

The struggles of being an ambivert

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

As rudimentary as it may seem, using labels or categorising individuals based on their social preferences offers people a space for inclusion as they try to understand themselves better. For some, their personality cannot simply be contained by the labels of “introvert” or “extrovert”. Some people do not completely fall on either side of the spectrum, which is where ambiversion comes along.

On the surface, an ambivert is a person who is not quite extroverted, but not completely introverted either. But of course, there is so much more to it than just being caught in the middle. In a way, it can simultaneously be the best and worst of both worlds. While you may equally feel comfort in socialising and in solitude, there will be times when you feel uncomfortable in either scenario.

As someone who identifies as an ambivert, I have been confused for an introvert for most of my life. The key difference here is, in most cases introverts do not like to socialise too much, whereas ambiverts do. It is not that we do not want to talk to people, it is just that sometimes we do not really know how to. Due to having a some-



ILLUSTRATION: **SABIL SADAT ZAHIR**

what lonely childhood, socialising does not come as naturally to me as I hoped it would. While I do have a lot of good friends now, sometimes I still struggle to find words or say what I want to say.

Ambiverts may often need to plan how to talk to people, or have issues picking up on social cues. Sometimes it is hard to understand which is more comfortable—talking with others or being alone. One’s

state of mind affects the dichotomy at the root of it, so sometimes neither option might seem exciting or comforting.

My self-deprecation would make me think that ambiversion is just an elaborate excuse for covering up my social ineptitude, but now I like to think it is more of a strength than a weakness. The flexibility of this kind of personality helps to better adapt to most social situations. There is just

as much comfort to be had sitting in silence with your thoughts, as there is in sitting with a friend and talking with them.

Being able to adapt to different social scenarios mean ambiverts can deal with FOMO – the fear of missing out – much better compared to other people. Throughout the years, I learnt how to manage expectations in regards to people and, coupled with the fact that I can be comfortable being alone too, ambiversion prevented me from facing that particular social insecurity for most of my life. Furthermore, I believe this also makes ambiverts more empathetic towards others, as you not only manage expectations for others but also learn to adjust and accept your own qualities.

Again, just like extroversion or introversion, ambiversion is an oversimplification of identity traits and is just a means for expression. You do not need to conform to any particular label to express yourself. In the end, what matters is how you learn to accept who you are and try to be your best self.

Sabil spends most of his time trying to stay as hopeful as possible. You can contact him at sabilsadat616@gmail.com

DEMYSTIFYING BRAIN FOG

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Throughout COVID-19 and after, I’ve heard many family members and friends complain about forgetfulness, fatigue, inability to talk coherently, and other unpleasant cognitive symptoms. While none of them knew their condition had a name called “brain fog”, they did notice that their symptoms had started after a dramatic change in lifestyle and living under sheer stress.

I personally had evaded any such issue during the pandemic, but this January, as I was sending out the last of my college applications, I started feeling my own brain fog settle in. Something I said a minute ago would get lost in memory, it was harder to put simple things into words, and focusing on anything was difficult. It felt scary, confusing, and just bizarre.

After almost a month of struggling, I finally started talking to others about my frail cognitive state and looking into what this could mean. It didn’t take long to realise I was dealing with brain fog.

Brain fog is cognitive dysfunction that leaves us feeling disoriented, absent, and tired. It’s not any medical condition in and of itself. Instead, it’s the symptom rising from certain medical conditions. For me, it was stress from almost half a year of juggling studies, work, extra-

curriculars, writing college essays, and preparing for standardised tests. The moment my applications were submitted, my body gave up. For others, it can be different reasons, like lack of sleep, hormonal changes, medication, and even nutrient deficiency.

To fight brain fog, it’s important to first recognise the causes. Getting blood work done will help identify if it’s any deficiency in nutrients, hormone imbalance, or some other ailment. If none of those boxes is checked, it could be a lack or poor quality of sleep, or stress. For good sleep, it’s important to have a good sleeping environment: dark, cold, and quiet. Maintaining the same routine and avoiding blue light, caffeine, or anything stimulating before bed are great habits. If necessary, consulting a doctor for medicines or melatonin is also a possibility.

As for stress, it’s always best to turn to self-care and maybe even

therapy. One mistake I made as I was going through brain fog was not

understanding what I really needed was rest. Whenever I saw I wasn’t feeling very conscious or energised, I would panic and force myself into whatever I was doing even more. This in turn drained me more and the vicious cycle just continued. However, giving yourself downtime is only one piece of the puzzle.

For people who go through brain fog due to stress, social interactions and deep thinking, like reading and journaling, can help, too.

Lastly, no matter what the cause of someone’s brain fog is, a healthy diet and exercise are always highly recommended.

Brain fog is usually nothing severe and passes away in a matter of days, but it can still be uncomfortable. Since some conditions can cause lasting brain fog, it’s best to immediately bring it to the attention of close ones and a doctor.

References:

1. Verywell Mind (November 08, 2022). *What Is Brain Fog?*
2. WebMD (June 22, 2021). *Reasons You May Have Brain Fog*

Fabiha is now the Martell heir apparent of Dorne, but still a secret Slytherin alum. Pledge your allegiance and soul to her at afafabiha01@gmail.com

