



ILLUSTRATION: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

Why sports are fun but studies are not

SAMIN YASAR ANABIL

A few days ago, as I was struggling to concentrate while juggling tasks, I rummaged through articles and videos to find a fix. I then landed on the concept of flow – a euphoric state of mind

The idea of flow dates back thousands of years to ancient China. In Taoist philosophy, there is a concept known as “Wu Wei”, translated paradoxically as the action of non-action. Modern positive psychology also studies flow with great interest. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihályi first coined the term flow and described the state as being completely involved in an activity for its own sake.

in which a person performing an activity becomes fully immersed in a feeling of energised focus. When we are in flow, our mind is entirely present in the moment, and hours seem to pass in minutes.

Learning about flow got

me thinking about the age-old questions we all wonder – why are some activities fun while others aren't? Why do some of us enjoy sports so much but not studies? And why do some of us even enjoy studying at all?

On the surface, the answer seemed obvious. We are all different beings and have our own preferences. However, on a deeper level, I suspected there was something more to that. Perhaps it boils down to how distinctly we enter the flow state.

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limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. In other words, the activity has to be challenging, and at the same time, we need to have the skill set required to carry through the task.

Some of us can enter the flow state while writing, some while playing a musical instrument, and some while solving a complex problem. But a large group of people finds flow when playing sports.

I asked one of my most sports-enthusiast friends how he feels in the field. He replied, “I become so happy, I only think about the game forgetting all my problems and struggles.”

Interestingly, most of my friends, whom I consider sports enthusiasts, are top performers. They are ambitious and have the skills to back it up. As they meet both preconditions to enter the flow state, they can lose themselves in the field. For this very reason, those who ace academics are usually the ones who can absorb themselves in studying. A perfect combination of

challenges and ability is what we need to enter flow. When we are in flow, we can concentrate intensely, which translates into superior performance and we tend to like that activity more.

Knowing why we like the things we like might tell us something significant about how to make things we don't like a bit less boring. When we lament about studies, it's often because we can't focus as we don't find the topics purposeful or don't have a basic understanding of them. Because it's easier said than done, I have something to say in this regard. Perhaps if we learn to see tasks we can't escape as challenges and start upgrading our skills, we can experience flow more often and lead a more fulfilled life.

Reference:
Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2009). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

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The museum with nothing to show, but lots to see

ARNAB RAHMAN

A museum is a place to see things. This is a museum, paradoxically enough, you visit to not see.

My visit to the Dialog Museum in Frankfurt, Germany, a small establishment within a busy metro station, showed me things that we would never see in the light. In the lightless corridors of the museum, I experienced the vulnerabilities of blindness.

The museum's concept is fairly simple – a blind or visually impaired guide leads you through rooms with changing themes, all in the dark. You are put in the shoes of the blind. Absorbed into total darkness and immersed in blindness, you have no choice but to adapt and rely on your other senses.

The guide takes you through a dark corridor showing how to count money, cross the road, take the train, and much more, all without sight. Not seeing for 45 minutes has shown me the struggles of the person clutching onto a white stick, tapping

The experience humbles you. It reminds you of your blessings of sight and of your obligation to someone who lacks it.

it repeatedly against the asphalt trying to navigate. The experience humbles you. It reminds you of your blessings of sight and of your obligation to someone who lacks it.

The museum I visited in Frankfurt is an initiative of Dialogue Social Enterprise (DSE). It is a social enterprise with a mission to promote inclusivity. Dialogue in the Dark (DiD) is an exhibition of theirs. DiD raises awareness for blind people by leaving a lasting impression on visitors.



It also creates jobs for the visually impaired and the blind.

Bangladesh, according to some sources, accounts for roughly 2.2 percent of global blindness and 2.53 percent of global visual impairment. Needless to say, the visually impaired are neglected in our society, mainly due to a lack of awareness and empathy.

Setting up something like this in Bangladesh can show others what the Dialog Museum has shown me. It can raise awareness for the eight million people in Bangladesh struggling to cross the street. It will, eventually, lead to better accessibility and infrastructure for the visually impaired, and we can be a truly inclusive society.

To voice your support, please visit sites.google.com/view/blindmuseum and simply select “Yes”.

Shamsin Ahmed is taking us all one step closer to a better tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shamsin Ahmed is the CEO and Lead Consultant of Identity Inclusion and the winner of this month's “Stellar Women” award. Through Identity Inclusion's wide plethora of programmes, Identity Inclusion strives to do precisely what its name suggests – work towards creating a more inclusive society. Nonetheless, the mantra that fuels her vision is a challenge that most would deem insurmountable but through strategic planning, Shamsin works towards shattering the stigma around discussions of mental health as well as encouraging community-driven services that cater to the needs of disabled individuals.

The majority of society views disabled people through a lens of apprehension. They hold the belief that they are flawed and do not conform to the standards that warrant participation in society. Shamsin wants to break that mindset. She believes by giving the help these people need, we can build a world where they are accepted.

Shamsin and her team provide consultation services to some of the biggest NGOs. While her pursuit is noble, Shamsin started off with no institutional support and was even aware of the risks involved with working for the benefit of disabled people and mental health.

But where there's a will, there's a way. With multiple successful initiatives



PHOTOS: COURTESY

undertaken by Shamsin, her perseverance has been awe-inspiring.

One of her initiatives with Identity Inclusion involved working with BRAC and Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme (UCEP) Bangladesh. What Shamsin did was change policies, infrastructure, and roles of leadership to help quantify employment and inclusion for disabled

people. Furthermore, she conducted sensitisation training to over 200 Regional Managers of BRAC to raise awareness and spread that knowledge among 27,000 field-level employees who work for BRAC's Microfinance program. But her work was not done yet. To ensure that she left a mark in all areas of the organisation, Shamsin directed architects to develop infrastructure that was inclusive for the disabled. The goal was to build 36 regional

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BRAC offices scattered across Bangladesh.

The initiatives she undertakes are dictated by the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), four of which influenced her project with BRAC. They included quality education, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities.

Another initiative of hers that involved developing a strategy for UCEP Bangladesh revolved around similar SDGs.

She conducted multiple focus group discussions to address the need to develop a national strategy for menstrual hygiene management.

Another noteworthy project of hers involved organisation sessions at CARE and Oxfam Bangladesh. With the aid of these sessions, Identity Inclusion sought to raise awareness about mental health and self-harm prevention measures.

In a time where it often feels like the world is a gloomy place, people like her light it up with their beacon of hope. With Identity Inclusion, she has already worked towards breaking the taboo around discourses of mental health in the workplace.

But it has not only been contained within offices, as Shamsin conducts workshops through the aid of media content in schools as well. And while she spreads word about the need to be more accepting in all spheres of life, she follows it up with action as well. By establishing inclusive youth leadership opportunities through her own firm, as well as consulting for sustainable changes, Shamsin proves that she is willing to go above and beyond to fully realise her vision.

Due to her valiant efforts, Shamsin received a Special Mention from the late Dhaka North City Corporation mayor, Annisul Haque. Shamsin is an inspiration to many people. Not only does her work aid hundreds, if not thousands of people, but it takes us all one step closer to dismantling barriers that never should have existed in the first place. That is precisely what makes Shamsin Ahmed worthy of the “Stellar Woman” award.