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Gave my HEART to parandi

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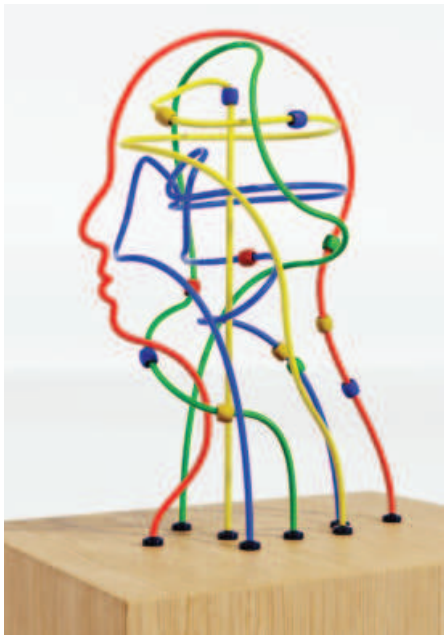
#HEALTH & FITNESS

Why asking for help shows strength, not weakness, in life

For the longest time, to anyone seeking guidance for their mental well-being, it has been the norm to hand them a list of things they should do. But what if, for once, instead of looking at things we should do, we look at things we should not do?

The purpose of discussing all of this is simple: instead of looking into the addition of new habits and practices into our lives, why not first look towards changing what's always been there and modify the elements of our daily lives, things which are subconsciously harming our mental health more than we realise.



Doomscrolling

Social media apps have increased our ability to stay aware of distressing news and alarming information, but sometimes we find ourselves caught in a cycle of viewing such negative content. We become victims of "doom scrolling", which is the habit of continuously viewing negative and disturbing content on social media, despite the unwanted emotions that are caused by this, which they ignore.

Many apps like Instagram have algorithms, which ensure the new content popping up on your screens is similar to what you regularly view, often leading to an overload of such news.

While compulsive scrolling causes its victims to be stuck in a loop of negative emotions such as sorrow, fear, anxiety and even rage, it is especially harmful when done before bedtime. Watching disturbing content before sleep leaves a lasting effect on our mind throughout the next day; the information churns in our brain for a long time during sleep, often leading to nightmares as well.

Emotions aside, scrolling in general takes away time from our lives, leaving us with poor sleep schedules and rushed routines. The lack of proper sleep itself can cause anxiety and stress, which only gets worse for people who have been binging on negative news, leaving them in a state of panic and, if too severe, depression.

Ignoring feelings and emotions

It is often said that emotions make us human. If that is true, we must never feel shame in addressing them, especially the unpleasant ones. One of the biggest enemies of our mental well-being is "bottled up emotions".

For a vast majority of people, especially teenagers and young adults caught up in their ever-so-busy lives, ignoring feelings such as loneliness and guilt seems like the easier solution than addressing them. It may seem that ignoring emotions will help us forget about them, but the bottled-up feelings always creep into our subconscious and leave us in a state of constant confusion and discomfort.

It is essential to acknowledge that feelings, no matter what kind, are natural. Being honest with ourselves and acknowledging those feelings, so that we may take the required steps to deal with them, is the correct course of action.

Falling into the trap of overworking

As we grow older, the only other thing increasing as notably as our age is the workload. For different people, work can mean different things, but the key idea is that our responsibilities increase when the workload is on the rise.

This demands more attention to work, but in doing so, we must never lose ourselves. It is very easy to fall prey to the habit of overworking, especially when more work often means more physical benefits like promotions or raises.

Overworking not only strips us of time we could have spent behind ourselves doing something to soothe our mind, but additional work always brings about added stress with it, especially when the mind realises work is non-stop, it begins to associate work with all sorts of unpleasant feelings, making the whole working experience distressing.

When work is something we have to spend most of our week doing, it is very harmful for our mental health if our brain starts to associate this with negativity. It not only makes it harder to concentrate but also leaves our minds in an unpleasant state most of the time, all of which prevents our mental well-being.

Keeping wrong company

The people we regularly interact with have a very important role in our mental health, which is why it's crucial not to surround ourselves with negative people. People who are seemingly toxic, constantly pessimistic or always have something unpleasant to say to us are not ideal company.

While we aim to surround ourselves with people who have our best intentions at heart, sometimes certain people may express themselves in ways that are harmful to our mental health. Such as always having a fault to point out, starting every conversation with an accusation instead of praise or consolation and expecting us to remain a version of ourselves that they have envisioned, instead of acknowledging us for the unique individuals we are.

These individuals, irrespective of what their true intentions might be, carry negative energy into our lives and can often make someone feel "drained" if their piling expectations from us become overwhelming and ignorant of our true situation in life.

We must try as much as possible to distance ourselves from such individuals and instead surround ourselves with people who make us feel heard and valued, in front of whom we can be our true selves without guilt.

By Raidah Hasan

From Runway to Real Life: 5 closet trends for 2026 Inspired by The Devil Wears Prada

If only a handful of people in the world were trendsetters, Miranda Priestly from *The Devil Wears Prada* would be one of them. Although fictional, the demanding editor-in-chief of *Runway* fashion magazine in this year's sequel to the 2006 film remains relevant to the furnishing world. When Miranda Priestly chooses a particular colour, it signals to designers and influencers worldwide that this is *the* colour for the season. She doesn't chase trends, she sets them.

Here is where the closet comes in. We all need one, otherwise, where would our new shoes, clothes and purses go? For Miranda, a closet is not just a place to store her clothes and accessories, but an extension of her personality. If Miranda Priestley were to redesign her walk-in closet this year, these would be the 5 features she would perhaps ensure:

Mood lighting: Set the scene.

Imagine opening your closet to soft ambient lighting that highlights every fabric, every shoe, every stitch. Built-in LED strips around shelves and display cabinets create a warm, inviting glow that transforms a closet into something closer to a private boutique, where every piece is presented with the importance it deserves. Anything worth owning is worth exhibiting properly. To Miranda, poor lighting would be nothing short of carelessness; an insult to the collection itself.

2. Glass cabinets: Visibility is *power*

Instead of concealing your wardrobe behind opaque panels, glass doors and partitions will allow your collection to become part of the interior itself. They impose a quiet discipline and accessibility, suiting a fast-paced and demanding lifestyle such as Miranda's, where choices need to be made quickly and easily. She would never hide her worth, and neither should you. A collection worth owning deserves to be seen. This way, your Hermès bags and Louboutins become part of the room's architecture, almost impossible to ignore or mistreat.

3. Pull-out shelves: Precision over clutter

Pull-out shelves ensure that everything you own is reachable, organised, and visible. Every accessory is displayed like a curated collection rather than hidden away. This way, you won't need to take out multiple items just to gain access to the one you need. This becomes especially important as you age, which Miranda knows. To her, in a closet, every item must have a place, and clutter is unpardonable.

4. Seating: A space to decide

An ottoman at the centre of your closet ties the place together, turning your closet into a runway, where you can sit and admire the luxuries you own. You would see Miranda sitting here gracefully, taking her time to consider, and then deciding with conviction. The act of getting dressed deserves a moment of solitude. A seating area converts a storage space into a dressing room in the truest sense, where decisions are made carefully and without apology for the time they take.

5. Colour Coordinating: A deliberate decision

Arranging by colour is about an aesthetic discipline. It shortens the distance between intention and outfit, and it makes a closet feel like a mood board you live inside. When everything has a colour and a home, getting dressed becomes effortless.

Miranda is known to be deliberate about her choices, especially when it comes to the exact shade she wears. Every single detail, including the colour of her closet, is deliberate. So, arranging all her clothing by colour would reduce cognitive overload, which is important for a high-stress life like hers.

When it comes to choosing a closet, bold yet traditional colour choices, recessed lighting, and easy accessibility provide a sense of calm to start and finish your day.

If Miranda were looking to upgrade her walk-in closet in 2026, she would find Molteni & C's GLISS MASTER to be a prudent choice. A piece that exudes style, power and grace through its signature Italian craftsmanship. If she were to live in Dhaka, Miranda Priestly would find this and other similar collections at Shanta Lifestyle, and so could you.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Shanta Lifestyle

#PROFILE

How Asad Sattar redefined cultural experiences for young Bangladeshis

There is a familiar way of telling stories about creative founders. Someone spots a gap in the market, builds a brand to solve it, and scales it with precision. Asad Sattar's story does not fit that structure neatly.

He spent five years in the United States. And after returning to Bangladesh, he did not immediately enter the cultural space. Sattar joined his family's garment business and remained there for a couple of years. Arka came later, and when it did, it was not born out of a formal business model.

"It wasn't really a business decision. I just knew that I wanted to do something interesting," he shares. If there was a turning point, it came after Arka's first event.

According to Sattar, that was when he realised there was a genuine gap in the market. He realised people were looking for a cultural experience that felt communal, contemporary, and intentionally designed.

"There was a vacuum in the market for something like this… For a community, creative, cultural experience," he explains. That response, he suggests, is what pushed him to take Arka seriously and pursue it full-time.

What gap did Arka actually fill?

Dhaka has never lacked events. What it has often lacked is a coherent cultural experience designed for a younger urban audience without slipping into pure commercial spectacle.

Arka entered that fragmented space and treated these elements as connected. Sattar is candid that this clarity did not exist from the beginning.

"When I first got into that space, I did not think too much about it," he says. Over time, though, Arka became less about staging an event and more about creating an environment where fashion could coexist with music, atmosphere, movement, and social interaction.

Sattar believes Arka's appeal lies partly in how these experiences are shaped.

"I just try to create an inclusive space for everyone," he says. "We're very energetic in our approach to things. I like there to be a lot of things happening, whether it's in the music, the content, the feeling, the vibe, the colours."

However, energy alone is not the full answer. He argues that Arka's bigger difference lies in the details of user experience.

"We are mindful of the final 10 per cent of UI and user journey as well," he says. Audiences may not consciously identify those choices, but, as he puts it, "People definitely can tell the difference."

So, the gap Arka filled was not simply the absence of another event. It was the absence of a format that made younger audiences feel considered.

The generalist as organiser

Sattar resists tidy labels. Asked whether he sees himself as an entrepreneur, a creative director, or a cultural strategist, he replies, "Mainly as a human." Then he adds, "I'm a specialist of nothing," saying that one of the things he does best is "being a generalist."

That answer explains more than it avoids.

His educational background moved across economics, behavioural thinking, psychology-linked study, business, and a liberal arts structure that allowed him to take courses from computer science to audio and light engineering.

"It really allowed me to explore my generalist desire," he says, "to understand basic constructs and explore things."

Arka reflects that mindset. It does not operate like a single-industry platform and moves across fashion, design, performance, branding, music, film, and audience experience.

Fashion week from Dhaka, but not by imitation

Sattar's presence at platforms such as the BRICS+ Fashion Summit, Colombo Fashion Week, and Modest Fashion Week Jakarta seems to have sharpened his sense of difference rather than pushing him toward imitation.

Meeting representatives from numerous fashion weeks made one thing clear to him: Arka did not emerge from the same lineage. "We came from the other side," he says, describing it as more democratic, youthful, and broad-based than many conventional fashion week structures.

That distinction matters. Bangladesh's fashion conversation often swings between inferiority and imitation, as if legitimacy must come through resemblance to Paris, Milan, or some other model. Sattar seems uninterested in that route. "We don't have to become like anyone," he says. "We can create our own taste and identity."

He argues that Dhaka should not try to prove itself by more efficiently copying global templates; the city could become regionally significant by building a platform that reflects the energy of South Asia on its own terms.

That ambition, of course, depends on money, sponsorship, infrastructure, and policy support. However, as an idea, it is more compelling than imitation.

The uneasy math of culture and commerce

If Arka is the public face of Asad Sattar's work, Ami Dhaka and Kathal reveal a more experimental side of his thinking.

By his own account, these clothing brands did not begin with a strong business formula. "I just wanted to design a few things, test the market, and test out creativity," he says, describing the process as something not well planned.

That honesty points to a larger truth about Bangladesh's creative economy. Many concept-driven brands begin with expression first and structure later, but expression alone cannot sustain a label. Sattar seems aware of that tension, even joking that his brands are his "neglected children" because Arka takes up so much of his time.

Arka is now visible and influential, but visibility is not the same as permanence. The larger question is whether this kind of platform can continue to grow without becoming formulaic or over-commercialised.

For now, Sattar's work suggests that a younger audience in Bangladesh is not just looking for products or spectacles, but for formats that make them feel culturally addressed. Arka's rise proves there is an audience for that – but whether it can become something more lasting remains to be seen.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

Special Supplement

Where stitch meets verse: The living soul of 'Nakshi Kanthar Math'

Anika Tahsin Hafsa

Think of a woman sitting by a window in a village home somewhere in the Bengal delta. The afternoon is quiet. Her children have been fed. The kitchen has been swept. The river outside moves without hurrying, the way rivers in this part of the world always do. She picks up a needle and thread, thread she has pulled herself from the fraying border of an old sari, and she begins to stitch. She does not stitch from a pattern. She stitches from memory. She stitches from longing.

This scene is not imagined. For centuries, it was simply Tuesday, Wednesday or any other unremarkable afternoon in the lives of women across rural Bengal, where the Nakshi Kantha, the embroidered quilt, was as ordinary as cooking rice. The quilts had humble beginnings. They were made for warmth during winters and monsoons. Over time, the designs became more and more filled with meaning. The quilts became repositories of family history, woven with threads of love and memory. A woman might stitch for months on a single kantha, pressing into it everything she could not say in words. Each flower, each border, each rippling line of thread carried something — a memory, a wish, a grief too large for speech.

It is this art, patient, intimate, and almost entirely invisible to the world outside the home, that a young poet named Jasimuddin chose to immortalise in 1929. He did not merely write a poem about a quilt. He wrote a poem that was a quilt. He layered grief over joy, image over image, stitch over stitch, until the whole thing held together as one luminous and heartbreaking work. He called it ***Nakshi Kanthar Math*** (The Field of the Embroidered Quilt). Nearly a hundred years later, it remains one of the most celebrated poems in the Bengali language, translated into fifteen different languages and adapted for stage and screen across multiple decades and multiple countries.

On the evening of April 17, that poem came alive again on a Dhaka stage. MAYA Bengal in Motion, presented by MW Bangladesh, was held on April 17 at Aloki Convention Centre. Now in its third edition, the evening was a tribute to Polli Kobi Jasimuddin and his most celebrated work, ***Nakshi Kanthar Math***. The event was jointly organised by MW Magazine Bangladesh and MAYA, a natural wellness brand under Square Toiletries Limited, and was presided over by Anjan Chowdhury, Managing Director of Square Toiletries Ltd. The choice of date carried its own meaning. April 17 is both International Dance Day and the birth anniversary of the poet, and the organisers brought these two occasions together with evident deliberateness.

In one corner of the venue, girls bent over

frames, weaving Nakshi Kanthas. Quilts hung from the walls, their intricate threadwork catching the light. From the very first moment, it was clear this was not merely a tribute to a poet. It was a celebration of an entire vanishing world. Women moved across the stage with

clay pots balanced on their hips, going to the river for water. Men swept through scenes of paddy cutting. A palki crossed the stage in a procession, and the whole auditorium felt like a village courtyard rather than a convention hall in a capital city. It evoked the same rural spaces Jasimuddin once walked through as a young man, where he listened to folk songs and collected ballads from people who had no other way to record their lives.The sound of a flute drifted out over the audience, straight from the sonic world of the poetry itself.

The poem at the heart of the evening tells the story of Rupai and Saju, two young villagers whose love is interrupted by circumstance and distance. Rupai leaves home and flees far away after a quarrel with peasants from another village. Saju waits. As hope fades, she begins to prepare a Nakshi Kantha, stitching into it the story of her love. She does not survive the wait. When Rupai finally returns, he finds only her grave, covered in the quilt she made for him. It is from this image that the field, and the poem, take their name.

Jasimuddin captures the ache of that separation in lines that feel less like poetry and more like a cry left in the open air:

"Ajo ei gao ojhore chahiya oi gao tir pane, nirobe boshiya kon kotha jeno kohiteche kane kane" (Still this village gazes, unblinking, towards that other village, sitting in silence, whispering something, something, into the ear).

Two villages looking at each other across a field. That is the entirety of it. And yet those two lines contain the whole human experience of longing. The poem is a Bengali tragedy that carries the weight of Romeo and Juliet without borrowing any of its vocabulary. It is a work rooted entirely in its own soil, its own rivers, its own grief.

The performance at Aloki Convention Centre was curated by Anisul Islam Hero and featured renowned artistes Shamim Ara Nipa, Shibli Mohammad, and Nrityanchal. The programme combined music, dance, and storytelling to present rural Bengal in a simple and expressive way. The audience responded with strong appreciation throughout the evening. Many viewers expressed emotional connection with the performance.

Welcome speeches were delivered by Rumana Chowdhury, Editor and Publisher of MW Magazine Bangladesh, and Malik Mohammed Sayeed, CEO of Square Toiletries Limited. Sayeed reaffirmed MAYA's commitment to supporting initiatives that celebrate the nation's art, culture, and heritage. MAYA Bengal in Motion highlights how a brand rooted in nature can stay connected to cultural traditions while growing as a business.

Actor Afzal Hossain, speaking at the event, reflected on what occasions like this mean for

the country's cultural life. He noted that commercial pressures have gradually weakened our connection to literary heritage. "Life is not for popularity. Life is for feeling," he said.

Writer and journalist Anisul Hoque described Jasimuddin as one of the foremost figures in Bangla literature and spoke about the renewed relevance of his work in the contemporary era. "This event will help introduce the real Bangladesh to the world," he said.

Actress Azmeri Haque Badhan praised the organisers and urged them to carry this work beyond Dhaka. "These initiatives need to reach the young generation at the grassroots level," she said.

However, in 1959, ***Nakshi Kanthar Math*** was first adapted into a dance drama by Bulbul Lalitakala Academy. The third edition of MAYA Bengal in Motion brought it back to the stage after a long absence, not as a museum piece but as a living performance, choreographed and felt.

The broadcast partner for the event is Maasranga Television. The PR partner is Mediacom Limited, while Aegis Security Forces served as security partner and decoration partner was Eskay. Sun Communications Limited handled overall event management. The programme will be broadcast on Maasranga Television on April 29, marking International Dance Day.

Platforms like MAYA Bengal in Motion, that take the country's literary heritage seriously and present it with craft and genuine intention, are doing something that goes well beyond staging a beautiful evening. When the final notes of the flute faded and the lights came slowly back up, the audience sat still for a moment before they applauded. That stillness was not emptiness. It was the pause of people who have just been reminded of something they had not known they had forgotten, the paddy fields, the river, the woman at the window, the kantha spread across a grave in a field that now carries its name forever.

"Shei hote tar nam ti hoyeche Nakshi Kanthar Math" (Since then, the field is known as Nakshi Kanthar Math).

Photo Courtesy : Mediacom

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Dawn of the Parandi era!

Opulent and ornate, parandis are typically worn at the end of the braid with fun accessories hanging from it, such as tassels, bells, mirrors, and zari balls! Elevating a braid from basic to beautiful, parandi is loved wherever she goes, just cause she's so fun and pretty. One is truly spoilt for choice when it comes to selecting just one kind.

But first things first, matching your parandi with your outfit is a no-brainer, of course. For a jewel-toned outfit such as ruby, emerald, sapphire, or amethyst, golden is a great choice with lovely sparkly tassels and beads to make it look festive. With rusty shades such as copper, burnt orange, and pewter grey, dull or matte golden parandis will look fabulous. Add little ghungroo bells, stones, and flat paillettes to the tassels and do not forget zari strings to make it look extra pretty.

Colours that are opposites and yet look harmonious together also elevate your look and style instantly. Pair green parandi with your pink suit or red with white! This could be a great option for traditional Bengali celebrations when we all love pops of red for our looks.

An ivory Jamdani accessorised with lovely red and gold parandi will add a much-needed charm to your outfit while staying on trend. You could also add multicoloured tassels to your parandi to make it look even more fun and festive.

Making your own parandi could also be a fun little project for your next event. Choosing your own elements is always exciting, and making it is easy and delightful. Decide on a colour palette and hit the accessories stores at Gawsia or Banani Market to score some unique trinkets to create a custom parandi matching your outfit, style, and leave a little sparkle wherever you go.

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Model: Mysha
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Styling & Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon
Hair: Probina

Star LIFE Style

#LIFEHACKS

Feeling unsure? Here's why you should ask for help

Life is an adventure, and a challenging one at that. It can be unpredictable, difficult and sometimes scary. We often fall into tight spots that shake us to our cores, but what you need to remember is that you do not have to do it alone. You can ask for help.

It's okay to ask

The first thing that you need to realise is that it is okay to ask for help. Usually, we do not want to ask others for help, thinking that it might inconvenience them. Or worse, what if they hate us and do not want to help? Here's some news for you. There are numerous scientific studies that confirm that people are willing to help more than we realise. The catch is that you have to ask for it.

Maybe you think asking for help makes you seem weak. On the contrary. Asking for help takes courage. It takes the wisdom of knowing that you need assistance and you are strong enough to admit it. It confirms that you are wise enough to know your limit.

It builds a connection

There is an interesting psychological phenomenon called 'The Ben Franklin'. It refers to the fact that a person likes someone more after doing them a favour, and they are more likely to do them another favour in the future. So, if you are looking to improve your relationship with someone, ask their advice or help. It shows that you value their insight and wisdom and admire their ability.

In addition, helping and asking for help builds loyalty. And if you reciprocate, a strong social bond is formed. Even a lone wolf needs some social bond to survive.

Respect people's time and know your place

Don't be one of those people from high school who never maintained the relationship for a decade, but then one day just calls you to ask for money! You do not want to be one of those people who texts you to ask for help, but instead of getting to the point, just beats around the bush by reminiscing and asking about your private affairs for an hour before mentioning why they texted.

The invisible score

You have played video games, right? The more side missions you complete, the more score or reward you get, and it makes it easier to play the base game. Help is sort of like a side mission in that way. Sure, there is no official score on your HUD, but there is an invisible score going on.

The more you help people, the better you feel about yourself. Asking for help does not reduce your score; it builds a social connection; think of it like XP points. But you should be willing to help others when the chance comes because it also builds a reputation (even more XP points!) in your own social circle.

Be grateful when someone helps you, and try to help others without any ulterior motive. You will be positively amazed by the rush of dopamine that comes after helping people.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Collected

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Protect your mental health while staying informed about world events

These days, it seems like each morning brings news of a new conflict somewhere around the world. As the world becomes more and more uncertain, people must make an important trade-off: turn off the news channels and risk losing the opportunities for contingency planning or stay updated by the minute, and often ruin their mental health in the process.

Fortunately, or at least as fortunately as possible given the circumstances, there is an in-between that can afford you some semblance of mental peace without having to forgo the important information relevant to staying prepared and making informed choices for your livelihood.

First, analyse what kind of news you require. Are you managing the supply chain for a multinational, handling finances and stocks, or simply have friends and family in a war-affected country? Instead of trying to track every headline, choose what is relevant to you and focus on that.

Next, schedule when you wish to receive news. Pick times when you are mentally charged and ready to take on some load because chances are, the news will either require you to take active steps

to prepare for a change, or it will pull you down mentally.

It is important to choose trustworthy websites and channels to source your information, rather than doom scrolling social media, which can be counterproductive. Use filtering tools such as news alerts on important topics, curated market reports, etc., that can cut through unnecessary sensationalism to get you news in the most clear and concise format possible.

Practising emotional boundaries is very important in times like these. While it is natural to feel deeply disturbed by what is happening around the world, it is also important to take care of oneself and not give in to impulses. Digital or social guard-railing helps. This includes muting or unfollowing accounts that repeatedly monger fear and distress through their content, turning off unimportant notifications and setting screen time limits for yourself.

According to Educational Psychologist, Sara Mehzabeen, harrowing news, not unlike what we are being exposed to at

this moment, can shake even the best of resolves.

"And that's okay," she affirms.

She adds, "The first step to feeling better is to acknowledge your feelings of discomfort or sadness."

Distracting yourself is the second step.

"It may even be that one is unable to shake off feelings of despondency and distract themselves; that, in itself, is acknowledgement enough," Mehzabeen adds.

In moments such as these, she also suggests calming techniques such as sipping water and moving around, and grounding techniques, such as listening to distinct sounds and touching something around you.

We cannot control world events, but we can advocate for peace from where we are.

"Instead of constantly guilt tripping, look for ways to donate to charities that do good work, pray if that's something that gives you a sense of peace, or choose to raise your voice for causes that matter to you, to reduce feelings of helplessness," Sara Mehzabeen concludes.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

Easy tricks to get your toddler to sleep faster

Unless you have actually met a toddler, you might feel, "Meh, putting a child to sleep is easy." You are wrong, because that requires high energy, strategy, and most importantly, the patience of an aged monk. So, if you are the toddler-parent who is patting their kid on the back, chanting, "Good babies go to sleep" like a sacred mantra every night, here is a guide to put your kid to bed, without losing your sanity!

Start bedtime preparations in the evening

If you think bedtime starts at 8 PM, you are still in the dark. Dimming the lights, closing the curtains, and speaking in a relatively calm tone from dusk are small steps that send a signal to children's brain that it is time to slow down and create a smooth transition from activities into sleeping. You will know you are doing something right when you see those small yawns and eye-rubs at the end of the day.

Follow a routine

Toddlers learn over time through routines that nights are for rest and thus, become aware when their body is winding down for sleep. Putting the child to bed and waking them up at the same time every day gives them a sense of safety and security rather than seeing bedtime as an "end of all fun."

Avoid sugary treats or soda before bed

Added sugar not only makes the toddler hyperactive during the day, but also turns them into a mini nightclub DJ, who is convinced the night is still young! Soft drinks, especially, has a significant amount of sugar and caffeine that unknowingly messes up the sleep cycle of your toddler.

To be on the safe side, you can completely eliminate sugar after sunset. Without that sugar rush, a child's brain is much more likely to cooperate with your reasonable plan for sleeping.

Limit screen time

The blue light emitted by electronic devices blocks the production of melatonin, the hormone that regulates a healthy sleep cycle. It tricks the brain into feeling more alert, disrupting the natural clock.

Additionally, overstimulating cartoons and high-pitched music make it difficult for a child's brain to fall asleep. It is important to make sure the child is not looking at screens for at least 2 hours prior to bedtime.

Monitor their napping time

If your child takes frequent naps throughout the day, there is a high possibility that they will be energetic at night. To fix this, try keeping them busy with brain games, puzzles, and outdoor activities during the day.

Also, naps that are too close to bedtime increase your probability of staying awake until 3 AM with your toddler. Therefore, ensuring there is a proper gap between nap time and bedtime allows their body to develop just enough sleepiness to cooperate at bedtime, rather than rejecting sleep like a torn toy.

Spending time with your child before bed

If your toddler sleeps in a separate room at night, you are no stranger to the "one more question" or "I want another sip of water" request when you have said good night and are about to leave their room. This happens because the child suddenly feels less important and left out. So, before you put your child to sleep, make sure you spend enough time with them. Reading a bedtime story or just listening to their prattle can do wonders.

Now, even if your child is skipping sleep to take a moment to appreciate the ceiling fan, do not assume you are not the "a perfect parent" just yet. In the end, bedtime battles are less about winning and more about quiet moments that will not last forever, like the small hand holding yours a little tighter before finally falling asleep.

Therefore, you keep showing up and keep laughing when you can, because one day the house will be quiet much earlier than you expect, and you might just miss the chaos that once made every bedtime feel like a long, exhausting, and strangely beautiful adventure.

By K T Humaira
Photo: Collected

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

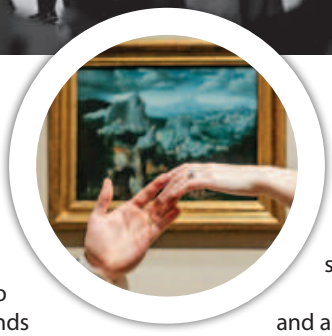
Why quiet art spaces are replacing cafes and restaurants for dating

In a time when dating often begins with swipes and an awkward "Hey!" text, some places consistently demonstrate that it can unfold in a smooth or sophisticated conversation. Art galleries, a place that offers something refreshingly different — a shared, real-world experience rooted in curiosity, interpretations, and emotion.

Unlike the usual dating spots like cafes and restaurants, art galleries make it easier to talk without trying too hard. You are not sitting across from each other, wondering what to say next. Instead, you are walking, stopping, reacting to things around you. A painting or sculpture gives you something to start with, and the conversation just builds from there. No awkwardness, no fumbling – only real conversation with your loved one.

"Art galleries mean a lot to my partner and me," said Raiyan Islam, 27. "That's actually where we met. I remember feeling more relaxed than I expected. It didn't feel like a first meeting in that awkward way," Raiyan expressed.

An art gallery never turns you away; it can activate all your senses. In a gallery, the focus is not entirely on you; it's shared



with art. And somehow that makes people open up more. You are not trying to impress as much as you are reacting, thinking and sharing those thoughts with someone else.

The environment itself also influences the outcome. It tends to be peaceful, aesthetically pleasing and calm. This setting encourages more intentional, thoughtful involvement. People can be less distracted here and improve connections with each other.

For some people, galleries act as a subtle measure of compatibility.

Nusrat Jahan, a university student, expressed that if someone is willing to take their time to walk through an exhibition and genuinely engage with it, it signifies something meaningful to her.

"It shows that they can relax and appreciate moments, which I value," she added.

In a way, looking at art together becomes a small test of compatibility. What catches their attention? What do they skip? What do they laugh at? These little things can say more than the usual "what do you do?" questions.

"It feels more real," said Maisha Haque, 25. "Not like you are performing for each other, just reacting to things together. That's a better way to connect, I think."

There's also something interesting about how art itself works in these moments. Not everyone sees the same thing in a piece, and that's fine. In fact, those differences can lead to better conversations. Talking about different perspectives and being respectful of others' opinions in a relaxed setting can bring people closer, rather than push them apart.

At a time when dating can feel rushed and repetitive, art galleries offer something quieter and more meaningful. They remind us that connection does not always come from trying harder — it often comes from simply sharing a moment, seeing things differently and being open to where that might lead.

So, maybe the next time you think about where to meet someone, skip the usual plans. Walk into a gallery instead — you might end up with a good memory in your bucket.

By Sabrin Zawad Ritu
Photo: Collected

#TRAVEL

Lessons from my first trekking experience in Nepal

For a lot of Bangladeshis, Nepal feels like the doorway into trekking. After all, it is the capital for trekkers around the globe. Some spend thousands of dollars or a small fortune to fulfil the dream of experiencing the Himalayan ranges. However, for neighbours like us, Nepal is close. It does not demand the kind of money or paperwork that makes you want to give up before you have even packed. And for many of us, that matters.

The dream of walking into the mountains feels far less ridiculous when the country is just next door, flights are manageable if planned properly, and almost all the clothing you need can be sourced from home without setting your wallet on fire. That is probably why so many of us consider Nepal before anywhere else. I did too.

Around four or five years ago, I decided to go for my first trek. As any conceited or brash individual, approaching it with

the confidence of a man who clearly did not know what he was doing seemed normal.

I got a trekking backpack from Baitul Mukarram in Dhaka and thought, well, a backpack is a backpack. Never really stopped to ask why some bags and gears cost more, why some prefer brands with a reputation, or why seasoned trekkers focus on "expensive" gears that offer quality support, straps and accessibility. I am sure some of you are finding it a bit dramatic; it sounded the same to me at the time.

The string of confident mistakes continued with footwear. Instead of proper trekking boots, I wore a pair of high-neck police boots from Kachukhet. In my head, boots were boots. Strong-looking, covered the ankle, job done.

Then the trail started teaching me things the hard way. The bag broke. My feet were in horrible pain. And because mountains do not care about your budget logic, I had to finish that trek wearing the consequences of my own bad decisions. It was miserable, but useful. That first trip stripped away a lot of my false confidence.

Over the next few treks, I began to realise two things. One, I genuinely loved trekking. Two, if I loved it that much, I had to stop treating it casually. That shift did not happen overnight. It came piece by piece.

First with the backpack. The first one I got from Baitul Mukarram was a bit of a disaster. One of the locks broke, and then the waist buckle gave up in the middle of the trek. Later, I bought a cheaper bootleg trekking backpack from Kathmandu. Better, yes. But still limited. Not enough space, accessibility or comfort. Only when I finally got a proper branded trekking backpack did I understand what I had been missing all along. The back support, the lumbar support, and the ease of reaching things without turning your life upside down on the trail. It felt less like carrying a burden and more like the bag was doing what it was meant to do.

Footwear followed the same story. Police boots first. Then, a cheap trekking boot that lasted roughly one trek before it started giving up on me. Then, finally, a proper pair of trekking boots that made me understand why people spend money on such things in the first place. Not for the logo or for show. Just because pain is a very honest teacher.

The same went for trekking poles. I started with a very cheap one from Kathmandu. It broke easily. After that, I got myself a proper one from Decathlon, and the difference was not glamorous, just reliable. Sometimes that is all you want from gear. Reliability!

Even my relationship with water changed. At first, I carried a plastic bottle and thought I was sorted. Then I went higher and realised cold water in the mountains is not a small inconvenience. It gets into your body, your mood, your energy. Later, I started carrying a thermos. Then, eventually, a Nalgene, which turned out to be one of those small upgrades that quietly change everything. At night, keeping it close to my chest inside the sleeping bag kept me warm. In the morning, I had lukewarm water waiting for me. Small thing. Big comfort.

But the biggest lesson was not about gear at all. It was about respect. For the mountains, yes, but mostly for my own body.

When you first start, especially from Bangladesh, trekking can feel surprisingly accessible. Clothes like thermals, trekking trousers, socks, base layers and windbreakers can often be sourced here at very reasonable prices. But technical gear is different. Backpacks, boots, trekking poles, and even the way you carry water, these things need understanding. And if you are a first-time trekker, it is actually wiser not to throw a fortune at expensive gear right away.

Start small. Do an easier trek. See if trekking is even your thing. See how your body reacts. See what kind of trekker you are. Some people want comfort. Some can tolerate roughness. Some care more about weight, others about support. You only learn that on the trail.

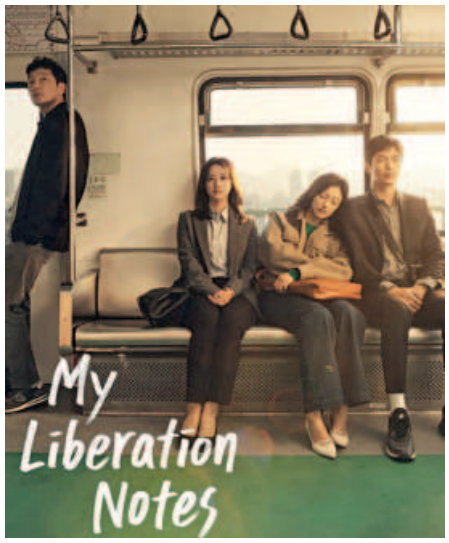
I believe that is what Nepal gave me, again and again! Not just views, not just stories, but a clearer understanding of myself. The mountains slowly taught me that adventure is not about winging it and hoping for the best. It is about paying attention. To your breath, your knees, your feet and to the difference between discomfort and danger.

That, to me, is where trekking really begins. Not when you buy the gear, but when you finally understand why you need it.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Collected

#PERSPECTIVE

Why Korean dramas conquered the global living room



They have very quietly, but firmly, taken over global screens and outshone Western television series in popularity. The audience's shift towards Korean dramas is no longer limited to niche fandoms. From university students binge-watching after classes to families picking which drama to watch on the weekends. K-dramas have now become a part of life.

The rise of Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, reflects a big cultural shift in people. K-pop, Korean fashion, food, and lifestyle are curated in a way that naturally draws people into drama consumption. Watching a K-drama is not just about leisurely pleasure; it is about stepping into a different world.

The appeal of Korean dramas rests in how they make people feel seen, understood, loved and emotionally connected. In this busy world filled with content, but at the end of the day, emotional intimacy is what the soul craves. Although Western shows still get top priority, dominate awards, and have high budgets, people are now finding Korean storytelling more relatable, emotionally satisfying, and easier to commit to.

One of the core reasons behind this change of preference is emotional clarity. Korean dramas portray love, grief, ambition and family pressures, whereas Western dramas often rely on complex timelines, moral complexity, or shock value.

"I started watching K-dramas during COVID-19, and all of a sudden I started to feel disconnected from Western shows," says Sadia Islam, now a 24-year-old university student. "K-dramas left such a deep impact on me, and sometimes it took months to get over a series after it ended."

Korean shows are very good at narrating a complete storyline, like past to present, how the plot evolved, unlike Western series that stretch multiple seasons. Most dramas wrap up within 12 to 16 episodes. However, even though the format is limited, they still skillfully show proper storytelling, character development, and satisfying endings.

Aziz Hossain, a corporate professional, said, "I don't like when I have to wait for years to know what happens next, but with K-dramas, I will get a full journey from past to present without unnecessary fillers, but in a very detailed way so that it looks real."

Another strong appeal is the romantic narrative, but not in a critical way.

K-drama romance is very different from Western shows. It starts with a slow burn, emotionally layered, and grounded in mutual understanding. Their selling point is never physical intimacy, but emotional connection. In contrast, Western shows normalise casual relationships and lack core values and explicit content, which does not align with the viewers' mindsets.

"I enjoy romance that builds gradually," explains Zahra Hafiz Kimti, a 25-year-old fine arts student. "In K-dramas, small gestures like holding hands can feel more powerful and comforting than an entire season of Western shows because they have a more upbeat aura, which is not relatable."

At the same time, it would be biased to claim that Korean dramas are perfect because we often see familiar tropes like rich-boy-poor-girl and childhood connections. What's interesting, however, is that viewers are willing to see the same patterns as the emotional payoff feels more genuine. The familiarity becomes normal and comforting to the viewers.

Cultural values play an important role as themes like career, social pressure, family responsibility, and unspoken sacrifices strike a deep chord with Asian audiences. K-dramas do not try too hard to look relatable, but still effortlessly reflect real-life struggles better than Western shows that focus mostly on individualism.

"Sometimes it feels like they are portraying our own struggles, just in a different city and language," says Naslima Begum, a school teacher who often watches K-drama with her daughter. "The way they show emotions and actions in a certain situation feels familiar."

Korean drama production aesthetics are different from Western shows. Visuals are pretty polished — soft aura, carefully composed frames, and meaningful soundtracks. On the other hand, Western shows prioritise realism over beauty, which feels heavier visually.

The audience, however, is not avoiding Western dramas entirely; they are just simply looking for balance.

"I still enjoy Western shows for thrillers, crime, or dark comedies, but I love Korean dramas because they keep me hooked," says Junaid Islam. "I don't have to pressure my brain much thinking, as the stories are simple and easy to understand, which feels safer and warmer," he added.

And maybe that's all the reasons viewers need to find their way back to Seoul episode after episode, not just for entertainment but for the comfort.

By Faria Nowshin Tazin
Photo: Collected

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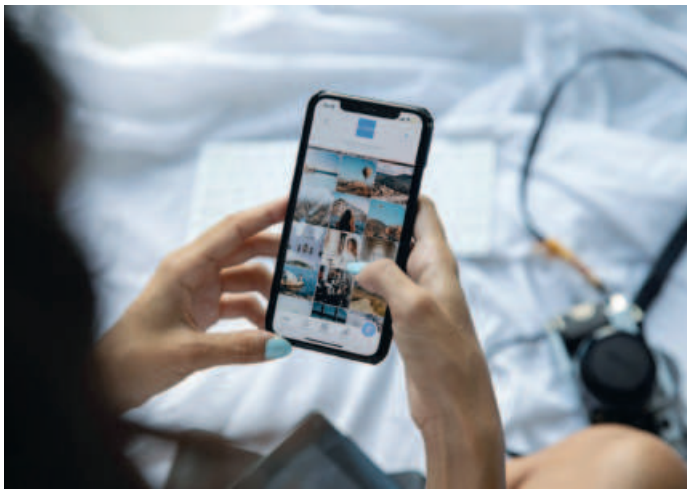
#PERSPECTIVE

How algorithms are shaping our taste



Have you ever opened up Instagram only to find suggested reels related to a conversation you just had with a friend? Or, maybe you meant to buy a certain item, and your feed immediately started showing you ads for that very thing. Disquieted, you may have wondered, "Did the phone overhear me?"

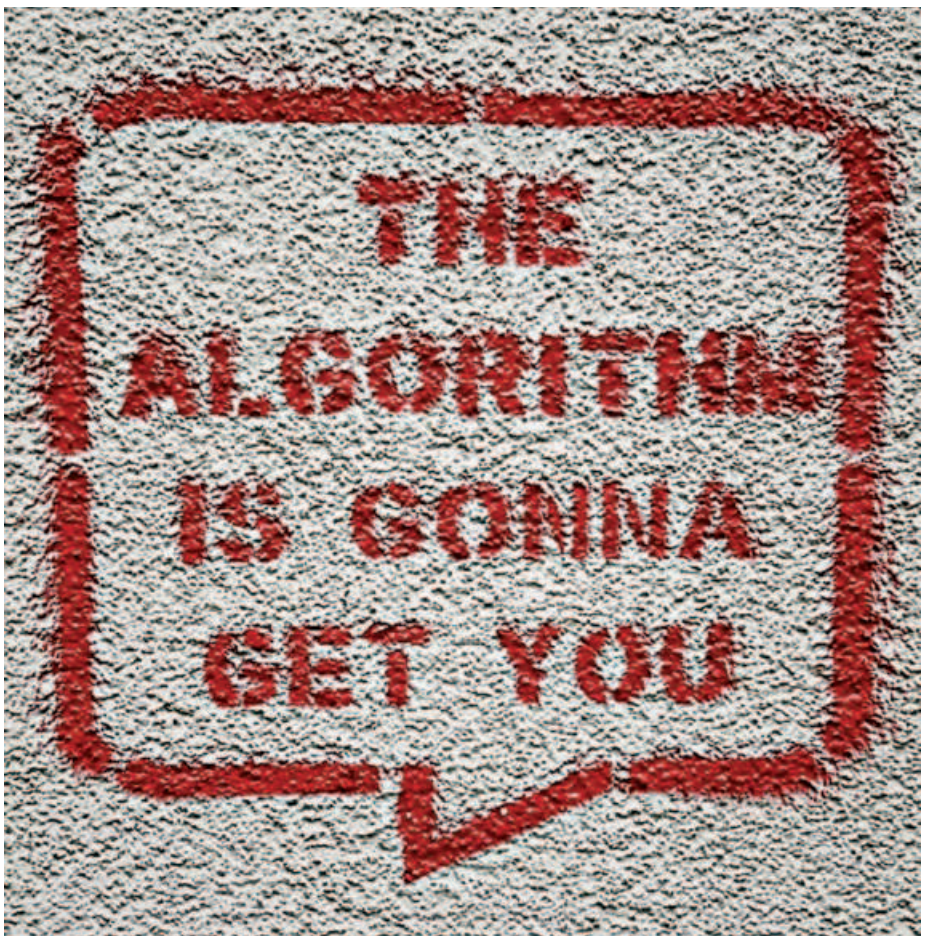
You would not be alone in thinking or feeling this way. While the secret, ever-hearing microphone has been debunked as a mere myth by multiple studies, the concern itself reveals a deeper fear. The fear of surveillance. Of having our privacy breached.

The scary truth is that we already live within this reality. We exist within the algorithm, consistently scrolling through one reel after another.

Think of it. What is the first thing we do right after waking up in the morning? We reach for our phones. We tell ourselves that it is just to check notifications, just for a "quick scroll". But, on most days, it never ends up being just a quick scroll.

According to research, the average Gen-Z is now scrolling for at least 6 hours per day on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. And screen time can go much higher than that on most days, reaching up to 13-15 hours.

Which brings us to the question: why do we scroll in the first place? On most days, we do it simply as a routine activity with little intention or purpose behind it. It is what I like to call a "filler" activity to pass the time. Requires little thought to surf your feed than, say, dusting off the book that's been sitting on your nightstand for months and reading a page or two.



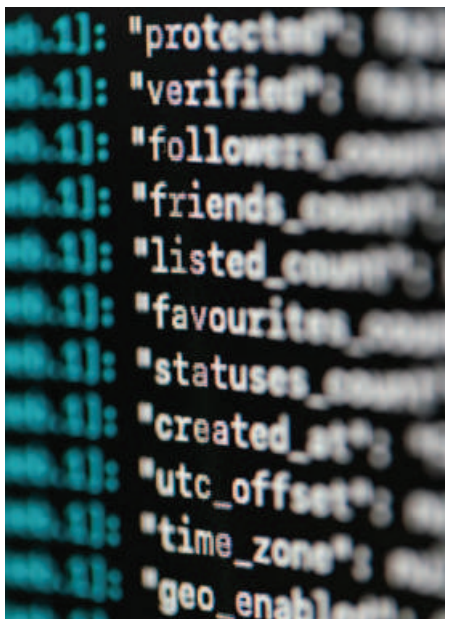
In recent years, though, more and more people are starting to feel the mental fatigue of constantly consuming short-form media.

We are all suffering from a unique strain of virtual illness: "brainrot." Much has already been said about the way our attention spans have become drastically shorter due to speed-reading multiple subjects in a short period of time. What is less discussed is how it has impacted our taste. How much of what we like or enjoy is affected by what's popular on social media?

The answer? Almost everything! From our taste in fashion, books, movies, music, hobbies, our to-do lists, to travel destinations, our algorithms have a big say in it. What is trending online dictates how we spend a lot of our time offline.

Currently, there's an expression going around the Internet about the correlation between online activity and our taste in fashion. It goes like this, "You can tell a lot about a person's screentime by looking at their fit." Seems like a ridiculous thought at first, doesn't it?

Unfortunately, there's quite a bit of truth to it.



Think about the evolution of fashion in the last few years. Since lockdown days during the pandemic to 2026, we have already cycled through a gazillion trends — Old Money, Dark Academia, Y2K, Cottagecore, Balletcore, and more. Even certain colours were trendier than others in each year, such as pistachio green (2020), burgundy (2023-present), butter yellow, and brown combo (Summer 2025).

Almost every single time an item or an aesthetic takes off, you can trace the virality back to a popular figure — be it a model, a YouTube personality, or an actor. The hype is initially engineered through celebrity brand deals and PR packages. And once this aspirational image becomes accessible through fast fashion knockoffs like SHEIN and Zara, the masses hop on the trend cycle without question.

Currently, we have moved on to things which will become passé soon. And even if we do adopt a trend and stick to it for a while, like the Clean Girl Aesthetic pioneered by Hailey Bieber, it does not take too long for us to grow tired of it.

And, why not? After all, we are simply chasing trends and, by extension, chasing something that makes us look like everyone else. On one hand, we want to be part of the pack by acquiring that one item, getting pictures for Instagram at that one trending spot during our vacation to Bali, or somewhere touristy by watching the one movie everyone's been talking about. We fear logging off for too long lest we become unaware of the cultural tides. In other words, we experience FOMO (fear of missing out).

At the same time, we are subconsciously aware of conforming too much and the risk of becoming homogenous. Building our personal taste would require us to reduce our screentime, though and pull the plug on following trends.

I suspect this is what has driven the rise in posts titled "What I read/watched this week instead of doomscrolling" on Instagram lately. It is well-intentioned: after all, the idea is to get you to put down the damn phone.

Take a glimpse behind the veil, though, and it falls to shambles just a little bit. Because, here too, we shy away from the raw and the real. We subscribe to curated aesthetics. Almost without exception, all the posts I have seen under this category looked like they were pulled straight out of a Pinterest template.

Without realising it, we are once again reading and watching the same things as everyone else by following these posts. Our attempt to break free from the algorithm's influence feels akin to Sisyphus rolling a boulder up the hill for eternity.

However, there seems to be some hope yet. This year, more netizens are attempting to rely on their socials less and rely more on physical media. They are hoping to return to physical media like magazines, catalogues, and such to authentically find music, movies, and fashion inspiration. Who knows? Perhaps, this could be the reset we desperately need from the algorithm.

By Sunehra Afreen
Photo: Collected