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ILLUSTRATION: **MONG SHONIE**



MOVIES

Clayface pushes the DCU into DISTURBING BODY HORROR TERRITORY

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

**This review contains spoilers.*

Clayface is the third feature film in James Gunn and Peter Safran's DC Universe (DCU), following *Superman* (2025) and *Supergirl* (2026), based on the Batman villain of the same name. The movie provides a unique take on the genre, focusing on body horror and portraying a complex take on a person's loss of identity and the desperation that ensues after.

The film is a horror-revenge thriller centred on Matt Hagen, a successful actor who is horribly disfigured by a Gotham City crime boss and receives experimental treatment to repair the damage, resulting in unexpected changes to his body. The root of the story is based on Matt's loss of self and desire for revenge.

Clayface is more of an experimental mixed-genre film than a straightforward horror or superhero film, blending elements of a crime-thriller, revenge quest, and body horror. There are very few jump scares in the movie, with the horror stemming purely from the gore and disturbing scenes of Matt Hagen's body transformation. The superhero (or, in this case, supervillain) aspects of the movie come from Matt's revenge quest. While this side of the plot is satisfying, it does slightly undercut the scares and existential dread built through the gruesome body horror side of the story.

Matt Hagen's descent into madness is done with masterful complexity, as from the beginning of the film his true personality is left ambiguous. Matt is neither completely heroic nor villainous; his profession as an actor and "becoming other people" is hinted at as being his coping mechanism for having an abusive childhood. His gradual transformation and ability to not just portray but physically become other people are both tragic and poetic to his character. He is a character with no sense of self, and he values himself by how others perceive him and the validation he receives as an actor. Subsequently, he values others based on that same philosophy, as demonstrated by his relationship with Dr Caitlyn Corr.

Caitlyn is the only character who helps Matt, and thus he begins to develop an idealised version of her and fails to perceive her as anything more than that. While his pursuit of revenge may seem somewhat "heroic", his relationship with Caitlyn devolves into a one-sided obsession. When she ultimately rejects him, it drives him toward his inevitable villainous turn. After finally entering his comic-accurate monstrous form at the end of the film, he holds on to that idealised version of Caitlyn. This aspect of the story can be interpreted as a subtle commentary on consent and unhealthy relationships based on idealisation and desire, and not taking into account the other person's individuality.

A minor aspect that may disappoint certain fans is the absence of any reference to Batman, even though *Clayface* is primarily a Batman villain and the movie is set in Gotham City. On its own, the plot does work well as solely a *Clayface* origin story; however, the lack of Batman connections is a bit of a missed opportunity. Furthermore, the film's approach to blending genres does make it more of a "jack of all trades", as the elements of horror and revenge thriller make it so that the movie doesn't excel at either but still manages to be sufficiently good enough to be enjoyable.

Clayface is yet another unconventional addition to the DCU, delivering a brilliant mix of body horror and revenge thriller within the superhero genre. It does not vastly expand the lore of the cinematic universe; however, it does give a solid, standalone character study on identity and self. *Clayface* is an easy recommendation not just for fans of DC Comics, but also for horror enthusiasts and people looking to see a satisfying revenge story.

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Special Content

How ISD's MYP helps students think beyond the classroom

Can a lesson on climate change teach students about responsibility? Can a robotics project teach them teamwork as well as technology? And what happens when a personal interest becomes a project that takes months of research and effort?

At International School Dhaka (ISD), these connections are an important part of learning. Through the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP), students are encouraged to look beyond their textbooks, explore ideas that interest them and understand how their knowledge can make a difference in the world.

Designed for students in Grades 6 to 10, the MYP builds on the curiosity nurtured during the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and helps the students to grow more independent, to think critically, to appreciate different perspectives and become more aware of their responsibilities towards others.



Learning to connect ideas with the real world

At ISD, subjects are not taught in isolation. With the school's inquiry-based learning, students learn to question information, connect different ideas across subjects and use their knowledge to solve real-world issues.

They also learn how to analyse and evaluate issues, come up with novel ideas, consider new perspectives and solve problems by working in teams through classroom discussions and collaboration.

"Through the MYP, we want our students to have the ability to question and think critically. We believe, when they see how their courses relate to the world outside school, they can use those learnings to explore and address global challenges," says Steven Ellis, Secondary School Principal, ISD.



From personal interests to independent projects

Personal Project is an important part of the MYP programme, where Grade 10 students conduct an independent inquiry based on their personal interests.

With this project, students gain valuable experience in research, communication and self-management skills, culminating in a journey that reflects their learning.

Students develop different interesting projects, such as documentaries, fashion journals, cooking videos, scientific models, awareness campaigns, other research-based projects and so on.

Learning to make a difference

Hands-on learning is another crucial part of MYP. Through Service as Action, students get involved in community-focused service learning where they find out ways of responding to real needs and making contributions to their communities. These experiences help them develop empathy and a stronger sense of social responsibility.

Beyond classroom, ISD's Week Without Walls programme offers opportunities of experiential learning for secondary students. The school's robotics programme offered in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University for grades 1 to 10 is an example of practical problem solving and computational thinking.

"When students step outside their comfort zones, work with others and engage with their communities, they begin to see how their choices affect the people around them. We want them to develop the empathy to understand different perspectives and the confidence to take action," says Nilanthi Das, Vice Principal and MYP Coordinator at ISD.



Preparing for what comes next

ISD's MYP essentially helps students become lifelong learners. It helps them critically appreciate their own culture and personal history as well as the values and traditions of other. Moreover, it provides a foundation for the rigorous IB Diploma Programme (DP). Students in Grades 9 and 10 can work towards the internationally recognized IB MYP certificate through portfolio work and optional e-Assessments.

Beyond academic preparation, the programme helps students become independent thinkers who can approach challenges with confidence, appreciate different perspectives and take responsibility for their actions.

At ISD, these qualities are central to preparing young people not only for further education, but also for meaningful contributions to an increasingly interconnected world.



COVER STORY

What it means to study film in Bangladesh

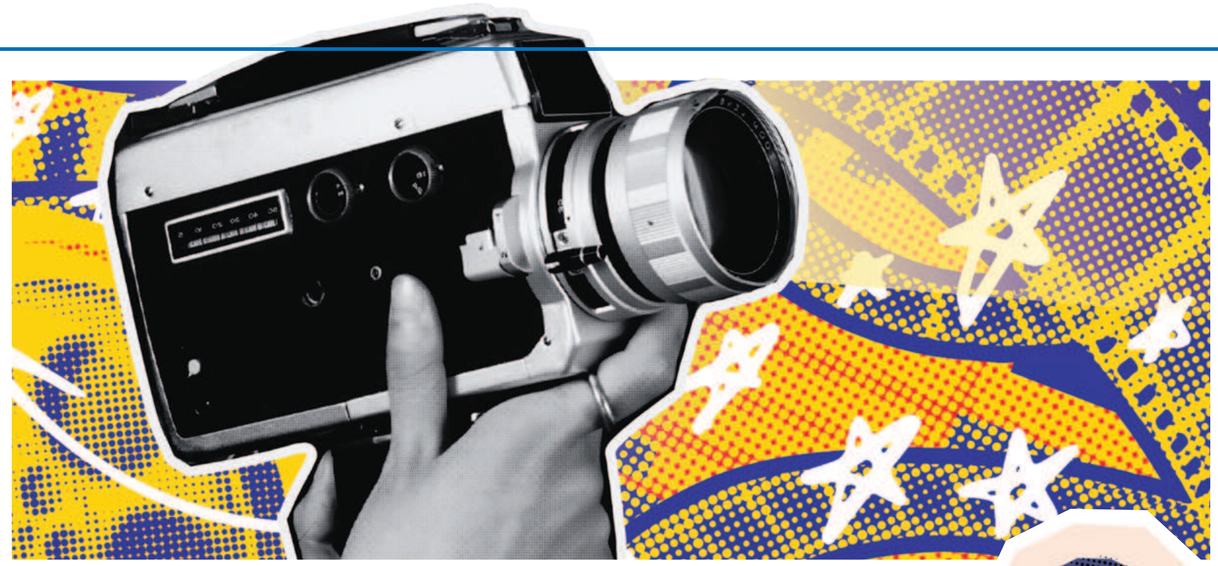


ILLUSTRATION : ABIR HOSSAIN

"Studying film in Bangladesh can seem like a risky choice, especially if you expect a guaranteed job after graduation. But opportunities do exist. I have not even finished my studies yet, and I am already working with a production house."



SHEIKH FABIHA AMREEN

Among the art that surrounds our lives, film is perhaps one medium with something for everyone. No matter their age or background, someone is likely to have at least one movie they like. As such, we might be bound to question what it actually means and what it takes to study in such a creative field.

The Department of Television, Film and Photography (TFP) at Dhaka University (DU) opened in 2012 as the Department of Television and Film Studies. A handful of other public universities offer dedicated film degrees. Among public universities, Jagannath University (JnU) has a Department of Film and Television, and Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University (JKKNIU) in Trishal has a Department of Film and Media Studies.

Among private universities, Stamford University Bangladesh's Department of Film and Media Studies has operated since 2004. The University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) offers a concentration in Digital Film and Television Production within its Media Studies and Journalism degree. Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) teaches film and production through its Department of Media and Communication, and Daffodil International University (DIU) runs a programme in Multimedia and Creative Technology. Outside formal degrees, Pathshala South Asian Media Institute remains one of the most respected names in photography education and also offers diplomas and short professional courses in film and television.

The government-run Bangladesh Cinema and Television Institute (BCTI) and private schools such as the International Academy of Film and Media (IAFM) offer short-term training in filmmaking, editing, screenwriting, and acting.

While looking into the discipline, one of the main questions I had was, how does one go about teaching another person a creative journey? It's not like other subjects that can be practised just through reading theory either. It's largely a practical field that requires you to be taught in the art of making a film.

As such, being a faculty member in such a discipline takes genuine love for both the art itself and teaching. Assistant professor at DU TFP, Saiyeed Shahjada Al Kareem's experience is unique, as he was one of the first graduates of the first-ever batch from the department at DU. He had to face a lot of judgement from society for his subject choice and his career path.

He says, "While studying here, I felt there are two types of people in this industry: those who study films and the art of it, and those who practise the art of filmmaking. There was always a gap between them. People who take too philosophical an angle forget how to create, and those who create tend to think people who aren't doing so don't have the right to judge any form of art. For a subject like this, if you think you will just teach, that would be a misconception. You have to teach students how to create, so you have to stay in touch with your practical skills. Even though I am a faculty member on paper, I am still in tune with my identity as a filmmaker. I am involved with my students' projects, and I know how the industry operates because we often collaborate with it. I still work as an executive producer, writer, and director, which I can then teach my students."

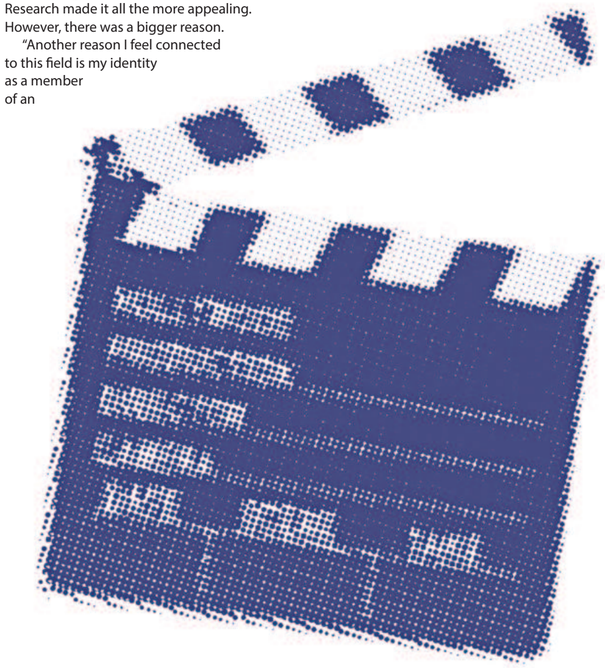
He also mentioned that a lot of students who are currently enrolled in university are already in the industry. Some have even attained recognition, getting their projects shown at different international film festivals.

One of these students is Shakib Hossain, who had one of his documentaries – *Silent Verdict* – selected for Bulgaria's Golden FEMI Film Festival. Rather than being heartbroken about failing to secure a seat at BUET, he decided to follow his childhood dreams and pursue an undergraduate degree in film. Shakib stressed that though he never had any experience with filmmaking, he still made his first short film during his first year at DU, for which he received the departmental award for best director. This was how he realised that the sky is the limit.

Maysainu Marma Lipy, a master's student at JnU's Department of Film and Television, first found the subject through music. Lipy has loved singing since childhood. As such, coming across a degree that offered courses like Music Research made it all the more appealing. However, there was a bigger reason.

"Another reason I feel connected to this field is my identity as a member of an indigenous community," Lipy says. "Our communities have many unique stories, cultures, traditions, and experiences, but they are not always represented from our own perspective in mainstream media." Lipy hopes to one day tell those stories through film. She finds the teachers cooperative and the alumni network fairly strong but feels a lot of it depends on how much initiative you take yourself.

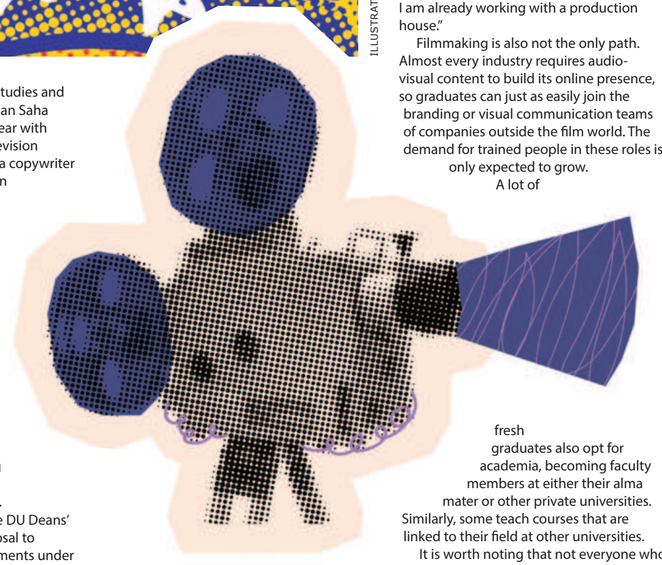
At ULAB, film is one of four majors under the Media Studies and Journalism Department. Anirban Saha Arpon graduated earlier this year with a major in Digital Film and Television Production and now works as a copywriter at Chorki while making his own films on the side. He did, however, express some concerns, claiming that when he joined back in 2022, the media lab didn't have proper or updated equipment. He also alleged that there weren't enough faculty members either, with some students struggling to find a supervisor for their projects. Things have, nonetheless, improved, with newer equipment, a screening room, and more experienced faculty members now in place.



Earlier this year, in June, the DU Deans' Committee discussed a proposal to merge TFP with other departments under the Faculty of Social Sciences, like Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ) and Printing and Publication Studies, into one department. "There is a misconception that MCJ and TFP have the same curriculum," says Saiyeed Shahjada. He explained that TFP is a purely applied field compared to that of mass communication and journalism, stressing that their concentrations are different.

What disheartened him the most is how far behind Bangladesh is in the realm of creativity in the film field. "Right now, we are teaching television, film and photography under the same degree, yet other countries separate film itself into film studies and filmmaking," he elaborates.

Owing to a lack of funding, the department runs on a limited budget, so they cannot give their students much in terms of equipment or scholarships for their productions. A large fraction of that gap is accounted for by collaborations with the industry.



Students pitch their final productions to executives from organisations who are already active players in the film or TV industry, who then help fund or develop the projects they like. The department now works with the industry through both Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and industry-academia collaborations.

Of course, life at TFP isn't only about classes and productions. Like most departments, it has its own clubs, but the one closest to the department's heart is the TFP Film Club. Nafis, an executive member of the club, stated that one of the most fun things they do is screen films every Thursday. "The screening is open to all, and sometimes we bring directors who share their journey with anyone interested in attending," Nafis says. The whole idea is to build a little community of people who simply love watching films.

But the question that probably worries students and parents the most is a simple one: will this actually get me a job? When TFP's first batch started out, the most common question its students faced was simply, "What do you even do?"

More than a decade later, that has changed to some extent. Sifat Rahman, who is currently doing a master's at DU TFP and was cast as Shakil in the *Bonolota Express,* says, "The first question is whether we can actually call the Bangladeshi film sector an 'industry' yet." With little structure and so few cinema halls across 64 districts, it's a fair question to ask. Still, Sifat sees people going back to theatres as a good sign, one that exists because of people who genuinely love cinema and continue making films despite everything. "Studying film in Bangladesh can seem like a risky choice, especially if you expect a guaranteed job after graduation. But opportunities do exist. I have not even finished my studies yet, and I am already working with a production house."

Filmmaking is also not the only path. Almost every industry requires audio-visual content to build its online presence, so graduates can just as easily join the branding or visual communication teams of companies outside the film world. The demand for trained people in these roles is only expected to grow.

A lot of fresh graduates also opt for academia, becoming faculty members at either their alma mater or other private universities. Similarly, some teach courses that are linked to their field at other universities.

It is worth noting that not everyone who gets admitted into these departments has a burning passion for the medium. Like most other departments, some have aspirations outside of the field.

Regardless of whatever it is that students aspire to do, it is vital that there is space for them to pursue and practice it. After all, the urge to tell stories is innate. Perhaps its greatest testament is the students, who persevere even in the face of the many hurdles that persist within the classroom as well as the industry. Though some progress has been made, work remains to be done, for many stories are left to be told.

Reference:
The Daily Star (July 2, 2026). *DU deans discuss proposal to merge eight departments into three.*

Fabiha wishes to sleep the sleep of eternity, yet has to be an active member of society. Give her funny reels at s.fabiha.amreen@gmail.com so that she can soldier on.

OFF CAMPUS

DOES SUFFERING MAKE GREAT ART?

ZARA ZUBAYER

When the app Tumblr was still relevant and a safe space for 11-year-old wannabe writers to encounter quick literature, I came across a poem by Emily Dickinson titled "I Felt a Funeral in My Brain". I remember thinking, "How much grief does a person have to wallow in in order to articulate such words?"

Thomas H Johnson's 1955 biography *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography* established the 1861–1865 window as Dickinson's most creative period in her identity as a poet and that there is a degree of obsession one needs to possess to create such works. Needless to say, I was panicking. Not only was I unsuccessful in being unhappy, but I had also failed to produce any other emotion worth writing about. The critic's words stayed with me as I grew into writing and left one question: to what extent is suffering necessary for great art?

Indeed, there exists a consuming desire — in emotion or way of life — needed to be remarkable, to reach the height of creativity and skill that truly stands out. The blueprints of our music, literature, and theatre have been drawn by devoted figures in history who help us believe so. Writers like Sylvia Plath produced canonical works shaped by intense suffering and grief and helped establish the title of a "tormented writer". While figures like SM Sultan showed immense dedication to their art by choosing a reclusive lifestyle, allowing their environment and solitude to shape their creative practice.

The idea of an obsessed artist is explored numerous times in cinema as well. Movies like *Black Swan* and *Whiplash* show a similar theme of resorting to extremism in order to reach the illusion of perfection. Misery being an antidote for great art has been explored beyond poetry as well. In Imtiaz Ali's *Rockstar*, the character of Khatana Bhai guides the protagonist Jordan towards artistic depths by telling him that pain, *dukh*, is an inherent trait possessed by all great artists. He doesn't refer to light or feigned *dukh* but emphasises that his inner turmoil should be felt through his music. Consequently, Jordan reaches stardom — driven by an obsessive pursuit of love, loss, and emotional extremity.

Morbidly so, I had a sudden appreciation for every song, movie, or story that was a product of sadness or fixation, at times both. Without the fracture of grief, after all, how could we have gotten works like Rabindranath Tagore's *Nastanirh*, or have Mahmoud Darwish write after a tumultuous heartbreak: "Out of my ignorance, I called you a homeland, and I forgot homelands are taken away."

Along with the desire to create work with emotional depth and psychological layers, there is also a fear of remaining ordinary, which often drives this pursuit of intensity. This fear comes from the belief that artistic value is tied to emotional extremity, making it seem like a requirement rather than a choice.

In contradiction, it also raises the question: does joy not make a meaningful contribution as well, compared to *dukh*? Not all creative work comes from pain, of course, and not every piece requires grief-heavy metaphors. However, it is in human nature to seek solace in the arts, with pain often becoming a prerequisite for understanding love and loss. It reveals a paradox that suffering, while painful in life, often becomes a source of pleasure in art. We feel seen in certain songs or stories, and the experience of relating to them brings relief, or what I'm fond of calling *sukoon*, the Arabic word for peace and tranquillity.

Ultimately, suffering and obsession may not be the sole requirements of great creative work, but they remain powerful forces in shaping it. Such memorable creations give a canvas to unsaid, unrequited, and buried feelings. It allows us to make sense of the intensity of human experiences and at times, helps turn them into something bearable. Perhaps that is why such works stay with us long after we encounter them, because they give form to what we often struggle to express ourselves.

Zara Zubayer is a half-pianist, occasional grandma (she knits), and a collector of instruments she never learns. Suggest a new hobby she won't commit to at @ zarazubayer1@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION: **AZRA HUMAYRA**

MENTAL HEALTH

Rethinking what we mean by good mental health



ILLUSTRATION: **AZRA HUMAYRA**

SHEIKH FABIHA AMREEN

I was recently reading a memoir named *I Want to Die but I Want to Eat Tteokbokki*, the South Korean writer Baek Se-hee's record of her therapy sessions with her psychiatrist. It was pleasant enough, but I still had an unnerving feeling, and to make sure I wasn't just overthinking it, I went on to the sequel, *I Want to Die but I Still Want to Eat Tteokbokki,* and that bothersome feeling actually gave way to a harsh truth about mental health.

In the sequel, Baek is clearly burning out as a result of working in a very toxic environment. She talked to her psychiatrist about wanting to quit her job. Yet her psychiatrist never brought up the possibility of her taking a break nor validated her feeling that she was indeed going through burnout. Rather, they kept pressuring the author into admitting that she was making a mistake and that she shouldn't even consider leaving her job, as she was in a good position with quite a few years under her belt; she most definitely shouldn't leave this job to pursue her writing career, even though it was making her absolutely miserable. Thankfully, the author made her own decision, quit, and went on to write this very book.

Sadly, this phenomenon I read about isn't that uncommon, and it is the productivity-and-societal-expectation pitfall of diagnosing mental illness. It's difficult for people to comprehend that high-functioning people with active social lives can be mentally ill. However, when you are having a bad day and aren't living up to the standard imposed on you, the tables turn.

This creates a rigged sort of test, one where you have to be unwell enough to be believed but never so unwell that you stop being useful. Slip on either side of that line, and someone appoints themselves your diagnostician. Perform competence for long enough, apparently, and even your own psychiatrist will start treating your seniority at a job as more clinically relevant than your burnout.

The psychologist Corey Keyes gave that space a name: "languishing". Not flourishing, not in crisis; just stalled in the middle. His point was that a person can be free of any diagnosable disorder and still be running on empty. Languishing is what that looks like from the inside: low energy, low interest, and a flatness that no screening tool picks up, because screening tools are built to catch dysfunction, not a dimmer switch turned halfway down.

Sadly, that is precisely where the pitfall lies. Our healthcare system responds to crises by default. So even if someone is languishing, as long as they seem to be coping and managing their responsibilities, their need for help is, more often than not, ignored.

This is also precisely the blind spot researchers have started naming as "high-functioning depression", arguing for its clinical recognition. It reveals that the traits that get rewarded at work or at home – reliability, ambition, and the instinct to push through – are more often than not the same traits that hide distress from the people near and dear to them. Doctors take these as competence, and so do family, friends, and employers.

None of this actually gives people an outlet to get treatment for themselves, though. When people finally decide to do something about how they're feeling, the decision is rarely only about themselves. Often, underneath it, is the sense that they've become an inconvenience to a partner, a family, or a friend group that has started to sound tired on the phone. Researchers have a term for this too: "perceived burdensomeness", the belief that you've become a burden for significant others who would honestly be better off without you. It sits inside a wider architecture of self-stigma, the internalised sense that needing help in the first place makes you weak, which research has linked to people dropping out of treatment early once they've started.

It's worth saying plainly that perceived burdensomeness isn't just an unpleasant feeling to note in passing. In a study on a brief intervention to target perceived burdensomeness in clinic-referred youth, researchers studying suicide risk treat it as one of the more consistent predictors of suicidal ideation, which is a reason the distinction between getting help for yourself and getting help to stop bothering other people matters more than it might sound like it should.

As I said before, people who function well in their lives are not thought to have mental health issues, but that's mostly because nobody around them was looking for the problem to begin with. I don't think the fix here is a new diagnosis. It's a lower bar for noticing: permission to check on someone before they've stopped functioning enough for it to count.

References:

1. BJPsych Bulletin (2025). *High-functioning depression: a hidden burden demanding clinical recognition.*
2. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior (2022). *Brief modular approach to target perceived burdensomeness in clinic-referred youth.*

Fabiha is going to put herself in time out for trying to juggle so many things as though she were part and parcel of a circus party. Give her juggling tips at s.fabiha.amreen@gmail.com

OFF CAMPUS

THE COMPLEXITIES OF SIBLING DYNAMICS

TASFIAH LIAKAT

Sibling relationships force two opposing emotions to coexist — the same person can feel like your greatest ally and your greatest enemy.

Siblings are your first playmates, first rivals, first accomplices, first bullies, fiercest defenders, and sneakiest snitches. They know how to get under your skin faster than anyone else in the world, how to embarrass you, and how to make you miserable. Yet, you've also shared whispered conversations huddled under the covers in the dark, birthday celebrations, month-long family vacations, and an entire childhood.

Sibling rivalry often grows out of competition for finite resources inside a family — primarily, parents' attention, approval, and affection. Specifically, perceiving unequal treatment can strain sibling relationships well into adulthood.

According to the late psychologist Dorothy Rowe, childhood clashes serve a psychological purpose. In *My Dearest Enemy, My Dangerous Friend: Making and Breaking Sibling Bonds*, Rowe noted, "Siblings may scream insults at one another, or exchange heavy blows, or destroy each other's possessions. Such fights are bitter and vicious, necessarily so because each sibling is fighting for survival as a person."

This fight for individual survival can force siblings to take completely different paths. Judy Dunn, a developmental psychologist, explains in *Separate Lives: Why Siblings Are So Different* that siblings work out early on what aspects of the other's personality make the other a success and then try to make themselves as different as possible. The more time they spend in the same family, the more different they get. As Dunn puts it, "You try and secure your own identity not by emulating a sibling, but by reacting against them. You become an individual by not being your brother or sister."

Tasnim Rodoshi Hassan, the elder of two, doesn't sugarcoat what that looked like in their household. "We were absolutely awful to each other growing up," Tasnim shares. "We fought over everything — the TV remote, whose turn it was to use the family phone, who took whose stuff without asking, or who got the bigger portion during meals."

The disputes, Tasnim acknowledges, look small, silly, and petty now — but not at the time. "Looking back, all our arguments sound so ridiculous that I feel embarrassed talking about them. At the time, though, every single one felt like a matter of principle."

Tasnim remembers the school mornings with something akin to horror. "One of us would lock the bathroom to do our hair, and the other would be outside, screaming and frantically ramming the door."

Nothing was ever fully resolved or forgiven. It was stored away to be leveraged later. "We mentally kept score of everything the other did, and whenever we started a new argument, we'd always end up bringing up things that had happened three years earlier," Tasnim recalls.

Even mutual silence wasn't peaceful; rather, it was fraught with tension. "We'd spend entire car rides refusing to acknowledge each other's presence, then get into a row over whose elbow had crossed an imaginary line five minutes later," Tasnim continues.

Tasnim believes that at the root of it all was constant proximity to each other and what she'd perceived as blatant favouritism. "The problem was that we had to share everything — our room, our food, our parents' attention, even the air we breathed," Tasnim admits. "I couldn't stand how much my parents babied her. She could get away with things I never could, and she wasn't expected to obey the rules the way I was. She'd throw a tantrum, and my parents would give in to her demands — regardless of how unreasonable they were."

People offered Tasnim well-meaning reassurances, but they failed to make her feel better: "Adults kept insisting we'd outgrow and laugh about it someday, and it only made me more furious back then."

Tasnim wasn't wrong to be sceptical of their words. What actually made things better wasn't that the two of them had managed to work through the underlying issues—it was moving out. "We don't really fight as much anymore," Tasnim concedes, "and yes, it's simply because we don't live together for most of the year."

For Nusaiba Binte Asad, the elder of two, the mend didn't happen with distance but time — her relationship with her brother improved through the mutual understanding that comes with growing up.

Nusaiba describes years of antagonism from her brother: "Growing up, we were worlds apart, despite being close in age. He would constantly annoy me, ruin my things, and treat everything as a joke. I could never trust him with a secret because it would immediately reach our parents, and cause things to escalate."

The circumstances improved once he started college, and, in Nusaiba's words, "he became more empathetic and emotionally aware." Nusaiba adds, "Today, our relationship is completely different. We share things I never imagined we would, and if there's a disagreement at home, he'll speak up to back me up. If I have a problem, I know he'll listen instead of dismissing it. For us, sibling love wasn't immediate — it was something we grew into when we finally learned to see each other as complete human beings."

Not all siblings can reach reconciliation. Farha Fauzia, the youngest of three, and her eldest brother have never gotten along, and there's no single incident that accounts for it.

"People always assume there must've been one massive fight that we're still holding a grudge over, but there wasn't," Farha shares. "He just has this uncanny ability to bring out the absolute worst version of me, dragging me back in time to our younger years. Just being in his vicinity makes me easily irritated, defensive, and more reactive. I start recalling past grievances and replaying old arguments."

What frustrates Farha most is the consensus that blood alone should outweigh all of that. Farha wholeheartedly disagrees. "People always say, 'But he's your family.' But I don't believe that family should get a free pass to disrupt your life. Just because we share DNA doesn't mean I owe him a place in my life."

Farha has come to terms with the fact that she and her eldest brother simply don't work. "Accepting that we are fundamentally incompatible — and that it's okay to protect my peace of mind by staying away — was the most freeing thing I've ever done. I genuinely wish him well, for sure, but I also wish him far away from me."

Put side by side, these three accounts don't fit into the single narrative that most of us were raised on: Sibling fights are just a childhood phase; it could well be. Sometimes, however, it hardens into real, lasting dislike.

Whether these relationships end in carefully maintained distance, hard-won reconciliation, or even estrangement, acknowledging the darker side of the bond is essential. Only by recognising that resentment, just as much as love, can we truly understand the full, complex reality of what it means to be a sibling.



PHOTO: **SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED**

References:

1. Basic Books (1990). *Separate Lives: Why Siblings Are So Different.*
2. Routledge (2007). *My Dearest Enemy, My Dangerous Friend: Making and Breaking Sibling Bonds.*