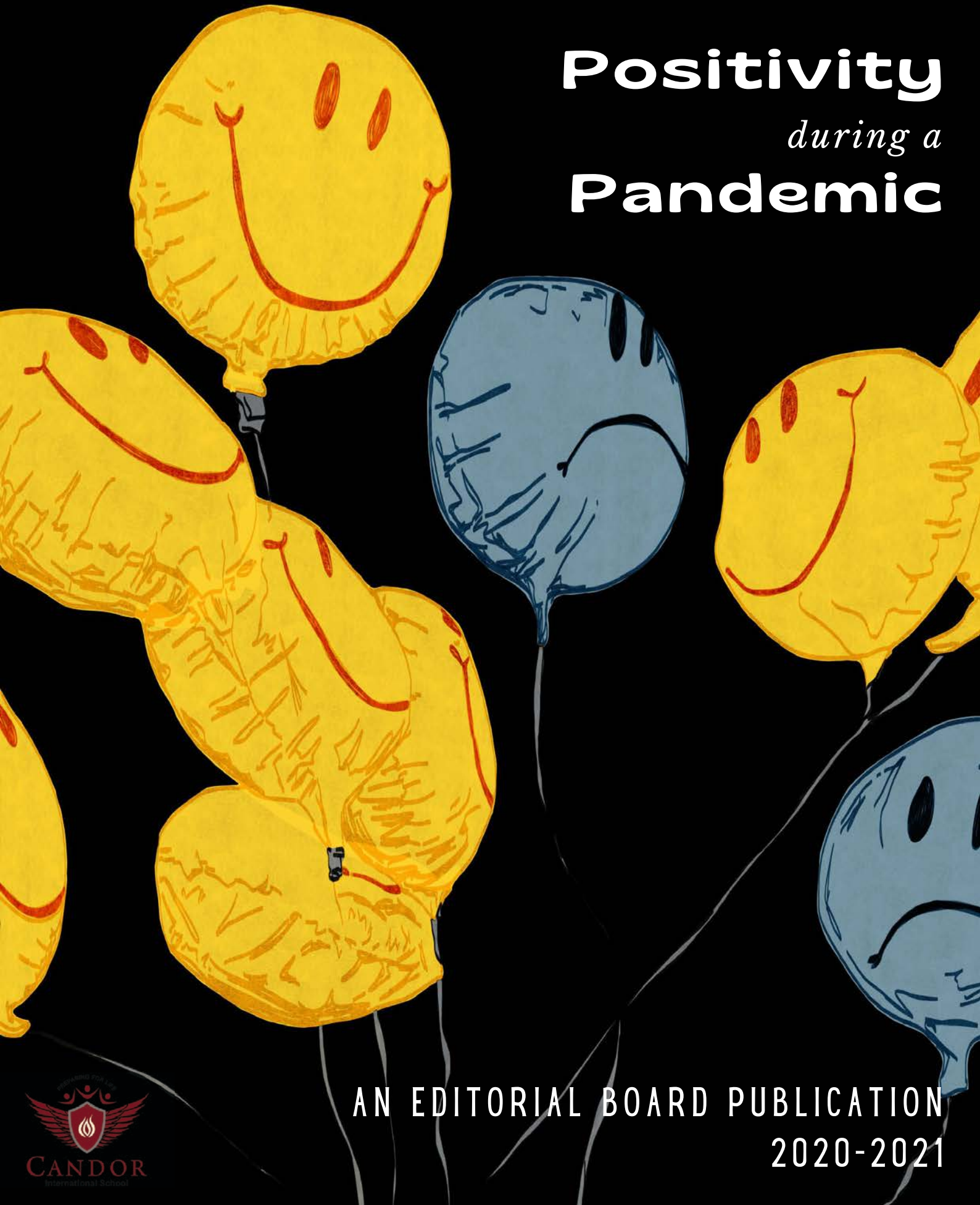


MERAKI

Positivity
during a
Pandemic



AN EDITORIAL BOARD PUBLICATION
2020-2021

Editor's Note

It's April. Some can say that it's a month of beginnings. The beginning of summer and flowers and scorching sun. Yet it also brings uncertainty and apprehension. I can hardly imagine a more stressful time. Some of us are in school, some of us exist only virtually and most of us exist in the in-between. We're constantly submitting assignments online so much so our screen-time cannot help but be over the limit.

Tomorrows have become the backlog of todays.

So, at this point, dear reader, I urge you to place yourself first. Mental health is a word that you may have heard countless times amidst a pandemic. And I am here to reiterate those words- I cannot emphasise enough the importance of your mental health amidst a pandemic that seems to encroach on the sanctuaries that are our minds. Time seems like a meaningless blur to most nowadays, so the only solution is to place importance on the now.

Our team here at Meraki has worked extremely hard to give you our first edition of this year titled: *Positivity during a pandemic*. It's easy to disregard the importance of school-journalism by casually questioning, "Does it matter?" Well, I'm here to answer your question- of course, it matters. If we have even one minuscule part in bringing a smile to your face or peace to your mind, I think what we do here does matter.

I am so proud to announce that we have articles, book and movie reviews, recommendations for your rejuvenation, intricately-crafted quizzes, and so much more- all generously sprinkled with love, wisdom, and a little bit of humour. Made for your enjoyment and recuperation.

April may be a month of beginnings, but I think it can be one of healing too. So, sit back and I hope you enjoy the ride.



Anoushka Ghosh
Editor-in-Chief



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SLUMP

01

CHAITRA BARKAM

On the 19th of March, 2020, we boarded the buses to leave school not knowing that it was going to be the last time we would attend it for an entire year. The whirlwind that was 2020 distorted everyone's lives and changed their perception of the world. Due to COVID-19, one of 2020's monsters, we returned to school in a virtual set-up. No more desks, uniforms or school bells ringing. At first, this seemed like something we could get used to; we could get up later in the day, follow whatever routine we wanted to, and stay in the comfort of our homes all day.

This honeymoon phase didn't last long though, as the online setup began to allow leeways for distraction and mindless entertainment. Soon, whether it was conscious or unconscious, students began slipping into a detrimental cycle of irresolute work habits with seemingly no way to break it.

As we complained that the hours of screen time bored into our heads and dulled our brains, it didn't stop us from remaining on our devices after school hours to scroll through social media. We were stuck in our rooms with only ourselves and our bad habits, as there wasn't enough motivation to break through this monotonous stupor that stunted our room to grow.

The description above is a classic example of a slump, which is defined as a prolonged period of abnormally low economic activity. This can apply to individuals too, especially students who burn out after a period of intense, unsustainable studying. While learning and staying on track should be a matter of discipline, motivation and your surrounding environment play a prominent role in determining the work ethic of students.

Psychologists categorise motivation in two forms: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, where intrinsic is the ability to self-inspire, and extrinsic encompasses the external factors like peer influence and modulated settings that put the right amount of pressure on children. It is obvious to say that during the lockdown, there was a near-complete loss of extrinsic motivation that would normally challenge students to push themselves. Intrinsic motivation is barely enough to counter dwindling concentration, making it easier to digress and do activities that seem more entertaining at the moment, which, in reality, contribute to an unhealthy work ethic.

The slump is an extremely frustrating period in our lives as it leads to the unintentional building of habits that are extremely toxic for our wellbeing. Finding the perseverance to break them will be a challenge, but a challenge I'm sure all of us will find our way to decimate.

If you feel that you are stuck in a spot where you aren't able to find any motivation, here are a few things that specialists like Hirsh-Pasek recommend-

- Do small brain-challenging activities, like sudoku or word puzzles that stimulate your brain
- Don't rush into studying and don't study for hours on end, as those are unsustainable habits and can result in you falling into a deeper slump than before. Build habits that are easy to follow.
- Try to boost your self-efficacy and autonomy by doing things that make you confident. Right now there won't be external pressure to motivate you, so you should try to strengthen your intrinsic motivation.



Source: Pinterest

Source:

- 1) theguardian.com
- 2) sites.nd.edu
- 3) liberalarts.edu

euphoria: eu-pho-ri-a

noun

artificial happiness.

-Isbaan Romil

After a long hard day, haven't you wondered what it would be like to escape to a world without the constant stress of deadlines, fear of failure, and burdens of the real world? It was not just an escapist fantasy for me. It was reality.

It all began one miserable day. I woke up late -- as I often did -- in my dull, grey room and dragged myself to school. It wasn't like this before. A day at school was always better than the previous one. I was my school's best football player after all. I had led our school to the state championship. I felt like nothing could get in my way. All that changed when I developed a hairline fracture on my ankle. I had to stay away from the field for three long, arduous months. When the time finally came for me to return to the field -- to the same field where I'd scored dozens of goals in front of an overjoyed audience -- I... couldn't. I guess I was fearful of injuring myself again. This year, it was worse. I didn't even try out for the team.

I had always loved walking into school hearing the cacophony of contrasting sounds -- the dozens of minute conversations, the constant ringing of alarm bells (a literal horrid-sounding orchestra!) but now, all it seemed like was meaningless silence. Cold, hard silence. When I look around at the jovial faces around me in the cafeteria, I could not handle my misery. They were enjoying doing what they loved -- when I no longer could. Grabbing an apple, I kept wishing my life would return to normal. Every bite I took, the more I wished and dreamt and hoped. I want to feel alive again **crunch** I want to enjoy the world around me **chomp** I want to feel true jo-

The next thing I remember was that I woke up in my bed after what felt like years of sleep in my vivid, colourful room. I could've stayed home and accomplished nothing but instead, I strutted into school full of confidence, enjoying and absorbing my surroundings. The hollers of my friends and the aromatic smells of cafeteria meals all seemed so vivid. For the first time since last year, the school felt real -- like a second home.



02



Source: Pinterest

I'm not sure what happened the rest of that day -- the events remain a blur -- but it all led me back home. I had planned to attend a mid-season football tryout, but I found myself too euphoric to care about a position that I wasn't sure that I even wanted. Needless to say, I skipped the tryout.

I was so enthused and overjoyed throughout the day that I ignored everything important to me. It was at that moment that I realized what I was missing was not euphoria, but rather... a passion.

I had experienced what joy felt like. It was like being a kid in a candy shop. It meant taking in one's surroundings to the utmost of their abilities -- everything from the clock ticking to the aroma of cafeteria food... but it came at a price. I lost interest in everything because my euphoria had overpowered even the strongest feelings of passion. As the sense of joy slowly drained from my body, I decided that I didn't need artificial happiness. The delight felt good but nothing could ever satisfy me as much as returning to the football field.

I pleaded with the coach to offer me another opportunity to try out. Eventually, he agreed. This time, I would not abscond out of fear. I would try my hardest to fulfil my passion. I decided that if I ever want to naturally experience what I felt that one euphoric day, I would have to make the most of this opportunity.

A Serendipitous Solitude

Dinisha Tiwari

03

Around 10 months ago, my life took a pivot. It went directly from thinking about strategies to get more fruit custard from the bustling cafeteria at our school, to finding ways to dispel boredom in the comfort of my home. Now, I pay heed to strengthening bonds, embracing imperfections, and utopian peace. These were deeper matters that I had thought of as 'boring aunty stuff' but the lockdown made me take that road less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.

I am tempted to say that the 'old me' was cringey, immature, and shallow. The 'new me' is all of that, but only partially. My point is that everything has changed within the span of this period- a week-long 'holiday' that turned out to be a never-ending work-from-home. For instance, my dad was always busy on office tours so we barely got time to have a Chai pe Charcha (Chat over Chai). Conversations that didn't mention school grades were seldom. However, this lockdown facilitated midnight card competitions, three-hour laddoo making, two-hour scoldings, and a whole day of binge-watching shows! It's not just with my family. I now have better bonds with my friends and acquaintances who I care about. I never realised that relationships of any kind were beyond mini-syllables like 'sup', 'nm', and 'wby'. I now enjoy meaningful conversations and vulnerability that is mutual.

I grew up to believe that possessing imperfections is unacceptable. Merely acknowledging that I had flaws still seemed like a societal sin.

"Did you get a B on your English paper?"

"Do you not know how to score a three-pointer?"

"How do you only have 200 followers on Instagram?"

These questions triggered unending chaos within me. I craved to be at the top of everything: be it academics, sports, or social life. After all, it's what everyone wanted. Just accepting that I was not the best at something made me question my worth. Since then, however, I've learned to be kinder to myself.

My tendency to procrastinate increased exponentially during the lockdown. I would spend hours indulging in video after video on Youtube. I watched everything ranging from daily vlogs to meticulous tutorials, but what fascinated me the most were videos of self-care. I once thought that all self-care regimes were a product of vanity or a projection of narcissistic superiority. I mocked those who used expensive products and orchestrated elaborate self-care routines while I used a Clean n Clear face wash to get the best of my acne.



Girl at Mirror, 1954
Painted by Norman Rockwell

Source: artsy.net

Youtube rid me of my prejudices; despite being a platform that usually entertains, it had suddenly become educational. Individuals who were strangers to me seemed beautiful as a result of their confidence. They taught me that self-care places more emphasis on embracing oneself- flaws included. They highlighted how imperfections are valuable. How else will progress happen?

Lockdown was my red-carpet to enlightenment. I learned that it's okay to let those jeans get tight. It's okay to turn that assignment in slightly late. It's okay to just let yourself be.

How to avoid doing homework and not get a bad grade (with tricks)

- Richa Prakash & Advait Bhargav



Source: pngitem.net



Source: clipart-library.com



Source: clipart-library.com



Source: adhdkidsrock.com



Source: aavictoria.org.au

04

We're all well aware of the fact that getting bad grades will result in you ending up as a failure with no purpose in life. You might as well start living the lifestyle of *cows* since that's the only way you will be able to eat enough food (plus, the Society of Cows are extremely welcoming and generous, although they do smell bad). Incomplete homework will result in all your teachers losing the truckloads of respect they previously had for you.

Still. Why do homework when you can scroll through an infinite amount of reels on Instagram? We all learn more there than we do in school, anyways. So, with extensive research, we offer you five things you can do to avoid homework without having to join the Society of Cows:

1: SLEEP

Many scientists claim that sleep is essential for the proper functioning of the brain. Upon tons of experimentation, we've also discovered that sleep is the perfect strategy to avoid doing homework while keeping your brain sharp and prepared. According to The Learning Center at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, statistics prove that students who receive 9+ hours of sleep tend to score higher than students who are sleep deprived. So, ditch the millions of assignments you have and sleep when you want, where you want.

2: SKIP SCHOOL

Why attend school when all you're going to get is a million more assignments? There's only so much storage your laptop can take. Not to mention, you have two additional benefits- the beautiful serenade that is a teacher's reprimand and the tiresome journey to *and* from school. Why not just conserve *all* that energy by sleeping? If you skip school, your teachers will eventually forget about your existence, and getting a bad grade will *obviously* be unachievable

3: GET ON AN AIRPLANE, FLY TO MEXICO, AND CHANGE YOUR WHOLE IDENTITY (BONUS POINTS FOR WEARING A MASK)

Sometimes, sitting in a room full of books that constantly mock you for not being able to complete two million assignments in a week can be a tremendous nuisance. A change in scene and a makeover are said to boost your dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphin levels, which improve how you feel about homework. If the levels are extremely high, you may just be able to complete one (or possibly two if you **REALLY** try) of the assignments due 3 months ago!

4: DON'T PLAN YOUR TIME OR CHECK YOUR GRADES

What you don't know can't hurt you. It's much easier to forget about the assignments than to spend precious time and energy just to get a mediocre grade. That time and energy can be put into something more worthwhile, like bingeing all 17 seasons of Grey's Anatomy; at least you'll gain some surgical skills by simply observing. Plus, carrying a planner takes up unnecessary space. The simple act of not checking your grades is an extremely effective way of critical problem-solving and can go a long way in terms of self-care. Don't let your teachers give you bad grades either! No one needs *that* kind of negativity.

5: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND LET FATE TAKE ITS COURSE

It's called self-confidence and thinking outside the box. Manifestation is one such option- *manifest* that you'll pass. As someone who follows this religiously, I can vouch that "Believing in yourself is the first secret to success." If you believe you'll pass, it'll *happen*. *That* is the power of manifestation. Besides, home isn't supposed to be a place to do school work.

From Math to Madness

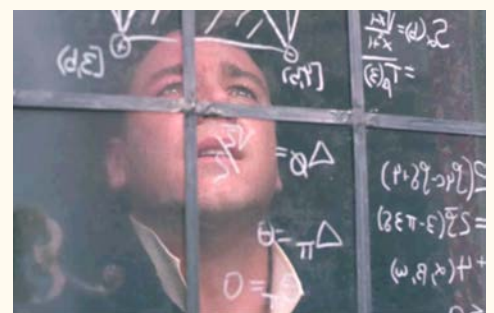
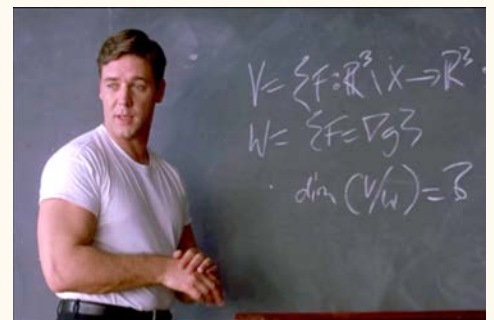
A MOVIE REVIEW BY ANKITA GHOSH

The Oscar-winning film 'A Beautiful Mind'—inspired by a book of the same name by Sylvia Nasar—stars Russell Crowe as the leading role who has perfectly embodied the manic state of John Nash. The film tells the story of a mathematical genius, John Forbes Nash Jr. While his mind was of enormous service to humanity, it managed to betray him due to his diagnosis of schizophrenia.

The story begins with Nash's days in graduate school at Princeton, where he begins to endure delusional episodes. The movie encompasses Nash's journey from his graduate school days to being invited to the Pentagon to crack encrypted codes and finally, to receiving the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1994. As a person with a short attention span, I was captivated from beginning to end.

One of the best scenes in the film is when Nash is in graduate school in Princeton and he says "I need to get something done; I need to distinguish myself." This scene, I believe, resonates with many of us—society has placed immense pressure on 'distinguishing yourself'. If you are 'mediocre' or 'like everybody else' you are considered inferior or average. Society demeans these people thus placing unbelievable expectations that people continue to feed into just to feel validated.

For those who want to delve into the world of math and madness, I strongly recommend this movie. It is moving, heartbreaking and fascinating all at the same time. It was also refreshing to watch a movie that was centered around a schizophrenic protagonist, whose mental illness was not his only defining characteristic— it was his beautiful mind.



Source: Pinterest and Netflix *A Beautiful Mind* screen shots.

'Radio Silence is a masterpiece, and you should read it.'

A BOOK REVIEW BY ANOUSHKA GHOSH

By chronicling societal expectations, mental health, and identity, *Radio Silence* by Alice Oseman makes you relate to it, laugh, and cry- all at the same time.

Frances, the main character in our story, is a 17-year-old girl who's at the top of her class at school. Aled, our other protagonist, while similar, is not the same. He's an 18-year-old boy, going to university with a secret (I can't tell you).

What I have to make clear is one of my most favourite and unique aspects of this book: Frances and Aled do *not* fall in love. In some ways, their relationship is the antithesis of a romantic relationship- of loving a person so much that you can't live without them; of having a person who makes you laugh; yet there are only platonic connotations to this love story.

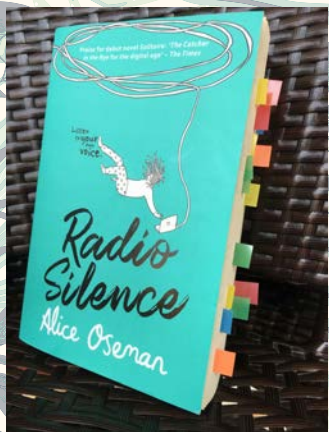
There are always hardships in any love story, however, platonic or not. Frances and Aled both handle personal identity crises, whereby both of the students question nihilistically- 'Why am I doing this? What is the point of placing so much importance on doing well in school, when we're all struggling inside?' A recurring theme in the story is how Frances constantly concludes that 'Being good at studying' is a *useful* thing to be. Not *fulfilling*. Oseman criticizes that aspect of society that places 'academic achievement' on a pedestal- all at the cost of suppressing creativity.

By forming unbreakable bonds of friendship, love, and hope, the characters work through their struggles and eventually resolve them, pursuing the things that make them happy. This story encourages its readers to let their loved ones know when they're feeling stressed, unhappy, or disillusioned, because talking, ranting, venting (literally) is the best therapy.

School never was easy in the first place, but being a student right at this moment, in 2021, is most definitely not easy. Mental health fluctuates like the waxing and waning of the moon. Sometimes you feel productive and sometimes you don't. In *Radio Silence*, I hope you find some part of yourself in each character, like I did, and know that you're not alone in what you feel.

"It must be useful to be smart," Raine said and then laughed weakly. She glanced down and suddenly looked very sad. "I'm like constantly scared I'm going to be homeless or something. I wish our whole lives didn't have to depend on our grades."

'Useful', I [Frances] thought, was a pretty good word for it.

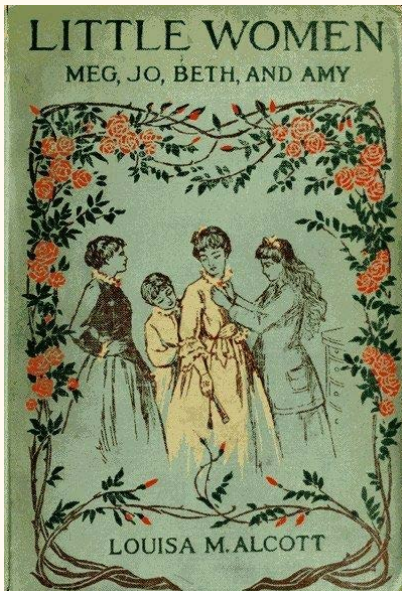


The picture above is evidence of how much I loved this book. I tag pages of books when I love some parts, and here is the *Radio Silence* version.

Photo Credit: Anoushka Ghosh

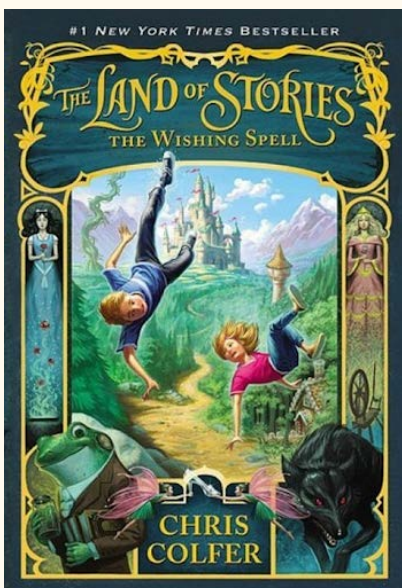
Comfort Reads

for all your therapeutic needs
-compiled by Anoushka Ghosh



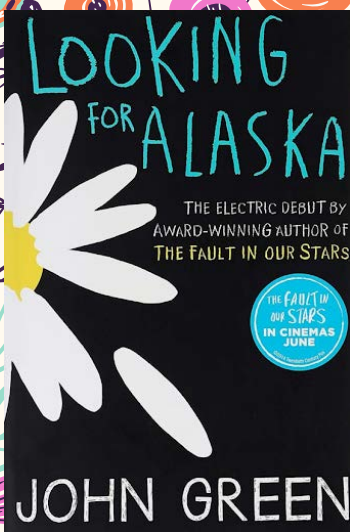
Little Women by Louisa May Alcott
Recommended by Richa Prakash

Little Women is a classic literary novel published in 1868 that remains a comfort read for me, no matter how many times I read it. The simplicity of the storyline, slightly distinct from classic literature, attracts and engrosses me. In the late 1800s (the period of this story), strong female characters were uncommon, but *Little Women's* unconventional Jo was the complete opposite of the stereotypical women of the time. By portraying compassion, family bonds, as well as sibling rivalry, Louisa May Alcott succeeds in warming my heart, regardless of how many times I read the book.



Land of Stories by Chris Colfer
Recommended by Aditi Chandra

The Land of Stories is a series of novels that follow the journey of two siblings- Conner and Alex- in the fairytale world. The series redefined children's fiction- it epitomizes comfort for me because it takes characters from simpler times- the fairy godmother, Snow White, and others, and sheds new light on them. I don't happen to be much of a reader but this series kept me on my toes with its suspense, drama, and characters. When you want to be transported to a completely different world (much like how the plotline goes), or take a trip to childhood nostalgia, *Land of Stories* is the series for you.

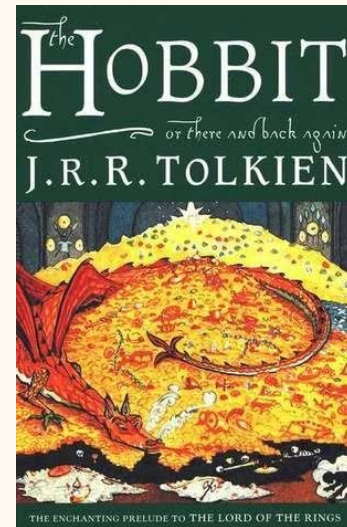


Looking for Alaska by John Green
Recommended by Neha Vengesanam

Looking for Alaska is a young-adult novel that documents the life of Miles Pudge Halter, his journey in boarding school, and a girl named Alaska Young. Using teenage shenanigans, lovable characters, friendships, and tragedies, John Green paints an accurate picture of a teenage coming of age. I love how I could relate to *Looking for Alaska* because of how real and multi-faceted the characters are. Although the book was very emotional, John Green does a brilliant job of balancing this with excitement and a sense of humour that speaks to readers my age.

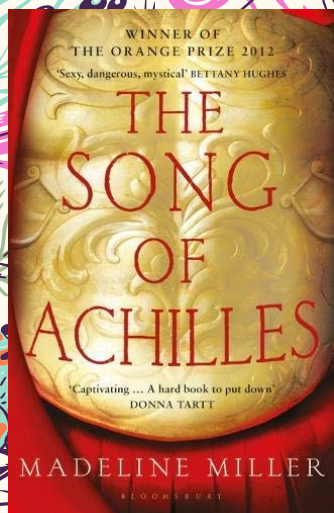
The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien
Recommended by Chaitra Reddy Barkam

The Hobbit is a children's fantasy novel published in 1937 by J.R.R. Tolkien that chronicles the adventures of the Hobbit- 'Bilbo' and his friends. People don't normally place it in the 'wholesome' category, but that's because of the influence of the better-known movies. I watched the 6 movies before reading the books, so when I read *The Hobbit* I was really surprised that the atmosphere of the book was different. It was less suspenseful and chose to focus on Bilbo's journey to becoming more spirited. Compared to the battle-themed movies, this journey was beautifully descriptive and mystical. And if it isn't already, this book should be on everyone's reading list.



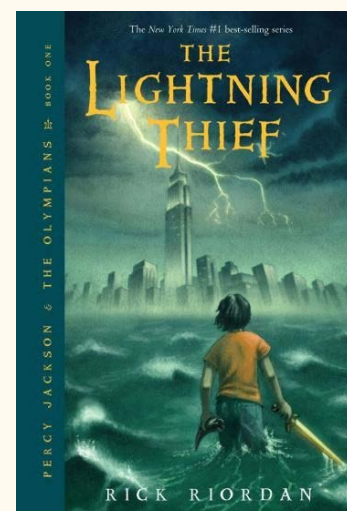
The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller
Recommended by Ankita Ghosh

The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller is a unique take on the Iliad story of Achilles, the famous Greek war Hero, and Patroclus, his lesser-known companion. The most engrossing aspect of this book must be its portrayal of a romantic relationship between two boys, allowing readers to feel represented by identities less openly spoken about. By beautifully and lyrically describing the transition of two boys from childhood to adolescence, Miller succeeds in both thrilling and comforting me at the same time. Her writing transports me to a world that describes a coming-of-age story I didn't know I needed.



Percy Jackson and the Olympians by Rick Riordan
Recommended by Anoushka Ghosh

Percy Jackson and the Olympians is a series of novels that chronicle the adventures of a growing demigod- half-human and half-god- 'Percy' in the Greek mythological world that exists alongside the real world. This series, I'm sure, means a lot to countless others around the world, just as it does to me. These characters have become comfort food for my brain, but most importantly, they've become my friends. But one of its most distinguishing factors must be the fact that it is one of the first mainstream book series with protagonists that have ADHD and dyslexia, allowing kids with learning differences to not only feel accepted but also powerful.



Psychotopia

A quiz by Chaitra Barkam

08

“What mental health needs is more sunshine, more candor and more unashamed conversation”
- Glenn Close



(Untitled image by Rachel Sikorski, in light of colour and art therapy)

1

Agoraphobia is the fear of intense and stressful situations, where patients are prone to panic attacks. One famous patient in particular, who struggled with anxiety, revolutionised the field of Biology. Voyaging around the world on the S.S Beagle, who is this iconic figure that every school kid would definitely recognise?

2

Known as “The Princess of Polka Dots”, this Japanese contemporary artist is inspired by her own struggle with psychedelic schizophrenia. As a child, she suffered hallucinations and visions of dots in her head. She wanted other people to understand what the images in her head looked like, so she created her art. Who is this modern artist known for works like “Infinity room” and “Pumpkin”?

3

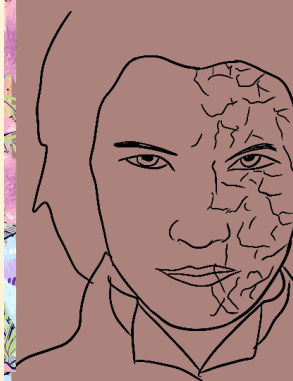
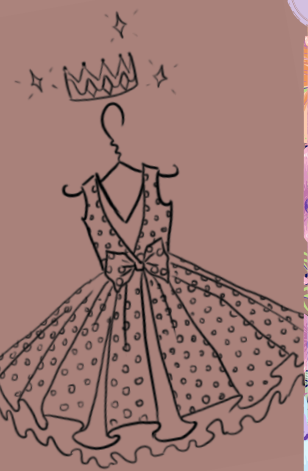
The man-child trope is commonly portrayed in mainstream media, mainly comedy shows. One beloved character (by the Candor community at least) in particular, shows an endearing childishness that is later explained to be related to his abandonment issues and a desire for a father-figure, whom he identifies in his stoic captain. While these clues aren't much to go on, can you still deduce who this “noice” character is and which show he belongs to?

4

There is a syndrome where people suffering from it face body-image insecurities, namely- the fear of ageing. The name of the syndrome is derived from a gothic classic novel, wherein the titular character exchanges his soul to stay youthful forever. While he gets his wish, every corrupt act he performs results in a portrait of him becoming more grotesque. What is the syndrome that is inspired by the name of the character?

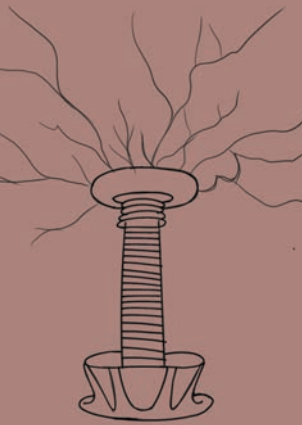
5

This story from our childhoods may not be as simple as you remember it. Written by A.A Milne, the premise follows characters who are direct personifications of mental illness- a schizophrenic boy and his imaginary friends: ADHD, anxiety disorders and abstract eating disorders, or, as we see it in the book; A hyperactive tiger, grumpy donkey and a bear who loves honey. What is the name of this illustrative book that has the purest characters in existence?



6

This brilliant pioneer had obsessive-compulsive disorder, which made him prone to repetitive behaviour like the addiction to the number three and extreme aversion to earrings...All these symptoms gave him an eccentric reputation in the public eye. These setbacks, however, did not inhibit him from achieving great success, as he invented AC motors for the first time. Who is this famous scientist who you would automatically connect to Elon Musk?



7

This iconic author began by weaving together fantastical stories for his dyslexic son. Dyslexia is characterised by the struggle to read, which can develop in children at a young age. He observed that his son was very inspired by these stories that represented characters that dealt with similar struggles like ADHD and dyslexia. This motivated him to convert these stories into a successful book series. What is this famous series that centres around a dyslexic main character who discovers that he is a demigod?



8

For all the Bollywood fans : This movie stars Deepika Padukone and Farhan Akhtar, who plays a man who has schizophrenia. He receives mysterious phone calls from a stranger giving him career advice that turns out to be effective. What is the name of the movie that gives away the entire plot in the title?



9

For the longest time in sports history, athletes talking about psychological issues was seen as weak and unnecessary. This was until the roughness of the sport impacted the neurological functions of their brain, one particular sport saw a devastating amount of injuries. The head injuries in the games led to athletes getting CTE, comprising Dementia, depression and even death. After this, there was a huge movement supporting awareness for sports psychology which even included a hit movie starring Will Smith. What was this movie and what is this aggressive sport?



10

The years of adolescence are some of the most erratic in a human being's life. A movie that perfectly captures the saturation of emotions, follows a young girl dealing with adjustment disorder, toxic positivity and anxiety. The painfully relatable themes and genuine messages made this movie a stepping stone for a brighter outlook on teenage emotions. What is this cinematic experience that taught us that it's okay to accept our sadness?



Answers

1. Charles Darwin
2. Yayo Kusuma
3. Lake Peralta, Brooklyn 99
4. Dorian Grey
5. Winnie the Pooh
6. Nikola Tesla
7. Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Rick Riordan
8. Karthik calling Karthik
9. Concussion, Football
10. Inside Out

Illustrations by-
Aditi Chandra, Trisha
Narayanna, Neha Vengesanam





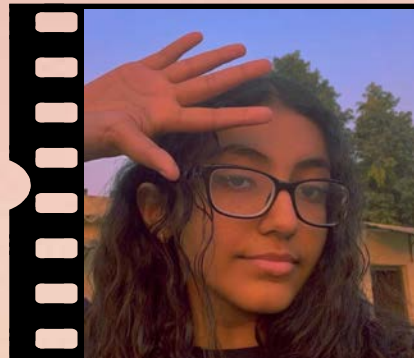
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