



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The key to balancing EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ACADEMICS

NADERA NAEEMA OHI

In our cultural landscape, it's common to be deterred from doing extracurricular activities (ECAs). Whether it's our parents who emphasise stellar grades over ECAs or our schools that don't provide enough support for students who are interested, and consequently, our own hesitance, it's hard to be active with ECAs. It is even more difficult to ensure our grades don't slip while we're at it.

There is one caveat, however. It's a difficult balancing act, and not one that everyone wants to try, or even needs to. If you're someone who is passionate about something, it's alright to put your time and effort towards it. And if you're someone who values their academics more, or simply doesn't have the time to put into ECAs, that's alright too. Your mileage may vary.

The first and most important step of the process is to accept that no one's perfect. Even people who seem to be juggling ten different things at a time and never missing a beat may not be doing it as easily as

they make it seem. You will make mistakes with time management at first, or feel exhausted after long days. After all, you are only human. Accepting that it's okay to not have fantastic results at every task is the starting point for allowing yourself to try.

Secondly, it's crucial to know your priorities. Balancing your commitments doesn't always mean you need to devote the same amount of time or effort to each one. No one knows your strengths and weaknesses better than you do. So, if you're aware that you're weak at a particular subject, sacrifice a weekend spent on your activity to study instead. Planning ahead allows you to minimise any losses you get from trying to do a lot at once.

It is also imperative to try and practise discipline. This is the part where almost everyone struggles the most. Discipline, in this context, refers to someone's ability to be consistent with the attention they give to their tasks. To get really skilled at anything, it takes consistency. Unfortunately, the process is frustrating.

Results can fall short of your expectations even

after you've spent a lot of time working on a project or pulling all-nighters. In my personal experience, the worst feeling is realising I wasn't disciplined enough despite wanting to do well.

What it really boils down to, of course, is trusting yourself. Trust that your dedication will help you achieve what you want. In due time and with small steps, there always lies the possibility of being able to make yourself proud. And that feeling is worthwhile to say the least.

My final piece of advice is to take care of yourself. Trying to balance ECAs and academics does not mean you can neglect your emotional and physical needs. It means they are your number one priority. Go out with your friends, treat yourself to your favourite drink, and sleep in on the weekend whenever you can. It really does help. In the end, what matters is your effort. And that will always be something to be proud of.

Nadera Naeema Ohi is a student at Maple Leaf International School.

