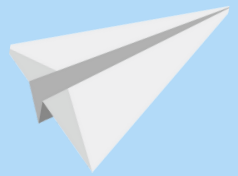


Issue 28

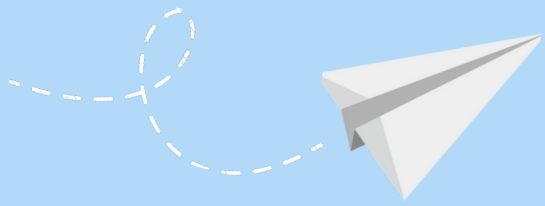
April 2022

Matrix



Shatin Pui Ying Post

Connection



Editor's Note

With stringent social distancing measures in place, face-to-face communication has become a rarity. Though this is the case, nothing can stop us from communicating with others what we think and how we feel. We continue to express ourselves effectively, and often more powerfully, through writing.

In this issue, our budding writers share with us their inner thoughts and feelings, their stories of personal growth, their understanding of the world, and comments on social issues. Let's dive into these young minds and try seeing the world through their youthful perspectives. Enjoy!

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*The Emotional
Rollercoaster that Made
Me the Best Version of
Myself*

by Pauline Yau 6D (24)



A path of various footprints leads from the top left towards the right, ending near a large green tree. The path is orange and the footprints are in shades of brown and black. In the background, there are several stylized green trees with black trunks.

Footprints and Passersby

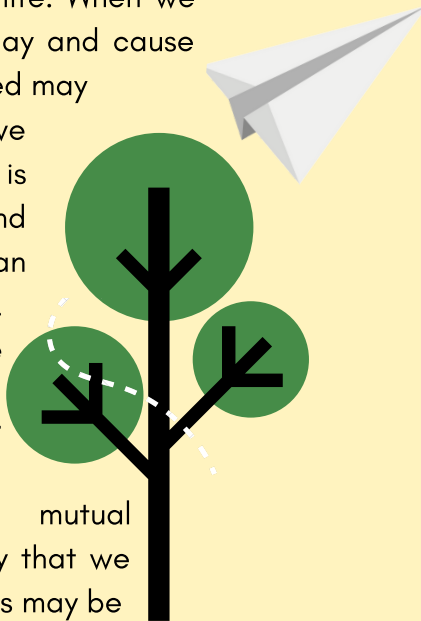
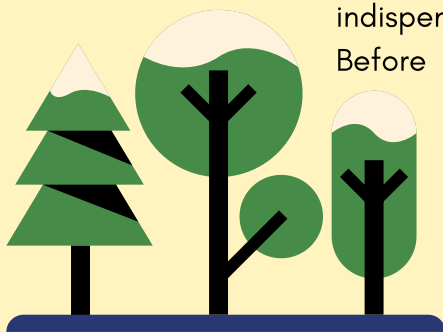
by Perry Chiang 4C (3)

Throughout our lives, we meet countless people. Some may just be passers-by, but some may leave a footprint.

"Remember those who have held umbrellas for you in heavy rain, those who have made you laugh, and those who will always value you. Their warmth is what allows you to move forward in the darkness."

Everyone needs different friends at each stage of life. When we are young, the friends we need are people who play and cause trouble with us. As we grow older, the friends we need may be those who help us overcome the difficulties we encounter. When we are depressed, what we need is a trusted confidante. Regardless of our age and despite the many changes in mentality, friends are an indispensable part of our lives.

Before meeting them, we were strangers to our friends. As time goes by, our bond grows deeper and deeper with every mutual experience and memory that we share. These companions may be




hard to find, but once we do, it is definitely our good fortune at work.

Here is a story about friendship.

“One day, Hedgehog transferred to a new school. He tried very hard to fit in. He wanted to play on the swings with his classmates. However, because of his spines, he wasn’t welcomed. On the day of the school trip, Hedgehog tried to sit with his classmates, but his spines injured his neighbour. To avoid hurting others, he walked away despondently and sat by himself. Later, when it was time to go home, his classmates gave him a large gift box which was filled with small cotton buds. His classmates put a cotton bud on each of Hedgehog’s spines and embraced him. Only then did Hedgehog discover that his friends were trying to accommodate his difference and help him fit in.

“A true friend accepts who you are, but also helps you become who you should be.”





Real friends will not despise us because of our flaws, but will protect us and be there for us. In the story, the spines on Hedgehog make him feel like an outlier. But his classmates do not give up on being friends with him. Instead they try to include him into their circle. No matter what we are, someone will be willing to make friends and progress with us.

“Every friendship travels sometime through the black valley of despair. This tests every aspect of your affection. You lose the attraction and the magic. Your sense of each other darkens and your presence is sore. If you can come through this time, it can purify with your love, and falsity and need will fall away. It will bring you onto new ground where affection can grow again.” –John O’Donohue



The Connection Between Music and Humans

by Krystal Law 4C (6)

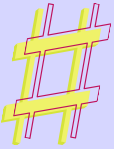
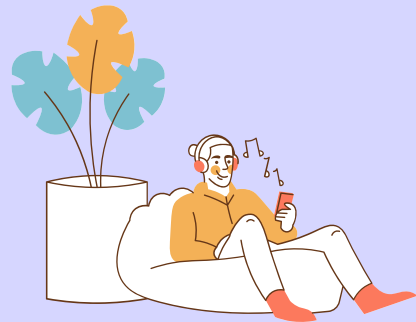
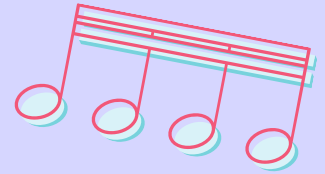
Music is a universal form of communication. You may ask, 'Aren't languages like English the true universal language connecting people across the globe?' For me, languages communicate only intellectual meanings whereas music also conveys emotional meanings. Listening to music, singing, playing instruments and composing are common activities for many people, as these allow them to express their inner selves while bringing them many positive effects. The connection between music and us human beings is really interesting. From the way our ancestors valued music, we can understand how deep and fundamental our need for music is.



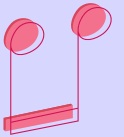
Music has a massive influence on our emotions. We all have that one song that can bring us joy or sadness. This is also why



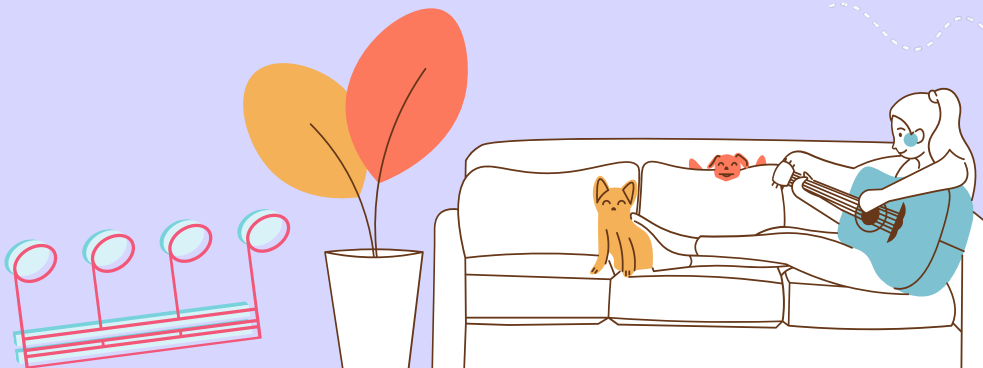
directors add background music to films and videos -- they want you to feel the right emotions at the right time. For example, happy, upbeat music causes our brain to produce chemicals like dopamine, which makes us feel happy and relieves stress. On the other hand, sad music like break up songs helps us release unpleasant emotions from

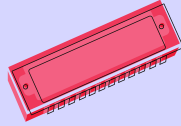
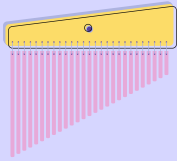
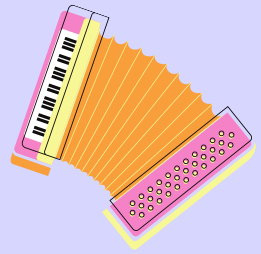
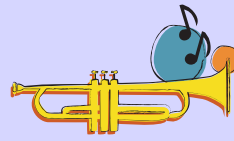


deep inside our heart. According to a study, depressed people feel relieved after listening to sad songs, stating that those songs are relatable to them and that it feels like somebody completely understands their situation. This foregrounds why music is used in therapy. Music therapy is an effective tool that helps patients who have trouble expressing their emotions, and it includes both listening to music and making music.



In addition, music connects us with old memories. We humans have something called 'music memory'. Most of us are able to remember the catchiest parts of songs after listening to them a few times, with some of us even being able to recall entire songs. This explains why people sometimes feel nostalgic when listening to music. Listening to and playing music can





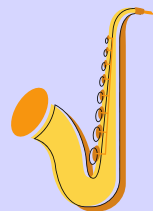
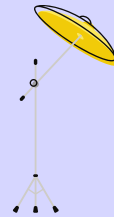
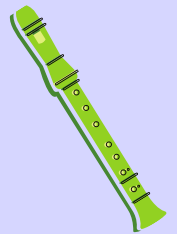
activate areas of our brains linked with memories, calling forth emotions. For instance, music can help those afflicted with brain injuries or memory issues, as it helps them recall some of the special moments in their lives that they might have forgotten.



Music does not just help us revive stored memories, it also helps us create new ones. According to a study done in the US and Japan, elderly people who did weekly physical exercise while listening to music scored higher in memory tests. There is also an interesting phenomenon in music called an 'earworm', which occurs when a song is stuck in a person's head. Earworms are interesting in that they are thoughts that replay the music in our heads depending on the catchiness, the time played and the emotions of the song.



Music connects people to their communities. Music is everywhere, and whenever people come together, there is





music. People easily connect to others who like listening to the same genre of music. Music is also a part of many celebrations or festivals in different communities around the globe. It brings us joy, helps us express our feelings, and creates a sense of belonging towards a particular group or culture.

Music is everywhere, and whenever people come together, there is music.



Undoubtedly, music plays a huge role in our lives and even in our society. Even though everyone's musical tastes are different, we can all benefit from music emotionally and socially. Music is a good way to express our true feelings, linking us with significant memories, and connecting us with our people and our community. The psychological and social benefits music brings is definitely unparalleled by language.



Little Bear (Part 1)

by Lois Leung 5A (10)

"Guten Morgen! Einen Kaffee zum mitnehmen."



The cashier's beaming smile reduced into a bewildered frown at my strange accent.

"Einen Kaffee zum mitnehmen."

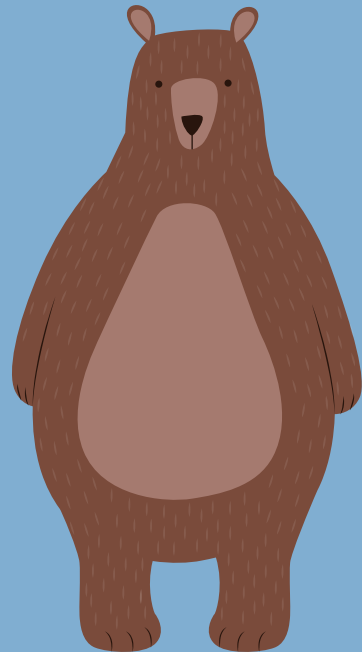
I repeated each word the best I could, unable to shake off the hint of my Afghan accent, all the while trying and failing to ignore the anxiety surging through my veins.

"Ja klar."

He flashed me a smile. Yet, the glitter in his hazel eyes never returned.

I — a cup of coffee in one hand, my laptop in the other — hurried into the subway, and muttered apology over apology as my shoulders brushed past dozens of Berliners on my way to *Deutsche Welle's* headquarters, where I recently, and successfully, applied for a traineeship.

It'd been 10 years since Mother and I were granted asylum in Germany. I was now a fresh university graduate who had majored in Journalism — just as Mother and I had always dreamt of.





"Asmaan, listen to me, you were born to be a fierce bear. You were born to be a journalist, to expose our monsters to the world, and to help our people." I could almost hear Mother's voice trailing after me.

A text notification from my phone broke my thoughts. I took it out of my pocket. The headline of the news article read: *"The End of Taliban? NATO and America's Final Strike"*.

For a moment, I stared at those words in a daze, all my emotions rushing to my brain in a tangle. Flashes of my ruined school sneaked their way into my mind and tried to consume my thoughts.

I took a deep breath, reminding myself repeatedly: I am in Germany. I am no longer in Afghanistan. I am safe. I put my phone away and tried not giving it another thought. Yet, my hands were trembling slightly.

"Welcome, Asmaan! Have you prepared for your presentation?"

"Of course. I've been preparing for it the entire week."



I am in
Germany. I am
no longer in
Afghanistan. I
am safe.



I followed the receptionist into a room packed with my fellow trainees. I took my seat among them, all wide-eyed and anticipating. I could almost hear my heart pounding ferociously in my chest.

"Welcome, fellow trainees. I trust you're all aware of what you're here for. Today, we'll be discussing a new documentary about the life of Afghan people in Germany and we would like your help. But first, we would like to invite one very special trainee to tell us something about her life in this city. A round of applause for Asmaan, please!"



This is my moment, Mother. This is my moment to become the fierce bear to help our people, to fight against our monsters.

All eyes were fixed on my face, glowing under the luminous light, as I took the stage.

"Good morning, everyone, I'm here to tell you a story about a little girl waking up from slumber and finding herself on her mother's lap in a plane crowded with terrified people, all trying desperately to flee from monsters, while her father was nowhere to be found."

I let the sentence hang in the air for a second, and continued, "I'm here to tell you a story about my life as an Afghan in Germany..."



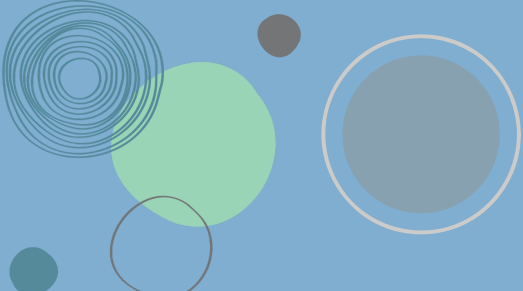
Someone in the audience let out a gasp that echoed in the room.

“Berlin has been my home for nearly 11 years, and I am truly grateful for everything offered to me by this beautiful city, where the monsters could never take control of my life...”

Out of the corners of my eyes, I caught a glimpse of other trainees’ intent stare. I spoke about Afghanistan; I spoke about Germany, about Berlin; I spoke about the monsters. I spoke about everything.

When my speech drew to an end, the room was instantly filled with thunderous applause. Yet, the rush of adrenaline I had expected never came. Instead, I caught sight of the monsters resting behind the crowd, their eyes glaring at me, growling beneath the claps and cheers.



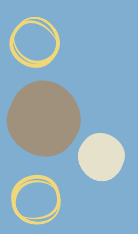


I blinked once, then twice, then slightly tilted my head, and put on a graceful grin in an attempt to suppress the doubt and unease rising in my heart.

“Thanks so much for the powerful story, Asmaan. We’ll be meeting in two weeks for the preparation of the documentary. We look forward to hearing more about you,” the facilitator, with her sky-blue eyes, said as she saw me out of the building.

“Thank you, it’d be my honour,” I nodded with a faint smile as I stepped out of the building into the sunlit afternoon streets.

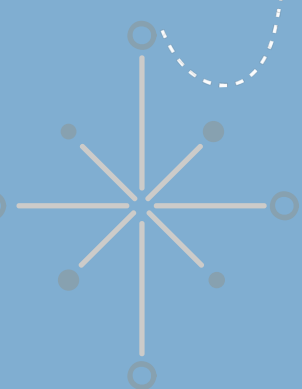
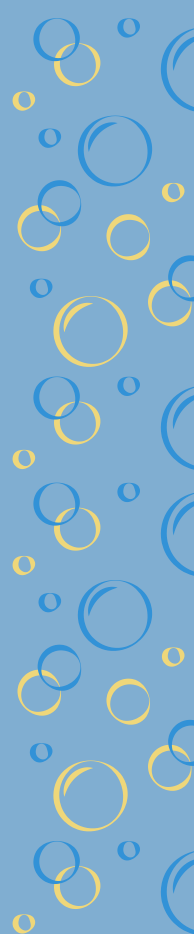
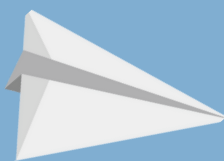
Strolling around the city, my shadow trailing my every step, I tried and failed to calm my restless heart. I stared at the walls covered with vivid graffiti, only to see my school in Afghanistan being blown into pieces. Again.



I did it, Mother, I did it. But why was my heart aching? Why were the monsters still lurking in the shadows, haunting me?

I shook my head once, then twice, then for the third time, I took my phone out of my pocket, and purchased a train ticket to Hamburg.

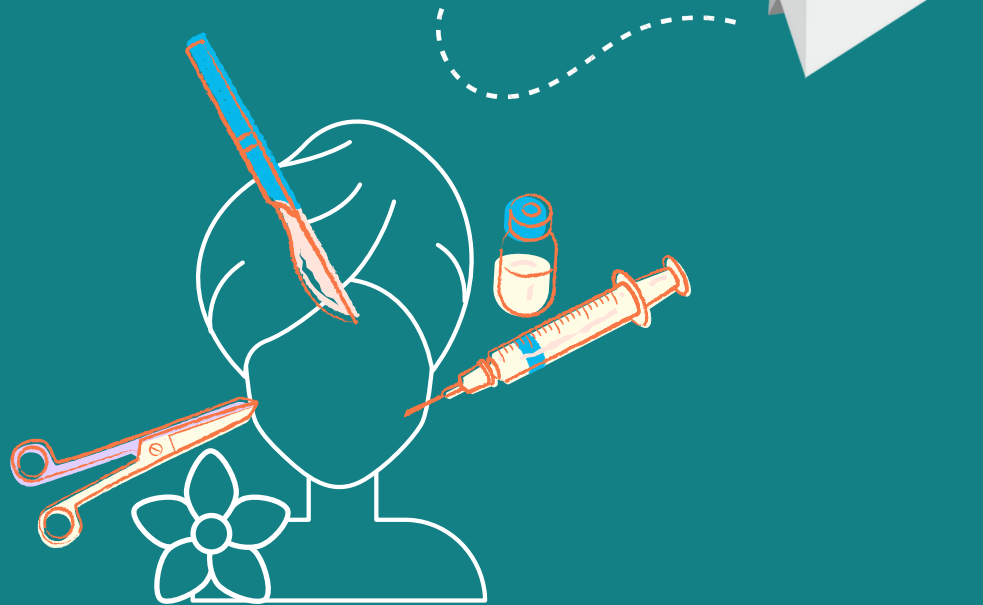
(To be continued in the next issue)



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

by Stella Pun 5B (11)

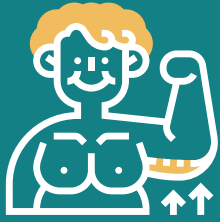
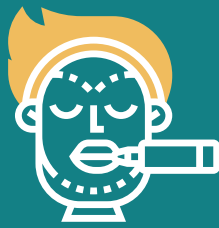
Going under the knife to get ahead in life? Not so fast, urges our correspondent.



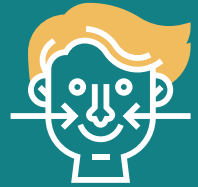
Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing in response to the article titled 'Cosmetic Surgery Enhances People's Lives' dated 14 December, which sheds light on the upward trend of undergoing cosmetic surgery to help people excel in different aspects of life. In my point of view, it is undoubtedly not worth going under the knife to acquire more opportunities in life.

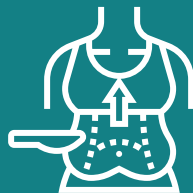
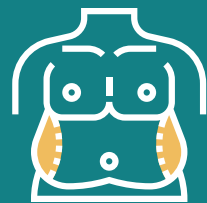
It is irrefutable that the artificial enhancements to one's appearance brought by cosmetic surgery are temporary. According to a survey published in the Journal of the Korean Society of Cosmetology, 20.1% of respondents indicated that they were willing to stop their skin from aging by receiving Botox injections. However, the effect of reducing facial wrinkles is not long-lasting. The patient has to keep receiving injections, which becomes a massive financial burden. An exorbitant amount of money needs to be spent if one wants to keep up his/her appearance for a job. This is certainly not cost-effective.



Cosmetic surgery may lead to a myriad of serious health complications. For instance, permanent nerve damage can be triggered by a facelift, resulting in facial paralysis. Moreover, scarring is prevalent owing to surgical failure or mismanagement. These devastating side-effects will absolutely lower the self-esteem of the patient, contradicting the belief that these surgeries could improve self-image. Therefore, it is definitely not worthwhile to put our physical well-being at stake since these operations pose disastrous psychological and physical risks.



Admittedly, external beauty is embraced by most people in today's society. Nonetheless, it is more important for us to be virtuous people. In fact, whether a person can secure a job opportunity or appeal to the opposite sex is attributed to their personality, rather than their gorgeous appearance. Everybody is attractive and





enchanting to somebody else. Instead, we should focus on developing positive qualities like having integrity, treating others with respect and being optimistic. Outward beauty is only skin deep.

To conclude, it is not necessary to perfect our appearance through undergoing cosmetic surgery due to the potential health risks involved. To be a truly beautiful person, a virtuous character is more significant than a flawless exterior. Although cosmetic companies and the media constantly bombard us with promotions for surgical makeovers, we should embrace our uniqueness and should not let our self-confidence be undermined by this unhealthy trend. Be yourself and trust that there will be somebody who truly appreciates you for you.

Yours faithfully,

Stella

Stella Pun
Shatin



*At the end of the day, no product or service
in the cosmetic industry can make you more beautiful than you already feel.*



To my followers:

The Emotional Rollercoaster that Made Me the Best Version of Myself

by Pauline Yau 6D (24)

“School suspension will start next week.” To me, that was the start of the pandemic. To a 16-year-old girl, the sudden announcement of “no school next week” was the first ‘real’ impact of the coronavirus -- not the news reporting the first case of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, nor the chaos in the supermarket of people scrambling for toilet paper. To an oblivious schoolgirl like me, I only became aware of the pandemic when I no longer had to wake up at seven in the morning.

Not only did I not have to wake up early, but I also didn't have to get dressed, go out for lunch (imagine the danger of eating in a public place without a mask on!), or go to piano lessons or tutorial classes! My routine that had stood its ground for years, seemingly eternal as the sun in the sky, had suddenly crumbled.

And let me tell you, I was overjoyed.

I woke up at 11 every day, then ordered takeout from whatever restaurant I wanted. I ate junk food seven days in a row until I gagged on the word

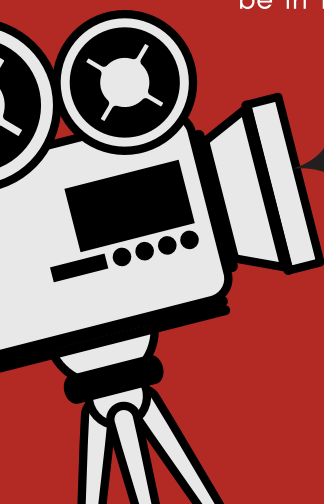


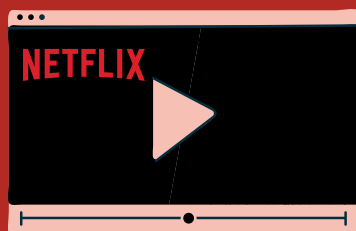
'fried'. I binge-watched all the TV shows I could and put off doing my homework. I finished six seasons of the HBO show 'Girls', as well as 'Little Big Lies' and 'The Handmaid's Tale'. It started to feel like my best friends were Hollywood stars as I spent all day watching them. However, the euphoria that I experienced didn't last as long as an evil existential crisis crept up.

Losing my ultimate purpose in life (studying to score exceptional grades in the DSE exam) had taken a toll on my mental health. All motivation and meaning vanished. What is my purpose if not being the top 1% of the Hong Kong education system?

The pandemic and the lockdown forced me to examine this question seriously. I started to contemplate who I really wanted to be in this world. Who knew a pandemic had the power to turn an ignorant schoolgirl into a philosopher?

At first glance, I was just an average student who was so invested in navigating through the exam-oriented education system that I enjoyed nothing more than putting my brain on pause





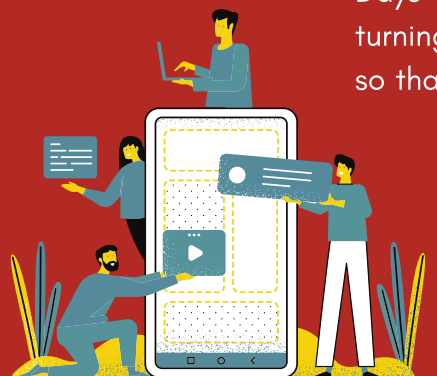
while watching Netflix. The only thing that didn't add up was that I wasn't putting my brain on pause, it was on fire. On closer examination, I realized the excitement and passion I felt watching a story unfold. I trained my attention to the

cinematography and soundtrack of a film or TV series. That was when I started to write film reviews and enrolled in a masterclass by Aaron Sorkin to teach myself screenwriting.

That was also when online classes started. Unfamiliar with the classroom setting of Google Classroom and Zoom, every day was a surprise. One day it was a student reporting a mic malfunction to avoid answering a question from the teacher. On another day, it was a cat destroying the teacher's camera, causing a wave of applause and cheers.



Days went by as I mastered the art of turning off the camera at the perfect time so that the teachers didn't notice. I began to post my film reviews online and slowly received recognition from other avid movie lovers. We discussed the magic of cinema and our mutual agony that cinemas were closed until... well, nobody knew when.





Then, out of the blue, things took a turn, and my dad became unemployed. He had been working from home for months until then, so nothing changed at home. But the despair in the air was almost too much to bear. I paid attention to the news and became aware of the soaring unemployment rate as well as the steep plunge in the stock market. The economic recession I studied in history books was right in front of me. My mom worked longer hours, which was a slap back to reality. There were people dying all around the world without medical care and supplies. Suddenly, the weariness of staying at home felt like a blessing.



Watching the news also resulted in my awareness of fake news, from the need to steam masks to the importance of spraying them with hand sanitizers, the creativity and ignorance of these stories never failed to shock me. All over the Internet were conspiracy theories about how vaccines were injected with a disc to track people's whereabouts. I learned that in desperate moments, people like to imagine bizarre beliefs as reality to comfort themselves and to feel that they are in control.

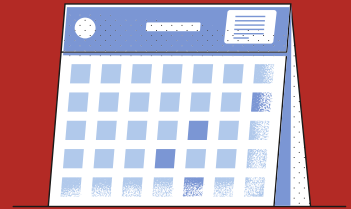
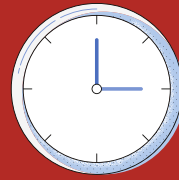


That was not what our family did. My dad never stopped applying for jobs even though practically nowhere was hiring. Mom was working eight hours a day but never complained. I continued writing film reviews and opened a Patreon account. I will never forget the pure joy of having my first subscriber. I felt so proud of myself for turning my interest into a pursuit. My




efforts were recognised, appreciated and rewarded.

I won't lie and say we weren't at all panicky. The pandemic disrupted all of our routines, and everything felt like it was spinning out of control. But routines are made by humans, and they are the results of what we do every day. As long as we have each other, we will always have a routine that can keep our feet on the ground.




Last month, schools reopened. But that, to me, was not the end of the pandemic. I taught my grandparents how to use 'Leave Home Safe' so they could go to mass every morning, their own little routine. I started waking up at seven every day again but did not feel like dying. It was a real emotional rollercoaster, from euphoria to anxiety, anxiety to despair, despair to shock, and shock to contentment. Nevertheless, I would go as far as to say I am doing better than I have ever been.



I stopped taking everything for granted. I have a roof above my head, a stable family income and a mask on my face. I still complain about the heat the mask creates but I also appreciate it for keeping my facial expressions and true emotions to myself! Just joking, I'm grateful that it keeps me safe. I became

aware of my privilege of being protected and given priority.





Being thankful for what you possess is a greater feeling than having everything.

I also found my purpose. I discovered my passion and enthusiasm for movie making, and I took my first step to achieving my dream of being a filmmaker by writing film reviews. Now, I am looking for film colleges to apply to. Knowing your place in the world is a much better way to live than blindly following the norm.

What's more, understanding how fragile life and our daily lives are, I value every second of my life -- well, at least most of it. The deadly pandemic is horrible and unfortunate, taking so much away from us. So, it is only fair that I took away these lessons from it and became a better, if not the best, version of myself.



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