ANNA CHANDY
ON HOW TO ASK FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP

MEETA SENGUPTA
ON THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

GRACE PINTO
ON LESSONS FROM 2020

GET READY FOR THE Gig Economy
Why e-Learning is the future

15-MINUTE YOGA

PLUS HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR VOCATIONAL SUBJECT
Uncertainty is the mother of invention. I firmly believe that. COVID-19 has given us all an opportunity to reassess our strengths and weaknesses.

For Generation Z which has fortunately seen only the best of times so far, it is a moment to realise that they have to live with the new normal, whether it is observing strict hygiene protocols while meeting or using online classes while learning.

That’s not all. The world of work has changed enormously. But I would urge youngsters to approach it from a place of confidence, not fear. I am sure all of you have seen Sholay and remember the famous dialogue, Jo darr gaya woh marr gaya. Sure it’s a bit exaggerated, but it is also true. That’s why in this issue of Teen Community, we have focused on the opportunities in adversity; in the light at the end of the tunnel.

We’ve got lots of fresh ideas for you, from how to prepare yourself for the gig economy of the future to how to choose the right course in Artificial Intelligence. We’ve got one of the country’s finest education experts to dissect the National Education Policy and what it means for the future—multiple choices, multidisciplinary campuses and multiple chances. And we’ve also got an article on how to choose your vocational subject in the new curriculum that is being framed.

We also understand the importance of balance of mind, body and soul, something yoga teaches us. So from 15-minute yoga exercises to the first steps towards Vipassana, from quick quizzes to words of wisdom, from what to watch to what to read, come, plunge into our world, stay a while, and replenish yourselves.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your engagement. Please keep reading us, sending us your feedback and telling us what you think. You know you’ve got a friend in us. A friend for life.

Dear Teens,

EDITOR’S NOTE

Children’s Community Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that is developing a platform to bring together children, parents, teachers, schools and childcare professionals under one umbrella. It is supported by a team of internationally renowned professionals and parents with significant knowledge and expertise in the field of children and their families. The Foundation will act as an independent voice on the national and international stage for child protection, child development, research, education and parenting support. CCF and its members will work together as a community towards a future where children have the best start in life and even better prospects for their future. CCF will tenaciously pursue its mission without fear, favour or compromise and to continually ensure that the best interests, human rights and protection of the child are placed before all other considerations. We achieve our mission by combining the power of education, campaigning and developing innovative projects and services, to create change from top-down and bottom-up.

Children’s Community Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that is developing a platform to bring together children, parents, teachers, schools and childcare professionals under one umbrella. It is supported by a team of internationally renowned professionals and parents with significant knowledge and expertise in the field of children and their families. The Foundation will act as an independent voice on the national and international stage for child protection, child development, research, education and parenting support. CCF and its members will work together as a community towards a future where children have the best start in life and even better prospects for their future. CCF will tenaciously pursue its mission without fear, favour or compromise and to continually ensure that the best interests, human rights and protection of the child are placed before all other considerations. We achieve our mission by combining the power of education, campaigning and developing innovative projects and services, to create change from top-down and bottom-up.

Our portal (www.childrenscommunity.in) is packed with information, practical advice and loads of fun stuff! It is going to be a premier resource guide relevant to our strengths and weaknesses. Teen Community is a publication of Children’s Community Foundation trust. Charity registration no: 1839.

This disclaimer is to inform readers that the views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the author and are not necessarily to the editorial team, organisation, or anyone member of the publication board or anyone else’s. Photographs and graphics are only representational.

Copyright for the entire contents of the magazine is held by Teen Community and no article may, in part or whole, be published elsewhere without giving relevant credit. Information in Teen Community magazine is from sources Teen Community believes are reliable. Neither Teen Community nor its authors and editors guarantee the accuracy of any information published herein. Neither Teen Community nor its authors and editors will be responsible for omissions, errors or claims for damages including exemplary damages arising out of use or inability to use or the accuracy of information published herein. The authors, publisher, editorial and design teams and board are not responsible for any injury or accident resulting from use of materials herein.

October 2020 Teencommunity
COVERAGE STORY
THE GIRL ECONOMY

Author Gyan Nagpal explains how to get ready for the uncertainty of living with a gig economy.

THE ENVIRONMENT CRISIS EVERYONE MISSED

Cigarette butts are one of the biggest contributors to garbage. Here’s what to do to handle this environmental crisis.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

Education expert Meeta Sengupta on the benefits of the new National Education Policy for students.

HOW THEY DID IT: FOUR YOUNG RULE BREAKERS ON THEIR SUCCESS

Aditi Pai profiles four rule breakers on how they made it, from breaking records in competitive sports, to writing novels at 12, to teaching Indian mythology to classmates.

ONLINE WORLD

26 THE RISE OF CYBER CLASSROOMS

How digital learning is changing the world by Alisha Sen

FIVE BOOKS EVERYONE MUST READ

Author and singer Anmol Malik shares her joy growing up joys

BETTER LIVING

YOU’RE NOT ALONE

The first step is to ask for help says counsellor Anna Chandy. Break the stigma of mental illness and shatter the taboo of depression.

FIRST STEPS TO VIPASSANA

What makes this way of meditation unique. Enrol yourself and find out, says author Gayatri Jayaraman

PET PAMPERING

Author and economist Dhiraj Nayar on what makes his dog, Dali, so lovable.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a fountainhead of knowledge and custodian of liberty. Here are her lasting quotes.

FUNKY FACTS ON FOOTBALL

From Pele to Ronaldo to Messi, match your wits with some interesting football facts

THE LAST WORD

What makes 2020 so different. Grace Pinto of Ryan International tells us.

COVER STORY
THE GIRL ECONOMY

Author Gyan Nagpal explains how to get ready for the uncertainty of living with a gig economy.
EDUCATION & CAREER | NEW POLICY

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

Things you need to know

BY MEETA SENGUPTA

Multiple Choices
Multidisciplinary Campuses
Multiple Chances
A whiff of freedom is the plan, or at least the hope that we have of the New Education Policy. It’s a very clever document in parts because it fights the battle against rote learning with a pincer move. It is even more interesting when one realises that for the first time, it is the student that is at the centre of the conversation - and the entire policy is devoted to giving more choices and more chances to the student.

Multiple choices start not just from secondary school onwards, where the concept of streams has been abolished and all subjects made equal. This means that students can choose any combination they like with no forced combinations. By choosing subjects of one's interest, talent and potential is important at this stage for us to understand what we like, can succeed at versus what we may like but do not have much potential in that area. This is useful to helping us choose our careers and hobbies, and more than that, gives us a chance to identify areas where we may do well easily, or may have to work harder to reach our goals. The choice still remains with the students, as well as the chance to try out a subject and build a foundation in it. This base can be useful for higher education, but the NEP could have done better and recognise life long education options too. Many of us will work in the gig economy, or would like to switch careers after a while, where the opportunity to retrain and upskill ourselves should have been given importance in the policy. This is especially true for the less advantaged, where if you’ve not had many opportunities in your childhood, there should be more chances later in life.

Multiple Choices are served in the policy by giving more opportunities to take examinations. And in higher education, if you have to drop out, you can come back within a reasonable time and continue.

A modular approach to learning allows students to construct their own pathways into useful lives and careers and it starts all the way from early years, and into middle school where discovery, exploration and critical thinking are the recommended learning mores. The biggest critique of the NEP is that it is impractical, but one only has to look at the pockets of excellence in the country that have already achieved learning beyond rote thinking. Not all of these are in rich schools, and now the policy exhorts all learning to aim for application. It also understands that merely asking students to change is not going to make it happen. So, not only will teacher upskilling, pedagogy training and of course instruction by circular happen, but the NEP also has pincered this by working on assessments. The board exam questions are now to be application based, and will not test for rote learning. This means that teaching all the way down will have to move away from mere memorisation of facts and towards meaning. Those who have allowed creativity and critical thinking in middle school will find it easier to teach for application at secondary school, and this is what will ace the board examination.

There are more changes mooted in assessment. There is a voluntary exam that has been started after school and before university that is intended to be an alternate pathway to entry into most universities. This exam has the potential to bypass the different standards of the various boards, and maybe even calibrate board marks so that there is one score that applies across the country. Other improvements such as testing for the system, not individual student performance by anonymising results before analysing tests are also recommended by the NEP.

The National Education Policy is an agreed shared vision offered by consultation with people and experts, and agreed by the government. And while it offers us the chance to work towards our potential via education, it also throws out a challenge to us to make it happen. The challenge not only goes out to implementors and planners, it goes out to institutes and teachers too, but most of all to students because it’s good is based on a bedrock of trust and truth. It may be easy to buy a working model to show discovery learning, but then the only person cheated of learning is the student. And the system slips back to dumb rote. The only way the NEP will work if each of us becomes a champion for better learning.

Meeta Sengupta is an Advisor, Speaker and Writer on Education. She tweets at @meetasengupta and @aanteladda and @meetasengupta

Multidisciplinary campuses proposed by the NEP are another support mechanism for the student quest to find their groove. With a wide range of learning accessible within walking distance, on the same campus, students can actually learn from peers and professors outside of their core areas too, and thus find creative intersections and innovations.
When the Covid lockdown hit the travel industry, Rupa Kanwar, 24, suddenly found herself without a job. She used to work as a sweeper at Bengaluru international airport. When she was told that her services would no longer be needed, for the longest time she could not figure out an alternate source of income. Her husband, who worked at a furniture showroom, had saved enough money for the family to manage for a few months. “I have one child. We both earned money because we want him to attend a good school. By May, we were running out of money to pay for his fees,” she says. One day, a group of volunteers arrived at the slum where Kanwar and her family lived and began handing out cloth masks. Kanwar, who was literate, was shocked to find the price on each mask marked as Rs 50. “I knew how to stitch and my husband was a good salesperson. So we began to tear up my old clothes, I stitched them and he sold them at the local market for Rs 20 each,” adds Kanwar. Eventually, the couple increased the price to Rs 40 and bought better quality cloth. Recalling her days in school, Kanwar says, “My studies had no impact on me. I learned how to read and write but that by itself will not bring me money. I didn’t learn any skills in school. Today, I am able to earn only because I had one skill which I learned from my mother.”

Vocational skills can lead to an instant job, like in the case of Kanwar. However, for decades such education has been neglected in the country, both in policy and society. Even though India has the youngest population in the world and several studies have noted the economic potential of those who are trained in upper secondary vocational education, vocational learning still does not garner the kind of interest as mainstream curriculum. “It is looked down upon or not understood properly. School means books, not working with artists, gardens, or woodwork. When in fact, learning...
is not restricted to text. There are various ways to learn. Students should be able to learn what appeals to them,” says Dinesh Singh, chancellor of KR Mangalam University and former vice chancellor of Delhi University.

After 34 years of focusing on bringing more people to schools and improving the quality of secondary education, the National Education Policy (NEP) has now recognised that it is time to rethink the manner in which we learn and what we learn. The policy is now emphasising on learning outcomes, assessment reforms and foundational learning. The most important step towards achieving this has been a strong push for vocational education to be integrated alongside mainstream education. “In the past few years, India has made huge progress in terms of accessibility to education - there is universal enrollment in primary schools, and 80 per cent enrollment in class 9th and 10th. The new policy is disruptive and is starting an important conversation about learning outcomes,” says Ashish Bhawan, founder- chairman of Central Square Foundation and chairman of Ashoka University.

The NEP states that the policy aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education by integrating it with mainstream education in a “phased manner.” This will be done by the creation of a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF), which will be coordinated by the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). This integration between mainstream and vocational learning has been planned for classes 6-8. It will include 10 ‘bagless days’ when students will be enrolled in short-term internships with indigenous artists, crafts-people, gardeners, carpenters, tailors and blue-collar professionals. Atleast 50 per cent of students should have exposure to one vocational, notes the policy. It adds that such internships will also improve the dignity of labour, something which India lacks severely in. “My parents were shocked when I said I wanted to start my own furniture store. After having sent me to school they thought I would become an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer, but a carpenter? They didn’t speak to me for weeks. Now I earn more than what I would have as an engineer,” recalls Madhav Rangarajan, who runs his own furniture store in Chennai. He studied his bachelor’s in woodwork at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. “In Europe, working as a carpenter, metal artist, electrician or a plumber is actually applauded. Money and respect is given to labour. In India, there is no social dignity nor any economic justice,” adds Rangarajan, who runs his own furniture store in Chennai. He studied his bachelors in woodwork at the University of Delhi Public School in Noida.

For students, however, the idea of ‘bagless days’ is nothing short of exciting. “I would like to start my own jewellery business. A few years ago, I saw artists making necklaces in Jaipur and I wanted to learn with them. I enjoy going to school but I am not interested in history or science. I like making things such as jewellery or pottery. Art class is my favourite,” says 13-year-old Ruhi Kaur (name changed), a student of Delhi Public School in Noida.

Teachers, on the other hand, feel that students and parents have to see the learning value of vocational training and not simply treat it as an ‘activity’ or ‘break from regular school’. Many suggest holding special workshops on vocational jobs to help parents understand the job opportunities in the market. “Vocational education is also education. That shift in mindset to happen for it to be treated seriously,” says Rangarajan.

Earlier this year, a report by the ILO suggested that 53% of India’s youth was not recruited in 2019 because of a gap in skills. Given this shortfall in supply, the NEP’s push for vocational training is to be applauded. However, givers and students to balance between classrooms and internships will take time and sustained effort. Those in the field recommend reinforcing the economic value of a school degree, ensuring classroom assessments and learning is not compromised on by creating an environment of fun and discipline within schools.

To do so

1. Reinforce the economic value of a school degree to ensure children don’t dropout for an ‘instant’ job after learning a vocational subject.
2. Educate parents on the job opportunities in the vocational market.
3. Incorporate student and parent feedback.
4. Making the delivery of education (both mainstream and vocational) interesting by keeping in mind individual needs of students.
5. Allow students to choose the path of learning that appeals to them, those who wish to focus more on vocational skills, should have the chance to do so.
GIGGING as a career choice

By Gyan Nagpal
Charles Dickens opened his 1859 masterpiece, *The Tale of Two Cities*, with an immortal idea: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.”

Life often feels this way. Having too much choice sometimes feels as debilitating as having too little. And no one sees this “paradox of choice” clearer than a young adult faced with what seem to be career-defining choices. At this stage, choosing between a full-time job or a career as a gig-worker can seem like extreme or opposite choices. However, the circumstances driving both these forms of work are in fact rapidly converging, and there are three main trends which are creating a whole new world of work:

1. **FREELANCE TALENT IS RAPIDLY BECOMING A STRATEGIC CHOICE FOR MANY COMPANIES**


   In this spectrum, Network Capability represents business to business arrangements, Internal Capability represents the army of traditional “full-time” employers within a business, and External Capability represents an array of high-quality gig workers available to modern business. This ranges from expensive agency-managed talent, to project-based freelancers, all the way to crowdsourced talent like the micro-entrepreneurs employed by Uber of Amazon. Taken together I call this entire group The Human Cloud. Made up of nearly 200 million on last count, this fast maturing source of gig-friendly talent is now made of some of the smartest experts in their field.

2. **BOTH JOBS AND GIGS TODAY ARE PRIMARILY ABOUT CREATING A “VALUE EXCHANGE”**

   In the industrial age, which lasted close to 200 years, the concept of work was essentially an exchange of “time for money”: for example, you gave up 45 hours a week to work a pre-determined shift and received a monthly salary in return. The digital age, however, is very different. Time is no longer the operating construct. It is value.

   Future employment is best construed as a “Value Exchange”. What this means is that, at work, a worker must first create undisputed value for customers, shareholders or your colleagues, and only then expect some of that value in return in the form of compensation. Thus, work isn’t about turning up anymore, it is about solving problems and innovating. In addition, modern practices like flexi-work, remote working, and agile projects are all making work less about time or place, and more about impact. As a direct consequence, several of the differentiating characteristics between long-term employment (jobs) and short-term employment (gigs) are less pronounced these days, thereby levelling the playing field for value-creation and value-exchange.

3. **THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) WILL DISRUPT BOTH PERMANENT JOBS AND GIG-WORKING ALIKE**

   Let me start by clarifying that I don’t see intelligent machines as the enemy. By taking many basic, rudimentary, repetitive and routine jobs away from people, AI actually leaves human talent more time for creative thinking and problem solving. Going forward, it is best to imagine the relationship between humans and intelligent machines as a powerful partnership. With machines employed to do work, which is too repetitive or rudimentary for human intelligence, too dangerous for human well-being or too complex for human time.
Human capability, on the other hand, has always excelled at fashioning such machines, creating meaning from the unfamiliar and in imaginative pursuits.

What this means in practice, is that while many routine-heavy jobs and many basic gigs today will indeed vanish; they will be replaced by new and creative ways for human talent to add value, over and above what machines can do. These new occupations may not always come back as old-fashioned jobs.

So, as we can see above, gigging will be an increasingly popular and powerful mainstream career choice for coming generations. However, for those among us who are curious about gigging as an early career choice: either for the freedom it provides, as an antidote to boredom and routine or perhaps because we know freelancers who seem to be “living the life”, here is a list of ten strategies, competencies or considerations which will help you succeed at gig working.

1. Be clear about your motivations
This is because every decision involves a set of trade-offs, and being clear about your choices is the first step to making the most out of them. As an example, let’s process the notion that “a life of gig working allows us more freedom”.

At a high level, this is true to some extent: as gig-workers do seem to have greater “schedule flexibility” to plan their day. However, in practice, there are several other factors that impinge on our sense of freedom. Not being able to predict workload, an inability to switch off during busy periods or moving from one strenuous project to another without adequate rest can also lead to people feeling trapped. By the workload or delivery schedule in this case, as opposed to a job or a manager. The first step to success, therefore, lies in being clear about your motivations for gigging.

2. Discover your passion and monetise it
One way to manage the pressures of gig working is to closely align your business with work that you innately love doing. This makes the work itself feel like play. But it isn’t just important to align with your passions, you must be able to monetise your effort too, i.e. it must be something others want and are willing to pay an acceptable price for. This is the sweet-spot for any freelance worker.

The Japanese have a word for this, which has become fashionable in the west recently – Ikigai. Your “Ikigai” (or reason for being) signifies a perfect balance between your body or work emerges, over time, as distinct and recognisable. This helps you command a premium over others, stand out in a project pitch or even achieve the holy grail for any freelancer: have hundreds of clients specifically seek you out.

4. Learn how to say NO
This is a lot tougher than it sounds, especially if you are young and starting out. But learning this early could make the difference between success and failure. Because nothing kills a career faster than unhappy clients. Learn to walk away from business you cannot deliver (an acceptable level of quality) on. It’s the same with timelines you cannot meet.

5. Build your brand
Recent advances in digital and social infrastructure allows you to proactively reach out and find customers, find your tribe, build your reputation, and even scale your business. The quality of your digital footprint matters, and there are several ways to grow your brand. For example, answering questions and solving problems others face (on sites like Stack Overflow), can help you build reputation and become a certified rock-star in your field of work. Blogging and writing is another way to ensure people can appreciate your ideas, talent, and potential for great contribution.

6. Build your ecosystem
There is an African proverb that reads “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Gigging can be lonely work if done alone. Most successful gig workers have built strong communities of practice around them, by banding together with others who possess complementary skills. By collaborating, it is possible to enhance both your network and capabilities, in quick time.

7. Find the right platforms that can help you grow
In the technology business, sites like Toptal, Crossover, 10X, Crew, or Scalable Path (and others like them), are gold-mines for clients looking for urgent professional support. These networks are known for having pre-vetted or top-contingent talent. Toptal, for example, only accepts candidates into its talent pool after they pass interviews, technical exams and a live demonstration of skill in a test project environment. Likewise, in the advertising business, Tongal’s 12,000 strong creative community make it a powerhouse in an age of fast-paced social marketing. And a potent weapon in an industry constantly searching for the next quick and topical Twitter or Instagram campaign to go viral.

8. Be disciplined
Working without a manager requires strong self-structure and excellent execution skills. The best way to self-manage your way to success is to set good boundaries (and rhythms) at work and stick to them with the zeal of a drill sergeant. This also includes ring-fencing personal time, holidays, exercise and other ways you recharge or relax.

9. Be courageous
Entrepreneurship is a roller coaster and it takes courage to ride the inevitable ups and downs along the way. It is also important to stay on course, particularly when things are not looking up. It always helps if all your eggs aren’t in one basket at the start, and it is smart to ease into gigging if possible: for example, gig while you are still studying to learn the ropes.

10. Protect your happiness
I left this for the end for very good reason. I have a formula which served me well during my many years as a gig worker. It was happiness = authenticity – expectation + self-worth. In practice, this helped me anchor to three enabling beliefs:

a. It is important to be true to yourself, in the pursuit of a well-balanced business and personal life.

b. Success and failure are no more than momentary encounters. Both help us reinforce learnings, gain insights and grow as professionals.

c. By enjoying the journey as much as the destination, we get to experience the gigging experience as a fantastic adventure.

On his 18th birthday in December 2019, Aditya Choudhary won himself a gift he greatly coveted for several years—the title of the world’s youngest Ironman. He had completed the highly intensive three-pronged sports competition of swimming for 1.9 km, cycling for 40 km and running for 21 km, all within a time period of six hours and five minutes. “I prepared for it with absolute dedication while balancing my studies. I sacrificed by social life and food cravings because I knew I had to achieve this,” says the second year student of BSc at Mumbai’s NMIMS University. The idea to participate in this race struck him during a visit to sports injury specialist Dr Mihir Patki’s clinic in 2014 with his father. Here he met an Ironman who had made a record as the world’s oldest person to win the competition at the age of 55 years. “At that time, I realized that I had six years to prepare to be able to participate since the minimum age is 18 years,” says Choudhary.

He trained under the guidance of Dr Patki who put him through rigorous fitness and strength building schedules which started at 5 am and went on for several hours. On weekends, he would train for up to seven hours a day. To save travel time, Choudhary moved from his family home in Worli to an all-vegetarian hostel close to college where he had to sneak in eggs to meet his dietary requirements. He would wake up at dawn and boil a dozen eggs to escape getting noticed but was caught thrice. “Finally, my friend offered to bring me a dozen boiled eggs everyday and I would then eat those,” he says.

Overcoming odds
While Choudhary had been an avid swimmer as a student of Balmohan Vidya Mandir, two surgeries had led to a break in any competitive sports. He regained his strength and stamina with regular training and won two gold medals in the annual swimming competition at NSCI while training for Ironman. He would go to Lonavala with his father and Dr Patki and cycle through the ghats to build his strength. Being a student of science also meant that he had to attend college regularly. “For several months, I gave up movies, television, meeting friends and any recreation and followed a very strict diet,” he says. The sacrifice paid off when he made history as the world’s youngest Ironman 70.3. Choudhary has now set his sight on the next level of the race, Ironman 140.6 and continues his basic training at his farm during the lockdown. “Once gyms and pools reopen, I shall resume more rigorous training,” he says.

From making records in the world of competitive sports to starting businesses and from writing novels at the age of 12 to teaching Indian philosophy and mythology to classmates, these four teenagers are achieving new personal highs at an age when most others spend their time enjoying campus life.
Instead of listening to fairy tales, starting young with contemporary issues.

From ancient texts and match them to score high ranks in competitive exams. The Class 12 student has helped take the burden and stress off many of her classmates. “This simple lesson, she says, “but leave the results to me,” she says.

Bhagwad Gita, that do your best is what we want. But we must realize that the youth faces has a solution in our ancient texts. We just need to read and understand it,” says the student of psychology.

Anusha Subramaniam describes her first book, Heirs of Catriona, published when she was only 12 years old, as a “happy consequence of a phase” of reading voraciously and then foraying into the world of writing. “I was always kept happily supplied with a steady influx of fiction to read and like any other growing child, I had various genre phases. At the time that I began to indulge in writing, I was going through my ‘fantasy and mythology’ phase with Percy Jackson, Narnia and Harry Potter, after devouring ‘detective novels’ such as Nancy Drew, Agatha Christie and Famous Five,” says Anusha Subramaniam.

In her debut venture, written over a period of one year, she tells the story of two girls, Sara and Crystal, who live in the fantasy world of Catriona and the book follows their journey that unfolds as they discover their true parentage and their consequent quest to bring justice to Catrina. “I used to exclaim excitedly every time I finished writing the next 1000 words because at that time, it was a huge accomplishment for me,” she says.

Subramaniam recollects that writing a book at the age of 12 was “actually quite surreal” for it required immense motivation, discipline and commitment. “I realized that I actually really liked writing and creating characters and living vicariously through the worlds I create. It was novel and exciting and a very defining experience of my life,” she says.

While as a young writer she didn’t have the expectations of older authors, she did face the ‘writer’s block’ for months. “I was overwhelmed at first — a nice way to disappear when I’ve had a bad day or school or some kind of a fight since middle school is often quite dramatic,” she recalls. Subramaniam’s writing is prompted by a desire to “drive discourse on a variety of topics”, to share and understand various different perspectives and also attempt to change people’s lives with words. She wants to make people ‘feel’ complex things, even if it’s just for a moment.

Now a student of the University of California, Berkeley where she is studying Molecular and Cellular Biology with an emphasis on genetics, Subramaniam followed up her debut book with a young adult novel titled Never Gone that released in 2016 when she was 16 years old. The book explores the complexities of friendships, relationships and happiness in times of great loss in a group of eight teenagers after a personal tragedy. “I had an incredible time fleshing out different characters and seeing the world through their eyes and through eight different perspectives,” she says.

Subramaniam says that the process of getting published involved effort in getting senior editors to take her seriously and not dismiss her opinion as childish. “Usually publishers and editors would want to deal directly with my parents or when I didn’t approve of some edit or cover or illustration, they would check once again with my parents to see if they could approve it instead of me,” she says.

When she was still in Class 7, Uditi Mittle printed out self designed notebooks for her class work and sent out her first batch of Nutella jars with personalized labels. The collection was an instant hit among her family and friends and she started accepting orders for customized gifts. Buoyed by the appreciation she got, Mittle started her own company, Chic Creations, in 2018 to design gifts. The self-taught designer says that she was always inclined towards graphic design and learnt Corel Draw and other designing techniques by watching the people in her father’s advertising firm. Growing up in a family where creative work was always around her with her father’s advertising agency and her mother’s jewellery label, Mittle was inspired to combine her design abilities and business acumen to set up her own brand at the age of 16. “I have always been interested in both, designing and business because of my parents,” she says.

Now a first year student at IISME School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Mittle had her first brush with exhibitions and orders as a student of Hillspring International School in Mumbai where she sold more than 200 personalised notebooks during a fair on campus. She continued designing notebooks and weekly planners and soon started accepting orders for corporate gifting hamper. Mittle’s Chic Creations now makes personalized luggage tags, passport holders and planners. Her notebooks with names printed on the cover have won her clients from Raigad and Chennai. For now, she designs entrepreneurs and companies and customizes labels for Nutella jars and chocolate sauce bottles and a stationery collection for a “Drake Ian”. Mittle makes stationery sets with names and personalized messages which are popular as gift hampers. “Most people want gifts for rakhi, birthdays and as back presents,” she says.

Uditi Mittle started her first business at the age of 12. Her first customised gifting label was for a friend’s birthday party. After graduation in 2018 to design gifts. The self-taught designer says that she was always inclined towards graphic design and learnt Corel Draw and other designing techniques by watching the people in her father’s advertising firm. Growing up in a family where creative work was always around her with her father’s advertising agency and her mother’s jewellery label, Mittle was inspired to combine her design abilities and business acumen to set up her own brand at the age of 16. “I have always been interested in both, designing and business because of my parents,” she says.

Now a first year student at IISME School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Mittle had her first brush with exhibitions and orders as a student of Hillspring International School in Mumbai where she sold more than 200 personalised notebooks during a fair on campus. She continued designing notebooks and weekly planners and soon started accepting orders for corporate gifting hamper. Mittle’s Chic Creations now makes personalized luggage tags, passport holders and planners. Her notebooks with names printed on the cover have won her clients from Raigad and Chennai. For now, she designs entrepreneurs and companies and customizes labels for Nutella jars and chocolate sauce bottles and a stationery collection for a “Drake Ian”. Mittle makes stationery sets with names and personalized messages which are popular as gift hampers. “Most people want gifts for rakhi, birthdays and as back presents,” she says.

Uditi Mittle
Why and how cigarette butts are one of the biggest environmental challenges faced by humankind.

We, as a race, are focusing on technological aspects of the future and how we could possibly evolve with digital advancements in the coming times. We discuss how a certain core processor might be beneficial for the gadgets or how we are introducing voice-detecting bots to the world, however, we manage to be lenient towards something imperative, which is the whole wide world altogether. The environmental changes are becoming evident by the day and clearly reflecting how our interference has done no good to this planet. But since it is never too late, we can still change the narrative and interfere with creating a better place or at least similar to the one that Adam got when he first walked the world, a clean, green, toxic-less world.

Confronting facts
To reach a place where we act as a positive contributing factor, we first need to confront the real-time scenario and pay heed to what has been going haywire with the planet—pollution. Contaminating the earth and creating air, water pollution, people have only contributed to depleting the green cover of the planet and harming the environment, and one of the significant contributors to pollution are cigarette butt litter. A lot of people are not aware that cigarettes not only cause air pollution but are heavily involved in aggravating the pollution levels of water and landfills. Cigarette butts are one element which is hardly paid any attention to, in fact, they are treated as an insignificant part at the end of the cigarette, which is to be trashed as per we like. Studies show that 30 to 40 per cent of the total items collected in streets, roads, along the beach, and many other places annually are primarily composed of cigarette butts. Yet, as per a survey done by Waste Wheel, 70% of people are entirely unaware that cigarette butt litter is pollution and that it does not degrade easily. The anthropogenic activities have led to this situation, and it's time to make amends, starting from making ourselves aware of the issue.

Grave concerns
Cigarette butt litter is a pressing concern because the cigarette stubs are not biodegradable, as claimed by most of the manufacturing labels initially. Rather, the composition stands far away from being decomposable. People globally smoke over 7 billion cigarettes a year, which further contributes to three-fourth of the cigarette butts littering around us without being segregated or treated. The stub litter is collected in kilos annually and is consistent in contributing toxically to the environment. As per the data by Code Effort Pvt. Ltd., the cigarette butts are collected in aggravating numbers of kilograms in each state; for instance, in FY 2018-19, Uttar Pradesh: 570 kgs, Maharashtra: 2322 kgs, Karnataka: 3734 kgs, Madhya Pradesh: 145 kgs, Andhra Pradesh: 1780 kgs, Gujarat: 478 kgs, Delhi: 801 kgs, Haryana: 360 kgs, West Bengal: 113 kgs.

Spilling the pernicious composition
Cigarette stubs are composed of cellulose acetate, which is analogous to plastic. They also contain dangerous chemicals including cadmium, arsenic and lead, making it worse for the environment the world. This composition makes them slow to degrade. The cigarette butts are hazardous as when they are thrown into the environment without proper disposal, absorb other substances from their surroundings and become even more toxic, resulting in a catastrophic impact on nature and animals. A significant number of strays are known to chew over cigarette stubs and fall prey to the impact of this pernicious litter. Similarly, it’s also affected marine life, where aquatic organisms consume the stub and die as a consequence of anthropogenic activities and toxic human interference.

As a matter of fact, over two million cigarette butts were last reported to be recovered from seas globally. Additionally, a recent study has also found that cigarette butts inhibit plant growth as well. If after all this contemplation and confrontation, one wonders that e-cigarettes might be a solution, then they are highly recommended to re-analyse the thought because the brands, they are a few steps behind, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was in agreement with the applicant. The stub litter is consistent in contributing toxically to the environment.

Intervened by Green
The stub waste has been a growing issue and brought up the National Green Tribunal too. Furthermore, the authorities are standing strong together while keeping in mind the best interest of people as well as the environment. In addition to this, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) also filed a report with respect to the same which was then reviewed in-depth by the Bench reflecting how the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was in agreement with the applicant. It passed a statement about an inter-ministerial or departmental committee to be constituted to consult at the national level for conducting an impact study of discarded cigarette and bidi-butts and reprinting of tobacco products in public places.

The road ahead
The only way we can curb this pressuring matter is by joining hands and standing strong collectively as we combat the concern of proper disposal and demand a better composition for the stub. It is time to hold the production-labels and sharks accountable, asking them to revamp their process and approach in this context. Other than the legal responsibilities, the tree has to be protected and if the individuals not only educate themselves but also create awareness about the stub-waste amongst their friends and network. Plus, another way to go about this issue could be depositing the cigarette butts in zip locks or packs and sending it to the organisations which are specifically working towards this plummeting the grave impacts of stub-litter on the environment. These organisations will further treat the stubs through different mediums and techniques and prevent them from being toxic to the environment.

It is time to make a conscious choice and be protective of the environment. It’s time to create a place for one to thrive in, not the one which.hinders the growth of us as a community as well as our natural environment.
ONLINE WORLD | e-LEARNING

Logging on to Learning

e-learning is a great way to re-skill, learn new skills or just increase your productivity

By ALISHA SEN

Dictionaries had been integral to Saisha Kapoor’s childhood. She remembers falling asleep every other night while thumbing through the faded pages of her father’s old Cambridge Dictionary. Words fascinated her and she felt learning the English language opened up a new world of perspectives and possibilities for her. When she turned seven, she declared with confidence to her parents that she would grow up to be an English teacher. “I wanted to bring the joy of the language to others. It was all I dreamt about while growing up in Delhi,” recalls 18-year-old Kapoor. Last year, Kapoor took a step towards realising this dream by applying for a Bachelor’s degree in English at Columbia, Oxford and New York University. “I never believed I would get through but I still gave it

THE WORLDWIDE DEMAND FOR E-LEARNING COURSES SAW A 400 PER CENT SPIKE SINCE THE PANDEMIC WAS ANNOUNCED

Logging on to Learning

e-learning is a great way to re-skill, learn new skills or just increase your productivity

By ALISHA SEN

Dictionaries had been integral to Saisha Kapoor’s childhood. She remembers falling asleep every other night while thumbing through the faded pages of her father’s old Cambridge Dictionary. Words fascinated her and she felt learning the English language opened up a new world of perspectives and possibilities for her. When she turned seven, she declared with confidence to her parents that she would grow up to be an English teacher. “I wanted to bring the joy of the language to others. It was all I dreamt about while growing up in Delhi,” recalls 18-year-old Kapoor. Last year, Kapoor took a step towards realising this dream by applying for a Bachelor’s degree in English at Columbia, Oxford and New York University. “I never believed I would get through but I still gave it
In a regular classroom,” says Raghav Mishra, a 19-year-old student in aerospace engineering. This would never have been possible in “I connected with users from Japan and France to solve problems, ask questions, discuss ideas and work together on a course topic. The internet has plenty of opportunities for communication to be two-way,” says Raghav Gupta, managing director of Udemy India. According to a 2020 LinkedIn Survey, the three factors driving e-learning are an opportunity to communicate better, career advancement and gaining credentials from reputable universities at a lesser cost. “Web-based learning is an effective way to study—it is convenient, students can access courses when and where they want. It promotes independent learning whereby education can be designed in a manner that suits the learner,” says C Raj Kumar, vice-chancellor of OP Jindal University. Indeed, many educators feel that the commonly cited problem of e-learning being a ‘one-way’ mode of learning is over-hyped. “There are discussion boards available to clear doubts and share opinions. Ultimately, the manner of learning is in the hands of the kind of course design and platform. The internet has plenty of opportunities for communication to be two-way,” says Raghar Gupta, managing director of Coursera in India. Coursera, which is one of the most popular web-learning providers in the world, has a special online community page which allows users from around the world to ask questions, discuss ideas and work together on a course topic. “I connected with users from Japan and France to solve problems in aerospace engineering. This would never have been possible in a regular classroom,” says Raghar Mishra, a 19-year-old student of engineering at IIT Madras. This year, when regular classes halted momentarily, Mishra enrolled himself on Coursera to keep his interest in space engineering alive. “Most of my friends went into depression because we were about to have exams, I distracted myself with online learning and it worked,” he says.

Another draw for online learning is the multiplicity of credentials and courses that a learner can opt for. “I was very happy to have the opportunity to take up e-learning courses. There is also the opportunity to take up courses one wouldn’t normally come across offline. For example, Yale University provides an e-course on death and mortality; Coursera has a course on background music for video games; Harvard University conducts one on predicting the future; and Rochester University has an extremely popular e-learning module on The Beatles. While some of the longer diploma courses might cost more online than offline at Ivy League universities, students say that they still end up saving a lot of money on travel, living and recreational expenses by not having to live on campus. Of course, the recognition of online diploma courses by employers is also drawing more users into the fold. “Different employers look for different things. A lot depends on how you position your online course and its impact on your skills. For example, it could be a mark of your self-discipline and ability to learn,” says T Rao, a career adviser from Chennai. A recent LinkedIn Survey noted that respondents were more confident about online learning to improve their job searches with 60 per cent users wanting to study online to improve their career prospects and industry understanding.

“The shift to e-learning has also given us a chance to smooth out some of the problems. For example, online assessment remains a point of contention—many are doubtful of its authenticity. Equally, e-learning requires strong inner motivation and discipline on the part of the learner. But it gives far greater flexibility. Students can also access lectures as many times as they want if they miss out on something,” says Arun Kapur, principal of Vasant Valley school in Delhi. Many principals share the same opinion—that the benefits of e-learning far outweigh its disadvantages. And that despite initial teething problems, there is a future in web-based courses. All it needs is a balance between the virtual and reality. “The Internet is a medium that students are comfortable with. There is a lot we have gained in terms of how to improve online education this year. Some things cannot be replaced by the web such as sport and games, offline socialising, offline assessment. But to find a balance between the offline and online will help bring education to more people and improve its overall quality,” says Sunita George, principal of Bombay Scottish School. With demand for online and hybrid classes growing at a rapid pace, it is a balance that both teachers and learners are enroute to finding.●

How to make the most of e-learning

Know your course

Read about the details, duration and type of degree before you opt for it. Often, course titles can be misleading. History for courses from trust e-learning platforms will enhance the overall experience and result in a recognised degree.

Design your own learning

While some courses are good from a career point of view, e-learning also allows users the chance to study several subjects for fun and personal interest.

Cost benefit

Pick a course that will add to your professional or personal skill set. The cheapest course may not necessarily be the best one or vice versa.

Inner motivation

E-learning requires significant self-discipline and motivation. With no one to ensure you are attending daily classes or completing assessments without cheating, the drive to work hard falls entirely on the user.

Community forums

Discussion boards are an often overlooked part of e-learning. These make courses more interactive, social and give users a chance to clear doubts. So make sure you make the most of them.
Even as we learn to build a life within the four walls of our homes, it’s a great idea to develop a new skill. By Rewati Rai

While the Coronavirus pandemic forced people to stay cooped up indoors, it has also motivated them to discover a world virtually. Apart from the daily essential activities such as school, college and offices that have gone online, there are also the endless possibilities of the world of online learning. Just like these courses listed below are which can be done online free of cost for a small duration.

- Financial Markets
- Machine Learning
- COVID 19 Contact Tracing
- PredictionX
- Arcade Classic
- Game Development
- October 2020
WHAT IS TAUGHT
This is a great opportunity for students to learn about the science of SARS-CoV-2, including the infectious period, the clinical presentation of COVID-19, and the evidence for how SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted from person-to-person. The course delves deep into contact tracing and why it can be such an effective public health intervention. The course teaches you more about building rapport with cases, identifying their contacts, and supporting both cases and their contacts to stop transmission in their communities. The course will also cover several important ethical considerations around contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine. Finally, the course will identify some of the most common barriers to contact tracing efforts — along with strategies to overcome them.

Machine Learning
CONDUCTED BY
Stanford University on Coursera
WHY IS IT FOR YOU?
If the world of gadgets is your happy place where you yearn to discover all that goes behind machines, data and informatics.
DURATION
Approximately 60 hours
WHAT IS TAUGHT
This course will give a broad introduction to machine learning, data mining, and statistical pattern recognition. Some of the topics covered include supervised learning (parametric/non-parametric algorithms, support vector machines, kernels, neural networks), unsupervised learning (clustering, dimensionality reduction, recommender systems, deep learning), best practices in machine learning (bias/variance theory, innovation process in machine learning and AI). The course will also draw from numerous case studies and applications, so that you’ll also learn how to apply learning algorithms to building smart robots (perception, control), text understanding (web search, anti-spam), computer vision, medical informatics, audio, database mining, and other areas.

Arcade Classic in JavaScript on Canvas
CONDUCTED BY
Chris DeLeon, independent game development educator on Udemy
WHY IS IT FOR YOU?
If you’ve always been fascinated by the world of games and secretly wanted to create a game on your own.
DURATION
2 hours 9 minutes
WHAT IS TAUGHT
This course will equip you to programme your first game. You’ll learn game play development fundamentals by doing them yourself – writing and running real code on your own machine. Each step of the course has the source code attached exactly as it should look at that time for you to compare to or pick up from. While you’ll be coding in JavaScript for HTML5 canvas in this course, the focus is on common game programming concepts. You can later apply these same patterns to get quick results in other programming languages such as C#, Java, ActionScript 3, C++, or Python.

Covid 19 Contact Tracing
CONDUCTED BY
John Hopkins University on Coursera
WHY IS IT FOR YOU?
While your friends and family are steering clear of Covid news, you spend hours reading about the pandemic, understanding contact tracing and more. This course might be the perfect one for you.
DURATION
7 hours
WHAT IS TAUGHT
This is a great opportunity for students to learn about the science of SARS-CoV-2, including the infectious period, the clinical presentation of COVID-19, and the evidence for how SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted from person-to-person. The course delves deep into contact tracing and why it can be such an effective public health intervention. The course teaches you more about building rapport with cases, identifying their contacts, and supporting both cases and their contacts to stop transmission in their communities. The course will also cover several important ethical considerations around contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine. Finally, the course will identify some of the most common barriers to contact tracing efforts — along with strategies to overcome them.

PredictionX: Lost Without Longitude
CONDUCTED BY
Harvard University
WHY IS IT FOR YOU?
If you’ve always wondered how people travelled in the absence of Google Maps.
DURATION
1 week
WHAT IS TAUGHT
What is taught remember being fascinated reading about old clock towers and lighthouses predicting time and directions? This course will take you back to those days albeit using video, text, infographics, and Worldwide Telescope tours. The course will explore the tools and techniques that navigators used, with a particular focus on the importance (and difficulty) of measuring longitude. Grounded in the principles of position, direction, speed, and time, it will talk about the challenges of navigating without a GPS signal. It’ll also take you through the Age of Exploration and the economic forces of worldwide trade encouraged scientific progress in navigation; and how Jupiter’s moons, lunar eclipses, and clockmakers all played a part in orienting history’s navigators.

Amazon Web Series - From zero to hero
CONDUCTED BY
Udemy
WHAT IS TAUGHT
If you’ve loved watching Amazon Web Series but have been more fascinated with the technology that creates it.
DURATION
2 hours 56 minutes
WHAT IS TAUGHT
This is a high-paced hands-on course on Amazon Web Series (AWS) replete with in-depth professional course notes and subtitles for 24 languages. This course will help you create an AWS EC2 WordPress Web server, launch and connect to an AWS RDS relational database server, a highly available and fault tolerant back-end for NodeJS applications with AWS Elastic Beanstalk, store and retrieve files from AWS S3, send email with AWS SES, create alarms with AWS CloudWatch, and use the AWS Command Line Interface.
A PEEK INTO THE AUTOMATED WORLD

HOW DOES THE FUTURE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE LOOK LIKE FOR TEENS? EXPERTS TELL US WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR.

By REWATI RAU
Back in 2010 when superstar Rajinikanth’s movie Enthiran released, not many in India knew the words Artificial Intelligence (AI). Cut to 2020, conversing with Amazon’s Alexa has perhaps become a household routine. One of the finest examples of AI, Alexa plays many roles – from being your alarm clock, to updating you on daily news and even making phone calls for you. From using face to unlock phones to the phone navigating you perfectly to the most obscure locations, AI has indeed made our life easier. AI suddenly seems more relevant than ever in the post Covid world where human touch and interaction almost seem like a taboo.

**GROWTH SPURT**

Artificial Intelligence has the capability to do most disruptive innovations. Nagarro, the software development and technology consulting company extensively uses AI in different ways. Ramesh Soni, Director of Technology, Nagarro, says, “The continuous research and advancement of this technology enables many new possibilities. The demand for engineers in this space is doubling every few years. It is going to play a significant role in economic growth of countries in future.”

According to experts, the reason for a sharp increase in the scope of AI is the advancement in technology and the availability of data. Bethany Edmunds, associate dean at Massachusetts’ Northeastern University explains in a blog post, ‘While advanced technology is important, the key to the operation is actually the data. In fact, the astounding increase in the quantity of data collected over the last decade has had a significant impact on the advancement of the AI industry today. What’s happening right now is that technology has finally caught up to what people have been predicting [about AI] for a long time. We finally have the right amount of data and the advanced machines that can process that data, which is, right now, [AI] is being applied in so many sectors.’

**FUTURE OUTLOOK**

From the automated chat windows that pop up when you browse e-commerce and other websites to the smart apps on your phone, AI is getting into almost every domain of modern day existence. No wonder then that the future is bright for millennials equipping themselves in the area. Nagarro predicts AI is going to be an important skill set. Soni says, “The overall space of AI is very vast and requires different types of education qualification.” Some of the areas where people would look for trained professionals could be the following.

**Machine Learning Engineers**

A computer science degree holder with strong Programming skills

**Data Scientist**

A master degree with specialisation in any field of data science

**AI Researcher**

A master or PhD with specialisation in this space

**Business intelligence developer**

AI in India

Seeing the growing demand, sometime in 2019, quite a few universities in India introduced full-fledged courses in Artificial Intelligence. Some of the universities offering these courses are listed below.

**Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Hyderabad**

Course: B.Tech in AI

Eligibility: JEE-Advanced

Fees: ₹1.15 lakh for full course

**Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Delhi**

Course: B.Tech in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence

Eligibility: JEE, JAC and Direct Admission

Test: 80 percent in aggregate for five subjects (including Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics) and 80 percent in Mathematics in class XII from CBSE Board or equivalent.

JEE Main (or 2020) NTA Score

Fees: ₹1.8 lakh per semester

**Sharda University Greater Noida**

Course: B. Tech in Computer Science (Artificial Learning and Machine Learning)

Eligibility: SUAT (Online Test) Followed by Personal Interview

JEE mains: 1200 or above

Fees: ₹1.8 lakh per year

**Sage University, Indore**

Course: B.Tech, AI

Eligibility: Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) (Main and Advanced)

Fees: ₹1.25 lakh per year

**Great Lakes International University**

Course: B.Tech Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning, Sri City (Andhra Pradesh)

Eligibility: Admissions done on the basis of GAT Exam and SAT Score > 1200 or Qualify JEE Main, the candidate should have passed in 90% in XII and 70% in X with 60 percent in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics.

Fees: ₹14.22 Lakh for full course

*The list is indicative, not exhaustive*

ONLINE WORLD | ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
ONLINE WORLD | STAY HOME GUIDE

YOUR ESSENTIAL STAYHOME GUIDE

Even as you spend more time indoors, here’s what can keep you entertained.

Imagine surviving this lockdown without our favourite streaming platforms. Even the idea seems like an aberration. Notwithstanding video calls and Zoom parties with friends, streaming platforms have clearly emerged as our best friends in the past six months. And as we inch closer to the end of 2020 with a hope for a ‘normal’ new year, here’s what your best friend has in store for the coming month. Bring on the popcorn.

1. BLACKPINK
Light up the Sky
October 14, Netflix

Many bored millennials found solace in K-dramas in the past six months even as the pandemic continued to wreak havoc throughout the world. So when Netflix announced the release of a documentary on the popular South Korean girl group Blackpink, it created a wave of excitement. Directed by Caroline Suh, director of the Netflix docuseries Salt Fat Acid Heat, and produced by RadicalMedia, the film interweaves exclusive interviews with never-before-seen footage of BLACKPINK members Jisoo, Jennie, Rosé and Lisa from their trainee days to the global sensations they are today. Viewers will get a first look into the recording process of the band’s follow up album, which depicts the highs and lows of being a K-pop idol group, and showcases each member’s incredible talent that when combined, creates the uniquely trailblazing DNA of BLACKPINK. The film culminates with their historic 2019 Coachella performance, where BLACKPINK was the first K-pop girl group to take on the Coachella stage. The group recently released “Ice Cream,” their collaboration with Selena Gomez. Their forthcoming album also includes “How You Like That,” which the group shared in June after appearing on Lady Gaga’s Chromatica track “Sour Candy.”

2. SERIOUS MEN
October 2 on Netflix

In an Instagram post early September, actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui revealed that after 20 years his dream of working with director Sudhir Mishra is all set to become a reality with the movie Serious Men. Based on Manu Joseph’s book by the same name, the much-awaited film marks the prominent actor’s third collaboration with Netflix. Siddiqui will be playing the lead role in the film. Produced by Bombay Fables and Cineraas Entertainment, the film is about a wily slum dweller, who cons the country into believing his dim-witted 10-year-old son is a genius, to realise that the only victim of his dangerous game is his son. The story revolves around an underachiever named Ayyan Mani (Siddiqui), who uses his son Aadi’s newfound fame as a boy-genius to earn money and improve his family’s status. Speaking about his film, Siddiqui wrote on Instagram: “Finding fame was easy. But staying famous? That’s where things get tricky. Watch a slum dwellers rags to riches story while he lays what’s most important on the line.”
Crash Bandicoot 4

Developer Toys for Bob are bringing the famous anthropomorphic marsupial back for new adventure in this sequel to the original trilogy. The excitement of Crash and his sister Coco is back as you can play as Dingodile and the original antagonist Doctor Neo Cortex. With a host of new features including character skins, the upcoming sequel is filled with colourful platforming set across the gaming universe.

Disney Hotstar

Cricket fans might be able to distract themselves from the isolation anxiety the next few months as the Dream 11 IPL 2020 streams online. In an official statement, the streaming platform Disney Hotstar says, “Upgrading the ante from the previous tournaments, this year Disney+ Hotstar VIP has added new features to the interactive Watch’NPlay social feed that allows a nationwide virtual community of cricket lovers to share excitement and support while watching the matches LIVE on the platform. Replicating the exhilarating roar of the stadium, fans will be able to determine the mood of the nation using an interactive emoji stream. In a global first, cricket lovers will be able to join in the action by expressing themselves using ‘Hotshots’ selfies or a new video feature ‘Duels’ that lets fans create customized videos showcasing their rendition of famous shots and reactions of their favourite Dream 11 IPL Heroes; the best of which will be broadcast on STAR Sports.” Uday Shankar, President, The Walt Disney Company APAC and Chairman, Star & Disney India says, “Over the past few years, IPL has become the most loved sporting tournament in the country. After several months of the lockdown, we believe that this tournament can be a catalyst in ushering in new optimism and smiles in India, with millions of fans cheering together from all parts of the country. Our use of technology in presenting this immersive experience will not only set a global benchmark but also redefine the way we watch and enjoy sports in the coming years.”

Leaving is known for her unique discipline and the bond with her military combat dog that helped save many lives during their deployment in Iraq. Assigned to clean up the K-9 unit after a disciplinary hearing, Leavey starts to identify with Rex, a particularly aggressive dog that she trains. Over the course of their service, Megan and Rex complete more than 100 missions until an improvised explosive device injures both, putting their fates in jeopardy.

The American biographic film is based on the true incidents in the life of the young Leavey and the combat dog called Rex. The movie stars Kate Mara as Leavey with Edie Falco, Common, Ramón Rodríguez, and Tom Felton in supporting roles. Leavey is known for her unique discipline and the bond with her military combat dog that helped save many lives during their deployment in Iraq. Assigned to clean up the K-9 unit after a disciplinary hearing, Leavey starts to identify with Rex, a particularly aggressive dog that she trains. Over the course of their service, Megan and Rex complete more than 100 missions until an improvised explosive device injures both, putting their fates in jeopardy.

Test Your Epic KNOWLEDGE

How well do you know the women of Indian mythology? Here’s a quick quiz.

1. He was born as Amba and did severe penance to Lord Shiva for a boon that could cause Bhishma’s death. He is perhaps mythology’s first transgender. What was his name when he was reborn?

2. She is mythology’s most famous mother of a son born out of wedlock. She was the powerful great-grandmother of the Kauravas and Pandavas and also the mother of Vyasa. What was her name?

3. ALWAYS PORTRAYED AS THE DUTIFUL, BLIND-FOLDED WIFE OF DHRI-TARASHTRA, SHE WAS A WOMAN OF IRON WILL, WHO STRUCK HER BELLY SO HARD UPON HEARING THAT HER RIVAL KUNTI HAD GIVEN BIRTH THAT THE FOETUS WAS EXPELLED FROM HER BODY BY THE SHEER FORCE OF THAT BLOW. WHO WAS SHE?

4. Rishi Gautam’s wife, she was seduced by Indra for which she was cursed to turn to stone, to be liberated by Ram years later. Who is she?

5. Her beauty was legendary and apparently stopped Aulauid Khilji in his tracks. She was also mythology’s most famous Sati. What was her name?

6. She is the world’s first #MeToo warrior who refuses to back down even after she is insulted in the open court by Duryodhan. Her rage is enough to start a great war. Who is she?

7. BANISHED BY HER HUSBAND, SHE LIVES IN AN ASHRAM AND RAISES HER CHILDREN SINGLEHANDEDLY. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS QUEEN?

8. She is Sita’s sister but is also her sister in law. She stayed behind while her husband and his brother and his wife went into exile. She is the younger daughter of Janak. What is her name?

9. She is a princess but also a demoness. She could change skins and she also got her nose cut off. What was her name?

10. One of the most beautiful of the ten heavenly Apsarasas, she was sent by Lord Indra, to break the severe penance undertaken by Vishwamitra. She gave birth to a beautiful daughter who had a son after whom the country is named. Who was she?
What I love about books is that they feel like portals lining up my bookshelf. I can choose to visit any land or Time without leaving my chair. This is immensely exciting for my gymhating limbs. But the books that truly stayed back with me long after I’d read them were the gems I stumbled upon in high school. These were the ones that shaped my thoughts, my writing style and the way I looked at the world. And frankly they were a lot more interesting than learning that ‘the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell.’ The following list is just a sliver of the books I’m grateful for.

**The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling:** There’s a reason this series is so famous. Of course everyone has heard of the boy-wizard and his nemesis, the vile Voldemort. The real beauty lies in the intricately woven world Rowling has so carefully and painstakingly painted. Something about it fires up the imagination of anyone who picks the book up. No one comes away empty handed after reading this series. The David versus Goliath theme is simply what keeps the plot chugging along. The real treasure is underneath that of friendships, mentors, bravery, quintessential British dorn living, and just general mucking about. And of course all that lovely magic, with platters of food refilling themselves, invisibility cloaks, a school that’s an actual castle filled with ghosts and moving paintings (before GIFs were a thing, mind you)... and the Weasley twins. Also, Draco Malfoy was my first literary crush.

**Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury:** It was either this or The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand. Yet, somehow it’s the quotes and imagery from this book that haunt me till date. They’ve been embossed into my psyche. This, my friends, is the OG Black Mirror. Bradbury welcomes you into a society where books are seen as contraband. Any home suspected of storing even a single title is burned down by the government. Knowledge, it seems, has become a crime worse than murder. And no one remembers a time when firemen weren’t feared. They’re now seen as beacons of death. Neighbor turns against neighbor, until one fireman breaks the system. His escape keeps the reader on edge and just... suddenly you’ve slipped and reached the end. Potent, addictive stuff. You’ve been warned. Each chapter is marked by a prime number, which should be your first clue that everything about this book is going to be unusual. Clever writing keeps the pace crisp while conveniently hiding deeper emotions. Like having a spoonful of sugar to hide the bitter medicine.

**Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi (graphic novel):** You know those confusing “If you could take one book to a desert island?” quizzes that made you wonder why the hell you’d be grabbing a book and not something more lifesaving like a Swiss Army knife and a hunk of cheese? Anyway, if you really had to take a book: then this is the one. I could read it every day for the rest of my life without tiring of it. Never before has such an important aspect of the world’s history been so accessible. Satrapi takes us through the Iranian Revolution from her own memories as a young girl. This immediately makes the story witty yet achingly poignant. Every panel is a triumph. This is one of those books you’ll treasure for years, because it’s simple, wise, funny, yet powerful. Lots of adjectives. Deserves more.

**The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-time by Mark Haddon:** A fifteen-year-old with Asperger’s Syndrome wants to investigate a curious case. Of a dog who died. In the nighttime. That’s it, that’s the story. And yet this is one of those books you’ll casually flip one page of and suddenly you’ve slipped and reached the end. Potent, addictive stuff. You’ve been warned. Does anyone know how many times I’ve read War And Peace? Yes, it enriched me and of course there’s something intensely charming and nostalgic about these simple stories that just breeze by. The pockets of little worlds and sketches of an India within India are quite marvelous. Best enjoyed with a platter of crisp banana chips.

**Anant Pai’s Tinkle (graphic novel):** Does anyone know how difficult it is being a teen? It’s like we grow up and just completely forget. Half the time you don’t even know if you have your head screwed on straight. Then there’s the pesky bit about exams. Of course there’s something intensely charming and nostalgic about these simple stories that just breeze by. The pockets of little worlds and sketches of an India within India are quite marvelous. Best enjoyed with a platter of crisp banana chips.

**BONUS**

**Bridget Jones’s Diary by Helen Fielding:** Look, I’ve read War And Peace, and yes, it enriched me and of course it’s a marvel, but sometimes you just need something sweet adrak chai and some snarky writing. This cheeky take on Jane Austen’s Pride And Prejudice is just that. Gloriously so.
Take the first step. Ask for help. Remember you’re not alone

by Anna Chandy
you take India’s 364 million youth (10-29 years), and carve them out into a separate country, it would form the third most populated country in the world. Like young people everywhere, they are facing a long, hard road to adulthood. Internally, they fight anxieties, personal struggles, hormones, stresses and powerful emotions. Externally, they grapple with a fast-changing India, pregnant with possibility but at the same time, difficult to comprehend and navigate. These pressures, a changing lifestyle and society, combined with genetic and biological factors have made mental health issues rampant among youth. Other than the emotional pain and suffering, studies suggest that mental illness can exacerbate self-destructive behaviour.

As a teenager, life can be a rollercoaster of emotions and changes. With so much going on both internally and externally, things can get overwhelming at times. I am sure a lot of you identify with this. However, for some of us, these changes can get more overwhelming than others. If you are someone experiencing this kind of a feeling, or a prolonged sadness that refuses to ebb, what you will perhaps identify with is that a majority struggle in mustering the courage to actually ask for help.

Unfortunately, mental health continues to be a subject of stigma in India, despite how common conditions like depression and anxiety are. Did you know that about 20% of teens between the age of 13 and 18 suffer from some kind of mental health issue? That is around 1 in 5! It can be difficult to come out, talk about it, and ask for help or get help for someone you know with this issue because of embarrassment or just the apprehension around what the other person might think of you.

Amidst all this, what is important to understand is that mental health conditions and life as such can be tricky. When we are already struggling, certain obstacles can get hard to overcome all by ourselves and we might need a little extra help to get by and live our best lives! Identify what is the source or talk to someone who can help you out. Are you being bullied by your peers or is it something else that is the source of your anxiety?

There are some signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety. These can linger for a long time. The signs include sadness, hopelessness, and sporadic mood changes, irritability, anger, vocal outbursts, crying, social withdrawal, fear of rejection, low concentration, worthlessness, and feeling of guilt. The physiological symptoms include deficient or excess appetite and sleep; stomach aches and headaches which do not go away with rest or medication. Watch out for these and try to open up to someone you feel you can share your vulnerabilities with. Understand that
feeling sad is not an illness. Every individual experiences sadness, grief, social withdrawal and irritability albeit in different degrees throughout life. These feelings are a natural part of a person’s emotional graph and all of us are equipped to handle these ups and downs. When it becomes difficult to overcome a temporary setback even after trying multiple attempts, it could indicate a serious problem—it is a sign that you must seek help. Here are some ways that you can do this.

**TALK TO A TRUSTED ADULT**

Although it can be scary or unnerving, one of the best things you can do to help yourself is to tell someone you trust about what you are going through. If you are not comfortable with your parents, it is alright. Reach out instead to another person who is close to you, if you prefer to or to a mental health professional. Skip the details if you want but simply initiate a dialogue. You will be surprised to see how people can actually be forthcoming in terms of helping each other out.

**USE RESOURCES AT YOUR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE**

Many schools and colleges nowadays have counsellors who keep your information confidential. Schedule an appointment with them and talk it out. Depending on the circumstances, they might suggest whether you need to seek further help from outside or not.

**JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP**

There are several online and offline support and therapy groups which can be helpful to assist you in feeling less alone. In group settings like this, you might come across other teens facing similar challenges. They are moderated and hosted by professional therapists or counsellors who keep your information confidential and the environment is healthy and safe to discuss what may be of concern to you.

**DO NOT FEELASHAMED**

Understand that asking for help or reaching out is not bad or something to be ashamed or embarrassed of! In fact, feel proud of yourself for having asked for help. It indicates that you chose to take that first and most difficult step in terms of getting better and changing your life in a positive manner.

Consider helping yourself too

One of the major steps you can take when you are undergoing something like this is to take good care of yourself — both emotionally and physically. You will be surprised to see what a positive effect it can have on you. Bring about some lifestyle changes like eating healthy, getting regular physical activity, meditating, and even doing what you really like. You can even do some simple things like journaling about your feelings, and making a note of the progress you make as a way of positive reinforcement.

Always remember that asking for help is the first step to overcoming mental health issues and facing them head on. There is no need for you to go through this alone — all you have to do is ask and talk. Look at your list of achievements and remember to engage in what you have planned for the day. Remind yourself constantly that you can overcome this and that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. And there is hope.

Anna Chandy is the Chairperson, Board of Trustees, The Live Love Laugh Foundation

---

**BETTER LIVING | WORDS OF WISDOM**

**THOUGHTS TO LIVE BY**

*Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a Supreme Court justice, feminist, and one of the smartest women in the world. She died in September at the age of 87 but not before leaving a truckload of wisdom in her wake. Here she is, immortalised through her quotes:*

“Suppose I had gotten a job as a permanent associate. Probably I would have climbed up the ladder and today I would be a retired partner. So often in life, things that you regard as an impediment turn out to be great good fortune.”

“When I’m sometimes asked when will there be enough women on the Supreme Court? And I say ‘When there are nine.’ People are shocked. But there’d been nine men, and nobody’s ever raised a question about that.”

“You can’t have it all, all at once. Who—man or woman—has it all, all at once? Over my lifespan I think I have had it all, but in different periods of time things were rough, and if you have a caring life partner, you help the other person when that person needs it.”

“Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation.”

“I’d like to be remembered as someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the very best of her ability. And to help repair tears in her society, to make things a little better through the use of whatever ability she has. To do something, as my colleague David Souter would say, outside myself. ‘Cause I’ve got much more satisfaction for the things that I’ve done for which I was not paid.’

“My mother told me two things constantly. One was to be a lady, and the other was to be independent.”

“I...try to teach through my opinions, through my speeches, how wrong it is to judge people on the basis of what they look like, colour of their skin, whether they’re men or women.”
The light has just broken on the horizon and cuts through the biting cold. For the first time, I have to shuffle my frozen feet along and stuff my numb fingers into my pockets. I head for my pee break and grab a pair of gloves I had stuffed into my suitcase just in case, but haven’t had to use so far. The air is crisp, like something is sucking the moisture out of it, a pause that I like to call a snow vacuum whenever I encounter it. It’s like sticking your head in a frost-free freezer and feeling the dry air billowing around you. My sister used to do that when she was a kid, coming back home from school on a hot afternoon. The light today is different, clearer, tighter, and, as I approach the hall, I am struck by the urge to look up to know why—and I gasp.

The sky is spotless for the first time, an eggshell blue tinged with the gold flecks of the stretching sun. There she is, a haughty manifestation of raw power, billowing soft flakes on sheer rock face, as though she were rocking a baby in a snow blanket between her two precipices. The Kanchenjunga, at 8,586 metres, the third-highest mountain in the world, just staring down at me from across the valley as though she knew all along that I existed just there, that we all did. She is as fierce as she is awesome. She is so clear, glittering as the light bounces off each of her edges; she seems as though she were outlined and planted there anew, a fresh painting of the storm. She imprints on my mind like a mother duck to a duckling. All through the day, as I shut my eyes, she is what rises in my mind’s eye, and with her, the feeling of exaltation, height, the need to rise to the pristine. I cannot even contemplate being an atheist when I see such beauty, because there is no ordinary power that can possibly conceive of it. It is beyond our minds, or at least our...
It tells the story of the October 2020 poems from the day from 4.30 am. You have to sit cross-legged for oh just around 14-15 hours around 4 or 5 am. Yeah. It hurts. Like the first time. The hurt is part of the process. You get used to it and also it teaches you something to get used to it.

The sangha comes tumbling out of the hall doors, rubbing their hands together for warmth. I gesture for them to come quickly, as though the elusive mountain would disappear if they didn’t take two steps at a time. I have no recollection of the non-communicating, and I wave my hands at them to come quick. ‘Kanchenjunga! Kanchenjunga!’ we are all repeating over and over to ourselves and each other, as though simply saying her name out loud in some way sanctifies us. Gaps go around the group, from everyone, except the women from Sickim who probably see her every day. For the rest of us, for me, we are bathing in her clarity, sharing this exultation like choristers around the Rockefeller Centre Christmas tree.

Apty, the verse for the day is from the Mittānīsaṃ. sa, a poem from the Muga Pakhā Jataka. It tells the story of the bodhisatta born as a prince, Temiya, in Varanasi. He pretends to be deaf and mute all his life to escape performing the ills that his role in power would require him to. He is considered so useless that a woodman is despatched with him to the woods to execute him. He reveals himself, and his ruse is understood. The king and his court become his followers. Inasmuch a lesson in renunciation, a larger scale, this is damaging. Our diabetes, our vices, our sugar intake, our intoxications arise from here. Not being able to recognize this is also why we repeatedly succumb.

Now I understand why I cannot stick to diets though I know which ones my body responds well to. Why don’t I stick to exercise routines. If I have not eaten for hunger, then all I am doing is chasing the sensation and must repeat the cycle to feel that way again. It all comes down to just two things – cravings and aversions. ‘Until we realize this link explains. Those of us who repeatedly pray at the altar of food or drugs or alcohol – we are drawn to how it makes us feel, not the item we ingest. Every time I eat, I eat because of the sensation it creates in me. Then when the sensation, temporary, anicaya as any, passes, I want to create it again. Cue the addiction. On a larger scale, this is damaging. Our diabetes, our vices, our sugar intake, our intoxications arise from here. Not being able to recognize this is also why we repeatedly succumb.

Inasmuch a lesson in renunciation, a larger scale, this is damaging. Our diabetes, our vices, our sugar intake, our intoxications arise from here. Not being able to recognize this is also why we repeatedly succumb. Why don’t I stick to exercise routines. If I have not eaten for hunger, then all I am doing is chasing the sensation and must repeat the cycle to feel that way again. It all comes down to just two things – cravings and aversions. ‘Until we realize this link explains. Those of us who repeatedly pray at the altar of food or drugs or alcohol – we are drawn to how it makes us feel, not the item we ingest. Every time I eat, I eat because of the sensation it creates in me. Then when the sensation, temporary, anicaya as any, passes, I want to create it again. Cue the addiction. On a larger scale, this is damaging. Our diabetes, our vices, our sugar intake, our intoxications arise from here. Not being able to recognize this is also why we repeatedly succumb.
Parents and children have always been at loggerheads. Almost never do the see eye to eye on anything, whether it is studies, friends, love or lifestyle. Yet neither can live without the other. As a psychologist, I often get asked all sorts of questions by teenagers about how their parents behave. This is how I answer.

Q. Why don’t my parents try to understand me instead of being judgmental?
A. At this age you tend to be strongly connected and influenced by your friends. Being in the same age group helps in understanding and empathising with each other better as you go through nearly the same situations, be it heartbreaks or exam pressures. Parents, however, come from different generations and experiences. They may not intend to judge but they react from their world view. Communication is the key; if they don’t understand, how about you take the effort to make them see your viewpoint (politely).

Why do they want to spy on my social media feed all the time?

I understand a lot of teenagers want to keep their parents off social media falling prey to maintaining the ‘cool status’ in your peer circle. However, perception is the key here. What you perceive as ‘spying’ could be very different from how parents look at it. Some reasons that parents state are:

a. Safety: Parents are extremely worried about things like cyber-bullying, the influence of bad company, even social media addiction. They are just being parents. Their basic nature is protective.
b. Curiosity: Most parents are also curious about this new world of connections. They want to know what keeps their teenagers engaged for such a long time.
c. To be more involved: Sometimes, teenagers tend to avoid and hide things from parents. This may cause parents to feel disconnected and less engaged. They may start assuming that they are not being good parents. The only way to know your whereabouts is through social media. You could really give this a thought and reflect on how much, or how little, of your life you share with them.

Why do they put so much pressure on me for marks when I don’t want to get into academics?
At this age you may feel like you got everything figured. Following your dreams and passions become a priority. Of course, if you are passionate, you got to chase your dreams. Although life doesn’t always take the exact course that you plan. Parents understand this and in their need to protect you, they want to safeguard you with academic qualifications. You may be great at a lot of extra-curricular activities, however having a basic academic degree is going to help in the most difficult situations. Stay in school.

Why do my parents always compare me with other children?
This definitely can feel demeaning and hurtful. Some work is required on both parents and at your end to solve this issue.

Parents may compare because in their experience they view the world full of competition. Remember the famous dialogue from 3 Idiots, ‘Life is a race, if you don’t run fast you will be like a broken egg’. This philosophy is so ingrained that it’s difficult to change things overnight. However, there is work in progress. Movies, media, parenting workshops, and research are all working for you. Compare yourself only with yourself. Be the best version of your old self. Always.

Why do my parents drag me to every party of theirs?
Rescue me from this boring party, is a common text you may send your friend from most parties you attend with your parents. Of course, you have very little that is of interest to you—age group, conversation topics, and the type of party. However, try seeing it from a parent’s point of view. You are their child and they want you to be a part of their life. Socialising is one of the basic human needs and that’s what parents do. They want you to be connected with people and experience a larger world view. They also consider you to be responsible enough to be around adults. The next time you are at such a party try to communicate with at least two-three adults and you will notice how much they have to offer. The human species is designed to protect and nurture its offspring. So if your parents may seem annoying when they do certain things to protect you, take a breath and say ‘they are just being humans’. Communication and empathy are two important tools, use them wisely and they can repair almost anything.
Until Dali turned 5, he had no idea what to do when he encountered a dog. He would just turn away with a mix of disgust and fear and shoot back home. Salvador Dali, the strong headed, clear minded, hugely loving dog that has changed my life, had never spent any time with dogs, ever. He obviously thought he was human, and much preferred being around this other species, unless they were a trainer! Try saying no and try telling him to sit - at least five dog trainers were shown the exit with the last of them wondering why we wanted to train Dali at all! After all, he barks when the doorbell rings, acts threateningly towards strangers, has an intelligent mind, making calculations of his own all day, without any training. We may think Dali is our dog. In reality, we are his humans sharing his space.

Dali looks like he has been painted by an artist. Chocolate brown with white in perfect measure, the shape of a heart on his forehead and a brushstroke of white lightning down his back. He has two pale cream spots above his eyes. We named him Dali after the great Spanish surrealist. But little did we know that he would take after the legendary painter’s eccentricity.

In truth, Dali’s unfailing spirit that is the reason he is with us today. A few hours after birth, lost by his mother, he lay frozen on the ground, on a cold December night amidst thick fog in a tiny by-lane in a residential colony in South Delhi, with only a murder of crows standing watch. If the not the bitter cold, a hungry bird would surely put an end to the flickering light of life. But here was a miracle dog.

My aunt, a dog lover, happened to be walking her eight dogs at that unearthly hour when she came across what she thought was a dead rat. Out of empathy, she scooped the tiny animal with a large leaf, to put him on one side of the lane. And suddenly, the seemingly lifeless, frozen cold body opened its mouth gasping for air. This is a puppy and its alive, she thought! She rushed home with him frozen in her palm and put him on a hot water bottle in a carton. As someone who has experience in saving and raising many dogs, she didn’t think he would survive the night. He was really tiny, chilled to the core and without a mother.

He made it. In the morning I dropped in by chance and was most startled to see a dog smaller than the size of my palm! He could not see me; the eyes and ears of a puppy only open or develop two weeks after their birth. But the connection was instant. I fed him milk with a dropper and nestled him in my lap. I did not have to convince my wife or my aunt – both dog lovers – and Dali came to our home, two weeks later.

They say a cat has nine lives. Dali had a second miracle. When he was six months old, fearless and extremely naughty, he strayed, unnoticed, out of the gate of our home one night and got lost. We searched for him, frantically, for hours. The colony has a highway teeming with traffic just meters away and Dali would have no clue what to do if he was accosted by another dog. Just these thoughts made our minds race as all of us broke into different search teams. Our housekeeper – Dali and he were extremely close – blamed himself for letting Dali slip away and disappeared to meditate a few hours into the search. It infuriated us. And then before we knew it, he emerged out of his room in his nightclothes, and picked up his bicycle and wandered off into the night without saying a word. Fifteen minutes later, he cycled in with a big smile and Dali under his arm! While meditating, he had seen a vision of Dali near a temporary shelter for construction workers in a back lane in our colony. Believe him or not, Dali was right there and now back to his home!

Since then he has been circumspect about stepping out of the gate. But he has transformed our home and our lives. He is always there to brighten the spirits after a long day at work, to give solace in times of worry, to celebrate the good times, and to remind us of the power of perseverance and will without ever sinking into self-pity. Humans like to train their dogs. I think it’s the other way round. They mould us into better humans.

Humans like to train their dogs. I think it’s the other way round. They mould us into better humans.

The author is Chief Economist, Vedanta Resources and a well known columnist.
Vrukshasana
Tree pose

**HOW TO DO IT?**
Stand straight on the Yoga mat. Raise your right leg and place it on the inside of your left thigh. Concentrate your vision on one point ahead of you. Once body is balanced and calm, take a deep breath and raise both your hands over your head in to a namaste position. Once in the position, feel relaxed. Breathe in and breathe out, normally. After a few minutes, come back slowly to standing position and relax. Repeat the same with the other leg.

**BENEFITS OF VRUKSHASANA**
- It strengthens the legs, and opens the hips.
- It improves your neuromuscular coordination.
- It helps with balance and endurance.
- It may help those who suffer from sciatica (nerve pain in the leg).

Khumbakasana
Plank position

**HOW TO DO IT?**
Stand straight at the front of the mat. Raise your hands, over your head and breathe in. Breathe out and bend down to touch your feet (hasta padasana position). Place your palms, next to your feet, on the mat. With the help of your palms, stretch your leg backwards. Body should balance on palms and toes of your feet. Keep your back straight. Stay calm. Continue to breathe in and breathe out, normally.

**BENEFITS OF KHUMBAKASANA**
- Plank pose tones all of the core muscles of the body, including the abdomen, chest, and lower back.
- It strengthens the arms, wrists, and shoulders, and is often used to prepare the body for more challenging arm balances.

Parvathasana
Downward dog pose

**HOW TO DO IT?**
Parvathasana can be done after Khumbakasana. From Khumbakasana, you can go in to Parvathasana. Raise the back high up. Feet and palms should rest on the mat.

**BENEFITS OF PARVATHASANA**
- Helps develop a proper breathing technique.
- With regular practice of the pose, your lung capacity will increase.
- Parvathasana helps reduce flab from the abdomen, tummy, hips and the waist.
- The pose has a slimming effect on the physique.
- The spine and ribs are stretched.

Chakrasana

**HOW TO DO IT?**
Lie flat on your back on the mat. Fold your legs and place your palms, next to your head on the mat. Fingers should be turned inwards. Lift your body, slowly onto your palms and feet. Head will be upside down. After few minutes in the pose, come down slowly on to the mat. Bring your head down first and then the rest of the body. Be careful not to bang your head down.

**BENEFITS OF CHAKRASANA**
- It reduces the stress and tension in the body.
- Sharpens eyesight.
- This asana helps to strengthen the back and increases the elasticity of the spine.

Matsyasana

**HOW TO DO IT?**
Lie flat on your back, on the mat. Fold your legs in to Padmasana. Hold your toes with your fingers. Rest your elbows on the mat. With the support of the elbows lift your back and neck.

**BENEFITS OF MATSYASANA**
- Relieves tension in your neck, throat, and shoulders.
- Stretches and tones the front of your neck and your abdominals.
- Stretches and stimulates the organs of your belly and throat.
- Strengthens your upper back and the back of your neck.
- Especially good for people who work on laptops or phone for long hours.

By Ramya Baradwaj

59

October 2020
At 30, she has already been called Chef of the Year 2020 at the Times Food Award and has been listed as one of the 40 under 40 Top Chefs in the country by Conde Nast Traveller. She has lectured students at IIM-A, done a fellowship in America, and has worked with top chefs in Stockholm. Now, she works alongside the United Nations and mentors young chefs. During the lockdown her cooking videos went viral, Meet Megha Kohli, chef, writer, and all round star.

By KAVEEREE BAMZAI

Q. What made you become a chef? How did you choose your profession at such a young age?

A. I was fond of cooking since I was a four-year-old kid. I was always pottering around in the kitchen and used to keep cooking random things, and my family and siblings would be my guinea pigs. I realised I wanted to turn my passion into my profession when I passed out of school and was zeroing in what career path to take. The two options I could think of were journalism or being a chef, and I finally ended up choosing the latter. The main credit for this goes to my mother, who saw the potential chef in me much before I did.

Describe your journey so far.

I started my career with the Oberoi Group of Hotels, with the STEP Programme and then The Oberoi School of Learning and Development. I trained/ worked with the Oberoi group for the first five years of my career in Udaipur, Delhi and Mumbai. Post that I wanted to work in a fine dining restaurant, which is when I joined Olive Beach in New Delhi. After Olive Beach, I headed the Olive Culinary Academy and then I joined a boutique hospitality consultancy called Fabrica, where I was head for all the projects. And finally I became the head Chef of Lavaash, a concept that Chef Sabyasachi Gorai and I worked on for more than two years before we opened it.

How did the lockdown affect your work? Did you make any changes?

As a chef who had been working non stop for 13 years, it was a very drastic and sudden change to sit at home during the lockdown with no agenda for the day. I used this time to read up and research more in the world of food and I also started cooking and experimenting a lot more at home. I made IGTVs of almost 50 different recipes on Instagram to encourage people to cook at home and to spread the joy of my recipes and food to people’s homes. I also wrote a detailed thesis on Muslim influenced cuisines of India which was published in the journal, Social Action, by the Indian Social Institute. I realised that even though I’m a chef, I can still do a lot from home and when I am not in a professional kitchen. Food is too vast a medium to be contained just in the walls of a restaurant.

Is hospitality still a profession that has a future in these covid times?

Yes, I do feel that hospitality is still a profession in these COVID times. The industry has re-invented itself to adapt to the current scenario—whether it’s by getting a chef on your screens virtually to help you put a DIY meal from the restaurant together to making cocktail pre mixes or ready made sauces and dishes available at your doorstep to chefs sharing recipes to the industry going all out to ensure that you have a safe experience when you dine outside. I feel that the hospitality industry is one of the most resilient industries comprising extremely creative, hard working and intelligent people who will make sure that we not only survive but also bounce back even stronger.

What are the things youngsters need to keep in mind about hospitality? It seems glamorous but is it?

Some advice that I would like to share with you all is:

A. Work ethic and attitude is everything. It’s the only thing that matters. I would take a less knowledgeable cook with a great attitude and work ethic over a talented prodigy with bad attitude any day of the week. It will always make for a better team at the restaurant. I can’t tell you how many amazing cooks have been through my kitchens and simply have not made the cut because of their attitude.

B. Learn the basics. A chef’s life in a real kitchen is very different from the glamour that you see on Instagram and on TV shows. It’s a lot of hard work, in hot humid conditions, some days you will work for 18 hours in a day. A shift of 12 hours is considered an “easy day” in our industry. If you have no passion for food and are just entering this profession to become famous or for the glamour then please back out now. Glamour comes after years and years of working on your basics and skills. You will only be considered a good chef and you will only be respected by your colleagues and your juniors if you know your basics. This is a completely skills based job. Which is why I always insist on focusing on your basics. I once had a young intern who used to bring in modern cuisine cookbooks because he wanted to make things like mango caviar and chocolate soil. I told him, ‘Hey, how about you learn how to make a tandoori roti first, cook meat to a correct temperature, clarify a broth and debone meat? Once you can do these things then, and only then, should you try to learn these other techniques.’

C. Don’t ever think you’re above learning from anyone. I learn from my staff as much as they learn from me.

What are the things you would like to see in your staff?

A. Work ethic and attitude is everything. It’s the only thing that matters. I would take a less knowledgeable cook with a great attitude and work ethic over a talented prodigy with bad attitude any day of the week.

B. Learn the basics. A chef’s life in a real kitchen is very different from the glamour that you see on Instagram and on TV shows. It’s a lot of hard work, in hot humid conditions, some days you will work for 18 hours in a day. A shift of 12 hours is considered an “easy day” in our industry. If you have no passion for food and are just entering this profession to become famous or for the glamour then please back out now. Glamour comes after years and years of working on your basics and skills. You will only be considered a good chef and you will only be respected by your colleagues and your juniors if you know your basics. This is a completely skills based job. Which is why I always insist on focusing on your basics. I once had a young intern who used to bring in modern cuisine cookbooks because he wanted to make things like mango caviar and chocolate soil. I told him, ‘Hey, how about you learn how to make a tandoori roti first, cook meat to a correct temperature, clarify a broth and debone meat? Once you can do these things then, and only then, should you try to learn these other techniques.’
Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro are the only two places to host a World Cup final multiple times. The United States has dominated the Women’s World Cup since the inaugural 1991 tournament. They have four titles and one runner up out of the eight tournaments. The most expensive transfer in soccer history came when Paris St. Germain paid FC Barcelona $263 million to obtain Neymar Jr.

The oldest professional football club in the world still in existence today is Sheffield FC. It was founded in 1857, and they have fluctuated in different tiers of play in England.

A match in the Congo in 1998 ended in tragedy as lightning killed an entire team. The opposition was left untouched.

Norway are the only football team not to lose to Brazil in international competition. They have two wins and two draws against the powerhouse.

Germany experienced a baby boom of around 30 per cent roughly nine months after hosting the World Cup in 2006. Many other countries have noticed a spike as well after hosting (and winning countries), but not as big as this one.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

There is no uniform size for a soccer pitch. Going off of FIFA rules alone, length can be anywhere from 100 m to 110 m, while width can be 64 m to 75 m. Individual leagues around the world have even more laid back measurements.

Four out of every five soccer balls are manufactured in Pakistan.

It is common to see Messi point to the sky when he scores a goal. Most people think he is thanking God. However, this gesture is for his late grandmother Celia. He shared a special bond with his grandmother.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

Ricardo Olivera from Uruguay has the fastest recorded goals scored in football history. He was able to find the back of the net just 2.8 seconds into a match in 1998.

There is no uniform size for a soccer pitch. Going off of FIFA rules alone, length can be anywhere from 100 m to 110 m, while width can be 64 m to 75 m. Individual leagues around the world have even more laid back measurements.

A soccer field became known as a pitch due to the slope built into most fields. A soccer field can be sloped as much as 5° upwards from one end to the other, which is why teams will switch sides at the half.

The largest stadium used for soccer in the world is the Rungrado 1st of May stadium in North Korea. Located on Rungra Island in Pyongyang, it holds about 114,000 people for soccer, with a capacity of around 150,000 for other events.

It is common to see Messi point to the sky when he scores a goal. Most people think he is thanking God. However, this gesture is for his late grandmother Celia. He shared a special bond with his grandmother.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro are the only two places to host a World Cup final multiple times. The United States has dominated the Women’s World Cup since the inaugural 1991 tournament. They have four titles and one runner up out of the eight tournaments. The most expensive transfer in soccer history came when Paris St. Germain paid FC Barcelona $263 million to obtain Neymar Jr.

The oldest professional football club in the world still in existence today is Sheffield FC. It was founded in 1857, and they have fluctuated in different tiers of play in England.

A match in the Congo in 1998 ended in tragedy as lightning killed an entire team. The opposition was left untouched.

Norway are the only football team not to lose to Brazil in international competition. They have two wins and two draws against the powerhouse.

Germany experienced a baby boom of around 30 per cent roughly nine months after hosting the World Cup in 2006. Many other countries have noticed a spike as well after hosting (and winning countries), but not as big as this one.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

There is no uniform size for a soccer pitch. Going off of FIFA rules alone, length can be anywhere from 100 m to 110 m, while width can be 64 m to 75 m. Individual leagues around the world have even more laid back measurements.

A soccer field became known as a pitch due to the slope built into most fields. A soccer field can be sloped as much as 5° upwards from one end to the other, which is why teams will switch sides at the half.

The largest stadium used for soccer in the world is the Rungrado 1st of May stadium in North Korea. Located on Rungra Island in Pyongyang, it holds about 114,000 people for soccer, with a capacity of around 150,000 for other events.

It is common to see Messi point to the sky when he scores a goal. Most people think he is thanking God. However, this gesture is for his late grandmother Celia. He shared a special bond with his grandmother.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro are the only two places to host a World Cup final multiple times. The United States has dominated the Women’s World Cup since the inaugural 1991 tournament. They have four titles and one runner up out of the eight tournaments. The most expensive transfer in soccer history came when Paris St. Germain paid FC Barcelona $263 million to obtain Neymar Jr.

The oldest professional football club in the world still in existence today is Sheffield FC. It was founded in 1857, and they have fluctuated in different tiers of play in England.

A match in the Congo in 1998 ended in tragedy as lightning killed an entire team. The opposition was left untouched.

Norway are the only football team not to lose to Brazil in international competition. They have two wins and two draws against the powerhouse.

Germany experienced a baby boom of around 30 per cent roughly nine months after hosting the World Cup in 2006. Many other countries have noticed a spike as well after hosting (and winning countries), but not as big as this one.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

There is no uniform size for a soccer pitch. Going off of FIFA rules alone, length can be anywhere from 100 m to 110 m, while width can be 64 m to 75 m. Individual leagues around the world have even more laid back measurements.

A soccer field became known as a pitch due to the slope built into most fields. A soccer field can be sloped as much as 5° upwards from one end to the other, which is why teams will switch sides at the half.

The largest stadium used for soccer in the world is the Rungrado 1st of May stadium in North Korea. Located on Rungra Island in Pyongyang, it holds about 114,000 people for soccer, with a capacity of around 150,000 for other events.

It is common to see Messi point to the sky when he scores a goal. Most people think he is thanking God. However, this gesture is for his late grandmother Celia. He shared a special bond with his grandmother.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro are the only two places to host a World Cup final multiple times. The United States has dominated the Women’s World Cup since the inaugural 1991 tournament. They have four titles and one runner up out of the eight tournaments. The most expensive transfer in soccer history came when Paris St. Germain paid FC Barcelona $263 million to obtain Neymar Jr.

The oldest professional football club in the world still in existence today is Sheffield FC. It was founded in 1857, and they have fluctuated in different tiers of play in England.

A match in the Congo in 1998 ended in tragedy as lightning killed an entire team. The opposition was left untouched.

Norway are the only football team not to lose to Brazil in international competition. They have two wins and two draws against the powerhouse.

Germany experienced a baby boom of around 30 per cent roughly nine months after hosting the World Cup in 2006. Many other countries have noticed a spike as well after hosting (and winning countries), but not as big as this one.

There are over 5000 teams in the English football system, with different tiers depending on the caliber of play. Any team can move up to the highest league, the Barclays Premier League, by winning and moving up.

There is no uniform size for a soccer pitch. Going off of FIFA rules alone, length can be anywhere from 100 m to 110 m, while width can be 64 m to 75 m. Individual leagues around the world have even more laid back measurements.

A soccer field became known as a pitch due to the slope built into most fields. A soccer field can be sloped as much as 5° upwards from one end to the other, which is why teams will switch sides at the half.

The largest stadium used for soccer in the world is the Rungrado 1st of May stadium in North Korea. Located on Rungra Island in Pyongyang, it holds about 114,000 people for soccer, with a capacity of around 150,000 for other events.

It is common to see Messi point to the sky when he scores a goal. Most people think he is thanking God. However, this gesture is for his late grandmother Celia. He shared a special bond with his grandmother.
The academic year 2019-20 was almost coming to an end when in mid-March the entire country went in an indefinite lockdown due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The sudden closure disrupted every sector across the nation and the world at large; education was no exception to it. As per the UN report, the COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries. Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing health crisis, the year 2020 has taught humanity many things and changed the very way we live. Year 2020 brought families together, teaching people the importance of time for the family, taught the urgency of our responsibility towards the environment and showed the significance of empathy. As we continue to live through these challenging times, adopting ourselves to the new normal, it would be helpful to reflect on what students and teachers among those severely affected by the pandemic, likely have learnt.

Over the decades, by and large, learning was confined to the four walls of a physical classroom of a traditional school day. With the emergence of technology in education and globalization, several schools realized that education goes beyond the confines of a classroom and learning can take place within and beyond the school hours. Overall, through many schools, virtual learning seemed a remote reality for the students. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 propelled school leaders and institutions to adopt virtual learning mode as a feasible alternative to continue the teaching-learning process. Teachers and students quickly adapting to the virtual learning platform wholehearted. Virtual learning offered a significant scope for students to become independent learners, enabling them explore their abilities for time management, development of 21st century skills and taking ownership of their learning journey through a blend of synchronous and asynchronous methods.

With the passage of just six months, we witnessed a significant growth in the shift to virtual learning. Technology has demonstrated that where there is a will, there is a way. Going forward, blended learning is likely to be the new normal. Covid-19 which was thought to be for our harm, worked out for the good of the education sector in more ways than one as it helped to make a sustained shift to re-skilling and up-skilling to become lifelong learners. It is encouraging that schools have remained committed to ensure that quality teaching-learning continues through the virtual learning platforms to support wholesome learning experience for their students. Robert John Meehan, an educator and author has wonderfully said, “A well prepared and engaging teacher is a catalyst… a spark that creates the desire to learn in our students.”

ANSWERS:
1. George Washington  
2. Judicial, Legislative and Presidential  
3. Thomas Jefferson  
4. Articles of Confederation  
5. Aaron Burr  
6. Clarence Thomas  
7. Alexander Hamilton was shot dead by  
8. Which US president was assassinated in 1963?  
9. The words slavery or slave were mentioned in the US Constitution?  
10. Can someone who is not born in America aim to become US president?

BETTER LIVING | QUICK QUIZ

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW US POLITICS?

The American elections are round the corner and it’s time to test how much you know of the country’s democracy.

1. Who was the first President of the United States after the adoption of the Constitution in 1787?
   - Alexander Hamilton
   - John Adams
   - George Washington
   - Samuel Adams

2. What are the three branches of the US Government?
   - Judicial, Legislative and Presidential
   - Judicial, Legislative and Executive
   - Executive, Pluralist and Sovereignty
   - Executive, Judicial and Confederation

3. The Declaration of Independence was written by
   - Thomas Jefferson
   - James Madison
   - John Adams
   - Benjamin Franklin

4. What was the first written document that established the colonial government in 1777?
   - The Virginia Plan
   - Declaration of Independence
   - Articles of Confederation
   - The Federalist Papers

5. Alexander Hamilton was shot dead by
   - Aaron Burr
   - John Jay
   - John Adams
   - Samuel Adams

6. Who was the first African-American Supreme Court Justice
   - Clarence Thomas
   - Thurgood Marshall
   - Jesse Jackson
   - Sojourner Truth

7. Which philosopher influenced Thomas Jefferson in writing the Declaration of Independence?
   - Descartes
   - John Locke
   - Montesquieu
   - Voltaire

8. Which US president was assassinated in 1963?
   - Johnson
   - Kennedy
   - Jimmy Carter
   - Nixon

9. The words slavery or slave were mentioned in the US Constitution?
   - True
   - False

10. Can someone who is not born in America aim to become US president?
    - Yes
    - No

PHOTO CREDIT: Unsplash

UP CLOSE | THE LAST WORD

What has 2020 taught Teachers and Students?

ORACE PINTO
MD. RYAN GROUP
The Global Youth Alliance (GYA) is an organization and programming model that empowers young people from the ages of 14 to 20 with the skills and resources they need to meaningfully enrich their local, national, and international communities. Our mission is to bring young people together in a collaborative, empowering space where they can advocate for meaningful social causes while developing their professional skill set. Through youth-led educational programming, community service projects, multimedia, and professional networking, GYA equips young people to serve vulnerable communities and build connections around the world.

Want to Become a Global Youth Alliance Member? For further information please contact connect@childrenscommunity.in