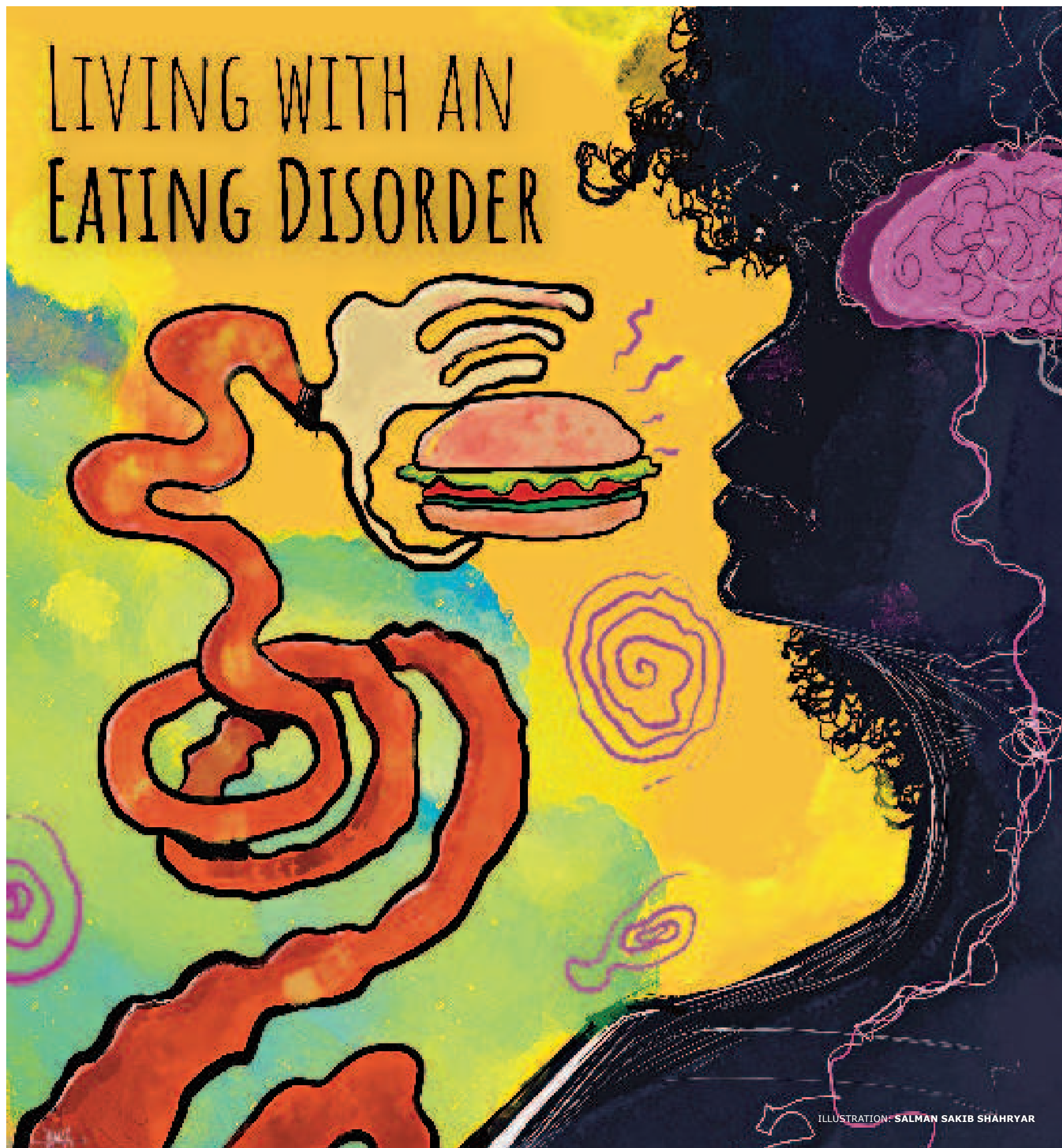


ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

# EDITORIAL

Today marks the 9th anniversary of SHOUT. We are the definitive voice of the youth in Bangladesh.

Our journey so far, if I evaluate, has been quite an exciting one. I myself joined as a young contributing writer back in its early days. Like writers that we have today, I too remember, the thrill of updating my Facebook bio.

But so much has changed since then. Where do I begin?

We have grown from catering to young adults to serving relatable, original content and opinions for teens to professionals. We work with universities and organisations in bringing out the success stories of Bangladeshi youth at home and abroad. We've made a mark in the digital space – Facebook, Instagram and now we are on TikTok!

SHOUT has grown from being an edgy teen to a mature young adult, as have our readers and well-wishers. Stay with us. The horizon promises greater things.

-- Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Editor In-charge, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### MANGA



# Oshi no Ko

## Exploring the cutthroat entertainment industry

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

From the authors of *Kaguya-sama* and *Kuzu no Honkai*, *Oshi no Ko* is a manga series about the dark side of the entertainment industry and everything that goes on behind the big screen.

The story starts off following Doctor Gorou, a 30-year-old avid idol fan. One day, Ai Hoshino, an emerging 16-year-old pop idol, is suddenly rushed to the hospital he works at, pregnant with twins. Doctor Gorou is tasked with her delivery but meets his untimely demise at the hands of an obsessed stalker. However, by supernatural means, he gets reincarnated back into the world as one of Ai's twin babies with the name Aqua, thus, getting another life with his adored idol as his mother.

By the time our protagonist settles into his new life as the secret child of an increasingly popular idol, certain events unfold that result in him being unceremoniously thrown into the world of showbiz that his mother resides in.

From the beginning, the manga exposes the harsh reality of the people working in the entertainment industry, their struggles, and the shady aspects of idol culture. It takes an introspective look into how appearances can be painfully deceptive, how the idols with their bright smiles are far from perfect.

The first thing *Oshi No Ko* makes clear is that the entertainment industry is not about art, or even entertainment for that matter. Rather, it is about the business. Companies groom idols and actors as products that are to be sold to the audience. In order to cater to said audience, these performers must be adept at lying

to their fans and to themselves as well. Anyone who does not fit that criterion is cast aside and forgotten, since second chances are virtually non-existent in such a cutthroat environment.

However, despite going all in with the critiquing, the series is not only a condemnation of the industry. It is an exploration of everything that makes the industry good and bad, with the good popping up in more controlled doses than the bad.

As keen as the series is to portray the truly loathsome for what they are, it goes to even greater lengths to examine the inner lives of each and every one of these characters, exploring their ambitions, dreams and what makes them do the things they do.

That is what ultimately makes up the core of the manga. Through its writing, *Oshi no Ko* is able to explain and show people's desire to be famous and adored, the lengths they can go in order to fulfil that desire, and how that desire is exploited for profits by their industry. It can, at times, be a rough and upsetting read, but an adequate amount of comedy and silly interactions are sprinkled in to cut back on the intensity.

*Oshi no Ko* is still an ongoing series, so it is difficult to say how it might conclude or where it will eventually end up on people's radars. But, following the recent announcement for its anime adaptation, one can hope that it will garner the attention and fame it deserves.

Remind Ayaan that he should be studying for his SSC examination at [ayaan.shams@gmail.com](mailto:ayaan.shams@gmail.com)

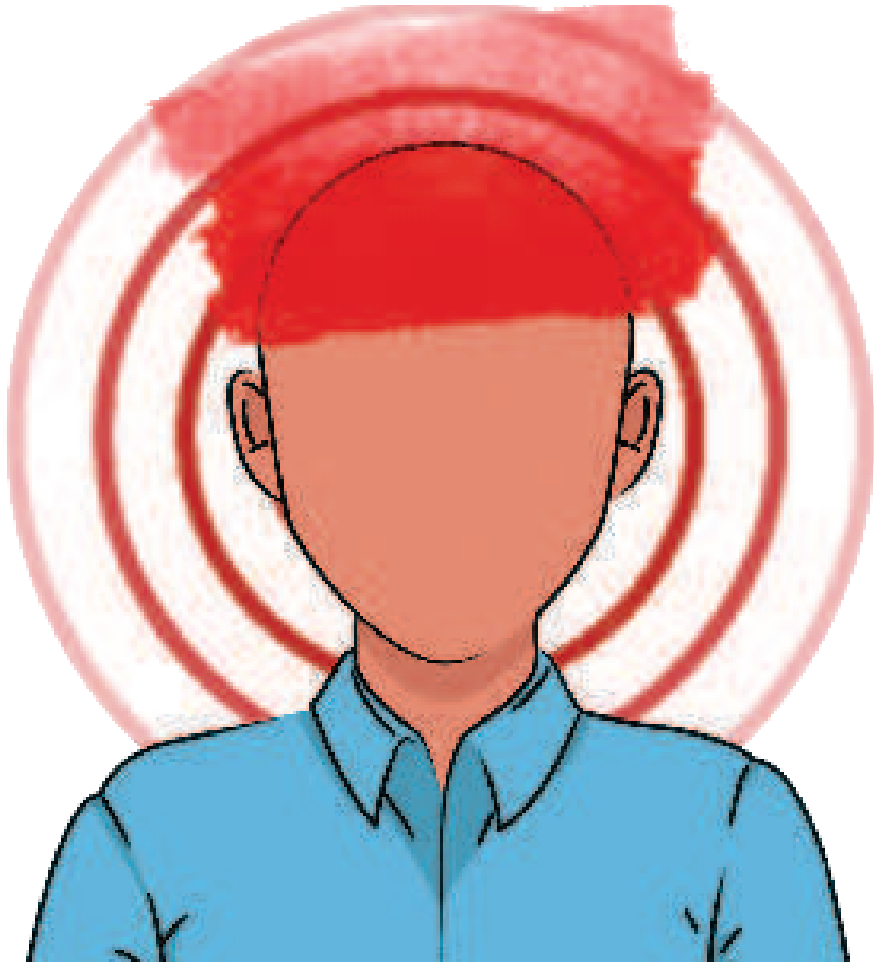
### TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



<b>A</b> Amar Priyo The Farooque Bhai Project	<b>B</b> Kiwi Harry Styles
Jam & Butterfly DPR LIVE ft. Crush, eaJ	Strawberry Swing Coldplay
Deep Fried Frenz MF Doom	I'm Just Snacking Gus Dapperton
Coffee Sylvan Esso	Bite Troye Sivan

Email us at [shoutds@gmail.com](mailto:shoutds@gmail.com)  
with feedback, comments, and reader  
submissions within 500 words.





DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

## Migraine and a toxic boyfriend. Are they the same?

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

I have been suffering from migraine for as long as I can remember. In fact, this chronic headache has been around for longer than most of my friends, and some of my younger family members.

To be completely honest, from observing my own suffering and the perils of others around me, I have come to the conclusion that having chronic migraine is really not that different from being in a somewhat toxic relationship.

Migraine is a volatile partner, just like your trusted partner

Just as a thoughtless word or careless action may ignite a row with a lover, migraine brandishes its sharp talons at the slightest inconvenience.

A couple minutes spent under the sunlight, the overpowering scent of someone's perfume in an enclosed space, or even the weight of your own hair tied in a ponytail – it is difficult to predict which one from this assortment of triggers may become the cause of incapacitation later in the day.

May isolate you from the rest of humanity

It has caused a great many instances of strife within my own friend circle. They are not to blame, it is but a natural reaction to the elaborately made plans cancelled at the last minute, or the several unanswered calls at a moment of need.

Sometimes, my trusted partner even gives into fits of jealousy, unable to tolerate the idea of me having a pleasant time laughing boisterously with some friends.

You think you can let it go

Everyone around me always suggests ways I can be free from these shackles, without experiencing the futilities of their

own advice. Alas, despite the tribulations brought upon by this one-sided and undesirable relationship, it appears our bond is stronger than any material found on earth.

I have exhausted every home remedy, fallen back upon my trusty prescription medicines, sung "Will Ye Go Lassie Go" out loud, all to send my lover away. Yet, my faithful old migraine refuses to part from me, bound to me through the sort of commitment many exhausted hearts have given up on seeking in this century.

Migraine is temperamental

Sometimes, it exudes an aura that it will unleash its wrath upon me soon, causing me to walk on eggshells the entire day. It leads to wearing sunglasses indoors, signalling everyone around me to lower their voices, carrying an umbrella even when the sun's rays are softened by the light. All this effort goes in vain in the end, when the ever-familiar headache blesses me with its presence.

There is much resentment between us. I would have been more than happy without the occasional attacks of headaches, and I'm sure the ungodly number of painkillers I take cannot be pleasant for my migraine as well (or my internal organs, for that matter). However, at the end of the day, when I can stride out of classes and skip out on family functions and plans, it's almost impossible to not be fond of the always reliable excuse.

At the end of the day, it would be a shame not to acknowledge and accept the torturous longevity of this bond.

Zabin Tazrin Nashita is once again asking for you to stop abusing your car horns when stuck in traffic. You can present your defence at: [zabintn@gmail.com](mailto:zabintn@gmail.com)

## Achaar: A jar of spices, sunshine and love

SHADYA NAHER SHEYAM

*At my grandmother's place, summer was defined by green mangoes, aroma of mustard seeds and the blanket of sunshine. I recall dozing off in the afternoon, lulled by the repetitive thuds of spices being pounded in the mortar.*

I would look at the sliced mangoes put out in the sun and would fight the temptation to taste them. Soon they would be sealed in bottle bathing into fragrant mustard oil, and then they would wait to be delivered to their loved ones. I have become so accustomed to the flavour of my grandma's achaar that I cannot bring myself to try any store-bought pickle even though she is no longer able to make them.

One day, during the pandemic, I picked up the phone and dialled my grandmother's number to ask her for the pickle recipe. When I first started grinding the toasted mustard seeds, I was brought back to a scene from the novel *Zami* by Audre Lorde, which described a young lady emerging into womanhood while pounding various spices.

In that instant, I felt what can only be described as a raw and primal connection with my foremothers — each move of the pestle resonating over the ages. I imagined women whose lives were centred around their families expressing their individuality through the flavours of the pickle.

The aroma of the spices transported me to the familiar scent of grandmother's cotton sari, which was warm, welcoming, and full of affection. To lazy afternoons spent listening to stories about princesses and other enchanted beings who lived in thick forests. I felt a connection with her and the other women in my family who elegantly carried the tradition of spices and care forward bottled up with salt, turmeric, and a big squeeze of lime juice with an indefinite shelf life.

The cherished recollections of witnessing my grandma skilfully removing the seeds off of fresh mangoes while telling us stories about how back in the day, on hot summer afternoons, all the women in the home would gather together to make pickles. In the midst of the spices and the drying mangoes, ordinary lives were exposed. Women who were worn out from responding to their husbands and children's pressing needs would let their hair down and seek solace in the ritual of communion.

I think about those women, their regular lives, and the discussions they had revolving the pickle jars at a time when we feel the need to continuously chronicle and sell a narrative of our lives to be relevant.

We do not know precisely what they talked about, but we do have countless stories that have been passed down through the generations as oral literature about a period when they spent their time caring for families. It's possible that their hopes and ambitions had been peeled away and thrown away like so many of the mango skins.

Shadya Naher Sheyam attempts to live life like Ashima from *The Namesake*. Talk to her about Mira Nair films at: [sadianaharsiam@gmail.com](mailto:sadianaharsiam@gmail.com)



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



# Have we become too desensitised to true crime?

NAMREEN SHAIYAZ

“True crime” is a broad term used to refer to any kind of content that deals with real-life crimes. A common interest among many, its popularity only grows every day. But have we ever stopped to think how morbid this is as an interest?

Many people have different reasons for why they indulge in such content, but the major ones seem to be that it helps them be more aware of the kind of crimes that can occur in our world. Those who have a fascination for the psyche can use these cases as a way to analyse human nature, and what drives these people to do what they do.

For some, it can even work as a coping mechanism. This is what sets it apart from fictional mystery or thriller stories — the level of reality associated with it is the main appeal of it.

While these are valid reasons, the level of popularity it has gained is starting to become concerning, and with all popular media, there is worry about the way it is discussed.

Many creators do not seem to have the



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

level of nuance and sympathy required to handle such a heavy topic. It is not completely uncommon to see people treat these cases like they're some regular old story, and not an account of a horrific event that actually happened to someone. They recount these graphic events over mundane tasks like putting on makeup, and having food, some even going as far to crack jokes. It can come off as insensi-

tive as it seems like they are downplaying the effects of the severity of what they are talking about. It makes the content easier to digest, which is not what stories of horrifying crimes should be.

Another reason for why people become desensitised is due to the sheer volume of true crime content that exists. It is not just YouTube or podcasters narrating stories, but it exists in the form of endless streams

of documentaries and TV shows as well.

It can be argued that there is some merit to such content as it spreads awareness about these events. However, it is not uncommon to see that some documentaries have the culprits portrayed by well-loved Hollywood heartthrobs. Certain “popular” ones even have multiple documentaries made about them, and half the time it's not quite clear if the makers just want to inform us about this individual or have us try to sympathise with them.

There is nothing inherently wrong with consuming true crime content. As mentioned before, people have different reasons, and some of these are understandable. But the endless barrage of content that is continuously being made about something so dark, and the rate at which it is consumed can make one question how much care is taken when talking about something so sensitive, and how much of an effect it can have on one's mental health.

Namreen has been stuck in the void for too long. Send help at [namreen.shaiyaz@gmail.com](mailto:namreen.shaiyaz@gmail.com)

# Being a woman who watches (men’s) sports

NAHIAN NAWAR

I have been watching (men's) cricket for ages now, and the person who kindled this interest in me was my mother.

Ma has been a cricket enthusiast since she was an undergraduate student in the 90s. Having left her family back home, she found a second home in the cosy TV room of her dormitory, where she and her girlfriends would gather to watch the likes of Sanath Jayasuriya and Brian Lara, the gods of cricket in those days.

Since I caught the cricket fever from my mother, and my sports loving family mostly comprises women, I hadn't realised until middle school that watching cricket, or sports in general, was considered a traditionally male interest. Partaking in conversations about cricket with male peers proved difficult, as my opinions were routinely dismissed.

Because I was a girl, it was assumed that my appreciation for the sport must not be as deep-seated as theirs. It was also taken for granted that I didn't understand the rules and terms as well as they did; they were the self-proclaimed pundits, and in their eyes, I was an amateur.

Luckily, I found a group of girls who were also fans of sports. We bonded over our love for the game and our shared experiences of being women who watch sports. From being subjected to barrages of unprompted questions (“Name the captain of the Indian cricket team in 1975. What does LBW stand for? What's the difference between ‘reverse sweep’ and ‘switch hit?’”) so the men could determine our “legitimacy” as fans, to being accused of feigning our enthusiasm to impress guys, the patronisation and outright humiliation was endless.

Over the years, my relationship with cricket has evolved. My younger self associated watching cricket with pure joy.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

These days, I feel this tinge of guilt when I join my family to watch a cricket match. The feminist in me is ashamed of how we only care about the men in the sport, causing female cricketers to go largely unnoticed.

Underhyped and criminally underfunded, it's no surprise that many find women's cricket uninspiring, especially when you're used to the glitz and glamour of the men's cricket. It's important to remember, however, that women's cricket

doesn't lack what is at the heart of any sport: skilled players who are devoted to the game. Though it's tough to care when nobody else does, as fans we need to start giving women in sports the screen time they deserve.

As long as the realm of sports is considered an exclusive men's club, the rest of us will never fit in, as fans or athletes. While the onus is on men to welcome us into these spaces, and on authorities to ensure adequate funding and media coverage, as

female fans we also have a role to actively support the brave, talented sportswomen who have it the hardest.

So, in the future, I want my family to be more gender inclusive in terms of the sports we consume.

Nahian Nawar is a slow reader and a fast eater. Teach her how to change her ways by reaching out at [nahiannawar.dhk@gmail.com](mailto:nahiannawar.dhk@gmail.com)

# Living with an Eating Disorder

SHANUM SARKAR & AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

*Trigger warning: mentions and/or graphic details of eating disorders*

An eating disorder can refer to any of a range of psychological disorders, characterised by abnormal or disturbed eating habits. They might start with an obsession with food, body weight, or body shape. In severe cases, eating disorders can cause serious health consequences and may even be fatal if left untreated.

Contrary to popular belief and regardless of cultural background, people in Bangladesh are susceptible to eating disorders too, particularly anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. According to a recent study by National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), about one in four students were reported at risk of eating disorders in a public university in Bangladesh. Private university students in Bangladesh showed a 37.6 percent risk.

Despite these figures, people tend to latch onto misconceptions. Many refuse to acknowledge or educate themselves regarding the existence of eating disorders.

Women are at a higher risk for developing an eating disorder compared to men, as society places a higher concern on physical appearance and body image for them.

However, these disorders are becoming increasingly common amongst men and gender nonconforming people. These populations often seek treatment at lower rates or may not report their eating disorder symptoms at all.

“A desire to be attractive is a feeling reserved for women in our society. We're told to deal with body dysmorphia by just not caring about our experiences with appearance. For the longest time, I convinced myself I was fine despite extremely unhealthy eating habits. It did not occur to me that men were susceptible too, until much later,” laments Kazi Nahiyen Nabi (18), a student at South Breeze School.

Cultural aspects significantly contribute to triggering eating disorders for many.

Social gatherings, or dawats, are particularly challenging for someone with any form of disordered eating. Food being the focal point of these events in our culture may spark anxiety for many, conversations surrounding food at these events may feel internally isolating.

People being unaware of these disorders altogether have serious consequences. Relatives throwing snarky remarks in regards to people's bodies may seem harmless initially. For people with distorted body image, these comments can pose danger.

When it comes to comments like these, 23-year-old Fatima Jahan Ena, third-year student at North South University shares, “Family members, friends, or even complete strangers often negatively point out someone's physical features, without giving it a second thought. This is a very common scenario in our culture. I've had relatives scrutinise my appearance daily. Since anorexia can create a fear of gaining weight, these comments ended up acting as triggers.”

As a result, she recalls going to great

lengths while restricting her diet. She mentions how she did not finish a single meal in a day and exercised to the point where she was close to passing out.

Dr Mithila Khandaker, consultant psychologist currently practising at Lifespring Healthcare Centre talks about trends observed, when asked about her experience with eating disorder patients during her clinical practice. According to her, bullying in regards to appearance and body weight seems to be prevalent in most patients.

She adds how patients generally lack self-esteem and are greatly influenced by opinions and comments.

Farah Abrity, a third-year student



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

majoring in Engineering Management at Thammasat University, Bangkok, talks about the dreadful effects of eating disorders and navigates us through her journey.

She had been struggling with tendencies that were clear signs of an underlying eating disorder for over ten years. Her clinical diagnosis of binge eating disorder, body dysmorphic disorder and depression happened as recently as a year ago. Her experience paints a clear illustration of how alienating experiencing such illnesses are in Bangladesh.

“I was the only chubby child out of three sisters. I grew up listening to comments about my weight and suggestions to follow my sisters' eating habits. Starting from sixth grade, I developed a dysfunctional relationship with food and ever since then, I spent the years overly restricting all kinds of food. When my body could not take that anymore, I would be constantly bingeing on food,” she says.

Due to uncertainty over lockdowns, she chose to stay in Thailand during the mandatory quarantine periods in 2020.

“Quarantining all alone took a big toll on my mental health and I could not help but binge eat to cope. Over the course of a year, I gained 30 kgs before having to return to Bangladesh for my sister's wedding. Having to face family and society at large with my changed appearance was a

harrowing experience, for no one could be expected to understand that I did not have control over this. Upon my return, every interaction I had met this expectation,” she reflects.

It is ironic that there seems to be no room for people with eating disorders when dawats are supposed to be a celebration based on appreciating loved ones.

When courtesy is cautiously examined through your relationship to food, and the amount on your plate becomes a parameter for self-worth, do you give up on these conventionally fun gatherings altogether? How much empathy does the community have for eating disorders? Unsurprisingly, not so much.

being mentally unable to try certain types of food, no matter how hard I tried,” they add.

The struggles are quite often shrugged off using phrases which suggest that the person is somehow responsible for, or in control of their eating habits. This further reinforces the guilt, shame and stigma surrounding eating disorders.

People may argue that they are concerned about their loved ones. However, airing out concerns in the form of mockery, especially coming from a place that thrives in misinformation and insensitivity, is unsolicited. This may worsen eating disorders and in severe cases, lead to body dysmorphic disorder.

Parents should also trust their instincts when it comes to eating disorders in their children, in addition to educating themselves about basic eating disorder information. Eating disorders can thrive in secrecy, but parents often intuitively know if something is wrong with their children. If concern arises, consulting with a specialist and early intervention is critical to effective eating disorder recovery.

Due to the complexity of eating disorders, recovery can take months, or even years. But with treatment, recovery is absolutely possible.

We asked patients what cultural shifts would help those battling eating disorders.

Faith says that the increasing obsession with the notion of body positivity seems unrealistic.

“On bad days, people won't be absolutely in love with their bodies. And that is okay. It is important that people are taught to accept their bodies first. This lessens the pressure to chase perfection and go to extremes when it comes to controlling eating habits, at least for me,” she says.

“Our ingrained practice of body-shaming plays a big role here. Kids don't often think about their bodies that much and oftentimes, they grow to view it in a negative light because of scrutinising comments from family members,” says Fatima.

What else can we do if our loved ones have an eating disorder?

For starters, we should not reinforce people's negative self-image any further by ridiculing their struggles. We should not promote diet culture or dish out unsolicited advice that has not been verified by a medical professional. When in doubt, we can ask respectful questions.

If a loved one is struggling, educating yourself, alongside simply being there for them may do more than you realise. Lastly, their relationship with food does not, in any way, transcribe to their love for you.

*\*Name has been changed for privacy*

*Shanum closely resembles a raccoon, send her reasons to cut down on caffeine at [shanum-sarkar18@gmail.com](mailto:shanum-sarkar18@gmail.com)*

*Amrin Tasnim Rafa is always confused, it's literally her dominant personality trait. This is maybe her email, she can't be sure: [amrinrafa@gmail.com](mailto:amrinrafa@gmail.com)*





**ECHOES BY**  
ASRAR CHOWDHURY

# SHOUT at 9!

**I**  
This week, SHOUT turns 9. Whether by design or chance, I've been associated with SHOUT since the first instalment of Echoes on October 3, 2013. When you've spent almost a decade with an establishment, and more with previous sister establishments at the same organisation, you've travelled a long journey.

**II**  
The first youth weeklies of The Daily Star were Rising Stars; and Teens and Twenties. This was in the first half of the 1990s. Chance had it, I was associated with both the weeklies.

Then there was a pause from The Daily Star from my side. In the end of 2007, I found myself with the youth weekly Star Campus. After some irregular contributions, I started my first column, Post Campus. In 2013, Star Campus and Post Campus drew its curtains. Thus, started the era of SHOUT. As SHOUT turns 9 this week, it's natural to ask: why did SHOUT survive longer than other youth weeklies?

**III**  
The basis of the format of Rising Stars and Teens and Twenties was the Young Observer of the Daily Observer, the leading English daily before the Daily Star. Young Observer was a one-page weekly that



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

came out on Sundays, and then on Fridays. The two weeklies of The Daily Star went one step ahead. Initially, they came out as four-page folds within the newspaper. Later, as separate magazines.

The weeklies became a good opportunity for the editorial team to groom themselves. Over time, quite a few staff of the

weeklies were absorbed in other sections of The Daily Star or went on to make careers in other media houses. SHOUT was born in 2013 with an established legacy behind it.

In 2013, readership was slowly segregating into print and online readers. SHOUT was clever to notice this change

and adapt. Online readership had a few advantages. Print SHOUT could not accommodate long articles due to space constraint. This disappeared in online content. As young people became more and more dependent on their mobile phones to access online content, SHOUT online began to boost.

The best change in recent times is cover stories on issues young people face or think about. A cursory look at these cover stories tells you how advanced today's youth are. We never thought as deeply as today's young people do. SHOUT is now exploring video content. This could be revolutionary if contributors from different areas of Bangladesh contribute.

**IV**  
SHOUT will celebrate its first decade next year. Having been a part of SHOUT over its existence has made Echoes and myself appreciate the last words of Bhagvad Gita that the only constant is change. SHOUT has adapted with changing times making it the longest surviving youth weekly of The Daily Star. The future can only be for the young to SHOUT.

*Asrar Chowdhury is a professor of economics. He follows Test cricket, listens to music, and spins vinyls when he has free time. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu or asrarul@gmail.com*

## SATIRE

# University student still haunted by GK he memorised

**HASIB UR RASHID IFTI**

"I had to start going to therapy soon afterwards," Shadman shared his grief to the press. "I have friends who went through 10 years of public school, so finding a good therapist wasn't a problem. But in the first session, when I shared my nightmares haunted by the irrelevant and inapplicable information I memorised during my university preparation, my therapist also started crying. Turns out, as an aspiring BCS candidate in the past, she's actually the CEO of irrelevant GKs. It took her years to let go of her own trauma and accept a life without GK. But now, we're both looking for a therapist."

Shadman was just like any other teenager out there – afraid to resist his dream getting stomped on by his parents and too lazy to do anything about it. Peer pressure attracted Shadman to Science just like rumoured cameos attract Marvel fans to theatres, "In class 10, my best friend got 84 out of 100 in Physics whereas I got 17. Yet I dared to follow him to science in college. If my best friend is the latest cryptocurrency, I'm the nerd sitting behind a computer and going all-in with my dad's



credit card."

While Shadman's parents took 10 years to give up on their child, Shadman only needed 10 days of classes to do the same, "Somewhere around the second week in the middle of my organic chemistry class, I realised that memorising irrelevant information has always been my dream. My parents had also been supportive of my decision since I was the middle child and they already had an elder son whose dreams they could butcher. You see, when you have three children in your family, parents' expectations keep getting lower

with each child. My youngest brother, for instance, had all the freedom in the world to pursue anything ranging from music, drama or even sports! He, of course, went for BBA."

Now, after 2 years of university, Shadman's days of memorising GKs from MP3 guides are behind him. Yet, his nightmares are far from over.

"They keep floating in my head at night! I only remember these random numbers, figures and years yet I can't seem to remember which is which. For all I care, Emperor Akbar probably inaugurat-

ed the first nuclear powerplant of south-east Asia on the 23rd of June, 1757."

Psychologists have coined a new term to explain these symptoms: PGSD, or "Post-GK Stress Disorder".

"Initially found among medical school aspirants and D-Unit examinees of different public universities, PGSD reaches its extremities among BCS aspirants. Patients are found lurking around in the lanes of Farmgate and Arambagh, trying to dump more irrelevant information in their already rotten brains," explains Dr Sigma Fraud.

Meanwhile, Dr Shingarazzaman, VC of Shahbagh University explains their meticulous selection process in the entrance exams, saying, "Let's face it, nobody wakes up one morning and says 'I want to be a D-Unit examinee once I grow up.' You're settling for this department so clearly, ambition's not your cup of tea. Where do all the ambitionless souls with crushed dreams end up? BCS. We're simply preparing our students for the balderdash they should expect from life."

*Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com*



**FABLE FACTORY**

Tick-tock.

Despite the invigilator's best efforts, the exam hall was far from pin drop silent. Yet, I could hear the ticking sound of the single analogue clock hanging on the wall, signifying that the exam time was over.

Or maybe I'd imagined it. I had a flair for the dramatic, I was often told.

The transaction of handing in my paper and signing the attendance sheet was almost mechanical. The clamours of examinees seemed distant, though I was right amidst them. Everything was muffled, save for the accursed ticking.

I stepped out of the exam hall, realising, not for the first time, how suffocating sounds can be when you want to shut them out. The roads are no less loud, but there is a certain comfort in noises when they're not ricocheting off of walls. Especially when the walls belong to an exam hall.

A few more minutes would have sufficed for a passing grade, and yet... I was out of time.

Someone very dear to me once told me there was no such thing as luck, fate, destiny, or whatever else there was. She learned it the hard way herself, she said. The only reality for her was time, and its scarcity.

She was a writer. Better than most, but not extraordinary enough to be more known than she was.

That would change, she used to say, after she published the novel she had yet to complete. If she could complete it— was something she always added afterwards. She was ageing, after all.

Her shaky, wrinkled fingers danced ungracefully on her typewriter as she desperately tried to finish her legacy. It would be her masterpiece, she claimed, if she didn't run out of time.

The clouds accumulated over the years watered and hazed her sight little by little, and her limbs started getting heavier and heavier, until she could lift them no more.

Time was not kind to her unfinished manuscript that lay on my desk, and neither was I. Still, I perfectly remembered all her instructions. Or warnings, depending on how you were to interpret them.

I was to make up for her lost time. I was to finish the legacy of someone who took upon the futile battle against time and lost. She wasn't the first thing time had taken from me, and she would be far from the last.

That was obvious, of course. The last thing you lost to time was always yourself.

Throughout history, humans worshipped their gods for their benevolence, or to be spared from their cruelty. Yet, it was no use praying to, or for, time. Time was never fair; it was uniform in its motion.

Others called it an old woman's drivel. Someone who couldn't pass on without regrets, passing her burdens onto someone else. In other words, I was to finish her novel. Not that she had any use for recognition or royalty after death, but there was something melancholic about an unfinished novel. She believed I would want to write on her behalf for that reason alone. And she knew me well.

A half-finished sculpture was still pleasing to the eye, a canvas with splashes of



paint that hadn't quite managed to create a complete picture was still aesthetic. But when it came to novels, one without closure only left the reader with an ache to know more.

That was part of the torturous beauty of open endings, but even an open end was an ending. A story that ended in the middle of a dialogue was far less acceptable.

Probably.

The reader base in current times could find beauty in a dialogue comprising a single word of affirmation, reflected by another. Maybe they would appreciate the abrupt end. Or maybe not.

I realised how far my thoughts had digressed from the characteristic sound pollution of Dhaka. Perhaps not too far off, twenty-four hours a day was very limited in this city. It was reflected in the fact everyone around me appeared to be pressed for time. Someone bumped into me, and mumbled a barely audible "sorry" before rushing away.

Any other day, I'd have been annoyed. Maybe I would have furrowed my brows and glared. But today, I hoped they could reach their destination before running out of time.

It was on days like this that I found words when I sat in front of her old typewriter. Days that reminded me I could run out of time at any given moment, myself. On those days I spent hours in the traffic jam of Bijoy Sarani, a rarely taken route of mine. The anniversary of her death, or her birth. On the days I miss her ever so dearly.

That old machine, and the ongoing struggle against the ticking seconds were my only connection to her, despite the lack of urgency in me.

I hoped to finish the story when I last sat down to write. She had made my job easy for me, had told me the ending she had in mind. I was the only one allowed to know, everyone else had to find out on print.

I left it off a little before I could finish it. Something more important came up, and somehow I never got back to it. I was capable of operating a computer, I didn't need to use her old typewriter. I had ages before my limbs would succumb to old age. My lifetime was far from being over.

I knew fully well today would have been the last of that writing.

Just a couple pages till the end. Just a matter of thirty minutes. Forty, if you considered the time it would take me to cross the road and walk two more blocks to get to my apartment. That was all I needed to immortalise a work that deserved immortality, but couldn't attain it in two lifetimes.

Because it was really no use praying to time for twenty-four hundred more seconds when I was out of time for the second time that day. The truck rushing towards me needed no more than one.



# The academic advantages of pessimism

AHMED NUZHA OISHEE

*Despite brainstorming countless ways to make this article insightful and having re-edited it several times, I have prepared myself for the possibility that readers might find my writing tedious and unhelpful. Similarly, prior to exams, my mind keeps conjuring up scenarios how I might mess up. Pessimism makes me think of innumerable setbacks instead of what can go right.*

Optimism is so highly regarded that being a young pessimistic person is deemed “ominous” for our life and academics. However, the key takeaway is that if pessimism makes you understand why something might go wrong and look for ways to prevent that, it can be a positive quality after all. This mentality of hoping for the best while expecting and preparing for the worst is “defensive pessimism”, which can sometimes have tangible academic benefits.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

## PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE

Suppose, you have a due paper or exam that you are ill-prepared for. As a pessimist, you assume the worst outcome. The upside is that you voluntarily relinquish the need to perform exceedingly well. Since your results cannot go further downhill than your predictions, you reassure yourself that you can only march upwards from here. When pessimism convinces you that you cannot perform worse, enabling you to prepare accordingly, the brain functions better during important events.

## COPING WITH ACADEMIC INFERIORITY COMPLEX

As students, we often find our hard work be unrewarded or fall short of expectations. This leads to lingering self-doubt or feeling incompetent in comparison with our peers. However, defensive pessimists have an easier time acknowledging the fact that there might always be someone who is

better than them at academics. Pessimistic students, knowing their limitations and capabilities, gauge how much control they have over own situation instead of fixating on others’ performance.

## LEVERAGING ANXIETY

Optimism aims for success under any circumstance. Consequently, this brings on anxiety to accomplish that. Contrarily, pessimists intensively weigh their probability of success. Rather than festering unrealistic results, pessimism prioritises evaluating vulnerabilities. Pessimistic students find redirecting anxiety into consistent effort to evade improbabilities more fruitful than expecting to excel at something overnight, which provides a sense of control amidst the anxiety.

## ENCOURAGES CONSISTENT PREPARATION

Optimism sequesters weaknesses so that nothing can fundamentally go wrong. Whereas the doom and gloom whispers, “What if the teacher sets a difficult question? What if you forget what you’ve studied?” It necessitates focusing on your deficiencies, anticipating setbacks and making concrete plans to circumvent ill-outcomes. Is it not better to be overprepared for what might be an easy test than being underprepared for a difficult one?

## KEEPS EXPECTATIONS IN CHECK

Perpetual academic stress and disappointments can lead to burn-outs. Pessimism protects you from the let-downs of subpar results because you started off expecting the worst outcome. That way, you can strive to make amends and do better without the burden of expectations weighing you down.

It’s okay to be the person who notices the cloud in a silver lining. However, it is untenable to despair due to pessimism. Make sure you do not self-sabotage yourself and put effort into self-reflection.

## Reference

PositivePsychology.com (August 14, 2017). *The Upside of Defensive Pessimism: The potential benefit of anxiety*

*Nuzha forgives people for pronouncing her name wrong and wallows in books and anxiety. Suggest her fiction at nuzhaoishee1256504@gmail.com*



PHOTO: BAGH & CO.

# How pets help our mental health

TAJREEN TABASSUM NUSHBA

Imagine an adorable puppy wagging its tail as soon as it sees you, or a cranky old cat sitting on your lap and staring at you with large eyes. The effect would be immediate –you can feel yourself instinctively grin, and a terrible day would turn into a better one. An adorable defenceless kitten pawing at our face would soften even the most jaded and hardened one among us.

What most people don’t realise is that pets can have a significantly larger long-term impact on our mental health.

Although individual experiences may vary, it can be argued that pets positively impact the mental health of their human companions in the vast majority of cases. Most of us can relate to craving affection and companionship, especially during our time spent in quarantine.

Our basic need for human touch may go unsatisfied, especially in homes where physical affection isn’t as freely given. Hugging friends also become a rare occurrence during our mutually busy lives. Interacting with our pets through touch can alleviate that craving since their affection is provides positive sensory input. Coming home to a loving animal companion after a stressful day can feel immensely comforting.

Furthermore, as some studies have shown, merely petting or playing with pets can raise oxytocin and dopamine levels, which create positive feelings and serve as a good bonding experience for both the person and their pet.

Petting and embracing our pets can provide sensory stress relief for those who suffer from anxiety. Pets can also be an accessible source of mutual affection for people who may be deprived of that level of comfort due to social anxiety. Animals live in the moment and their love for us is not contingent upon painstakingly going through layers of social cues before coming to a position where affection can become a granted thing. Asking for a hug from another person, no matter how close we might be to them, can still be daunting at times. Fear of being judged or questioned can stop us from even asking. Pets can give us that quick boost of serotonin without any prelude.

In the long run, having an animal to care for can make us feel loved and wanted even when we are at our lowest. It can also assist us in implementing some structure into our lives. Feeding, walking, and caring for a pet can help us stick to a schedule, which can be especially difficult for those of us who become easily distracted or often get lost in our own heads.

Pets also encourage us in becoming more active in our daily lives, which is something that many of us avoid. Walking our dogs or playing with a cat encourages physical activity when we might just want to stay in bed all day during our more depressive periods.

Pets are not a solution to our mental health problems, but at the very least, they can give us a reason to smile even when we feel as though we don’t have much to smile about, which is a big feat in and of itself.

*Nushba is uselessly raging about the patriarchy and crying because her cat doesn’t love her. Please send help at nushba.tajreen@gmail.com*