



Creaky backs and shattered hearts: What they don't tell you about your 30s

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Of course, this is not an excuse to stay in toxic relationships and try to "fix" a bad person. All I can say truthfully is relationships are hard and happiness is not easy, so if you are not happy and at peace, be with someone who gives you those things, because if it were not evident already, life is hard.

THE PERILS OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

While you may think we have made peace with/adjusted to most of life's swings, you know who has not — society!

Society has so much to say about the poor state of our finances, our 'dead-end' job, and our divorced or single status, that we might be forgiven for thinking that

society was there to raise us, wipe our tears, feed us, put us to sleep, and send us to school.

Society seems to be especially at the necks of women, endlessly criticising their lifestyle, their marital status, and their relationships. In our 20s, we were very impressionable, and subconsciously, we carried their dos and don'ts with us to our mid-30s, and that has resulted in unfair comparisons to our peers, leading to unhappiness of

our own making.

The trend continues with social media, where people selectively share only their happy moments, leading the rest of us to think we live unfulfilling lives. Loads of people in their 30s realise that by trying to conform to societal norms, they had landed themselves in a pit of unhappiness, and guess what, society was not there to bail them out.

Speaking of inside your house, something that is a sure-fire signal that the "rest of your life" is knocking on your door is the rise in responsibilities. As you get older, you will start working, pay the bills, take care of elderly parents, manage a career, maintain a relationship, and take care of yourself.

THAT ONE INESCAPABLE INEVITABILITY

This part of your thirties will sting the most, because, for most of you, this is where you will start to grapple with the concept of mortality. After all, for one, this is where your parents growing old will become most evident.

For many of you, this will be when your folks start suffering from the effects of old age. For some, it will be the trauma of watching your parents deal with serious or terminal health issues and coming to terms with the idea that they will soon leave this place, and you will truly have to face the world alone.

And for the unfortunate few, who have already had to undergo the loss of one or both of their parents, the pain of putting the pieces of their life back together seems unbearable.

Another aspect that drives home the lesson of mortality that many of you did not think about is unexpected losses. Some of you out there have lost a friend, close cousin or beloved member of the family. Some go through worse — from the gripping fear of infertility to the emotional devastation of neonatal deaths, even happily ever after is not without its share of pain.

THE CLOSING

It is important to prepare for these eventualities, but what is not right is jumping the gun. Most of these things need to be tackled at the right age, with the right mental development. Getting married in your early 20s, for example, is an example of what you perhaps should not do. Those are your formative years, where you experience things that will help shape your life further down the road. That action robs you of said experiences and leaves deep-seated issues that remain unresolved for many years.

Some have managed to deal with them admirably, while others, not so much. Sure, there are extreme circumstances where people have to tackle a 35-year-old's level of responsibility while still in their very early 20s, but remember that they are the exception, not the rule.

If it was not evident enough, life past your 30s is rough, at least it was for us. From disappointments in careers, shattered hearts and relationships, to unfair comparisons to our successful peers, and to seeing our once-invincible parents becoming feeble, things get real in your 30s.

I wish I could say knowing these things would somehow help you make changes, but the truly hardest lesson we learnt is you can plan and plan, and life will sweep it all away and present something else. So, what I can say is to learn to make the best lemonade and get used to having it on the regular when life leaves you with crates of lemons.

By Intisab Shahriyar
Illustration: Oishik Jawad



Society will always have an opinion, so it's important to learn that anything outside your own house is just noise, and you should treat it as such.

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