

## OFF CAMPUS

# Moving out, for all its challenges, can be liberating

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Living away from one's family is often seen as a step toward adulthood—an experience that supposedly helps gather important life skills and lessons. Whether it is learning how to cook a full meal, shop for groceries, or simply manage expenses, the process invariably teaches self-reliance.

"I think self-reliance is better learned while living alone. Living by myself allowed me to develop my own autonomy in making everyday decisions like what I want to eat, when I want to do household chores, and how I want to plan my finances," expresses Emrita Siddique, originally from Chittagong and a recent graduate of Jahangirnagar University.

**"Once you learn to live alone, it becomes a loophole. There is a kind of comfort in living alone that you won't find anywhere else. I am not restrained by anyone or anything. I can go on a walk, sing loudly in my room, and wear that pretty dress," explains Efath.**

Fuad Hasan, an undergraduate student at Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET), shares, "I don't know if everyone views it as a skill, but I've learned the basics of electric maintenance, things such as setting up a ceiling fan, bulb plugs, or an electric switch. It proves to be pretty handy, especially when you're switching houses. Apart from this, I've learned to ride a motorbike with the help of my friends, and we often go on long rides."

Even though cooking is a basic life skill, for Sefayet E Jannat Efath, a master's student from Chittagong University (CU), it wasn't entirely easy.

"I've hated cooking my whole life. At home, my mother and sisters handle cooking. That's why I never really had the pressure to learn to cook. In these last three to four years of living alone, however, I've had to prepare meals for myself, which probably wouldn't have happened if I were at home," she states.

For many, enrolling in a university miles away from their home has given them the opportunity to conquer the fears of travelling alone as well.

Sifat E Noor Sahiba, currently a second-year student at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET), says, "The idea of travelling alone used to terrify me before I left my parents' house. But I frequently have to travel long distances alone now which I've gotten used to. Overcoming this fear has been a personal achievement for me."

Often, living solo allows individuals to meet and interact with a diverse group of people. Efath shares, "When we live on our own and start engaging with other people, we understand how different each person is. In the past, I viewed every person and my bond with them to be equal, but I eventually realised the uniqueness of each relationship."

Nonetheless, living on your own comes with its own setbacks. Istiak Hasan, a third-year student at Chittagong Medical College, says, "The food in our dining hall is overpriced and tastes horrible. Often, it is so bad that eating feels like a chore." Similarly, Ahnaaf Raad Shahamat, a second-year student at BRAC University, reflects, "My family lives in Chittagong and I really miss home-cooked food now that I live in Dhaka."

Living on your own can be empowering, but it also comes with its fair share of emotional hurdles. "Handling stress and anxiety and tackling other emotional challenges make living alone exhausting. Sometimes, being on your own can lead to loneliness if there's no one around to share moments

with," states Emrita.

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However, she also thinks this can lead to other hurdles. She says, "When you live with another person or a bunch of people, there are other things that you have to be considerate about for the sake of the living environment." This compromise is not something you learn when you live alone.

Fuad, on the other hand, expresses concern about a different issue. He says, "Going on long bike rides with friends has become a thing for me. We meet new people along the way. Sometimes we set camp in remote places and enjoy nature. But when I come back home or go to the campus, I feel like I can't stay there for too long. It feels suffocating. I'm not sure if I have developed a nomadic lifestyle, but I really enjoy the lifestyle I have right now."

Living independently is a transformative phase that shapes individuals in profound ways. In the silence of our own space, we learn to embrace life's rhythms—both gentle currents and rough waters. It's a chapter of life that gives us a chance to step beyond the shelter of our homes to explore ourselves as well as build meaningful connections.

It is a journey everyone should embark on after coming of age, if they have the means to do so.



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