Looking after your mental health
DURING A GAP YEAR

INQIAD BIN ALI

Gap years are stressful. Flung into the abyss of uncertainty during the application season, coupled with their long, final goodbyes from school-life, it's easy for students to get overwhelmed. This, in turn, can take a toll on their mental health.

For students opting for such a break before enrolling in university, taking care of their mental health becomes vital. This, of course, is easier said than done. After all, not everyone is able to handle the stress and anxiety that come with the struggles of applying to universities, especially when they have decided to take a gap year.

Even then, however, a few simple actions from the

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student's end can go a long way towards alleviating their struggles.

Take things slow

Seeing your batchmates applying to and getting into their dream universities while you are left behind is difficult. You might be disillusioned into believing that you are not capable enough.

However, just because you took a breather in the form of a gap year does not mean you have lost all your abilities.

The university application process, alongside the overall admission journey, is a difficult ordeal in itself. If you are applying to universities within the country, you might have to sit for multiple admission tests. If you are applying abroad, you probably have to prepare for a number of standardised tests, write essays, and collect letters of recommendation from your respective schools or teachers. There is

also the pressure of seeking out funding or scholarship opportunities.

All that being said, not everyone is suited to take on these challenging tasks simultaneously. However, contrary to popular belief, there is no reason to do all these at once. You take your time and take things slow, even if it means that you have to start doing these things a bit early. If you are taking a gap year, know that you have the time to take all the required tests and collect the necessary documents before the application deadlines.

Take one step at a time and avoid working on multiple things at once if you think it will stress you out even more. For instance, if you are preparing for the SATs, do just that; no need to work on your application essays at the same time if you think that it will just raise your stress levels.

Rediscover your passion

After years of going through a hectic academic life during your school days, suddenly having an abundance of time due to the gap year might feel rather daunting. This, however, doesn't need to be the case. Having this time to yourself allows you to properly explore your persona away from academia.

You must remember that there is a life

beyond your notes and test papers. Gap years offer the perfect opportunity to explore your hobbies. From writing or singing to even volunteering at charities, there is a lot that you can do with the time in hand.

This period also gives you the perfect opportunity to roll back the years and enjoy old hobbies which you had to give up for rigorous schedules. For the more academic ones among you, the absence of exams might even help you rediscover the joy of learning, as it allows you to explore concepts at your own pace and choice.

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Get a change of scene

It's inadvisable to spend all your time cooped up in your room as doing so can be bad for your physical as well as emotional well-being. It's also important to enhance your social skills, as you will be encountering a diverse group of people in university.

Hence, the importance of going out and interacting with others can't be stressed enough.

A change of scene doesn't mean taking a lavish or expensive trip to a tourist attraction. It can be something as simple as taking a walk around the neighbourhood, visiting a park in your area, or even catching up with friends at a restaurant or coffeeshop for a light session of reminiscence and banter.

Being fit mentally is crucial in crafting a good application. Unfortunately, what we often fail to realise is that a student's emotional strains might seep into their application profiles. This, in turn, can prevent them from fully expressing themselves in their applications or essays, and even hamper their preparation for standardised or admission tests.

Hence, for those of you taking a gap year, make the most of this opportunity and look after your mental health. Once you can ensure your mental and emotional well-being, you will feel more prepared to take on the challenges that await you during the admission season.