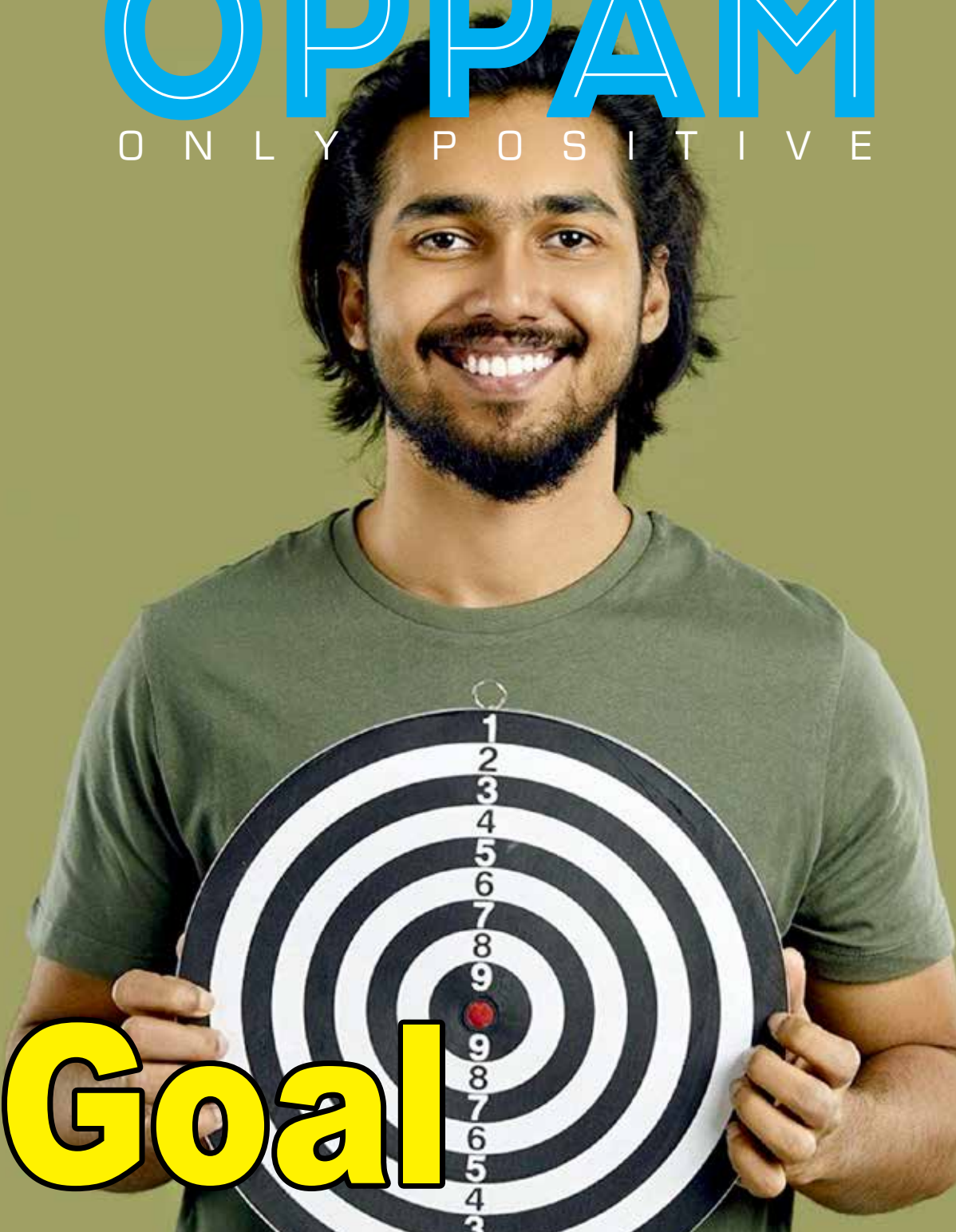


OPPAM

O N L Y P O S I T I V E

A smiling man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a green t-shirt, holds a circular target board. The target has concentric black and white rings. A red bullseye is in the center. Numbers 1 through 10 are printed vertically along the right edge of the target, with 1 at the top and 10 at the bottom. The word "Goal" is written in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline, positioned in the bottom left corner, partially overlapping the target.

Goal



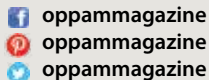
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Editorial

PROF ANTONY P JOSEPH
Managing Director

Ousmane Dembele's Partnership

The name Ousmane Dembele is well known to football enthusiasts. He is one of France's leading professional footballers and is regarded as one of the finest wingers in the world. His pace and his ability to use both feet with equal effectiveness are considered among the defining features of his game. When fully fit, Dembele is widely regarded as one of the most dangerous attacking players in world football.

However, these achievements did not come to him overnight. There was a period in his life when he faced difficulties both professionally and personally. There was hardly a game in which he escaped injury. In fact, there were times when he spent more time in hospitals than on the football pitch. Yet, how was he eventually able to attain such remarkable success?

At one stage, he was addicted to video games. He would play late into the night and junk food was another major temptation. As a result, his training suffered and his fitness declined, making injuries a frequent occurrence. It was during this phase that he got married.

After his marriage, his life underwent a complete transformation. His wife was the driving force behind that change. With love and care, she brought discipline into his life. She helped him overcome his addiction to video games, discouraged him from eating junk food, ensured that he never neglected his training and encouraged him to pay greater attention to his fitness. As she stood by him, correcting his weaknesses and strengthening his positive habits in every aspect of life, those changes were reflected in his performances on the football field as well.

This is where the importance of a partner becomes evident. From husbands and wives to business partners, the people who share our journey occupy a significant place in our lives. They have the power either to help us grow or to hold us back. Those who stand beside us play a crucial role in leading us toward greater achievements and success. Friends, life partners and colleagues all fall into this category.

If our partners are capable of identifying the reasons behind our failures, suggesting ways to avoid repeating them and helping us build consistently on our successes, both our professional and personal lives become richer and more fulfilling. On the other hand, if our partner is not a good influence, we may suffer many kinds of losses.

Whatever the nature of the relationship may be, if you have a good partner, you will be able to reach greater heights in life. May your partnerships be strong and may you also be able to protect and preserve them from being damaged.

Regards
Prof Antony P Joseph



**At Least by
Thirty, Make
a Change...**

Turning thirty is no great age by today's standards. For many people, life begins to settle around this time. Naturally, it is also one of the busiest phases of life. Career, family and financial responsibilities all become defining features of this age. Amidst this busyness, however, health is often neglected. The common attitude is, "I'm still young; I'm in the prime of my youth-I can keep going like this."

As people continue eating whatever they like and living however they please, they often fail to notice -or fail to take seriously- the warning signs their bodies begin to give. Although this may not cause immediate harm, it can pave the way for serious health consequences in the future. That is why health experts stress that one should begin paying careful, long-term attention to health from the age of thirty itself.

So, what should people in their thirties do?

Many people rush to the gym only after diabetes, obesity or high cholesterol has already set in. Instead of waiting until then, it is better to begin moderate physical exercise as soon as one reaches thirty. There is no need to spend hours in the gym every day. At

least 150 minutes of moderate exercise spread across the week is sufficient. Brisk walking, cycling and swimming are all beneficial. Strength-training exercises two or three times a week are enough to improve muscle strength. Such habits help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

Sleep is indispensable for good health. In many ways, sleep is the foundation of good health. Getting seven to nine hours of sleep every night is ideal. It is equally important to maintain a regular sleep schedule by going to bed and waking up at fixed times rather than sleeping only when one feels like it. Excessive screen time before bedtime can interfere with sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to numerous health problems.

Try to include more vegetables, fruits and whole grains in your diet. Reduce your intake of sugar and salt and limit highly processed foods. Your diet should be rich in protein. Today, many young people live under constant stress and various forms of stress adversely affect both their lives and their health. Stress is a formidable enemy. Therefore, learning to manage stress is essential. Make meditation and prayer part of your daily routine.



Spend time in nature and cultivate hobbies that you enjoy. Human beings are not destined merely to work; they are also meant to rest. Therefore, instead of exhausting yourself in relentless pursuit of work, make time to rest while giving due attention to your health.

The next step is to strengthen and nurture relationships. Find time to spend with your family. Stay in touch with your friends. Overcome social isolation. Healthy relationships are equally beneficial to mental and physical well-being. Another important measure is to avoid smoking and alcohol consumption. Doing so significantly reduces the risk of heart disease, cancer and respiratory illnesses.

Finally, make it a habit to undergo

regular health check-ups. Blood sugar and cholesterol tests should be carried out periodically. Likewise, screening tests appropriate to your age and family medical history should be undertaken as recommended.

If these habits are cultivated consistently from the age of thirty onwards, it is possible to live a long and healthy life in the years ahead. Whether one chooses to live in good health or to spend life burdened by illness is, to a large extent, a personal decision.

We should remember that longevity does not merely mean living to the age of one hundred; it also means living with good health, vitality and independence, without having to rely on others for everyday life.





Older people constantly tell those who are younger than them that one must have a goal, that one must have a purpose in life. Parents tell their children; teachers tell their students. Thus continues the long chain of reminders about the importance of having a goal.

It is not because we lack goals that many of us fail to reach them. Rather, it is because the obstacles and setbacks encountered along the journey drain our self-confidence. It is because we turn back halfway. It is because the despair that we will never reach our goal takes root in our hearts. Perhaps it is because, the farther we walk, the farther away the goal seems to appear. Yet, one must have

a goal. A single setback should never make us abandon it.

When we examine the lives of those whom we believe have found their goal and attained success, we realize that they did not achieve it with ease. Instead, they were people who struggled, toiled and shed blood and sweat in pursuit of their goal. No one has ever reached a goal in a single stroke. Nor has there been one identical path to success for everyone. There may, at times, have been similarities, but they may have reached their goals through many different paths. Those who believe that reaching the goal alone is what matters may choose any path. But those who



consider the path to be as important as the goal cannot adopt every possible means to attain it.

Many things in our surroundings can divert us from our goals. For a student whose primary goal should be education, mobile phones, television and the internet may sometimes become obstacles. For a person who wishes to live free from alcohol, even the sign-board of a bar may become a hindrance to achieving that goal. We live in a society filled with countless influences that, in different ways, tempt us to turn away from our goals. In such a society, the most important thing is to live without losing one's sense of purpose.

Having a goal is by no means a trivial matter, nor is attaining it easy. Even those who have a clear goal may have to face many obstacles before reaching it. A goal is not something that can be accomplished all at once. Have you ever watched an archer? So many of their arrows miss the mark. Yet they continue their efforts.

In the end, perhaps it is the very last arrow that strikes the centre of the target. That is exactly what we, too, should do. Many of our attempts may have failed; we may have gone wrong somewhere along the way. Even so, we must continue trying. The final attempt may be the one that leads us to our goal.





Status

The English word 'status' has several meanings in Malayalam, depending on the context. It may mean position, condition, standard, social standing or state. Accordingly, there is social status, health status, current status and status as a symbol of prestige. In this age of the overwhelming spread of social media, the word status has gained immense popularity. On WhatsApp and Instagram, we post and view status

updates, turning our everyday situations into occasions for display. Such is the direction in which things have moved that even the question, "Don't you have a status?" carries an entirely different meaning today.

In reality, a status is both a form of silent observation and a form of self-display. Behind the habit of checking WhatsApp statuses lies the human mind's subtle curiosity and pleasure



in discovering the circumstances of others. There are people who habitually search for others' statuses. Their purpose is to find out what someone is doing. At the same time, a status is also an attempt to let others know about one's achievements and successes, coupled with the quiet display that says, "I have accomplished something," even without stating it outright. I post a status; you view it every day. Even if nothing is explicitly communicated or acknowledged, a clear form of communication takes place. Today, WhatsApp statuses have become an easy and cost-free medium for publicising one's achievements.

There are also people who regularly post their personal situations as status updates. Things have changed to such an extent that one can often gauge the quality of a person's life and even understand aspects of their mindset simply by looking at their status updates. Likewise, there are those who, after posting a status, check every few minutes to see whether anyone has viewed it. More important than WhatsApp statuses, however, is having a meaningful status in life itself. WhatsApp statuses last only for a limited period of time, whereas the status we hold in life is not so temporary. Therefore, strive to preserve your true status in life.



**Do you ever lie
to yourself?**



We should acknowledge our weaknesses and limitations with an open mind. Ignoring or denying problems will never lead to progress. We may close our eyes to a problem, but the problem remains.

What a question, isn't it? We usually think of lies as something we tell other people. We lie to secure our own interests, to achieve our own ends, to protect our self-respect-and in countless other situations, we have all told countless lies. There are many who present lies as though they were the truth, persuade others to believe them and thereby accomplish their objectives. In all such instances, the lies are directed at other people.

But we also lie to ourselves. How? We often find it difficult to acknowledge our own shortcomings and weaknesses. We hesitate to admit to ourselves that we have certain flaws or limitations. If someone points out those shortcomings, we may even begin to resent them for doing so. In all these situations, we are in fact lying-to ourselves.

Those who recognize their own shortcomings and, where possible, strive to overcome them are the ones who succeed in life. One of the principal reasons why people fail is that they are not honest with themselves and refuse to acknowledge their own mistakes. Those who are willing to confront and address their weaknesses possess remarkable inner courage.

Lying to oneself can take many forms. Excuses are one such form of self-deception. When people fail to complete a task entrusted to them on time, they often offer a variety of justifications-from claiming that they had no time to blaming others for the delay. Some people habitually postpone everything until tomorrow, believing that they can set everything right later. Those who place the responsibility for their own failures upon others are also lying to themselves.

We also see people who, after losing an election, attribute their defeat to the opposing party or to certain ideologies, thereby absolving themselves of responsibility. Escaping from reality may provide temporary relief, but we should never forget that it neither erases reality nor secures success for us. Honesty is indispensable for any success that is enduring. It is equally essential in our relationships and in our actions.

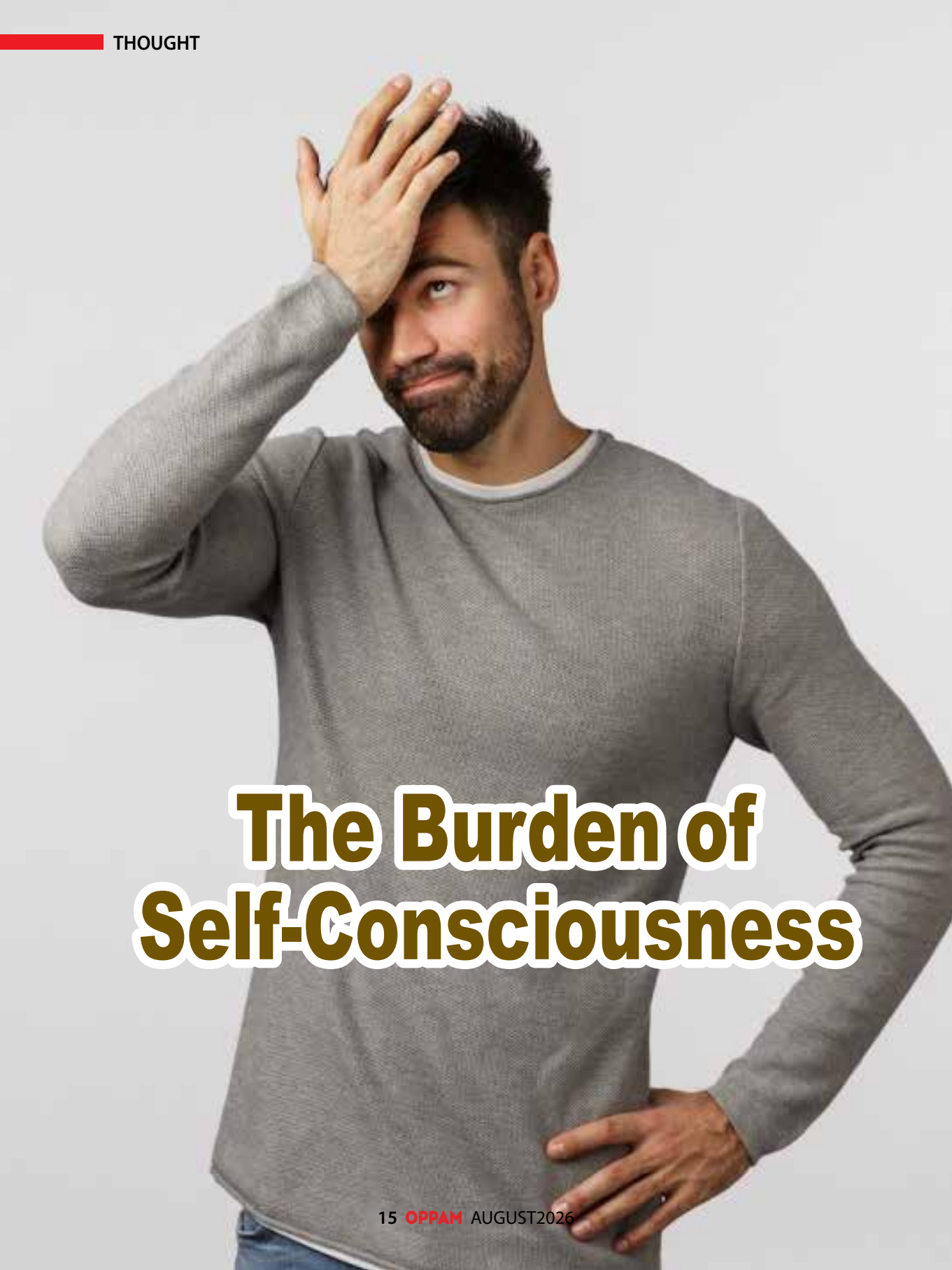
Whenever we lie, we undermine honesty. Honesty is one of the most important foundations of success and the first person to whom we must be honest is ourselves. A lie may offer temporary comfort. The truth will certainly hurt. Yet we must remember that truth ultimately leads to lasting success.

A mirror is the perfect metaphor, for

it reflects us exactly as we are. We do not blame the mirror because our appearance is imperfect. Likewise, we must learn to accept our own defects and imperfections. We should acknowledge our weaknesses and limitations with an open mind. Ignoring or denying problems will never lead to progress. We may close our eyes to a problem, but the problem remains. If you have made a mistake, first admit it; then correct it. No one is knowledgeable or competent in every field.

Therefore, never feel ashamed to admit that there are things you do not know. Do not place the blame for your own mistakes or faults upon someone else. Move forward with honesty towards yourself and you will certainly succeed in life.



A man with a beard and grey sweater, looking thoughtful with his hand on his forehead. The background is a plain, light grey.

The Burden of Self-Consciousness

One of the things that weighs heavily on many people is self-consciousness. Thoughts such as "What will others think of me?", "Did I say something wrong?", or "How do I look?" can become an overwhelming burden. Almost everyone experiences such thoughts from time to time. However, some people become excessively preoccupied with them. As a result, their self-confidence diminishes and they begin to feel uncomfortable in social situations. How, then, can one overcome this?

The greatest misconception among such people is the belief that everyone is constantly watching them, speaking ill of them or ridiculing them. The as-

sumption that others are continually thinking about you is simply mistaken. In reality, everyone is preoccupied with their own concerns and thoughts. It is not their occupation to keep examining you or judging your every action.

If the feeling that "everyone is mocking me" continually troubles you, try approaching it in a different way. Ask yourself: What evidence do I have that everyone is ridiculing me? Could this simply be something I have imagined? Question your assumptions and perceptions in this manner. More often than not, our fears are unfounded and disconnected from reality.

Avoid dwelling repeatedly on events that are already over. Do not keep re-



playing how you behaved, what you said or what you did. Thoughts such as "I shouldn't have said that," or "What must they have thought of me?" should be set aside. Whether the outcome was good or bad, what has happened has already happened. Leave it where it belongs—in the past.

Another way forward is to understand that no one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes and has shortcomings. A mistake need not be viewed as a failure. If we are willing to correct it, a mistake remains nothing more than a mistake. Every human being is imperfect and has faults and limitations.

As your knowledge, skills and competence grow in any field, your self-confidence naturally increases. Therefore,

do not waste any opportunity to develop your abilities. Good preparation and consistent practice reduce the burden of excessive self-consciousness.

Before the end of each day, write down three good things you did that day. It may be one good deed 'I did today, something that made me feel proud of myself today', or 'what I was actually afraid of and what really happened instead'. Reflect on the day by writing down such observations. If you make this a regular habit, you will gradually realize that many of your fears and worries were baseless. In doing so, you will free yourself from the unnecessary burden of excessive concern about yourself.



Let Your Decisions Be Guided by the Future

Whatever the nature of a relationship may be, does entering into it mean that it must be continued until the end of one's life, even if it is no longer fulfilling? Very often, what keeps people trapped in unhealthy relationships is their tendency to focus primarily on the past. They think, "I've invested so many years in this," or "We've lived together for so long; we might as well continue." This is the perspective from which they approach the situation.

Even when the relationship is no longer healthy or satisfying, they are willing to make endless compromises because of what has already been invested in it. Psychology refers to this as the 'sunk cost fallacy' - the tendency to continue with something simply because time, effort or resources have already been invested in it.

This mindset is not confined to marriages; it is equally evident in business. There are people who continue running businesses despite incurring losses and earning no profit. What drives them is the same way of thinking: "I've invested so much money," "I've been running this business for so many years," "I shouldn't give it up halfway now." As a result, they feel compelled to continue an unprofitable venture.



The same pattern appears in personal relationships. Even after years of marriage, some people continue in relationships that bring them neither happiness nor fulfillment simply because they are already married. Psychologists point out that this is not a healthy way of thinking. Instead, one should ask, "If this relationship continues in exactly the same way for the next five years, why should I sacrifice my happiness and peace of mind by remaining in it?" That question should lead to seeking a solution. According to psychologists, the sunk cost fallacy is a common feature of many unhappy relationships. They often illustrate this with a simple example: if you realize a film is bad, is there any reason to sit through it until the very end?

While we should respect the past and cherish our memories, many of our decisions ought to be based on the future. We need to ask whether a relation-

ship contributes to our growth, earns our respect and brings us happiness. A relationship should not be continued merely because a great deal of time has already been spent on it.

If a friendship consistently brings you neglect and rejection and if it causes you emotional distress, persisting in that friendship is unwise. Simply because you have loved and valued a friend does not mean that the friendship necessarily provides you with security or genuine companionship. Therefore, do not allow past investments to rob you of future happiness. If a relationship brings you neither happiness nor peace, or if a business brings you nothing but losses, do not continue to deceive yourself.

The future is the reality you have yet to live; the past has already become history. Therefore, let every decision you make be guided by the future rather than by what has already been spent.





Habits That Endanger the Brain

The brain is like a weapon that must be sharpened regularly. If life is to remain creative, productive and full of energy, the brain must also remain active and efficient. Yet, knowingly or unknowingly, we often engage in habits that put our brain at risk. By understanding these dangers and taking appropriate precautions, we can help preserve the health of our brain.

Irregular sleep patterns are among the habits that endanger brain health. Going to bed and waking up at consist-

ent times, together with getting seven to eight hours of sleep each day, helps keep the brain alert and functioning well. Spending long hours sitting at work is another risk. Those whose jobs require prolonged sitting should make it a point to stand up, walk around and take short breaks at regular intervals. With the widespread adoption of working from home, many people fail to pay sufficient attention to this. Compared with those who work in offices, people working from home are often more prone to re-

maintaining seated for long, uninterrupted periods. Such continuous work without adequate breaks may gradually have an adverse effect on the brain.

Some people can enjoy music only when it is played at a very high volume and others follow the same habit while watching videos. Studies suggest that both habits may be harmful to the brain. Likewise, constantly consuming negative news may also have adverse effects on brain health.

Another concern is the excessive use of social media. Spending prolonged periods on television or social media beyond reasonable limits places unnecessary strain on the brain. Excessive and persistent worry about the future is equally harmful. Thinking and planning are beneficial, but constantly dwelling on the future with intense

anxiety can negatively affect the brain. Solitude may at times be valuable, but prolonged social isolation is not beneficial for brain health.

The brain may be compared to a washing machine. If more clothes are crammed into it than it is designed to hold, it cannot function properly. Likewise, if we burden the brain with more work than it can reasonably manage, it may continue to function for a while, albeit under strain. It may keep going, much like an elderly person who struggles to carry on despite physical exhaustion. But such a state cannot continue indefinitely.

The same principle applies to the brain. Therefore, we should free ourselves from all those habits that overburden the brain and place its health at risk.



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