

# Removing the stigma of laziness

**SUMAIYA RASHID**

It's convenient to place inflexible, abstract expectations on a person's behaviour because we don't completely comprehend their context, which includes all the minor irritations and significant traumas that define their existence.

A friend once told me that poor people can't think beyond the box because they believe they'll always be poor, so they're just too lazy to do anything about their situation. But when someone is homeless and/or poor, the world is hostile, and everything is excruciatingly unpleasant. It's difficult to sleep well whether they're sleeping beneath a bridge or a shelter. They are likely to have injuries or chronic ailments that trouble them regularly, and they will have limited access to medical treatment to treat them. They most likely don't have a lot of nutritious food. In that persistently unpleasant, overstimulating environment, their primary thought cannot be how they can become successful. Instead, it ends up being how they can survive.

When I notice people behaving unusually, I'm especially compelled to ask: what are the barriers to action that I'm not seeing? There are always challenges. Recognising and acknowledging such obstacles is typically the first step toward changing "lazy" behaviour habits. Responding to inefficient behaviour with inquiry rather than judgement is quite important.

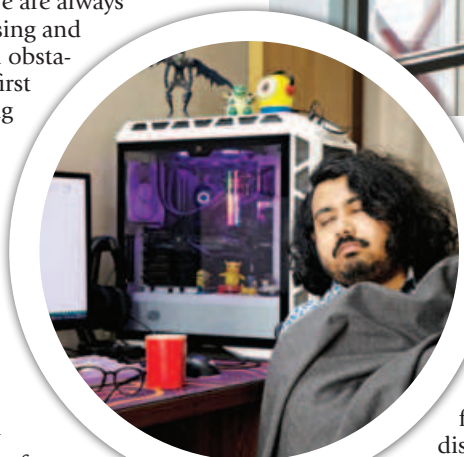
"It's easy to point the finger at others and ignore the structural limitations that poverty brings with it. People from privileged backgrounds who have never lived in poverty may try to rationalise the behaviour of the poor to feel better about the inequities in the world," says Mahbuba Dewan, a lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at Independent University of Bangladesh.

Behaviour that seems "unproductive" on the face of it can often have deeper reasons. There was a student who was rather irregular in an English class I attended, and she always put her head down while lessons were not being given. She sat in the first row and hardly spoke to anyone except the instructor. When our classes ended early one day, I asked her why she was always so quiet, late with her homework, and inconsistent in class, and she told me she had been suffering from clinical depression for the last two years and that it was difficult for her not to cry while talking to others and that some days it was impossible for her to get out of bed, which was why she had so many absences.

Sumaiya Azmi, Founder and Lead Counsellor at Nirvana - Wellness of Wholeness, says, "In order to understand



PHOTOS: **ORCHID CHAKMA**



why we have anxiety, depression, coping mechanisms to avoid failure, and other mental health difficulties, it's vital to distinguish between persons who suffer from mental health disorders and those who are lazy. The self-identity of youngsters is so delicate due

to their familial environment nowadays, they are particularly prone to worry about failure and rejection. The way our youth's familial upbringing has moulded their self-identity is a major crisis today. The connection between parents and children has devolved into a transactional one in which identity is secondary to social standing. The tension between the ideal and the real self worsens. High expectations placed by families nowadays produce worry, which leads to procrastination."

Let's consider a symptom of academic "laziness". For decades, studies in the field of psychology have been able to explain procrastination as a functional problem rather than a result of laziness.

Procrastinators are frequently held accountable for their behaviour. The act of putting off work may look lazy to an uninformed eye. Even people who deliberately delay may mistake their activities for being lazy. You're meant to be doing something, but you're not – isn't that a moral failure and sign of being weak-willed?

When someone doesn't begin a project

they care about, it's typically because they are unsure of what the first steps of the endeavour include or they are worried that their efforts won't be "good enough". Procrastination is more likely when a task is important to the person and they care about getting it done right. When you are paralysed by failure, dread or don't even know where to start with a big, demanding work, it is very tough to get things done. It is unrelated to motive, desire, or moral rectitude.

Procrastinators can force themselves to work for hours. They can torment themselves by sitting in front of a blank word document and doing nothing else, they may pile on the guilt over and over – none of this makes starting the task any easier. Their desire to complete the activity may exacerbate their stress and make it more difficult to begin.

Mahbuba Dewan also suggested that students just need to begin the pending assignment or tasks that they need to do. Since, in ordinary circumstances, our attitude follows behaviour, it is possible to overcome procrastination by beginning the task to get her/himself engaged with it. People who perceive outcomes as internally controllable by their own actions and efforts, tend to succeed in personal and professional spheres alike.

If a student is not submitting papers, there is some component of the task that they cannot complete without assistance. If an employee constantly misses deadlines, something is preventing efficiency and fulfilling deadlines. Even if a person intentionally chooses to self-sabotage, there is a reason for it – some fear they are working through, some need that is not

satisfied, and maybe a lack of self-esteem.

Sumaiya Azmi also expresses her own belief, "We are doing everything wrong; we attend mental health awareness workshops, we employ counsellors at our institutions, and our problem remains unsolved. We're not performing our jobs correctly, aren't we? Instead of seeking mental health care, the focus should have been to prevent mental health difficulties. So that we don't make you sick and instead focus on curing you. We should have designed our educational system such that it never made students sick. The youth nowadays experience significant difficulties with issues related to attachment, understanding of love, concerns with self-identity, and sources of happiness."

People do not choose to fail or disappoint themselves. Nobody wants to be inept, indifferent, or ineffectual. If you don't understand a person's behaviour, it's because you're missing a piece of their context. Just because you can't see them or don't believe they're real doesn't imply they don't exist. I find myself applying this theory to all kinds of actions that are misinterpreted as indicators of moral failure – and I have yet to come across one that can't be explained and empathised with.

## Reference:

1. Price, D. (2018, March 23). *Laziness Does Not Exist*. **Medium; Human Parts**.

*Sumaiya is in the midst of her researching untold topics era; send her leads here, [sumrashid10@gmail.com](mailto:sumrashid10@gmail.com)*