

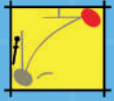
SUCCESSVERSE spark.

A place for collegians to read, write, and grow.

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26 HABITS TO MAKE 2026 YOUR BEST YEAR



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Welcome to Spark

EVERY DAY, we scroll through hundreds of posts, videos, and headlines. We consume more information in an hour than earlier generations did in a week. In a world driven by algorithms, AI, and notifications, attention spans have collapsed. We are always on 21st century's drug; phone scrolling. We hardly pause and reflect on who we are becoming.

Spark was born from a desire to invite a pause.

This magazine is meant to be a canvas for ideas. We want the conversations to be honest. We want you to debate on questions about ambition and anxiety, friendships and failures, dreams and doubts. We believe that in colleges young people should not only consume content but also create it.

Spark will grow through your voices: your writing, your opinions, your questions, and your provocations. Some articles may challenge you, some may comfort you, and some may provoke a debate. Difference of opinions is healthy.

Inside this first issue, we begin with a powerful theme: **Habits**. Our lead story explores how small everyday choices shape our confidence far more than resolutions do. If you make one small habit, you begin to change your past. Our lead contributor even identifies **26 such habits** worth experimenting with. Each month master two, so that by the end of 2026 you have mastered almost all of them.

Our second lead dives into a question many students and parents experience daily but rarely discuss: **Why do generations collide?** Why does Gen Z look upon people older as Boomers? From classrooms to homes to workplaces, they have differences in views and values that ultimately create friction. Understanding this gap is not about choosing sides; it is about learning how to adapt across generations.

Alongside these, you will find opinions and reflections from leaders who have been there, seen it.

This is only the start: the ignition that lights the spark.

One last thing, *Spark* does not belong to its editors. It belongs to you, its readers. Read actively. Forward to others. Talk about what you agree with and what you don't. Send us your writing, your questions, your provocations. Suggest themes you care about. Help us keep *Spark* alive, brave, and curious.

If even one idea in these pages makes you think a little differently and act a little better then this spark has done its job!

Welcome. Let's start thinking.



The 2-Minute Pause

Before you flip the page,
put your phone down.
Close your eyes. Take two
deep breaths. Ask your-
self: What do I want to
create this week instead
of just consume?

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Win Your Days

IT WAS AROUND 10:30 at night when my phone buzzed. A college student I know had texted: “Sir, can I call?”

When I called her back, her voice was low and slightly rushed. In the background, I could hear hostel life moving as usual—someone laughing, a door closing, a bike passing outside.

She said, “Sir, I’m tired. I’m trying, but I have no time. Everything is pending.”

I’ve heard that sentence in the working world too. “No time.” It’s one of the most common reasons people give when they face a new action.

I didn’t try to motivate her. I asked one gentle question I ask adults as well: “What are you busy with?”

LET’S REDUCE THE FOG

The question is not to judge. It is to reduce the fog.

Because “busy” is rarely one thing. It is usually a mix: tasks you are forced to do, things you should do versus want to do, and tasks you never planned. Nowadays we have even linked busyness with social importance. We feel good saying ‘I’m busy.’ But many times it only means we are not in control.

As she listed her day—classes, assignments, group work, messages, family calls, and scrolling. I could feel the pressure become more specific. Not lighter. Just clearer.

Then I shared one thought: time is limited; money is not. With time, we can create money. But with money, we cannot buy even one minute back. Most students

already know this line. But knowing and living are different.

The real issue is not always time. The real issue is control. I’ve noticed that highly successful people do many things in a day and still don’t keep complaining about time. Before doing what they want to do, they take control of their time.

This is where my “Win Your Days” idea comes in.

Winning your life comes from winning your years.

Winning your years comes from winning your months.

Winning your months comes from winning your weeks.

Winning your weeks comes from winning your days.

The day is the real unit. Not because it is perfect, because it is small enough to plan and control better.

That night, instead of giving her a plan or tools, I suggested something simpler: to notice her day and week. She tried tracking her days for a week and reviewing it on the 7th day—so she could move from guessing to seeing.

When she reviewed it, the discovery was quiet. Time wasn’t disappearing in dramatic ways. It was disappearing in small leaks. And once she saw those leaks, she saw something else too: small pockets she could reclaim.

After a week, she didn’t say, “Sir, now I’m a time management expert.”

She said, “Sir, I can see my day now.”

That sentence mattered to me more than any perfect schedule. Because when you can see your day clearly, you begin choosing with more intentionality and honesty. And that is usually where winning begins not loudly, not in one shot, but one day at a time. ■



Venkatesh Athreya

A transformation consultant, and a leadership coach

**Remember –
With Awareness
+ Small actions,
you can achieve
many things in
this world.**

1. When you feel “no time,” pause for one minute and write what you are actually busy with.
2. Track your time for one week, simply, so you stop guessing and start seeing.
3. Pick one important-but-not-urgent thing and give it just 20 minutes every day for 7 days.



SMALL HABITS. ONE YEAR CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING.

26 HABITS TO MAKE 2026 YOUR BEST YEAR



HABITS are more important than talent. I will tell you why.

We see the success – the awards night, the flashbulbs, and the loud cheer. We rarely see the long, quiet preparation behind them.

You have seen the outcome, not the effort. Remember, success is built in habits. And today, the game has changed steeply, with the arrival of AI.

Traditional degrees cannot guarantee success. The competition is global, attention is fragmented, and mental health challenges are rising across campuses.

Yet, your generation has the sort of access your parents did not have – access to global knowledge, digital platforms, mentors, tools, and opportunities. A student in a Tier-2 Indian college today can learn from the same resources as someone in a top metro institution. Access is no longer an issue.

The difference is how you use your days; your habits.

Habits decide how you think, how you handle failure, and prepare for the future. Over time, habits shape destiny.

I present 26 life-shaping habits, organized into six pillars, that can help you, college students, turn 2026 into your best year yet. You can do that through small acts practiced daily.



Dr Anbutambi B

*Director, Successverse
ASK Foundation.
Educationist, Author and
Public Speaker. Former
President of ICT Academy
and Head-Strategy
(EduTech) of Larsen &
Toubro.*



MINDSET & SELF-AWARENESS

College is the first time most of you experience both independence and peer-pressure. Mindset is the foundation on which every habit is built. How you think about failure and discipline determines how you respond to challenges. A strong mindset helps you move from self-doubt to confidence. Without this pillar, talent and opportunity remain under-utilized.



HABIT 1: START THE DAY WITH INTENT

Most of us lose control of our day within the first few minutes after waking up. Notifications, messages, and social media drag our attention outward. Starting the day with intent is about reclaiming control.

Practicing this habit is simple. Spend five minutes every morning, before touching your phone, writing three tasks: one academic, one personal, and one career oriented. This small ritual anchors the mind and gives direction to the day.

Benjamin Franklin began his day asking, “What good shall I do today?”.

Clear communication builds confidence, diverse friendships grow empathy, and leadership roles teach responsibility, together shaping adaptable students ready for challenges in college and beyond.

HABIT 2: OWN YOUR CHOICES

Many of you carry silent resentment—towards parents and institutions. If only I were not the eldest son... Or if only my father had put me into a better college. While these emotions may be valid, it keeps you powerless. Ownership is the moment you taking charge of life.

‘Owning’ means accepting responsibility for how you respond. This means replacing complaints with action-oriented questions: What can I do with what I have?

Dhirubhai Ambani began with limited resources but owned his journey. It proves that responsibility matters more than resources.

HABIT 3: ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

College exposes you to failure for the first time: low marks and comparison anxiety. A growth mindset looks at these not as proof of inadequacy, but as feedback for improvement.

Replace statements like “I’m bad at this” with “I haven’t learned this yet.” After setbacks, they ask what can be done differently.

Satya Nadella transformed Microsoft by embedding a growth mindset culture.

HABIT 4: PRACTICE GRATITUDE WEEKLY

In today’s world, you constantly compare yourself with others. This erodes confidence and increases anxiety.

Once a week, write down three things that went well—academic progress, meaningful conversations, or personal wins. Over time, gratitude shifts attention from scarcity to progress. The impact is subtle: reduced stress, improved emotional balance, and healthier ambition.

Oprah Winfrey attributes much of her resilience to her gratitude practice.

HABIT 5: CHOOSE DISCIPLINE OVER MOTIVATION

Motivation is unpredictable. Discipline is reliable. Waiting to “feel motivated” delays growth. Discipline trains students to act regardless of mood. This habit can be practiced by fixing routines—study hours, sleep schedules, and minimum daily efforts—even on low-energy days. Over time, discipline builds self-trust.

Sachin Tendulkar, a later day Bharat Ratna, says discipline drove his success. Contrast that with the prodigiously talented Vinod Kambl for you to get an idea of one man’s growth and another’s fall.

LEADERS’ HABITS



Reading: The sustained practice of reading technical literature and systematically tracking progressive developments has shaped my growth.

Dr Ajith Abraham
Vice Chancellor, Sai University



Reading: I read a lot of non-fiction. Topics include science, philosophy, psychology, evolution, language, cognition and consciousness. My own thinking on these topics and on questions related to technology evolution are shaped by the books I’ve read

Rajan Sethuraman
CEO, Latentview Analytics



Continuous Learning: This the one habit that has contributed most to my success. As Jim Rohn said, “Formal education will make you survive in life; continuous education will make you a fortune.” To quip, to earn more, learn more.

C K Kumaravel
Founder, Naturals



Gratitude: Gratitude grounds me in humility and reminds me that leadership begins with awareness, not authority. Practicing gratitude keeps me balanced and humble.

V Udaya Sankar
Director – NASSCOM & Co Founder, Maatram Foundation



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & LEARNING

This pillar focuses on how students learn, not just what they learn. Effective learning habits help students understand concepts deeply, reduce stress, and build intellectual confidence.

HABIT 6: ATTEND CLASSES ACTIVELY

Many students are physically present in classes but remain mentally absent. Active engagement—asking questions, sitting attentively, and summarizing lectures—transforms listening into learning. Such students build stronger relationships with faculty, which often matters beyond exams. You must be one of those who engage actively.

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former president, was known for deep classroom engagement as a student.

HABIT 7: LEARN BEYOND THE SYLLABUS

The syllabus defines minimum requirements. Industries evolve faster than curricula. Those who learn beyond textbooks future-proof themselves. Spending even 30 minutes daily on extra learning, courses, books, or industry blogs, builds relevance and confidence.

Sundar Pichai, the later day Microsoft head, consistently pursued learning beyond formal education, even while studying engineering in India.

HABIT 8: REVISE WEEKLY, NOT BEFORE EXAMS

Cramming increases stress and reduces retention. Weekly revision distributes effort evenly and builds mastery calmly.

Fixing a weekly revision slot reduces anxiety and improves recall during exams. This is not true of examinations alone but for anything that you do – have a clear margin of safety in the deadlines.



Marie Curie believed consistent review was essential for deep understanding.

HABIT 9: TAKE SMART NOTES

Always take notes, whether you are attending a class or a talk or step into conversing with anyone. They can be a gold mine. These notes are thinking tools. Smart notes use headings, diagrams, and keywords to capture ideas clearly.

Over time, good notes reduce study time and improve comprehension.

Leonardo da Vinci maintained detailed notebooks that connected ideas across disciplines.

HABIT 10: TEACH WHAT YOU LEARN

To learn, teach. Teaching clarifies thinking. When students explain concepts to peers, they identify gaps and deepen understanding.

This habit also builds communication and leadership skills.

Richard Feynman famously said that if you cannot explain something in simple terms, you have not understood it well enough.

Those who learn beyond textbooks future-proof themselves. Spending even 30 minutes daily on extra learning, courses, books, or industry blogs, builds relevance and confidence.



SKILLS, CAREER & FUTURE READINESS

Degrees alone don't guarantee career success. This pillar helps you bridge the gap between education and employability by focusing on skills, exposure, and early career awareness. It encourages you to think ahead, build capabilities, and prepare intentionally for the future.

HABIT 11: MASTER ONE FUTURE SKILL

In an age of endless options, many students try to learn everything and end up mastering nothing. Constantly switching between skills creates confusion and low competence. Choosing one future-relevant skill and committing to it brings focus and direction. The future job market rewards depth, not surface knowledge.

Elon Musk is known for deep mastery in chosen domains, proving that focused learning creates extraordinary impact.



HABIT 12: DIGITAL PRESENCE

In today's digital-first world, your online profile often introduces you before you meet a person. A well-maintained LinkedIn profile or personal portfolio becomes a resume that reflects intent, effort, and capability. A strong digital presence reduces dependence on college brand names and local networks. It allows you to showcase skills, projects, and learning.

Over time, this habit attracts internships, mentors, collaborations, and job opportunities. It builds visibility, confidence, and professional credibility.

Naval Ravikant advocates building digital leverage early, emphasizing that sharing your work publicly creates long-term opportunities.

HABIT 13: DO ONE MEANINGFUL INTERNSHIP OR PROJECT

Many students chase multiple short internships just to add lines to a résumé. This often results in shallow learning. One meaningful internship or long-term project allows you to experience real re-

sponsibility. When you stay with a project long enough, you learn discipline, problem-solving, collaboration, and ownership. These are skills that cannot be developed through brief, surface-level experiences.

Steve Jobs believed that deep, meaningful experiences shape thinking and innovation far more than formal credentials.

HABIT 14: READ CAREER SIGNALS EARLY

Many students postpone career thinking until the final year. Reading career signals early means paying attention to how industries are evolving, what roles are emerging, and what skills employers actually seek. Early awareness helps you align your learning, internships, and skill-building efforts with real-world demand. It shifts career planning from guesswork to informed preparation.

Indra Nooyi planned her career moves with long-term clarity, aligning her growth with future opportunities rather than short-term gains.

HABIT 15: SEEK MENTORSHIP

College can feel overwhelming when you try to figure everything out on their own. Mentorship provides direction in this uncertainty. A mentor does not give ready-made answers but offers perspective based on experience, helping students see possibilities and pitfalls more clearly. By approaching seniors, alumni, or faculty with thoughtful questions, students gain insights that are rarely available in textbooks or classrooms.

Even a single mentoring conversation can bring clarity, confidence, and focus.

Warren Buffett often credits mentors for shaping his thinking and long-term decisions.

Early awareness helps you align your learning, internships, and skill-building efforts with real-world demand. It shifts career planning from guesswork to informed preparation.



HEALTH, ENERGY & WELLBEING

No achievement is sustainable without physical and mental wellbeing. Students often neglect sleep, movement, nutrition, and stress management in the pursuit of academic or social goals. This pillar emphasizes that health is not optional—it is the fuel for focus, learning, and resilience.

HABIT 16: PRIORITIZE SLEEP

In college, sleep is often the first thing students sacrifice to meet deadlines. But remember, sleep is not wasted time—it is when the brain processes learning. Adequate sleep strengthens memory, emotional regulation, and decision-making.

If you prioritise sleep, you will learn faster, think clearer, and handle pressure better.

Arianna Huffington describes sleep as a performance strategy, not a luxury.

HABIT 17: MOVE YOUR BODY DAILY

College life often involves long hours of sitting in classrooms, libraries, or in front of screens. Physical inactivity slowly drains energy and focus. Moving the body daily is a simple but powerful way to reset both mind and body. Regular movement reduces stress, improves blood circulation, and sharpens concentration. It does not require a gym—walking, stretching, sports, yoga, or cycling are enough to keep the body active and the mind alert.

Virat Kohli consistently prioritizes daily fitness, often highlighting its role in maintaining mental sharpness and peak performance.

HABIT 18: EAT FOR ENERGY

Food affects how the brain functions. Irregular meals, excessive junk food, and poor hydration can leave you feeling tired, irritable, and unfocused. Good nutrition stabilises blood sugar, improves concentration, and supports emotional balance. Regular, balanced meals help you maintain consistent energy throughout the day.

P V Sindhu follows disciplined nutrition routines, recognising that consistent food habits are essential for peak physical and mental performance.



HABIT 19: MANAGE STRESS PROACTIVELY

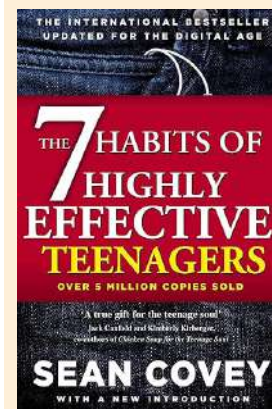
Stress is a natural part of college life. Unaddressed stress slowly accumulates and can lead to burnout, anxiety, or loss of motivation. Managing stress proactively helps you recognise emotional signals early. Simple practices such as journaling, open conversations, breathing exercises, or seeking professional support prevent stress from becoming overwhelming.

Dalai Lama consistently emphasizes mindfulness and inner balance as foundations for emotional wellbeing and resilience.

HABIT 20: CONTROL DIGITAL OVERLOAD

Digital devices are an essential part of student life, but constant notifications, endless scrolling, and multitasking fragment attention. When digital use is uncontrolled, it silently drains mental energy and reduces the ability to focus deeply. Attention is a limited resource. Learning to limit screen time, silence unnecessary notifications, and create phone-free study periods helps you protect your concentration.

Cal Newport advocates digital minimalism, arguing that intentional technology use enables meaningful work and sustained success.



Liked 26 Habits? If yes, take your habit journey further with Sean Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. Written in a lively manner, with cartoon-like illustrations, fun facts, and relatable stories, you are sure to enjoy it.



RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION & LEADERSHIP

Success in college and beyond is deeply connected to how well you interact with others. This pillar highlights the importance of communication, collaboration, empathy, and leadership. College provides a unique environment to build these skills.

College provides a safe environment for you to take responsibility, and learn how to work with people through real situations.

HABIT 21: COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Many capable students struggle not because they lack knowledge, but because they cannot express their ideas with clarity and confidence. Communication is the bridge between what you know and how others perceive your ability. Effective communication builds confidence and presence. Speaking clearly in classrooms, group discussions, and presentations strengthens thinking and helps students articulate ideas with structure and purpose.

Barack Obama is widely admired for his clear, empathetic communication that connects ideas with people.

HABIT 22: BUILD DIVERSE FRIENDSHIPS

In College you interact with people from different regions, languages, cultures, and disciplines. Limiting friendships to familiar circles reduces exposure, while

diverse friendships expand understanding of the world. Interacting with people from different backgrounds helps you develop empathy, adaptability, and social intelligence—qualities essential in multicultural workplaces and societies.

Mahatma Gandhi learned deeply from engaging with diverse communities, shaping his inclusive worldview and leadership.

HABIT 23: TAKE LEADERSHIP ROLES

Leadership is a skill developed through experience. College provides a safe environment for you to take responsibility, and learn how to work with people through real situations. By joining clubs, volunteering, or organizing events, you learn decision-making, accountability, and teamwork.

Ratan Tata began learning leadership early through hands-on responsibility, shaping his values-driven leadership style.

LEADERS' HABITS



Curiosity: Staying curious about people, problems, and possibilities keeps me hungry. It leads to better relationships and continuous growth.

Dr Sai Prakash Leo Muthu
Chairman, Sairam Group Institutions



Reading: I read at least one technology article or research paper every morning. It gradually shapes my thinking and perspective. I also pray every day.

Venkatesh Natarajan
Former President - IT & Chief Digital Officer, Ashok Leyland Ltd.



Empathy: Empathetic listening has helped in communicating with people and responding with compassion. This has resulted in commitment & efficiency.

V M Muralidharan, Chairman, Ethiraj College



The Word: Honouring the given word, big or small, is what I practice. It helps me gain trust. The cumulative impact of people's trust leads to success. Therefore, practice doing what you say you will do.

M P Vijay Kumar, Executive Director & Group CFO, Sify



MONEY, ETHICS & LIFE SKILLS

College is a training ground for adulthood. This pillar focuses on practical life skills that are rarely taught formally but have lifelong impact—financial literacy, integrity, and reflection. Learning to manage money responsibly, act ethically, and reflect on experiences helps students build character and independence.

HABIT 24: LEARN MONEY BASICS EARLY

For many students, money becomes a source of stress. College is often the first time students handle expenses independently. Learning money basics builds prevents financial anxiety from affecting studies and decisions. Financial literacy encourages discipline, responsibility, and independence instead of impulse-driven spending.

Students who understand money manage expenses better, and develop habits that support long-term financial stability and self-reliance.

N R Narayana Murthy has often emphasized financial discipline from a young age as a foundation for personal integrity.

HABIT 25: PRACTICE INTEGRITY

Integrity is about doing the right thing even when no one is watching. In college, students face many small choices—shortcuts in exams, copied assignments, exaggerated claims—that quietly shape character. Trust is the foundation of all meaningful relationships. Practicing honesty and builds credibility, which is far more valuable than short-term gains achieved through shortcuts.

Students who practice integrity earn respect, build strong reputations, and attract long-term opportunities. Over time, this habit creates confidence.

THE QUIET POWER OF HABITS

You do not need to practice all 26 habits at once. Start with five. Practice them for 30 days. Then add more. 2026 can be your breakthrough year. Not because of luck. But because of the habits you choose and practice every single day.



A. P. J. Abdul Kalam symbolized ethical leadership throughout his life.

HABIT 26: REFLECT EVERY MONTH

Reflection creates a pause—a moment to step back, assess progress, and understand what experiences are truly teaching you. Monthly self-review helps students identify what is working, what is not, and what needs to change. It turns mistakes into lessons and effort into insight, preventing repeated errors.

Students who reflect regularly make better decisions, grow faster, and develop self-awareness. Over time, this habit builds wisdom, clarity, and intentional growth.

Charlie Munger, the master portfolio manager, believed that consistent reflection and learning from experience were essential for long-term success.

26 Habits

PILLAR 1: MINDSET & SELF-AWARENESS

1. Start the Day with Intent
2. Own Your Choices
3. Adopt a Growth Mindset
4. Practice Gratitude Weekly
5. Choose Discipline Over Motivation

PILLAR 2: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & LEARNING

6. Attend Classes Actively
7. Learn Beyond the Syllabus
8. Revise Weekly, Not Before Exams
9. Take Smart Notes
10. Teach What You Learn

PILLAR 3: SKILLS, CAREER & FUTURE READINESS

11. Master One Future Skill
12. Digital Presence
13. Do One Meaningful Internship or Project
14. Read Career Signals Early
15. Seek Mentorship

PILLAR 4: HEALTH, ENERGY & WELLBEING

16. Prioritize Sleep
17. Move Your Body Daily
18. Eat for Energy
19. Manage Stress Proactively
20. Control Digital Overload

PILLAR 5: RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION & LEADERSHIP

21. Communicate Clearly
22. Build Diverse Friendships
23. Take Leadership Roles

PILLAR 6: MONEY, ETHICS & LIFE SKILLS

24. Learn Money Basics Early
25. Practice Integrity
26. Reflect Every Month

Why generations often talk past each other

Each generation is shaped by a different social, technological, and emotional factors. What's common sense to one may sound wrong to another. Once we understand this, half the battle is won. It's the first step toward better dialogue.



TODAY, people live longer. In many homes, four generations live together. It is not unusual for someone born in the 1930s to be in the same room as someone born in the 2010s. The same overlap exists on campuses, in offices, and across public life. These people carry different assumptions about work, authority, time, technology, and success. Friction is inevitable not because anyone is difficult, but because their worlds were different.

Consider a few familiar moments.

- A father offers advice that feels outdated.
- A manager expects commitment that feels excessive.
- A colleague sets a boundary that feels like indifference.

None of these begin as conflicts. They become conflicts only after we start interpreting it.

GENERATION DIFFERENCES

Generational differences are often mistaken for differences in attitude, values, or character. More often, they are differences in the world people grew up in. Our beliefs about work, authority, time, and success are absorbed early.

Someone who grew up when jobs were scarce learns to value stability. Someone who entered adulthood during periods of growth learns to connect effort with reward. Someone raised in a constantly connected world learns to value authenticity. None of these are moral positions, but are practical responses to different conditions.

In other words, most generational differences are adaptations, not attitudes.

This matters more today because generations coexist in the same home, the same office, and sometimes the same group chat. Advice that once offered protection can now feel intrusive. Choices that feel responsible to one person can look careless to another.

This article offers a way to understand them. By placing generations side by side, behaviour begins to look less like stubbornness and more like logic shaped by experience. The aim is not agreement, but clarity.

On page 16 is a comparison table. You can scan it, return to it later, or use it to understand one situation at a time. Below the table is a short story. It shows how these patterns play out in everyday life.

A few things are worth keeping in mind. Generations overlap, and people do not change personalities based on the year of birth. No generation is internally uniform; these are tendencies, not rules. This table is the reference point for the article. It is not meant to explain individuals, but patterns.

Read row by row, it shows how each generation was shaped and what it values. Read column by column, it reveals why conversations between age groups

are often misaligned, even when everyone has good intentions.

The table does not predict behaviour. It explains why the same misunderstandings keep repeating across families, workplaces, and everyday conversations.

WHEN GENERATIONS SHARE A ROOM

Saranya Muthu has stepped into her twenties. She is still learning what that means.

At a family gathering, her grandfather listens for a long while before speaking. When he speaks, it is with care and economy. He asks her cousin whether his new job is secure. When her cousin says he is still figuring things out, her grandfather nods. He does not ask what the role is or whether it is interesting. In his world, work was about holding on.

Saranya's father joins the conversation. He asks about the company, the designation, and the future prospects. He believes in systems. He grew up learning how to earn credibility before questioning authority. For him, work was identity.

Saranya's cousin explains what he does, choosing his words carefully. He talks about flexibility, learning, and not wanting to commit too early. He has grown up negotiating authority rather than accepting it. He wants to be understood on his own terms.

Saranya notices not just what is said, but how people listen. Her grandfather listens without interruption. Her father listens while quietly steering the conversation toward conclusions. Her cousin listens with one eye on his phone—not out of disrespect, but because attention, for him, has never been singular. Each person assumes their way of listening is normal.

That evening, when her phone vibrates with a work message, she glances at it and sets it aside. Her father notices and suggests replying. He offers it as advice, not instruction. She tells him it can wait till morning.

For him, responsiveness was how you made yourself indispensable in a

By placing generations side by side, behaviour begins to look less like stubbornness and more like logic shaped by experience.



V Pattabhi Ram
is a CA, an author,
and a teacher.

SECOND LEAD

Generation	Years	Formative Shock	Authority	View of Work	Risk	Technology	Communication	Deep Fear
Silent	1925–40	Scarcity, war	Obedience	Duty	Avoid	Distrust	Formal, minimal	Insecurity
Baby Boomers	1940–60	Nation-building	Respect	Identity	Managed	Utility	Structured	Failure
Generation X	1961–80	Constraint	Skeptical	Means	Calculated	Tool	Direct	Dependence
Millennials (Gen Y)	1981–96	Transition	Questioning	Purpose	Selective	Platform	Conversational	Stagnation
Generation Z	1997–2010	Visibility	Negotiated	Balance	Cautious	Native	Visual, short	Irrelevance
Generation Alpha	2011–	AI immersion	Fluid	Playful	Assumed	Environment	Interactive	Disconnection

This table is the reference point for the article. Read it horizontally to understand a generation. Read it vertically to understand why conversations across ages so often misalign.

How to use this table:

If an advice feels misplaced, look at Authority, Time, and Idea of Success. If work expectations clash, compare View of Work, Risk, and Optimises For. If communication misfires, check Technology and Communication Style. This table does not explain individuals. It explains patterns, and why they keep repeating.

world that could easily overlook you. He is translating the logic that once kept him safe.

Saranya has grown up watching boundaries dissolve. To her, success is not being reachable at all times. It is being able to choose when to engage without fear of being erased.

The next day at work, a senior colleague tells her that she should be more visible. Speak more in meetings. Stay longer. He is not wrong in his context.

As he speaks, Saranya look at the table. To three generations using the same language to describe different ends. None of them is careless. None of them is lazy. Each is responding to the world that shaped them.

Saranya's grandfather was solving for security.

Her father for recognition and certainty.

Her cousin for flexibility and learning.

And she was solving for alignment.

Every generation carries a fear that just wears a different name.

WHAT THE TABLE EXPLAINS

Once these patterns are laid out, a few things become easier to understand.

First, it explains why advice across generations often feels misplaced. Advice is usually given in good faith, but it is shaped by the problems the adviser once had to solve. When someone emphasises stability, they are remembering scarcity. When they



Optimises For	Relationship with Time	Learning Preference	Idea of Success
Stability	Long-term, patient	Instruction-led	Security
Achievement	Linear progress	Authority-led	Status
Autonomy	Pragmatic pacing	Self-taught	Control
Meaning	Delayed milestones	Collaborative	Fulfilment
Authenticity	Urgency	On-demand	Alignment
Personalisation	Instant, on-demand	Immersive	Experience



emphasise long hours, they are recalling a time when effort had to be constantly shown to be recognised. Advice is rarely context-free.

Second, the table explains why the same words create confusion. Hard work can mean endurance, visibility, learning, or alignment, depending on who is speaking. Commitment can mean loyalty to an institution, reliability to a role, or honesty about limits. Success can mean security, status, control, fulfilment, or alignment. Disagreements arise because people assume these words mean the same thing when they do not.

Third, it shows why authority is such a sensitive issue. For some generations, authority provided safety. For younger generations, authority is often negotiated rather than accepted automatically, shaped by access to alternatives. What looks like defiance is another form of legitimacy.

The table also helps explain differences in how time is experienced. Patience made sense in worlds where progress was predictable. Urgency feels natural in environments where feedback is instant. When older generations describe younger ones as impatient, and younger ones describe older ones as out of touch, they are reacting to different costs of waiting.

Most importantly, the table shows why these misunderstandings are becoming more frequent. Without a shared map, people fall back on judgement.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If you are in your late teens or twenties, many pieces of advice you receive will feel mismatched to the world you see. That

does not mean the advice is wrong. It means it was shaped for a different set of risks.

Older generations often speak from a place where the main fear was loss—of income, position, or security. Their guidance reflects a world where patience, loyalty, and visibility protected you from falling through real gaps.

You are entering adulthood in a world that is faster, noisier, and more visible. Opportunities appear and disappear quickly. Comparison is constant. In this context, valuing boundaries, alignment, and flexibility is not laziness. It is a form of risk management.

This article allows you to listen to advice and recognise the wisdom inside it. Also, it helps you explain your own choices. Most importantly, it reminds you that you do not need to reject earlier generations in order to be different from them. Nor do you need to imitate them to be taken seriously. Every generation inherits strengths and outgrows some limits.

The task is not to rebel blindly or comply quietly, but to choose consciously.

It is tempting to ask which generation is right. No generation is wrong. Each one is efficient at solving the problem it inherited.

Every generation feels it is living through unprecedented change. In some ways, it always is. What remains constant is the pattern of people adapting to the world they are given. Seeing that pattern does not end disagreement. It helps us listen. And sometimes that is enough to begin again. ■

You are entering adulthood in a world that is faster, noisier, and more visible. Opportunities appear and disappear quickly. Comparison is constant. In this context, valuing boundaries, alignment, and flexibility is a form of risk management.

How design thinking empowers you to become a leader

Design Thinking is a human-centered approach to problem-solving. Rather than focusing only on solutions, it places people at the heart of decision-making.

FOR STUDENTS preparing to step into leadership roles, this approach requires more than familiarity with tools. It demands a deeper understanding of human behavior, context, and intent. By integrating creative problem-solving with human-centered design principles, Design Thinking equips students to become agile, empathetic, and innovative leaders in an increasingly uncertain world.

When we consider the transformation of students into future leaders, leadership development must go beyond conventional academic achievement. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reflects this thinking by emphasizing holistic development such as foundational literacy and numeracy, inclusivity, multilingualism, skill development, collaboration, and character building. The goal is not merely employability, but the development of well-rounded individuals with strong values and 21st-century capabilities.

Holistic development emerges when students learn to observe, reflect, and think without constraints. This raises an important question: what are these constraints, and how can education help students overcome them?

THE MIND AS AN OPEN PARACHUTE

As students' progress through formal education, their learning journey often resembles a pyramid *viz.* broad exposure in early years, followed by increasing specialisation. While this approach builds expertise, it can also narrow perspective. Leadership, however, demands the opposite: breadth before depth, openness before specialisation. An "open parachute" mindset allows students to explore, question, and connect across domains.

A multidisciplinary education exposes students to science, arts, mathematics, literature, history, sports, and philosophy, enabling them to see relationships between seemingly unrelated fields. Questions such as "How does philosophy influence politics?" or "Can mathematics improve performance in sports?" nurture curiosity and systems thinking. This ability to connect the dots is critical for leadership and innovation.

As the adage goes, the human mind works best when it is open.

Dr. Anbu Rathinavel

Head - School of Design Thinking | Chief Design Officer - Intellect Design Arena. Visiting Faculty - IIM Calcutta, ISB Hyderabad.



Higher education ideally supports a journey from acquiring basic skills to achieving mastery, while also developing the ability to see the bigger picture. History shows that many breakthroughs and innovations have emerged when individuals were able to combine insights from different domains. Leadership, therefore, is not just about expertise, but about insight.

DESIGN THE THINKING® OF FUTURE LEADERS

The most significant shift from student to leader occurs when individuals begin to ask “why” before “what” or “how.” While education trains students to think logically and analytically, it does not always teach them how to think effectively in uncertain, human-centered situations. This gap is addressed through what the School of Design Thinking calls Design The Thinking®.

Five internal frictional elements often limit students’ effectiveness as future leaders: unresolved doubts, unaddressed conflicts, anger, fear of the unknown, and ego. Managing these forces is essential. Doubt can delay action; clarity, even if imperfect, enables progress. Conflict can be reframed as a difference in perspective. Effective leaders focus on what is right rather than who is right.

Anger frequently arises when outcomes do not meet expectations. Fear stems from unfamiliarity, growth requires courage and action, not passive observation. Ego, the belief that one already knows enough, is perhaps the greatest barrier to learning. Humility, openness, and a willingness to listen are hallmarks of strong leadership.

ENCOURAGING LIMITLESS THINKING

The Sanskrit word Unmukt, meaning “without boundaries,” beautifully captures the mindset required of leaders. Philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurthy observed that a living mind is free, learning, and never concluding. Leadership demands the courage to question assump-



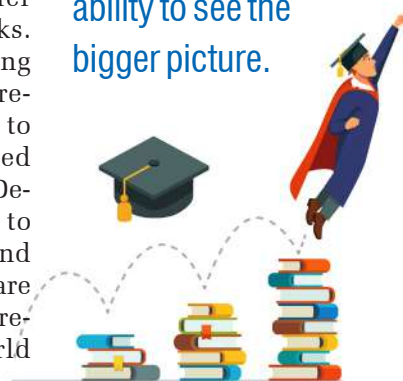
tions, challenge established practices, and rethink long-held beliefs.

Equally important is the ability to see the big picture. As students specialize, they risk losing sight of interconnectedness. Leaders must continuously zoom out, recognizing how systems, disciplines, and contexts influence one another. Design Thinking provides a structured yet flexible approach to cultivate this perspective.

CONCLUSION

The journey from student to leader begins with shaping how one thinks. Design The Thinking® – cultivating an open, curious, courageous, and reflective mindset – is foundational to effective leadership. When practiced as a mindset rather than a method, Design Thinking empowers students to question deeply, connect broadly, and act responsibly. These capabilities are vital for leading with purpose and creating meaningful impact in the world ahead. ■

Higher education ideally supports a journey from acquiring basic skills to achieving mastery, while also developing perspective – the ability to see the bigger picture.



The Ubiquitous Guru!

You might have heard of that old saying: “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”



A rubber band spends its life in that unnoticed category. It stretches to make room, then shrinks back to shape.

I GREW UP HEARING it as a kind of promise, as if life would send me a special guide the day I became serious enough - someone wise who would take the trouble to show me the way. I remember waiting, more than once, for that kind of cinematic entrance.

What I got instead, were ordinary days. A crowded bus, a noisy corridor, a cluttered desk. No new teacher, just the same surroundings I thought I already understood.

That’s when I stopped waiting and started looking. The thing that shifted was a kind of inner focus: suddenly a line in a book, a gesture in a meeting, or even a tired rubber band on a stack of papers began to stand out, as if the lesson had been hiding in plain sight and I had finally grown eyes for it.

REAL LEARNING NEEDS NO CLASSROOM

We tend to overfocus on education, especially collegiate education as a sort of stepping stone into the real world. Somewhere along the way, we fool ourselves that learning can happen only in designated set-



tings: a classroom with a timetable or an online course with a progress bar.

Formal learning has its place; it can open doors and it signals effort. But much of the learning that matters most doesn’t require such formal settings. You can see it in a family that can smell rain before it falls because generations have watched the same horizon. In a friend who understands group dynamics without ever having opened a management book. In a shop assistant who can tell, from the way someone enters, whether they are here to browse or buy. These are also forms of study, built out of planned repetition and rapt attention, and they rarely show up on a résumé.

WHEN OBJECTS START TO SPEAK

You must start to see learning as something that pervades everything. A cracked phone screen, a long queue, a traffic signal that refuses to turn green – all of them begin to hold up small mirrors. They show you how you react, where you tense up, what you ignore, what you return to again and again.

A rubber band spends its life in that unnoticed category. It lies in drawers, snaps against fingers, circles stacks of paper, keeps lunch boxes shut. It stretches to make room, then shrinks back to shape. It holds together what would otherwise fall apart. And if you watch it closely for a while – how it reacts to stress, how it even-

Rajendran Dandapani, *Director of Engineering & Business Solutions Evangelist at Zoho Corporation and President of Zoho Schools of Learning.*

THE QUIET MIRROR

TQM 1: Are You Lonely?

Your phone vibrates constantly. Your classroom is full. Your hostel corridor is never silent. And yet you feel disconnected. Loneliness today is not about being alone. It is about not feeling truly seen or heard.

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. **Just respond honestly with Yes or No to each statement.**

Don't overthink.

Section A

1. I have at least one person I can speak openly with.
2. I feel emotionally understood by someone.
3. I spend meaningful time with people offline.
4. I initiate conversations instead of waiting.
5. I feel comfortable being alone without feeling empty.
6. I can share my real opinions without fear.
7. I feel I truly belong somewhere on campus.
8. I feel listened to when I speak.
9. I have at least one deep friendship.
10. I feel my presence matters to someone

Section B

11. I often feel lonely even when I'm with people.
12. I scroll on my phone to avoid feeling empty or bored.
13. I hesitate to share my real feelings with anyone.
14. I feel invisible in groups.
15. I compare my life constantly with others online.
16. I avoid asking for help even when I need it.
17. Most of my conversations stay superficial.
18. I feel emotionally disconnected from people on campus.
19. I struggle to sit quietly without distractions.
20. I sometimes feel no one would notice if I disappeared for a day.

Go to our website, and score there. You will receive a gift.

SCORING

Step 1: Give yourself:

- +1 point for every YES in Section A
- +1 point for every NO in Section B

Step 2: Interpretation

16–20 | Strong Connection Zone: You have at least a few relationships where you can be yourself, not just perform. Protect these connections.

10–15 | Mixed Zone: You have people around you, but some conversations remain surface-level. A few deeper conversations, less scrolling, and more presence can help you move to the Strong Zone.

0–9 | Silent Loneliness Zone: You may be carrying loneliness quietly, even if your life looks busy. This doesn't mean something is wrong with you. It means you are asking for more real connection.

By: Alex Vitale

tually gives up and breaks – you start to see a familiar pattern of your own: how far you can bend, how long you can hold, and what it costs when you pretend there are no limits.

There is a reason the rubber band rarely appears in graduation speeches. It is too plain. Yet, day after day, it performs useful labour: holding loose pages together, keeping food from spilling, absorbing sudden pulls without protest. It knows, in its own way, that its job is not to be celebrated but to survive the next stretch. Watching it, I start to wonder which parts of my own life I treat like this – what I keep holding together quietly, and at what point the material begins to fray.

If you want to play with this as a way of learning, you might start very simply: Choose one everyday object that has been working for you in the background, observe it over a day, and note where its limits show up.

You do not have to turn this into a project or a post. It can remain a private habit, a small agreement between you and the things that share your day. The only real shift is this: instead of waiting for a grand teacher to arrive, you let the world begin to answer back, one rubber band at a time.

By the way, everybody knows that too much stress breaks the rubber band. But, did you know that an unstressed rubber band, left unstretched for too long loses its elasticity? Google or ChatGPT can tell you the scientific reason why, but to me, I recall the word “eustress”. It is the opposite of distress. Positive stress characterised by excitement, motivation, and fulfilment that leads to beneficial outcomes. Are you eustressing enough?! ■

Dreams need follow through

We talk easily about dreams. They show up in conversations and in the quiet confidence of the young who believe they have time on their side.



Sudhakar Rao

*Brand Strategist, Director
at The ICFAI Group*

DREAMING FEELS natural. What is less often spoken about is what follows the dream: the small decisions, the habits that form when no one is watching, and the work that begins before the applause arrives. Somewhere in that unglamorous middle, progress takes shape.

There is a phrase we use when we speak about young India: demographic dividend. It sounds almost celebratory. Half the country is under thirty, and that conjures vision of energy, ambition, and possibility. But phrases have a way of papering over the harder questions. What matters is not how many young people we have, but how many are actually able to move from intention to action.

I have noticed it over the years. The young don't lack ideas. They don't lack talent. What they often lack is a sense of how to be inside their own story.

NARRATIVE MORE IMPORTANT THAN TALENT

A student once described himself to me like this: "I'm doing my engineering. I like data. I'm looking for opportunities." A few weeks later, after working on a campus project, he spoke differently. "I work with messy data. I try to make sense of it. Recently, I helped a student group by analysing patterns no one was looking at." Same person. Same skillset. But now there was a thread connecting effort, outcome, and meaning. He was seeing himself differently now.

Another thing I keep noticing is how easily speed is mistaken for progress. Tools are faster, outputs are quicker, and responses are instant. But depth still takes time. I've seen young interns who rush through tasks and others who slow down to understand context. The second group often looks slower at first. Six months later, they're the ones others rely on. The difference isn't intelligence. It's patience.

OPPORTUNITY LITERACY AND TRUST

There's also a quiet gap that doesn't get discussed enough: opportunity literacy. Two students attend the same event. One collects photographs. The other collects conversations, and follows up. Same access. Different outcomes. Some people wait for opportunity to announce itself. Others learn to notice where a door might open if they knock gently enough.

Trust plays its role here. Many institutions still treat young people as future-ready, not ready now. Responsibility is postponed. And yet, whenever students are trusted with real decisions like budgets, projects, leadership - the energy shifts. Things move. Learning deepens. What looks risky often turns out to be necessary.

Leadership, I've learned, has less to do with instruction and more to do with design. Environments shape behaviour far more reliably than motivation speeches ever will. When systems are transparent, when expectations are shared, when peers hold one another accountable, effort becomes easier to sustain. Not because people are inspired, but because the ground beneath them is steady.

SMALL BEHAVIOURS, BIG DIFFERENCE

And that is what development really looks like—not just better outcomes, but better habits. Arriving on time. Taking responsibility without being chased. These small behaviours rarely make headlines, but together they build trust, efficiency, and dignity.

The shift from dreaming to doing doesn't come from one grand moment. It comes from attention, consistency, and the courage to stay with the work even when no one is watching. ■





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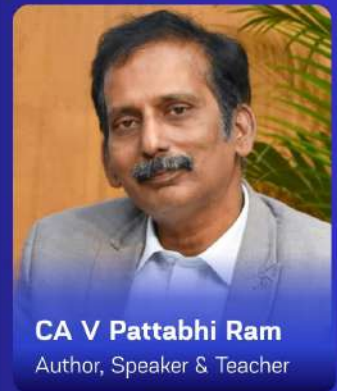
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We're making it up as we go...

When I was a student, I felt uncertain of the future. Even in my uncertainty, I remembered this: the future is imminent.



**Dr Deependra
Kumar Jha**

*Vice Chancellor, Manav
Rachna University*

WHILE I MIGHT not recognise it, I knew it by the sound of my professor's steady voice.

I remember thinking I'll know the future. But I don't. I know of a future. I also know a thousand other ways we don't end up there. This present, once a future, is not one I'd ever prepared for.

What strikes me is this: in meeting rooms, in conversations after the meeting ends, the language sticks. 'The future' — of education, of work, of learning. The skills they'll need. As if there's only one path forward, and our job is to point them toward it.

It's changing now. That the old agreements about what education promises — a degree equals a job equals security — are loosening.

The first crack in the ice is AI. The thawing is neither good nor bad, but it is simply here. In classrooms, in the tools we use to write and think. It has walked through the doors. The question is what we do now that certain work can be done by something else.

Beyond the obvious panic, there is intrigue — students want to understand what it means to work alongside something that can produce but not feel, that can calculate but not care. They're asking how to stay human in proximity to a thing that isn't.

The second thing is harder to name. It has to do with skills that don't show up neatly on a transcript. Collaboration that actually requires listening. Creativity that can't be automated because it emerges from doubt, from trying something and watching it fail.

These capacities have always mattered, but they matter differently now. Because if a machine can draft the memo, write the code, analyze the data, then what's left

for us is the part that requires being alive: the noticing, the connecting, the deciding what's worth doing in the first place. These tools are no longer supplementary.

HOW DO WE RECOGNISE IT?

The third, and perhaps the most divisive, is the matter of credentials. I've been in higher education long enough to feel protective of degrees. They meant something to me, years ago. It was a promise. It opened up the world. But I'm also watching what happens when someone can learn to code in six months, build a portfolio in a year, demonstrate competence without ever setting foot in a lecture hall.

This doesn't reject the idea of a university; it simply rewrites the only legitimate path forward. Students aren't less willing to learn, they're more curious than ever. They have the autonomy to decide their curiosity, and they're not willing to bend to rigid 4-year programs decided decades ago.

THE MONOPOLY ON EDUCATION IS ENDING.

All this adds up to is this: uncertainty. The future, in spite of technological advances, and new schools of thought, remains uncertain. More so than ever.

Perhaps the preparation isn't in the knowing. Perhaps it is in embracing the perpetual uncertainty — in remaining curious in the face of the unknown. To keep building as the blueprint changes.

What can I give students, if not the answers? Perhaps nothing more than company, as we figure this out together. We can ask each other the questions, fumble around the answers. We can learn with each other.

We're making it up as we go. The future, really, is now. ■

The future is a rolling mass. No one has seen it. So, it's best to regard the future as already before us, and work accordingly.

The Three Ps...

ONE DAY, a dove asked a hawk, “What’s there in the sky?”

The hawk replied, “There is nothing in the sky except freedom.”

The dove was visibly curious.

“That’s an illusion”, the dove said.

The eagle, without batting an eyelid, said, “I believe in illusion to prove them wrong.”

When I got introduced to entrepreneurship, I was 18 years old and in the first year of college. The subject was Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship. Everyone said that it is a theoretical subject, and many questioned its existence in our syllabus. The professor was boring, academically very strong, but practically a novice.

Today, I am in my thirties, and I understand the value of entrepreneurship like a science student understands the value of physics. In the last ten years, I have observed entrepreneurship from close quarters. I’m surprised by how entrepreneurship is more of an art than a science. The strategy that worked for me might not work for you. It’s also not just strategy; it could be the same strategy, but the execution excellence makes the difference too.

Today, I will tell you three key indicators to test your ability to be an entrepreneur. I observed that there are three Ps that are foundational traits of every entrepreneur. It becomes easy to remember if you like green peas. The first two are oriented internally, and the third one is anchored externally.

1. PATIENCE

In an imaginary land, there was a king who had three queens. One day, a queen comes to the king and says that she wants to leave the kingdom. The king tried to convince her to stay back, but she left. The king is okay with it. On the second day, the second queen arrives, and she, too, wants to leave the kingdom. The king persuades her to stay back, but she refuses. This time, too, the king takes it by the chin. Now, it’s the



CA Ranjan Kumar Sahoo

Manager (Information System Audit), SBI Hyderabad

third day, and what happened was what the King had been afraid of. The last queen too wants to leave the kingdom. This time, the king falls at her feet and requests that she not leave the kingdom. The third queen agrees. After years, one day, both the first and second queens return to the kingdom. Story ends.

Like you, I was curious at this point when my mentor, in his eighties, narrated this story to me. I was restless to know who these three queens are. He leans forward from his well-cushioned red and black chair, “the first queen’s name is Prosperity, the second is Power, and the third is Patience.

Always have that third queen in your entrepreneurial life.

2. PERSEVERANCE

There is only one shortcut in life: neither hard work nor smart work, but perseverance. When I reflected on this, it clicked for me like a well-chewed piece of gum clicks to our shoes. Perseverance is a consistent effort to desire and do what you want. It is not mere handwork, nor is it the overused smart work. It is a well-calibrated, tempo-driven, orchestrated effort towards your vision and goal. Imbibe this trait, and you will realise that you are slowly becoming invincible from within.

3. PEOPLE

This is about our external orientation. If you ask any learned man what the generic goal of all entrepreneurs is, they would most probably say “to ease people’s lives.” Yes, it is for the people you work with. Your endeavour, devoured by people, will have no meaning. Your efforts should be centered around people whose lives you want to make pleasurable. If you aim to be an entrepreneur, understand the people around you, and build people around you who would march along with you in your journey to bring solutions for problems that people, including you, are facing. ■



Small Numbers, Wide Horizons

Reflections on money, movement, and the quiet choices that shape a student's path.



Meera Venugopalan

I REMEMBER a train ride during my first year away from home. The ticket was cheap, but the tea at the station wasn't. I bought it anyway. Later, counting coins in my pocket, I wondered why the math of freedom always seemed to include subtraction.

Money, when you're starting out, is rarely about numbers. It's about movement – what you can do, where you can go, and how far you can stretch a day. Some mornings, it feels like a puzzle with missing pieces. Other times, it feels like a door you didn't know you could open.

Digital finance makes the puzzle look neat. Apps line up expenses in tidy rows, graphs bloom in color, and alerts whisper about limits. It feels like control, and

sometimes it is. But the neatness doesn't quiet the questions. It only moves them to a screen. The real work—choosing what matters—still happens off the app, in the quiet moments when you decide whether to click “buy” or wait.

Investments sound like a word for later, but they start early. A friend once told me they bought a single share of a company they liked, just to see what it felt like. It wasn't about profit. It was about curiosity, about learning the art of patience. You notice it in small ways—like how markets move while you're asleep.

Side hustles arrive like rumors. Someone is editing videos for a brand, someone else is tutoring online. They are side roads: sometimes scenic, sometimes rough. I've taken a few myself. What I remember most is not the extra money, but how those hours they taught me what I enjoyed, and what I didn't. That knowledge felt like a kind of wealth.

Patterns emerge over time. Money tends to follow attention. When you notice where your hours go, your coins often follow. And attention is expensive. Spend it carefully.

If any of this sounds like advice, it isn't meant to. These are moments that stayed, questions that didn't settle. You'll have your own. They'll arrive in the form of choices: a train ticket, a subscription, a share bought on a whim. Each one will feel small, but together they'll sketch a straight road you'll recognise as yours. ■

Meera Venugopalan is a corporate finance and audit professional.



Learning How to Move with Times

Many students sense that something is changing, even if they cannot name it yet. Courses remain familiar, but the world they are preparing for does not.

THE DISTANCE between what is taught and what is required feels wider. What seems to matter now is not only what you know, but how you move when things change.

One way students are responding is by becoming polymaths. Not by mastering everything, but by allowing different interests to coexist. A management student who explores design. A computer science student who studies human behavior. A science student who learns how products reach people. These overlaps create options. When fields blur, those who can move between them find space to grow.

FLUID INTELLIGENCE

Noticing what surrounds the task, not just the task itself. In group work, internships, or online collaborations, some students see only instructions. Others notice timing, tone, incentives, and unspoken expectations. Over time, that awareness becomes more valuable than perfect execution. It allows people to adjust before problems fully appear.

Fluid intelligence is the ability to step into unfamiliar systems and learn while moving. New platforms, new tools, new forms of work appear faster than any syllabus can update. Students who grow comfortable with this motion develop confidence that does not depend on specific knowledge. They trust their capacity to learn again.



ADAPTABILITY QUOTIENT

When plans dissolve, when industries shift, when opportunities arrive without warning, some freeze. Others reorganise and continue. The difference is rarely raw talent. It is familiarity with change itself. Those who adapt early carry that advantage quietly into every new environment. This is called adaptability quotient.

SUSTAINED BY CURIOSITY

Curiosity shows up as small questions. How does this system work? What happens behind this interface? Why does this campaign succeed? Why does another fail? Students who keep asking these questions do not look extraordinary at first. Over time, they become difficult to replace.

This is the shape of preparation now.

Not rigid paths, but responsive minds.

Not fixed roles, but evolving capabilities.

And for students who feel drawn toward understanding how digital systems, markets, technology, and human behavior intersect, there are spaces designed to explore that intersection deeply. Environments where Digital Marketing and AI are not subjects, but living tools. Where learning does not end with a semester, but keeps moving with the world. ■



Dharaneetharan G D

Founder, Social Eagle and the 21DC Community.

One way students are responding is by becoming polymaths in quiet ways. Not by mastering everything, but by allowing different interests to coexist.

The day I took care of myself

Resolutions are not about perfection; they are about presence. Care for yourself, enjoy small moments, and allow life to organise by itself.



CA Sandhya Pappu
Senior Internal Auditor
SoftwareONE UK Ltd

IT WAS THE DAWN of the new year. The holiday season, the time between end of year and beginning of another year was coming to an end.

The first day of January always seemed a little louder than the rest of the year. For some it was another year with a new beginning while for some others it was just another day and same routine. For me it was a blend of both. Everywhere I looked, the year felt young in that unmistakable Indian way: messy, hopeful, and slightly noisy.

Since I woke up, my phone had not missed a single beat. It was buzzing with ‘ting’ sound, predictable messages and status updates from my network – “Happy New Year” followed by long strings of emojis.

While scrolling through the status messages, one message from my friend caught my attention. It was a status message that read, “My resolutions for this year ...”. This thought lingered in my mind.

That night, in my hostel room I made another list. Not on fancy stationery, just in my phone. I typed a few lines. Drink more water. Be more focused. Read at least 15 minutes each day. Keep the room a little cleaner than last year. Try waking up before 7 am. This was nothing different from what I had written the previous year.

And then, almost instantly, my mind told me “Take care of your well being this year.”

The phrase sat there for a while. It felt too grown-up for a student who always lost stationary in the class. I searched for the delete button on my phone’s keyboard, but then decided to let it stay. There was something honest about it, that didn’t need to be defended. It sounded so simple.

MIND DRIFTING AWAY

Holidays over, things got back to routine and the resolutions quietly slipped to the back of my mind. It wasn’t something I tried to act on. It drifted into the corners of my days, appearing in ways I didn’t expect.

There were those afternoons when I walked on to the terrace to catch some sun. I saw a kite dip unevenly in the sky, its tail tangled. It felt oddly similar to how my mind behaved during the busiest months: fluttering, uncertain, but moving anyway.

Some days, it was those little things that made the mind feel heavier. The sound of sudden silence



of the corridor when friends left for class chattering away and I couldn't bring myself to follow them. The bustling afternoons when everything outside felt far too noisy and everything inside felt far too quiet. The late-evening calls to home where I found myself saying, "Everything's fine, All Iz well, Amma."

Hostel life had a way of amplifying everything. The arguments over who used whose bucket in the bathroom. One evening, after a particularly long day of costing problems and corporate law case studies, I walked to the economical dosa bandi corner. The bandi wala knew most of us by face and served dosas. A group of students next to me discussed about future opportunities. I just listened. Somehow, that felt enough.

RESOLUTIONS BECOMING ROUTINE

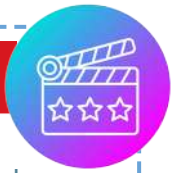
Nothing changed dramatically after that. The list in my phone felt less like a set of rules for myself and more like a faint memory from the night I wrote those resolutions. I didn't check them often, but parts of it still stayed with me. As for taking care of myself - well, it didn't feel like a separate line item from my resolution any more, it became a trend, a part of my daily life.

Some days it was just stopping by the badminton court even when I didn't play, just to watch the rhythm of people moving. Some days it looked like re-reading old comic magazines because the familiarity felt grounding. Some days it was just listening to random music, without bothering to find out which movie. Some days it was simply telling myself that it was ok to feel off.

I suppose that's the quiet truth of resolutions. They rarely bring any change overnight. They simply accompany, like a companion who doesn't mind if you walk slowly. The beauty is not about the list itself but the way life tries to organise itself around it. ■

ANBE SIVAM

By: Alex Vitale



This column will track classics that you may like to watch.

ANBE SIVAM (2003, Tamil): Kindness Is the Most Radical Idea

Tagline: *A road journey that quietly changes how you see humanity.*

Anbe Sivam begins as a road movie. Two strangers are forced to travel together after a flight disruption. One is loud, humorous, and scarred by life. The other is rich, polished, and quietly arrogant. They are as different as chalk and cheese, and that friction makes the story unforgettable.

The film questions our ideas of success, intelligence, and what it means to live well. It shows how empathy rarely grows from comfort, but from shared discomfort and choice. In short, you must have lived it to understand it. Each encounter quietly reveals who we become when convenience disappears and character is tested.

Kamal Haasan's portrayal of Nallasivam is moving; a middle-aged man who has seen and endured tragedy without losing his humour or generosity. R Madhavan's character becomes our mirror: ambitious, brash, educated, yet emotionally narrow. Watching him change is uncomfortably personal.

What makes Anbe Sivam timeless is its courage. In a world sucked to outrage, speed, and winning arguments, this film whispers something. That, kindness is strength. That, listening matters. And that, how you treat those with no power says everything about who you are.

If you've ever wondered whether goodness still has a place in our world, this film answers. By the time the journey ends, both the characters and we, the viewers, see humanity a little differently.

Verdict: When I first watched this movie, I was slightly irritated. It felt slow, and awkward. But as the minutes passed, I was completely absorbed. By the end, I started to rethink how I look at people.

Watch it for: Warm humour, unforgettable performances, soulful music.

Takeaway: Being human is more important than being right.

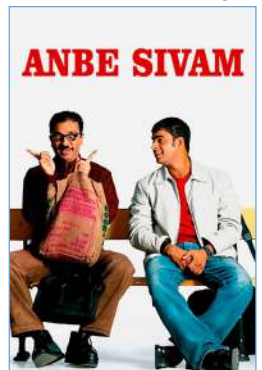
Cast & Crew:

- **Director:** Sundar C
- **Lead:** Kamal Haasan, R. Madhavan, Kiran Rathod
- **Music:** Vidyasagar
- **Genre:** Road Film

Best Scene to Watch For: A late-night conversation between the two travellers.

Where to Watch: Amazon Prime

Also Watch: Planes, Trains and Automobiles (1987). A classic road comedy about two mismatched strangers forced to travel together.



Kindness is courage.

Being compassionate in a harsh world takes strength, not weakness.

Pain can deepen humanity.

Suffering does not have to harden the heart; it can enlarge it.

Listening changes minds.

Real influence happens through empathy, not arguments

This column will share the executive summary of a book. Read it, internalise it, and you can hold conversations on it with anyone. If you are excited, read the book.

ATOMIC HABITS

THE BOOK OFFERS you a simple thought: you do not rise to the level of your goals; you fall to the level of your systems. It means that systems are more important than goals. Do you want to write a book? Then write a paragraph or a page every day, without fail. Want to run a marathon? Then, put your shoes on at the same time every day and run at least a kilometre.

Create an 'identity'. Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. A visit to the gym is not about health, but about being someone who doesn't skip workouts. If you want to start skipping dessert, it's not about willpower; but about becoming the person who values long-term strength over short-term sugar.

One man lost over 100 pounds not by dieting, but by mastering the art of showing up. He began with five-minute gym visits, did that consistently, come hell or high-water.

Clear says that to build habits we must shift from the external ("I want results") to the internal ("I am becoming"). 'I want results' is about chasing a visible outcome. 'I am becoming' is about who you are becoming through consistent action. So instead of saying "I must make Rs.10 lakh," say, "I am becoming someone who handles money wisely."

DESIGN OVER DISCIPLINE

The road to that lies in four simple laws. Make it obvious. Make it attractive. Make it easy. Make it satisfying. That's the system.

Make it obvious: If you want to start a new habit, attach it to something already rooted. Like, "After I brush my teeth, I will meditate for one minute." Design your space to encourage good habits. Leave a book on your pillow if you want to read at night..

Make it easy: Keep the steps between you and your good habit few. A man promised he would go to the gym regularly. He would walk in, do a simple activity, and leave in five minutes. His first goal was to become a person who never misses a workout.

Make it satisfying: Our brains crave for immediate reward. So how do we stay with long-term goals that don't pay off right away? Clear suggests a simple progress bar helps. The habit tracker tells the brain: "This matters."

Make it attractive: This book is also about breaking bad habits. By removing making the craving less attractive, you can break a bad habit. One man gave up smoking by repeating: "I'm not a smoker," every time temptation struck..

THE LANTERN IN THE FOG

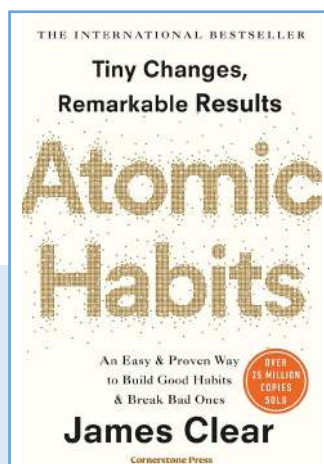
Throughout Atomic Habits, Clear acts as a strategic guide. He illustrates best practices from athletes, artists, businesspeople, and a woman who reset her life after a breakup so that we can learn from their experience.

This is a book you would want to come back to when you're trying to read for the exam, run that fourth kilometre, or say no to that fifth cookie. Because Atomic Habits doesn't promise change overnight. It promises the effect of compound interest in behaviour.

Like, one percent better each day done over 365 days is a staggering 3676% growth. It means that the author with a writer's block, finishes a novel. Clear quotes how the Dave Brailsford led British Cycling team rose to Olympic dominance by improving everything by just 1%. That part is a fantastic read.

The message is that one must aim for permanence, not perfection. One must design systems that perform consistently. The difference between 'who you are' and 'who you could be' is just a few atomic habits away!

– V Pattabhi Ram



James Clear lays down a leadership principle: Small choices, repeated every day, compound into big results. Atomic Habits is about a process.

When he was a teenager, James Clear suffered a baseball accident that left him in bed for months. The road to recovery was slow, and that's when he discovered the power of tiny gains. Atomic Habits was born from this lived truth: that transformation doesn't come via breakthroughs, but with small habits, practiced each day.

**Build the right habits today.
Aspire to work with India's
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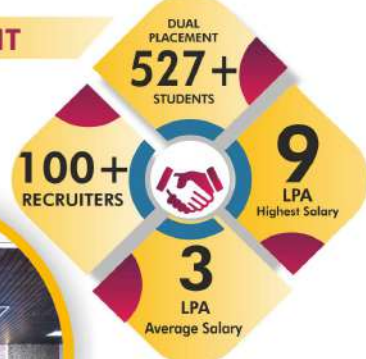
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