



A TEENAGER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

Being a teenager can be difficult—these are often the most confusing years of life. You might feel like you're floundering, with new responsibilities and freedoms. However, direction and advice from adults, whether that's family members or teachers, can feel condescending and unhelpful—they just don't understand!

Well, from a group of your fellow teenagers, who do understand, we bring you *A Teenager's Survival Guide*. From lifestyle to academics to financial stability, this issue will help you find your way and emerge from your teenage years a happy and healthy adult.

Happy reading!

Tavasya Mizar Rao
Editor-in-chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04	<i>Starting future journeys: College & Careers</i>
06	<i>Cultivating a Positive Self Image</i>
07	<i>Preparing for Standardized Tests</i>
08	<i>The Power of Sleep</i>
09	<i>How to Actually Get Fit</i>
10	<i>Making Healthy Food Choices</i>
11	<i>Start Being Financially Stable in Your Teens</i>
13	<i>Volunteering - Make a difference!</i>

Starting future journeys: College & Careers

Lasya Mohan Varma, Grade 12D

In today's age, the list of choices for universities and professions seems to never end! With social media also offering a blitz of contradictory advice and pressure, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

It's crucial to remember that everyone has a different college and career path, so avoid drawing comparisons with others. However, there are some strategies that will help you make career decisions more easily and ensure you prepare adequately for the college application process.

Keep Your Horizons Wide Open

When you enter high school, keep your options open and experiment with different fields. Engaging in a variety of activities that interest you will allow you to gauge which fields appeal most to you and build a strong foundation in those fields. Maximize opportunities like the school's BA program, utilising it to gain exposure to activities beyond those which you're already pursuing outside of school. At the same time, studying consistently will equip you with the work ethic to handle the challenging course load throughout high school. At this early stage, don't pressurise yourself to take any decisions; welcome plenty of changes in your interests.

Discover what truly excites you

In the tenth grade, start narrowing down your activities list. Choose which commitments matter most to you and start investing more effort and time into them. Across countries, universities look for students who genuinely enjoy and care about their pursuits, so it's imperative to pick activities that you love rather than those that simply 'check a box' on a college application.

Dive deeper into your chosen field

By this time, you probably will have a basic understanding of the broad stream into which you'd like to delve. Begin researching that field, reading up about what it encompasses and the career prospects that follow after studying it. Engaging in an internship related to your area of interest during your summer break will help you understand the field better while giving you a taste of working in the real world.

During the summer, begin searching for potential universities. Ensure that you explore options in various locations and choose the top 5 countries to which you would like to apply.



Start exploring global possibilities

Eleventh grade is the time to delve deeper into your chosen commitments and showcase tangible outcomes. Try engaging in activities that offer an intersection of multiple of your interests. Record your engagements and achievements in a document, noting key details of the tasks you performed and the magnitude of your accomplishment.



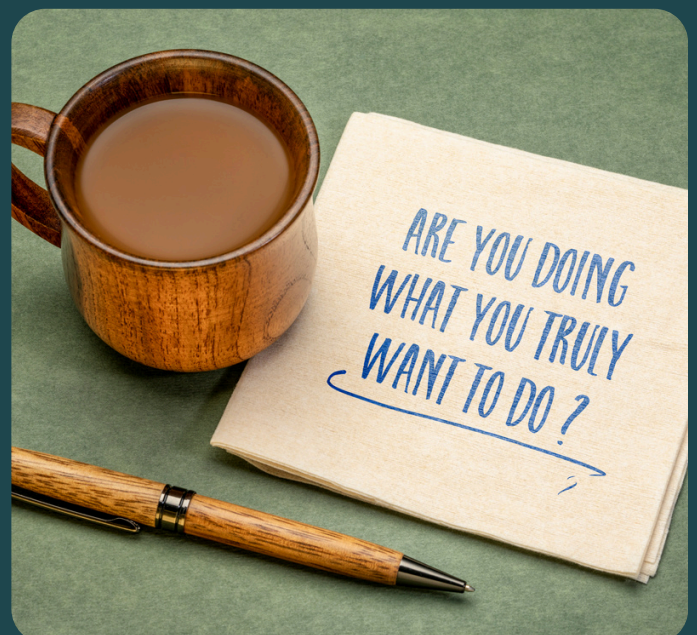
Seek real-world insights

It's also important to have frequent conversations with your parents and teachers about your career prospects, while speaking to professionals to understand your potential industry better and garner advice on how you can prepare for a similar profession.

Get a head start on the application marathon

College applications are a whirlwind of essays, entrance tests, recommendation letters, etc. To make the storm a little easier to manage, I suggest planning early. Before twelfth grade begins, put together a list of the colleges to which you definitely want to apply and note down their specific requirements. Set up regular meetings with your counsellor to stay on top of your applications. Even though the process is stressful, it's also a great opportunity to reflect on your progress over the years, think about your future aspirations, and explore the fascinating opportunities that stem from your field of study!

Keep in mind that this framework is a mere suggestion - each of us has a unique approach to preparing for the future. Regardless of what path you take, remember to embrace your interests and spend time doing the things you enjoy!



Cultivating a Positive Self Image: How to Feel Confident in Your Own Shoes

Tavasya Mizar Rao, Grade 12C

At some point, every single one of us has had those moments where we are consumed by our insecurities, perhaps fuelled by social media or the people around us. Having low self-esteem can affect your grades, social life, and mental health. However, with a few changes, you can learn how to look at yourself in a positive light.

What's the Problem, Doc?

First, you need to identify the source of your insecurities. Attempting to fix your insecurities without getting to the root of the issue is inefficient and temporary, like slapping a band-aid on a broken leg and hoping the bone magically heals right. The cause could be social media platforms, your friend groups, comments made by strangers or family members, or a dozen other things.

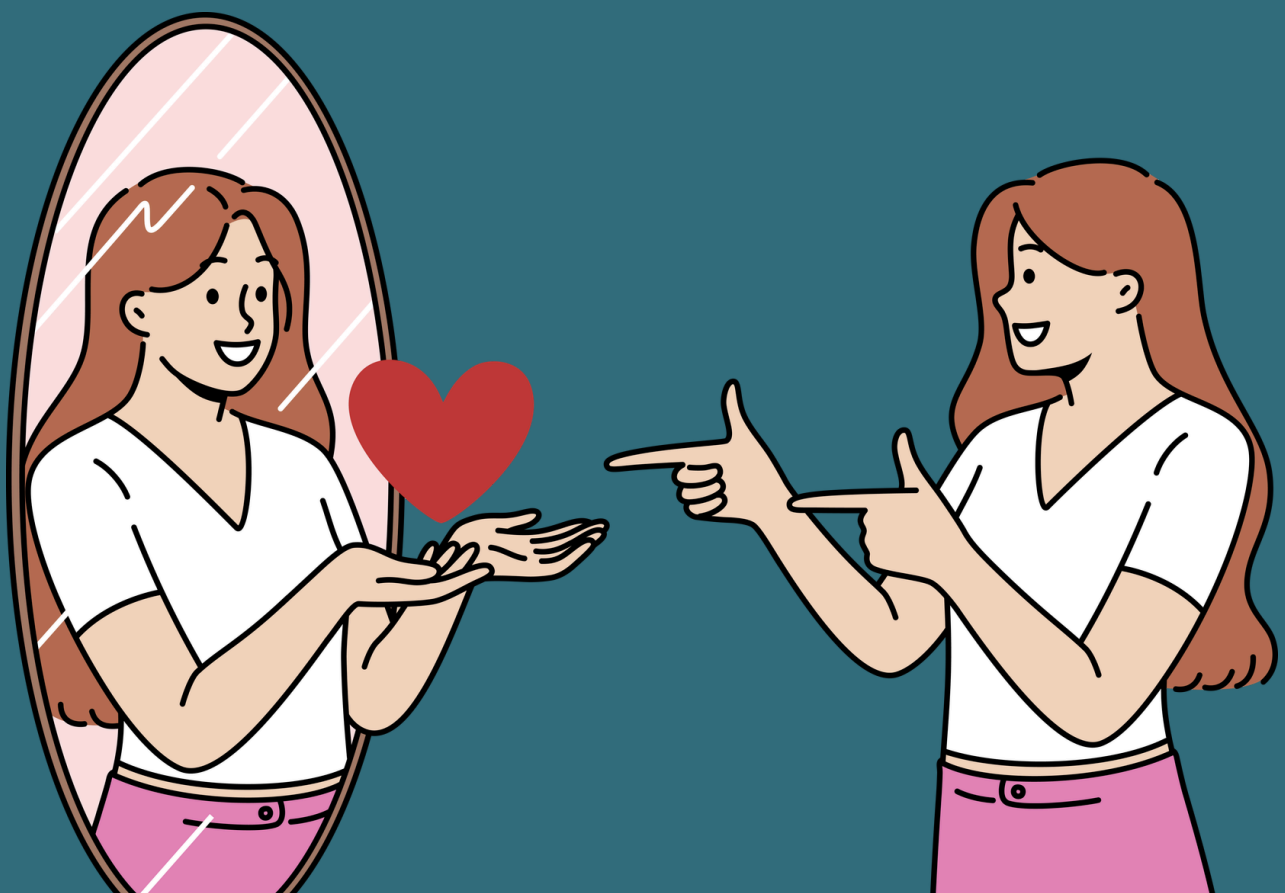
Stand Your Ground

Once you've figured out why your insecurities exist, reflect on how you can get over them by targeting the cause. That could be cutting off a group of toxic friends, curating your social media feed or deleting your accounts altogether, or learning how to stand up to people who say rude things to you.

Kindness is Key

Not only do you need to curate your environment, but you also need to pay attention to your mindset. Learn how to recognise and eliminate negative self-talk, and give yourself credit for the things you accomplish. Reframe your thoughts in a more positive manner. Instead of thinking "I barely studied for my chemistry midterm, I'm so lazy," think "I might not have been able to finish everything I wanted to do, but I still got piano practice done."

Change is scary, especially when you're used to drowning in self-hatred for years. However, at some point, we must all make the choice between the discomfort of change and the pain of staying where we are. So, what'll it be?



Preparing for standardized tests: Study plans and relaxation tips

Arya Kenghe and Aanika Feagans, Grade 12C



Are the SATs coming up? Is the TOEFL on your mind? Standardized tests, although important, can be stressful. With preparing for school tests, board exams, extracurriculars, and attempting to maintain a social life, there is already so much to do. So, how can you study effectively for your upcoming tests?



Secondly, by taking time to **relax**. Stress can actually make you perform worse. Most studies estimate that between 40-60% of students perform poorly on the SAT due to test anxiety. So, take some time out of your day to pursue hobbies, move your body, or really any activity that gives your mind a break.



Overall, it is crucial to remember that successful preparation includes consistency and rest. Keep working towards your goals and on test day try your best!

Third, keep your **goals and motivations** in mind. Why are you studying? You might just want to pass a class you don't like, or maybe get better at a subject you love because you're passionate about it. When you'd rather do anything but study, think about the long term—going to a university, your dream job, the life you want to live—and let that motivate you.





The Power of Sleep

Kashvi Kansal, Grade 9D



Most adolescents are getting only 6.5-7.5 hours of sleep per night, while the recommended amount is 8-10 hours. Sleep deprivation affects areas of a teen's life, such as academic performance, emotional stability, and physical well-being. It leads to difficulty in concentrating, remembering information, and processing new material. Adolescents who don't sleep enough have a chance of suffering from anxiety, depression, mood swings, and irritability because their brains cannot produce enough hormones regulating emotional well-being.



Teens who don't get enough sleep are more likely to engage in dangerous behaviour and experience emotional difficulties. Every year, over 100,000 traffic accidents are caused by sleep deprivation, with young drivers accounting for most. Students who don't get enough sleep also have compromised immune systems, making it longer to recover from accidents and injuries.

Here are steps that can be taken to fix one's sleep routine.

Step 1: Establish a regular pattern of sleep.

Set a realistic bedtime that allows 8-10 hours of sleep and stick to it. Go to bed a little earlier by 10-15 minutes every few nights to work into the pattern gradually.

Step 2: Institute a soothing bedtime wind-down routine.

Follow the same nighttime routine every night until your brain learns to connect those things with sleep.

Step 3: Avoid screens before bedtime.

Turn off phones, tablets, laptops, and TVs at least an hour before bedtime; that way, blue light won't keep you awake.

Step 4: Make your bedroom sleep friendly.

Keep your bedroom quiet and dark; use curtains or earplugs if necessary. Use your bed for sleeping only—so that your brain can associate that place with rest, not stress or excitement.

Step 5: Build daytime habits that support sleep.

Get daylight and exercise most days, and avoid caffeine and naps so your body feels naturally tired at night.



How to actually get fit (Without Hating Your Life)

Physical fitness and its importance cannot be understated in today's world. Basketball helped me reduce my stress, improve my sleep and focus while also just feeling happier. Most people think that physical fitness involves one and a half to two hours of high-intensity sport, but getting fit is easier than you think when you change your mindset, when you stop chasing extreme diets and start building tiny, manageable habits.

Here's a simple 5-step approach to fitness so it's easy and fun:

1. Find movement you don't hate - Stop running if you hate running! Move because it's fun, not because you have to.
2. Prioritise protein - Try incorporating protein into every meal. Sources include almonds, yogurt, chicken and eggs.
3. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Carry a water bottle everywhere. Dehydration is the number one cause of headaches and brain fog you get during a long school day. Chug water instead of sugary sodas.
4. Get as much sleep as you can - Switch your phone off 30 minutes before bed. Your body doesn't build muscle or repair itself during the workout; it happens when you sleep! Aim for 8-10 hours.
5. Don't forget to stretch - Spend ten minutes stretching before you sit down for homework or hop into bed. This simple routine just helps you relax.





Making Healthy Food Choices

Samaira Khetan, Grade 10A

Are you always tired or feeling hungry soon after meals? These are signs that your current food choices may not be giving you the nutrients you need.

Many teenagers rely on processed foods because they're convenient and tasty. However, these foods are often high in sugar, salt, or bad fats. They give you a short burst of energy but leave you drained soon after.

Adopt this checklist for a transformative outcome:

- Swap sugary drinks for water, milk, or fruit-infused water.
- Choose whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, beans, and nuts.
- Pack simple snacks such as bananas, yogurt, or *makhana* for school or after sports.
- Plan ahead by preparing meals or snacks the night before so you're not tempted by unhealthy, quick-to-eat foods.



Start Being Financially Stable in Your Teens

“The stock market is filled with individuals who know the price of everything, but the value of nothing.”

— Philip Fisher

The epitome of the human experience is in losing and earning money. It's what makes gambling addictive enough to destroy families and deplete savings.

So, how can you begin to learn how to beat the game of life? Warren Buffett once said, “Never test the depth of the river with both feet”. Dipping a toe into the ocean of investing now will allow you to dive confidently later. Your future self will thank you.

The stock market, like a vegetable market, is a place where people buy and sell ownership of shares. When you buy a share, you own a small part of that company, just like when you buy a vegetable, you own a small part of the farmer's harvest. Companies register their stocks through IPO (Initial Public Offering). The two main Indian stock exchanges are NSE (National Stock Exchange) and BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange). Much like vegetable prices, stock prices are affected by demand and supply—if more people want a stock, its price goes up. Just like how you can't steal from your neighbour's garden without asking, investors can only invest in public limited companies on the market, and brokers like ICICI Direct and Zerodha are middlemen that connect you to your future riches.

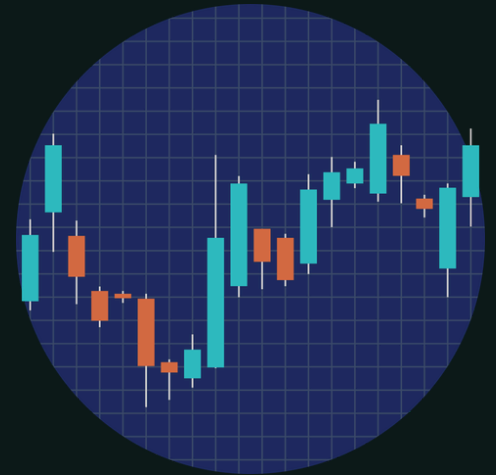


“You don’t have to be rich to start, but you have to start to be rich.”

When adults gather near community clubhouses like animals to a watering hole, they throw around heavy investing terms that have the power to instantly sour a good conversation on a pleasant day. Joining these watering hole debates begins with a few simple steps.

The average student barely has time to finish a T.V. episode, much less to do painstaking research about each individual stock they plan on investing in. This is where a stock market index comes in—it lists companies that are relatively easy and safe to invest in. The two main ones in India are NIFTY 50, which tracks the top 50 companies registered on the NSE, and SENSEX, which tracks the top 30 companies registered on the BSE.

Therefore, when you invest in a stock index, if one company's stock falls, the price of the others will still balance it out, reducing your risk.



“Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world.”

— Albert Einstein



Teens have something that can't be bought - time. Time is the most valuable resource, although it may not seem like it amidst IAs and exams, we have time to learn how to invest, something that's usually only learnt well into adulthood.

Compound interest is a double-edged sword; granted, the ones paying it will surely find that edge to be sharper. For now, we are learning to wield the more blunt side of that sword and how we can use it to our advantage.

Avoid the pitfalls of rushing in; educate yourself steadily to turn money management into a lifelong win, not a gamble. Your future self will celebrate the financial stability you build now. Begin the journey and watch wealth compound!



VOLUNTEERING

Make a difference!

Dia Z Panakkat, Grade 11D

Many of us feel a strong desire to contribute to our community, yet face the common challenge of not knowing where or how to begin. It is easy to worry that the impact we can make as teenagers might not be significant or lasting enough.

This feeling is only normal. However, creating meaningful change does not require tackling some global crises. Instead, it starts right here, locally, within our own communities. Volunteering is both accessible and the perfect starting point.

When I first started volunteering in various community spaces, I often felt anxious and frustrated with the people around me. Only with time did I slowly become more comfortable and eventually have the confidence and support to take bolder steps, from running programs to initiating awareness campaigns. However, I do understand the initial hardships.

Here are the biggest hurdles I recognized, paired with some small yet actionable solutions.

Finding the Right Fit

Volunteering should never feel like a chore, something you have to do for college applications, counsellors, or family. It should be something you genuinely want to do. If you are already volunteering or thinking of starting but feel disconnected, the solution is to focus not only on what is required but also on what you care about.

The Solution: Think about your passions: a sport, art, math, or technology, it can be anything. This will be your personal cause. The next step is to find a place to foster that passion: look for local non-profits, community centres, libraries, or organizations that align with your interests.

Feeling Unqualified

It's common to hesitate because you feel you lack the proper skillset, leading to the fear that you might be more of a burden than a help.

The Solution: The key is to start by focusing on your strengths. Offer a specific skill you know you can execute well, such as managing social media, organizing events, or tutoring. Don't just offer "any help." This ensures you contribute immediately and effectively. From there, moving forward with other initiatives you have in mind will be easier. Build yourself a place in your community.

Burnout and Time Management

With school, sports, and other commitments, it is easy to commit too much time initially and quickly feel burnt out or overwhelmed.

The Solution: Remember, you don't have to make massive leaps right away. Start small. Commit just one or two hours a week. What's most important is consistency. Starting with a manageable schedule ensures you can sustain your effort over time.

The Difference Starts Small

We often undermine the value of local impact, thinking only of large-scale change. However, every big difference always starts small.

Volunteering does not just help the community; it is an incredibly rewarding experience for you. I often feel completely fulfilled rather than exhausted after spending hours doing community service. So, not just for your community, but for yourself, take that first step today.



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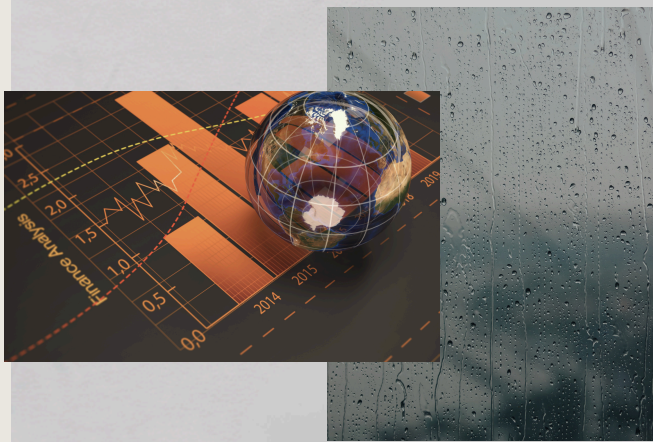
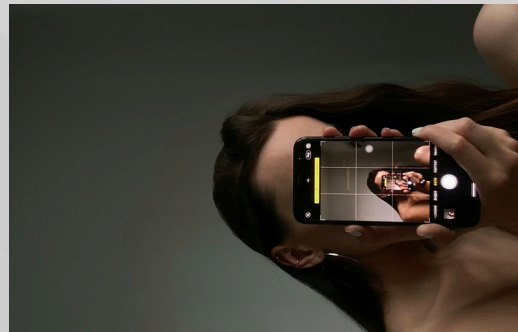
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