

# HAIGAZIAN HERALD



**COVID-19 Vaccine:  
“All You Need to Know” &  
“Beyond the Conspiracies”**  
Dania Al-Boukhari

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**“Lebanon: Where Is It Headed?”**  
Andrea Khatchadourian

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**“Do Old Habits Die Hard?”**  
Vartineh Baghdo Donabedian

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**“She’s Not Asking for It!  
Combating Sexual Harassment: A Never-Ending Battle”**  
Liliane Mohamad

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**“The Romanticization of Mental Disorders”**  
Samaher Yehya

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# MEET YOUR SPRING 2021 DEADLINES

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For some time now, I have identified the well-known imposter syndrome lurking in the shadowy corners of my mind, and I have always held the deep-rooted belief that I am neither good enough nor ready for anything I am facing.

And then I somehow became the chairperson and the editor of The Haigazian Herald, the University student newspaper. I have always admired this position from afar, but I never dared to approach it, as I perceived it to be difficult and demanding, not to mention that I had big shoes to fill.

However, the position came knocking at my door, taking me by surprise. And for once in my meticulously planned out life, I decided to go with it.

Funny enough, I compare becoming chairperson to becoming a parent. No parent is ever ready to raise a baby, to take care of every one of their needs and make sure to provide for them every day. Even if the parents had planned to have a baby years in advance, they always describe two overwhelming feelings the first time they hold their child: love, and immense responsibility.

**The  
parent is  
never  
ready...  
until they  
do it.**

I find this to be truly amazing. I have grown accustomed to thinking of potential being fulfilled through action. But who would have thought that action enables potential?

I also thought this represented what we are going through, all of us, presently. If you had told me that I would be living in such hardships a year ago, I would not have believed that I could survive. Yet I did, we did. And we are, every single morning.

So here is to all of us: students still waking up every day to study and work, to live and survive. Instructors pouring out their hearts in every lecture as they do in other areas of their lives.

Haigazian staff working behind the scenes to ensure that the upcoming generation is one that will continue holding the values they are shown rather than taught at Haigazian.

I think I speak for many of us when I say that Haigazian has become our home and our inspiration for perseverance.

**KNOW**

**WE HAVE**

**OUR LIVES  
MOVING  
FORWARD  
INTO THE NEW  
NORMAL...**

This time last year, the pandemic was just starting and we were hoping it would be a few months until life would go back to normal. Fear and anxiety from the unknown future filled us up as little was known at the time. Now, we can see a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel with the progress of the vaccination process in many countries including Lebanon. Yet, because of the quick pace of vaccination and the lack of information about the offered vaccine, many are worried about injecting an unknown substance in their bodies. In order to clear the confusion and find answers to the questions being asked, I decided to conduct an interview with Dr. Alex Dainis, who has a Ph.D. in genetics from Stanford University. Dr. Dainis is also an educational content creator with over eight years of experience in posting videos that answer commonly asked scientific questions. In addition, she vlogs her journey in the scientific field. Her videos are popular across different social media platforms including YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Her goal is to make science, mainly genetics, accessible for everyone and to show how scientists are humans as well. She is truly an inspirational woman in STEM and production which is quite admirable!

**COVID-19 is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They should not be used interchangeably.**



# DIFFERENT TYPES OF COVID-19 VACCINES



All you need to know

## NUCLEIC ACID:MRNA

### Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna

The mRNA, that is later destroyed, teaches your cells how to make copies of the spike proteins and display them on the cells' surface so that T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes (cells of the immune system) start identifying and building up memory to prevent infection in the future

#### Advantages

- mRNA vaccines have been studied for a long time
- Simple to manufacture

#### Disadvantages

- Booster shots may be required
- May require ultra-cold storage
- New type of vaccine for human use

## VIRAL VECTOR

### Johnson & Johnson's Janssen, Sputnik V Oxford/Astrazeneca

The vector, a modified version of a different harmless virus, enters your cells and introduces a piece of DNA that codes for the spike protein. The cell's machinery then produces spike proteins that are displayed on the cells' surface so that the immune cells start identifying and building up immunity against the virus

#### Advantages

- Well-established technology
- More stable at low temperatures

#### Disadvantages

- Complex to manufacture

## LIVE ATTENUATED WHOLE VIRUS VACCINE

### Codagenix

The vaccine includes a weakened form of the virus, introduces your immune system to the virus to stimulate a response against it.

#### Advantages

- Simple to manufacture

#### Disadvantages

- In rare cases, it can cause diseases
- Incompatible with people who are immunodeficient

## INACTIVATED WHOLE VIRUS VACCINE

### Sinovac and Sinopharm

The vaccine includes destroyed proteins and genetic material of the virus, introduces your immune system to the virus to stimulate a response against it.

#### Advantages

- Simple to manufacture
- Suitable for people who are immunodeficient
- No risk of triggering disease

#### Disadvantages

- Booster shots may be required

## PROTEIN SUBUNIT

### Novavax

When the protein, isolated from the virus, is injected, the immune system identifies foreign proteins and starts using T-cells and antibodies to prepare memory cells in case of future infection.

#### Advantages

- Suitable for people who are immunodeficient
- No live components which can not trigger infection

#### Disadvantages

- Booster shots may be required
- Complex to manufacture
- Determining the antigen to be used can take a lot of time

**Myth:** the vaccine will alter my DNA



**Fact:** mRNA in nucleic acid vaccines are destroyed and can not enter the nucleus of the cell where DNA is found

Prepared and designed by Dania Al-Boukhari  
Edited by Alex Dainis

# COVID-19 Vaccine: Beyond the Conspiracies

## Interview Conducted by Dania Al-Boukhari



### I. Virus and vaccine speculations:

1. We find that many people are hesitant when it comes to taking the vaccine and prefer not to take it; what might be the cause behind their fear?

"I think there are a lot of different reasons why people might be hesitant to take the vaccine, but many of them have to do with the misinformation online about the vaccine. We were all overwhelmed with information last year, so sometimes it can be hard for people to sort through all of the different sources they are getting in order to distinguish the good information from the bad."

2. There are many conspiracy theories about the vaccine such as giving it to old people to kill them or using it to track people; why do some people spread such misinformation about the vaccine?

"Often, misinformation and conspiracy theories appeal to people's emotions, especially fear and anger. These are easy emotions to tap into and can lead people to spread the misinformation farther."

3. Will the vaccine help eradicate COVID-19 as other vaccines have done previously?

"To date, only one human disease has been eradicated by vaccines: smallpox. This was the result of an incredibly impressive worldwide vaccination campaign. For other diseases, vaccines help to keep their rates lower in the population, and can help people have milder infections if they do contract the virus. This is what I predict will happen with COVID-19."



## II. Vaccination process:

1. Why should we let go of our speculations and take the vaccine?

"Through the clinical trials, and now the millions of people who have been vaccinated, we have great data that the vaccines are safe and effective. They can help prevent you from becoming severely ill from COVID-19, and there is increasing data that they can help prevent you from spreading it to more people. Getting the vaccine can help keep you and your community safe!"

2. Should we insist on a certain type of vaccine or should we take the offered vaccine regardless of the type/pharmaceutical manufacturer?

"At the moment, it is more important to take the vaccine and get many people vaccinated than it is to wait for one particular brand of vaccine. The faster we can slow down the spread of the disease, the safer we will all be."

3. Should we take the vaccine if it's offered to us or should we prioritize those in the higher risk groups?

"My personal opinion is that you should take a vaccine if it is being offered to you. While there have been some setbacks and stumbles in vaccine distribution, if it is being offered to you, you are once again helping your community by getting vaccinated."

## III. Recommendations/future view:

1. There are multiple types and manufacturers of the vaccine; which vaccine is the most optimal?

"This is something that we will continue to evaluate going forward. Different vaccines might have different efficacies against the many different variants of the virus. Once we have everyone vaccinated, we can start evaluating better alternatives."

2. Coronaviruses are known to be a family of viruses (SARS MERS, SARS-CoV-2), is there a possibility that a vaccine can be made in the future for the protection from this family of viruses and its mutations?

"There are some groups working on a 'pancoronavirus' vaccine! There's a great New York Times article about it here:

[h t t p s : / / w w w . n y - t i m e s . c o m / 2 0 2 1 / 0 2 / 0 9 / h e a l t h / u n i v e r s a l - c o r o n a v i r u s - v a c c i n e . h t m l](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/09/health/universal-coronavirus-vaccine.html)"

3. In your opinion, what are some ways that can be used to combat the spread of misinformation and encourage people to take the vaccine?

"One of the best ways that everyone can help to combat the spread of misinformation is to check the source of information before sharing it: is it from a reliable source like WHO? Who is sharing this information? What is their motive? Validating information before you share it can help to stop the spread!"

## IV. Geneticists and the vaccine:

1. What is the role of geneticists in the making of the vaccine?

"Geneticists helped make the vaccine by quickly sequencing the genome of SARS-CoV-2. This allowed vaccine producers to easily identify the sequence of the spike protein and immediately begin designing vaccines."

2. How can geneticists help in the development of the COVID-19 vaccines in the future?

"By continuing to sequence the genome of SARS-CoV-2 as it moves through the population, and tracking variants and mutations, geneticists can help to keep an eye on how the virus is mutating and when we might need updated vaccines or booster shots."

# Because of the Pandemic

## Alyag Momjian



After going through many ups and downs growing up, and as hard as that seems to be, you eventually start accepting the fact that almost everything can change. Looking back at my memories is one of the things I enjoy doing the most; it reminds me of how things were back then, how certain things remained the way they were, and how an object or a feeling that had held a part of my heart, is no longer there. It makes me realize how I coped with the changes, and with time, I start noticing all those little perspectives that changed within me during that period.

“A lot can change in a year” was one of those cliché sentences that had lost their meaning in my mind after having heard it everywhere. Anyhow, I was convinced that, truly, a lot can change; yet the changes we witnessed in the past year were excessive. Enduring a whole year in which a pandemic, a war, and several catastrophes followed along the way was definitely laborious. Outriding through all of these, while feeling lonely, was difficult and tiring both mentally and physically. A pandemic was the wake-up call for me as, a year ago, I was a different version of myself... and so were you. We all have our own stories to tell of the past year, of the adventures that somehow became limited as well as unexpected.

Despite having a heartache that resulted from the chaos around me, the strength that was hidden inside of me showed up.

I called it a wake-up call, for various reasons: Because of the pandemic, I stopped taking things for granted, I learned to be more appreciative.

Because of the pandemic, I pushed myself to keep going, as everything happens for a reason.

Because of the pandemic, I now value time and life.

Because of the pandemic, I discovered that it is the little things that matter the most.

As we are still feeling stuck due to the endless lockdowns, remember that nothing lasts forever; any slight thing can change in the blink of an eye.

Be an optimist, and be sure that even optimists can feel down, lose hope in some cases, and even have insecurities; these are very reasonable. Each one of us has to feel in order to understand certain situations in life. Do not minimize your feelings, feel them all the way. Once you are ready, try lifting yourself up, keep pushing yourself to hold on a bit more, and even if the needed motivation is unfindable, keep searching for it.

Times were tough, they still are, but look how far you have come. Let us toast to you for achieving so much in such times. Salute to the fact that you made someone smile through a phone conversation, inspired another online, and that you are doing your utmost best. Celebrate the fact that you can still stand on your feet and enter a new day. It is time to give yourself some credit.

When in disappointment, blaming oneself will not help. You can learn and improve; the trick is not to give up, precisely while walking towards achieving a goal.

Remember who you were, who you have become, and keep going. These times will dwindle, and will, later on, bring images from the past into your mind, where you can relive any feeling. Stay true and strong for yourself because no one can help you as much as you can.

Here is a kind reminder for you not to be too harsh, for life is all about the little things that will eventually lead us to the bigger ones. Now, go ahead and stop worrying, for this too shall pass.

## Teacher's Day with a Twist

Dounia Houssami



Armenag Haigazian once said:

**“It is impossible to educate humanity without love.”**

It has been a year since the pandemic of COVID-19 emerged.

We had no choice but to close school buildings, shut down some businesses, or shift to working from home. The concept of a pandemic was new to many of us. The concept of a lockdown was also new to many of us. What was not new is our ability to rapidly adapt to new situations, new circumstances, and a totally new life style. However, what happened to teaching and learning?

People coped with this sudden change differently. What grabbed my attention was the fact that many people around the world were driven towards learning new concepts and acquiring new skills. The passion for learning was ignited again among adults.

Schools and universities shifted to adopting the virtual teaching and learning model in March 2019. Here we are today still teaching/learning virtually. Our ability, both teachers and learners, to use different and unfamiliar online platforms and new tools is quite impressive.

On the occasion of Teacher's Day, as a teacher, and as a proud Haigazian University alumna, I dedicate this article as a salutation and a form of appreciation to all educators, who under very challenging circumstances, stayed up late to learn how to use online platforms and to prepare lessons and assessments to ensure that the learning journey of all students remains uninterrupted.

Looking back at my experience in virtual teaching over a year, I am grateful for my very unique journey at Haigazian University back then. I am grateful for all HU educators who instilled Armenag Haigazian's saying in me as an educator.

### Teaching with love?

Yes! Schools and universities have been deserted for quite a while. Yet, teaching was uninterrupted. Love? Yes! Love, care, and support remained the pillars of our teaching regardless the distance between the teacher and the learner.

Teacher's Day this year came with a twist. We alumni supported each other all through this year regardless of where we are. To all Haigazian University educators, to all Education Department Alumni, you are truly and genuinely appreciated. You have been wonder-fully teaching with love during and way beyond your work hours. You have been making a great difference one day after the other. Give yourself a pat on the back and keep going.

A Proud Alumna,  
Dounia Houssami (BA Education, 2017)



# How the Youth can Lead the Next Generation of the World

## Jack Jizmejian

**“Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”**

**– George Bernard Shaw**



During the past decade, the world has been struggling with many difficult challenges that have not only affected the lives of adults but have also mainly affected that of the younger generation. The rise of social media and the shocking consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have forever changed the way youth will look at the world, especially with the amount of pressure that they are currently experiencing, which has not only affected their mental health but also the future of the world. In regards to the power of social media, it has become one of the primary issues concerning the mental health of the young generation who are bound to be the leaders of the next generation. Nowadays, many young people from the ages of 10 to 15 are addicted to social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Their obsession with the number of followers and likes they receive and their exposure to negative content on these platforms have taken over their mental wellbeing and have hindered their growth into more mature human beings. These negative habits have caused disorders such as depression and anxiety, which according to John Assaraf's book *Innercise*, can negatively change the neurology of a person's brain in the long term. Assaraf argues that these disorders cause the most activity in the "amygdala," the structure responsible for responding to threats and fear. Instead, the youth should engage in more creative activities that would prepare them to become more effective goal achievers in the future.

Such activities can be created if our world comes up with new ways to prepare the youth for their awakening. However, with a pandemic on our hands, which has caused psychological, political, and socio-economic problems, it has become quite difficult for our current

leaders to become healthy examples of efficient leadership to inspire the youth to recognize the reality that they will be the ones who will carry the torch of responsibility. After all, the youth will be leading the next generation into the future, and without an optimistic mindset, and the right amount of courage, they will fail to do so.

In his book, *The Leader Who Had No Face*, Robin Sharma describes how important it is for leaders to not only have a strong mindset but to also develop a strong heart-set. Personally, I believe that the future of our world should not be led by tyrants or famous business figures, who may have the appropriate number of strategies and experiences to achieve their goals, without having any empathy or emotional intelligence. Instead, it should be led by people who follow their passions, their persistence, and their love for their own lives because that's exactly what having a true heart-set is.

My message to the young generation is that they should begin to realize that wasting their time on their technological devices and procrastinating will hinder their opportunity for self-development to evolve into mature, disciplined, and enlightened people. It's very important for people to be committed to chasing their dreams, but what's more important is the amount of progress they make while aiming to achieve their ambitions in life, because at the end of the day, what's important isn't the end result but rather the identity they create along the journey.

Finally, after a year of worldwide suffering, I believe that the youth should begin to learn how to feel more and want less, because the more they get attached to the material things in life, the more detached they will become with the present moment and their inner selves.

# Lebanon: Where Is It Headed?

Andrea Khatchadourian



**Lebanon, what of it?** Lebanon, my dear compatriots, is headed towards an iceberg. But unlike the Titanic, it appears our captain and crew have purposely steered the ship towards it. We might assume that some, or even most of us, would make it out alive, but alas the lifeboats have been sold to the highest bidder. We are left to drown, not in the cold icy waters of the Atlantic, but our hunger.

**In** the hands of the vile sadistic charlatans we call our petty leaders, hope becomes nothing more than the ash of charred flesh. Being left in such a position, what options do we have? To whom can we turn? Where can we go? Can we even leave this place?

# Lebanon: Where Is It Headed?

**The** people of Lebanon have very few options; some would say there are none. However, this type of pessimistic and backward thinking has no place anymore. We have three options:

To leave our fate in the hands of the rotten swine, and hope that they don't cover what's left of our beautiful country with the contents of their sty. But expecting the corrupt and foul to act decent and do the right thing is as foolish as expecting a wild boar to not grunt at the sight of food. And as such, the first option is like a children's fairy tale: it would make for a nice story, but expecting anything more would be an overestimation of our leaders' competence.

The people have, in almost all cases, chosen to stick with the sectarianism-preaching warlords they have seen as protectors. But things have changed: the people have been cast aside; they have lost their homes, jobs, and lives, and they have been disillusioned by the grandeur of their leaders. Some would say that Lebanon has substitutes for its improper leaders. The truth is, Lebanon has always had substitutes, which brings us to our second option. This option requires the utmost strength of our democratic institutions, for there we shall fight our wars and we shall slay the vipers of injustice in the halls of liberty. Voting out the incumbents is an option that is becoming more likely by the day. People still have their doubts, citing the pied pipers of corruption; but we must root and vie for the best and install a new generation of selfless servants who would represent and defend the interest of the people.

The last – and there is a reason for this option being the last one – is dissent and revolution, one that would make the French look like amateurs. This calls for the unification of the people of Lebanon, for the destruction of the sectarian borders that are still in place, and for the establishment of a new country. Lebanon must be killed. The tumors are many, and its survival for so long is a miracle, but sadly it must die. This is our Ultima Arbitrium (Final Choice) and we must leave it as such. Only after every legal and democratic option has been exhausted shall we even dare to turn to this option. We risk losing everything by going down this path, and there is no guarantee we would achieve anything; instead, we would be serving Lebanon to the hyenas of the South.

**Some** might see leaving as a fourth option. They might go somewhere new and call it home. Unfortunately, not everyone has that luxury. Our wealth is held hostage along with us, and some even believe it is dead. In that case, how can we leave? And most importantly, why would we let the people responsible get away with it? People have had their lives reduced to nothing, their livelihoods stolen, and their dignities smirched. To leave despite everything that has happened, despite the incompetence of our leadership, and the tragedies that have come with it – the economic crisis, the Beirut port explosion, and a pandemic on top of that – is cowardice. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, “We despise and abhor the bully, the brawler, the oppressor, whether in private or public life, but we despise no less the coward and the voluptuary. No man is worth calling a man who will not fight rather than submit to infamy or see those that are dear to him suffer wrong.” To answer the question, we can't leave, and we now know what needs to be done.

**To** whom can we turn? We have no other choice but to turn to ourselves, to our brothers and sisters, for we have no one else. The cooperation and unification of our people is of the utmost importance to witness change. Otherwise, we would be going down the same broken cycle that destroyed Lebanon in the first place. Most Lebanese people are mere followers, but years of social conditioning cannot be changed overnight. We, therefore, need someone to lead; we need someone to gather the herd: a prophesized shepherd that would lead us through this chaos. There is yet a person to claim this title, and we mustn't be hasty in choosing a false prophet. Only time will tell if a liberator would emerge.

**The** Lebanon of tomorrow needs to be that of reform: tackling corruption, rebuilding the economy, restructuring the banking sector, and fixing the electrical and sanitation problems need to be the number one priority of any coming government. People need to collect what little hope and energy they have left and rebuild the country brick by brick. One can hope for more things such as universal healthcare and education, but the basics will do for now, and if we are lucky enough, we might live to see it all happen.



# Reform Conscription, Introduce Social Work

## Garen Kazarian

Most Armenians are aware that as of the second Artsakh war we are a defeated nation. Losing the war left Armenians everywhere shaken about the future of Artsakh and Armenia, as uncertainty rises following the continuous clashes for power between the government and opposition, as well as the deaths of at least 4000 Armenians during the war (may their souls rest in peace).

The war proved that both the Armenian state – Artsakh included – as well as the Diaspora have a lot to work on to maintain the fragile and endangered statehood, and to thrive as a nation to prevent another disaster from happening ever again. Even though this “never again” attitude should have been adopted after the genocide, we took things for granted by creating a huge and lethal gap in the fields of politics and statehood.



Figure 1: Map Showing Armenia and Artsakh as of 1/12/20

This, in turn, made Armenian affairs, both in terms of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as the Diaspora, take at best a mediocre shape, and at worst a regressive one. This state of Armenian affairs has had multiplier effects creating many problems for the Armenian nation including the lack of an efficient, effective, and modern military along with its military-industrial complex.

Unfortunately, it took both the wars of 2016 and 2020 to highlight our deficiencies in the military which cost us thousands of lives (may their souls rest in peace). This lack of development and discipline is also seen in other factors of Armenian affairs, such as Armenia's socio-economy state, where estimates show that at least 1/5th of Armenians live below the poverty line.

And this isn't exclusive to Armenia. In Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran for example, many Armenians face daily socio-economic hardships due to the unstable nature of all four countries as well as their respective economic issues, like the ever-growing rates of inflation that are witnessed in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. Thus, based on facts like these, one can easily conclude that socio-economic stability is among the biggest problems that the Armenian nation faces. In addition, the doctrine, equipment, and organizational structure of the armed forces are obsolete and outdated; this sad state of affairs clearly manifested itself in the second Artsakh war. This includes the use of conscription, as unlike our armed forces – which were mainly composed of conscripts – many of Azerbaijan's forces were either seasoned veterans like the hired jihadist mercenaries from Syria, Azeri/Turkish special forces units, or drones that decimated our brave soldiers on the battlefields costing us many Armenians lives, including those who were born between 1999 and 2003 (again, may their souls rest in peace).

Thus, based on the negative socio-economic and military affairs in our nation, it is highly recommended that the Armenian state reforms the conscription law of Armenia and Artsakh while allowing for a social work-oriented alternative to take place. Basically, instead of forcing males to go to the frontlines for 2 years in defense of the nation, it is advised that 3 months' worth of general training be given to both males and females when they turn 18. Once they complete their training, they can have a choice between continuing with either 9 more months of military service or participating in public service in terms of social work, through both governmental and non-governmental organizations like the AGBU, Birthright Armenia, iGorts, Repat Armenia, etc. These social work initiatives won't only be limited to Armenia and Artsakh, as they can be applied in Diaspora countries as well, where a Lebanese Armenian, for example, would be given the choice to either carry out social work activities in Lebanon, Armenia, or Artsakh.

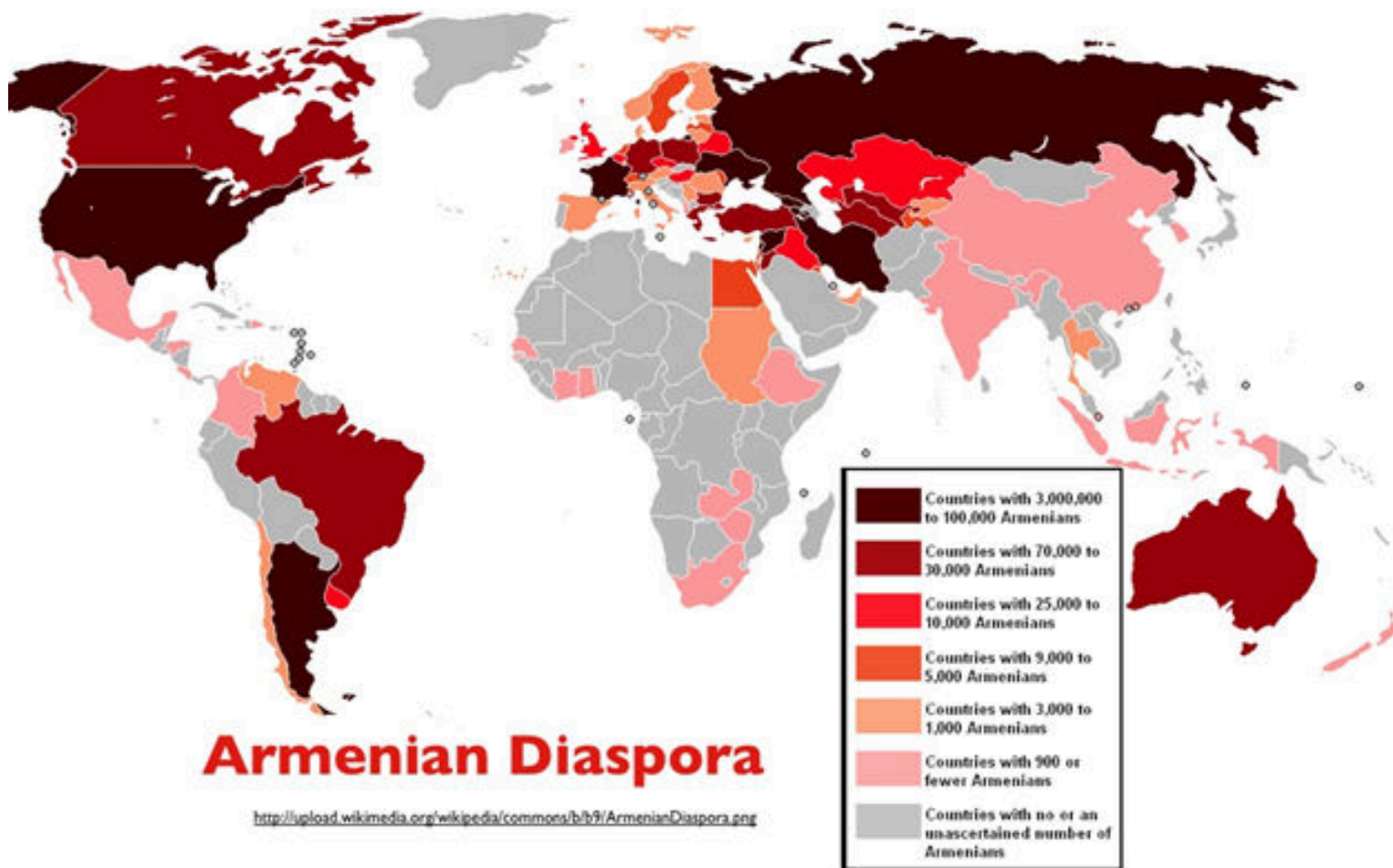


Figure 2: Map Showing the Armenian Diaspora





Figure 3: Photo of Grigoryan Family Living in Poverty after Arthur Grigoryan, Father of family and 1st Artsakh War Veteran, Was Killed in the Recent Artsakh War

This way, many things can be achieved. First, Diaspora Armenians would not hesitate to get the Armenian citizenship in fear of serving two years in the frontlines. Second, unlike the past and present affairs where the relationship between Armenia/Artsakh and the Diaspora can be easily said to have been and still is more beneficial to Armenia/Artsakh rather than a mutually beneficial relationship. The Diaspora can also seek to benefit, as it essentially allows for the Diaspora to acquire the Armenian citizenship more confidently, while also allowing the Diaspora to use its youth more productively enabling them to conduct local social work after getting basic military training in Armenia. Thus, such a step can make the youth more patriotic and community-oriented, while also enabling them to enhance their self-defense, social, and technical skills. Third, by allowing the youth of the Diaspora and Armenia/Artsakh to interact with each other more actively, both in the realms of the military and social work, the social and linguistics gaps that exist today between both parties would be minimized, if not eliminated. This would be accomplished over time as the increasingly shared experiences of the Diaspora and Armenia/Artsakh youth would enable them to better understand each other's livelihood, and to initiate personal relationships such as friendships, business ties, marriages, etc.

This, in turn, would allow the merging of the diverse identities of both the Diaspora and Armenia/Artsakh into a more coherent singular Armenian identity with minimal divisions, unlike what we are witnessing today. Hence, a sense of fraternity and equality should be developed where the stakes of both the Diaspora and Armenia/Artsakh are combined to form one national and international set of Armenian interests. Fourth, by reforming conscription to 3 months of general training for both sexes and introducing social work as an alternative to public service in the military, both the Diaspora and Armenia/Artsakh could use the power of the youth to enhance the socio-economic status of Armenians in both the Diaspora, as well as Armenia/Artsakh, while also minimizing the reliance on conscripts for the military. Consequently, this would maximize the mobilization and deployment of highly trained, very well equipped, modern, efficient, as well as effective military. Meanwhile, this would ensure the availability of a huge pool of reserves in case of war or natural disasters. As such, the funds for the new military force would be acquired from the ever-increasing and evolving Armenian socio-economic developments through social work activities, problems like poverty, deficits in public infrastructure, lack of access to basic services and utilities, etc. would be solved with the utilization of the youth's manpower, as well as its social work jobs that could help tackle such nuances.



Briefly, it is believed that through reforming conscription and introducing social work, the Armenian nation could work on minimizing and even eliminating its many internal socio-economic issues, including poverty, while also allowing for the empowerment of the youth in both the Diaspora and Armenia/Artsakh. Hence, this, in turn, can/will strengthen the Armenian communities of both parties, as well as merge the identities of both parties into a more coherent, unified, singular Armenian identity with its set of interests both nationally and internationally.

Therefore, by dealing with the many internal problems that weaken and divide the Armenian nation, as well as creating room for the nation not only to survive, but also to thrive, in the ever-evolving world, we can deal with our external enemies including Turkey and Azerbaijan, and, hopefully, achieve external international pan-Armenian goals like retaking the core Artsakh territory. These include territories such as Karvajar, Hadrut, Shushi, Sanasar, Shahumyan, Govsagan, Chragan, etc. as well as Nakhichevan. In addition, we

can work on enhancing our diplomatic and trade relations with the world, thus making Armenia an indispensable and powerful member of the international community. After all, if we fail to fix the mess we are in, we might perish, as the odds are stacked against us. Let us work on shifting the odds to our favor together, with a long-term, unified, mutually beneficial approach for all Armenians.

Hopefully, this article may gain the attention of all relevant leaders of the Armenian nation, and it could be both discussed extensively as well as implemented. I am open to any and all levels of criticism and believe that this piece of policy needs further editing; however, as an idea, I personally believe it to be fundamentally valid, doable, realistic, and most importantly crucial for the continued existence of our nation and state.



Figure 4: Photo of Armenian Special Forces

# The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Hoda Al Ghali

On the 4th of August at exactly 6:08 pm, Lebanon witnessed its most traumatic event of the century. In the blink of an eye, hundreds of people lost their houses, their loved ones, their pets and more. In that fraction of a second, those people's lives flashed before their eyes, so you can only imagine their mental state at present. People's need for mental health support has increased significantly in the two months since the massive explosion hit the city of Beirut.

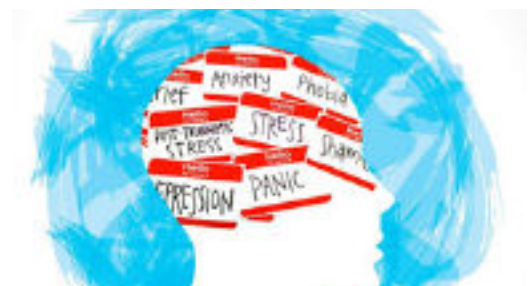
In neighborhoods affected by the blast, two in three patients coming to *Medicins Sans Frontières* (MSF) for mental health consultations have symptoms related to anxiety and depression, with more than half citing the August blast as the cause. Of patients with pre-existing mental health conditions, 82 percent say their symptoms have increased in severity since the explosion.

It's evident that the rate of mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and PTSD skyrocketed after the explosion. Even many months after the explosion, people continue to face the demons that had donned upon them on that day. Although it might seem impossible for these people to find happiness again, there are many effective ways to uplift their spirits. One of the many ways people can stay positive is associating the place of trauma with a positive memory. For example, many people witnessed the explosion from their houses, as they stood by their windowsill or in their kitchens. Thus, instead of dwelling on the past, they should keep reminding themselves of the happy times they spent in those specific areas. Another important strategy most people tend to forget is to take a breath, and count to ten when confronting a stressful decision. Such an act helps you control your impulses and manage your stress. Remaining connected with your friends and family is very important even though it can be rather hard in times of lockdown, but communication and social networking can provide you with a sense of normalcy and sustainability.



Some people tend to use repression as a coping mechanism when faced with such traumatic events, but that tends to worsen their mental problems. Instead of repressing your emotions, you should turn to healthier alternative methods like communicating or writing down your feelings. Maintaining a healthy daily routine is crucial when getting over trauma. To maintain a healthy outlook, you should give structure to your day as this provides a sense of stability and calmness and helps you stay in control. This, in turn, can decrease your anxiety and stress. Last and certainly not least, maintaining a positive and optimistic outlook can enable you to see the good things in your life and can keep you going even in the hardest times.

Even though Lebanon is going through a tough time right now, and you feel like the universe is out to get you, keep reminding yourself you are not alone, and that you are going to get through this. Cut yourself some slack, and take a breath once in a while. Take care of yourself, but most importantly, love and appreciate yourself no matter what.





# Do Old Habits Die Hard?

## Vartineh Baghdo Donabedian

Change is evident in our everyday lives in the way a day turns into night and the way seasons change from hot summer beach weather to the withering cold winter evenings and living beings survive accordingly. We adjust and make changes that best fit our interests: to keep us warm on cold nights, or to rest when it is nighttime. All habits develop for the better of our livelihood. According to a study done by psychologist Philippa Lally, to detect the duration of time needed to form a habit, it was shown that an average of two months is needed (as cited in the article by Clear, n.d.). In the past year, the world was forced to be put under quarantine in light of the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to major changes in our lifestyles and has, in turn, helped in the development of new and protective habits that best fit our wellness.

This massive change has impacted different cultures and businesses across the world. For instance, the Middle Eastern culture thrives on family values and companionship. No Sunday afternoons are left without the laughter and arguments heard a block away, as well as the smell of delicious food shared amongst them. But all that seems to have faded away as the fear of death took over in mid-March 2020. Across the world, parents started to hold back their instinct to stroke their child's face before disinfecting their hands, while singing the happy birthday song twice. In addition, humans have become aware of every item or person they touch or stand too close to, as those would be polluting the air they breathe; this has led them to become more prone to keeping their surroundings clear. Moreover, companies such as Kylie Cosmetics, a makeup brand, started profiting off of sanitizers and masks. Thus, new habits have been created to accommodate the way we will live in what seems to look like the apocalypse. "Six-feet" apart has become a standard.

And what remains to be discovered is: if this pandemic ever ends, will people still hold onto the habits that they've become accustomed to? Will they think twice when blowing candles on a cake in fear of spreading unknown germs? Will they still push elevator buttons with their keys, or elbows, or kick doors with their feet in the horror of what lives on the doorknob? Will people start looking for sanitizer when entering a restaurant, or ask for their temperature to be taken as they enter each store or building? Will they feel like something is missing when they can finally go outside without wearing a mask?

Habits feel comfortable, but will these habits be forgotten once it is announced that COVID-19 can no longer hurt an individual the way it used to? I've come across a lot of post-COVID plans, and none of them mention people abiding by the habits that they've acquired during this period. Some of these plans consist of letting go of the fear that sparked when we realized our need to be conscious of everything we come in contact with. Things such as hugging loved ones without a second thought and without considering how we might hurt them, traveling to see family that we were separated from because of lockdown restrictions, being outside without worrying that it might be close to lockdown hours, and just plain living as we used to, without caring so much.

In conclusion, it might take years for us to know if, or when, COVID-19 would stop having so much control over our lives. But one thing is for sure, and it is that people have a hard time letting go of habits. Personally, some of the habits that I've acquired will live with me. And there will come a day when I will tell my grandchildren of the time I had to sing happy birthday every time I washed my hands to make sure I was kicking COVID-19 in the butt.



# End Jealousy, Embrace Acceptance of Difference

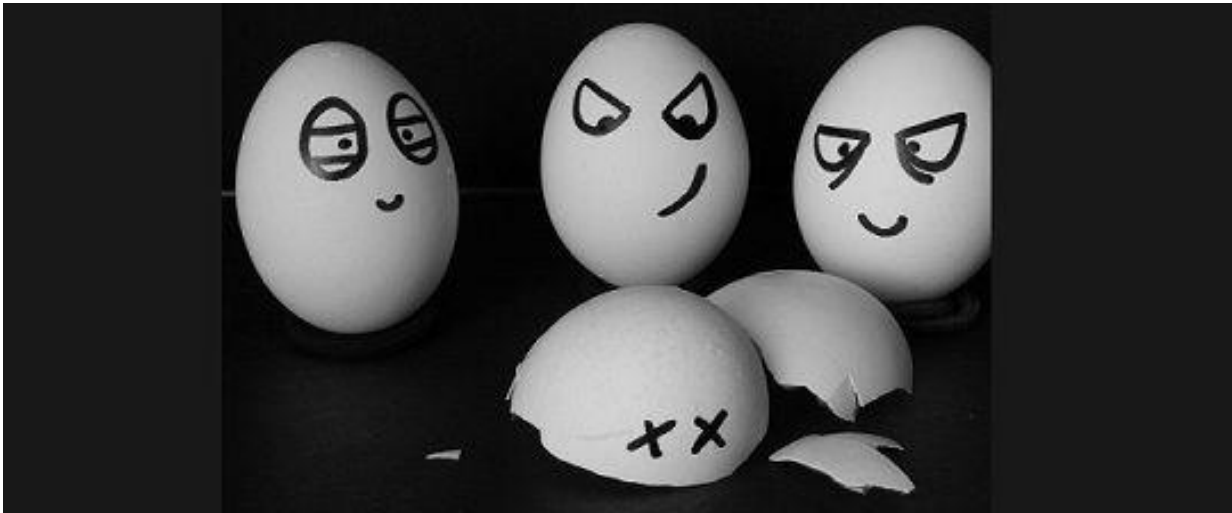
Dania Al-Boukhari

“Jealousy implies  
resentment”

In the last issue of the Haigazian Herald, I wrote an article about acceptance which many found helpful and said that the article spoke to them. However, I only discussed acceptance of the situations we face without focusing on the acceptance of our lives. We often fall in the trap of developing self-hatred and anger because we simply want somebody else's life, without realizing that we are living our best life at any given moment. We tend to forget our blessings and the hard work we've invested to reach where we are right now. Instead, we resort to comparing our lives with others' and envying them for having lives or things that we have yet to experience. We want everything, yet we do nothing towards the things we presumably "want." In this case, what should we do so that we don't fall in such a trap?

Let's start with acceptance. Once we stop living by the expectations of how things should be and accept what is, we open a big door for ourselves to leave that never-ending cycle of jealousy and envy. What is it that we should accept? Well, a starting point can be the acceptance that we don't live others' lives. Even though we might cross each other's paths at one point, each one of us is going on his or her own way. Thus, each person gets what is meant for him/her throughout his/her journey- meaning that we will not necessarily have what others have.

We can also start by accepting the fact that what we observe in the lives of others is only a filtered fraction of a picture and not the whole image.



Not only do we tend to forget that, but we also often refuse to admit it. We just want to believe in the aesthetic beauty and the simplicity, ignoring the pain and difficulty behind such images. In reality though, people refrain from sharing their struggles and vulnerability with those who are not close to them, making it easier for them to pull off this filter.

Another thing to do is to choose to be inspired with others' achievements instead of feeling jealous. Jealousy and envy will not yield any beneficial results; but instead will build a gap between us and others that might destroy our relationships. Diverting that jealousy into inspiration can give us ideas and motivation for our next move or help us continue grinding in our current projects.

# End Jealousy, Embrace Acceptance of Difference

Throughout this process, we should also let go of people in our circles who make us feel desperate instead of inspired. It might seem difficult, but the results are worthwhile. For instance, during the quarantine period, I built some distance from some people, who didn't help me move forward by any means, didn't support my vision, and made me feel like I'm somehow a failure. While doing that, I thought of how much I will miss these people. And guess what? None of them noticed that I had even left! That made me discover that I wasn't missing them as much as I was missing the moments we had shared together. Their absence gave me strength and power I never realized I had, which made me grow beyond what I had expected. It also gave me an opportunity to meet people who push and believe in me, and others who inspire me to pursue my dreams. This way, I channeled any comparison and jealousy I had into creating eye-opening experiences.

Having said that, being inspired means nothing if we don't put in the effort. Sitting back with inspiration while simultaneously comparing ourselves to others gives no results. It doesn't change anything. If we want to achieve what others did and get what they have, then the best thing to do is to follow their footsteps to reach their achievements because persistence + work = tangible results.

When We Don't Accept Other's Success, It  
Becomes Jealousy;  
When We Accept It,  
It Becomes Inspiration.

Acceptance Is The Key To  
Handling Life Well.

— Viren A Majithiya

ENVY IS THE  
**ULCER**  
OF THE SOUL

Otherwise, we shouldn't blame others for what they have, we should blame ourselves for not working to get it. A place to start working from is oneself: building healthy effective habits that will help us achieve our long-term goals and stop toxic behaviors. For example, practicing gratitude as it can help in becoming happier and more content with what is currently present. This is just an example to give inspiration for building a plan that is compatible with one's vision.

Changing the way we choose to see others' lives changes the way we live our lives. Accepting the things that are out of our control can bring us so much peace and empowerment. We must not forget that the power of our individual uniqueness is of incredible value. We weren't made to be a copy of others; we were blessed with our differences that make us stand out from others. We must dare to be different and to boldly show that. In the end, should we lose our identity while aiming to be copies of other people?

COMPARISON CREATES JEALOUSY !  
CRITICISM CREATES AGGRESSION !  
RIDICULE CREATES GUILT !  
ACCEPTANCE CREATES SELF RESPECT !

— MADHU SMITA



# Budget-Friendly Places to Visit after Lockdown in Lebanon

## Armen Simonian

**Lebanese people** are known for being outgoing and adventurous; however, as the economic and financial meltdown continue to bite us hard, most Lebanese people are driven to be more mindful of how and what to spend money on, often finding cheaper substitutes for products or activities. One of those things is simply going out... The present uncertainty of a devalued currency, as well as intermittent COVID restrictions, have limited many people's options of places to explore and enjoy their time.

### **Going out, however, doesn't have to be an expensive excursion...**

It is quite possible to enjoy a time out, to have fun, and to make amazing memories without feeling guilty about excessive spending. Therefore, I hope, and I wish this article comes in handy for anyone wanting to explore on a budget.



*Some tips:*

- Bringing a friend or two who are willing to share the cost of transportation (i.e., gas) will lift some of the financial burden off of everyone.
- There's no need to spend excessive money on eating out while on a road trip; bring food and drinks from home.
- Drive carefully; potholes on the roads can be risky – and potentially costly – to your car. Drive safely, relax, and enjoy the ride, and listen to some music too!
- Use Google Maps frequently. Although it is not always perfect, yet most of the time it will get the job done in taking you to your destination efficiently and not steer you away from your route and get you lost (potentially raising transportation cost).
- Respect COVID preventive measures.



**The places mentioned are a mix of hiking trails, old towns, natural landscapes, and castles...  
They are listed according to their distance from Beirut.**



**Walk through the cozy narrow and colorful streets of Karm el Zeytoun**





# Budget-Friendly Places to Visit After Lockdown in Lebanon



**Watch the sunset from the historic village of Broummana**



**Walk through the streets and souks**

**And visit the churches of Jounieh**

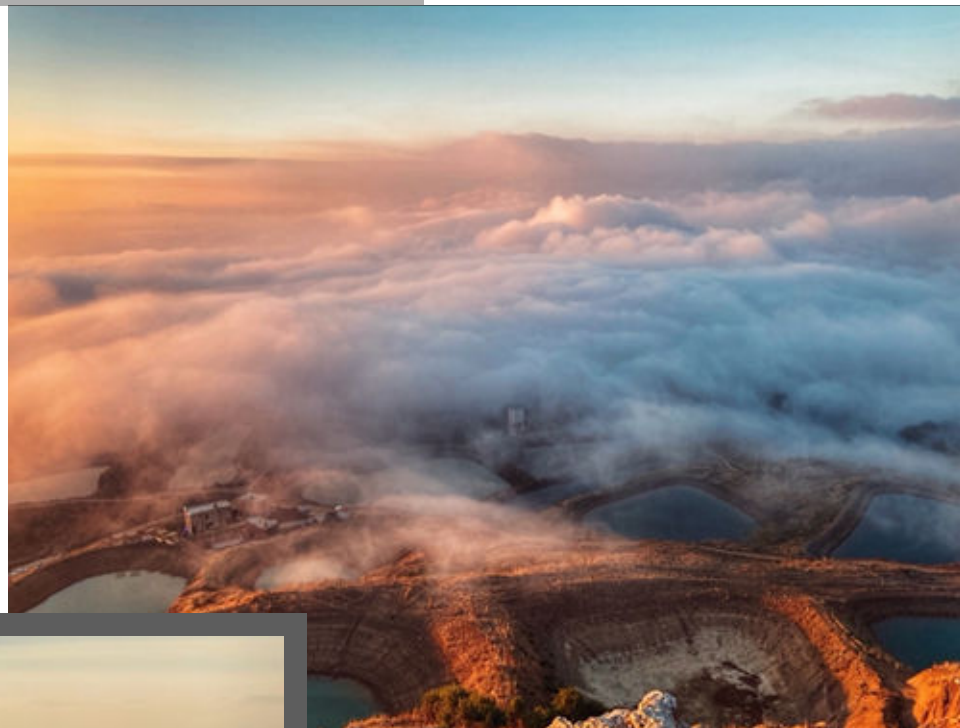




## **Budget-Friendly Places to Visit After Lockdown in Lebanon**

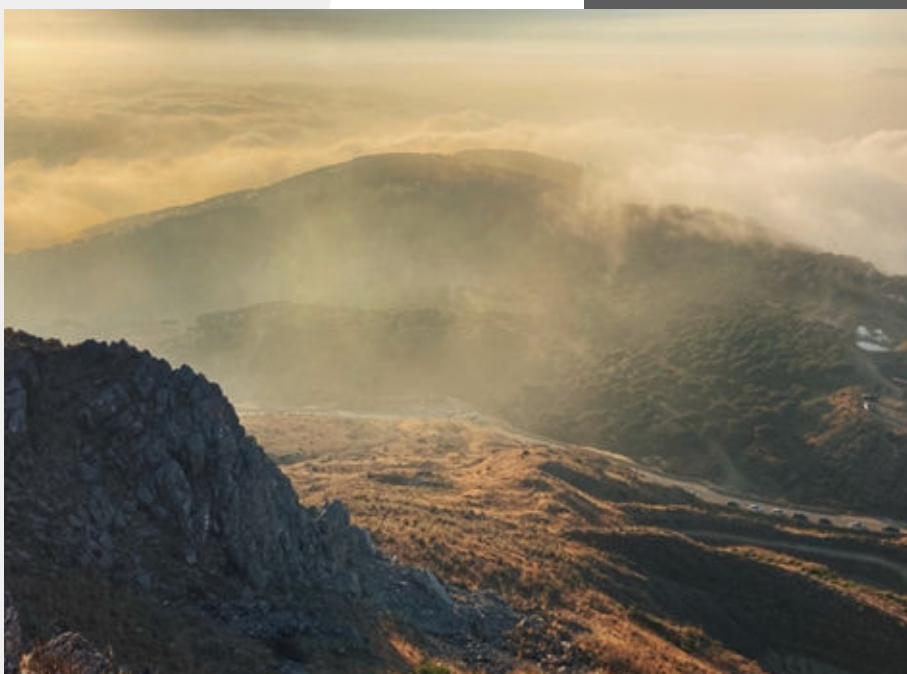


**Hike the trail of  
Wadi al Salib  
and admire  
the beautiful scenery**



**Hike in Falougha**

**& enjoy an afternoon  
picnic by the lakes**





# **Budget-Friendly Places to Visit After Lockdown in Lebanon**



**Roam the old town  
of Jbeil (Byblos)**



**& admire the ancient  
seaside town**



**Visit the Byblos  
Citadel in Jbeil**





**Roam the old town of Batroun  
and enjoy the famous local lemonade**



# Take a trip to the Roman ruins in Fagra



“

The places shown above do not even scratch the surface of the number of stunning places there are in Lebanon; these are the places I personally went to recently. I chose sites that are free to visit or that have a very simple entrance fee; however, with the rise in prices, fees may also be subject to increase. Additionally, due to COVID restrictions – if there are any – some places may be closed to the public.

”



# She's Not Asking for It! Combating Sexual Harassment: A Never-Ending Battle

Liliane Mohamad



When I decided that I was going to write my first article, I immediately knew that I wanted it to discuss a human rights issue, more specifically, a women's rights issue. I had many options and several topics, but I decided to choose something personal, and that is sexual harassment. As a survivor, I feel it is my responsibility to speak up about the struggles that girls and women in my country go through when it comes to this issue. I am not writing this article to talk about my story, but to discuss sexual harassment as one of the most revolting and pervasive problems that affects women, men, girls, and boys across the globe.

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual behavior or action that happens without the consent of one of the parties. It can be physical or verbal, and it can happen at any place and any time. Catcalling, groping or touching someone without his or her consent, making inappropriate sexual remarks about someone's appearance, and sharing someone's private photos are all forms of sexual harassment. And unfortunately, most girls and women in Lebanon have experienced at least one of these types of harassment throughout their lives.

Despite all the economic, social, and political issues that are currently occurring in Lebanon, sexual harassment remains one of the most widespread problems that have been normalized for centuries, with no hint of change until recently. Over the years, several NGOs such as RDFL, ABAAD, and KAFA have been voicing their concerns about this particular issue through campaigns and protests. According to the Human Rights Watch, On December 21, 2020, Lebanon's Parliament finally passed a law that criminalizes sexual harassment, offers protection to the victims, and acknowledges the different forms of sexual harassment whether physical, verbal, or digital. This law is a huge step forward and a very important milestone for all those who have been working on making this happen for years. There are a few positive aspects as a result of this law, one of which is that it punishes the harasser from one up to four years in prison with fines that reach up to 10 to 50 times the minimum wage respectively. The law also protects the victims from any acts of revenge after they report the incident. However, we live in a society that considers talking about such issues demeaning and taboo. Some families even encourage the victim not to open up about the sexual harassment incident because of how disgraceful they consider it to be. And when the victim does, in some cases, she is beaten up and killed in the name of "honor killing." Thus, in such cases, these protection measures are futile and unrealistic. We are also aware of the collapsing state of this country and how nepotism controls its every aspect and field, and how it ultimately holds a tight grip on the judicial system. Therefore, this law will be as vague as ever if most of the harassers get away with their criminal offenses.

In addition to all of that, there is another problem that is just as challenging and perpetual as sexual harassment, and that is rape culture. UN Women defines rape culture as "the social environment that allows sexual violence to be normalized and justified, fueled by the persistent gender inequalities and attitudes about gender and sexuality." He believes that are associated with rape culture are embedded in our patriarchal society. This society that we grow up in is



# She's Not Asking for It! Combating Sexual Harassment: A Never-Ending Battle

quick to pin the blame on the victim, and is reluctant to accept that the victim never “asked for it” in the first place. What’s more despicable are the dreadful reasons being used to back up such arguments; we are in the year 2021, and some still believe that a woman’s clothing is the reason behind her assault. It is deeply rooted in our culture that women dress to please and attract men, that they were created to satisfy men’s desires, that they are to be submissive to their husbands and fathers, and that they do not have a say in anything. In a nutshell, women are simply considered the inferior sex. All these beliefs and values are a result of institutionalized misogyny that manifests from the fragile egos of abusive men who hold the power.

Because our patriarchal society and our government are clearly incompetent in combating this issue, the responsibility falls on us, the people of this country, to speak up and fight harassment. After the rise of the COVID-19 and at the beginning of the lockdown, a new Instagram account called “PervsofLebanon” was launched. It aims to expose all the offenders and harassers within Lebanon and gives a space for girls to share their experience, raise awareness, and protect somebody else by identifying the harasser. This is what should be done.

Girls should feel encouraged to speak up when they want to. They should feel safe in sharing their experiences knowing that they will be benefiting other girls as well.

Another effective method of tackling sexual harassment would be by offering support to its victims. This is the first thing you can do. Listen to their story, believe them, and encourage them to seek help and to report the incident. Survivors of sexual harassment often feel vulnerable at first, afraid of what other people would think and say, and wondering if anyone would believe them. Having someone who they know they can trust and open up to will make them feel safe and credible. Hence, it is important to listen to them at first without demanding to know any details. Then, try to convince them that what happened was never their fault. Unfortunately, many survivors blame themselves after the incident and think of different scenarios of how things could have been different. Therefore, you can always remind them that they should not take the blame.

By voicing our experiences, and helping other victims, we step closer towards eliminating sexual harassment within our country. Accordingly, this is a plea to take action and dismantle the patriarchal society which created rape culture in the first place. We are tired of being terrified of walking alone, of clutching our keys tightly when we go into the parking lot, of carrying pepper spray wherever we go, of being told to cover up, and of constantly hearing more sexual harassment stories.

The path to eliminating all forms of harassment is no bed of roses, but we need to fight it together despite the thorns.

**“Don't cry”,  
“don't smile too much”,  
“don't play with soft toys”,  
“don't dance”,  
“don't be friends with a lot of girls in school”**



**these are all sentences I've heard as a Lebanese child growing up in Lebanon, a country where being “man enough”, or at least passing as “masculine”, is a condition of adherence to norms.**

As a twenty-year-old psychology student, none of the many experiences I have gone through have been masked or veiled from my peers. There are many misconceptions around what it means to “be a man” especially in a collectivistic, Middle Eastern country such as Lebanon. Those experiences combined made me realize that the over-glorification of men in our society and in our families does not only affect the treatment of females in regard to them reaching their full potential and being able to rise to the positions they yearn for in society; it also increases the burden on men themselves. Men are encouraged, even forced at times, to be emotionless, because having emotions is not “manly enough”. They are expected to constantly be strong, because if they can't always show up, then they would be letting everyone down. They have to be the providers because the man should be the Head of the family; these are some of many notions we have experienced first-hand. Despite the fact that research has shown the compatibility between men and women on a personal

and psychological level to be only minimally different, men still feel the need to take care of other women and be the ‘heroes’ of the story, even though, in many cases, it is unsolicited. They even feel offended if they have been taken care of by a woman, believing that this destroys their image of a strong, tough, and emotionless man.

For the men reading this article, if I asked you to define what it means to “be a man”, to draw a square and write in it what you think you need to be to qualify as “man enough” then what would you put outside that box? Write down the qualities you have that might betray the man in you. What emotions are acceptable for you to show without appearing weak? What happens if you step away from the box that society has so toxically put you in? What finally happens if you get rid of the box altogether and live as just a person without all the dos and don'ts? Would you be betraying the man in you?

# Redefining Masculinity

It is no coincidence that the percentage of men killing themselves around the world is increasing by the day. It is no coincidence that bottling up all their darkest thoughts and despaired emotions – because they are ashamed of them – pushes them to resort to substance abuse or, worse, to fulfill their repressed feelings by taking them out on women. Our Lebanese educational system, be it in schools or universities, lacks all the basic education on how to teach students to properly cope and behave as well as understand their roles in society: we lack sexual education and awareness, we lack gender equality, we fail to teach our students what it means to be a man, failing ourselves in the process, we fail to empower women to be the strong, capable, independent individuals that they are, and finally, we fail to be respectful of those who are different from us.

Up until this point, I have betrayed the man in me several times by declaring that he is not enough for this society and that he is not tough enough to fit in its patriarchal system. Growing up, I started realizing that I have a responsibility to grow out of the culture that I have been brought up in, and adopt my own belief system: one that doesn't put women down but celebrates their many victories and accomplishments. I have decided to let go of the 'box' to which I have been predestined because of my biological sex, and feel when I need to feel, talk when I need to talk, isolate myself when I feel down, and unapologetically be myself around other men, some of whom can't help but insult women, sexualize them and make comments about what women should be in order to satisfy their unquenchable thirst for their toxic masculinity.

Today, I have a duty towards myself and all men who are struggling. We should call out other men when they're being offensive and not put ourselves in boxes of what we see fits the concept of masculinity. We should celebrate other men when they open up and stand up for what's morally right against the majority and not assume that showing 'feminine' features lessens their manhood or deem them 'unfit' or weak when they choose to love their differences. No matter your surroundings, your sexual orientation, your past, and your present, you are 'man enough' just by being yourself and being who you are. Let's try to reinvent our own idea of who we are as men and remember what we were before society instructed us on who to be, just human.



# The Romanticization of Mental Disorders

## Samaher Yehya

TV and social media, as we all know, reach a wide variety of people around the world. As such, they have a great responsibility regarding what they portray to their audiences who, like sponges, consume everything and internalize it to form their identity.

When I was younger, I used to watch a lot of TV. I had my eyes glued to that screen every moment I could. I saw a wide variety of relationships, from friendships to relationships to family, and believed that what was being portrayed was the healthy and ideal way to interact with people. In addition, I admired the main characters' personalities and wanted to be just like them.

But then, I grew up, saw the real world, and became a psychology student; and now, as I watch shows on Netflix or see the content of "influencers", fear fills my insides at the horrible realization that mental illness is not represented accurately: it's romanticized.

**Mental illness has been portrayed in the media as something glamorous and aesthetic, and has become a mere "trend" that everyone wants to be a part of.**

However, the dimensions of such debilitating mental disorders are complex and cannot be described by a group of writers who have never been in contact with or experienced a sliver of the exhausting battle we have to fight every single day. Shows like **"13 Reasons Why"**, **"Euphoria"**, **"Gossip Girl"**, as well as many other influencers have sugar-coated disorders such as Depression, Social Anxiety, Anorexia, as well as toxic love relationships. By only portraying the "aesthetic"

side of it, making the characters seem cool and unique, their relationships into epic love stories, and even turning eating disorders into merchandise for profit, upcoming generations are growing up with a twisted idea of what suffering from a mental illness feels like.

As someone who has been diagnosed with a mental disorder, I can tell you, it is a constant exhausting battle that drains every bit of energy from you, and it's definitely not even remotely close to what TV shows present.

The consequences of such romanticization can be detrimental, it can lead teenagers to never seek help, or cause others to undermine the severity of the problem. What we need is actual education: to develop a platform for people to seek help and talk about their issues freely, to reduce the stigma and misinformation surrounding the field of mental health.

As a conclusion, while each battle and experience with mental disorder is unique, this does not mean that you are alone. The only person you want to be is you, and there is no golden rule for how you should live your life and be in a relationship.

It is our responsibility to highlight the problems in the media, and not just demand change, but be the change we need in the community.

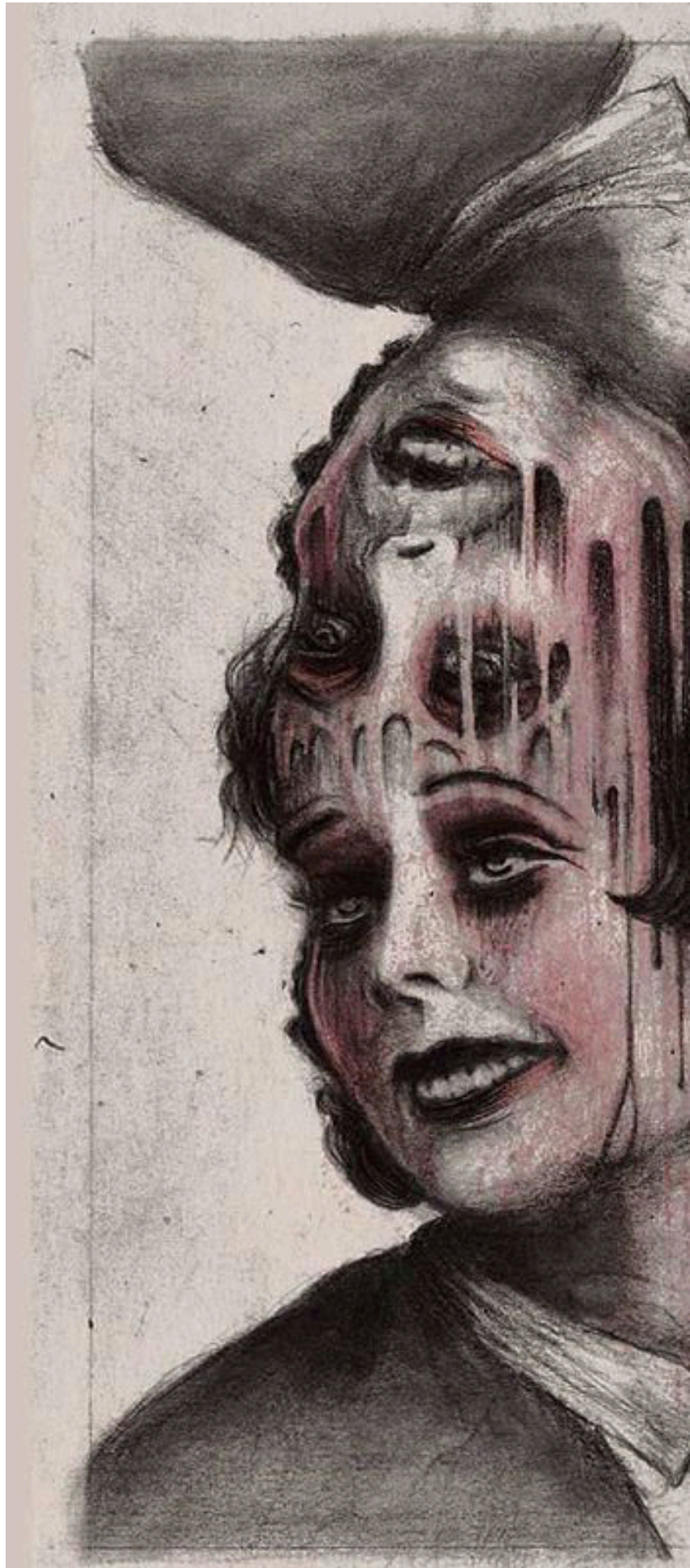
**Stop Romanticizing  
Mental Illness**



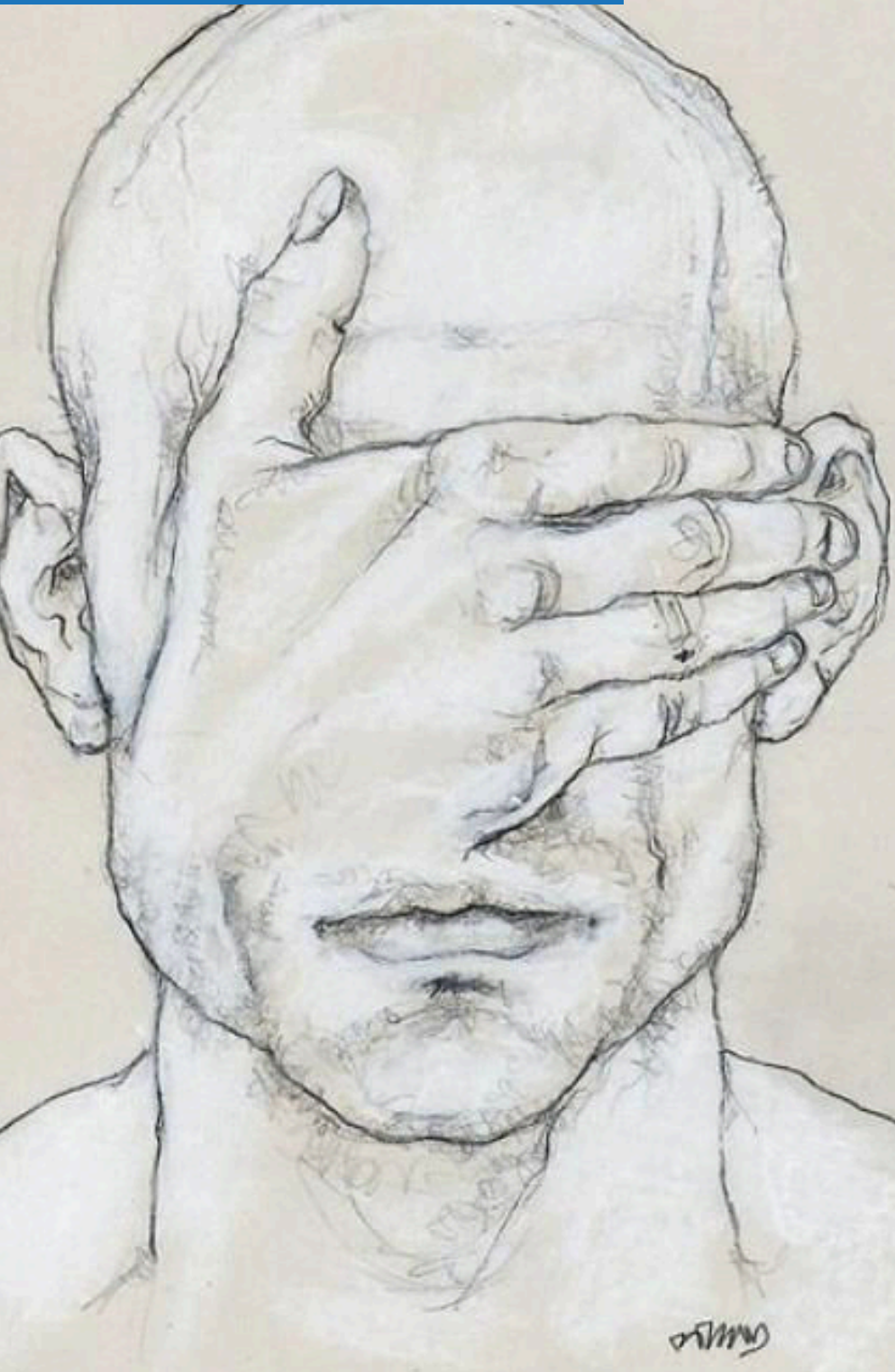
We've seen them in movies and documentaries, heard stories about them, and, who knows, maybe are seeing them now in politics, business, or on the news. We've laid judgments upon them, believing they deserve the death penalty or other forms of horrible punishment. Society interchangeably uses terms such as psychopath, sociopath, and Antisocial Personality Disorder to label them. Yet, despite the abundance of research and investigation, we still lack knowledge regarding their motives or thinking processes. What makes a psychopath? What life events occurred to produce such apathetic, cruel beings?

By definition, psychopathy is a mental disorder by which an individual expresses egocentric and antisocial behavior and a lack of remorse or empathy for other people. Most psychopaths exhibit criminal tendencies; there's always been a dilemma about whether appropriate help can alleviate them. Men such as Charles Manson, Ted Bundy, Richard Ramirez, and Jeffrey Dahmer may be considered victims of a harsh past, an abusive family, or even a brain injury. Such traumatic events, in addition to maybe some genetic predispositions, may lead people to develop the behaviors seen in psychopaths.

Ted Bundy kidnapped, raped, and murdered more than 30 women during the 1970s. 13 female victims fell at the murderous hands of Peter Sutcliffe, or the "York Ripper". Jeffrey Dahmer was charged with the murder and dismemberment of 17 men and boys. These three men have similar histories of a troubled, unstable past, with tenuous relations with their parents, particularly their mothers, and a low socioeconomic status. What else do they have in common? An absolute lack of remorse: they did not have a sliver of guilt or empathy for the victims who met the horrible fate of crossing paths with them. They rationalize their behavior and if given the chance, would do it again.







So, it seems that, regardless of the cause, psychopaths cannot be cured. How can you help someone who lacks empathy and remorse? How do you get through to a manipulative, egocentric, evil person? The answer is: you can't. In fact, they may succeed in convincing you they're the nicest, most charming, and normal people you have ever met; while talking to them you wonder; how could these delightful people have done such horrible things?

However, regardless of these harsh truths, many women and men fall for their charm and charisma, such as the abundant wave of ladies defending Ted Bundy at his trial—yes you read that right.

The danger lies in the fact that we underestimate the number of psychopaths roaming the streets and holding positions of power. Now, I'm not saying that every powerful individual is a psychopath, but there may be more than we think; it is not only limited to murderers.

As a psychologist-in-the-making myself, shock and hopelessness fill my entire being at the thought that I can't help them, that nothing can be done. After years of believing that there is hope for everyone, must I accept the fact that this idea was a lie, that certain people have no shred of goodness in them?

So, what happens now? As we watch their documentaries, hear their stories, observe what they're doing with our world, and maybe pray – if that works for you – that we never cross paths with a psychopath, all we can do is work toward a better, kinder future, where hatred is not accepted and children are raised to be good people more than anything else.

Also, as the distant future becomes a close reality, I hope that psychological research can continue to identify a proper treatment so that no one is a hopeless case, and everyone gets the deliverance they deserve.

The only conclusion that I can reach – while cheesy – is that love is, indeed, all you need.



# What If I Told You, You Fear Death

Joyce Al-Hayek



Do you get frustrated when someone asks you to do something you had planned on doing, and then decide not to do it, just because they asked? Yeah, me too.

Not only do I despise being told what to do, I do not appreciate being told how to feel

In a psychology class of mine, the instructor was explaining the Terror Management Theory (TMT) that claims that our drive as humans is the fear of death. You wake up every day, work, love, eat and drink in a desperate attempt to push away a perpetual and persistent fear of death.

I read about how people who successfully hide away their fear of death end up becoming functional members of society, leaving the ones who don't suffocate under the heavy weight of death, as their dread for the end of their existence becomes too salient to bear.

I also read about the beauty of the contradictory nature of human beings, portrayed powerfully by the Lebanese people who quarantined themselves when the deadly threat of COVID-19 started spreading, and yet were able to soar beyond their instinctual drives and primitive basic human needs to protect their values. They prioritized their souls over their bodies and principles above the rules, going down to the streets to fight for what is right.

But while this theory explains a lot, there is one problem in it: I am not afraid of dying. I can't even imagine what that must feel like.

This is part of my belief system, which I believe in to my very core. But according to the theory, my belief system itself is engineered to help me escape that fear.

And just like that, the TMT theory takes my well-founded belief, boxes it up, and slaps the "coping mechanism" label on top.

In fact, that's what psychology does with every concept that requires any degree of spirituality to be understood.

It makes me feel so meaningless... Is everything I do and have ever done serving a purpose I don't even consciously believe in? Why does the fact that this process is so-called 'unconscious' make this matter more important and valid than what I do and think of consciously?

Just because the theory accounts for all of its variables, doesn't mean it is accurate.

Why is it that when things make sense, they have to be true?



# What If I Told You, You Fear Death

Maybe this is just the cry of a tired psychology student always prompted to look beyond.

*The subconscious.* I am so tired of guessing and tugging at my mind and looking to see if what I am finding on the surface is really what is within.

Here's a question: what if I really, genuinely, do not fear death? Who are you to tell me that this is not true? Why does my claim have to be called a coping mechanism just because it doesn't fit in your pretty, little, neat, and square box?

Of course, I could just admit that every drive of mine is just a desperate attempt at neglecting my inevitable, ultimate death.

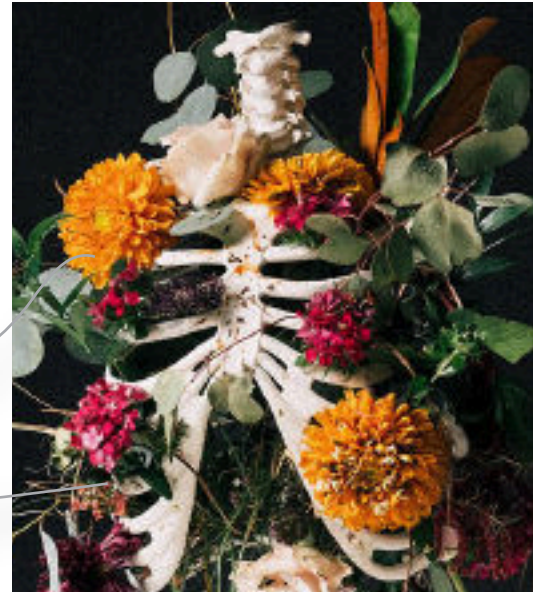
But admitting to this feels like a lie.

It feels like I am throwing away my beliefs, principles, qualities and efforts away.

It feels like stripping away the meaning of my life and downgrading it to instinctive survival, and in the process brushing away the possibility for humans to evolve their mindsets and become better.

And just like the Lebanese people demonstrated that we can evolve, and lay down our fear of physical death to protect the life within us that is more eternal than our bodies could ever be, I want to prove that we can change.

*Our minds are more complicated than coping mechanisms; our souls go deeper than petty theories and the labels of biased-thinking researchers.*



Simply typing this out might just be proof that we hold on to the lies we make for ourselves because it feels safe and comfortable. But this statement is as applicable to me as it is for the people who disagree with me.

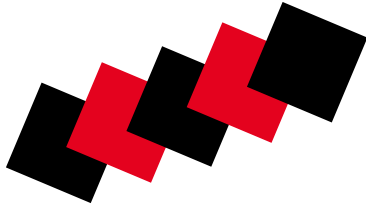
At the end of the day, who am I but a tired psychology student always prompted to look beyond.

I might just be actually fearing death somewhere deep within, at least that's what they would like me to feel. But I think we already established how much I hate that.

And one day, when you remember death, or when it remembers you...  
...know that it may have been closer to you than you thought.

# Why Do Conspiracy Theories Exist?

Albert Georgeuzian



Conspiracy theories are more popular than ever. Social media has pushed them into the forefront; theories that were previously confined to the fringes are becoming mainstream.

If you're unfamiliar with what a conspiracy theory is, it's basically a belief that some covert but influential organization is responsible for an unexplained event, generally. Now, let me be clear; sometimes conspiracies do happen, like Watergate for example, but because of the inherent difficulties in going through with such plans, and later on keeping people quiet, they tend to fail (Dai & Handley-Schachler, 2015; Grimes, 2016; Keeley, 1999; Popper, 1972).

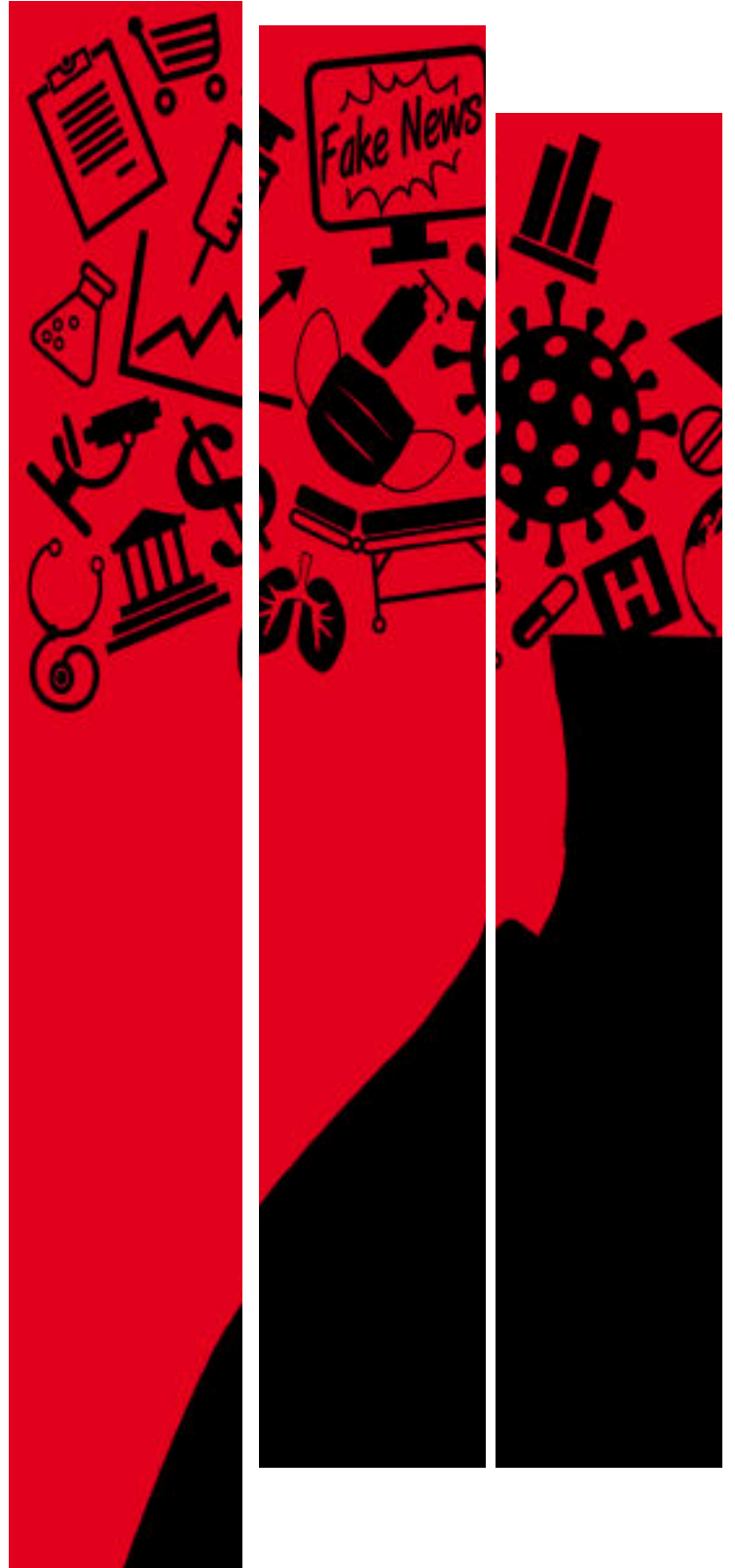
But why are people so drawn to conspiracy theories in the first place? What makes conspiracies so compelling? Well, like everything with people, it's not straightforward. There are many reasons that explain why people can be drawn to conspiracies. For example, those who consistently seek patterns and meaning in their environment have stronger conspiracy beliefs, such as those who believe in paranormal activities (ghosts), supernatural phenomena, astrology and so on...

Research has also found a link between conspiratorial belief and the conjunction fallacy. What is the conjunction fallacy? Here's an example of a conjunction fallacy: Linda is 31 years old, single, outspoken, and very bright. She majored in philosophy. As a student, she was deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice, and also participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations.

Which is more probable?

1. Linda is a bank teller.
2. Linda is a bank teller and is active in the feminist movement

Before you continue reading, choose the option you think is more probable.





## Why Do Conspiracy Theories Exist?



likelihood of Linda being a bank teller in this scenario. However, most people make an error in their probabilistic reasoning whereby they overestimate the likelihood of occurring events.

One of the main reasons for conspiring is the social psychology that makes people feel unique to be part of a conspiracy. They want people to feel that they have possession of rare information that they don't have, making them special and boosting their self-esteem.



What are the consequences of such conspiracy theories? If conspiracies are so illogical, what's the harm in a minority of people believing in it?

I think we can all agree that beliefs tend to drive actions; if you believe something, you act upon it and that's where conspiracies can be so dangerous.

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# How to Work the Instagram Algorithm to Your Advantage

## Vana Agopian

Trying to grow on Instagram? Struggling with the algorithm? Here is how to not “beat” the Instagram algorithm, but to work with it in 2021! Since the algorithm is constantly changing, you don’t want to work against it; you want to understand its full depth in order to make the best of it. Let’s start with the secrets, shall we?

For anyone who is just getting into expanding their Instagram account or who does not know what the Instagram algorithm does, it basically adjusts the app based on user actions including likes, comments, views, saves, sends, interactions, etc. Instagram wants to figure out what users like and what they spend time viewing. What are they searching for? Whom do they interact with the most? Instagram uses this information to build a unique set of content specifically tailored for each user. The goal? To keep you engaged on the platform for the longest time possible.

Being an avid Instagram user for almost a decade, I remember every old trick in the book; first, they introduced filters with posts, then Instagram stories, followed by IGTV, and then they removed the chronological order... This is what the app does to keep things spicy. One thing to always remember is that engagement is key. It’s 2021, people, and nothing is more crucial than engagement. If you want to grow your account and encourage people to hit that follow button, you need to spend time engaging with others. Interact with the people who follow you, ask questions in your captions to initiate a conversation, try to respond to all comments and continue the conversation. How does the algorithm reach its peak? This occurs through monitoring the comments, which are more important than the likes. The more comments you get on a picture, the more you’re exposed to users who don’t follow you. It is also essential to build a community of similar accounts, where you can tag each other and constantly support one another; by doing this, if you attract followers, you will be attracting followers to the entire online community you are a part of!





# How to Work the Instagram Algorithm to Your Advantage

As previously mentioned, the next step would be to write engaging captions; captions are very important on Instagram. To get to the level of maximum growth, you need to write captions that will engage your followers. It can be a simple question such as “How was your day?” or some personal questions such as “What’s your favorite series?”, “What’s your favorite quote of all time?” and so on. You can also get a little personal and share facts about yourself as well as offer them advice and valuable information. There is SO much you can do with your captions! Take full advantage of captions and get creative because there is no rule book when it comes to Instagram; it’s simply a chance to explore your imagination and creativity.

Another key point is to use all the features Instagram offers; let’s start with Instagram stories, which is without a doubt, my favorite feature of all time! Instagram stories are the most used tool on the app. Nowadays, the stories get more interaction and views than any regular post. Stories are seen as the more personal and less-serious aspect of Instagram since they allow you to interact with your audience on a more personal level through polls, Q&As, quizzes, etc. which leads followers to participate and get the “insider” view of your life! With all the constant changes in the algorithm and posts not showing up on your followers’ feeds, Instagram Story is the only place where your followers get to see you! So, take advantage of that and be active on stories! Stay active though, as you need to post every day. Offer value, so that your story pops up first, and most importantly, continues to pop up! Typically, Instagram Stories that appear at the start of your feed is from accounts that you engage with the most, whether that’s through likes, comments, story views, reactions, or DMs.

And lastly, take advantage of the analytics that come with Instagram (if you don’t have the analytics, go to settings>switch to business account and follow the instructions). Research your analytics to figure out what type of content is getting the most engagement, most likes, most comments, and what your followers are enjoying the most. Are your followers mostly male or female? What type of content has the least engagement? Use all of this information to plan out your content and make the best of it!





# How to Work the Instagram Algorithm to Your Advantage



Having a better understanding of what's working (and what isn't) will help you come up with a finely tuned marketing plan, saving you time and effort in the long run.

Whatever tactic you choose to focus on to improve your algorithm ranking in 2021, it is crucial to remember that engaging with your audience should be at the heart of your strategy. Building a genuine relationship with your followers is the most powerful way to "hack" the algorithm.

We've finally come to the end of this super long article. I tried to be as short as possible, but I get too excited when it comes to anything remotely related to marketing! I hope you enjoyed reading my babbling and learned some new Instagram tricks that will, hopefully, help you grow your account and work the algorithm to your advantage.



***A special thanks to the writers of  
the Haigazian Herald, who continue to  
demonstrate strength and resilience.  
And thank you to the readers and to  
everyone involved in the magazine's  
production***



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