

Writing Portfolio

Marcella Purnama



Marcella Purnama
writer

Contents

Introduction	6
Various Publications	
Redefining love	8
The 5 Love Languages	10
Why You Will Always Believe In Love	12
Marcella's story of studying in Melbourne	14
On choosing Melbourne, Australia, to study	16
Oodles of Noodles	18
Going down under, on a budget	20
When God is Just a Back-Up Plan	22
What does it mean to put God first?	24
A World without Mothers	26
Gen (wh)Y: saving the lost generation	28
Us vs. them	30
A- is an Asian F	32
Tutorial 101	34
Now, it feels like home	36
Life, on its own terms. Srsly	38
Indonesia Mengglobal	
Life as an ex-international student	43
5 life tips in studying abroad	45
You've graduated. So what's next?	47
On choosing Melbourne, Australia, to study	49
blueVisions Management	
5 Tips to Empowering Employees	53
Higer EQ, Better Job Performance	55
DISC: Communication Tips for Cs – Part 5	56
DISC: Communication Tips for Ss – Part 4	58
DISC: Communication Tips for Is – Part 3	60
DISC: Communication Tips for Ds – Part 2	62
Communicating to Influence Using DISC – Part 1	64
Answering the Salary Interview Questions – Part 3: Know What You're Worth	66

Answering the Salary Interview Question – Part 2: Stating the Right Number	68
How to Answer The Interview Question: “What is Your Expected Salary?” – Part 1	70
4 Practical Ways to Improve Your English Skills	72
Starting 2014 the right way	73
5 ‘Year-End’ Review Questions to Prepare You for 2014	74
5 tips for giving effective feedback to your employees	75
It’s December. Time for annual performance reviews?	77
The art of communication: Are you conveying more than you realise?	79
How to build trust in the workplace	80
Do your team members lack accountability?	81
Is Indonesia ready for AEC 2015? Why corporate English is important	82
First time meeting a prospective client? Here are some things you should know	84
Feeling unappreciated? Tips to build healthy workplace	85
More actions but no results? Perhaps you’re doing it all wrong	86
What differentiates the best from the rest	88

YCAB Foundation

What does charity mean to you?	91
Education unveiled: What underprivileged students really need	94
Dr. Iskandar Irwan Hukom: Doing my duties and responsibilities	97
Dody’s story: From a school dropout to entrepreneur	99

Meld Magazine

Entertainment

The future of Indonesian cinema	105
Indonesian Film Festival 2012	107
Project O: Revive 2012	109
Charity concert: For the Love of Music	111
Fan diary: Notes from David Choi’s Forever and Ever Tour in Melbourne	112
Escape from Camp 14 (Book Review)	114
Trio Lestari in Melbourne: “Don’t forget Indonesia”	116
O-Week: Clubs and Societies Expo 2012	118
The Supper Market at Abbotsford Convent	120
Move over Brooklyn... Papua is claiming the pop ‘n’ lock	122
Students fund children’s charity through Project O: Reboot	124
Review: Face to Face	126
Indonesian Film Festival 2011: a sneak peak	128
Indonesian Film Festival 2011: an insider’s look into the world of Indonesian cinema	130
Sour Surfer (review)	132
Three things to do in Melbourne this summer	134

Features

Writing your resume the journalist way (part 2): Structure	137
Writing your resume the journalist way: the Dos and Don'ts	139
Which tram traveller are you?	141
Social media lifeline for international students	143
Why Melbourne really is the most livable city in the world	145
An insider's guide to picking a cafe in Melbourne	147
3 ideas for a first date	150
How important is Facebook relationship status to you?	153

Lifestyle

Melbourne's Top 10 Cafes	157
The Dating Game: Who would you date?	160
A culinary guide to the Olympics	163
Indonesian Fine Arts student Join Silica Liong connects the dots	165
From student to biz wiz: Ivan Tandyo	168
Best places to keep fit in Carlton	171
The League of Honest Coffee	174
Food and drink: exploring Lygon St. Carlton	175
Open till late: best places to study in Melbourne	178

News

Volunteers Needed for Carlton Harmony Day Festival	181
I in 3 international students evade fares: "it's just too expensive"	182
ASOS comes to Australia	183
Call to abolish international students' 20-hour work restrictions	185
Working in Australia: visas, taxes, minimum pay and rights	188
Weekly news round-up: who's who in Australia, cool iPhone apps, and updates from Japan and Libya	191
Collins place fire, workers evacuated	192

Opinion

The bittersweet truth about life after graduation	194
The Great SEXtember Debate: Waiting for 'The One'	196
Happy Birthday, Indonesia	198
Love across borders: How one cynic embraced a long distance relationship	200
Would you date someone who's already taken?	202
Unpaid internships – unethical exploitation or a necessary evil?	204
Why gaming can make you a better person	206
Forget myki – I'm holding onto my Metcard	208
Rebound: Only this isn't basketball, it's relationships	211
She's just not that into you	213
Do you believe in platonic relationships?	215
My friend, you have been dumped	217

The Youngest Child Syndrome.....	219
No pain no gain? The importance of being beautiful.....	222
Puppy Love.....	224
On Celebrating Chinese New Year.....	226
On graduation and beyond... ..	228
The ugly truth – finishing a degree to start another one.....	230
The definition of success	232
Life overseas: getting comfy under your own skin.....	234
How important are grades to you?	236
Coffee: the quintessential Melbourne experience.....	238

Introduction

Marcella Purnama is a writer. In the midst of searching for stories to share and scrounging deadline to keep, she keeps alternating between tea and coffee to drink. After completing her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Melbourne, majoring in Psychology and Media and Communication, Marcella pledges herself to the world of written words. She blogs regularly at MarcellaPurnama.com.

Website : marcellapurnama.com
Portfolio : marcellapurnama.com/portfolio
LinkedIn : linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761
Twitter : twitter.com/MarcellaPurnama
Facebook : facebook.com/mp.writer

This portfolio is last updated in February 2014.

Various Publications

Redefining love

Publication : Wedding Carousel

Published Date : November 15, 2013

URL : <http://www.weddingcarousel.com/2013/11/15/redefining-love/>

When I was a kid, I thought of love as a prince who comes slaying the dragon and freeing the princess who is trapped at the top of the highest tower. I thought of love as finding your one true love, having that true love's first kiss, and living happily ever after.

If we are having coffee, perhaps I would witness your eyes rolling.

When I got broken hearted the first time, I thought of love as something that resembles a longing. What's that word? Hope. Love is hoping that the next relationship is going to work. Love is hoping that one day he would regret on ditching me and then he would realise that it was such a big mistake and that I was the only girl for him.

He didn't, of course, and I thought love as just that – longing, hoping for a better tomorrow.

When I got broken hearted the second time, I realised that love has many forms. You could hate and love a person at the same time. And I realised that love is much more than just silly love poems and having someone to text and call at the times that are convenient to you.

When I entered university, I realised that apart from all those romanticised love from a man to a woman, perhaps love in a family is of stronger bond. I realised that love is sticking by you no matter what, accepting you for whoever you are, never giving up on you no matter how screwed you are, and having someone to count on for 24/7.

Then, I fell in love.

Love is... happiness.

Love is wanting to make sure that he's okay. Love is wanting to take care of him when he's sick. Love is praying to have those sleepless nights he is having instead.

Love is giving him the last bit of the cake. It is driving thirty minutes to where you are, another thirty minutes to your place, and another thirty minutes back home. Love is all those KFC nights in front of the TV on Saturday night and still feel like having the best date ever.

Then we come to the stage where love is not all lovey dovey. Love is forgiving, and forgetting mistakes. Love is looking beyond the hurt we are having and focusing on our partner instead. Love is caring about the other party even when we are in a pretty bad shape ourselves.

Love is being selfless. It is about losing arguments, saying sorry, and compromising. Love is choosing him over and over again.

Love is staying up late to chat, even when all your eyes want to do is closing them. Love is giving another chance when you screw up, and screw up all over again. Love is never giving up on you. Love is not keeping score cards.

And as I delve deeper in a relationship, the more I find myself reminded on the definition of love which I have always dismissed.

It is the definition they forced me to remember when I was in Sunday school, yet never understood the meaning. Somehow I always thought it is overrated, that I would want some other contemporary meaning instead of this.

But the more you know about love, the more you realise that, this definition is the closest we have on understanding love.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.”

- 1 Cor 13: 4-8

And when you have experienced love this way, life is truly heaven on earth.

The 5 Love Languages

Publication : Wedding Carousel

Published Date : October 18, 2013

URL : <http://www.weddingcarousel.com/2013/10/18/the-5-love-languages/>

There's an old quote that says, "Just because somebody doesn't love you the way you want them to doesn't mean they don't love you with everything they got."

I came across this saying when I was a little girl, still in Junior High school perhaps, when we all had no idea of what love really means. However, for some reasons this quote is stuck in my mind ever since.

Fast-forward a couple of years and when I finally fell in love for real, my sister gave this book, [The 5 Love Languages](#) by Gary Chapman. I realised that my definition of love is different than yours. But somehow we always believe our own definition as the universal one.

In his book, Chapman describes that there are five languages, or expressions, of love. They are words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service, receiving gifts, and quality time.

If your language is physical touch, you might feel loved by cuddling on the sofa while watching TV. Yet your partner's love language is acts of service, and him cooking for you, doing the laundry, and fetching you to and from everywhere are how he expresses his love.

Yet you both don't feel like the other party really loves you. There's something missing and your love quota of the day is not filled, because clearly, you are talking in different languages.

The 5 love languages

1. Words of affirmation

People who have this love language needs constant reaffirmation through words – spoken or written, that their partner loves them. Saying, "I love you", "I appreciate you", "Thank you", and "I support you" are the encouragements she needs.

2. Physical touch

Cuddling, hugging, holding hands, kissing, and the list will go on. People who have this love language feels secure with physical contact, even if it's just a kiss on the cheek every morning.

3. Acts of service

Does your partner like to cook for you, clean the house for you, or even fill out the gas tank in the car for you? His love language may be service.

4. Receiving gifts

Like it says, people who have this love language love to give gifts. They may not rest until they find the perfect birthday gift with the exact meaning to convey his feelings. For them, gifts mean a lot.

5. Quality time

Above all, people whose love language is quality time just love to spend time together. She doesn't really care about getting a birthday present but if you are late for your date and/or too busy with work, she will feel unloved.

How to know your love language

Knowing your love language is simple. Observe the thing you do the most for your partner, or how you express your own love. Almost always, the way you express love is how you want to be loved as well.

Not only that, observe how you voice your complains or requests. These are your inner desires, whether you say to your partner, "You never say you love me!" or "Can I ask you to help me doing these house chores?" can reflect a great deal about your love language.

Plus, note that most people don't have only one language, but two. Your dominant one might be words of affirmation but the other thing that's equally as important is gifts.

Why is knowing your love language important?

Why, then, knowing your love language, and your partner's, is important?

Because even though he doesn't love you the way you want, it doesn't mean he doesn't love you with everything he has.

A lot of relationships failed due to the misunderstanding that "He doesn't love me," while it is really, "He doesn't love me the way I want him to." Knowing how to love him fully and being loved fully in return make your relationship stronger.

So today, start with yourself. Start accepting that your partner's love needs might be different to yours. Start communicating the way you want to be loved to him instead of dropping hints. And most importantly, start loving him fully for who he is in his love language.

What are your and your partner's love languages? Take the test and find out [here](#).

Why You Will Always Believe In Love

[Had over than 440 Facebook likes by October 2013]

Publication : Thought Catalog

Published Date : October 9, 2013

URL : <http://thoughtcatalog.com/marcella-purnama/2013/10/why-you-will-always-believe-in-love/>

You may have endured countless heartbreaks and hurt. Your boyfriend has cheated on you, your girlfriend casually says, "I just don't love you no more." Your father may have left you since you were a child or your sister betrayed your trust for not keeping your deepest darkest secret. But deep down, deep down, you still have this tiniest bit of hope that the next love you'll find is going to work.

You may have tried and failed. And tried and failed again. You may have twenty names in your it-just-didn't-work-between-us list. Brad. Jack. Jen. David. Sam. Hugh. Whoever. You've cried yourself to sleep every single time after all those breakups, and you vow to guard your heart a little better – to not give every piece of puzzle to the next one who comes along. But you'll never be able to stop putting yourself out there. You'll find yourself having the strength of being vulnerable once more. Because you know you are one step closer to finding the one, even when you know you might get hurt once more.

You may once be a believer. "That was when I was naive," you said. "That was when I didn't know the truth in this cruel world." Then something happens – something always does, and you find yourself at the other end of the spectrum. You scoff at those believing in fate; you mock your friends for believing in love. "The sooner you learn the truth," you begin, "the sooner it will set you free." But every night when you close your eyes to sleep, you wish there's something you can do to fill the emptiness in your heart. You wish, deep down, you can be a believer once more.

You may be broken. You may have been experiencing enough pain to turn your back on the world, on humanity, and on every fairy-tale fantasy that feeds the possible existence of your true love. But there will still be moments that make your heart skips a beat. A touch. A smile. Those warm eyes. There are seconds when you will find yourself breathless, igniting those fire inside your heart that has been long put to rest – a flicker of hope of the warmth that you never think will experience once more.

You may feel desperately lonely. You have spent your 20s waiting and hoping that the next guy who sweeps you off your feet will present you the missing pair of glass shoe and end your singlehood forever. You wait – while at the same time seeing your friends getting engaged and close friends starting to build their family. You become others' bridesmaid but never the bride. But you never give up. You never give up of showing up, of getting yourself out of the house because if there's even the tiniest chance of meeting that guy today, you'll grab it.

You may watch the news – witness wars emerging and the two towers falling and societies breaking. Death. Greed. Anger. Pain. Sadness. You start asking yourself, "How could anyone do this to another?" You become a complete cynic towards whatever good that is present, questioning every motive behind every deed. But then you see a two-year-old smiling wide, laughing innocently while their mother wipe

away that ice cream smudge on their face. And you find yourself smiling. There is still goodness in this world. There is still hope. There is still love.

You may even curse love. You curse it so hard that it rips your heart to pieces. You hate others who believe in it. But deep down, deep down, this hatred roots in the hope of its success. You hate love because it has failed you. You despise love because it is the one thing you want to have, but robbed.

You may say you don't believe in love. But deep down, deep down, you always will. It doesn't matter if love has or hasn't done you justice. Because even the tiniest hope of its existence gives you hope for tomorrow.

It gives hope to life.

Marcella's story of studying in Melbourne

Publication : Study Melbourne

Published Date : July 19, 2013

URL : <http://www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/entertainment/news/indonesian-student-story>

I had always known I would study in Australia. Or to be more exact, I had always known I'd go to the [University of Melbourne](#).

I was in junior high when my older sister went to Melbourne to pursue further studies. After that, I was absolutely sure that I would follow her path. After all, we attended the same international school (IPEKA International Christian School, Jakarta, which uses the New South Wales curriculum), took the same subjects, and my parents had hinted for me to follow in her stead.

Most of my friends dreamed of studying in the States, but I never did. I was that person who decided not to go to America because of the ridiculously long flights required to get there. America was never an option, because I raised the white flag before even considering living the American Dream.

I graduated from high school in December 2009 and applied only to two universities: the University of Melbourne and [Monash University](#). By the following March, I was walking down the streets of Melbourne — one of many international students who had traveled 1,000 miles from home, spoken a different mother-tongue language, and had eaten rice for as long as life itself.

The first few months were not exactly what I expected. There were a lot of lessons to be learned, starting with learning to live independently and managing your own studies while socializing at the same time. Speaking English full-time was also hard, and listening to Australians with their thick accents made it even harder. But I never once regretted my decision to study in Australia, and if I was given the chance to choose again, I would still choose to go to Melbourne.

Here are some reasons for why I chose Melbourne:

Being independent

This is one of the first and most important lessons you learn when you study overseas. You're forced to become independent, as the comforts of being at home — being pampered by your parents who manage everything for you whenever you ask for it — are no longer there. Studying overseas means doing your own laundry, cooking your own food, cleaning your own apartment and taking care of yourself. These are skills I believe we all need to master in order to grow up and mature, and I personally don't think I could've acquired all these had I continued to live with my parents here in Indonesia.

Good university ranking

The University of Melbourne is ranked 28th in global university rankings. For Psychology (one of the majors I studied), it's ranked 7th. Other universities, such as Monash, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, University of New South Wales, and University of Technology, Sydney, are also great universities whose names people know around the world. I must admit, being the person that I am, I

cannot resist the temptation of going to a university with a good name — and it's even better when others recognize it too.

The most livable city in the world

For students, Melbourne is a bit like heaven. It has good public transportation systems and many historical sites, cultural values and exotic lifestyles to explore and enjoy. For coffee lovers, it's even better, because Melbourne is home to some of the best cafes in the world. Plus, its multicultural status makes Melbourne rich in its varieties of food – including Indonesian cuisine to satisfy your Soto Betawi and Martabak cravings. Your social network will expand as you get to know people from all over the world; some of my best friends are from Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. With the annual Australian Open, international exhibitions and Broadway shows, what more could you ask for?

It's far/near enough from home

It is usually the case that after finishing university, graduates move on to work and maybe meet that special someone before starting a family of their own. Work schedules are harsher than university term schedules, so the frequency of seeing your parents and siblings (if any) dwindles once we become young adults working in the real world. It thus seems that your university experience may be one of the last times you can truly be our parents' son or daughter. With Melbourne being only a six-hour flight away, the distance makes it easier (than the States, for instance) to go home and spend school holidays with your family, while at the same time being far away enough that your daily activities cannot be monitored by your parents. Melbourne isn't as near as Singapore, for example, but being farther than an hour's flight away makes it just inconvenient enough to prevent your parents wanting you to come home every long weekend.

Is there a reason, or a number of reasons, that prove that studying overseas is good? Maybe, maybe not. Choosing a university is a very difficult and important choice, as it means a minimum of three or four years of studying and living there. Look for options, ask for opinions, and only then will you be able to choose wisely. But one thing I do know for sure is that when it comes to choosing a university, whatever your decision, you'll not live to regret it so long as you make the most of your experience.

[Story published Jakarta Globe](#) | 1 July 2013.

[Marcella Purnama is a content writer at the Jakarta-based nonprofit organization, YCAB Foundation. She blogs regularly at marcellapurnama.com.

This article originally appeared in Indonesia Mengglobal. The site aspires to make high-quality global education more accessible for Indonesian students.]

On choosing Melbourne, Australia, to study

[Republished from Indonesia Mengglobal]

Publication : The Jakarta Globe

Published Date : July 11, 2013

URL : <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/blogs/on-choosing-to-study-in-melbourne-australia/>

I had always known I would study in Australia. Or to be more exact, I had always known I'd go to the [University of Melbourne](#).

I was in junior high when my older sister went to Melbourne to pursue further studies. After that, I was absolutely sure that I would follow her path. After all, we attended the same international school (IPEKA International Christian School, Jakarta, which uses the New South Wales curriculum), took the same subjects, and my parents had hinted for me to follow in her stead.

Most of my friends dreamed of studying in the States, but I never did. I was that person who decided not to go to America because of the ridiculously long flights required to get there. America was never an option, because I raised the white flag before even considering living the American Dream.

I graduated from high school in December 2009 and applied only to two universities: the University of Melbourne and [Monash University](#). By the following March, I was walking down the streets of Melbourne — one of many international students who had traveled 1,000 miles from home, spoken a different mother-tongue language, and had eaten rice for as long as life itself.

The first few months were not exactly what I expected. There were a lot of lessons to be learned, starting with learning to live independently and managing your own studies while socializing at the same time. Speaking English full-time was also hard, and listening to Australians with their thick accents made it even harder. But I never once regretted my decision to study in Australia, and if I was given the chance to choose again, I would still choose to go to Melbourne.

Here are some reasons for why I chose Melbourne:

Being independent

This is one of the first and most important lessons you learn when you study overseas. You're forced to become independent, as the comforts of being at home — being pampered by your parents who manage everything for you whenever you ask for it — are no longer there. Studying overseas means doing your own laundry, cooking your own food, cleaning your own apartment and taking care of yourself. These are skills I believe we all need to master in order to grow up and mature, and I personally don't think I could've acquired all these had I continued to live with my parents here in Indonesia.

Good university ranking

The University of Melbourne is ranked 28th in global university rankings. For Psychology (one of the majors I studied), it's ranked 7th. Other universities, such as Monash, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, University of New South Wales, and University of Technology, Sydney, are also great universities whose names people know around the world. I must admit, being the person that I am, I

cannot resist the temptation of going to a university with a good name — and it's even better when others recognize it too.

The most livable city in the world

For students, Melbourne is a bit like heaven. It has good public transportation systems and many historical sites, cultural values and exotic lifestyles to explore and enjoy. For coffee lovers, it's even better, because Melbourne is home to some of the best cafes in the world. Plus, its multicultural status makes Melbourne rich in its varieties of food – including Indonesian cuisine to satisfy your Soto Betawi and Martabak cravings. Your social network will expand as you get to know people from all over the world; some of my best friends are from Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. With the annual Australian Open, international exhibitions and Broadway shows, what more could you ask for?

It's far/near enough from home

It is usually the case that after finishing university, graduates move on to work and maybe meet that special someone before starting a family of their own. Work schedules are harsher than university term schedules, so the frequency of seeing your parents and siblings (if any) dwindles once we become young adults working in the real world. It thus seems that your university experience may be one of the last times you can truly be our parents' son or daughter. With Melbourne being only a six-hour flight away, the distance makes it easier (than the States, for instance) to go home and spend school holidays with your family, while at the same time being far away enough that your daily activities cannot be monitored by your parents. Melbourne isn't as near as Singapore, for example, but being farther than an hour's flight away makes it just inconvenient enough to prevent your parents wanting you to come home every long weekend.

Is there a reason, or a number of reasons, that prove that studying overseas is good? Maybe, maybe not. Choosing a university is a very difficult and important choice, as it means a minimum of three or four years of studying and living there. Look for options, ask for opinions, and only then will you be able to choose wisely. But one thing I do know for sure is that when it comes to choosing a university, whatever your decision, you'll not live to regret it so long as you make the most of your experience.

Marcella Purnama is a content writer at the Jakarta-based nonprofit organization, YCAB Foundation. She blogs regularly at marcellapurnama.com.

This article originally appeared in [Indonesia Mengglobal](http://IndonesiaMengglobal), a site where Indonesian students and alumni from top US schools such as Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley share their tips and experiences from studying abroad. The site aspires to make high-quality global education more accessible for Indonesian students.

Oodles of Noodles

Publication : Speak! Magazine July 2013 edition
Published Date : July 19, 2013
URL : <http://youthspeak.com/tabloids/265>

Marcella Purnama always starts her weekend with a tasty bowl of noodles. Here are two new discoveries on her Jakarta restaurant list.

Steal

On the menu: Chicken Mushroom Noodles

Ingredients: Noodles, minced chicken, mushroom and white flowering cabbage

Location: Rumah Makan Palmerah on Jl. Palmerah Barat, Central Jakarta

Price: Rp 12,000

Location: **

Hygiene: **

Décor: *

Hospitality: ****

Taste: ***

Price: ****

I am studying overseas, and the one thing that I always crave once I get back to Jakarta is a tasty bowl of chicken noodles with mushroom, served with soup and white flowering cabbage. I especially love eating it at no-frills, cheap restaurants.

My motto is that the more curious the place, the better the taste. And I believe it's usually best to just follow your nose.

I decided to check out the modest-looking noodle stall located opposite The Jakarta Post office. The reward for my curiosity was a generous portion of noodles. I loved the freshness of the noodles and the perfect dollop of chili. Best of all, it only costs Rp 12, 000, so you can bet that I'll come back to this place!

Splurge

On the menu: Chicken Wonton Noodle Soup

Ingredients: Noodles, homemade wonton, shiitake mushrooms, carrot, Chinese cabbage and coriander

Location: Pique Nique restaurant, PX Pavilion @ The St. Moritz 1st Floor, Unit 7, Jalan Puri Indah Boulevard, Block UI, Jakarta

Price: Rp 50,000,++

Location: *****

Hygiene: *****

Décor: *****

Hospitality: *****

Taste: **

Price: **

The modern but laid-back interior is the first thing I noticed upon entering Pique Nique, a newly opened restaurant in West Jakarta. I was particularly drawn to the brightly colored chair covers which contrast well with the wooden tables.

I opted for the Chicken Wonton Noodle Soup, based on the friendly waiter's recommendation and the yummy photo in the menu. I have to admit I was a tad disappointed at the time it took to prepare.

When it arrived, it was a generous portion, with plenty of mushrooms and meat. Still, the soup was way too peppery for my taste. I'm pretty sure that the pepper overload was meant to mask the bland taste of the soup.

Despite the disappointing dish, the restaurant itself really is a feast for the eyes, so I didn't mind spending an extra two hours chilling out there.

Going down under, on a budget

Publication : Speak! Magazine January 2013 edition

Published Date : January 2013

URL : <http://marcellapurnama.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Speak-mag.png>

How do you survive a day in Melbourne with just A\$50 in your pocket? Marcella Purnama picks a few hotspots that will not break your budget.

10a.m.

Breakfast at Queen Victoria Market

Address: 513 Elizabeth Street

This place offers the freshest homemade food from all across the country. My choice for breakfast is Bratwurst Shop & Co (Shop 99-100), a quaint German restaurant famous for its delicious sausages and budget-friendly menu. I highly recommend trying the spicy Bratwurst with extra cheese (A\$6.40). Don't forget to check out the cool souvenirs, from kangaroo dolls to Indian fabrics.

11a.m.

State Library of Victoria and Melbourne Central Shopping Centre

Address: 328 Swanson Street

Only 10 minutes from Victoria Market, this magnificent 19th century building is distinguished by its gorgeous architecture. Join the guided tour, take plenty of pictures or just look at books. Admission is free, and so is the Wi-Fi!

Once you're done with books, go window shopping at Melbourne Central Shopping Centre. Located just opposite the library, this shopping complex has everything from designer goods to quirky finds.

1 p.m.

Lunch at Hardware Societe

Address: 120 Hardware Lane

This amazing café features shabby-chic interiors that encompass the spirit of the city. Laidback, earthy but well put together, aromatic coffee is only A\$3.50 (plus, tea is poured from teapot featuring knitted and colourful cover into colourful cups). And it goes perfectly well with a light lunch. Personally, I enjoy my cup of coffee with a side order of their delicious eggs (A\$16).

2.30 p.m.

Afternoon snack at La Belle Miette

Address: 30 Hardware Lane

If you're still feeling hungry after lunch, then head to La Belle Miette which is just five minutes away. This chic little shop is touted as Melbourne's macaroon paradise (A\$2.50 per piece). Apparently, the owners

went all the way to France to learn the secrets of creating the perfect macaroon. La Belle Miette offers unique flavours such as Earl Grey, Rose, and Pistachio.

3 p.m.

Shop at Bourke StreetMall

Address: Bourke Street (located between Swanston and Elizabeth Street)

Once you've indulged your taste buds, it's time to hit the streets again. Head to Bourke Street and venture along the pedestrian and tram-only shop. Here you'll find countless shops, with the two well-known department stores, Myer and David Jones. The professional buskers around here will also keep you entertained with their singing, instrument playing and magic tricks. If shopping is not your thing, then just enjoy the surrounding architecture like the mesmerizing General Post Office, now an upscale mall.

5 p.m.

Sigtseeing downtown

Address: Flinders Street and Swanston Street Intersection

If you want to know more about the city's past and future, head to Flinders and Swanston streets. At the intersection, you can admire the majestic St. Paul's Cathedral, check out contemporary art performances in Federation Square or soak up the industrial feel of the Flinders Street Station.

6 p.m.

Walk along Yarra River

Located just five minutes from Flinders Street Station, the Yarra River complex offers amazing views of Melbourne's remarkable skyline. This area is home to the Crown hotel, the famous Chef's Hats restaurants and Southgate Shopping Centre.

7:30 p.m.

Dinner at Ponyfish Island

Address: Yarra River Pedestrian Bridge

Time to wrap up the day with yet another delicious dish. Head to Ponyfish Island, located beneath the Yarra River pedestrian bridge. This place serves burgers, baguettes, and sandwiches, all below A\$15. Their beef BBQ burger (A\$14) is simply irresistible.

When God is Just a Back-Up Plan

Publication : Prodigal Magazine

Published Date : August 2012

URL : <http://www.prodigalmagazine.com/back-up-plan/>

In six months' time, I will graduate. With the last months of college life coming to a close, I have been bombarded with future-talk from every corner of my life. From my parents. From my friends. From my mentors. From my juniors.

All of them are asking me the same question, "What do you want to do after graduation?"

To tell you the truth, I have no idea. Do I pray about it? Yes... when I remember.

Being a true Gen Y-er living in this crazy, busy, and noisy world, I've realised that I have a very short attention span. Five minutes into a lecture, I have already decided whether or not I will listen for the next 50 minutes. Instead of listening, I scan through articles, click on interesting headlines, ignore the others. I multitask, not because I'm good at it, but because I need to be constantly engaged in what I'm doing.

But the number one problem in the world is message overload.

Everyone is trying, begging, fighting, and pleading to get just ten seconds of our attention, promising a valuable product, service, or information in return. And God is fighting for attention along with all of these other inputs. Unfortunately, God never promotes Himself, posts an ad, or sends a reminder when I'm inside the virtual world.

I let myself get distracted, tending to the noise and notifications, and by the end of the day I have no energy left to tend to God. Bedtime prayer quickly morphs into a rapid, one-minute *thank you, I'm sorry, blessings please, Amen.*

God is often my back-up plan, instead of Planner of My Life.

Why do I always come to Him last instead of first? Maybe because I know He will always be there. Maybe because I believe that He will never leave me no matter what. Maybe because I know that if all else fails, He will never fail.

As a devoted media student, it is my responsibility to know what's going on with the world. If you don't know yet, 100 percent of us are paid to read everything. When we don't know about something, we find out. We ask questions. We seek experts.

But at the end of the day I realize that there will always be one more bit of information to absorb. What's the consequence of missing one? Nothing. And yet most of us never miss a single update from our friends on Facebook.

Sometimes I wonder if technology is to blame.

What is it about the virtual world – about Facebook, Twitter, 9GAG, YouTube, or even online magazines that hook us to the point of abandoning everything else? Why do we consciously sit in front of our computers for six hours after school or work every day, knowing that it isn't doing anything for our personal growth?

It is so easy to miss a week's worth of devotion to God when we live our lives that way, chasing after information.

Our technology does influence our actions, I believe, but the real cause lies with our own priorities and values.

If consulting God first is not in our calendar, even without the virtual world, consulting God will not be the first thing that comes to our mind. We will simply find other things to tend first.

I am learning that if I want to make my future a priority, if I want to pray without distraction and discern His will, it is time I remove the distractions.

So when another person asks me about what I want to do after graduation, I'll probably still say that I have no idea. But this time I'll say it with confidence because I know God will unfold my path one step at a time. Because I've been praying about it. Because I'm learning to come to Him first.

What does it mean to put God first?

[Had over than 710 Facebook likes and 170 tweets by February 2014]

Publication : Relevant Magazine

Published Date : www.relevantmagazine.com/god/practical-faith/what-does-it-mean-put-god-first-0

URL : August 9, 2012

It's a cliché we hear all the time, but what would it look like if we actually did it?

Imagine a typical day for a twentysomething Christian. She wakes up to her ringtone alarm, checks her email and notifications and hits *snooze*. She utters a one-minute prayer to cover all her bases—thank You, bless this, ask for that, amen—and rushes to the shower.

By 9 a.m., she's clocked into work at the office or heading to class, praying for the weekend to come sooner. During lunchtime, she meets with her friends while trying to steal some time to look at Facebook.

And from then until she hits the pillow, her day is filled with meeting deadlines, doing chores and errands and generally trying to keep on top of things before another day is over.

Sound familiar?

Life is not easy for today's generation. There's too little time and too many tasks. We need to study, work, keep up on house chores, socialize and relax at the same time.

The question is, where should we put God in the equation?

As Christians, we know at a head level that God should take first priority in our lives. He comes first, and everything else is secondary. And even thinking of Christ as a "priority" doesn't come close to the reality that He is King—over every detail of our daily lives. Yet how often is He our waking thought each morning? How often do we reach for our phones instead?

The virtual world is alluring. It claims to offer everything: pleasure, entertainment, education, socialization and even spiritual growth. At some point, though, we enter into information overload.

Everyone's trying, begging, fighting or pleading to get just 10 seconds of our attention, promising a valuable product, service or information in return.

Yet while each of these input channels fights for our attention in our overworked brains, so does God. But unlike them, God doesn't remind us of His presence with an ad or a convenient notification. He's always there for us, but we have to decide to come to Him.

While technology has brought humanity to the next level, it has also altered our values. Emails and texts make our prayer lives more distracted. Endless facts and data make us more skeptical of truth. And when you can just pick up the phone and talk to a loved one in an instant, what's the use of coming to God first?

In a fast-moving world, what grabs our attention is that which is faster, better and brighter. We are accustomed to instant answers and results. We are masters at multi-tasking, trying to get everything done in our own grand timing.

Why is it that it's only when something's gone wrong—or there's nothing else to do—that we finally turn to God?

We might then wait for His answers, but not for long. Unconsciously, we give Him a deadline. It's difficult for us to put our faster-is-better mentality on hold while we wait for God's guidance. The best time to do anything is now, so why wait—right?

More often, we expect God to mold into our own lives and schedules. It's no longer us who need to adapt to His ways—it's Him who needs to adapt to ours, we think.

The truth is, the virtual world would do just fine without you. But you would not do just fine without God. There will always be one more snippet of information to absorb online. But are there really harsh consequences for missing those updates? If we're honest with ourselves, sometimes it's easier to miss a week's worth of devotions, of time spent checking in with our heavenly Father and listening for His voice and guidance.

The digital world has enough news and opportunities to get anyone hooked. And it can be a great and wonderful thing within proper boundaries. But even when it's not, we can't blame technology for our spiritual neglect. If consulting God first is not in our daily agenda, even without Facebook and YouTube, we will simply find other things to tend first.

Perhaps it's time we readjust our faith from turning to God when it's convenient to recovering our lost fear of the Lord. We show Him we don't fear Him every time we prioritize other things first.

So, how do we recover a lost fear of the Lord? By seeking Him. By intentionally pursuing Him first in our daily actions—from the moment our alarm goes off until we fall asleep again. By praying and asking for His guidance not only when things go wrong, but on every occasion. By encountering Him through His Word and listening to how He wants us to live it every day.

God is not a back-up plan but the Planner of life itself. And as we slowly change our daily habits to recognize this, we will slowly reshape our priorities and recharge our faith.

A World without Mothers

Publication : OZIP Magazine, May 2012, issue 32

Published Date : May 2012

Published on [OZIP](#) (Indonesian magazine based in Melbourne) on May 2012, issue 32 edition.

During this time of the year, we are always reminded to appreciate and honour our mothers, to buy some flowers on the way home, or to give her some chocolates.

On this day, we might have some family gathering, or call our mothers from overseas, thanking her for what she has done and telling her that we love her.

Yet it's done as if we fail to appreciate her for the other 364 days of the year.

Mother, the woman who has given birth to us, may be our closest person, or she may be the most distant. She may be protective and strict, or she may be lenient and submissive to her children's demands. Yet she is a mother.

But what is a mother?

JK Rowling believes that a mother's love can make her child cheat death. Abraham Lincoln believes that great men are born from great mothers. Barney Stinson realises that a hell of a mother can even fill the gap of not having a father. Forrest Gump knows that he succeeds because of her mother's teaching.

So let's consider another question. What would it be like, a world without mothers?

Here's our day-trip towards another world, a world where no mothers exist.

When we go out to have our breakfast, the café would be packed with women in their 30s and 40s, but oddly, there are no prams to be found. They are just women who give birth to their children yet do not tend to their children's needs, dropping their toddlers on a child care and having fun with their girlfriends.

After we are finished with our morning coffee, we walk to the city and have some sightseeing at the skyscrapers, only to realise that there are so many professional looking women entering each of the buildings. They all are pursuing their dream jobs and there's no way that they are willing to give up all that to become a full-time stay-at-home Mom.

We then take a stroll along the park. Again, we see no prams around, and children were having soccer competition with no one's watching them. No one is cheering when the children score a goal. It is just an oddly quiet day, with the sound of the coach's whistle piercing our ears.

After lunch, we visit a local school nearby, and we see aggressiveness, violence, and troubles among the kids. No one has ever known what it feels to be cared and to be loved, and no one has a secured attachment with their mothers. The teachers are seen on the edge of giving up.

Looking at the time, we decide to give a visit to the hospital, a place that is always full of patients, but oddly no visitors. The neonatal clinic is full of babies who are struggling to breathe, born prematurely or with a defect. But there are no mothers who try to cuddle their newborn babies, or give that radiant smile when she heard the child's first cry.

After a while, we make our way to the psychology clinic. Most teenagers there are anorexic, depressed, and having suicidal problems.

Just before it gets dark, we head home wondering, because we always thought that a world without mothers means there's no one to nag you to go to bed when it's past midnight. No one is there to tell you what to do, when to do it, and how to actually properly do the stuff.

No one is screaming to wake you up in the morning, or frantically trying to tell you to wash your face before going to bed. No one will tell you to practice your piano lessons. No one is there to treat you like a 10-year-old when you're 25 just because in her eyes, you will be forever young.

But then, we remember looking at those motherless children's hollow eyes, and we realise that with all those freedom, it also means there's no breakfast in bed when you're sick. There will be no hug after getting bullied in school during the second grade. We will hear no bedtime stories, and we will find no cooked dishes and cleaned apartment after trying hard to survive our first year in uni. We realise that there will be no one to turn to when all else fails. And we would know no love.

So what would it be, a world without mothers?

Certainly, Harry Potter would not even be alive. Abraham Lincoln would never become president, let alone a president who ended slavery. And Barney Stinson? He may be a more legen-wait for it-dary character than he already is, which may actually be a negative thing. Ted Mosby wouldn't be telling his children on how he met their mother, and Tom Hanks would never win Oscar for being Forrest Gump.

And we just simply would not exist.

Happy Mother's Day.

Gen (wh)Y: saving the lost generation

Publication : Upstart Magazine

Published Date : March 15, 2012

URL : <http://www.upstart.net.au/2012/03/15/gen-why-saving-the-lost-generation/>

As Gen Y kids will soon become adults; they will either be saviours of the world, or the lost generation. Marcella Purnama reflects on life as a Gen Y-er.

This is the great Gen Y: those who are born during 1984-2002. We are the target of marketing, the pioneers of embracing new technologies, and according to [Dr. Tim Elmore](#), the founder and president of [Growing Leaders](#), we are the ['Millennial' generation](#).

We are the ones who do not hold onto the idealism of our parents. Instead, we make our own life paradigm, setting our own value systems, and imposing them on our working style. These features make us unique, but they are either destroying us or being our trump cards.

And here is why.

Life Paradigm: 'I will change the world'.

Being born right in the middle of the Gen Y period, I grew up with the paradigm that something will always be wrong with the world. We have learned our history: about Hitler and racism, about the apartheid politics in the West, about poverty in India, about September 11 and terrorism.

We are taught this simple idealism that the world is broken, and we can fix it. In fact, we should fix it.

Countless times we are reminded that 'one man can make a difference', that we should 'be the change we want to see in this world'.

And we believe it, for we grew up witnessing the success tales: from Thomas Alpha Edison who failed 999 times, to Steve Jobs who is said to be the father of the 'third apple that changes the world'. We are told that Mark 'Facebook' Zuckerberg and Bill 'Microsoft' Gates used to be nobodies, and that nobodies like us, can one day be somebody.

Value Systems: 'See what works for me'.

What I know of myself is this: we do not adjust ourselves to go out into the world; we adjust the world to fit to ourselves.

We want our lectures and tutorial hours to be flexible; we want to call in sick for work because it's raining.

Why?

Because we have been taught that we are number one; we grew up with the constant praise from teachers and parents that say that we are.

Instead of, 'It's good, but I know you can do better', people will say, 'That is great, I am so proud of you!'.

It's a double-edged sword.

Career / Working Style: 'Must suit / interest me'.

We believe that our passion can make us rich overnight by watching too many talent shows, from *American Idol* to *Britain's Got Talent* and *MasterChef Australia*. We also believe that instant stardom on YouTube will make us famous – think about Justin Bieber.

But we are not taught that sometimes passion wears out, that passion alone is not enough. We are not taught of the real working life, and we demand instant success.

Sometimes, we change jobs as often as we change clothes.

Of course, every generation before us might have held the same life paradigm. Youth are always the ones who can undo unresolved tensions of the past, to make the world better. But with Gen Y's values, attitudes, and lifestyles, we still have our own pros and cons.

We are the visionaries; we grasp new changes, new ideas quickly, and we will think out of the box.

We are exceptionally good at multitasking, for we have been trained well: doing homework while watching television, or opening multiple tabs of Facebook, Twitter, university schedules, and Microsoft Word to finish our essays.

We are the high achievers – instead of doing our best, we are taught to be the best: why come second, if we can be first?

Unfortunately, we are thought of as spoiled and conceited; and we think of our generation too highly, think of ourselves too greatly.

We are cliquish; we may have seven hundred Facebook friends and a thousand Twitter followers, but we have little true friends.

We can change the world, but sometimes it's not for the sake of the world. It's for the sake of our pride, our good names, and our thirst of being someone.

We are unstable; we are too used to changes, and at times we do not have the commitment in jobs, or worse, relationships.

And sadly, I am perfect living proof that Gen Y pressures work to the extreme. Without realising it, I have been influenced by every paradigm.

Our upbringing might make us believe in these values, however, the choice to keep holding onto them or not, still lies entirely in our hand.

[Marcella Purnama](#) is journalist at [Meld Magazine](#), and a Bachelor of Arts (Psychology and Media and Communication) student at Melbourne University. You can read more of her writing on her [blog](#), and follow her on Twitter: [@MarcellaPurnama](#).

Us vs. them

Publication : Farrago

Published Date : May 17, 2012

URL : <http://union.unimelb.edu.au/farrago/my-adopted-home/us-vs-them>

Every time we international students walk into a tutorial, we instinctively walk to the table that has other international students. When we hang out, we usually hang out with international students. But why does this segregation happen?

Although not all people live by this formula, and certainly many international students are able to befriend the opposite side of the equation, the majority is not really comfortable in doing so. I, for one, always see a barrier between international students and the locals, separating us from them.

Recently, I started my internship. 90% of my colleagues are locals. I feel totally exposed. I'm the only one with black hair, small eyes—definitely all-out Asian. I am way out of my comfort zone.

I don't get the jokes they make. I don't know what they are talking about. I stutter, trying to find the right words to tell a story, and that really hinders communication.

But despite all that, they welcome me with open arms, throwing me an afternoon tea party on my birthday and giving me a birthday card signed by my colleagues.

However, I know that racism occurs. Every day. I may not be the one experiencing it, but there's no doubt that it happens.

Last month, we international students trembled upon hearing the news that Chinese students got beaten up in Sydney. Too many people watched them being robbed and assaulted without offering any help. Then we came to the horrifying question, "What if it happens to me?"

We began to wonder, "Does Australia really welcome us with open arms?"

Racism. We know it exists, yet we act as if it doesn't.

I wonder if the locals hate us, just like any person would if their peaceful country was suddenly flooded with foreigners. I wonder if they look down on us, or think of us differently.

After living in Melbourne for more than two years and having some local friends, I gather up my courage to ask one of them this question, "What do you think of foreigners? Are people being racist towards us, or...?"

And she replies, "Well, I can't speak for all people, but there is definitely racism. It depends on the person."

Of course we know that it exists. We pay 10 times the university fee, double the public transport fee, get offered less jobs, have smaller wages, and sometimes we have to endure being in tutorials whose tutors show discrimination. We know—we just act as if we don't.

But the truth is, we love Australia. We respect the locals. We enjoy the relaxed culture. We try hard to master the English language, and we try hard to get out of our comfort zone and go all out in exploring Melbourne.

We, in a sense, want to be welcomed, too.

Some of my friends' best friends are locals, and I know in my heart that we can get along—more than just petty talks in tutorials, asking 'how was your weekend' and 'how's your assignment going?'

Maybe one day, international students will feel like they belong here, without needing to fear for their safety.

Maybe one day, it won't be 'us or them'.

A- is an Asian F

Publication : Farrago

Published Date : April 30, 2012

URL : <http://union.unimelb.edu.au/farrago/my-adopted-home/a-is-an-asian-f>

**You speak Glee? I know you know this infamous quote already. You don't speak Glee?
It's okay, I know you know this prognosis already.**

Symptoms:

Do you love to compare your grades with those of others?

Do you always want to know what others scored on that test?

Would you be devastated for a month if you didn't pass a test?

When you get an A- for supposedly A-graded subjects, do you consider it a fail?

Do you dislike sharing your knowledge with your peers, worrying that they might end up getting higher grades than you?

Do your parents have high expectations of you in terms of grades?

If you are generating these symptoms, here's the diagnosis. It's likely that you are (but not limited to being) Asian. Bias and generalisations aside, it is a widely known norm that Asians are more prone to being grade conscious, rather than excellence conscious. We learn not for the joy of studying, but to pass a test, and pass it successfully. Why? Is it a cultural thing, perhaps, or an individual thing?

As an Asian, I have experienced every symptom listed above. In high school, I loved to compare my grades with others. I would actually need to know what others scored on that test, just so I knew where I was standing compared to them. I have never failed a test, but I got a red mark once, and I was devastated for a month, crying for an hour while talking on the phone with my older sister who was overseas at that time.

When I received good marks, but I thought I could have done better, I would consider it a failure. When I knew something extra, I tended to keep it to myself unless asked, because I was just afraid that the one I told would ace and I would come home in despair. And my parents? They sure have high expectations, but in my case I don't think it's them who are more grade-conscious. I think it's me.

Coming to uni for the first time was a grade-shocking time because hey, I used to be a good student, and suddenly it was damn hard just to get a borderline H2A. I was so used to good grades that the first time I received 46% for my assignment, I broke a plate (no), ate a whole bucket of ice-cream (no), and stayed out karaoke-ing all night (not really).

Well, okay, I imagined I was doing these things, but in fact I just went home and stared blankly at my papers, and after two hours of emotional distress I turned on the TV, and watched every chick flick movie in my hard disk. This camouflaged my tears perfectly.

When studying for exams, I listened to the song 'Win' by Brian McKnight over and over again, reassuring myself that "I'll never give up," and that "I'm gonna win" over these 120 multiple choice

questions, 9 short answers, and 3 essay questions that were attacking me from every angle possible. This was war. But halfway through my degree (in my second year, towards the end of my first semester), I have finally made peace with grades. Common sense kicked in when I watched the Bollywood movie '3 Idiots'. This is my favourite quote from that movie:

"Most of us went to college just for a degree. No degree meant no plum job, no pretty wife, no credit card, no social status. But none of this mattered to him, he was in college for the joy of learning, he never cared if he was first or last."

As if it was made for me, the movie specifically tells me to "pursue excellence, and success will follow".

I have never pursued excellence. I have always pursued that certificate of excellence. But even when common sense finally kicked in, it was quite a process for me to change my values and the paradigms that I have lived for the past 18 years. It still is.

Why do Asians tend to be more competitive? A cultural thing, perhaps, but you do have a choice. You can either look at your grades as an Asian F, or just to be happy with an A- or whatever grades you have, knowing that you have done your best.

Tutorial 101

Publication : Farrago

Published Date : April 29, 2012

URL : <http://union.unimelb.edu.au/farrago/my-adopted-home/tutorial-101>

It was Friday, 9am. I was a first year student, in the first week of my first semester. I held the university map and studied it like the Bible, and brought four different subject guides to every class. So what could possibly be a worse way to enter your first tutorial? Oh yeah, being the only Asian in the room.

The subject of my first tute was 'From Homer to Hollywood', and frankly, I only took this subject because it was compulsory for Arts student. And having the word 'Hollywood' made me thought that it would be an interesting subject. Well, it turned out to only be half-interesting, but that's a different story.

So imagine me, a 17-year-old girl who has never spoken in English for more than ten minutes, let alone for a full one hour, being stuck in between another 10 or so Westerners.

It was a nightmare.

Luckily, my other tutorial classes were better. Well, at least, I was not the only Asian-looking girl in class. There were some ABCs, and that also counted, right? Wrong. The ABCs are Westerners in different skins. They may look like Asians, but they have Western heart and soul, plus a very good Western tongue.

So here's the million dollar question: what's so hard about speaking up in tutorial? Well, as an international student, sadly English is not my cup of tea, and I need to do constant translation in order to utter a seven-word sentence.

Well, despite all efforts to make international students speak in class, we are still not that keen.

During my first year, it took me double the effort to actually listen to the tutors, let alone to speak up my opinions. Others need to listen, to think and to speak. I need to listen, to translate, to think, to translate back, to grammatically check the words that I'd like to say, and to speak. So I did what I do best – I diminished my work by not asking questions or saying comments in class.

In sum, here are my seven good reasons of why international students don't really want to talk in tutorials:

1. Because English is not our first language, and as I said, it is hard to even speak in broken English, let alone speaking in proper English for others to understand.
2. And when you do want to talk, you start rehearsing the sentence about three times before you actually say them. By the time you finished rehearsing, another student has spoken up about something else and your momentum is gone with the wind.
3. Frankly speaking, it is quite embarrassing if people ask you for the third time of what you are trying to say.

4. Because it isn't our (or specifically saying, my) culture. My culture says to listen to the nice teacher and to believe in him – we are not really taught to dispute or to have a debate of what being taught. Blunt memorisation is our best friend.
5. Laziness – we don't really see the point of talking in tutorials. Not commenting on certain things doesn't mean that we lack the understanding of the subject. And hey, we still got decent marks.
6. Because we are way too much comfortable in our own skins. Speaking our own languages with people who share the same culture is our heaven, and one thing that most people hate is getting out of their comfort zones. That's why we tend to sit in groups in tutorials. That's why we have arranged to be in the same tutorial class beforehand. We are interdependent beings, not independent ones.
7. Because we literally don't have anything to say.

And what do my international friends think? They pretty much share the same thoughts. Some of us even have that 'I only need to fill the attendance thingy in tutorials' attitude.

Okay, I admit that not speaking up does make you invisible. For four straight semesters, not even a single tutor remembers my name (well, maybe one tutor does remember me). They mispronounce my name every single week (yes, it's Mar-sel-la, not Mar-khel-la or Mar-chel-la). When addressing me, they don't call my name, instead, they have one of those blank looks and politely use their hand gesture to indicate that they want me to answer the next question. What a sight.

Two Australian academics, Jeremy Novak, a lecturer with the South Cross Business School, and Michael Cowling, from Central Queensland University, have found that Twitter could actually help shy international students to speak up. Clearly, not speaking up in tutorials has a bit of negative stigma; it is an issue that needs to be addressed – something to be helped, or fixed even.

But not speaking up in tutorials doesn't necessarily mean that you are not able to practice English. You can do this with your other friends who have different nationalities. And it doesn't mean that you're academically disadvantaged either (except for that 5% class participation mark).

Rather, not speaking up just makes you stay at a stagnant point on which disables you to go to the next level. At least, that's what happens to me, and I know that if I want to upgrade my personal skills, I actually need to get myself into that vulnerable state and practice.

Should international students be forced to speak up in tutorials? Maybe. Maybe not. Of course each student has a different case – some actually could talk but wouldn't, others would like to talk but couldn't, while the group that I'm usually in is would like to talk but don't actually have anything to say. Whatever it is, encouraging students to speak up is the best people can do, but I believe the change needs to come from within. Students have to understand why they need to speak up in tutorials.

I always think of speaking up as a plus point for it builds your confidence, and not doing so is not necessarily a minus point. If you want to challenge yourself, speaking up will be a very great asset when you go into the workforce. After all, you are the one who needs to approach the employers, and not the other way around.

Now, it feels like home

Publication : Farrago

Published Date : March 11, 2012

URL : <http://union.unimelb.edu.au/farrago/my-adopted-home/now-it-feels-like-home>

A new international student muttered this question to the girl in the mirror one day, “When will it start feeling like home?”

I could see it in her eyes – fear of the new life, but there was a spark of excitement as well. She was afraid that she would never make friends – that she would never get through the feeling of homesickness.

Yet two years later she muttered another question, “When did it start feeling like home?” And she smiled.

That first day was scary; that first attempt to talk to someone was nerve-racking. What could be more challenging than speaking broken English and living a thousand miles from home. I thought to myself.

Yet I survived, and I not only survived, I have lived a beautiful life.

After those first few weeks, soon enough you will discover how to do your housekeeping stuff. From the 101 of cooking – that oil combined with water will splash badly – to getting red stains on your white shirt because you just throw all your clothes into the same washing basket.

And yes, you will know the trick of how to skip classes and still be able to get a pass, how to choose which tutorials to skip, how to get more days off, and how to meet the bare minimum requirement for attendance.

Of course, it will take some time until you finally skip your first class. If you are a straight A student, I'd say a couple of months. If you were like me (I skipped my O-week and all my classes on the first week – well, I had a not-getting-my-visa-on-time issue), I'd say three weeks tops.

But let me tell you this from the start: homesickness is inevitable – especially during those lonely weekend nights when you are fed up with watching DVDs alone with some instant noodles. Or when you have just received a bad score on a test. However, immunity is achievable. You just have to practice.

And you will make new friends; I can assure you that. I remember that feeling – the feeling when I tried to find seats during busy lunchtime at the Union House, with no company at all. After a week I gave up and ate my lunch alone somewhere else – somewhere less obvious.

Before long I was burying myself in the library, finding excuses in my unfinished assignments, when in fact I didn't want to be seen eating lunch alone, so I preferred having lunch with my laptop. But yes, in time, one person will ask you for lunch, and suddenly, you'd feel at home.

Trust me, you'll find new friends.

A third of you may even continue your studies to Masters or PhDs, and finally move to Melbourne permanently.

In time, you will even master how to fare evade without getting caught (yes, I did it a couple of times, being a poor student who prefers the money to be used buying coffee instead of paying the extremely expensive full fare), and you will know which days are the cheapest to go to the cinema.

You will be a master of time – when to wake up, which train schedule to take, when to run for a tram, or how to arrive at classes just two minutes after they start.

Sure, you'll still miss your mom's cooking, and the smell of your old bed in your home for more than 17 years. But one day when you're home, eating your mom's special dish and sleeping on your own bed, you'll miss your small apartment and the smell of fresh roasted coffee in the morning.

I know, I've been there.

Change is always scary, yet it is inevitable. The sooner you make peace with it, the sooner you can taste the best of both lives.

It's uni life in Melbourne, and if you are going to spend the next three (or even more) years here, oh yes, you'll be able to call Melbourne your adopted home. Not necessarily replacing your own, but as parents can love their children perfectly instead of giving a divided love, you can also have two homes and feel connected to both.

One day, you'll get to the stage when you're in Melbourne, and you'll feel like home.

Life, on its own terms. Srsly

Publication : The Naked Listener Blog

Published Date : April 6, 2011

URL : <http://thenakedlistener.wordpress.com/2011/06/04/marcella-purnama-life/>

IN THIS SPECIAL GUESTPOST, **Marcella Purnama** of Melbourne, Australia, talks about the various **received wisdom we get during our education** — that they might not have been received, or even wise, unless we take pains to look how our ideas about education fit in with Life.

Marcella's views make quite a lot of sense, even if not necessarily even similar to those of The Naked Listener, whose ideas are considerably naughtier or even frivolous. The main point is that Marcella has given us a tight summary, and a nicely done one too. Figure out your own position or tolerance in all this.

The Naked Listener's Weblog is delighted to reproduce Marcella's full article below. Her article originally appeared on 18 August 2010 on her own blog.

*

BEING EXPOSED TO MANY SUBJECTS during my education (**Science, Arts, and Business**), I finally figure out what is wrong with all these three streams. During my high school years I was a Science person, and now in my tertiary study I am pursuing an undergraduate degree in Arts, with a breadth subject in Business. Thus, confronted with many different ideologies and theories, I conclude that there is something really wrong with life and these educations. Well, at least, some parts of them.

The problem with SCIENCE

Most of you will agree with me: science is a stream of education that focuses on facts, researches, proofs, and in absolute, indisputable truths. Science bombards us with a series of theories that we need to memorise and just 'take it as it is.' We are forced to swallow the gospel that says anything which can be verified through scientific means are the only reality. It may even hinder our critical thinking as we just take things for granted. Thus, it disables us to have *faith*. Even in psychology, you may even argue that "There is no such thing as love." Moreover, believe it or not, most people do not even believe that they have a 'consciousness,' or 'being,' the one you may call your 'heart and soul' —yourself.

In one sentence, I believe that: Science tries so hard to make definitions out of life, and misses life altogether.

The problem with ARTS

When I first entered this degree, I thought that Arts subjects will enable us to look at life in a different perspective. Yes, it does look at life in a different point of view, but it is even more complicated way of viewing. Let me say this: Arts complicates the already complicated things. It even complicates the simple things. In this area, you are propelled with critical thinking, saying that everything is true, you only need

reasons and evidences to back you up. To some extent this critical thinking is good, we ARE required to give reasonings to things that happened, and actively make judgments and take actions out of it.

However, they think too much that I come to the conclusion that they have forgotten the most important thing: the action. But the next crucial thing is: Arts takes too much time in critical thinking and in the end it comes to the holy quote of all things are the truth, if only you have reasons to support you. Thus, this justifies all people's actions — as long as their motives are logical.

Put it in one sentence: Arts pushes itself so hard to critically think and reflect about life, and in the end misses life altogether.

The problem with BUSINESS

Business is the stream that may be seen as 'advantageous.' Well, we make money out of it. But let me put it this way: Business takes the two streams (Science and Arts), exploits them, and turns them into money-making machines. Business makes people actively CONSUME things — either products or services. They make people assume that these so-called 'things' (products, services, etc) are the focus of 'life.'

So in one sentence: Business exploits life, and in the end it misses life altogether.

Maybe this is why I tend to go with Hospitality, because at least it provides people with satisfaction and it strives to provide the best quality of service towards the others, and gives them unforgettable moments that may last a lifetime. I guess the most important thing in life (aside from God), is loving others, right? If we can impact other people's lives, wouldn't it be great?

I am not saying that these educations — Science, Arts, and Business — are bad. They are good. They are all good. But if we misplaced them as the focus of our lives — we will miss life altogether.

But hey — *what is life?*

Dictionary defines it as: (1) *the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity, and continual change preceding death.* or (2) *the period between the birth and death of a living thing.*

Thus, what is the most important thing in life?

Christians will say that the most important thing in life is God, and the need to tell others about salvation. Others will argue that it is life itself — to do whatever you want to do, to think whatever you want to think — to enjoy every single thing that is pleasurable to human beings. Another will propose that it is love, because life without love is no life at all. And there are many other views regarding this. I believe this is a tough question, which may not have its concrete answers until now.

So let's take to the opposite of life: death.

Death is an easy task; life is a difficult one. Death is the end; life is the beginning. People used to say these things but what is death? Death is the period when we stop living, that's for sure. And then we come to this question: *what do you want to achieve in your life before it ends?* When your time is up, will you remember all those achievements that you have, all those theories you made, all those technology inventions that you may have introduced to the world? I believe the thing that matter when you have reached this phase is: the people. Keep aside Christianity for a moment, the people matter. How many people will be standing there in front of your coffin, saying how much your life has impacted theirs? How

many people, with tears in their eyes and smile on their faces, saying, "Thank you, for living your life. You make me live mine"? *How many people have you brought to the Lord?*

I walked into my Arts subject tutorial today and I saw so many people thinking and keep thinking and just thinking — reflecting on the globalisation that is happening and what the past has said about that, what the present will be doing, and what are the future prospects of the world if we continue progressing this way. Well, it may be essential (I say, "may be"), but somehow I just believe that all these thinkers (including me) have missed life in one point or another.

This is the problem with life: People are too busy filling their lives with all other things other than life itself and misses life altogether. I do not say that all these people (from science, arts, business — all those politicians, scientists, artists, doctors, poets, and blah) miss life. But most people try so hard to focus on all these little insignificant details (compared to love, people, family, friendship, and of course — GOD) so that they may miss life. It is a common cliché to "live our lives to the fullest." But only a few defined what a "full life" is. A lot of people talk about this, a lot of people make this their lives' motto; only a few are actually living it.

In the end I want to draw on Jesus. I believe that I will be INSANE if I do not know Him. In some ways, Christianity keeps me on a sane level. When we are confronted with many beliefs, ideologies, ideas, principles, or doctrines, we may have all these endless possible thoughts, and end up overloading our brains (like what I did today). But when I reflect on Christianity, Jesus, and the Bible, I know that I have clear boundaries, a guide on life about the things that I need to do and not to do. The things that I can do and cannot do. The things that I should be doing and not be doing. About life. About what is important in life. About everything we need to know about life.

Life is God.

Without God, there will be no life.

He is the provider of life, and we live for Him.

People have lived pursuing earthly goals. They forgot that the eternity is the one that matters. Live for eternity.

Conclusively, Science tries so hard to make definitions out of life; Arts pushes itself so hard to critically think and reflect about life; Business exploits life — and in the end they miss life altogether. Why do we make things so complicated? Make it simple: Life is about you and me. Life is about the people — the love and interaction between humans. Life does not need much definition; life does not need to be critically thought all the time so that you miss out the actions; life does not need to be exploited. Life needs love. And love is God, and God is love. Well, formulaically, life = GOD! It is as simple as that ;)

Life is simple. Humans are the ones who complicate the simple things. We are curious creatures, that's for sure. But let us be curious about life! Most people are not!

'Only a life lived for others is a life worth while.' — Albert Einstein

*

Marcella Purnama describes herself as "female, a dreamer." She is a Melbourne University student reading psychology and media and communications, and also currently a magazine intern. She runs two blogs of her own: [A Life Review](#) and [Marcella Purnama: a life in Net Communication](#).

Indonesia Mengglobal

Introduction

Marcella Purnama is the Australian Regional Editor at Indonesia Mengglobal. She joins the organisation from April 2013 until present.

In 2014, she steps up to become the Chief Editor. Her responsibilities include publishing three articles monthly, as well as overseeing the day-to-day operation and mentoring three other editors.

Website : marcellapurnama.com
Portfolio : marcellapurnama.com/portfolio
LinkedIn : [linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761](https://www.linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761)
Twitter : twitter.com/MarcellaPurnama
Facebook : facebook.com/mp.writer

*

About Indonesia Mengglobal

"Indonesia Mengglobal" attempts to connect students curious about global education with Indonesian students and alumni in those universities. IM shares the experience of students in applying and studying abroad, while trying to support prospective students in their application process. IM have published articles about higher education from many regions, including America, Asia, Australia, and Europe.

To find out more about Indonesia Mengglobal, please visit www.indonesiamengglobal.com.

Life as an ex-international student

Published Date : January 7, 2014

URL : <http://indonesiamengglobal.com/2014/01/life-as-an-ex-international-student/>

Moving overseas to study was hard. When we first packed our bags and moved halfway across the world, we ended up trying to adjust to a whole new life altogether. And living a new life wasn't easy.

Over time, though, we learned to enjoy it. We learned to laugh, make friends, and pull countless all-nighters for the sake of finishing those assignments. But suddenly it was graduation time, and we had to say goodbye to everything we've built for the past three years.

Like many other international students, perhaps you have chosen to go back home to Indonesia as well. You are about to continue to live a life you have left years ago. Then you realise that now you have parents to answer to, curfew to follow, and no friends to hang out with.

Sometimes, moving back home was harder.

Here are three tips to once again call your hometown 'home'.

1. Back to making friends

Remember your first year of university on which you know no one and live in the middle of nowhere? Well, you're there again. At this moment your old friends have had their own circles of friends, and your new friends are scattered in five different continents. Odds are you have one or two other university classmate who went home for good with you, but odds are you are not going to hang out with them that often either.

It's time to make new friends and discover new communities. When one of your old friends asks you to go out with their new friends, go. When one of your new friends asks you to have lunch, go. If you keep declining those invitations because of: a) "I'm so tired all the time," or b) "Adjusting to working life is hard," or c) "I just don't feel like going back to that square one once again," well, one year later you'll find yourself friendless in your own hometown. True story.

2. Negotiation is the best way to win the war

A life overseas pretty much equals to freedom. You are free to set your own schedule to sleep, eat, do assignments, study, go home, or go out. If you're back once again at the house of your parents, odds are the rules before you went overseas are applied once again. Now at your 20s, you have curfews to be home before 11 pm. You are not supposed to watch TV on the couch for three consecutive hours anymore. And most of all, you are not supposed to leave dishes unwashed on the sink. Oh yes, there is no such thing as a dishwasher.

If that's the case, a life back home can feel like being in prison.

Talk to your parents about parents-children life balance. Have lunch with them on Sundays but get your Saturdays free to go out with your friends. Be responsible about what you're doing and they'll start treating you as adults.

3. Remember: It's okay to make mistakes

Many graduates feel like they are not living the lives they are supposed to live. Perhaps they feel disappointed of not being able to secure better jobs. Others feel a little bit depressed as they have become so attached to the lives they have built overseas. If you are one of them, I just want to tell you that it's okay to make mistakes. Moving back home may or may not be the right decision, but despite all, it will become an experience on which you'll learn new things.

Remember, the best learning always comes when you are outside your comfort zone.

Returning to a life back home may not be your first choice, but it can be a great one if you choose to believe it.

5 life tips in studying abroad

Published Date : October 17, 2013

URL : <http://indonesiamengglobal.com/2013/10/5-life-tips-in-studying-abroad/>

Every now and then we find our friends say, "I want to study overseas." I bet it's not all because of the university, the degrees, and the subjects. I bet it's also for the sheer experience of living abroad.

Set aside the troubles of applying for scholarship, choosing a degree, finding the right university, and a whole other bucket of issues related to your studies. There is suddenly another fear that creeps in slowly, unanticipated, as before there was only space for excitement.

The fear of change.

We have spent our childhood and teenage years in Indonesia. We have our parents to support us no matter what. We have forged countless friendship and built a strong community surrounding our little haven.

Studying overseas means we need to be independent. We are going to be alone, trying to fluently speak another language rather than our mother tongue. We will be faced with a new set of challenges and gained a whole different set of experience.

Here are some tips to help you make the transition in living abroad:

1. Attend the pre-departure briefing sessions

Most universities hold one or two sessions to discuss about the important things you need to know about living in your country of choice. This includes how to find accommodation, how to use the public transport system, and where to go for help in case you need it.

I know, it's tempting to just skip this one. But this is the first best stop to get to know your future home for the next three years.

2. Join the overseas communities

Odds are your university of choice will have something like Indonesian Students Association or Overseas Students Association. Not only they are good first points to get to know others, they can also teach you about how to make the most out of your university career.

3. Make use of university academic advisors

When I first arrived in Melbourne, I couldn't write and converse in decent English until the end of my second semester. Truth is, studying English in your home country and studying English in a place where it's used as the mother tongue is not only challenging, it's difficult.

Most universities offer help to international students to improve our English language, including stuffs that are related to our studies. Of course, they will not be doing spelling/grammar check for your assignments, but they can take a look at your essays and check if the style, flow, and key messages are in place, offering invaluable advices to how the marking system commenced in that particular subject.

4. Get your chin up, smile, and say hello

I can't emphasise enough the importance of making friends. I spent my first semester in university eating lunch alone with my laptop, and trust me, it was not a good experience. I was shy and not confident of my English skills, and ended up burying myself in the library with the excuse of doing assignments.

When you're far away from your family, your friends become your family. And if there's something better than all the good coffees (I love caffeine) you can get, it's the company to drink that good coffee with.

5. Get an intensive course in cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry

One month before your departure is the golden opportunity to ask your Mom about how to clean the kitchen, how to cook decent meals, and how to do laundry properly. Learn the difference between one detergent and the other, which meat to go with what sauce, and how to disassemble the stove in order to clean it. These are the key skills to survive, and not only to survive, but to live well.

Studying overseas is not merely about studying. It's also about living to the fullest. It might be uncomfortable at first, but the whole experience is worth it!

You've graduated. So what's next?

Published Date : August 27, 2013

URL : <http://indonesiamengglobal.com/2013/08/youve-graduated-so-whats-next/>

So you've finished your undergrad degree. You have earned every inch of that certificate declaring that you are the Bachelor of Something-Great-That-Hopefully-Will-Land-You-A-Great-Job-Soon. Your parents have bought you flowers on your graduation day. You have thrown that hat with all your might and gotten that awesome picture taken for your profile picture on Facebook.

You've graduated. So what's next?

Like every other Bachelor's degree holder, I've been struggling with the 'what's next' question for months during my graduation period. I have graduated from Bachelor of Arts in the University of Melbourne, Australia, in December 2012. Back then, there were too many options on what to do next after graduation. I could do Honours in Psychology, Master in Journalism, or go back home to Jakarta, Indonesia and try to find work.

Well yes, it's either further studies or work, but sadly it's not that black and white.

My parents wanted me to take that Honours in Psychology, as I have actually been offered a spot among 70 others. I, myself, have my heart torn in two – I love psychology, but not to the extent of actually making it a lifetime career. And I love writing. But I'm not sure in doing Master of Journalism either.

Finding jobs in Australia was hard (still is), and as another holder of neither temporary resident or permanent resident visa, 99.9 per cent of the job opportunities closed their doors on me.

Thus, despite the urge of my parents and suggestions from my friends, I decided to pack my bags, to leave Melbourne – my home for the past three years, and to go back to my homeland.

Going home has been quite a challenge for me. All Indonesians who have gone overseas and back must have known how this feels. First, you are back to being your parents' little boy or girl. Second, the reality starts to hit you that you are now an adult who will be working real jobs at real companies.

My parents know this. They know the pressure of working life, and perhaps that's why they offer some other choices – doing Master's or Honours possibly, to delay this phase of life.

But I'm really glad that I decided to go to work.

Having been a full-time employee for six months now, I have learned so, so much. And it's not only about the theoretical stuffs on how to actually do your job, but also about the soft skills – how to do presentations, how to negotiate with clients, how to work in a team, how to work with your boss/for your boss, and how to deal with real life pressure.

These are invaluable stuffs that I know will equip me with so much knowledge if I decided to pack my bags once again and take that student profession back.

And during this holiday period, I visited Melbourne once more, catching up with some friends whom decided to take the other path – doing Honours, Master's, or further studies of some sorts.

Of course, they are happy with their choices. Master's degree is hard, and perhaps it should be. One friend explains it as, "During undergrad years, you have this set of strategies on which you can apply to your studies and you'll be okay. In Master's, you need to swim through endless learning and figure out everything by yourself."

Another friend thinks while she loves and enjoys her Master's, she would probably get much more from her degree if she has worked first – as currently she has no real life case studies to fall back to when learning the theories.

That said, another friend says he wouldn't trade his decision for anything, for he loves the challenge that he gets in learning Master's.

So what's next for you? Are you thinking of doing Master's, or going to work first?

There's no right or wrong answer, and only you can make the ultimate choice. Friends, parents, and mentors might have their say, but in the end, choose something that will bring peace to your heart. Make your own choices. And don't live to regret them. Because either way, you'll learn the necessary invaluable lessons to build your future.

On choosing Melbourne, Australia, to study

Published Date : May 31, 2013

URL : <http://indonesiamengglobal.com/2013/05/on-choosing-melbourne-australia-to-study/>

I have always been sure that I'd go studying in Australia. Or to be more exact, I have always known that I'd go to the University of Melbourne.

I was in Junior High when my older sister went to Melbourne to pursue further studies. Since then, I was absolutely sure that I would follow her path – just because, you know, we attended the same international school (it's IPEKA International Christian School, Jakarta, on which uses New South Wales curriculum), we took the same subjects (or actually, in the end I took the subjects on which my sister had chosen years earlier), and my parents had hinted for me to do so.

Nor that I had any objection.

Most of my friends dream to study in the States. Not me. I have always been that little girl not wanting to go to the States because of its long flight. Somehow, in living the American dream, I have raised a white flag way before I entered the battle.

I graduated from Senior High School in December 2009 and applied only to two universities: the University of Melbourne and Monash University. By the following March, I was walking down the streets of Melbourne, being one of those international students who has traveled 1,000 miles from home, spoken a different mother-tongue language, and eaten rice for as long as life itself.

The first few months were not exactly what I expected. There were a lot of lessons to be learned, starting from living independently, managing your own studies, and socialising and playing hard at the same time. Speaking in English full time was hard. Listening to Australians with their thick Australian accents were even harder. But I never did once regret my decision in studying there. If I was given the chance to choose again, I would still choose Melbourne.

Here are some reasons why I choose Melbourne:

1. Being independent

This is one of the universal lessons learned when you study overseas. There are no longer comforts of being at home, pampered with parents who manage everything for you, whenever you ask for it. Studying overseas means doing your own laundry, cooking your own food, cleaning your own apartment, and taking care of yourself. These are the skills, I believe, that we all need to master. Personally, I wouldn't acquire all these by living with my parents.

2. Good university ranking

University of Melbourne is [ranked 28th](#) in the global university ranking. For Psychology (one of the majors I studied), it's [ranked 7th](#). Other universities, such as Monash, RMIT, UNSW, and UTS are also great universities whose names people know around the world. I have to say, being the Asian that I am, I still can't resist the temptation of getting into universities with good names, and hence...

3. The [most livable city](#) in the world

For students, Melbourne resembles a little bit like heaven. It has good public transport, a lot of historical sites, cultural values, and exotic lifestyles to venture. For coffee lovers, it's even better because Melbourne is home to some of the best cafes in the world. Plus, its multicultural status makes Melbourne rich in its varieties of food – including those *Soto Betawi* and *Martabak* to satisfy your cravings. Your social network will also expand as you get to know people from all over the world. Some of my best friends are from Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines. And with the existence of yearly Australian Open, international exhibitions, and Broadway shows, what more can you ask?

4. It's far/near enough from home

It has been agreed that after university, we will become young adults who work for a living and then meet our soulmates and start families of our own. This means university life may be one of the last moments when we can truly be our parents' sons and daughters. Six-hour flight makes it easier to go home and spend our holidays with our families back home. But yes, it's still not that near (like Singapore, for instance), that our daily activities can be monitored heavily by our parents (and we are forced to go home every other weekend, ending up with no time for our friends, for instance). True story.

Should there be a good enough reason to choose a place for overseas study? Maybe they should, maybe they shouldn't. But one thing I know for sure in choosing a university: let whatever your decision be, you'll not live to regret it. Choosing university means a minimum of three to four years of living there. Look for options, ask for opinions, and choose wisely.

For me, my number fifth and ultimate reason for choosing Melbourne is because my sister is there, and living with your family member does make a difference.

blueVisions Management

Introduction

Marcella Purnama was the Knowledge and Content Manager at blueVisions Management. She worked full time at the company from August 2013 until December 2013, and continued to work on a freelance basis since January 2014.

During her time at blueVisions, Marcella was in charge for the blog and website publications, as well as the e-newsletter circulation. She wrote and edited the blog articles, as well as copywrote brochures and pamphlets.

Website : marcellapurnama.com
Portfolio : marcellapurnama.com/portfolio
LinkedIn : linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761
Twitter : twitter.com/MarcellaPurnama
Facebook : facebook.com/mp.writer

*

About blueVisions Management

blueVisions Management is an international consultancy that focuses on contracts and project management. blueVisions aims to increase project certainty. It has a proven track record with many of Australia's leading engineering consultancies, contractors, lawyers, financiers and federal and state government organisations reducing risk through innovation, culture and excellence in delivery.

To find out more about blueVisions Management, please visit www.bluevisions.com.au.

5 Tips to Empowering Employees

Published Date : February 18, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/02/5-tips-empowering-employees/>

Every leader wants empowered employees. Managers want people who take initiative in solving problems and completing tasks that are given. We want our employees to take control without needing us to guide them 24/7.

That said, despite the advantage of empowering our employees, many leaders do not invest significant time in creating an environment of empowerment. Here are five tips to make your company a place where people feel valued and ready to step it up.

1. Make your employees believe they are valued

People are a company's most valuable asset. If you have good business plan and yet no manpower behind the wheels to take your business from good to great, your business will suffer. Customers, clients and partners connect with people and not only your business brand, thus it is really important to remind your employees of their value in the business.

2. Create an environment that encourages open communication

Companies that work on top-down management may cause employees to take little initiative in solving problems. They may feel like it is useless to give their opinions as it will be dismissed by their leaders. In such case, leaders need to constantly let their employees to work for solutions instead of just giving orders of what to do.

3. Foster self-improvement

When an employee makes the wrong decision, many leaders would be hesitant to give them another opportunity. However, this will stop the person to take initiative or to try harder next time around. As a leader, tell your employee that making mistakes is natural, and provide the context on which his mistakes are made. Try to give other perspectives instead of just finger pointing that what he's doing is wrong.

4. Support their independence

Nobody likes a boss who looks over his employees' shoulders all the time. Practise trust on your employees and give them some space to practice their authority in the field. Wait for them to surprise you. Most often, they will.

5. Appreciate their effort

Say "Thank you," to your employees. Take the time to visit their desks and say, "Great work on the project yesterday." An employee who feels appreciated will put more energy to produce even greater work.

Want to learn more about how to empower your employees? Visit our courses at www.im.edu.au.

Higer EQ, Better Job Performance

Published Date : February 14, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/02/higher-eq-job-performance/>

The trend is clear. Companies no longer hire employees based only on their brilliance or intelligence level. Today, companies put more emphasis on emotional intelligence to determine an employee's effectiveness in the workplace.

Intelligence Quotient or IQ used to be the only acceptable benchmark to predict a person's success in the business world. Back in high school, we were taught by our teachers that those high performing students with IQ 140 and above will be the future lawyers, doctors, and CEOs. Fast forward twenty years and suddenly we realise that IQ is not that important after all. The ones who make it to the top are the ones who have high EQ as well.

What are IQ and EQ?

Emotional Intelligence, referred to as EI or EQ, is basically defined as a person's ability to understand emotions, both our own and others. While IQ measures how intelligents person is, EQ showcases your soft skills: communication, negotiation, empathy, understanding and self-awareness.

Why EQ can be more important?

We work with other people and many of the problems we encounter at work may be due to miscommunication or difference in personalities. Trainer and Consultant Bill Duncan says, "Emotional Intelligence can have a significant effect on the performance of a project, especially if you have a team of low EQ people. Overall it has a negative effect on teamwork."

Research has also proven that higher EQ leads to better job performance.

For example, [one study](#) shows that a national insurance company found that sales agents who have low EQ sold policies with an average premium of \$54,000. Sales agents who have high EQ, however, sold policies with an average of \$114,000.

Improving our EQ

While research shows that our EQ level is developed during our early childhood and fairly stable over time, but fear not as it is not set in stone. Our EQ is not rigid, which means, everyone can change for the better. Your boss can learn to manage his temper and your colleague can become more understanding.

Change, however, takes time.

Improving our EQ does not happen overnight and it clearly needs dedication and hard work. Just like trying to quit smoking, improving our communication skills or being more open minded towards critics take practice.

How important is Emotional Intelligence in the success of a project? Learn more at www.im.edu.au.

DISC: Communication Tips for Cs – Part 5

Published Date : February 6, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/02/disc-communication-tips-cs-part-5/>

In the previous four parts of this series, we talked about the importance of DISC and D, I and S's profile characteristics. In this final part of the series, we'll cover the characteristics of Cs and how to communicate with them.

If you are a fan of the Star Trek series, you would instantly note that Mr. Spock is an extremely high C type of person. That said, Albert Einstein, Bill Gates, and Queen Elizabeth also share the trait.

Quick reminder: C measures how a person responds to the rules and regulations of others.

C(autious) style characteristics

People with high scores on C have these characteristics:

- Perfectionist
- Sensitive
- Greatest fear is criticism
- Accurate
- Require many explanations
- Ask many questions

People with a higher C value are compliant with rules set by others. Consequently, the lower the C value of an individual, the more the person will seek independence.

The C factor measures fear. The higher the intensity of the C value, the more the individual is motivated out of fear. The lower the C value, the more daring the individual is.

Enhance communication with C's

Noted, he is the perfectionist co-worker who asks again and again for explanations regarding the project, as if afraid that he will miss something out. He does a great job though, but sometimes you are afraid to voice your opinions on him because he is really, really sensitive to criticism.

Here are some tips to enhance communication with C's:

Do:

- Prepare your case in advance
- Delineate pros and cons
- Use accurate data
- Assure them "no surprises"
- Use precise explanations
- When agreeing, be specific on what

- Disagree with facts, not with the person
- Give patient and diplomatic explanations.

Don't:

- Refuse to explain the details
- Answer questions vaguely or casually.

Fun fact: When in an antagonistic environment, the high C will respond passively and will usually withdraw.

Last words

Now that we have talked about all four DISC behavioural styles, it is important to note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' behavioural styles, or no behavioural style which is better than another.

Instead, these behavioural style characteristics provide a map for us to determine our own communication styles and how to communicate best with others. As Steven Covey said, "In order to be understood, we must first seek to understand."

If you missed them, check out [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#) and [Part 4](#) for more insights into communicating to influence, through knowing your DISC behavioural styles. Join the conversation and tell us your thoughts in the comments section!

This article is modified from the [Institute of Management training module: Communicating to Influence](#). For more information about the course, please visit [our website](#).

DISC: Communication Tips for Ss – Part 4

Published Date : February 4, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/02/disc-communication-tips-ss-part-4/>

In [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#) of this series, we talked about the importance of DISC and D and I's profile characteristics. In this next discussion, we'll cover the characteristics of Ss and how to communicate with them.

Steady. Stable. Secure. It is no coincidence that Princess Diana was depicted as a true lady, Mother Teresa as a humble, patient woman and Gandhi as a calm person who hates disputes. These people in fact have a high score on their S behavioural style.

Quick reminder: S measures the pace at which a person responds to change.

S(teady) style characteristics

People with high scores on S have these characteristics:

- Loyal; gentle team player
- Person of substance
- Greatest fear is loss of security
- High level of trust
- Possessive
- Resist change; adapt slowly

People with a higher S value are more resistant to change. Furthermore, the higher the S value, the more a person prefers to start and complete one project at a time. Consequently, the lower the S value of an individual, the faster the pace and greater the desire for change.

The S factor also measures the lack of emotion. The higher the S factor, the less emotional they are and the more difficult it is to read that individual. The lower the S value, on the other hand, the more the person is emotional and expressive.

Enhance communication with S's

You just can't read this person. She may be the real S behavioural style type of person but you just can't read the signs of whether she is in a good mood or a bad mood and whether voicing your problems now is the right move.

Here are some tips to enhance communication with S's:

Do:

- Build a favourable environment
- Show genuine interest in them
- Ask "how" questions
- Patiently draw out their goal
- Give them time to adjust
- Define goals, procedures and their role in the plan
- Assure personal follow-up
- Minimise perceived risk.

Don't:

- Be pushy, aggressive or demanding
- Be controversial.

Fun fact: When in an antagonistic environment, the high S will respond passively and usually without emotion.

If you missed the previous parts of this series, you can read them [here](#). The next and final post will cover the characteristics of Cs.

This article is modified from the [Institute of Management training module: Communicating to Influence](#). For more information about the course, please visit [our website](#).

DISC: Communication Tips for Is – Part 3

Published Date :

URL :

In [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of this series, we talked about the importance of DISC and D's profile characteristics. In this next discussion, we'll cover the characteristics of Is and how to communicate with them.

When you think of famous influencers, some names come to mind almost instantly. Bill Clinton. Robin Williams. Will Smith. They all score highly in the 'I' metrics.

Quick reminder: 'I' measures how a person attempts to influence or persuade others.

I(nfluence) style characteristics

People with high scores on 'I' have these characteristics:

- Emotional
- People-oriented
- Greatest fear is rejection
- Disorganised
- Optimistic
- Encouraging.

People with a higher 'I' value are more verbal and persuasive in trying to influence others to their way of thinking. Consequently, the lower the 'I' value of an individual, the more the person will use data and facts.

The 'I' factor also measures the emotion of optimism. Extremely high I's are joyful and optimistic while extremely low I's tend to be more pessimistic.

Enhance communication with I's

Say that your boss is a real influencer but sometimes he can be really optimistic without weighing the pros and cons. You want to communicate your concerns in such a way that he is open to them. How should you do this?

Here are some tips to enhance communication with I's:

Do:

- Build a favourable environment
- Let them talk about ideas, people, their institution

- Share testimonials
- Allow for social time
- Write details, but do not dwell on them
- Create incentives for following through.

Don't:

- Eliminate social time
- Do all the talking
- Ignore their ideas
- Tell them what to do.

Fun fact: When in an antagonistic environment, the high 'I' responds actively and may try to negotiate an agreement or apologise quickly.

If you missed Part 1 and 2 of this series, you can read them [here](#). The next posts will cover the characteristics of Ss and Cs.

This article is modified from the [Institute of Management training module: *Communicating to Influence*](#). For more information about the course, please visit [our website](#).

DISC: Communication Tips for Ds – Part 2

Published Date :

URL :

In [Part 1](#) of this series, we talked about the importance of DISC. In this next discussion, we'll cover the characteristics of Ds and how to communicate with them.

What do Margaret Thatcher, Bruce Lee, Donald Trump and Michael Jordan have in common? They all score highly in their D's.

Quick reminder: D measures how a person solves problems and responds to challenges.

D(rive) style characteristics

People with high scores on D have these characteristics:

- High ego strength; seek authority
- Impatient
- Greatest fear is to be taken advantage of
- Desire change
- Do many things at once
- Respond to direct confrontation.

People with a higher D value are more active and intense in trying to overcome problems and obstacles. Consequently, the lower the D value of an individual, the greater the tendency for him to gather data prior to making a decision.

The D factor also measures the emotion of anger. Extremely high D's are quick to anger while extremely low D's are slow to anger.

Enhance communication with D's

While reading D's characteristics stated above, several co-workers' names may pop into your mind. Now that you know they are high D's, how can you communicate more effectively with them?

Here are some tips to enhance communication with D's:

Do:

- Be brief, direct, to the point
- Ask "what", not "how"
- Focus on business
- Build trust by demonstrating competency and delivering results
- Highlight logical benefits

- Agree with facts and ideas, not with a person
- Discuss problems in light of how they affect the outcome and make sure you offer solutions.

Don't:

- Ramble
- Repeat yourself
- Focus on problems
- Be too sociable
- Generalise

Fun fact: When in an antagonistic environment, a high D responds aggressively and directly.

If you missed Part I of this series, you can read it [here](#). The next posts will cover the characteristics of Is, Ss, and Cs.

This article is modified from the [Institute of Management training module: Communicating to Influence](#). For more information about the course, please visit [our website](#).

Communicating to Influence Using DISC – Part I

Published Date : January 23, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/01/communicating-influence-disc-part-1/>

This article, and the four that follow, will talk about improving communication in the workplace by knowing your DISC behavioural styles. In this discussion, we will explain what DISC is and its importance for influential communication.

In a perfect world, every co-worker, boss and staff member knows exactly how to communicate effectively to achieve the greatest result. However, in the real world everyone speaks a different language and sends ambiguous messages.

To improve communication efficiency in the workplace, many companies use DISC personality profiles. These profiles provide insights into an individual's behavioural styles and how to best communicate with others of different styles.

What is DISC?

DISC was first established by psychologist Dr. William M. Marsten in the 1900s, and since then has undergone a maturation process by different experts. DISC itself is an acronym of four different major behavioural styles – Drive, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance, which are further explained below:

- Drive – measures how a person solves problems and responds to challenges
- Influence – measures how a person attempts to influence or persuade others
- Steadiness – measures the pace at which a person responds to change
- Compliance – measures how a person responds to the rules and regulations of others

Generally speaking, DISC is a system used to explain behaviour and personality in a way that opens the door to effective communication. While DISC style identifies the interaction of four factors, this is by no means a way to label people, as human interaction is far more complex. That said, DISC measures the needs-driven motivation portion of our personality.

Further classification also divides DISC into active and passive styles and whether they are task or people-oriented.

Active Styles: D and I

Passive Styles: S and C

Task oriented: D and C

People oriented: I and S

Thus, the D and S are 'opposites', while the C and I are 'opposites'.

Knowing your DISC behavioural styles: Why is it important?

If a person communicates to you according to your behavioural preferences, you are more likely to be open and respond positively. This also shows that the other party understands and respects you.

The same goes for the other way round. If you communicate to others according to their behavioural preferences, their guard will be lowered and they will be more attentive and open to your criticism, advice or ideas.

While the extensive DISC test needs purchasing, there are some good free DISC tests on the web which will provide an overview of your behavioural style. We recommend doing the test from [this site](#).

Over the next four posts, we will talk about the characteristics and tips for communicating with Ds, Is, Ss, and Cs.

This article is modified from the [Institute of Management training module: Communicating to Influence](#). For more information about the course, please visit [our website](#) and follow our [Twitter](#).

Answering the Salary Interview Questions – Part 3: Know What You're Worth

Published Date : January 21, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/01/answering-salary-interview-question-part-3-youre-worth/>

In [Part 1](#) of this series, we focused on defining a job interview and in [Part 2](#) we talked about the importance of stating the right number. In this final part of the series, we will show you the rules of thumb for answering your own question “What is your expected salary?”

While we have shown that stating the right number is much more important, how we deliver the number, or not deliver it, is still a big question.

The short answer for this is: It depends.

Frankly speaking, it's always different for everyone, depending on their position, their experience, their values and personality, the company culture and the interviewer's own preferences.

So to help you answer the question for your own specific circumstances, here are several rules of thumb to determine the best answer is:

1. Research your position's market value

Whether or not you have a strict policy of never being the one who states the number, coming prepared to an interview is never a disadvantage. That way, when your prospective employer states a range or requires you to give one, you are able to negotiate for a fair compensation.

2. Know your own industry

That said, not all salary questions can be answered the same way across different industries.

Say for example, you are a computer programmer whose salary formula is based on years of experience and computer language skills. Based on this, you might not have the luxury of not stating your expected salary, as it's pretty much black and white.

But if for instance, you are a writer/singer/painter/artist whose salary formula is much more subjective, you might be able to hold your card a little bit longer.

3. What's your position?

It is important to note that based on your experience and your position on the corporate ladder, you might actually have the privilege of holding your stance on not stating a number.

Look at it this way: A fresh graduate holding his stance on not revealing his expected salary might irritate the employer compared to a manager doing the exact same thing.

In short: Know what you're worth

All three rules can be summarised into this: You need to know what you're worth.

Ask yourself what your expected salary really is. Of course, everyone wants to improve on their career and everyone else understands this, including your future employers.

Knowing your worth is about getting a fair pay on the value you can bring to the company. Plus, knowing what you're worth enables you to screen out the companies you don't want to work for.

Remember: There's no right or wrong answer in the salary question

When it comes to the salary question in an interview, there's no such thing as black or white, or a right or wrong answer. Finding the right person for the job is about finding the right key as well as the right lock, so as an interviewee, you have an equal right to negotiation.

Whether you state the number or the employer gives you the range first, knowing your worth enables you to quickly decide whether or not the job is right for you. As much as you don't want to be underpaid, the company doesn't want to overpay you either.

Plus, if the 'to die for' company thinks that you're the right piece of the puzzle, they will be up for negotiation.

If you missed them, check out [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) for more insights into answering the interview question "What is your expected salary?" Join the conversation and tell us your interview stories in the comments section!

Answering the Salary Interview Question – Part 2: Stating the Right Number

Published Date : January 16, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/01/answering-salary-interview-question-part-2-stating-number/>

In [Part 1](#) of this series, we focused on defining what a job interview really is. In this next discussion, we'll cover why the salary question is a vital part of an interview.

Chances are you are at the very least a little bit uncomfortable when getting to the interview question "What is your expected salary?" But most often, this is the stage when you make or break the decision to hire you.

The salary question

If you have reached this phase of an interview, it can mean: a) the employer wants to screen out the people who are under you and way out of their league; or b) the employer likes you and before he offers you the job, he wants to know if you are both on the same page.

So how should you answer the salary question?

While some experts suggest that to [win the salary game](#) (that is, not stating a number and if you must, not being the first to say a figure), others prefer you to honestly state your expectations (with [smart ways of voicing this](#), of course). Before you get to that decision, here are several things that you need to remember:

1. You are not there to "buy a house".

The common perception of the interviewer/interviewee relationship is eerily similar to someone buying a house.

The buyer (i.e. the employer) wants to get it as cheap as possible and the seller (i.e. the interviewee) wants to get it for as much as possible. Walking in with this attitude is detrimental for both parties, as unlike a house sale, both sides need to live with each other for a long time after the negotiation is finished.

2. "Whoever states the number first loses." Not.

Negotiating your salary isn't a poker game and it shouldn't be one. That would suggest it is a win-lose situation and if you go into an interview with that mindset, it is possible that you are not eager to add real value to the employer either.

In some cases, it is not wise to state your number while in others, you can't move forward with your offer without this being spoken. Thus, both parties will ideally approach salary negotiations as a win-win situation, and still maintain respect if the number is just not right for them.

What matters most in answering the salary question is not whether we state the number first, but if we actually state the right number.

And yes, stating the right number is an even trickier business.

If you missed Part I, you can read it [here](#). In the third and final part of this series, we will give you the rules of thumb for how to state the right number.

How to Answer The Interview Question: “What is Your Expected Salary?” – Part I

Published Date : January 14, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/01/answer-interview-question-what-expected-salary-part-1/>

This article, and the two that follow, talk about how to approach the interview question “What is your expected salary?” In this first discussion, we’ll cover what a job interview really is.

According to [2012 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement](#) by SHRM, compensation or pay is the third most important aspect in job satisfaction (60%), right after job opportunities (63%) and job security (61%).

This report shows that being overworked and yet underpaid leads directly to job dissatisfaction. The catch is, unfortunately, this fixed amount of money you receive was usually set up when you sat in that first interview.

How should we approach this sensitive matter? During an interview, is it okay to state a number first, or should we persist in forcing the employer to give a range?

But first, the basics

What is a job interview? Basically, an employer has a vacant seat and he wants to find the right piece of the puzzle. The candidate brings their piece of the puzzle to the interview to see if it fits.

But most often, as soon as we walk into that strange room with strange people, we feel like a gazelle hunted by the lions on the savannah. Almost instinctively, we try to impress and please them as much as we can.

Here’s something your prospective employers never tell you: they are already impressed with you.

Out of the piles of resumes, they specifically handpicked you for an interview. Now their job is to make sure that you are the right piece of the puzzle they’ve been waiting for.

And your job is to figure out if you want to be the right piece of the puzzle to complete the set.

The job interview paradox

In approaching job interviews, some describe them as a game, while others think of them as a talent show.

Such descriptions portray nailing that job interview as a plain win-lose situation, with our job being to mould ourselves to an employer’s liking and interest to win the prize called contract offer.

They show the job interview as a one-way street where the employer controls everything.

But that’s not true. On the contrary, a job interview is more like dating.

You have an interest in the employer already (if not, you wouldn’t apply for the job), and the employer has an interest in you (if not, they wouldn’t ask you for an interview). Meeting face-to-face is a

way for them to see if you will fit their company culture, and if their company values are adjacent to yours.

So the next time you are preparing for a job interview, remember that it's a two-way street, and the employer's not the only one who holds the key to your next pay cheque – you do too!

Watch for Parts 2 and 3 of this series, where we will further discuss how to best approach the salary interview question and whether you should be the first to state a number.

4 Practical Ways to Improve Your English Skills

Published Date : January 9, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/01/4-practical-ways-improve-english-skills/>

For many non-English background speakers, communicating in English (whether in the form of listening, reading, writing, or speaking) can be quite a challenge. And yet, in this growing global era, English has become the universal language that you need to master in order to move to the next level.

Managerial positions now require the applicants to be fluent in both their native language and the English language. Even fresh graduate entry roles require sufficient English skills to apply!

So here are some practical ways to hone your English language skills, no matter what level you are at now:

1. Watch your favourite Hollywood movies without subtitles

Try watching your favourite Hollywood movies again, but this time, without the subtitles. It takes practice to make our ears accustomed to listening to English conversations, but the more you are exposed to them, the quicker your listening muscles will be developed.

2. Forget translated books, start reading in English

Pick a book that is suitable for your own reading pace. If you feel that taking a Harry Potter novel is too daunting, grab another one. Start reading online news, articles, or blogs in English.

3. Write 300 words daily

Noted, writing is not everyone's forte but in order to survive the emails and reports, writing in English has become a major requirement.

The quickest way to master the art of writing in English is to write every day, consistently. Note that the keyword here is to be consistent in your writing, which means don't write 10,000 words in one day and take a break for a week and start writing again.

4. Speak English often. Still self-conscious? Speak even more!

Approach those native English speakers and communicate with them. Make a pact with your friend to have 'English-only' time. Don't be afraid to make mistakes and most importantly, don't be self-conscious in your learning.

Practice makes perfect

You've done everything, so now what? Clichéd as it sounds, practice does make perfect. The more you practice in listening, reading, writing, and speaking in English, the quicker you will master the language.

Starting 2014 the right way

Published Date : January 7, 2014

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2014/01/starting-2014/>

It's been days since the New Year and the initial hype of celebration has died down. Christmas decorations have disappeared and work certainly replaces our holiday mood early, demanding attention once more.

Before you are drawn into a series of deadlines, however, it's best to first write down your New Year's resolutions, or the goals you have for your career in the next year or two. This time, however, instead noting down, "Get a raise," or "Break my bonus record," let's try things differently.

Let's start by defining your ideal outcomes.

Begin with the ideal end

The best leaders always have this one thing: vision. People with vision create opportunities, and to create this vision, the first thing we need to do is to begin with the ideal end in mind.

Ideally, what results would you create for your organisation? Are there specific outcomes you want for your customers and your business? What would make you feel incredibly successful and fulfilled in your career?

Let's begin by filling in table below:

Stakeholder	Desired Results
Your customers	My customers come back again to use our services. My customers tell their friends and families about their experience using our products.
Your organisation	My organisation achieves \$X profit.
Your manager	A good relationship with my manager, being able to trust each other and create bigger goals together.
Your staff	My staff exceed my expectations and empower them to improve each time.
Your colleagues	We achieve a great number of sales and projects together.
You	Get a raise. Improve my skills not only in sales but also in management.

Table 1. Example of your ideal outcomes

Now fast forward to the end of 2014 and imagine you have ticked all the boxes for these results to happen. How would you feel? Would you feel happy? Inspired? Excited?

Remember those feelings, and now with your desired results in place, write the specific steps you need to achieve each of them. For example, in order to have your customers come back to use your products and services again, you must exceed their expectations. This means going the extra mile and delivering outcomes before the deadline.

Let's start 2014 with a smile on our face and inspiration in our head!

5 'Year-End' Review Questions to Prepare You for 2014

Published Date : December 17, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/12/5-year-end-review-questions-prepare-2014/>

Most of us use the New Year as a time to try new things or to start over. However, before we kiss 2013 goodbye, assessing where we stand at the moment will better equip us to face 2014.

Here are five questions to ask yourself in preparation for the brand new year.

1. What have you accomplished this year?

It's easy to be blinded by fear that we are doing meaningless work. To avoid that, write down every accomplishment, every little success you have made in the past year. Did you take a leap of faith for that new job? Are you becoming a better partner? Are you the one who closes that project deal?

2. Are you where you want to be?

Now is the best time to take out that long forgotten 2013 New Year's Resolution list. Are you able to cross off a few things? Are you heading into the right direction to achieve your dreams? Or did you get sidetracked doing something else?

3. Are you happy?

Happiness is a tricky question but if you don't love your work, or don't even have an ounce of passion for it, maybe it's time to think twice and to venture into other options.

4. What did you fail to accomplish?

We ought to assess our mistakes and learn from them instead of burying them in the land of no return. What makes you fail? Are there better ways to achieve your dreams? What should you do to make sure these situations don't happen again?

5. What are your goals for 2014?

Some of the goals might not get crossed off this year. They may also be setting up higher challenges for you to move to the next level. Think of attainable goals and how they might serve you well in five/ten years to come.

Are you ready to close this year's chapter? Share your stories on the comment section below!

5 tips for giving effective feedback to your employees

Published Date : December 10, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/12/5-tips-give-effective-feedback-employees/>

Let's face it: it's hard receiving negative feedback, but it's equally hard being the one giving it.

As a manager, you notice that one of your employees is not performing well. However, you might be reluctant to offer honest feedback as you fear offending him, which will downgrade his performance even more. You also want to avoid straining your relationship with him at all costs. Nevertheless, you need him to change, so delivering that feedback is the right thing to do.

It turns out that there are good and bad ways of giving feedback to your employees. Here are five tips for doing it the right way.

1. Use AND instead of BUT

Bill Gross, Founder and CEO of Idealab, writes on [LinkedIn](#) that one of the most important keys for delivering feedback is to use AND instead of BUT. This means when voicing your concerns, don't say, "You are on track with this project, BUT your performance..." as the person may get defensive, paranoid or become overwhelmed with anxiety which does not help him to improve his performance.

Instead, use AND. Saying "You are on track with this project, AND discussing the next steps with your seniors will improve the outcomes exponentially," works better.

2. Be prompt

When an employee makes a mistake, don't wait until the next quarter performance review to point it out. Immediately settle the issue at hand while the situation is still fresh in your mind.

3. Focus on the issue, not the person

If the issue is an employee's punctuality, specifically talk about that, not about how lazy he is or how he has no respect for his superiors. That's not the case. The issue is his punctuality.

4. Give positive reviews

Your employee makes mistakes but chances are he has done many great things too. Don't only give negative feedback and demands for change. Highlight his strengths and accomplishments as well so he knows that you are a mentor who wants to help him grow and exceed his potential.

5. Listen and work on solutions together

Delivering feedback might be necessary, but it is more important to listen to what he has to say and work on solutions together. Simply pointing out the problem is not going to solve it, but working on solutions will help.

The most important thing when giving feedback is to assure him that you are not there to judge him, rather to help him. Once he knows that you are there because you genuinely care about him, he will be more open to what you have to say.

We at [blueVisions Management](#) and the [Institute of Management](#) provide practical courses to help you and your business grow. For more information about our courses, please visit our [website](#).

It's December. Time for annual performance reviews?

Published Date : December 5, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/12/its-december-time-annual-performance-reviews/>

Everyone fears the unknown, dislikes criticism, and is reluctant to change. That's why performance reviews can become living nightmares for some people.

However, employee performance reviews are crucial for both the employer and employee to move to the next level.

Here are some tips for making the most of annual performance reviews.

7 tips for more effective employee performance reviews

1. Be prepared

It's time to locate your previous review and your KPI files. Both you and your manager need a starting point and these documents will be crucial in determining your current performance and your future goals.

2. Make a list of your accomplishments, in addition to pointing out the areas where you need help

You might think your manager knows every single detail of what you're doing but the truth is he might have twenty other employees to manage and your accomplishments can get mixed up with theirs. You also need to assess the areas which you want to improve.

3. Be open, not defensive

When facing criticism, listen to whatever your manager has to say to you first. Let the words sink in and digest them thoroughly before offering any explanation. Apologise for the drawback if you have to and discuss for solutions together.

4. Focus on the problem, not the person

If you are the manager conducting the review, always remember to focus on the issues or the performance itself, not the person. If you are the employee, remember that you are not your work, and just because you make mistakes doesn't mean you are a failure.

5. Be honest

It's so easy to cross the line from relating your accomplishments to bluffing about your success, as well as sugarcoating a negative situation to cover your mistakes. However, you will not get anything out of this, nor will your employer. Honesty is the key for future improvement.

6. Set SMART goals

Performance reviews don't only focus on the past, they also set the scene for the future. Be sure to ask your manager about his expectations for your work, as well as giving your own input on what you want to achieve next year. Set goals that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

7. Discuss non-performance issues

Non-performance issues such as work attitude, relationships with other colleagues and company culture are important factors to ensure performance effectiveness. Are you getting enough support from your colleagues? Are you passionate about the work you are doing? Do you feel empowered? If the answer is no, does your boss know about this?

When it comes to the day of the review, don't fret. Attend with the mindset of improving yourself and exceeding your potential. Remember, this review isn't set up to make you fail. Rather, it's there to help you achieve your goals.

We at [blueVisions Management](#) and the [Institute of Management](#) provide practical courses to help you and your business grow. For more information about our courses, please visit our [website](#).

The art of communication: Are you conveying more than you realise?

Published Date : November 28, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/art-communication-conveying-realise/>

When we hear the word 'communicate' the thing that pops into our mind instantly is this: WORDS. Whether they are spoken or written, words are the universal language of communication. But is that all there is to it?

It may come as a shock that words only account for 7% in a communication. Only 7%! What about the other 93%? It is made up of your tone of voice (38%) and your body language when you say those words (55%).

These verbal and nonverbal cues need to be delivered in perfect harmony to convey the right message to your boss, client or even co-worker. Saying "I am really interested in doing business with you," while rolling your eyes does not really serve the purpose, right?

The three components of communication

1. Words (7%)

Contrary to popular belief that content is king in communication, the reality is that it accounts for the lowest part (only 7%) of the total message. Why is this so? The words or the content of our communication can only truly be king if they are in unison with the two nonverbal cues, which are tonality and body language.

2. Tonality (38%)

Tonality includes our tone of voice, timbre, tempo, and volume. Saying, "I am confident" to your boss in a low, husky voice does not convey confidence. The same thing goes when saying, "I am excited to be here today," with a flat intonation.

3. Body language (55%)

At the same time, body language accounts for more than half of our communication. This means that your facial expressions, whether you're smiling, widening your eyes, stretched, or in pain are the best way of getting your message across. Plus, your body movement and posture also give signals that you may not even be aware of.

So the next time you're going to meet your client, your boss or your co-workers, remember it's not just your words they're paying attention to!

This article is modified from the Institute of Management training module: [Business Communication Skills](#). For more information about the course, please visit our [website](#).

How to build trust in the workplace

Published Date : November 26, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/build-trust-workplace/>

It's been weeks since the deadline of that final report.

You can feel the wrath of your boss nearby, either yelling your name or giving cynical remarks on another day gone by without you delivering the results.

When you finally submit your report, he asks, "So what took you so long?"

"The clients", you say. It was the system that was down last week or the colleague who forget to follow up.

You try to wrap the story in such a way that takes you off the hook.

The next thing you know is that your boss never entrusts you with the big clients anymore.

While you may think it is important to save yourself and quickly escape from a problematic situation, it is more important to build trust.

How to build trust

Say you've blown your chance to prove yourself to your boss and you're keen to start over. Here are some ways to build or even rebuild trust in the workplace:

1. Be true to your word

Actions speak louder than words, so when you're late again for the tenth time to the Monday meeting, people will not believe that you'll come on time next time, despite you promising them so. And if you make mistakes, tell the truth.

2. Under promise and over deliver

Don't do what's required of you, but do more. Don't wait until your boss is chasing you for the task, deliver it to him first.

3. Be vulnerable

Trust manifests by action, yet it is a deed of the heart. For someone to trust you, they need to know that you seek the best interests of the group and don't just want to save your own face.

Trust may take months or even years to build. However, it is crucial for colleagues in the workplace to trust each other as it leads to more effective work, more productive teamwork, and greater results.

This article is modified from the Institute of Management training module: [Motivating Employees](#). For more information about the course, please visit our [website](#).

Do your team members lack accountability?

Published Date : November 21, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/team-members-lack-accountability/>

The deadline of the project is at 2pm sharp, today.

You arrive at work early, eager to close the deal but suddenly you find your boss in extreme distress. "We need to talk," he says.

It turns out the client has asked for a change in the design, and no one in the team follows up on that request. Now, you have four hours to make everything right.

Assembling your team members, you talk about the slip-up. Soon enough, everyone starts to blame the person next to them.

Sounds familiar?

When working in a team, accountability is crucial in facing adversity or challenges. Mistakes happen but at times we often forget that it's not what happens that matters, rather what we can do about it that is important.

Here are three ways to strengthen accountability and prevent the above scenario from happening:

1. Shift your focus: From problems to solutions

When faced with adversity, don't dwell on problems but focus on solutions instead. While one member can research for more information, another can start preparing the tools and three others can brainstorm for more ideas. Think creatively.

2. Ask for help: Find resources to solve the problem

It's true that the mind goes blank when clouded with problems. Faced with this situation, the team can ask senior colleagues for a fresh set of perspectives.

Remember, whatever problem your team has at the moment, it is very likely that someone else in the room has dealt with it before.

3. Fostering trust: It's not about you and I, it's about us

Team members who truly trust each other will face problems as a team and not as an individual, making it less likely for them to blame each other. In order to build trust, you need to know your own responsibilities and understand the mutual goals of the project.

One of the characteristics of high-performance teams is having strong accountability. Now imagine if your team members have each other's backs, wouldn't you want to be a part of it?

This article is modified from the Institute of Management training module: [Motivating Employees](#). For more information about the course, please visit our [website](#).

Is Indonesia ready for AEC 2015? Why corporate English is important

Published Date : November 20, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/indonesia-ready-aec-2015-corporate-english-important/>

In less than two years, [ASEAN Economic Community](#) (AEC) 2015 will take place to unify the economy of 10 participating countries. This means investors can establish their businesses anywhere, and employees are able to search for job opportunities in neighbouring countries with less restrictions than before.

The catch is, all 10 countries: Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Cambodia, Brunei, and yes, Indonesia, agree **to use English as the language for business**.

Are we AEC 2015 ready?

While [Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono](#) said that Indonesia is ready for this unification as it will improve our economy exponentially, some critics are not so sure.

Participating countries like Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei to name a few, have learnt English as a part of their school curriculum. But most Indonesians have not had this privilege.

In 2012, international education company Education First (EF) released [English Proficiency Index](#) report which showed Indonesia ranking 27 out of 54 countries with "low proficiency". In that same year, however, the Ministry of Education and Culture announced their solution of [removing English learning](#) from the elementary school curriculum altogether.

With the ever increasing competition, it is predicted that those with fewer English qualifications will be disadvantaged. Not only will we be competing with local Indonesians for jobs, we will also be competing with an international pool of highly capable employees.

"In Indonesia, English is deemed as a foreign language instead of a second language. However, as our local communities are becoming more global, coupled with our country's booming economy, learning and mastering English has become a must." - [Hamid Muhammad](#), Director General for Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Culture

Why corporate English is important more than ever

The good news is: there is still time to prepare.

Here are some of the reasons why learning English as a second language is beneficial in the long term:

I. It increases job opportunities

Regardless of whether you're a manager, an accountant, a technician, an engineer, or an administrator, learning English opens new opportunities for career growth, which leads to greater income. A managerial position now lists "proficient in English" as one of the qualifications. A directorial position may now require "fluent/native proficiency in English".

If you want to get ahead in your career, being able to communicate or write a report in English serves you as a great asset.

2. It reduces competition

Don't take this literally as competition will always be there, but knowing how to communicate effectively in English puts you at a great advantage compared to others who don't.

You might be the one who represents the company in meeting an international client as your English is the best among the team. And who knows what other opportunities await?

3. It opens more doors to the global world

By learning English, you can apply for jobs not only locally, but also internationally. AEC 2015 makes it possible to work overseas with limited or low restrictions.

Bonus point: It looks good on your CV.

Are you ready for AEC 2015? Our training division, the [Institute of Management](#), provides practical English language courses to prepare you for the workplace. Check out our [website](#) for further information.

First time meeting a prospective client? Here are some things you should know

Published Date : November 19, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/time-meeting-prospective-client/>

Researchers from New York University found that it takes a stranger seven seconds to make that first impression.

For business people out there, that means your client might have decided whether they want to do business with you when you first enter the meeting room and give a handshake.

While your presentation, your products, your proposal, and a whole lot of other factors may influence the deal, most agree that the feeling of first impressions goes a long way.

Considering this important cue, here are some tips to make sure you give the best first impression:

1. Dress appropriately

It's undeniable that the first thing someone notices is the way you dress. And it's better to overdress (shirt, tie, etc) rather than underdress (jeans and casual t-shirt) only to find the other party in full corporate attire.

2. Be on time

Too many people do not realise the power of being on time. Showing up on time, or even before the promised time shows that you are committed and that you respect the other party's valuable time to meet you.

3. Focus on how awesome they are – not on how awesome you are

Don't dominate the talk with details about your company and your products. Instead, get to know their company, their needs, and the things they want to address.

4. Listen attentively, respond accordingly

Listen to what they have to say and respond based on their requests, not on your scripted business speech. Take notes, literally with a pen and paper, about what they are saying.

5. Research, research, research!

Get to know your client's company beforehand. Stalk their website, read their blog, scroll through their social media. It shows that you are prepared and ready.

6. Exchange business cards after the meeting, not before

At the end of the meeting, give your card to the client as a hint. They will almost instinctively exchange theirs.

Do you have more tips to make the best first impressions? Share in the comment section below.

Feeling unappreciated? Tips to build healthy workplace

Published Date : November 14, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/feel-acknowledged-work/>

Human eyes are drawn to mistakes.

Whether it is as simple as not washing your own dishes in the office or as complicated as ruining a whole project operation.

However, when someone does a good or even an extraordinary job, we often forget to acknowledge their work.

While insincere compliments can become a double-edged sword in a business setting, under-acknowledgement can bring disastrous impacts as well, such as low employee satisfaction, low productivity, and unhealthy tension between co-workers.

As leaders, colleagues, and staff members, we all need a morale booster once in a while to know that we have done our work right. Here are some simple tips to practice acknowledgement in the workplace.

1. Show you've paid attention

No one likes being ignored. A simple comment like, "I understand how you feel," to a colleague who has been mistreated shows that you listen and respect him.

2. Change 'you' and 'I' to 'we'

Instead of saying, "So what will you do about the situation?" try offering some help by asking, "Is there anything we can do to improve this?"

3. Offer positive feedback generously

Telling your staff, "Thank you", "Good job", "Great idea", and "Nice one" can boost their working mood exponentially.

4. Use body language when giving acknowledgement

Saying "Good job" to someone while typing frantically on your laptop does not help. The other party needs to see that you really mean what you say. When offering a compliment, look into their eyes, clap, give a firm handshake or smile.

5. Celebrate every success

No matter how small it is, from getting a foot in the client's door to signing a not-so-important contract, they are still achievements in their own ways.

This article is modified from the Institute of Management training module: [Ensure Team Effectiveness](#). For more information about the course, please visit our [website](#).

More actions but no results? Perhaps you're doing it all wrong

Published Date : November 12, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/mindset-real-results/>

Are you frustrated of always doing things at work and yet getting no results? We all have been there – the late nights to finish our deadlines only to find out that it is going down the rubbish bin the next day.

Have you ever thought of doing things differently?

In our previous article, we talked about [the importance of focusing on the end results](#). Today, we are going to share with you the secret on how to actually achieve them.

Hint: it's all in the mind.

All businesses are made to succeed. We want our projects to actually accomplish something – whether it is a new client, profit, expansion, promotion, or positive branding.

It's no secret that to actually achieve real results, we need to have the right mindset in approaching our work. But let's break down the meaning of this statement.

Why the right mindset determines the results

Let's start from the desired end product: real results.

To actually have results, we need to do real things and get our hands dirty. The proposals will not be made if you just stare blankly at Microsoft Word. The contracts will not get signed if you do not visit your client's office and explain your services.

To have results, you need to have actions.

And everyone will vouch that our feelings determine our actions.

Consider waking up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. With less than four hours sleep, you order coffee from your local Starbucks and it turns out the lid is not secured properly and it spills. Will you be excited about a meeting twenty minutes away with an obnoxious client who asks for discounts and yet changes his request every other day?

For every action that we take, emotions play a big role.

And guess what controls emotions? Thoughts.

Let's say you wake up on the wrong side of the bed this morning but you are eager to start the day anyway, knowing that you have a breakthrough meeting to attend. You spill your coffee but you crack a joke and somehow it makes other people laugh. The barista might even offer to make you another one. Going to the meeting, you feel that there's a real opportunity to help this client, although all your colleagues have given up on him.

Our emotions are driven by our mindset.

We might face the same situation. However, different thinking yields a different emotional state and hence a different action. It is natural that different results will follow.

And that's how to do things differently, as having the right mindset matters in achieving real results.

This article is modified from the Institute of Management training module: [Ensure Team Effectiveness](#). For more information about the course, please visit our [website](#).

What differentiates the best from the rest

Published Date : November 7, 2013

URL : <http://blog.bluevisions.com.au/2013/11/differentiates-best-from-rest/>

It was the final of 2004-05 UEFA Champions league. Liverpool was up against A.C. Milan, and they had lost 0-3 during the first half.

People assumed that A.C. Milan had secured the golden trophy. There was no way Liverpool could turn back the scores and win the championship.

But Liverpool did. They cornered A.C. Milan to 3-3 during the second half, and later won the league by penalty kicks.

What was deemed as impossible turned into a legendary win. The question is: how did Liverpool do it?

Here's one of their secrets: **it's about focusing on the end goal.**

In our businesses, we want to achieve success every time. We want to deliver outcomes, secure the deal, make a profit and expand our network.

However, along the way to success, we encounter brick walls, just like those Liverpool players during the first half of the game..

But what sets them apart is that they didn't dwell on having lost three goals to none. Instead, they had the mindset, "If we win this thing, we'll become legends."

Here's why focusing on the end goal is crucial in building high-performance teams.

1. They become solutions-oriented, not problems-oriented

While it is natural for us to dwell on disappointment, focusing on the end result shifts our mindset from thinking, "Why is this problem happening to us?" to "What is the next step needed to win this business proposal?"

2. They learn from mistakes

Focusing on the end goal makes team members learn from past mistakes. They ask questions like, "What can we learn from this? Is there anyone we can ask for advice?" which brings them one step closer to achieving results.

3. They don't blame other members in the team

This is what usually happens when a project goes wrong – we find the person who is accountable and try to wash our hands of the problem.

High-performance teams know that they are in the situation together and blaming others will not get them anywhere. Instead, they start to think positively about possible solutions.

With fierce competition in the market, businesses need to differentiate themselves as the leaders by having high-performance teams. And it all starts by focusing on the end goal.

This article is modified from the Institute of Management training module: *Teaming effectively for high performance outcomes*. For more information about the course, please visit our [website](#).

YCAB Foundation

Introduction

Marcella Purnama was the Content Writer and Marketing Communications Executive at YCAB Foundation. She worked at the organisation from February 2013 until August 2013.

During her time at YCAB, Marcella was in charge for the blog and website publications, as well as the e-newsletter circulation. She copywrote the 2012 Annual Report, 2013 Mid-Year Impact Report, and 2013 Organisational Profile, among others.

Website : marcellapurnama.com
Portfolio : marcellapurnama.com/portfolio
LinkedIn : [linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761](https://www.linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761)
Twitter : twitter.com/MarcellaPurnama
Facebook : facebook.com/mp.writer

*

About YCAB Foundation

Established in 1999, YCAB Foundation is all about giving **hope** and **opportunity**. And YCAB is all about creating change. To date, the foundation has changed the world of more than **two million people**.

YCAB, or *Loving the Nation's Children Foundation*, focuses on **youth development**. YCAB believes in enabling youths to be independent as one of the keys to break the poverty cycle. YCAB invests in youths in **three sectors: health, education, and economic empowerment**.

To find out more about YCAB Foundation, please visit ycabfoundation.org.

What does charity mean to you?

Published Date : June 12, 2012

URL : <http://blog.ycabfoundation.org/what-does-charity-mean-to-you/>

Charity starts at home. Charity is giving to the poor. Charity is helping those more unfortunate than us. Throughout our lives, we often stumble upon charity organisations and underprivileged people. But what, really, is charity?

"If we live in a world where everyone only cares about themselves, then it would be a cruel and selfish world. That is not the world that I want to live in." Timothy Lam

Charity is a concept that has been blurred. Through time, less and less people stop to lend a hand, starting to think cynically before they even think to help.

I was walking passed a homeless person one day and decided to toss some gold coins to ease my conscience. I don't know what he will do with those coins, or how will he get enough money to fill his belly. But I thought I have done my part, now others must do theirs and chip in to help this poor guy.

Is this charity? Have I done something good?

When I first joined a charity organisation, my friends looked at me in disbelief. "Do they pay you?" they often ask. "Why are you working there?" "How is the money managed?"

I was taken aback. Of course, if I were in their shoes and a friend told me that she's working for a nonprofit organisation, I might have asked those same things. And I realised that charity, in all its noble vision and mission, has been betrayed by organisations who misuse the faith of the public.

So I tossed the question to 30 of my friends. They are students, consultants, doctors. They are accountants, retail workers, engineers. And their thoughts on charity blow my mind.

"Charity is an exercise, a training, a discipline of shaping our character to become less of 'me', but more of 'us', as the community." Willy Tan

"Charity means giving something to those in needs without expectation or wanting something back in return." Sumi Oetomo

All of my friends believe charity is doing good to others. However, only a third of them explicitly say they practice charity actively, with some sponsoring underprivileged children to get further education.

While the most common perspective of doing charity is by giving money, some of my friends also define charity in terms of having "compassion", "love", and "responsibility". They believe that charity starts at home by doing good to people who are close to us.

Around 40 per cent of them believe that charity goes beyond to just sparing some cash, for example by volunteering with organisations or giving time and energy to help others.

“As an aside, I think a better way to frame giving to the poor is ‘stewardship’ – being responsible with what you are given. From that perspective, giving to the poor is one way we make good use of the opportunities and resources we have.” Jason T. Widjaja

“In my opinion, the nature of love must always reach beyond ourselves. And in terms of charity, the love that we give must be free from selfishness. It is purely a joy to give, and to give more than simply material things, truly because we love others.” Herman Justio

Aside from that, although many of them would love to do something more hands-on, like doing visits or teaching education to illiterate children, sometimes resources and time are their limitation. Dr. Heng Khuen Cheok is one of them. Due to his busy medical schedule, for now he “settle(s) for second best, which is funding the work being done.”

That said, despite the doing good in charity, a striking 30 per cent are skeptical about giving donation to organisations.

With statement like “only a small amount of our money goes directly to the needy”, people tend to decide to give up charity altogether. This is especially true where they don't get results or statistic report of what their money is doing, or if they find out that their money is used in publications instead of more practical things.

My friend Shaun Lee says he understands that people working for charity organisations may be volunteers, and that he doesn't “begrudge them of a few of life's luxuries every now and then as they have sacrificed many of their own.” But what important is if “everything is made transparent.”

A third of them even state they are cautious in choosing the organisations to donate their money, stating that they rather “say no” instead of “not knowing where the money goes”.

But there are some who think otherwise.

Business consultant Jason T. Widjaja talks about the importance of the issue of how much of our money will directly benefit people. Nevertheless, it is a wrong point of view by itself, as it is not supposed to be the foundation on whether or not people donate to charity organisations.

“I have problems with this because this indirectly implies that the people who work in these organisations – who often have no product or services to offer – are not worth your donations.” Jason T. Widjaja

For my then-classmate-now-Master's student Timothy Lam, he believes that people who are cynical about charity organisations “blame NGOs as a way to mask their own guilt”. He thinks some people may accuse organisations of not using money properly as a way to justify their inaction.

A passionate soul in helping others, Timothy believes that charity is a way of “giving back to society and to the world”, and “making the world a better place for everyone”.

“People who don't do charity work are missing out big time because you do get enormous satisfaction knowing that you have helped other people. So in a way, charity is a win-win situation. You feel good about yourself, and you also help other people.

“If you can't change the entire world, you can at least try to change the world of one person.” Timothy Lam

What about you? What does charity mean to you?

Education unveiled: What underprivileged students really need

Published Date : May 15, 2013

URL : <http://blog.ycabfoundation.org/education-unveiled-what-underprivileged-students-really-need/>

After being in the field for more than five years, 65-year-old Diding Rochandi shares his experiences as a teacher at one of our House of Learning for underprivileged children. Marcella Purnama brings you the story.

Mr. Diding Rochandi sure looks 50, wearing white polo t-shirt and training pants as he just finished teaching sports to the students at *Rumah Belajar* Duri Kepa. He greeted me, an uninvited guest, to the teacher's room, smiling warmly while he adjusted his sitting position, then asking, "What can I do for you?"

I smiled, my brain racing from reaching my notebook and pen to write down the details, taking out my phone to record our conversation, to introducing myself with the same friendliness that he showed me. I wanted to learn more about the children's education, and I have come to the right place.

"Teaching underprivileged children needs a different approach to teaching students in formal schools," Mr. Diding said.

"As these students' background is from low socio-economic status, we can't pressure and discipline them like we do in formal schools.

"Students in formal schools will obey the rules if we discipline them. Students here will run away if we do so."

Parents hold the key

Having been a teacher for more than 30 years, Mr. Diding then continued to explain about the speculative underlying reasons of why the students like to confront the rules, such as not wanting to wear the school uniforms appropriately to taking absence from school too lightly. He believes parents hold the key to this kind of attitude, as they may not actually understand the importance of education.

Without a strong foundation in the family to support their education, Mr. Diding admitted that the students will find it hard to change their attitudes that have been forged for many years living outside. He then said for drop-out students aged 16 and above, they may never have gone to school before so they may not be familiar about school principles.

To my surprise, however, Mr. Diding went on to say the students don't really feel ashamed to go to a school dedicated for underprivileged. Instead, they may have thought that going to underprivileged school is easier than other formal schools that have tight disciplinary status.

"One of our biggest problems is giving discipline, especially in treating students' absence," Mr. Diding said.

"Some students may only come 80% of the time, some 50%, while another 100%. They may state their economical status as a reason, or actually invent reasons to not come."

In spite of that, Mr. Diding further acknowledged that the students have the will to come; only this will is not strong enough. They still lack the reasoning to understand the importance of pursuing dreams and getting the right education. Thus, if they are being pressured and forced to study, they will back off. He sees this attitude regularly when students complain when he tries to give sports movements that are heavier than usual.

A former sports teacher of Mrs. Veronica Colondam, YCAB Founder/CEO at BPK Penabur himself, Mr. Diding wondered if this phenomenon is due to their mentality of not wanting to work hard. He shared the story of one of the students, who actually graduated from hospitality class and gotten a job at Grand Indonesia. However, when he experienced that the job is hard, he quit.

"I asked, 'Why do you quit?' And he said because it's boring, it's hard," Mr. Diding said.

"Even when the Air Conditioning broke at school and it gets hot just a little bit, the students protest, despite of they themselves not having Air Conditioning at home and being okay with that.

"Is this because of their mentality? Or is it just them who purely do not want to work hard?"

Giving hook instead of fish

To help change this mentality, Mr. Diding emphasized that apart from support from parents, it's also important to make the students independent.

"We need to give these students a hook for them to find their own fish," Mr. Diding said.

"We should not give them both the hook and the fish, for it will not make them independent in the future.

"This is important because if not, even after they graduate with certificates in hand they will go back to us to ask for jobs. And yes, quit after they learn that it's hard. They will then go basking on the streets, for they *can* make money out of it, and with their increasing age, they are then more prone to smoking, drinking, and drugs, which we really fear."

Mr. Diding then stressed the point that he doesn't want the children to go to school just to pass time, and neglect their responsibilities after they acquire that piece of paper. Instead, he wants them to acquire real skills to make them competent in the working world – to be standing equal with their peers who graduate from formal schools.

Changing the world of the underprivileged

When asked about his reflections of more than 30 years of teaching, he smiled widely.

"I am happy to be among students, to be giving guidance. If there are among those students who are successful, I will be very happy and proud of them," Mr. Diding said.

He then paused and released a small laugh, with his eyes casting sadness, "But if there are among those who are yet to be successful, I'm also questioning myself, 'Is this partly because of my fault in teaching them?'

"You know, you can't help but to wonder sometimes."

There is still a lot of work to be done, but Mr. Diding is sure that slowly, together we will be able to fight the system.

"There's still work to do, but with the same vision for these children, we can change their world," Mr. Diding said.

Dr. Iskandar Irwan Hukom: Doing my duties and responsibilities

Published Date : May 1, 2013

URL : <http://blog.ycabfoundation.org/dr-iskandar-irwan-hukom-doing-my-duties-and-responsibilities/>

In the eyes of the public, Dr. Andie, or how he is used to be called, is one of YCAB Foundation's strikers – he gives speeches, monitors programs, attends meetings, and holds campaigns since our opening in 1999. Today, he tells Marcella Purnama his side of the story.

Graduated from Faculty of Medicine in University of Indonesia in 1985, Dr. Iskandar Irwan Hukom "Andie" first decided to study anaesthetics, although he ended up not finishing the course. He then ventured to the world of Pastoral Counselling in 1996, and later pursuing his doctorate counselling degree in 2010.

A man full of smile in his mid-50s, Dr. Andie welcomed me to his office, releasing small laughs throughout the chat. As YCAB's Chief Operating Officer (COO), he had another activity scheduled in the next thirty minutes or so. However, 14 years back, he never thought of being this involved.

"I first met Veronica Colondam in 1998 who with her husband, Pieter Tanuri, thought of building a rehabilitation centre due to their concern about HIV/AIDS and drug use in Indonesia," Dr. Andie says.

"One year later, Veronica Colondam called me again and said, 'Doc, we have built an organisation, but it is not for rehabilitation, rather it is dedicated for prevention. Would you like to help us? Come to the office!'

"Then I asked, 'What can I help you with?' and she said YCAB needs medical expert to talk about the medical side of HIV/AIDS prevention. In the end, I did say yes, even though my heart still goes to rehabilitation."

This father of three young adults then served as YCAB Vice President Campaign in the drugs prevention seminars held in Indonesia. In 2001, he officially joined YCAB Foundation until now as the Chief Operating Officer.

Surprisingly, with assumption that drug rehabilitation is in his DNA, Dr. Andie himself says with a laugh that he is not really sure what his passion is. Besides loving to bike and run, as he just finished a full marathon in Bali last year, he admits that things just fall into place, as he becomes more and more directed into handling HIV/AIDS and drug issues.

"If people ask me, 'Why drugs?' I also don't have a concrete answer," Dr. Andie says.

"In the beginning, I didn't even handle drug issues. I was involved in handling people who are stressed, or in other words, psychiatric issues. Then, I raised an idea about making a drug rehabilitation centre in the psychiatric unit, as there was an alarming number of drug issues but so few rehabilitation centres.

"Over time, I'm learning by doing to handle drug issues."

During his 14-year-involvement in YCAB Foundation, Dr. Andie has witnessed the birth of many new programs; some include the opening of *Rumah Belajar* Learning Centres and Economic Empowerment section. He believes that as YCAB is dealing with humans, it will keep on evolving, which includes expanding from having only drug prevention programs to educational and financial sustainability programs.

Dr. Andie then elaborates the story behind the birth of YCAB learning centres. Research data shows children who don't have positive activities to do are very susceptible to fall on three things: violence, free sex, and drugs. As a result, YCAB thinks of a way to prevent these things from happening, which is by giving the children activities to do.

"The idea is simple," Dr. Andie says.

"We thought of giving activities on which they can use to get work."

When asked about his dream, Dr. Andie says as of a matter-of-factly that he wants to help those who are in his reach.

"My dream, generally, is to do my duties and responsibilities," Dr. Andie says.

"I need to do what's being given in front of me. I want to see young people to have the ability and knowledge to say no to things that can wreck their future.

"Even if I can't reach many people, at least I can reach the people in front of me, for example my own children, or my colleagues here."

Dody's story: From a school dropout to entrepreneur

Published Date : May 1, 2013

URL : <http://blog.ycabfoundation.org/dodys-story-from-a-school-dropout-to-entrepreneur/>

Six years back, school dropout Dody Syah Saputra would not dare to dream to become independent as he is now. Today, the 20-year-old has birthed his own small sewing business. Marcella Purnama brings you the story.

A beaming youth with big heart is how you would describe Dody. Meeting him in his rental workplace in Srengseng, Jakarta, Dody wears a dark grey t-shirt and blue jeans. We sit on the floor where piles of different fabrics lie. He smiles nervously, and yet while he has a difficult childhood, the spark of a little boy never leaves his eyes.

"I was born in Majalengka, West Java," Dody says.

"I am the second child of six. My youngest siblings are two-year-old twins."

Since young, Dody's father works in Jakarta as a bajaj driver. His mother used to work in Middle East to provide extra earnings. Now, she's a housewife taking care of Dody's four younger siblings.

Left alone in Majalengka, Dody, 14 at that time, decided to move to Jakarta to be reunited with his parents and older sister. He brought along his Primary School graduation certificate with him.

"In a sense, I ran away," Dody says.

"All my family is here in Jakarta and yet I was left alone with some relatives in Majalengka. I was lonely. I wanted to be with my family."

For the first six months, Dody didn't really do anything, as his father didn't allow him to go to work. However, his family lacked the money to get Dody back to school.

"Actually, I did not have the chance to work in Jakarta," Dody says.

"My Father always encourages me to not find work. He said, 'Don't go to work, you must go back to school.'"

However, during those times, Dody used to join his friends to become a three-in-one jockey to get extra cash. He did basking once, but left the profession as he didn't like the system.

Dody first encountered Rumah Belajar (RB), or House of Learning and Development, a school built for underprivileged children who have dropped out of school, through his older sister by three years, Mela. Seeing his older sister continued her education, an interest to learn engulfed Dody. He then joined the school to take his student profession back.

"I didn't dare to dream to be given this opportunity," Dody says.

"I got my senior high school certificate in October 2011."

During his time in school, Dody finds his interest to lie in fashion design. He starts to draw girls' clothing in his spare time, and then joining sewing classes provided by the school.

"It was not really my initiative," Dody says.

"My teacher, Mr. Purwanto, invited me to join the sewing classes. There, I learned a lot of stuffs."

Upon his graduation, in a selection process among the alumni, YCAB Foundation decided to supply him with seed capital of two sewing machines and a handful of other materials to kick start his career. From there, Dody starts to produce bags, clothes, iPad and computer covers, and many other products. He used denim material as his trademark as it can be easily produced with his machines.

A dream comes true

Right now, Dody can make 10-15 pieces a day. He wakes up at 7am every morning, then works until about 6pm with one hour break in between. If he has a deadline, he works until late, even on the weekends.

His business then expands and he recruits a friend, also a RB alumnus, Rizal, to help him. Dody is now earning enough for him and his partner.

When asked about his dream, Dody admitted with a laugh that during his childhood, he wanted to become a singer. Later in life, Dody dreamed to become a businessman.

"I really want to become a businessman, even though I really don't know how to realise that dream," Dody says.

"But I really want to be one."

Today, his business runs as he gets orders from YCAB Foundation, as well as getting extra money from door-to-door sale.

"My plan for the future is to focus on the marketing side instead of the production," Dody says.

"I love to interact with people. I like to sell my products directly. That way, I can see if whether my customers like or don't like my sales. It makes me happy if they say they like my products."

When asked if whether Dody wants to go pursue further study, without skipping a beat, Dody says with his eyes beaming, "Yes. I want to study Public Relation in university. My parents also support me, but there's still no way to go back to school."

Upon parting, Dody tells me his dream for the future.

"I want to provide for my young siblings' education," Dody says.

"I have to put my brothers and sisters to higher education.

"I don't want my siblings to pursue an education like me; I want them to pursue an education higher than me."

Meld Magazine

Introduction

Marcella Purnama was a journalist and columnist at Meld Magazine – Melbourne's international news website during her undergraduate studies. She joined the nonprofit organisation in September 2010 until January 2013 where she graduated and moved back home to Jakarta to work as a Content Writer.

During her time at Meld, Marcella has written over 60 articles in various genres including Entertainment, Features, Lifestyle, News and Opinion sections. Some of her writings have gone to become Meld's top articles, most notably the 2011 Top Opinion Piece, 2012 Top Opinion Piece, and 2013 Top Lifestyle Piece.

Website : marcellapurnama.com
Portfolio : marcellapurnama.com/portfolio
LinkedIn : linkedin.com/pub/marcella-purnama/34/525/761
Twitter : twitter.com/MarcellaPurnama
Facebook : facebook.com/mp.writer

*

About Meld Magazine

Meld Magazine was incorporated as an independent not-for-profit media outlet in September 2008 to reach out to international students in Melbourne, and provide students the opportunity to gain real work experience.

With no paid staff, Meld rely solely on volunteers. The founders of this magazine include present and former international students from various industries, including media and marketing, business, law and international student services.

For more information, visit www.meldmagazine.com.au.

Top Stories

[Melbourne's Top 10 Cafes](#) – Lifestyle [page 59]

Meld's 2013 top lifestyle piece – had more than 4,000 views by April 2013

[The Youngest Child Syndrome](#) – Opinion [page 122]

Meld's 2012 top opinion piece - had over than 3,500 views by September 2012

[How important are grades to you?](#) – Opinion [page 138]

Meld's 2011 top opinion piece

[3 ideas for a first date](#) – Features [page 53]

Had more than 4,000 views by September 2012

[Open till late: best places to study in Melbourne](#) – Lifestyle [page 81]

Had over than 7,000 views by September 2012

ENTERTAINMENT

The future of Indonesian cinema

Published Date : October 2, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/10/future-of-indonesian-cinema/>

INDONESIAN cinema has typically been associated with “weird movies” like sensual horror films. But the organisers of the Indonesian Film Festival tell Marcella Purnama they’ve witnessed a breakthrough.

Indonesian cinema has long been associated with sensual, horror, and irrelevant content. But the managers of this year Melbourne’s Indonesian Film Festival, Andrew Aditya and Kemal Cesar, have witnessed a breakthrough.

“Honestly, I think that Indonesian cinema has been going through a lot of vast improvements,” Andrew says.

“Looking a couple of years back, sure, there are a lot of weird Indonesian movies such as sensual horror films.

“However, if we see the trend now, it’s like the producers and directors have been getting their momentum. For example, last year’s *Boy’s diary* and *The Raid* have been screened internationally. One even went to Hollywood!”

Kemal shares this view, saying Indonesian producers and directors are ready to go to the next level. Indonesian producers and directors are eager to make movies that are more insightful and meaningful concerning issues around the country.”

“And year after year, the progress keeps on increasing.”

While there has been warm reception to Indonesian movies by international crowds, the industry hasn’t been receiving much support back home.

“We acknowledge that one of the problems of Indonesian cinema not progressing is not from the supply side, but from the demand,” Andrew says.

“Our Indonesian market itself is not ready yet for something that is quite sophisticated.

“Let’s say, even in terms of revenue in business, with a budget of 500million Rupiahs, a producer can make a horror movie that is able to generate revenue three times the size of their budget.

The supplier is ready, but the market is not.”

Andrew further emphasises how popular horror movies are in Indonesia. While there are a lot of good, meaningful Indonesian movies, they are not able to compete with others just yet.

“For example, cinemas in suburban areas are likely to screen horror movies, as they target low to middle class people,” Andrew says.

“On the other hand, cinemas in the city are more likely to screen Hollywood movies. So good Indonesian movies have hard competition in both the city and suburban cinemas.

“However, there is good news. Statistically, Indonesian film productions have increased its numbers compared to the imported movies.

Slowly, Indonesians will be aware of their own local, good quality movies.”

Nevertheless, as Melbourne is a multicultural city, Indonesian movies are always accepted with open hands.

"Seeing from previous years' experiences, the reception is good, both from the locals and Indonesians," Kemal says.

"Indonesians themselves miss watching Indonesian movies, and they come to IFF.

And the locals, especially the ones who appreciate and love movies, are curious to know about Indonesian culture – what lessons can be learned, what issues are presented, and what characteristics does Indonesian culture present."

One only needs to look at the various film festivals Melbourne has hosted – including Macedonian, Korean, Indian, and Singaporean, among others – to know he's right. Melbourne has a large, segmented market that can consume different types of cinema – including Indonesian.

This year, the Indonesian Film Festival hopes to showcase the archipelago's culture beyond the big screen as well.

"We are not here to just offer our culture through movies, but we also want to show our hospitality when the screening is held," Kemal says.

"Being friendly and hospitable to the audience is an important thing for us as IFF committees."

The Indonesian Film Festival 2012 runs from October 8 to October 13. Tickets are able to be purchased [online](#) or at the door. Check out the festival [website](#) for more information.

Meld Magazine is a media partner for the Indonesian Film Festival and we have double passes to *Dilemma*, *Lovely Man*, and *Mama Cake* to give away. Find out more [here](#).

Indonesian Film Festival 2012

Published Date : September 25, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/09/indonesian-film-festival-2012/>

THE Indonesian Film Festival is on again for the seventh time in Melbourne this October. Marcella Purnama has the details on the biggest celebration of Indonesian screen culture in Australia. Plus we have free tickets!

It's lucky number seven, and the largest celebration of Indonesian screen culture in Australia is coming to town.

Screening five movies in six days, the seventh Indonesian Film Festival will once again [fill the movie-goers appetite for Indonesian culture](#). The program includes a Meet and Greet session, a workshop and a seminar, an educational program which includes a movie screening for Australian high school students, as well as two drama and two comedies.

Located in RMIT Capitol Theater this year, festival managers Andrew Aditya and Kemal Caesar say they are thrilled for the opportunity to celebrate Indonesian culture in Melbourne.

"Since coming to Melbourne last year, by the time we literally stepped down from the airplane, we heard about IFF," Andrew says.

"Then, Melbourne University Indonesian Association's leaders asked Kemal and I to be involved in the festival, since the founder, Ronald Wicaksana, has gone back to Indonesia and he envisioned that IFF can be once again screened in Melbourne this year."

Kemal took the opportunity to be involved too.

"We saw an opportunity to be involved in something big," Kemal says.

"If we can, then why not? And it's film, it's something that we personally enjoy ourselves."

When asked what movies both of them would recommend, they both agreed on the *Lovely Man*.

"It tells the story a girl from the village, who comes to Jakarta for the first time to find her father.

However, as she arrives, she finds something very different about her father," enthuses Kemal.

"If you want to know more, watch the movie!"

The [Lovely Man](#) has also been screened at other film festivals. It was accepted into the official selections at the Hongkong International Film Festival 2012, the Palm Springs International Film Festival 2012, and the Busan International Film Festival 2011. The film's lead actor, Donny Damara, won the Best Actor in Asian Film Awards 2012.

Kemal says the opening movie, [Dilemma](#), is also in demand with its unique concept. The movie consists of five plots knitted into one cohesive story. It won the title of Best Feature Film at DetectiveFEST 2012 in Moscow, Russia.

"Dilemma is an omnibus movie – so it has five different stories directed by five different actors that tell stories about individuals' life complications, decisions, and lessons," says Kemal.

"Each character has his own different background and they face different issues."

On the last day of the screenings, IFF will showcase two comedies: [Mama Cake](#) and [For Ucok](#).

Despite being branded as a comedy, [Mama Cake](#) addresses the important issue of finding one's own identity. It tells the story of Raka, a 25-year-old bachelor who comes from a wealthy background but does not complete his studies. With no idea of what to do with his life, he finds himself trying to fulfill his grandmother's last dying wish – to buy the famous Mama Cake's chocolate cake.

[Ucok](#), on the other hand, tells the story of a mother's obsession with finding her daughter a husband. But being the stubborn daughter that she is, she decides to pursue her passion of making movies rather than stepping into a marriage. Money, however, is her problem.

In addition to these screenings, a [Meet and Greet](#) session with Dilemma's artists and directors will be held on October 9 at 7pm at Ramen Ya, The Paramount. A [seminar](#), followed by a [workshop](#) will be held on October 10.

Kemal says the Indonesian Film Festival will also offer an educational program for high school students. It will be screening [Ciliwung Troops](#) to Grade 8 to 12 students who study the Indonesian language.

"By joining this educational screening, we hope the local high school students are able to practice their own Indonesian language," he says.

With a combination of movie genres, workshop, and events, Andrew and Kemal hope to set the benchmark of how Indonesian culture should be celebrated.

"One of the the purposes of this movie is to bring entertainment to Indonesians," Andrew says.

"But we don't want to stop there.

"We also want to introduce Indonesian culture to the locals. At least, from Indonesian language used in the movies, people would get a taste of what Indonesian cultures are able to perform."

The Indonesian Film Festival 2012 runs from October 8 to October 13. Tickets are able to be purchased [online](#) or at the door. Check out the festival [website](#) for more information.

The Indonesian Film Festival is giving a lucky Meld Magazine reader a double pass to *Dilemma*, a double pass to *Lovely Man*, and a double pass to *Mama Cake*.

For your chance to win, tell us which movie you would like to catch in the comments section below. Remember to provide your real name and email address so we can get in touch with you.

The competition closes on Friday, October 5 and is only open to those living, studying or working in Victoria. Winners will be picked in a random draw and announced via email on Saturday, October 6.

Project O: Revive 2012

Published Date : September 14, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/09/project-o-revive-2012/>

RMIT's Indonesian students association, PPIA RMIT, is tapping into school memories to help raise money for the underprivileged in Indonesia. Marcella Purnama tells you more about the creative project.

RMIT's Indonesian Students Association is tapping into school memories to help raise money for charity. The team at PPIA has partnered with non-profit organisation Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa, or [YCAB](#), to host a series of events around the concept of reminiscing. The initiative is called Project O: Revive and it aims to help educate and encourage young Indonesian students overseas [to help social development](#) in communities back home in Indonesia.

Project O's head of media relations, Adila Harsono, says by trying to revive people's school memories, the team hopes to raise awareness about the underprivileged people who are unable to attend school and thus do not share the same melancholy about school that many of us have.

She adds PPIA are thrilled to be supporting a charity again after the success of their collaboration with Care4kids on Project O: Reboot last year.

"The 'O' in Project O is born from the philosophy that our team would continue to give, to one day share the wonderful experience life has given us with those who aren't fortunate enough," she says.

"This is a legacy we would like to pass on for future PPIA RMIT students."

Project O will be holding a Charity and Music Night [on September 29](#), aptly themed "Reviving Memories of School". The event will feature an educational quiz competition (much like the ones you had back at school) called *Cerdas Cermat* and celebrity guest stars will be present to entertain the crowd, including Ronal Surapradja and Tike Priatna Kusumah as MCs as well as rock and roll band, The Changcuters. During the show, the audience will be able to get to know the stars, while also supporting their friends in the competition.

The majority of proceeds from ticket sales (70 per cent) will be given to one of YCAB's education programs, HOLD (House of Learning Development), also known as "Rumah Belajar". HOLD is a place where school drop-outs and street children can continue their education, receive vocational training and job placement assistance.

Adila promises the night will be entertaining.

"It's a fun way of gathering people together while raising such an important issue," Adila says.

"We're hoping that we will inspire the Indonesian community here. I can bet, knowing them or not, if you come to our event you'll leave satisfied."

In order to raise awareness before the event, the project held [a series of campaigns](#) including "Dollars for Memories". At this event, people picked "memory cards" featuring their favourite school memories- for example "I miss my basketball team"- before a picture of them holding the card was taken. The picture was then [posted on Facebook](#).

Another initiative was "Memory Lane Snacks", where a variety of food was sold to entice the customer to recall favourite memories, such as eating in their school canteen.

Adila is hopeful Project O: Revive will be a success.

"In a nutshell, we have a vision to help give a decent education for unfortunate children in Indonesia," she says.

"We want them to experience what it is like to be in school, to learn, to feel you have achieved something.

"We as a team truly believe that when you have the right tools, and by that we mean education, you are set. You have everything you need up in your brain."

[Project O: Revive's Charity and Music Night](#) will be taking place at 6.30pm on Saturday, September 29 at Storey Hall, RMIT University. Tickets can be purchased for \$20 by contacting Adila Harsono on adila.harsono@ppia-projecto.com.

[Project O: Revive](#) is giving a lucky Meld Magazine reader a double pass to the event. For your chance to win, tell us what your favourite school memory was in the comments section below. Remember to provide your real name and email address so we can get in touch with you.

The competition closes on Thursday, September 20 and is only open to those living, studying or working in Victoria. Winners will be picked in a random draw and announced via email on Friday, September 21.

Charity concert: For the Love of Music

Published Date : August 1, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/08/for-the-love-music-charity-concert/>

THEY are not just a bunch of international students, they are a bunch of musicians trying to make a difference in this world.

INTERNATIONAL students in Melbourne with a passion for music are banding together again to do what they love most – and raise money for a good cause – or causes, in their case.

Taking place next Friday August 10 at 488 Swanston St, Carlton, this is the third charity concert the students are organising.

Four bands will be performing on the night, as well as solo artists and dancers.

Some may remember their [fundraising efforts](#) for victims of the Japan tsunami last year, and the [Key Change Charity Concert](#) in October.

But unlike previous years, organiser Jorji Yeoh says the group has chosen to support three organisations this year, made up of charities and communities.

Concert-goers can support the causes they feel most strongly about by dropping their tickets into one of three boxes representing [Domestic Violence Victoria](#), [A2I Campaign](#), and the international student community initiative Arrow Neighbourhood.

Domestic Violence Victoria is the peak organisation representing family violence services across Victoria, and actively seeks to ensure women and children live free from violence. Donations are used to support the needs of women and children affected by violence, development of new projects to stop violence.

A2I Campaign was established as a response to the issue of human trafficking. The organisation conducts independent research, planning, rescues victims of human trafficking, and provides comfortable and safe shelter for them around the world.

The Arrow Neighbourhood is an active community engaging international students based on Swanston St. The neighbourhood has opened up opportunities for students to make friends, find a support network, and plug into activities and events organised by students for students.

So if the opportunity to take a stand against violence or human trafficking, or to empower a community of international students to flourish sounds like a worthwhile cause to you, do save the date and buy a ticket simply for The Love of Music.

Tickets are sold at the door for \$10. The concert will start at 7.30pm on Friday, August 10 at Arrow on Swanston, Champions Ballroom, basement 488 Swanston St, Carlton. Check out the event's [Facebook page](#) for more information.

Fan diary: Notes from David Choi's Forever and Ever Tour in Melbourne

Published Date: May 30, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/05/fan-diary-david-choi-forever-and-ever-tour-melbourne/>

WHAT is it about meeting David Choi face-to-face that makes your heart skip a beat? Marcella Purnama finds out.

Down to earth, sincere and affable, YouTube singing sensation David Choi charmed audiences off-screen when he stopped by Melbourne earlier this month.

On tour to promote his new album "Forever and Ever", he played to some 150 fans – many of them students, at BMW Edge in Federation Square.

Nevermind it was a weekday night, that the school semester was in full swing, and assignment deadlines were looming. The opportunity to meet David Choi himself was an opportunity fans like Monash University student Jaykerr would rather die than pass up.

"I literally stopped breathing for two seconds when I saw him," Jaykerr said.

"It's like when seeing your girlfriend, your heart skips a beat. But when I see David Choi, my heart skips two beats."

Student Ai Vyn had a 7am class the next day, but her presence at the concert proved her dedication.

"I love his voice. I think his songs are really personal, and his performance is interactive. He actually talks to the audience while performing!" she said.

Opening act Melbourne based singer/songwriter [Emmy Bryce](#) warmed up the crowd and entertained them with her own songs, and when the much anticipated moment arrived for David to take the stage, everybody in the room screamed.

It was the first time Melbourne audiences got to hear him perform his new songs live, complete with a band.

For Melbourne University student Patrick, the Melbourne concert was the third time he had seen David perform live, having attended his concerts in Jakarta and Sydney.

He confessed he had rushed to finish an assignment that afternoon to make it to the concert.

"I'm here to watch him perform, and to support him," Patrick said.

"David Choi is a very nice guy, and very humble. He is sincere, and when he sings, there's not much packaging. It's just him."

Another student Thomas shared similar sentiments, saying "you can imagine him (David) being your friend".

"I think his songs are emotional. They talk about friendship, love, and ups and downs, and at some point we can relate to that," Thomas said.

For another fan Jason, it was the way David "put his thoughts into his lyrics and song writing".

"I love the way he puts his message in his music", he said.

But while the songs touched on familiar topics like friendship (You Were My Friend), love (This and That is Life) and heartbreak (Lucky Guy), it was clear the singer-songwriter had taken some bold steps in a new direction, varying his sound and style. You only had to look to Forever and Ever, the song the album's titled after to figure that out.

That said, David also performed some oldies but goodies, with ballads like That Girl, Won't Even Start, and By My Side.

A concert would also have been incomplete without a meet and greet session, where fans had a chance to brush shoulders, get their albums signed and had their photos taken with the down-to-earth and affable favourite star.

Escape from Camp 14 (Book Review)

Published Date : May 22, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/05/escape-camp-14/>

ESCAPE from Camp 14 is a chilling true tale of one man's escape from the only home he'd ever known – a North Korean political prison camp.

ESCAPE FROM CAMP 14

By Blaine Harden

Pan Macmillan, \$29.99

Shin's first memory was an execution.

He was four-years-old at the time, too young to understand what was happening right in front of his eyes. He remembered the guards taking aim, firing their rifles three times.

Ten years after that first execution, Shin was back at the site where it happened – handcuffed and blindfolded – and he believed it was his time to die.

When a guard removed his blindfold, he saw the gallows and wooden poles.

But it was not Shin's execution day – he was merely there to be a spectator. He watched as his mother and older brother were dragged to the site – one hung, the other shot dead by three guards.

As he watched them die, Shin didn't feel sad, guilty, or even remorse. He was angry. He was angry with his mother and brother for planning an escape without him. And for leaving him to be beaten up by the guards as a result.

Fifteen years later and a free man, Shin admitted he was responsible for their executions.

Escape from Camp 14 by Blaine Harden tells [the horrifying true story](#) of Shin Dong-hyuk's life in a North Korean political prison camp. Shin eventually escaped, finding his way to China, South Korea, and finally to the States. But before all that, he grew up in a remarkably different world – a world no could imagine still existed in the 21st century.

Born and raised in Camp 14, Shin believed he was a sinner, the son of parents who had betrayed his country. His father's sin was being the brother of two North Koreans who had fled to South Korea. Shin's sin was that he was his son.

Shin knew no love. Friendship and family relationships turned into betrayal over the never-ending quest for food. Children were beaten to death if they were caught stealing. Women disappeared if they got pregnant without permission, even if they were raped by soldiers.

Starvation was a daily routine. Shin's happiest memories of his past were when his belly was full.

At 14, he found out his mother and older brother were planning to escape the prison camp. Brought up to respect and be loyal to the camp, Shin reported their escape plan to a guard – a move that would eventually lead to their executions, and his own torture.

Years later he met Park, a new prisoner who told him of the outside world. Shin began to hope. Together they plotted their escape. Park didn't make it. Shin did.

Now, even after escaping, his past still haunts him.

"I escaped physically," he says "I haven't escaped psychologically."

Reading *Escape from Camp 14*, it's easy to understand why. Gripping as the memoir is, it unveils the darkest sides of humanity – how we are capable of treating one of our own worse than animals.

And as Blaine Harden writes, what is surprising is how little is being done about it.

"High school students in America debate why Franklin D. Roosevelt didn't bomb the rail lines to Hitler's camps," he says.

"Their children may ask, a generation from now, why the West stared at far clearer images of (North Korean leader) Kim Jong Il's camps, and did nothing."

For those who don't know much about North Korea, *Escape from Camp 14* is packed with enough information to give any reader a comprehensive understanding of its history .

The book is highly-recommended as it tells "a story unlike any other" with its integrity shinging through on every page, to quote award-winning author Barbara Demick .

But just a warning: this is not a read for the faint-hearted.

Trio Lestari in Melbourne: “Don’t forget Indonesia”

Published Date : April 25, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/04/trio-lestari-melbourne/>

BEFORE tonight’s show, Meld’s Marcella Purnama catches up with Indonesia’s Trio Lestari and finds out how this non-traditional boyband is set on making waves both on and offshore.

Heavy rain, broken umbrellas and the bitter Melbourne chill did not dampen the spirits of international students who turned out in droves to meet their favourite stars from Indonesia Trio Lestari.

The trio are due to perform at the annual Indonesian cultural showcase [Etcetera](#) this evening, but took time out before the show to meet their supporters at Ramen Ya Paramount Restaurant last night.

The 200-strong crowd comprised students from universities all around Victoria, including Deakin, RMIT, Monash, Swinburne and Melbourne universities. It was the first time many of them would have gotten to see Sandhy Sondoro, Glenn Fredly, and Tompi – all soloists in their own right – perform together as a band.

Formed last year, the trio stand apart from other traditional “boybands”.

While Sondoro, Fredly and Tompi have all recorded individual albums which have sold widely in Indonesia, the trio revealed yesterday they had no plans to cut an album as a group.

Instead, the trio are focusing their efforts on live performances and starting a “cultural movement for a better Indonesia”.

Tompi, who is also a budding plastic surgeon, says the trio’s musical journey began when he was performing at Indonesian artist Cornelia Agatha’s birthday bash, and it was there where he first met Sondoro.

They decided to collaborate and perform together on stage, but as preparations went ahead, they felt there was still a missing element.

They thought Fredly would be the perfect “magnet” to knit the group together, and so Tompi plucked up the courage to pick up the phone.

“Before that we rarely contacted each other, but it turned out that Fredly had some very amazing ideas. To be honest, the idea of Trio Lestari was his brainchild,” says Tompi.

“The three of us got together, and we decided to make this movement – a movement of culture.”

Their performances are unique, blending music and talkshow elements. Despite their socio-political commentaries often being blanketed by humour, they are unafraid to speak their minds about the causes they are passionate about.

“Every time we go on stage, we will talk about the people struggling with famine, the people who need help, or even the people who need to sit up and take notice,” says Tompi.

For Fredly, it’s about remembering where one comes from.

“The mission is to never forget your homeland. Because for me, in this global era, identity becomes very important,” he says.

“When the nation's leaders are busy thinking about politics that align with the Western culture, I think it's time for us to move back towards identity.

“That's why, never forget Indonesia. Never ever forget your homeland, Indonesia,” he tells the crowd of teenagers and 20-somethings from Indonesia who have come to Melbourne in search of better education and brighter prospects.

Trio Lestari will be performing live at Colours of Indonesia, Etcetera 2012 tonight at the Melbourne Convention Centre. Doors open at 5pm, but tickets have now sold out. Follow MUISA on Twitter or Facebook for the latest updates.

O-Week: Clubs and Societies Expo 2012

Published Date: February 24, 2012

URL: <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/02/o-week-clubs-societies-expo-2012/>

MELBOURNE University's Parkville campus was a hub of activity as students turned out in droves to explore the annual Clubs and Societies Expo. Meld reporter Marcella Purnama brings you the highlights.

FREE donuts, balloons, discount vouchers, goodie bags, chocolates, cupcakes and cokes – everything and anything under the sun literally – are on offer as clubs and societies from Melbourne University spruik their memberships to students in a two-day expo, which ends today.

The expo is one of the multicultural highlights of O-Week, especially for new students who are eager to plug into uni life, pursue their extra-curricular interests, or connect with people from their home countries.

When Meld Magazine visited yesterday, a myriad of clubs and societies were dispersed all over university, from Union House and all the way to the South Lawn.

At its peak, there would have been a flurry of some 300 students signing up to the clubs of their choice outside Wilson Hall, and another 500 squeezed inside the venue.

By midday, first year Arts student from Malaysia Yin Jen Lai had already signed up to nine different clubs. On his list were the Malaysians of Melbourne University (MoMU), the Media and Communications Student Society (MaCSS), Fotoholics, the Engineering Music Society (EMS), Badminton Club, Tennis Club and the Pool Club.

"First year is a great time to join as many clubs as possible. You have more free time compared to second or third year students. I am really excited and looking forward to studying here," Zed said. Club committees were also doing their best to attract new members, wooing them with discounted early memberships and free gifts.

Yenn Yinn Lim, the secretary of Fotoholics, said they have more than 300 new members sign up every year. The photography group holds a variety of events for its members throughout the year, including photoshoots, camps, and day trips.

There was also a sizeable group of students gathered in front of the Malaysians of Melbourne University (MoMU) booth. Publicity director Elaine Teoh said the club attracted more than 300 members last year, and 200 students have signed up so far at the expo.

"This year we will be hosting a Welcome BBQ event, the Annual Ball, and a Great Ocean Road trip, among others," Elaine said.

But the club isn't exclusively for Malaysians, she said.

"There are many Chinese, Vietnamese, Singaporeans, and Koreans as well. People are interested to study more about our culture, especially the food."

Planted next to MoMU was the Korean Students Society. Likewise, not all of its members are Korean.

Committee member Scarlet Kim said students like to attend their Korean language classes, which they offer to non-native speakers at various levels of competency.

The club had some 220 people join last year, and they are expecting more new members this year.

For other students, life on campus involves finding a faith community to connect with.

Near the doors of Wilson Hall were second-year commerce students from Singapore Jeremy Sia and Kang Dipeng, who were actively inviting new international students to join the Melbourne University Overseas Christian Fellowship (MUOCF).

"We want to be a support group for these newcomers, so they feel like they have a family here in Melbourne," Jeremy said.

Other clubs like Fresh Life First are centred around health and wellbeing, and run events such as ultimate frisbee, marathons, hiking, and kayaking.

Club president, Master of Engineering student Pavneet Sinam, who is also a personal trainer, said he was passionate about promoting a healthy lifestyle through nutrition and exercise.

Melbourne University's Badminton Club had a novel way of drawing attention – students scored a small prize if they could direct the shuttlecock into a bin using their back-hand.

Anyu Quah, a first-year Commerce student from Singapore said that she had already joined the Singapore Students' Society (SSS), and was planning to apply to more clubs.

"The O-week has been quite busy. I have been to some talks, attended welcome lunch, went to the expo, and met some friends," she said.

There has also been a growing interest in the Anime Club.

"Many local students join us because they don't know much about anime. We have anime screening every day of the week at lunchtime," committee member Karen Li, a final-year Science student at Melbourne University, said.

But students signing up to clubs weren't all first year students.

Final-year Science student Esther Wong said she was signing up to the Chinese Music Group and Melbourne University Dancesport Class (MUDC) this year.

"I have watched Mulan performance by the Chinese Music Group last year and it was really good, and I wanted to be a part of it. I am also interested in joining because I want to get involved in Melbourne University and to get to know more people, have more friends," she said.

With so much going on both on and off campus, students should hopefully be on to a good start this semester.

The Supper Market at Abbotsford Convent

Published Date : February 20, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/02/supper-market-abbotsford-convent/>

BORED of spending another summer evening at the beach, shops or park? Don't stay at home, jump aboard a truly authentic Melbourne experience and visit a night market.

But not just any night market. Last week, Meld stopped by the absolutely unforgettable Supper Market at Abbotsford Convent and we loved it!

Back for its third year, the Supper Market is about to end for this summer, but you still have one more chance to go on Friday February 24 from 6pm to 10pm. So don't miss out!

Taking advantage of daylight saving, this market is a great excuse to stay out late savouring city life. Reveling in the great park atmosphere, you can try treats from the various multicultural food stands and buy from local designers selling their arts and crafts.

Founder Binh Ray says one of the best things about the Supper Market is the beautiful location it's in.

The Abbotsford Convent might only be 4km from the CBD, but it has a historical flair all of its own.

"You can purchase food from the food stalls and have picnics. As the sun sets, the atmosphere becomes a magical setting for all to enjoy," Binh says.

"The Abbotsford Convent has historic buildings and gorgeous garden grounds, both of which visitors are able to explore after their alfresco dining experience."

While it's one of the smaller night markets in Melbourne, the Supper Market is known for its intimate setting, delicious food and short queues! Plus, you don't need to fight for a seat or for a good spot on the green grass.

And if you come between 6.30pm to 8.30pm, you can listen to local musicians playing live music while you eat.

The food on offer comes from all over the globe. You can try the Spanish cocktail favourite, Sangria, Himalayan dumplings, Australian calamari, French provincial casseroles, Biyani rice and Turkish pastries, not to mention freshly made juices and desserts that range from the unique bretzel (big soft pretzel) to the downright delicious chocolate cake.

Once you're suitably stuffed, you can stroll along the small market and see the famous Kenyan beads on sale or Thailand handbag makers and bring home some treasures.

That said, Binh insists it's not the food, music or crafts that make this market such a fantastic place it to be. The real stars of the show are the locals and tourists who come week in and week out!

"The atmosphere of people enjoying themselves with their friends and family is a wonderful sight for the event organiser," she says.

"They love the hawker food stalls serving home-cooked food from around the world, merrily drink wine and beer from the Boiler room bar and stroll through the stalls for treasures to take home.

"There are other twilight markets in Melbourne, but you won't find a more beautiful setting than the Abbotsford Convent to enjoy a night out. The atmosphere at this market is magical. It's all about enjoying yourself and loving the quality food!"

Meld had a blast at the Supper Market last Friday, but we do have one suggestion, if you want to sit on the grass and enjoy your international treats, bring your rug along and make a mini picnic with a mix of different dishes from all over the globe.

To get to the Supper Market, catch the train to Victoria Park Station on the Epping or Hurstbridge line and then walk 15 to 20 minutes to Abbotford Convent. Otherwise, hop onto the 200, 201, or 207 bus from Melbourne Central (Lonsdale St) and get off at the Clarke St bus stop. From here, it's a five minutes walk to the market.

The Supper Market is open from 6pm to 10pm for one more Friday night, February 24, and is located at the Abbotsford Convent, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford.

For more information, visit the Supper Market website.

Move over Brooklyn... Papua is claiming the pop 'n' lock

Published Date : October 12, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/10/we-came-from-the-east/>

WHEN we hear the word "hip-hop", the first thing that comes to mind is Americans or African Americans. Yet Jecko Siompo is Indonesian, and he can really dance hip-hop.

Taking place as a part of the 2011 Melbourne Festival, *We Came From The East* will be performed by Jecko's ten crew members – eight Indonesians and two Germans – and will showcase a mix between hip-hop and Papuan traditional dance.

The 36-year-old choreographer says even though the two dance styles are different in reality, they share a common style of movement.

"Hip-hop has a close relation with the traditional dance in Papua," Siompo says.

"Many dances that are born in America actually originated in Indonesia, yet it becomes contemporary dance as we know now as the technology is developed. If there was no technology, maybe the dances in America would be the same as in Papua."

A native Papuan, Siompo moved to Jakarta at the age of 18 and enrolled at the Jakarta Arts Institute, to study music. But after struggling to learn to read sheet music, he ended up pursuing the one thing he had taught his body to do since he was young: dancing.

"In Papua, dancing is a part of life. Dancing is our daily life. We who are born in Papua have learnt to throw spear, to catch fish, and to dance in religious terms from an early age. Our dance has a close connection to nature, and it's been rooted down in my traditions," he says.

After finishing his studies in Jakarta, Siompo honed his skills by studying dance in the better known birth place of hip-hop – the US. He then got a scholarship to study dance theatre in Germany at the Folkwang Tanz Studio.

His works have been performed in countries the world over, including Indonesia, Singapore, Germany, the US, and now Australia.

Most of Siompo's early works portray only a distant link with his Papuan background. But after years spent journeying through other cultures, he has made a conscious decision to never forget his indigenous roots, and now incorporates contemporary dance with traditional styles.

Dance like you mean it

Siompo's previous Papuan inspired pieces include *Rats (Tikus-Tikus)*, *The Sun is Shining in Papua (Matahari Itu Terbit di Papua)*, and *Rooms for Rent (Terima)*. He says even though he believes some contemporary dances and Indonesian traditional dances share the same roots, technology has created a big gap between them.

"In Indonesia, most dances that I learn are the traditional ones, and every movement of the dance has a meaning behind it. If we move our hand, there is a meaning. If we walk, there is a meaning.

"After studying in the West, I honestly do not see the meaning behind (the dances). I just practice my movements in terms of physicality. The contemporary dances have been contaminated by developing technology, and they become merely entertainment. It's all about technique, technique, and technique," he says.

By sharing the mixed-style *We Came From The East*, Siompo hopes to bring audiences around to his view of hip-hop's origins.

"*We Came From The East* shows that the embryo of almost all dance styles comes from the east of the world, and I'm specifically referring to Indonesia," he says.

"I want to say that actually the 'lost Atlantis' is there in Indonesia. And I believe that Indonesia has the oldest civilisation in the world."

Singapore's *The Strait Times* has called *We Came From The East* "a force to be reckoned with", while Indonesia's *Jakarta Globe* reported that "eventually the stage becomes a whirling blur of movement, limbs twisting and bodies twirling with speed and grace."

Animal pop

Widely known as a fresh and witty choreographer, Siompo will once again show his trademark style in this piece: the "animal pop", which mimics the movements of wild animals. He says nature makes up an important part of humans' lives – and has done so since long before the development of modern technology – and he wants to preserve it.

"In the old times, humans lived closely with nature. For example, to hunt a crocodile people must dance like a crocodile and, in a sense, take its spirit. After taking its spirit, he then is able to hunt the crocodile easily.

"So what's important is the connection between humans and the nature. Since the development of technology, humans are more and more separated from nature, thus the dance evolves as well," he says.

In parting, Siompo put forward this last remark: "I hope that all the audience that come will be entertained with what we perform from Indonesia.

"I truly believe that hip-hop was born in Papua. You don't have to believe me, but my great-grandmother told me."

***We Came From the East* runs from Tuesday October 18 to Saturday October 22 at the Malthouse Theatre, 113 Sturt St, Southbank. Tickets are \$25 (students) and \$55 (full).**

Students fund children's charity through Project O: Reboot

Published Date : September 24, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/09/project-o-reboot/>

WITH the success of their past events under their belts, PPIA – RMIT's Indonesian students association – is once again inviting Melburnians to get involved in their latest charity event, Project O: Reboot.

Taking place this evening, Project O: Reboot is a talent show aimed at raising funds to help Indonesian children receive a proper education. Working in collaboration with [Care4Kids Indonesia](#) (C4KI), the guys behind Project O: Reboot believe "education is going to break the poverty cycle".

The project's managers Sally Tam and Danny Tanoto say after ten years of KafeArt, the successful arts showcase PPIA has previously hosted, it was now time to start a new beginning.

"Our school is RMIT, and the image attached to it is arts," Sally says.

"For the past 10 years, PPIA RMIT hosted the KafeArt event that presented exhibitions on fashion, photography, music, and much more – showing arts in its many forms and splendour.

"But now we want to break everything that we had, and make a new project. So we asked ourselves, 'what's our passion; what's our vision?' And we came up with the idea that we wanted to do social work – charity work."

Danny shares the same vision. He and Sally started the project from scratch in October 2010, without resources, money, or people to back them up.

"We call it Project O, because we want it to be a project, which means that it's on-going," Sally says.

"'O' represents a never-ending circle, and the term 'Reboot' is used because we want to reboot everything, including the event's vision and mission."

"And 'O' is also like the number zero, which means you start from the beginning again," Danny adds.

"With Project O: Reboot, we want to provide an ongoing support for social work, and this year we are solely focusing on the education sector."

The talent show will feature three performances: a dance performance by [Echo Dance Crew](#), an acoustic guitar performance by [Maggie Mae](#) (Ogam and Barli), and a vocal performance by [Hendrawan Mulyono](#).

There will also be games and several performances by Indonesian artists including Amink, Naif Band, and Petra Sihombing.

Sally says support for the event isn't just coming from Indonesians. Project O: Reboot is open to the public and the Victorian Multicultural Commission has recognised it as an event that brings people from different multicultural backgrounds together. But it's worth noting that it will be run in Indonesian.

All the money raised will be donated to C4KI, which funds 21 children's education until high school. With this project, Sally and Danny hope to raise funds for C4KI to sponsor more children, providing them with resources like books and computers and repairing school buildings.

"C4KI does not open their own schools or orphanages, but they are funding the children who are not able to support themselves to get a decent education," Danny says.

"They focus on supporting the community in Tangerang and Parung, which are rural areas in Indonesia where the education system is still not fully developed."

Sally and Danny hope to raise \$13,000 to help support the children. They say they are committed to a non-governmental approach to charity so they will know the money is distributed straight to the children.

Danny is passionate about what Project O: Reboot envisages.

"Our vision is simple. If the last PPIA event was about fun – gathering people together, and then going home – now we want our audience to learn something: it's when we can have a good further education here in Australia, there are still children in Indonesia who can't even finish their basic education."

Playing on their arts strengths, Sally and Danny hope that, through this event, they can improve the Indonesian education system.

"Our aim is for lives to be changed," says Sally.

"Around 2 million children in Indonesia do not have a proper education. And if we put ourselves in their position, as someone who can't have access to education, it's really a big thing. Being granted a scholarship is like a life changing moment."

Project O: Reboot is taking place at 6pm on Saturday, September 24 at Melbourne Town Hall. Tickets can be [purchased online](#) or at the door for \$25.

Review: Face to Face

Published Date : September 12, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/09/review-face-face/>

WITH twenty international film awards at hand, David Williamson is one of Australia's most prominent play- and screenwriters. In collaboration with film director Michael Rymer, a thought-provoking, transformative Australian film has been created.

Released this week, *Face to Face* explores a different approach to justice, focusing on the wellbeing of the offender and the community instead of throwing the responsibility to the court. Adapted from David Williamson's 2000 play of the same name, the movie is based on actual case notes.

Ten people sit down on wooden chairs in what looks like a community town hall, facing each other nervously. The only calm, decent-looking, suit-and-tie-clad man sits silently in the middle. We soon learn his name is Jack Manning (Matthew Newton), and they are there because a young, hot-tempered bloke, Wayne (Luke Ford), has just smashed in the back of his boss', Greg Baldoni (Vince Colosimo), sports car. When Wayne indulged in this act of revenge after being fired from his job with Greg's construction company, he was presented with two choices: face his charges in court and potentially end up in prison, or face his boss in a community conference and maintain a slight hope of keeping himself outside the bars. He chose the latter.

Ten minutes into the movie and I'm betting half the audience thinks they know how the film will progress. But what looks like an insignificant, on-to-the-next-case type crime turns out to be something more complicated. As the movie unveils the characters' motivations one by one, the audience are proved wrong.

Wayne's workmate Hakim (Robert Rabiah), an Australian of Arab descent, soon splashes bitterness against Greg's mind-your-own-business attitude towards his workers, paying them less than he should. Therese (Ra Chapman), a quiet Asian accountant, raises her rage as well, complaining about the dirty-work she has to do for the sake of her boss' profit. Another workmate, Mr. Nice Guy Richard (Chris Connely), is then blamed for enabling racism towards Hakim by doing nothing to stop taunts of "Al Qaeda eats here". While Greg's personal assistant Julie (Laura Gordon) proves to be much more than a pretty face, his steely wife Claire (Sigrid Thornton), berates her husband in every way possible.

While the film raises a range of social issues – from bullying and intimidation to gender politics and racism – it is also spiced with humour, spurring eruptions of laughter across the theater. Surprises and plot twists keep the audience entertained and curious to know what will next be presented on the screen.

Despite *Face to Face*'s continuous flashbacks, all the action unfolds in a single room, which gives you the feeling you're watching [Buried](#) (albeit with ten people) all over again. Dialog makes up the movie's soul, causing some to tactfully describe it as "lengthy". If you have just finished your mid-term exams and want to kick back with a flick, you may well want to find your way to [Horrible Bosses](#) instead.

It is a very Aussie movie, with strong dialects and Australian slang, complete with very culturally-dependent jokes – some of which I got, some of which I didn't.

My expectations weren't completely fulfilled when it came to the cinematography – the scenes are very obviously shot on a hand-held camera, with clear changing of the lens' focus and blurriness to indicate who is talking.

Yet being a low-budget movie, filmed in only 12 days and without rehearsals, makes it deserving of a good hand of applause. A big eye-opener, *Face to Face* proves a good story can often beat a big-budget one, and will be a likely addition to the list of Australia's most original and impressive movies.

A very rich movie, *Face to Face* crams in a myriad of heavy social themes, but complimenting this is a good-humoured, highly entertaining nature. Yet it is an Australian movie, written by Australian playwright, directed by Australian director, acted out by an Australian cast, and embodying everything Australian.

It's a story which would satisfy every aspect of an Australian film-goers palate. But for others, I'm not quite sure.

Face to Face is showing at [Cinema Nova](#) and [Cameo Cinemas](#) until September 21.

Indonesian Film Festival 2011: a sneak peak

Published Date : August 15, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/08/indonesian-film-festival-2011-sneak-peek/>

THE largest celebration of Indonesian screen culture in Australia is about to hit town.

Screening nine movies in seven days, the sixth Indonesian Film Festival will give movie lovers a chance to see what Indonesian cinema has to offer. The program includes a diversity of genres, including drama, thriller, religious, romance, family, documentary, as well as short films.

Festival manager Yolanda Yasinta says the week of screenings at ACMI cinema is a huge step from the festival's humble beginnings, when it was founded by Melbourne University's Indonesian Students' Association in 2006.

"It's amazing how we have come this far," Yasinta says.

Going back to volunteer with the festival for the second time, the final year Melbourne University actuarial studies major says she enjoyed volunteering as the event documenter last year.

"I have developed a passion for movies since I was young," Yasinta says.

"When my friend, who was the fifth Indonesian Film Festival manager, asked me whether or not I wanted to join, I just simply said yes.

"It is one of those golden opportunities where you can ask questions and learn straight from the pros.

"Now, it's just days away from the event, and life's never been so hectic. I receive endless emails and phone calls, slept at 5am yesterday...but I am so excited to see what the festival will be like."

When asked about the recommended movies, Yasinta says with a laugh, "well technically, every movie is recommended, for sure."

Judging by the high demand, Yasinta says *Boy's Diary (Catatan Harian si Boy)* by Putrama Tuta has been one of the favourites. It tells a fictional story of romance and friendship between a group of young adults. The screening will be followed by a question and answer session with the director and the main actors.

"It's a very energetic movie, highly recommended," she adds.

The festival's opening night will be marked by the screening of *Border (Batas)* directed by Rudi Soedjarwo, one of Indonesia's most prominent filmmakers. The movie tells the story of Jaleswari, who is sent from Jakarta to the rural area of Kalimantan to promote modern education, but finds her assumptions challenged when she sees the value of the community's traditions.

The film is largely based on real-life tensions.

"Conflicts happen, and they still happen between the local people living in rural areas of Kalimantan and the business politicians of metropolitan cities," Yasinta says.

Another of the festival's offerings, *Question Mark (Tanda Tanya)*, is a spiritual yet controversial movie. Producer and director Hanung Bramantyo and casting director Zaskia Adya Mecca will attend the question and answer session after the screening.

"In this movie, we will see many scenes from the angles of Catholics, Muslims, Chinese, Javanese, and thus taste the rich diversity of elasticities and religions in Indonesia. However, instead that ideal 'unity in diversity', the film proposes conflicts between them," Yasinta says.

Belkibolang, a combination of nine short movies directed by nine different producers, centres around the theme of nightlife in Jakarta. This movie has traveled the world well, from the Hong Kong International Film Festival to the Rotterdam International Film Festival to the Jakarta International Film Festival.

The Perfect House, a psychological thriller by Affandi Abdul Rachman, tells the suspenseful story of unexpected happenings in a house where a child and private tutor reside. The producer, Vera Lasut, will be coming for the question and answer session.

In addition to the screenings, a movie workshop will be held on Sunday, August 21. It will be lead by well known Indonesian director Aditya Gumay and scriptwriter Adenin Adlan.

Then comes the shorter movies.

"*Red Umbrella (Payung Merah)*, which has won the Asian Short Film Award 2011 in Singapore, is such a breakthrough, and we are so proud of it," Yasinta says.

"Directed by Edward Gunawan, the 10 minute supernatural thriller narrates the story about a taxi driver at night, who was about to go home, but decided to take one last passenger."

The other short movie is a documentary by Wisnu Adi titled *A Story from The Border (Catatan dari Tapal Batas)*.

Further on the program, Indonesian Film Festival will also hold an educational session, screening *A House Without a Window (Rumah Tanpa Jendela)* for high school students who study the Indonesian language.

"We have chosen a G-rated movie on purpose, so that it will be suitable for all audience," Yasinta says.

With a combination of movie genres, workshop and events, Yasinta hopes the festival will have even higher standard this year, reaching out to Indonesian audiences as well as international ones.

"Through Indonesian Film Festival, we aim to promote and introduce Indonesia's cultural diversity towards Australian crowd," Yasinta says.

"Not only that, we also aim to change the views, especially the negative ones, about Indonesia," she says. "Even though we are miles away from home, we can still support and show our love by promoting a piece of our culture towards the world."

The Indonesian Film Festival 2011 runs from August 19 to August 25. Check out the festival [website](#) for more information.

The Indonesian Film Festival is giving a lucky Meld Magazine reader a double pass to *The Perfect House*, to be screened at ACMI cinemas, Federation Square, at 7:15pm on Sunday August 21. To enter the draw, simply email your name, address and contact number to pickme@meldmagazine.com.au, with the subject heading "Indonesian Film Festival".

Deadline for entries is Tuesday August 16. Winners will be notified by email.

Indonesian Film Festival 2011: an insider's look into the world of Indonesian cinema

Published Date : August 12, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/08/indonesian-film-festival-2011-special-feature/>

INDONESIAN filmmakers have gotten stuck with a reputation for making sensual [horror movies](#).

However, not all Indonesian films are like that, as the manager of Melbourne's Indonesian Film Festival, Yolanda Yasinta, is keen to point out.

"Unfortunately, my friends – who are in the early 20s like me – see Indonesian movies as those sensual horror films that have no moral value whatsoever," Yasinta says.

Yasinta concedes that some Indonesian movies are made just for the sake of entertainment, but many have more value than that.

"The last couple of months when Hollywood movies were barred from Indonesian cinemas, the cinemas were totally quiet, even though there were other good quality movies available," Yasinta says, referring to American filmmakers' decision to halt film exports to the country after the Indonesian government raised import taxes.

In a recent interview, TV personality Donita [told NTD Television](#) the ban saddened her, because Hollywood films were "the boosters for the Indonesian film industry to compete and improve".

The ban is gradually being lifted, with the final *Harry Potter* film the first American movie to hit Indonesian screens since February.

The Hollywood ban is reminiscent of an earlier time in Indonesian cinema, when foreign films were restricted. Many argue the influx of Hollywood films in the 1990s marked the end of a golden era in Indonesian cinema, characterised by popular films such as [Pintar Pintar Bodoh](#), *Nagabonar* and *Catatan Si Boy*.

And in some ways, the recent ban has certainly given locally made movies some time in the spotlight – if only by default.

But Yasinta believes Indonesian cinema deserves that spotlight all the time.

"Maybe Indonesian movies have not yet achieved the same standard as Hollywood movies, or even Thailand's, but we are definitely heading in that direction.

"Many new young directors have the vision not only to earn profit but also to produce high quality movies," she says.

"For me, this is what we should be proud of. The skill is there, it's now our job as Indonesians to support and promote Indonesian movies."

Nevertheless, other Asians and Westerners have a different perspective, and surprisingly it is a positive one.

"There are many local audiences who are enthusiastic to go to the Indonesian Film Festival," Yasinta says.

"These people are so enthusiastic to learn more about Indonesian movies and culture. They give credits to the producers, and highly respect the movies. This is the kind of support that I want for Indonesian cinema."

Yasinta hopes Indonesian cinema will receive greater recognition internationally, a hope that seems to be on track with Indonesian movies screening at several international film festivals.

"For me, it's not that other people have not known Indonesian cinema at all, but I'm sure that they must know even just a little," she says.

"Especially when just months ago Edward Gunawan's short movie [Red Umbrella](#) has won Asian Short Film Award 2011 in Singapore. The story of success must have travelled well.

"Not only that, [Belkibolang](#), which will be screened at the sixth IFF, has travelled to Hongkong International Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival, and Jakarta International Film Festival."

Yasinta says Indonesian cinema has shown some serious development over the years.

More young directors have shown their skills to the public, including Putrama Tuta, whose directorial debut, [Boy's Diary](#), will be screened at this year's festival.

"Apart from the [Boy's Diary](#), IFF's opening movie last year, *7 Hearts, 7 Loves, 7 Women*, is directed by a very young director, around my age actually, and movie is very, very good," she says.

That said, Yasinta emphasises they are not merely supporting the younger generations, but also honouring the senior ones.

"In the sixth IFF, we also screen [Border](#) by Rudi Soedjarwo as the opening movie. Mr. Soedjarwo is a senior on the field, and one of Indonesia's most prominent directors.

"But having *Boy's Diary's* director to be very, very young, we hope that we have given a good variety of Indonesian cinema to the Australian crowd."

The Indonesian Film Festival 2011 runs from August 19 to August 25. Check out the festival [website](#) for more information.

The Indonesian Film Festival is giving a lucky Meld Magazine reader a double pass to *The Perfect House*, to be screened at ACMI cinemas, Federation Square, at 7:15pm on Sunday August 21. To enter the draw, simply email your name, address and contact number to pickme@meldmagazine.com.au, with the subject heading "Indonesian Film Festival".

Deadline for entries is Tuesday August 16. Winners will be notified by email.

Sour Surfer (review)

Published Date: May 24, 2012

URL: <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/05/soul-surfer-review/>

Based on a true story, *Soul Surfer* is about the life of teenager Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb), who loses her arm in a shark attack and courageously overcomes all odds to become a champion again, through her sheer determination and unwavering faith.

Raised by surfer parents (Dennis Quaid and Helen Hunt). Bethany leads the idyllic, sun-drenched, surfer girl's life on the Kauai Coast, competing in national competitions with her best friend Alana (Lorraine Nicholson), when everything changes in a heartbeat. On Halloween morning, Bethany is on a typical ocean outing when a 14-foot tiger shark appears out of nowhere and attacks her.

As Bethany fights to recover and grapples with the physical and emotional scars, she is forced to confront a myriad of questions: Why did this happen? Why did she have to lose everything? Will she ever feel the joy and power of riding the waves again? And if she can't be a surfer, then who is she?

The devastating 2004 tsunami in the Pacific Ocean unexpectedly gives Bethany a new perspective. Traveling to Phuket, Thailand with her youth-group leader Sarah Hill (Carrie Underwood), she learns to look beyond herself and discovers she can make a difference in the lives of others. Filled with a new sense of hope and direction, she returns home with a renewed resolve to conquer her own limitations and set an encouraging example for people facing adversity.

At the National Championships, Bethany bravely faces off with her fiercest rival, Malina Birch (Sonya Balmores), and takes her astonishing one-armed surfing technique to the limit. But as the horn blows, and the suspenseful competition kicks off, Bethany is no longer thinking about the challenges of her body. Now, her surfing, her biggest dreams and her life have become about pushing her own physical limits to touch the souls of others.

Soul Surfer is infused with Christian values, as audiences witness Bethany's faith and perseverance to continue to surf despite her physical limitations. It comes across as "safe" and almost cliché, and you wish you could see more of the real-life struggles Bethany Hamilton would have faced.

Bethany's mean rival Malina and her dashing love interest are also fictitious additions to the true story to tick off the boxes of your typical Hollywood movie.

That said, the performances put up by the all-star cast are nothing short of excellent.

Robb plays Bethany well, portraying her faith and courage without descending to melodrama. Dennis Quaid and Oscar winner Helen Hunt are convincing as Bethany's stubborn, supportive dad and strict, loving mother, and country singer Carrie Underwood has also done well in her debut performance as an actress.

But what audiences would appreciate most of all, is getting to meet the real Bethany Hamilton and hear her story as the movie's closing credit rolls.

Subtlety may be lacking in *Soul Surfer*, but it doesn't take away the fact that the story is an inspiring and powerful one.

Soul Surfer opens in cinemas May 26.

Three things to do in Melbourne this summer

Published Date : November 26, 2010

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2010/11/three-things-to-do-in-melbourne-this-summer/>

WONDERING what to do with your time now that the exams are over? The summer months are a great time to explore Melbourne, and we've shortlisted three things you could do around town.

Disney magic

Many of us would remember watching and singing along to Disney classics like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

Walt Disney began adapting fairy tales for animation in the 1920s, and from now until April 26, you can relive some of the magic with [Dreams Come True](#), a Disney exhibition on show at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Federation Square.

Browse the archives of the Walt Disney Animation Research Library, including original concept art, story sketches, drawings, maquettes (preliminary models) and final frame cels (transparent sheets of celluloid used in the production of cartoons).

An Australian exclusive, the exhibition features artworks from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Princess and the Frog*, and Disney's latest animated feature, *Tangled*.

The exhibition is open daily, and students can get in at a bargain for \$12.

And if you'd like to see it all come to life, there's still time to catch [Mary Poppins](#) on show till February at Her Majesty's Theatre (199-219 Exhibition St). Tickets range from \$30 to \$150.

Now, how do you say supercalifragilisticexpialidocious again?

Chill out

Stay cool this summer and head to Dockland's [Icehouse](#) (105 Pearl River Rd). The world-class ice sports and entertainment venue opened its doors earlier this year, and contains two Olympic-sized ice rinks, stadium seating for up to 1000 people, and a specialist winter sports gym.

The skating rink has been transformed into the "North Pole of Melbourne" for Christmas, and "pond hockey" is back for those raring to shoot some pucks. Icehouse provides skates, pucks, ice-hockey helmets and sticks, and all sessions are supervised.

General skating is divided into "sessions", which take place at set times throughout the week for skaters of all ages and abilities, and includes special sessions like ice-dancing, music-video nights and live DJ sets. Tickets are half-price on Tuesdays. Skating lessons are also available.

A two-hour pond hockey session is \$25 or an additional \$10 on top of a general skating session which costs \$21 (concession) including skate hire.

Or, if you prefer to sit back and watch other people bust some moves instead, you can catch the Harbour Town Christmas on Ice shows running from December 2 to 24. American figure-skating champion Johnny Weir will be performing from December 2 to 4 in the first four shows.

Night Markets

And finally, there are the night markets which are a Melbourne summer tradition.

The [Suzuki Night Market](#) at Queen Victoria Market attracts thousands of visitors every year. Held every Wednesday from 5.30-10.30pm until March 2, there's plenty to see, hear, taste and do.

Make your way around the more than 30 food stalls open and tuck into food from all around the world, including Indian, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Spanish, Dutch and Middle Eastern. And there's stuff to take home – bottles of chutneys, mustards, olive oils, or blocks of fudge make good festive gifts.

Australia's renown for its wine, so don't miss sampling wine from Victoria's regional vineyards. There are three fully licensed bars at the market – so you can order a glass, or surprise mum and dad with a bottle for dinner.

And no market is complete without shopping, shopping, shopping – so go nuts poring over everything from clothing and jewelry through to original prints and plants from the more than 130 stalls.

The best part is, you can be entertained while you eat, drink and shop with live bands playing from two stages at the market.

FEATURES

Writing your resume the journalist way (part 2):

Structure

Published Date : November 1, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/11/writing-resume-journalist-way-structure/>

RESUMÉ writing isn't guesswork. Marcella Purnama has the recipe to help you write a job-winning perfect resumé without the stress or uncertainty.

In general, there are three parts to a resumé: the layout, the content and the referees list.

1. Layout

Start by browsing and researching other resumé, then choose a layout that you like. Choose something that is easy to read, and most importantly, be consistent in your formatting. Don't underline one part and bold the other if they have the same level of importance. Use a big enough font size and the exact same margins.

2. Content

This is the most important part of your resumé and there are different bits to this: the personal details, professional experience/internships, portfolio, education and other.

Personal details: Don't put in everything. They don't need to know about your tumblr and instagram accounts (unless you use them for professional purposes). Apart from the usual mobile number and email address, list your Twitter, LinkedIn and personal blog/website if you're applying for a job where social media marketing or writing is relevant.

Professional experience/internships: While most people choose to put their education first, I put my experience first. Why? Because nowadays everyone has an education. That means, education matters less than any relevant experience. Show your skills and highlight them. Describe what you have been doing concisely.

Portfolio: Don't dump everything in here, but list the things that will show your skills stretch across a broad range of genres and categories. For example, if you're applying for a journalism job, include examples of writing from a handful of different publications and websites, if any. If the publication is not well-known, include a four-to-five-word description. Don't assume your future employer knows everything or that they will have the desire to Google your publication. Something like "Meld Magazine – Melbourne's international students news website" will suffice.

Education: List your education briefly and concisely, including any awards, your general score or GPA and your degree (major).

Other stuff: This is where you can write about all those other work and volunteering experiences that don't fall under your professional experience category. This includes being a waiter, a volunteer for an event, a member of a special club or organisation. Highlight the point you want to make. For example,

did you gain teamwork skills, a responsible attitude or organisational expertise from that job? If so, sell it as an asset. As a general rule, don't include more experiences here than you did in your professional experience section. If you have two examples of journalism experience and five wait staff examples, include only the two best ones.

But what about the other interesting stuff? That patisserie course you completed, that basketball competition you won or singing competition you entered?

If it's completely irrelevant, cut it. Literally. Your resumé is not Facebook, it serves a different purpose. With a heavy heart I deleted my professional barista course qualification (hey, I'm a proud barista) and my badminton team involvement (proud of myself for being good at that too).

3. Referees list

I can't emphasise this enough, but only list relevant referees. Do not write "contact details are available upon request". It can make your prospective employer discard your resumé altogether. Your referee can be your editor, tutor or lecturer, but do not use another student as a "character reference". They are not qualified to give a reference.

End remarks

This is a cliché, but be yourself. Let your resumé reflect you. Play around with the ideas and break the rules if it's applicable for you. If done right, people will love a rule-breaker because they stand out. Emphasis on the "if it's done right" bit.

Hungry for more resumé wisdom? Read our introduction to resumé writing [dos and don'ts article](#).

Writing your resume the journalist way: the Dos and Don'ts

Published Date : October 31, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/10/writing-resume-journalist-way-dos-donts/>

WRITING resumés can be a pain, but Marcella Purnama has some expert tips that will have you producing a resume that's both easy on the eyes and makes you look good!

I have just finished writing my resume and I can tell you, it was a painful experience. But after 10 days, five editors and 13 versions later, my resume is finally done (or not). That's what you get for wanting to cram your 20 years of life into two good-looking pages.

I've come to the conclusion that your resume is like a book cover. The layout is the nice design. The content is the enticing blurb at the back. And your referee list is the cool comment from a respected industry person printed on the inside sleeve.

Of course, no one should judge a book by its cover, but when you're given 1,000 books to choose from, well, who doesn't? So do your future employers a favour and make your resume the best book cover they've ever read.

The don'ts of resume writing

Don't use a generic template:

Don't send a resume that's used the *insert name here*, *insert education here* template. Put some effort into designing something unique.

Don't be dishonest:

Don't write "working from 2010 to 2011" then say you have been working for two years, when it's only actually been from December 2010 to January 2011.

Don't oversell yourself:

Of course, you need to sell yourself and get across the awesome stuff you have been doing, but overselling is a killer and might come off as fake or exaggeration.

Don't write about high school stuff:

I actually just found out that no one cares if you were the leader of your student council, the editor of your yearbook or the winner of a spelling competition. The skills you gained from this area are no longer relevant, and it shows you haven't done anything noteworthy since leaving high school. Ouch.

Don't write about irrelevant stuff:

You are interesting, but just be interesting in the relevant area you want to get a job in. Only include experience or skills that are relevant to the job you're applying for. Then you can talk about all that other interesting stuff in the interview.

Don't write your objectives in a generic way:

Including an objective is optional, but if you do have one, remember a generic objective is, well, generic.

A good objective won't actually land you a job, but a bad one can cost you one, so I don't really bother with putting one. Frankly speaking, everyone wants to gain experience, utilise their knowledge and to put their theories into practice. You are not unique in this sense so unless you have a really awesome and unique objective, you're better off without one.

The dos of resume writing

Do use descriptive words:

If you are a journalist, the "show, don't tell" rule still applies. Instead of writing "good journalism skills", it's better to say, "wrote articles in different genres including news, lifestyle, entertainment, and opinion pieces". See the difference? The trick is to be specific and descriptive. Show exactly what you've done. Don't be vague.

Do stick to the two-page rule:

The more space you have the more chances you have to speak nonsense. If you can't edit and be concise with your own resume, how can you be concise with your own work in the future?

Do write a short, sweet and strong cover letter:

Write your relevant experiences clearly and highlight the most important positions and characteristics.

Do your research:

Look at resumes from people in your field (just Google them and you'll be surprised by how many there are) and browse for ideas and structure. List the things they have done well and the things they haven't. I showed my resume to my sister and she did extensive surgery (well, she is a doctor) on it and gave me links to other journalists' resumes online. Can you believe it? She is even more journalistic-minded than me.

Do show to others for feedback:

Get someone (or actually, someones) to review your resume. Preferably you want people who are experts in your field to read it. Of course, you can show your resume to your peers too. I showed my resume to five different people – one peer, one consultant friend, one media expert, one design expert (to check the layout) and one medical professional (my sister). They all contributed feedback to different parts.

Do check your grammar and do edit your resume:

Not once, not twice, but multiple times. This is your professional autobiography in two pages. And if you edit your assignments more than five times, you shouldn't edit your resume only twice.

Which tram traveller are you?

Published Date : August 14, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/08/which-tram-traveller-are-you/>

FROM The Sleeper to The Talker, there are all sorts of characters riding Melbourne's trams. Marcella Purnama takes a look at some of them.

If you're a student, odds are you catch the tram. And odds are you're one of those people who read during the journey. Or maybe you're the one who wears huge earphones, listening to techno beats. Or the one who talks non-stop. Or the one who steals a brief power nap, sometimes wearing sunglasses so no one will know you're asleep.

There are many types of tram travellers, but they seem to all fall within these typical categories – and odds are, you do too.

Here are Marcella Purnama's observations of the six different types of tram travellers. Which one are you?

Type 1: The Book Geek

These tram travellers take the extra effort to bring a 300g book around with them, despite the added weight to their bags. They are the people I envy the most, because they look so intellectual and are able to fully maximise their free time (they read books, on trams. Isn't it self-explanatory?). These travellers are usually women, in their late 20's or 30's, or men in their 30's, and most of them seem to have decent, professional jobs.

Type 2: The One Listening to Loud Music

These people are usually men in their early 20s, often dressed quite fashionably. They are used to listening to music at a very loud volume – so loud the person sitting next to them can hear it. My best guess is they are the cool people – the ones who don't give a second thought about what other people think.

Type 3: The Talker

The Talkers are the ones who can't be silent. They easily make conversation with anyone who looks friendly – even when you're not in the mood to talk to them. They can be either male and female, and are either loud, high school students, or members of the 'older generation' (think of those in their mid-30s). They're also often annoying, or kind-hearted. Depending on which one, you can give them a writhing look or wait for someone to ask them to keep their voices down. Or you can put on a mask and keep on smiling through their chatter.

Type 4: The Sleeper

This type of traveller sleeps every time he or she is on a tram. They may use sunglasses to camouflage their lack of alertness, or they're usually spotted leaning against a window. They can be both males or females, and their characteristics often vary greatly. Odds are, all we've all been this type of tram traveller least once.

Type 5: The Gadget User

Gadget addicts are usually Gen Y-ers and young professionals in their early 20's who just got into the workforce. They're the ones playing on their iPhones, iPads, Blackberries, and Smartphones. They may play games, read news, text their friends – but they're mostly on Facebook. They're constantly looking out the window, afraid of having missed their destination during their gadget-playing reverie.

Type 6: The Daydreamer

The Daydreamers are those who seem lost, across space and time. They sport empty expressions while they look outside the window or stare blankly at the person sitting across them. They make sudden movements – especially when they realise they missed their stop ...three stops ago. Most tram travelers have been in this state at least once..

And last, but not least, there's...

Type 7: The Fare Evader

Fare evaders are constantly keeping an eye on the people who board the tram, fearing they may be ticket inspectors. If that's the case, evaders are usually fully prepared to step off as soon as the authorities step on. These travellers also feel relieved if there are many people travelling on their tram, because this means it's less likely inspectors will check their tickets.

Do you agree with Marcella's categories? Have you encountered different kinds of tram travellers?

Social media lifeline for international students

Published Date : June 12, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/06/social-media-lifeline-international-students/>

SOCIAL media is for most international students as important as breakfast is for the body. For some, it's oxygen.

"I check my Blackberry every morning and the last thing I check is, well, my Blackberry too. I should really change. " ST ♂

International students spend a third of their waking up time on social media, with more than half making surfing the net a priority in their lives.

The survey was conducted on a sample of 21 Melbourne-based international students aged between 18 and 25-years-old.

Around 60 per cent of students said going on Facebook or Twitter is the first thing they do after waking, and the last activity before bedtime.

International students spend an average of three to four hours per day online, with males and females equally hooked on social media, and the biggest motivation being the need to "be in touch" with the world.

Only one out of 21 international students surveyed didn't own a smartphone.

Nearly 30 per cent of the students surveyed said they receive complaints about their social media habits, and around 16 per cent of them said they can't go a day without checking Facebook or Twitter.

"I reckon the only things preventing me from becoming fully addicted are a) my lack of a smartphone prevents me from constantly checking up on social media; and b) all the constant updating gets quite overwhelming after a while, so I stop and take time to process the deluge." RY ♀

"[Social media] has its pros and cons. It's a great way to share resources and meet like-minded people. But it may cause unnecessary distractions or divided attention, for example by checking your Facebook or Twitter every opportunity you get." JT ♂

But while all the students surveyed said they use social media to keep in touch with friends, the majority regard social media as a "double-edged sword".

Some students cite feelings of irritation when real time interactions give way to social media engagement at social gatherings.

One student said nothing could beat face-to-face meetings ultimately, and wished people would make more of an effort to "put down their smartphones and engage the person sitting in front of them".

"People need to connect more often, not through the cyber world, but in the real world. It's sad that technology can ruin people's relationships. I think too many people try so hard to be famous in the cyber world that they forget how to really 'connect' to others," the student said.

"I think social media is a wonderful tool for connection and networking, but it's a double-edged sword, because like all powerful tools it can easily be misused to disastrous consequences." RY ♀

"I miss the good old days where people meet and chat with a real conversation instead of talking about other's statuses on Facebook or Twitter. That's just wrong." CNM ♀

Half of the students surveyed said they rely on social media for their source of news, and more than 80 per cent said they have Facebook "open" while surfing the net.

The survey also showed while most people said they can live a day without social media, many indicated it would usually not be out of choice, but because they are "on holiday", or have "no connection".

Two of the students surveyed said the deprivation from Facebook or Twitter for a day would significantly alter their mood.

But it's not an admission students are proud to acknowledge, like one of the students surveyed, who said that while she had not received complaints from family or friends about her social media habits, she was "disappointed to have spent so much time" online.

Why Melbourne really is the most livable city in the world

Published Date : December 9, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/12/melbourne-livable-city-world-international-students/>

INTERNATIONAL students generally complain about delayed trains, overpriced public transport, increasing rental fees, and expensive food in Melbourne. When news came out that the city had been named the world's most livable, I had my doubts. For people living here long-term, yes – maybe Melbourne was the most livable city in the world. But I was not so sure that was the case for the poor students who were often referred to as the “cash cow” of the city's tertiary education industry.

But on a recent four-day holiday to Sydney, I began to realise why Melbourne was worthy of its title – even for international students. I have to say my holiday wasn't a pleasant one overall, and after 24 hours in Sydney I was homesick – longing for a freshly brewed latte at my local Melbourne cafe, with poached eggs and smoked salmon on sourdough.

Then came the ultimate realisation: despite its flaws, I am proud to call Melbourne my home. Here's why:

1. Melbourne may be the 21st most expensive city in the world, but Sydney is the 14th

Ever think your Melbourne rent is expensive? Well, Sydney tops that. While the average two-bedroom apartment in the heart of Melbourne costs around \$400-500 per week to rent, in Sydney, this goes up to \$800 per week. Not to mention the price of food. I never managed to find a meal for under \$10 – something that's common in many of Melbourne's cheap noodle, sushi or sandwich joints. I am still feeling the effect of my Sydney holiday on my bank account.

2. Sydney buses vs Melbourne trams

There are no trams in Sydney. Well, there are, but they're not the main inner-city public transport system as they are in Melbourne. According to my friend who is a Sydney resident, trams are for tourists as they are quite expensive. Not only does Sydney have very pricy public transport fares (a weekly full-fare public transport cost ticket around \$50, compared to \$30 in Melbourne), but its bus system is also very different to Melbourne's – and I have to say that it is quite confusing.

Sydney's CBD is double the size of Melbourne's and we had to explore it on foot (for once your expensive bus ticket is validated, you can't use it anymore – no two-hour fare!) I came back to Melbourne in dire need of a foot massage.

3. The friendly people – or not

The first thing I did when I arrived in Sydney was visit the tourist information center at Darling Harbour. I expected a warm welcome, but the two ladies who were talking to each other behind the counter looked thoroughly annoyed that I had interrupted their voracious chatter. One of them replied to my questions in short and unhelpful sentences and resumed chatting. As the first point of contact for a Sydney newbie, she left me wondering about the hospitality of this tourist city.

4. Drivers, roads, jaywalkers, one-way roads, taxi zones, traffic...

I missed driving and walking in Melbourne. The drivers are so hot-blooded – honking everytime they have the chance, speeding through every yellow traffic light possible. Giving way to other drivers is a rare sight in Sydney. You want to drive in Sydney? You've got to earn it.

The jaywalkers are even worse. I don't think they care about their safety, and they walk as if they are going to live forever. Crossing on the red is normal in Sydney – not just three seconds before it turns green, but when cars are going by. I have no idea why they think another minute of waiting will cause them such harm.

Sydney has lots of one-way streets, and an impossible amount of taxi-only parking. To drive and to find parking in Sydney was no easy task. Plus, the roads are so narrow, and oh, don't even get me started on the traffic jams!

Sydney has its flaws, but I have to give special mention to the restaurants, which are generally fancier and nicer than those in Melbourne. Trying the pastries at Adriano Zumbo's restaurant, eating fresh seafood at Fish Market, and delighting in the succulent pork ribs at Hurricane were the highlights of my Sydney trip.

But the next time I'm waiting for a delayed train, experiencing four seasons in a day or paying for my expensive accommodation, I've vowed to try to be less judgmental about my adopted city. I am, after all, living in the most livable city in the world.

An insider's guide to picking a cafe in Melbourne

Published Date : November 15, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/11/insiders-guide-picking-cafe-melbourne/>

COFFEE lover, part-time barista and Meld reporter Marcella Purnama shares her tips on how to tell a cafe that will make good coffee from a cafe that won't.

Melbourne is home to many wondrous cafes, but let's face it – it has plenty of not-so-good ones too, and even some horrible ones.

You can judge a good cafe by the coffee they serve, and that depends on the brand of coffee bean, the type of coffee machine and the type of milk they use.

These are what people in the biz call 'controls', but there are plenty of other variables that come into play, like the barista's skills and the service.

As a traveller, a coffee lover and a barista, I've had some good coffee experiences and some bad ones. So I've come up with a list of ten things you should look out for that will (hopefully) allow you to embrace the good and avoid the bad.

From my experience, you should run from a cafe if...

1. The portafilter handle is not fixed into the grouphead

I know that sounds pretty complicated, but it's not. When you first enter a coffee shop, pretend to look around and fix your eyes on the coffee machine. Does the barista put the spoon-like handle that holds the coffee grounds on the counter or on top of the machine rather than fixing it straight into the its place in the machine (the grouphead)?

If so, run. Your coffee experience is about to be ruined because the handle is not hot enough to make your espresso.

2. The frothing wand is stained with milk

While some of you might drink your espresso black, almost 90 per cent of the coffees I make will have milk in them. Baristas use a frothing wand to aerate the milk and make it smooth and silky. After using, the frothing wand must be wiped to prevent clogging, so if the frothing wand is stained with milk, there's a good chance the barista has not cleaned it. Your milk will be nowhere near perfect, let alone hygienic.

3. They are using plastic tampers, instead of stainless steel ones

To make a decent espresso, a barista should tamp (press down on the coffee grounds) with a pressure equal to 15kgs. The tamper is the puck-shaped utensil used to press the coffee grounds into the portafilter. There is no way to achieve the right pressure with a plastic tamper, which is why you should head to the next cafe...pronto.

4. The barista puts their milk jug on the “designated” spot to froth it rather than holding it there by hand

I've been to a couple of cafes that used this method, and I'll never go back to them again. The first time I saw a barista fill the jug with milk, put it on the designated spot and start turning the pressure handles, I was surprised. Unfortunately I had ordered my coffee already. Big mistake – it ended up being a rubbish coffee.

5. The barista pours their milk straight into the coffee cup without working on it first

I know there are plenty of people queuing up for coffee, but I don't think a professional barista should skip steps and go straight to pouring the frothed milk into the cup just to save time. After frothing the milk, the milk needs to be swirled to ensure the perfect mixture of air and milk. If they don't do that at your cafe, your milk won't be silky or smooth.

6. The cafe staff aren't friendly or are not educated enough to answer your questions

Here is a true story about a cafe that uses 5 Senses coffee beans and a Synesso coffee machine (both of which are good), but makes horrible coffee. Once, as I entered this highly rated cafe, I was greeted by unfriendly staff and a grumpy barista. That made me suspicious, but I discarded my gut feeling and proceeded with ordering my coffee anyway. The coffee was too hot, burnt and with bubbles on top of what should have been silky smooth milk. As I sipped my horrible coffee, I saw at least five people walking out of the cafe in response to bad service. This place is now top of my never-go-to-again list.

7. It's 30 minutes before closing time

I'm not sure if it's because they're exhausted or because they want to go home straight away, but the staff and baristas at some of Melbourne's most popular cafes can turn pretty nasty just before closing time. As a result, it's not wise to order your coffee just before a cafe closes. The barista has probably started to clean the machine already and will be thinking of home, so his or her mind will not be on the job at hand.

8. It's 30 minutes after opening time

Based on experience, the coffee machine has an optimum heat level at which it is able to produce your cup of coffee just right, so it needs time to warm up. I know you need your caffeine fix, but patience is often the key to an awesome coffee.

9. It's rush hour

If it is a good cafe, the chance they'll make a bad coffee when they're super busy is lower. But even the best baristas slip up once in a while, and it can ruin your opinion of the place forever. That's what happened to me at one of Melbourne's best known coffee spots. They burnt my coffee when they were busy, and now, when people try to convince me how good the coffee is, I just can't believe them.

10. Your gut feeling tells you to get out of there

Sometimes, the best judge is your own gut feeling. So if your gut is telling you the coffee will be no good and the cafe is dodgy, follow it... and run!

3 ideas for a first date

[Had more than 4,000 views by September 2012]

Published Date : November 2, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/11/3-ideas-first-date/>

WANT to impress that cute girl? Meld reporter Marcella Purnama drops some not-so-subtle hints for guys wondering what to do on the first date.

FIRST DATES are scary. You only have one chance to make a good impression, otherwise the girl you've been crushing on for a day/month/year might never call you again.

One of the keys to a good first date is picking the right spot. That's no easy task. Melbourne has thousands of places you can take a girl for a first date, but if you get it right, you'll be well on your way to securing a second date.

But first, the rules:

The rules of a first date are always the same. First, never choose a fine-dining restaurant. Yes, it's a good way to show a girl you have cash, but it'll also make you look ambitious and obsessive. Not to mention, make us girls even more nervous.

Second, no fast food restaurant or movies. We want to get to know you better, not just hang out like friends would. Don't make us have second thoughts about whether we made a mistake agreeing to go on a date with you.

Third, always be on time. Girls like to be treated with care and picking us up on time from our homes shows us you're a responsible guy.

Fourth, pay, pay, pay. You don't need us to remind you that you're the one who is taking us out in the first place, do you?

Fifth, and most importantly, prepare beforehand and do your research!

Now that we've got that out of the way, here are three awesome ways for sweeping the girl you've been crushing on off her feet.

1. Casual meal with a perfect atmosphere and good food

The way into a man's heart is through his stomach, but the way into a woman's heart is by immersing her in a great environment. While guys ask, "What's for dinner?", girls ask, "Where should we go for dinner?", and then wonder about a restaurant's atmosphere, how comfortable the seats are and how crowded the place is.

There are plenty of cosy spots in the Melbourne CBD, but it may be fun travelling a little further afield (treat it like a mini excursion), exploring suburbs with lots of character. Streets such as Lygon St in Carlton, Errol St in North Melbourne, Brunswick St in Fitzroy; and Acland St in St Kilda come to mind.

Remember the earlier tips about doing your research? Make sure to check out the menu beforehand so you know it's within your budget (you're generally looking in the order of \$30 to \$40 per person), and

it's also impressive if you know what the restaurant's signature dishes are. If you're a bit of a wine connoisseur, show off your prowess by suggesting a glass of wine that would complement her meal.

If you're headed to North Melbourne, try [Auction Rooms](#) on Errol St. The cafe is a spacious warehouse with brick walls, dim lighting, light music and the perfect ambience for a first date. The ocean trout salad is a winner, fresh, light, but tasty, and great with a glass of white wine. Plus, it's light enough so you'll still have room for dessert. If you're thinking of something more substantial, try the wagyu steak paired with a glass of red wine.

For some finger-licking good, there's [Oskar Pizza](#) just down the road. The bull boar sausage pizza is to die for, and for vegetarians, the roast pumpkin and pine nut pizza is a great option. The place is small and cosy – so it's best that you make a reservation.

And finally – whoever said a first date had to be over dinner? To keep things casual, why not do breakfast? Melbourne is well-known for its chic cafes, hearty breakfasts and silky smooth coffees/chai lattes/hot chocolates.

2. Picnic in the park

Girls like a guy who is full of surprises and original ideas. So guys, if the girl you're asking out is outdoorsy, plan a picnic in the park, complete with a picnic mat, blanket, some macarons, a cheese platter, canapes (or make your own sandwiches or finger food), a light dessert wine (or maybe a lemon, lime and bitters), two plastic cups, two water bottles, napkins, wet towels and some board games, just in case you don't know what to talk about.

Start the date by picking her up and heading to the Royal Botanic Garden or another garden of your choice. The Royal Botanic Garden is a nice, historical place with colourful flowers and a beautiful lake in the middle, so it's a winner for a first date.

Again, don't forget to scout out the ultimate picnic spot beforehand. Pick someplace not too quiet or too far from the crowds – you don't want your date to think you're a sleaze trying to get up to some hanky panky – but someplace not so noisy you're straining to hear each other. You want to choose a spot near the flower beds or perhaps the lake. Again, do your research. It will annoy the girl if she has to traipse around a huge park looking for the right place to picnic.

Depending on what you buy, picnics could be easier on the wallet, and \$20 per person could go a long way to planning the perfect picnic.

3. Quirky, but fun activities

There are some girls who like shopping and high-end restaurants, but there others who would much prefer a wild, out-of-the-box experience. For the quirky and fun girl, I'd suggest [Scienceworks](#), but you could also pick the Melbourne Zoo or the Melbourne Aquarium.

Scienceworks is a great place for a first date because it has plenty to keep you occupied, from guessing optical illusions to playing 'mini-sports' and seeing how long you can keep your balance. Scienceworks is also a great place to break the ice. Plus, if you're struggling for conversation, there's always the planetarium or the spectacular lightning room.

Just a side note though, the food at Scienceworks isn't anything to shout about, so take her to the popular brunch spot nearby, The [Duchess of Spotswood](#), instead. Just five minutes walk from the museum, The Duchess of Spotswood has top notch coffee and a great menu.

All in all, be prepared to set aside around \$30 to 40 per person for a day at Scienceworks (remember to bring your student card for concessions) including lunch.

In the end, what a girl really wants from a guy on a first date is to know that he's made the effort to impress. Choose somewhere that you'll know she'll like or enjoy going to. Then make sure it's an experience she'll remember forever.

Know of other great first date places in Melbourne? Share them in the comments box below!

How important is Facebook relationship status to you?

Published Date : October 13, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/10/facebook-relationship-status/>

IT'S official, boys care more about their Facebook relationship status than girls. Meld reporter Marcella Purnama tells all.

It's official, boys care more about their Facebook relationship status than girls.

A recent poll of 138 single and taken Facebook users, aged 18 to 30, busted the myth that girls put more stock in how their relationship is presented on social networks.

The boys surveyed believed them and their partners should declare their relationship on Facebook the moment things become official.

One of the boys confessed it was an example of a "man's pride and ego", which according to psychology is a bit of a stereotype, but it totally makes sense.

On the other hand, girls don't think their Facebook pages are that important and prefer not to change their status. Don't believe me? It's true. Many confessed they feared the possibility of breaking up and thus becoming a subject to gossips.

Some of the girls in this group admitted to changing their Facebook statuses anyway, just to avoid fighting with their boyfriends.

And now, a fun fact: Only 13 per cent of couples surveyed hadn't changed their status on Facebook.

"It's important and I will change my status."

The majority of the girls who fitted into this category said declaring their relationships on Facebook was a sign of their commitment to their partner.

These girls said they were comfortable with their partners and wanted to share their happiness with their friends. They also said it was a convenient way to tell their friends and families about their new partner.

The boys in this category weren't feeling so charitable. They declared their relationships for security reasons, saying it prevented their partners from flirting with other people and keep other from flirting with their partners.

Some honest single guys even confessed they'd prefer it if girls declared their relationship status so they knew who was on the market and who wasn't!

"I think it's not right to say you're single when you're actually not. By having a 'in a relationship' status on Facebook, it means you're acknowledging your relationship with your boyfriend to your friends, families and other people." MC ♀

"Letting others know that you're in a relationship allows you to set up a barrier. I mean, I'm sure it's uncomfortable getting messaged every minute by a boy friend that's not your boyfriend." RE ♂

"It's not important and I won't change my status."

Surprisingly, there were striking differences between in this category.

Most girls reasoned changing relationship status was risky because there's always the chance of breaking up. Even if they're committed, they could go from 'in a relationship' to 'single' any time and people might start making up stories about why they broke up.

Boy in this category played the privacy card, insisting they wouldn't tell strangers their bank account numbers, so they don't see why they should their 'not-so-close' and 'non-friends' on Facebook about their relationships.

"I think I'd rather tell someone in person about my relationship status than publicise it on Facebook. It's just nicer that way. I don't want it to be the subject of talks by other people (aka gossip), especially if I end up breaking up with that person." IC ♀

"Changing the relationship status will indirectly pressure both sides who are in the relationship. They'll feel as if they're on display, especially if there are certain expectations from family and close friends." AK ♂

"It's not important, but I'll change my status."

A third of the people surveyed, fell into this category, and most of them were girls.

The single ladies said if their future boyfriends were to send them a 'relationship request', they wouldn't decline it.

But the majority of girls in this category were already in a relationship. They confessed changing their status wasn't important at all, but being 'Facebook official' was a small sacrifice to avoid fighting with their partners.

The boys in this section said they didn't care, but changed their status to give their girlfriend's a sense of security. They also insisted they were confident enough in their relationship to let their friends and family know about it.

"I honestly think it's really bothersome. If say, a relationship ends, then you have to change the status back and everyone will make a fuss out of it. I wouldn't change my status if my boyfriend didn't ask me to." PE ♀

"As long as we know we're together, that's all that matters. But I still think it's nice to change your status. And if I should cross that bridge one day, I would definitely change my status because I'd want my friends to know the great girl I'm in a relationship with." AS ♂

"It's important, but I won't change my status."

Interestingly, only two of the boys surveyed thought changing their Facebook status was important, and yet haven't done it. Why, you ask? To avoid gossip, of course!

"It's important because it's a signal to other people to stay away. But then, I'm reluctant to publicise it. There are some annoying people in my friends list that I don't want to know, and I'd rather avoid them." AS ♂

Couple's Corner

The couples in this category have all changed their Facebook statuses, but that doesn't mean they share the same opinion on the matter.

Couple #1

"I think it's important because if my status changed to single, some people would ask, 'Are you having problems with your boyfriend? Are you guys still together?' Plus, I think the status implies he's mine." SS ♀

"Not important at all in my opinion. I changed my status because my girlfriend asked me to. Facebook is not an ID, so why should we share our personal information?" FG ♂

Couple #2

"Initially I thought I would just leave my status blank until I got married. But I did change my relationship status on Facebook because my boyfriend requested it! It was important to him and I think he's proud of our relationship and wanted to tell everyone." JP ♀

"I think it's very important. My Facebook status is how the world sees me. I think once a couple makes their relationship official, there should be a discussion about changing their status." PL ♂

So now it's your turn to vote, how much does Facebook's "in a relationship" status mean to you? Tell us your views too in the comments section below.

LIFESTYLE

Melbourne's Top 10 Cafes

[Meld's 2013 top lifestyle piece – had more than 4,000 views by April 2013]

Published Date : January 22, 2013

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2013/01/melbournes-top-10-cafes/>

BEFORE Marcella Purnama left Australia for her hometown of Jakarta, the self-confessed super barista took a walk down memory lane to compile her list of the top 10 cafes in Melbourne.

Coffee. The aroma of freshly ground coffee beans. The sound of frothing milk. The beautiful latte art. Oh, I will miss Melbourne terribly.

Melbourne is to coffee like a stamp is to an envelope. Be it a latte, espresso, cappuccino, mocha or flat white. Be it poured over, filtered or siphoned. Coffee in Melbourne is the best you could ever ask for, if you know where to go.

After three years of indulging myself in this pleasantly wonderful lifestyle, visiting more than a hundred coffee shops and drinking tonnes of coffee, I can finally share this list. This has been my secret project since my first year here. I have visited all the city's well-known cafe places and I have rated them.

And here is my definitive list of the best places to go for coffee (and food) in Melbourne:

10. Auction Rooms

This used to be my favourite, but ever since they stopped serving not one, but two of my favourite dishes, I changed my loyalty. The ocean trout salad and pork belly were the best things in Melbourne. Unfortunately, they were victims of a menu refresh, and the new food, well, in my opinion, is not that good. The coffee's great though.

That said, [Auction Rooms](#) is one of the warehouse-cafes that captures the essence of Melbourne coffee culture. The other upside is it's spacious, and hence, there's less waiting time!

Opening Hours: Monday – Wednesday: 7am to 5pm; Thursday – Friday: 7am to 10pm; Saturday: 7.30am to 10pm; Sunday: 7.30am to 5pm.

9. Three Bags Full

[Three Bags Full](#) has the best big breakfast in town. But the coffee tends towards the acidic side. Another downside? The waiting time. Despite its super big space, there are always people. In fact, there are usually more people than seats. Simply put – don't bother coming here on weekends.

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday: 7am to 5pm; Saturday – Sunday: 8am to 5pm.

8. Hardware Societe

Colourful saucers, knitted teapot covers and wooden tables – you can't help but fall in love with Hardware Societe. The milk is divine (that is, if you go for a latte or its siblings) and the food is wonderful. I still believe they have the best baked eggs in all of Melbourne.

Downside? Again, the waiting time. Despite its expansion to double the original space, you can still wait from 10 minutes to two hours depending on the queue. Ugh.

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday: 7.30am to 3pm; Saturday – Sunday: 8.30am to 2pm.

7. Di Bella Roasting Warehouse

What is in North Melbourne? Despite being only a 15-minute walking distance from the city, this suburb is not an international student haunt. Shame because Di Bella cafe's ocean trout salad is top notch. Imagine fresh salad with lots of flavour and your favourite fish. Yum. Coffee bean roasting is done in the venue, producing a beantastic aroma!

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday: 7am to 5pm; Saturday – Sunday: 7.30am to 4pm.

6. Market Lane

[Market Lane's](#) coffee is one of my favourites in Melbourne. So far, two shops are open – one in Victoria Market and another at Prahran Market. There's no food, but yes, going all the way to Prahran is worth it even if it's just for the coffee. Although I'm biased as I had my first date here with my boyfriend.

Opening Hours: Tuesday, Thursday – Saturday: 7am to 5pm; Wednesday: 7am to 4pm; Sunday: 9am to 4pm.

5. Proud Mary

A friendly reminder: if you decide to [go here](#), make sure it's not on a weekend. This cafe is always jam-packed. Coffee is marvelous here, but the star is the food. Their dishes are Asian-inspired and their pork belly sandwich is definitely a divine intervention.

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday: 7am to 4pm; Saturday – Sunday: 8am to 4pm.

4. Sensory Lab

No food here, but it's close at hand. [Sensory Lab](#) is located inside David Jones and has always been my quick fix whenever I want to get a good coffee with literally no waiting time in the city. It's open till late (a gem, really, as most good cafes close at 4pm), and the coffee has never been off in the three years I've been visiting.

Opening Hours: Monday – Wednesday: 7am to 6pm; Thursday – Friday: 7am to 9pm; Saturday: 8am to 7pm; Sunday: 9am to 6pm.

3. Two Birds One Stone

This [newly-opened cafe](#) in South Yarra has left a deep impression on me. The beautiful interior design – a combination of warehouse and modern, with hints of Japanese/ “oriental” – influences are just gorgeous. The food, especially the pork belly buns, is another delicacy. Love. It.

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday: 7am to 4pm; Saturday – Sunday: 8am to 4pm.

2. Twenty & Six Espresso

Another North Melbourne cafe! This [local spot](#) has the best mushroom and bacon plate, ever. The coffee is marvelous, service is good and it's local – meaning, you don't have to wait too long for a table. Enough said.

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday: 7am to 5pm; Saturday – Sunday: 8am to 4pm.

... and my number one pick...

1. Porgie and Mr. Jones

[This cafe](#) requires a bit of travel (okay, more than a bit), but it's really, really worth it. The suburb is Hawthorn and it's a 30-minute trip from the city. The steak sanga is the best meaty dish ever – steak, bacon, beetroot relish, poached egg, and roasted tomatoes. Super. Yum.

The coffee, needless to say, is awesome. I especially love the milk. Plus, this cafe is open till dinner time on Fridays and Saturdays! Yay!

Opening Hours: Monday – Thursday: 8am to 4pm; Friday: 8am to 11.30pm; Saturday: 8.30am to 11.30pm; Sunday: 8.30am to 4pm.

Of course, there are plenty more wonderful places to have brunch in Melbourne. La Miel et la Lune, for example, has the best omelette in my opinion. While 65 Degrees has the best Egg Benedict.

Countless coffee shops like Coin Laundry, The League of Honest Coffee, Duchess of Spotswood, Seven Seeds and Manchester Press didn't make it on the list but are still worth a mention!

Do you agree with Marcella's picks? Which Melbourne cafes are on your list? Share in the comments box belows!

The Dating Game: Who would you date?

Published Date : October 15, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/10/the-dating-game/>

YOU can encounter all kinds of characters when you've been in the dating game for awhile. Marcella Purnama sheds some light on different personality types – and how they can make or break your relationship.

When Forrest Gump famously compared life to a box of chocolates, he was probably referring to the dating game. Anyone who has had more than one boyfriend or girlfriend knows that finding 'The One' can be seriously hard.

Everyone can fake a likeable persona or at least hide less desirable aspects of themselves on the first date. Some can do it for months at a time before you get suspicious. When they finally do show their true colours, most people fall into a couple of predictable categories – the Jock, the Drama Queen, the Cheater.

We've picked our top personality types for girls and guys. Print them out, carry them around in your breast pocket and hopefully, they'll help you figure out what you're going to get when you dip your hand into the box of potential dates.

And because we're movie geeks, we have made a reference to a movie character for each of the types. So they go something like this:

Mr Metro

Movie muse: Ryan Gosling as Jacob in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*. He always looks good, not to mention he's charming!

Mr. Metro cares too much about his appearance, and by doing so, he'll unconsciously influence you to too. He'll dress nicely. No shorts and sandals, but a casual shirt and white shoes. He knows the latest trends and can tell the difference between your flats and wedges. He himself has nine pairs of very good shoes that he always keeps clean. Odds are, he's tidy and organised.

This is the type of guy you're proud to stand next to. He smells good and looks incredibly charming.

Pros: Your friends will (slightly) envy you and he'll make a good first impression on your parents. You'll love to hug him in public because he's well put together and, oh boy, he smells so good in that Calvin Klein perfume. He'll buy you designer clothes and go shopping with you. But best of all, he'll take you to all those fancy places for dinner.

Cons: He might look better than you and that's a problem because you'll feel like you need to keep up with him. He might be popular with the women and have a very limited number of male friends. He'll look into the mirror a couple of times an hour and that'll disturb you because even you don't even check your make-up that often. Oh, and he spends a lot of money, mostly on himself.

Mr Mind-your-own-business

Movie muse: Justin Chambers as Alex in *Grey's Anatomy*. He's rough and looks like he doesn't give a sh*t about anything.

Mr. Mind-your-own-business never speaks his mind. He doesn't care what you eat for lunch, what you're wearing to that party or when you're going for that job interview. He doesn't want to eat out, he's comfortable in front of the TV and he doesn't even notice that new dress you bought for your second anniversary.

This type of guy is usually loyal, despite being a pain-in-the-ass. He doesn't care how you look or how much weight you gain.

Pros: Rest assured he won't hit on another girl – he's just too lazy. He is comfortable with you and that's it. While he doesn't look like he's paying attention, he does most of the time, he just doesn't see the point of telling you he's listening. He has many male friends and will usually be into sports or games.

Cons: Your friends will spend every day assuring you that he loves you. Your parents will question if he's serious. His friends will tell you to chase after him because he won't chase you. You can't hold his hands in public – he's just not the type. In fact, you can't show your affection in public at all. Odds are, he thinks being Facebook official is the stupidest thing on earth.

Ms Ambitious

Movie muse: Sandra Bullock as Margaret in *The Proposal*. She has a good career, zero social and love life and only thinks about her professional life.

Ms Ambitious is the typical leader in your relationship, not you. She'll take the wheel and prioritise her work life over everything else. She has grand dreams and, to some people, she might seem obnoxious, selfish and mean. She works hard, so hard in fact that she has few true friends. She'll have high expectations of those she's close to and might befriend you solely to take advantage of you.

This type of girl is thirsty for success and doesn't tolerate failure.

Pros: She is so clever and professional, you'll have tons of things to brag to your friends about her. She is independent, so you don't need to look after her. She'll make you grow professionally and set the bar high so you want to succeed in life.

Cons: She is hard to maintain and she won't submit to your leadership. After all, she's the alpha tigress. She'll have high expectations of you and make you feel intimidated about your level of professionalism. You won't be her number one priority and she'll have little interest in what others think of 'what a normal relationship should be like'. She is hard to open up to and gaining her trust might be a pain in the ass.

Ms Possessive

Movie muse: Uma Thurman as Jenny in *My Super Ex-Girlfriend*. Breaking up with her is not a good idea because she'll continue to stalk you for the rest of your life.

Miss Possessive will want to know everything about you – starting with what you ate for breakfast, brunch, lunch, tea, dinner and supper. She wants to know what you're doing 24/7 and she gets jealous pretty easily. Crying is her special talent and she'll try to make herself look helpless. You'll end up feeling bad and try to fulfil her every need. She is clingy and dependent and she limits your freedom.

This type of girl will make you feel wanted, but most guys can't tolerate being chained.

Pros: She'll tell you she loves you every day and she'll attend to your every need, making you happy in the process. She'll try hard to be the kind of girl you want and she'll want to get to know your friends, although often for the wrong reasons.

Cons: She'll rob your every freedom and she'll cry every time you want to spend the afternoon watching soccer with your friends instead of watching Twilight with her. She'll text you every five minutes and speak to you on the phone for two hours before you go to sleep. She doesn't want you to have any female friends and she is quite sensitive. If you don't like to be told what to do (and most guys don't), you'll want to break free at the first opportunity.

Do you agree with these personality types? Have any others to add? Share your suggestions in the comment box below!

A culinary guide to the Olympics

Published Date : August 7, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/08/culinary-guide-to-olympics/>

FROM Greece to Mexico, more than 20 nations have now hosted the Olympic Games. Marcella Purnama dishes on some of her favourite host nations, and where you can sample their native cuisines – right here in Melbourne.

Sure, the Olympics are about great sporting feats (and who can stay up to watch all 40km of the women's marathon), but we at Meld are convinced there's more to this event than just sport.

When Baron Pierre de Coubertin designed the Olympic rings in 1912, he said it was a truly international symbol and would stand to represent a meeting of all the world's cultures.

As far as we're concerned, you can't experience the world's culture without experiencing its food.

So to pay homage to the Games, we've picked our five favourite past host nations and the Melbourne restaurants cooking up the best fare these nations have to offer.

1. Greece 1896

Exactly 116 years ago, the first Olympic Games were held in Greece. Back then, only 14 nations participated in nine sports – and no females were allowed to compete. But we'll let that slide.

Get a taste of Greek cooking at: [Stalactites](#), 177-183 Lonsdale St

Arguably the best late-night dining places in the Melbourne CBD, Stalactites serves everything from souvlaki to custard pudding.

Signature dish: Lamb Souvlaki, \$12.50

2. Germany, 1916

Germany was meant to host the sixth Olympics Games in 1916, but this was cancelled following the break out of World War I. But the Germans did eventually get to host the games in 1936.

Get a taste of German cooking at: [Hofbrauhaus](#), 18-24 Market Lane

While we've [reviewed Hofbrauhaus before](#), we just couldn't resist mentioning it again as the best place in Melbourne to taste the authentic German food and beer. And beer. Oh how we love German beers.

Signature dish: Schweinshax'n (Bavarian pickled roast pork knuckle served with sauerkraut and homemade potato dumplings), \$25

3. France, 1924

Fun fact: During this Olympic Games, two British runners, Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, won the 100m and 400m events respectively – thus inspiring the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*.

You may have caught the film's soundtrack being played by the orchestra at this year's London Olympics opening ceremony. Yes, it was the song with Rowan Atkinson in it.

Get a taste of French cooking at: [Bistro Vue](#) , 430 Little Collins St

This is the most expensive restaurant on this list, but the food is so good I just can't bring myself not to mention it! Bistro Vue is actually the sister restaurant of the well-known fine dining restaurant Vue de Monde, but much cheaper and just as delicious!

Signature dish: 600 day grain fed Wagyu Steak with potato gratin, beetroot and your choice of sauce , \$35

4. Mexico, 1968

Have you ever heard the quote, "My country did not send me 10,000 miles just to start the race. They sent me to finish the race?"

It was uttered by Tanzanian runner John Stephen Akhwari, who dislocated his knee joint early in the Olympic race in Mexico. He crossed the finish line an hour after the winner did, but hopefully he was still happy about finishing.

Get a taste of Mexican cooking at: [Mamasita](#), 1111 Collins St

Hidden in a small city alleyway, Mamasita is *the* place for Mexican food – if you can get a seat, that is. The last time I went here it took me two hours to actually find a seat, but trust me, the food is worth it. Sadly though, they don't take any reservations.

Signature dish: Pollo Tostadita (fried tortilla filled with chicken, avocado and cheese), \$14

5. Spain, 1992

If we were talking *Hunger Games*, the 25th Olympic Games would be the one where all the previous gold winners got to compete again. Spain was the first and last Olympics to host what was then called a "Unified Team". This team consisted of 12 of the 15 former Soviet Republics, all of which competed as one single gold-medal hogging nation.

Get a taste of Spanish cooking at: [Movida](#), 1 Hosier Lane

Movida is one of the few restaurants in Melbourne that offers an authentic tapas experience. Once you've been here, you can't resist going back for more... and more...and more.

Signature dish: Bistec Tartar de Wagyu (Spicy Steak Tartare), \$18.50

Indonesian Fine Arts student Join Silica Liong connects the dots

Published Date : March 7, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/03/indonesian-finearts-student-join-silica-liong-connects-dots/>

IT'S an uncommon study pathway for international students, but Fine Arts student Join Silica Liong from Indonesia is confident about her future in the industry. Her exhibition is on show at Red Gallery in Fitzroy North. Marcella Purnama brings you the story.

Fine Arts is one of the least common study options that an international student would take, but for Indonesia's Join Silica Liong, it is the path that enables her to live her dream.

It's the third and final week an exhibition featuring her artwork is on at the Red Gallery in Fitzroy, and Join is really grateful for the opportunity that's been given.

"I was given an offer," Join says.

"The person who's in charge of the gallery wanted to give a chance for graduate students to show their artwork. He went to university graduate exhibitions around Melbourne and chose six people to do this exhibition.

"I was one of them."

Graduating from RMIT University with a bachelor degree in Fine Art (Drawing) last December, Join is not yet prepared to let go of the student life. She is now enrolled in the University of Melbourne to undertake a Master of Teaching (Secondary), with a focus on teaching visual art.

"I really enjoyed my uni life. Three years of study is not enough, I still want to learn more," Join says. Join says she has had a passion for Fine Arts since she was young. In Asia where art subjects are more of a rarity than the norm, she indulged in the only platform of learning available to her – drawing class.

"Since I was little, I was taught to draw. In Asian countries, it is very rare for them to offer arts subjects other than drawing, take sculpture as an example. And I like to draw, a lot," Join says.

"I moved to Malaysia in the middle of my primary school, and in highschool I was exposed to several art courses. And they were good. From there I had a very good chance to go on to do a Fine Art degree because I have developed my own portfolio."

Since coming to Melbourne, she has noticed differences the way art is taught in the east and west. Unlike Asia where a lot of focus is placed on technique, concepts – "the thought behind an artwork" – is celebrated in the west.

"In Asia, what you draw is usually not your own thoughts; it's not from your heart; it's not what you want to express," Join says.

"In Asia, the usual way to learn art is to see an object, and draw it. You may put your feelings on that drawing but somehow the drawing is not the result of the process of your thoughts.

"Here, I learn that art is a process of your thoughts. It's an idea. It's your thinking. It's just a piece of paper, but what's behind that paper is what I'm concerned about. The piece of paper is just a representation of what I want to tell.

"That's why I like art."

http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/?attachment_id=9564 **Connecting the Dots**

In her current exhibition, Join has two bodies of work on show: *Connecting the Dots* and *I Put My Hope in Your Word*.

Join says *Connecting the Dots* represents people's decisions. She believes that in real life, people need to make decisions, and sometimes these decisions are so random, people sometimes end up doing things that don't really make sense. But these things that people do, these dots, will connect later in life.

"When we want to make a decision, we can only see what's in front of us. But we can't really know what will happen next before we actually make that first decision," Join says.

"Connecting the dots is, in a sense, the need to follow the faith in making decisions. Even though you are doing completely irrelevant and random things, one day you will reach the point where you never imagine you're going to be.

"You will realise that at the end of the day, these dots that we're doing will all make sense. They might not make sense now, but they will make sense later," she says.

I Put My Hope in Your Word

The second set of Join's work is about the media. The media, says Join, outputs vast amounts of information, and individuals can't take everything for granted and need to filter what they consume.

"The media is where you hear and see information, and what you hear and see, you consume. You don't trust everything that you see, but you actually pick the ones that you think it's true," Join says.

"I put my hope in your word. Those who are in power will control the words that we hear and see. They will be the ones on whom we put our trust, but then can we really trust them?

"I have put my hope in your word, so what are *you* going to do?"

To realise this concept, Join used a second-hand book and began to weave alternative lines of text through its pages. Most of the sentences become unreadable, but there are some words she does not weave: the words she thinks are important.

"These words that I do not weave are the basic. There is much information in today's media that needs to go back to basic because at the end of the day, it's the most important thing."

Some examples of the unwoven words are money, children, men and women.

Join is really hopeful for the future in art.

"Art has begun to be common to everyone. In the past, everyone dreams to be having a bachelor degree. Now, everyone wants to pursue further studies more and more. And that's what is going to be happening to art as well.

"The media has exposed artwork more and more, and in the future, more people will come to appreciate art, or they might study art themselves. Although it depends heavily on the economy, I believe they will all link together, and that's where the dots are coming."

Connecting the Dots is a free exhibition that is open from 11am to 5pm for three more days, from today Wednesday March 7 to Saturday March 9, and is located at the Red Gallery, 157 St. Georges Rd, Fitzroy North. To get there, take the 112 tram to West Preston and get off at tram stop 21.

For more information, visit the [Red Gallery](#) website.

From student to biz wiz: Ivan Tandyo

Published Date : November 9, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/11/11/from-student-to-biz-wiz-ivan-tandyo/>

INTERNATIONAL student turned stellar businessman Ivan Tandyo sits down with Meld's Marcella Purnama to share advice on achieving your career dreams.

Often we wonder what the future will look like – whether we will need to go back to our home countries or stay here in Melbourne. International student turned successful businessman Ivan Tandyo had the same thought a couple of years ago.

Dressed in a white shirt, black knitted vest, black suit and a tie, Ivan, originally from Indonesia, sits down with his half-eaten lunch.

We have exactly 15 minutes for an interview.

After nine years at the helm of his company, Navanti (which has invested in Crown Café Bakery, Kimchi Grandma BBQ and Kimchi Kitchen), the 34-year-old admits he never originally thought he'd own his own business, let alone a business that invests in other companies to help other people make their career dreams a reality.

Before it all began

Ivan came to Melbourne in 1996 and finished his foundation studies at Trinity College a year later. He then went to RMIT to pursue a degree in economics and finance.

"When I graduated from my foundation and needed to apply for uni, I applied for everything I could think of," Ivan says.

"I applied for a psychology degree at one university, engineering in another and even combined arts in another. I had no destination in my life. But I was lucky because God put me in economics and finance, and actually, I really liked it."

Academically though, Ivan didn't do well at university.

"I used to want to be a VJ in MTV, to be in a band playing guitar, and to just enjoy my life," he says. And soon enough, Ivan was expelled from RMIT. Thinking school wasn't important, he chose not to continue studying.

"After I got expelled, I was very stressed. My dad got angry with me and I enrolled in another school. Not for long though because I was eventually allowed to reapply at RMIT. From then on I studied hard and got good marks."

With his degree in hand, Ivan reached a crossroads – should he work for others or open his own business? In the end, his father helped him decide.

"I realised that I was the type of person that couldn't be put inside a box, so when my dad asked me if I wanted to be a businessman or someone else's employee, I knew what to do," he says.

"I like business. I like negotiating with people, I like dealing with them, talking to them, networking and exploring my own creativity as well. I didn't want to be bordered within the walls that exist for those who work for someone else."

Ivan says it definitely wasn't easy to start his own business, and he has some tips for those hoping to lead successful lives.

1. There is no such thing as a free lunch

Ivan is quick to assert that becoming complacent about your education is the worst thing students can do.

"Don't think: 'oh, if Ivan can open a business and be successful when he was no good at school, then it must be easy.' No, that's not the message I'm trying to convey because there is no such thing as a free lunch," he says.

"Hard work...is a necessity. There's no point doing anything, if you don't intend to work hard in school and in your professional life."

2. You need a destination in order to make decisions

The first words of wisdom Ivan offers after instilling the principle of hard work is you have to have a dream to become successful. Only after you decide to pursue your dream, he says, can you start making decisions.

"Let me give you an example. Let's say your destination is Melbourne Uni. Once you've locked that in, you can make a decision about how to get there. Do you want to take a tram, bike, taxi, car, or on foot? The options are always there. But if there's no destination, you won't be able to make decisions about how to arrive there. It's the same with a dream."

Ivan insists once you have a goal, you can start to work towards it. Having a goal is also what keeps you going when you're faced with problems.

"When suddenly there's a road block and you're on the tram, if you know your destination, you don't just give up. You sit down and start planning. You have to be at Melbourne Uni by 3pm, so you find a way. Maybe you'll use taxi if it's urgent or run if it's not that far away. The same thing is true with any dream, including in business. Maybe you don't have a lot of money to achieve your dreams, but if you know where you are going, you can make decisions even though there are hurdles. That's important."

"Who you become while you go about achieving that dream also matters. You want to be successful in every aspect of your life, but do you want to become a crook along the way? It's important to achieve your dreams, but never at the cost of yourself or your integrity. You can be an honest person and still be successful."

3. Be red in your mind

No matter what your path in life, there will always be people who will try to knock you down, Ivan says.

Ultimately, no two people see success in exactly the same way. He likens it to the way you can never be sure the colours you see are seen the same way by someone else. But self-conviction, he says, goes a long way in making others believe in you.

"If you're already red in your mind, then no one can tell you're pink or magenta or fuchsia. People will say: 'you're red'."

"You have to be confident in your abilities and in the knowledge that you will succeed."

Looking for work experience? Internship opportunities are available at Navanti. For more information, contact Ivan Tando at ivan.tando@navanti.com.

Best places to keep fit in Carlton

Published Date : September 23, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/09/places-to-keep-fit-carlton/>

CULINARY and shopping experiences might be what we mostly associate with Carlton. However, there is much more to explore in this “Little Italy”. Voila, it’s time to get fit! Marcella Purnama shows you how.

University of Melbourne Sports Centre

It’s not just a place to study; the University of Melbourne has participated in various sports throughout its history, and was the overall champion in the Australian University Games in 1997, 2004, 2005 and 2006. With such awards in hand, the university offers a range of facilities and [40 different clubs](#) to join, from Tae Kwon Do to table tennis, fencing to futsal.

Open everyday throughout the week, the [Beaurepaire Centre](#) is a two-storey health and fitness complex. It houses a fitness gym and an indoor, heated, six-lane, 25m lap pool. A single visit gym pass costs \$15 for Melbourne University students and \$18 for others. And if you want to go for a swim, it costs \$4 per visit for Melbourne University students and \$5 for others.

The other centre, the [Sports Centre](#), offers yoga and pilates classes, and has badminton, squash, and basketball courts. The [outdoor facilities](#) include a basketball court, four tennis courts, and two barbecues – ideal for celebrating with friends after a game well played.

Melbourne University Sport is located on Tin Alley, 100m north of Union House (enter the campus via Gate 1 on Swanston Street). Check out their website for [opening hours](#) and [detailed pricing](#).

RMIT City Fitness

Conveniently located in the heart of the city, RMIT has long been a favourite destination of international students for fitness facilities. The gym – City Fitness – offers a \$10 casual day pass and has personal training sessions to help you with exercise choice and technique, injury, pain, nutrition and stress. Personal training costs \$280 for eight half-hour sessions.

City Fitness also offers group fitness classes including body pump, yoga, belly dance and kettlebells (a type of weight training). A variety of classes run throughout the week around lunch times and in the evenings. Classes are suitable for all levels, so don’t be shy to knock on the door.

RMIT City Fitness is located on level 3 of building 8, which can be accessed from Swanston St. It is open Monday to Saturday, and closed on public holidays. More information on opening hours and pricing is available on the [RMIT website](#).

The “Baths”

You’ve probably passed the 150-year-old facade of [Melbourne City Baths](#) hundreds of times, but this architectural gem offers more than just historical significance. The baths house a 30m indoor heated pool with four lanes for lap swimming, a gymnasium, group fitness classes and squash courts. Swimming costs \$4.70 per visit for students.

Melbourne City Baths is open everyday and located at 420 Swanston St. [Check out Melbourne City Bath's website](#) for more information on pricing.

[Carlton Baths](#), on the other hand, has an outdoor heated swimming pool, making it worth a visit when the sun is shining. The swimming pool is open to public from the October 1st to April 30th. Other facilities include a multi-sport stadium for badminton, basketball, netball and soccer. Group fitness classes are offered, including boxing circuits, yoga, pilates, and body pump.

Carlton Baths is open everyday and located at 248 Rathdowne St. For more information on opening hours and membership, see the [website](#).

More gyms

[Fernwood Womens Health Club](#) on Nicholson St and [Fitness First](#) in Melbourne Central also offer a range of group fitness classes and gym facilities.

Dance

If dancing is your first language, you may want to take a look at [Mangala Studios](#) just off Lygon St, or [Dancehouse](#) on Princes St.

Established back in 1970, Mangala offers yoga classes, tai-chi and its famous [creative dance class](#). The classes, based on “music and art”, aim to develop an individual’s own dancing style. And if you are keen enough, Mangala also offers diploma and summer school courses.

Mangala is located at 73 Grattan St, and classes run on weekdays. Further information about timetables and pricing is available from [Mangala's website](#).

Dancehouse boasts that it is the only school in Australia dedicated solely to contemporary dance. Established in 1992, it offers various casual dance classes throughout the week, including Bollywood dance, Odissi classical Indian dance, contemporary dance, African Congolese dance, and South Indian Bharatanatyam classical dance, among others. Casual passes range from \$12 to \$20, but only full term courses are offered for some dance styles.

Dancehouse is located at 150 Princess St. For further information about timetables and pricing, contact the [website](#).

Parks and gardens

While it's seldom you'll hear your friends say "let's go to the park" instead of "let's go for a coffee", Melbourne is home to superb parks and gardens. And here's a bit of trivia for you: Melbourne is reputed to have the largest population of European Elm Trees of any city in the world – including Europe.

Even a lazy stroll in the park is good for your overall health and wellbeing, but if you're keen to burn some extra calories, turn things up a notch and for a jog or run, or round up some friends for a game of frisbee.

[Princess Park](#) is home to the Australian football club – the Carlton Blues – and the Princess Park Tennis Club. It's a lovely spot for a barbecue with friends on a sunny day (with barbecues located near the playground at the end of MacPherson St), and you may even catch a glimpse of the "Blue boys" training. It's a good park to cycle around, and there are some popular dog meeting spots, for those with a canine companion fond of socialising.

Princess Park is located directly north of the University of Melbourne and bounded on its eastern and western sides by Melbourne General Cemetery and Royal Parade respectively.

[Carlton Gardens](#) is home to the Melbourne Museum, IMAX, and the Royal Exhibition Building. Despite the constant trauma experienced by Melbourne University students having to visit the Exhibition Building for their exams, Carlton Gardens is actually a UNESCO World Heritage Site, meaning it has a special cultural and physical significance. According to the World Heritage listing, the Exhibition Building and the surrounding gardens are "of historical, architectural, aesthetic, social and scientific (botanical) significance to the State of Victoria."

The garden has a Victorian era landscape design with sweeping lawns and varied European and Australian tree plantings. The Exhibition Fountain, located right out the front of Exhibition Building, celebrated its 130th birthday last year. The northern section of the garden contains tennis courts which can be used by the public, the curator's cottage, and a children's playground designed as a Victorian maze.

Carlton Gardens is located right on the northeastern edge of the CBD, and is bordered by Rathdowne St, Victoria St, Nicholson St and Carlton St.

The League of Honest Coffee

Published Date : June 7, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/06/league-honest-coffee/>

AFTER the Brunswick East Project and South Melbourne Market's Padre cafes, there's much to like about Marinus Jansen's new city outpost, The League of Honest Coffee. Marcella Purnama finds out on a cold blustery winter day.

This coffee better be good, I thought to myself as I set out on my assignment in search of The League of Honest Coffee.

The weatherman was lying when he said it was nine degrees in the city. It felt more like a frosty zero as the rain poured down hard and I wrestled against the gusty wind to keep my umbrella in one piece.

Drenched by the time I stepped through the front door, I was already cheered by what I saw: plenty of space, a polished concrete floor, timber benchtops, multi-coloured chairs, a coffee cherry tree painting that wound its way up the ceiling, lamps the shape of an espresso portafilter, and that striking bright green espresso machine and grinder.

A quarter of the cafe is reserved for retail. You can browse and buy coffee beans, coffee cups, coffee grinders, and colourful tampers – but back to my original mission, I found myself a seat and ordered my share of the devil's brew.

My latte arrived adorned with a beautiful rosetta drawn with smooth, silky milk. I took a first sip and put down my pen. With the latte cupped between my two hands, I took another sip, and another sip, and another sip. It was a cup full of bliss, perfectly balanced with big round flavours and the right amount of bitterness and acidity.

That said, be prepared to find your espresso coffees tasting slightly different the next time you visit. I've [since found out](#) the cafe's three blends are rotated every few days to introduce folk to new coffees and flavours.

It wasn't until I reached the bottom of my cup that I noticed an interesting aside – the colour of the saucer underneath. Mine was grey, and I realised other people's saucers also came in shades of yellow and green.

Do you remember what colour saucers your coffee cups were served on?

I cast my mind back to all the other cafes I've visited in times past, and realised they all came in different colours: blue saucers at Proud Mary, brown saucers at Seven Seeds, black ones at Three Bags Full and red saucers at Auction Rooms.

And it was then I saw a good friend come through the door. Time for another honest latte.

Food and drink: exploring Lygon St, Carlton

Published Date : May 13, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/05/food-drink-exploring-lygon-st-carlton/>

WELCOME to Lygon St. Dotted with countless restaurants, cafes and takeaways to indulge any palate, Carlton's famous food strip is abuzz from morning to night, and is a great destination for university students hungry for a bite between classes, or looking for a cosy spot to kick back with friends.

Buon Appetito: a taste of Italian culture

Famous for its Italian culture, Lygon St has one of the biggest selections of Italian restaurants and cafes in Australia.

Start your journey into the delights of Italian cooking at **Tiamo** (303 Lygon St) - an old favourite with students. A quaint little outfit on the corner of Lygon and Elgin streets, it's good food coupled with good prices, it's not hard to see why the cafe is often packed during lunch and dinnertime. Its sister store, **Tiamo 2** next door on Lygon St is more open and modern, and is also worth checking out.

Opening Hours: Daily, 7am to 11pm. Price Range: \$12.90 to \$13.90 for pastas, \$19.40 to \$21 for mains and \$6.90 for desserts

At the corner of Lygon and Faraday St is the Italian dessert and coffee shop **Brunetti's** (198-204 Faraday St). It's *the place* to get a sweet fix if you are in Carlton, and a popular meeting place for a catch up with friends. Chocolates, crepes, macarons, gelatos and cakes are made fresh everyday. Some suggestions include the Opera cake, which has layers of almond sponge, coffee butter cream and chocolate ganache. If you've still got room after that, try the strawberry mousse, enriched with vanilla sponge and kirsch liqueur. Their lavish cakes are also perfect for birthdays and other special occasions.

Opening Hours: Sunday – Thursday, 6am to 11pm; Friday – Saturday, 6am till late. Price Range: \$1.50 to \$11.50

When you're done gorging on chocolates and sweets, head to **Carlton Espresso** (326 Lygon St) for the authentic Italian coffee experience. More recently, it's also begun dishing out a good selection of breakfast focaccias and piadinas, pizzas and pastas. There's a spacious indoor café-bar as well as outdoor seating. It's great for breakfast, lunch or dinner with friends.

Opening Hours: Daily, 7am to 11pm. Price Range: up to \$15 for mains

Keep walking down the street and you'll see two of Lygon's busiest Italian eateries next door to each other. **Café Corretto** and **Papa Gino's** have long been the destination for international students looking for their first taste of traditional Italian.

Café Corretto (225-227 Lygon St) has been dishing out pizzas, pastas and steaks for three generations since the Francese family began business in 1972. And if the deco isn't telling enough, the restaurant is It's also "home" to the Ferrari Formula One and Ducati Formula 500 teams when they pass through Melbourne.

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11.30am to 11pm. Price Range: \$13 to \$22 for mains

Getting a table at **Papa Gino's** (221 Lygon St) can be quite a struggle especially on weekends and Friday nights. Nevertheless, the service is always good. But the food is even better. The very big menu includes pastas, pizza, steaks and seafood, as well as traditional Italian ice cream desserts like the tartufo and cassata.

Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday, 12pm to 2.30pm, 5pm till late; Sunday, 12pm to 11pm

Il Dolce Freddo (116 Lygon Street), which means "the cold dessert", is everything Italian and more. The Rocher gelati (think generous chunks of Ferrero Rocher folded through silky smooth gelati) has been among the top selling flavours for years; and the family-run business hasn't been afraid to innovate, coming up with flavours that international students dig, including the pungent durian, lychee, green tea and pandan.

Now, if only it was open all year round - gelateria is closed during winter.

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 12.30 pm to 11pm

Beyond Italian

Carlton has also become home to many other migrant communities over the years, and is reflected in the restaurants that have sprung up on the Lygon St food strip.

Don't say we didn't warn you. The food at **Ying Thai 2** (110 Lygon St) is hot, hot, hot. You won't be able to pass by the Thai eatery without noticing the fluorescent coloured walls, green tabletops and pink chairs. Signature dishes include its tom yum soups, crispy pork skin and green curry. Remember to ask for water.

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 12pm to 10pm

Next to Ying Thai 2 is the Indian restaurant **Namaste** (104 Lygon St) started up by two [former international students](#). The biryanis are packed with loads of spice and flavour, you can choose how spicy you want your curries to be, and the naans are made fresh up the front of the shop. It's a good idea to go with a couple of friends to try a variety of the dishes on the menu.

Opening Hours: Daily, for lunch and dinner

[Jimmy's the Original Greek Tavern](#) (130 Lygon St) is a Melbourne institution. Dine in or takeaway, this restaurant serves up something most Melbournians can't go without on a Friday or Saturday night out – a souvlaki. Tuck into richly spiced meat mixed with lettuce and onions, all wrapped up in pita bread and smothered in tzatziki sauce – it's the perfect cure for the late night munchies. Jimmy's also has great mixed meat and seafood platters if you're looking for something more refined.

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 6pm to 11pm

Price Range: \$18 to \$30 for mains

[Thresherman's Bakehouse](#) is a great place to hang out in between classes. The old warehouse on 221 Faraday St has been a Melbourne icon which most students from Melbourne University would recognise. The food is pretty decent, and most importantly, perfect for students on a tight budget. As its namesake suggests, you'll be able to find breads and pastries, from bagels, sandwiches and croissants to pies, pasties to cakes; but the bakehouse also serves up bowls of hot soup which are perfect for winter, as well as a changing selection of dishes from the bain marie. Look out for discounted breadrolls and pastries at night if you're after a bargain.

Opening Hours: Daily, 7am till late

And finally, for some pub grub, head to the [University Hotel](#) on 272 Lygon St. Dig in to heart parmas, burgers with the lot, and steak. Wash it all down with an ice cold beer.

Opening Hours: Every day till late

Okay, so this is not quite on Lygon St. But you couldn't talk about food and drink in Carlton without mentioning [Seven Seeds](#).

This cafe is tucked away unassumingly on 106-114 Berkeley St next to the Melbourne University law building, but it's definitely worth seeking out. The warehouse-café roasts its own beans so the coffee is always fresh. It's a must for the discerning coffee connoisseur.

Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday, 7am to 5 pm; Sunday, 8am to 4pm

The International Students' Guide to Carlton has been sponsored by the City of Melbourne's Opportunities for Carlton Fund.

Open till late: best places to study in Melbourne

[Had over than 7,000 views by September 2012]

Published Date : October 29, 2010

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2010/10/open-till-late-best-places-to-study-in-melbourne/>

OKAY last minute crammers, we've done the legwork for you and updated the best spots in town to hole up and study till late.

Libraries

Misery loves company, and it sometimes helps to know there are others in the same boat as you. A number of libraries have extended their opening hours to give students long stretches of uninterrupted study. Just remember to implement your new-found [library etiquette](#).

The **Baillieu Library** at Melbourne University's Parkville campus is probably one of the oldest and most popular haunts for students during the exam period. Although it's just recently renovated with a whole new facility, this semester they are not offering late study period. The library will be open from 8.30am till 10pm Mondays to Thursdays, 6pm on Fridays, and from 11am to 5pm on weekends.

A lesser-known library would be the **Brownless Biomedical Library**, which is on the west side of the Parkville campus close to Grattan St and Royal Parade. The study hall is open daily from 7am to 2am during the exam period. The downside is you've got to be a Melbourne University student to access the facility.

From November 1 to 30, students will also have the option of heading down to Melbourne University's **Law Library** on Pelham St. Doors to the modern and roomy library will open from 8.30am to midnight from Mondays to Thursdays, till 9pm on Fridays, and 10am to 6pm on the weekends. You don't need to be a student from Melbourne University to use this library.

For a nook closer to the heart of the city, try the **RMIT University Library** located on level five at Building 8, 360 Swanston St. The opening hours aren't as long – but it's not bad. Hours are from 8am till midnight from Mondays to Thursdays, and doors close at 8pm on Fridays and the weekends.

The **State Library of Victoria** on Swanston St has plenty of study areas and excellent internet facilities, but is open only from 10am to 9pm from Mondays to Thursdays, and till 6pm on Fridays and the weekends.

Cafes and eateries

Follow the escalators up to level three at Melbourne Central and arrive at the **Pancake Parlour**, which is open from 7am to 1am from Sundays to Thursdays and till 3am on Friday and the weekends. There's free wireless internet access, and a hard-to-resist menu from snacks and mains to dessert and drinks. The only caveat: indiscriminate binge eating may hurt your wallet and your waistline.

An affordable alternative would be **McDonald's** at Victoria Market, 501-503 Elizabeth St. It's worth considering if you were thinking of pulling an all-nighter. It's open 24 hours seven days a week, and there's free WiFi. Just remember that fast food is a [sometimes food](#).

For those after a caffeine hit, try **Starbucks**. There are two branches in the city – City Square on 207 Collins St and 295 Swanston St. You won't find internet access at either branch, which could be a good thing if you find yourself constantly drawn to check up on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, instead of the textbook.

The Collins St branch opens early from 6.30am to 9.30pm Mondays to Thursdays, 6.30am to midnight on Fridays, 7.30am to midnight on Saturdays and 7.30am to 10pm on Sundays.

The Starbucks on Swanston St is open from 7am to 11pm from Mondays to Thursdays, 7am to 11.30pm on Fridays, 8am to 11.30pm on Saturdays and 8am to 11pm on Sundays.

If chocolate is more your thing, there's **Max Brenner** on Menzies Alley at Melbourne Central and at QV Square.

The one at Melbourne Central is open from 8am to 10pm from Mondays to Thursdays, 8am to midnight on Fridays, 10am to midnight on Saturdays, and 10am to 10pm on Sundays.

Max Brenner at QV is open 8am to 9pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, 8am to 10pm Wednesdays and Thursdays, 8am to 11pm on Fridays, 9am to 11pm on Saturdays, and 9am to 9pm on Sundays.

And finally, if you wished the **Gloria Jeans** in [Borders](#) at Melbourne Central were still open, you should head to the one at Level 2 Melbourne Central, exactly at the corner of Elizabeth and Swanston St. Final opening hours were not yet finalised, but it is assumed to be open as long as Melbourne Central is open.

Where do you go to study? Tell us in the comments sections below.

NEWS

Volunteers Needed for Carlton Harmony Day Festival

Published Date : March 7, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/03/volunteers-needed-carlton-harmony-day-festival/>

DO you value cultural diversity and equity? Be a volunteer at the Carlton Harmony Day Festival and find out how you can make a difference in your community.

The festival falls on Thursday, March 22 this year and organiser Opportunities for Carlton is looking for eager participants from all backgrounds to volunteer at the event.

Harmony Day is a day where Australians celebrate its cultural diversity. The event also encourages people to respect each other, promote equity, and make all people feel like they belong regardless of race, age, gender, or religious beliefs.

The event will take place from 3.30pm to 8pm at the Carlton Housing Estate.

The volunteering time slots are

- 11am-1pm, 1-3pm, 3-5pm, 5-8pm or 8-10pm on Thursday March 22, and
- 9-11am on Friday, March 23.

Volunteers are welcome to apply for more than one time slot.

If you are keen to be involved, contact Ping Vincent on 03 9347 0025 or email ping.vincent@nych.org.au.

1 in 3 international students evade fares: “it’s just too expensive”

Published Date : October 19, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/10/international-students-evade-fares/>

IN a small survey conducted by Meld Magazine, around one in three international students said they occasionally fare evade, while around 20 per cent of Melbournians do.

This means many are risking the occasional \$180 fine rather than paying every time they use the public transport.

Such fare evasion been estimated to cost the government nearly \$80 million in revenue.

One international student who didn't want to be named said, "I fare evade because it's not worth it to buy two-hour ticket where I'll just use it for less than 10 minutes journey."

Another unnamed student also said, "If I travel from zone one to zone two, I fare evade because I need to pay extra \$10 for a daily full fare, where I might only use train in the zone two for only about two stops."

Others confessed that they were simply "broke", and were reluctant to pay more for such an expensive public transport.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that living cost has risen to 4.9 per cent. Melbourne shoppers have paid 30.7 per cent more for fruit, 19.5 per cent more for vegetables, 11 per cent more in electricity, and 17 per cent more in water bills compared to last year.

Previous worldwide study done by the UK-based Economist Intelligence Unit has compared the cost of living in major cities. While Tokyo was still the most expensive city in the world, Melbourne was not far behind at seventh, proving more costly than London, New York, and Hong Kong.

Although Victoria and New South Wales are the only remaining states in Australia where international students must pay full fare prices for public transport, previous attempts for equal fares have not been successful.

Strategic policy director of Australian Education International, Patrick Willix, said this was largely because 70 per cent of Australia's international students are located in Victoria and NSW, hence making it very costly for the government to subsidise the travel fares.

Documents obtained by *The Australian* under Freedom of Information laws have revealed that [Victorian officials expect ending the discriminatory policy would cost \\$92 million.](#)

ASOS comes to Australia

Published Date : September 22, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/09/asos-comes-to-australia/>

ONLINE shopping giant ASOS has just launched an Australian site, giving shoppers a more local online shopping experience. Marcella Purnama and Kim Larkin checks it out.

Before now, anyone who wanted to get a slice of this fashion nirvana would have to shop on the UK site, deciphering UK sizes and the exchange rate as they went.

Speaking to Vogue Australia, ASOS international director Jon Kamaluddin said the [Australian website](#) would do the math for local shoppers, displaying everything in local sizes and Australian dollars.

"ASOS took the UK site, kept all the things our customers loved and localised all the features that we believed would make it easier for them to shop," he said.

You will still be able to buy pieces from the best English designers featured on their famous UK website, but most exciting of all, ASOS Australia now gives Australian independent designers and vintage vendors a place to showcase their wares, including the Evil Twins, ksubi, Minkpink and myPetsQuare.

Other perks? An Australian-specific ASOS blog means shoppers will no longer be taunted by the seasons – summer fashion editorial featuring gorgeous summer dresses, straw hats and sandals in the dreaded Melbourne winter months.

Shoppers will also be eligible for promotions and discounts exclusive to Australia in the coming months, Kamaluddin said.

But there are no plans to set up an Australian warehouse to match the website though, so everything sold on the site will still be shipped from the UK, but there are no shipping or return fees.

For those not in the know, ASOS is a UK-based company that has been in the online retail business for more than 11 years.

Unlike other online stores, ASOS doesn't just sell established brands, but is a marketplace where anyone who loves fashion, anywhere in the world, can sell fashion, to anyone who loves fashion, anywhere in the world.

Confused? Well, it basically means that you can buy stuff and at the same time, create your own boutique store and sell your stuff online. Sort of like the ebay of the fashion world.

So what does ASOS Australia sell? In one word, everything. T-shirts, shoes, accessories, belts, coats, jewellery, dresses, bags, hoodies, anything – you name it. Most of their stuff is marketed towards young adults in their 20s and 30s, but caters for every style from indie to vintage, with a heavy emphasis on emerging designers.

Not bad if you consider that most of their stuff retails from \$50 to \$200, you just have to have the patience to sift through all the pages until you find something you like.

Will ASOS Australia be a hit or a miss? We hit the streets to find out what you think about the online shopping giant:

- “I used to always look at the UK site when I wanted to know what was going to be in fashion next season, but I never bought anything, so I'm definitely looking forward to blowing my next allowance on the Australian site,” – Anita, 21
- “When I'm looking for cool, unique pieces I'll check out ASOS. I love shopping emerging designers because I know I'm getting a statement piece that no one else has. It'll be good to see what the Australian designers come up with,” – James, 19
- “What if you order something and it doesn't fit or doesn't look like what you wanted? I'd be way too worried about that happening to shop at ASOS. Plus I think it's kind of pricey. You can get better designer stuff in the laneways of Melbourne,” – Sarah, 23

[Call to abolish international students' 20-hour work restrictions](http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/04/calls-abolish-international-students-20-hour-work-restrictions/)

Published Date : April 28, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/04/calls-abolish-international-students-20-hour-work-restrictions/>

AUSTRALIA'S fast food and retail workers union UNITE says 20-hour work restrictions are forcing students into low-paid sectors where they are vulnerable to exploitation. Elisa Scarton and Marcella Purnama report.

AUSTRALIA'S union for fast food and retail workers UNITE has renewed its call on the government to abolish the 20-hour working restrictions placed on international students.

This was after two former 7-Eleven operators were found out for deliberately [exploiting six international students](#) and ordered to backpay \$90,000 in wages.

UNITE representative Mel Gregson said the restrictions forced international students into low-paid sectors where they were vulnerable to exploitation.

"International students can't support themselves on low wages when they're working only 20 hours a week," she said.

"It creates a situation where a lot of employers force international students to work more hours for less pay. They then bully and threaten students with deportation if they complain."

In 2009, *The Age* reported an Australian student and an international student were paid \$14 and \$9 per hour respectively for doing the same work at the same place.

Melbourne University Overseas Student Service spokesperson Yee Hooi Tee said little had changed since *The Age* report.

"I still meet with international students, especially in the hospitality and mobile phone industries, who are severely underpaid," Ms Tee said.

But Ms Tee said it wasn't just fear of deportation that kept international students from reporting their employers.

"Often they come from countries where there aren't many rights for workers, so they don't expect them in Australia. Other times they need the job to survive," she said.

"With the 20-hour weekly working restrictions it's difficult for them to find employment, so they stay where they are. They're worried that an employer won't hire them when they can get a local student who can work for longer.

"They then accept discriminatory and often unacceptable working conditions."

Both UNITE and MUOSS have reported cases of international students not being paid for training sessions and probation periods, being forced to work long hours without breaks or being given impossibly short notice to come into work and then being threatened if they refuse.

Ms Tee also said many employers broke the law by paying international students cash-in-hand.

"That might seem like a good thing, but it isn't. Receiving cash-in-hand often means students are off the books and their payment can be delayed or they don't get paid at all. Then they can't take it to court because there is no record of their employment," she said.

In their petition to the government, UNITE said the abolishment of the 20-hour working restrictions would provide students with better flexibility and more employment options so they wouldn't have to turn to underpaying jobs and exploitative employers.

When contacted, a spokesperson from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations said the government's position on international student working restrictions wasn't under review, and pointed Meld Magazine to a [media release](#) issued back in 2009.

In the statement, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Evans said international students were expected to have enough money to support themselves before they applied for a university course in Australia.

"International students can supplement their income through part-time work in Australia but the primary purpose of a student visa is to study and students should not rely on part-time work to meet their expenses," Mr Evans said in the statement.

Work exploitation was among the issues raised by [Bruce Baird](#) when he was commissioned by the Federal Government to [review the regulation](#) of education services in the overseas student sector. His final report was released in February 2010.

But while international students should be given "all possible assistance to avoid workplace exploitation and effectively take action should it occur", the 20 hour cap was not, in his review, an unreasonable restriction – and arguments the cap should be lifted in order to allow students to earn the income necessary to meet rising accommodation costs ignored the fact students should not rely on earnings within Australia to meet basic living costs.

He said in his report: "Many international students consider a job as part of their Australian experience. However, Australia does not guarantee that every international student will find a job. Further, there are very few jobs that pay enough to cover room, board and tuition while working less than 20 hours a week, particularly for people still gaining their qualifications. That is why DIAC asks students to establish that they have a minimum of \$18,000 per annum for living costs, in addition to tuition fees and travel expenses."

Ms Tee said students shouldn't expect a change to their working restrictions, but they could still avoid workplace exploitation and discrimination in other ways.

She said the best thing students could do was make sure they were properly informed about their working rights before they even start looking for a job.

"Never begin work without knowing what your rights are and getting your employer to sign a contract promising to respect them. If your employer won't sit down and write one with you, then walk away," Ms Tee said.

As part of their Fair Work Campaign, MUOSS has created a sample employee contract for international students to take to their employers.

University of Melbourne students can arrange free appointments with the organisation to get advice or information about their working rights.

"Foreign workers have the same rights as local workers. If students feel like they're being exploited then we can help them take the right action and speak to the right people," Ms Tee said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is also available to help international students with workplace issues. They can find information [online](#) or call 13 13 94 to speak to someone in their own language.

"Students should never feel afraid to voice their problems. If we can't help you, then the ombudsman can. They can take your complaint to court and you can win," Ms Tee said.

"Never give up and never let employers take advantage of you. If you speak up, you're not only helping yourself, but your also helping to protect other international students from exploitation too."

Working in Australia: visas, taxes, minimum pay and rights

[Had over than 3,000 views by September 2012]

Published Date : April 6, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/04/working-in-australia-visas-taxes-minimum-pay-and-rights/>

ARE you looking for work in Australia? There are a whole lot of things you need to know even before you begin the job hunt. Karen Poh and Marcella Purnama report.

THINKING of working in Australia?

Not all international students are so lucky to enjoy an all-expense paid study trip, and many do look for part-time jobs to help pay the bills. Some do it for some extra spending money, and others do it simply for the experience or to kill time.

But before you even start looking for work, make sure you understand the working conditions of your student visa.

A good place to start is the [Fair Work Ombudsman website](#) – where you can access the information in languages other than English, including Chinese, Hindi, Korean and Thai.

20-hour work restrictions

It wasn't too long ago that international students had to apply for a work visa in addition to their student visas to have permission to work in Australia.

But from 2010, student visas now includes the right work to work in Australia – though restrictions apply.

You cannot work more than 20 hours a week when your course is in session, other than work which has been registered as part of your course. But no limits apply during the official semester holidays. It sounds silly to say this, but a week begins on a Monday and ends on the Sunday, so make sure the hours work out when sorting out your rosters. This applies to both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Things are slightly different if you have a spouse or dependents who are here with you in Australia. Spouses and dependents of undergraduate students have the same work restrictions, i.e. 20 hours a week during semester and no limits during the holidays. But spouses and dependents of postgraduate students can work full-time.

Tax File Number (TFN)

A Tax File Number (TFN) is essential if you want to work in Australia, and employers will ask you for one when you begin work. TFNs are issued by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and are used to identify people for tax purposes.

International students are considered residents for tax purposes. So to avoid paying the highest rate of tax, a TFN is essential for you when it's time to claim some money back. Read our [Tax Help](#). [Applying for a TFN](#) is easy. You can do it online.

Minimum pay and conditions

Your minimum pay and conditions may be set by an award, agreement or contract of employment. These are legal documents which set out your employer's obligations to you and your responsibilities as an employee.

If you are asked to sign any type of document agreeing to work conditions, make sure you read it very carefully and understand it before you sign. Also keep a copy for your records.

Your award or agreement should tell you things like your minimum rate of pay; whether you are entitled to penalty rates (higher pay rates) for working nights, weekends or public holidays; the minimum number of hours per shift you can be rostered and paid for; and if you should be paid an allowance for doing certain tasks.

Pay rates vary according to your age, as well as the industry you work in. You can work out your pay rates using the [Paycheck calculator](#) on the Fairwork Ombudsman website.

But as a rule of thumb, your employer should pay you at least the legal minimum rate shown in your award or agreement. Your employer can pay you more than the minimum rate, but not less. Depending on your age you may be paid a junior rate. In most jobs you will be paid junior rates until you turn 21.

Do also note how your employers will be paying you, such as in cash, by cheque or direct debits into your bank account. Each payment requires a pay slip as proof, and it would be handy to file them away.

Workplace rights

It's also important that you know your rights at work so you don't get ripped off.

Poor awareness about workplace rights has seen many students settling for less than minimum wage. Read [one student's story](#) here.

You should be paid for all hours you work. Many students often don't realise they ought to be paid even for trial shifts and during probation periods. You should also be paid to attend meetings, when you attend training, as well as when you have been rostered to open and close the business.

You should start and finish your shift at the rostered time whether work is busy or quiet, unless you and your employer agree otherwise.

Also, money can't generally be taken out of your pay if customers leave without paying, if the cash registers are short, or if you accidentally break something.

A Fair Work Ombudsman spokesman said foreign workers, including international students, have the same rights as any other worker in Australia, but youth, language and cultural barriers could make it difficult for foreign workers, including international students, to negotiate their employment conditions.

He said common issues included underpayment of their full entitlements and not being provided with access to entitlements such as annual leave and work breaks.

"The best defence for a foreign worker is an awareness of their workplace rights," he said.

"Any foreign worker who is concerned they have been treated unfairly or is seeking information about minimum entitlements under workplace laws should contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94

for free advice and assistance. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50. Information translated into 27 languages is available at www.fairwork.gov.au."

Quitting your job

And finally a note about quitting your job. If you want to resign from your job you usually have to tell your employer in advance. If you don't give your employer enough notice they may be able to keep some of your pay to cover the notice period – it's also good etiquette.

Would you like to know more? The [International Student Legal Advice Clinic](#) is holding a [free talk on workplace rights](#) from 6 to 8pm Tuesday April 19 at The Couch, 69 Bourke St, Melbourne. The session includes a free meal, as well as prizes to be won.

Do you juggle your studies with part-time work? What has your experience been working in Australia? Do you have any advice for other students? Tell us in the comments section below.

Weekly news round-up: who's who in Australia, cool iPhone apps, and updates from Japan and Libya

Published Date : March 15, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/03/weekly-news-round-up-japanese-earthquake-and-tsunami-fare-hikes-and-zara-opens-shop-in-melbourne/>

WONDERING what's happening around the world this week? We thought we'd give you a run-down of issues big and small, events near and far. This week it's about the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, Metlink's increased fares, and Spanish retailer ZARA opening shop in Melbourne.

Japan earthquake and tsunami

WE'RE pausing for more than a moment in the hustle and bustle of Melbourne city life this week to remember all those who have been affected by the devastating [Sendai earthquake and tsunami](#) in Japan.

The 9.0-magnitude earthquake shook the country last Friday March 11, triggering a tsunami that sent 10-metre high walls of water crashing over cities on the north-east coast of the main island.

More than 2000 people have died and thousands more are injured and missing (see the [National Police Agency of Japan pdf report](#)). Entire cities have been destroyed and many lost everything when the waves swept away their homes, cars and boats.

There have also been fears of [radiation leaks](#) from nuclear plants affected by the earthquake in Fukushima.

[Analysts](#) have confirmed that the earthquake is the fourth largest ever recorded worldwide and the largest Japan has experienced since modern recordings began 130 years ago.

Metlink increases fares

If being home to the world's most overvalued global house prices wasn't bad enough, Melbourne has now hiked up their public transport fares, again. Both Metcard and myki tickets were increased by 3.1 per cent on March 12, which means you'll pay an extra 10 cents for your average two hourly or daily trip.

So don't be surprised when you purchase your next Metcard. A full breakdown of costs can be found on the [Metlink website](#).

ZARA: Coming Soon

Having successfully conquered 70 countries and opened more than 1000 stores, [ZARA](#) has finally decided to expand its horizons to Australia.

The flagship Melbourne ZARA store is expected to open at Bourke St Mall, just next to David Jones this April. So keep your eyes peeled, fashionistas!

Collins place fire, workers evacuated

Published Date : October 22, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2010/10/collins-place-fire-workers-evacuated/>

FIREFIGHTERS are still trying to work out the cause of the blaze that broke out in an office building on the corner of Exhibition St and Flinders Lane this morning.

Spokesman for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade John Rees said the MFB received a call at 10.43am.

Six fire trucks were dispatched and office workers were evacuated from the Collins Place building immediately, Mr Rees said.

An employee from Ernst & Young, Devon Vong, said he witnessed the blaze from his office building next door.

"Collins Place is surrounded by a couple of office buildings, and we could see everyone in the surrounding buildings were looking out the window as well," Mr Vong said.

He said the fire was put out pretty quickly and workers affected appeared calm in the situation.

Mr Rees said no one was injured in the incident, but the extent of the damage was not yet known.

"It's only a small fire... and was held under control as soon as we get there," he said.

Mr Rees said he expected the situation to return to normal pretty quickly.

OPINION

The bittersweet truth about life after graduation

Published Date : November 23, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/11/truth-about-life-after-graduation/>

YOU'VE earned a degree, now what? Marcella Purnama discusses the harsh realities of applying for jobs after university.

YOU'VE earned a degree, now what? Realistically, you would expect to go into a job and have your company invest in you and teach you cool stuff. Besides, that's what workplace training is all about, right?

The reality is, most internship positions now require you to have experience. I wish someone has told me that before I started my degree.

I wish someone had told me you need to have at least three different internships under your belt after graduation, or five, or that you need to be active in your own process of learning, that the competition is too hard or that a degree doesn't promise you a job.

I wish someone had mentioned that as a student, your responsibility is not (only) towards your studies, it's not (only) about making friends, joining clubs or devoting yourself to a character development. Your responsibility is (mostly) to get lots of experience.

We international student graduates have a lot of expectations. After spending AU\$100,000 on a three-year degree, we expect to get a decent job and a decent salary. We expect to, at least, be able to feed ourselves and put a roof above our heads.

In the book [Why good people can't get jobs](#), author Peter Capelli argues there's something wrong with the hiring process.

He says: "With an abundance of workers to choose from, employers are demanding more of job candidates than ever before.

"They want prospective employers to be able to fill a role right away, without any training or ramp-up time."

Companies have vacancies but they are not getting filled because they are waiting for the right piece of puzzle. They are not investing in training, afraid that after becoming butterflies, their employees will fly off to the park next door.

I think this is why good people can't get jobs. Unless, you're in the top 10 per cent of your year with at least 10 different internships after three years of university, you're not even eligible to compete.

Another solution? A Masters degree, which would buy you extra time, but not experience. It would equip you with another shiny certificate, but not employment.

But is it too late for us graduates to equip ourselves with more experience? It's a lose-lose situation. The companies looking for interns want students. Employers looking for people to hire want experienced graduates with at least three years of experience. Even those who already have two or three internships aren't good enough.

Want another solution? Become an entrepreneur. But where's the market? And the expertise?

Take heart, my fellow graduates. Take heart. The storm's a coming.

I have seen friends graduate with double degrees or even masters and still not be able to secure a job after graduation. Some wait for a year, another two. Then comes the cycle where you squeal in both delight and horror when your friend gets the job you want. And scream like someone has won lottery after you land an interview.

But instead of looking at job hunting as a competition, a friend, colleague and recent graduate gave me a different analogy. He says finding jobs is more like the courting period of a relationship. There are a lot of trial and errors to getting to know each other before actually getting to the dating (or employment) stage. It's not all about the company, it's about you too.

Finding the right person to date is hard. So is finding the right employer. But you'll find one sooner or later.

Take heart. If you relentlessly try again and again and commit yourself to personal growth, there will be a company insane enough to hire you. Your starting place will be different to your friends's, but you'll start somewhere, and you will succeed.

Don't lose your child-like faith and believe in Dr. Seuss, who wrote:

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to great places!
You're off and away!
...And will you succeed?
Yes! You will, indeed!
(98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)
...Your mountain is waiting.
So... Get on your way!"

The Great SEXtember Debate: Waiting for 'The One'

Published Date : September 21, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/09/great-sextember-debate-waiting-for-the-one/>

WHY do some people wait until they're married to have sex? Marcella Purnama shares her reasons for abstaining.

There are countless views about sex in this world. Some choose to use the three-date rule. Others wait for a year. Others don't mind doing it on the first date, while some won't have sex until they're married.

I remember coming home from school one day with all these questions in my head. I was 10 and had just been to a "Love, sex and dating" seminar.

To be honest, I don't remember what we were told. I just remember how the seminar never encouraged further discussion. We had acquired this new-found knowledge, stored it and put it somewhere in the back of our mind.

Fast-forward a few years to the time when we all began actively exploring our sexuality, identity, and attraction to the opposite sex.

I remember being given a stack of Christian books about not having sex before marriage. Two I would remember for life. One is Joshua Harris' [*I Kissed Dating Goodbye*](#) and the other one is Shannon Ethridge's [*Every Woman's Battle*](#).

When I read those books, they confirmed the decision I had made at a young age – to wait until I was married to have sex. Why? Because I believe in its beauty.

I remember watching *Valentine's Day* a couple of years ago. In it, an old man tells his wife she is the only woman he has ever been with. I can still see his eyes beaming with happiness. He had this sense of satisfaction that came from being committed to only one person. I want that.

I really, really want that.

If I fast-forward my life to 50 years from now, I want to be able to hold my husband's hands, look him in the eye and tell him that he is my first and my last.

Last July, I got together with my friends at a bar and we stumbled on this topic. I have seen a lot of their values change – sex before marriage was one of them.

While I know some of my friends don't hold my view, I'd like to know if they have given this much thought.

I know one of my friends has – and he has made the decision not to wait. But what about everyone else? Sometimes I wonder if our inability to talk about sex impacts the decisions we make.

What if people think they don't have a choice? What if they do it just because everyone else seems to be doing it? Are they being safe?

Having sex or not, it's a choice. And every choice has its own consequences.

I believe that by abstaining from sex before marriage, I am guarding myself.

Some people say sex is an act of love, but I believe it's more than just an act of love. Things could go wrong – unwanted pregnancies, STIs, HIV, AIDS and a whole lot of emotional baggage if you break up further down the track.

By choosing to wait, I am avoiding all of these things.

I remember reading an [article](#) by young writer Alexandra Adornetto. She wrote:

“While each person should decide for themselves, my recommendation would be to wait. Wait for the right moment, the right person and the right situation. Becoming sexually active is not to be entered into lightly. I have seen too many girls damaged by a decision that was not carefully considered. The results are usually confusion, loss of self-esteem and a cynical view of relationships. My problem with casual, random sex is that while it might be physically pleasurable, it cannot possibly be meaningful or allow for personal growth.”

Happy Birthday, Indonesia

Published Date : August 18, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/08/happy-birthday-indonesia/>

AS Indonesia celebrates its 67th Independence Day, Marcella Purnama reflects on why she'll always be proud to call the country home.

It's raining.

I'm sitting here with a cup of latte to the left of me and passion fruit cake on my right. So Western, I know.

I am the only Asian (by far) in this small local cafe in North Melbourne, and yet I feel like I'm home.

And I'm home. I love Melbourne and all it has to offer.

But I have a lot of homes.

Indonesia is one of them.

I come from a very busy capital city, Jakarta, with a lot of traffic jams, and it often takes you two hours to get anywhere. Like most Indonesians, I often complained about the humidity, played badminton, and ate street food after school every day.

Even now, I eat Indomie once a week, and I listen to weird Indonesian songs about breaking up and cheating on others. True story.

I grew up reading news of corruption and injustice. Shopping malls were the places to be on weekends.

During primary school, I was the flag bearer. I learned how to walk like one, and talk like one. I memorised the Proclamation of Independence by heart. And despite every criticism I've made about my country, I still love it.

And yet I'm not a very patriotic Indonesian. Deep down, I want Indonesia to become a better place, but I just don't want to be involved in the equation it takes to get there.

Coming to Melbourne and befriending other nationalities, I've realised Indonesians are – in a sense – a bunch of followers. Everything that is done by Western societies allure us. We value branded stuff. We use Blackberries like they are our lifelines. We are loud talkers. We hate going out of our comfort zones. But you know what? Indonesians have a very strong sense of community.

Some of my fellow Indonesians are patriotic, some are patriotic one day a year, and some want to detach any connection they have their home country.

Truth be told, there are a lot of reasons to hate Indonesia.

Money rules, power rules, and corruption is everywhere. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. We lack political figures who stand for the country out of genuine love (and not money), and we have too many people who in the end, become corrupt.

But there is one reason to love it.

Indonesia is Indonesia.

It's the place where I was born, my homeland. And I'm proud of it.

I grew up there. It's my first world. My first taste of life. It's the language I speak, and the food I eat. It's my home.

I read an Indonesian novel once. In it, the author Donny Dhargantoro wrote,

"And even though you know how bad the news in the papers and...how broken our country is you will always say that you love this country."

I agree.

I've said this before, but let me say it again: no matter how many sandwiches I have for lunch, how much coffee I have for breakfast, and how much I talk and write in English, at the end of the day I crave for rice and hot tea.

Because I'm Indonesian, and I will always be.

Yesterday was my country's 67th birthday. And I'm sitting here in a Melbourne cafe, trying to be patriotic – listening to Indonesian songs, commenting on friends' statuses of how proud they are of their home country.

I've now realised, Indonesia will always have a place in my heart. And maybe that makes me just a little bit patriotic after all.

Love across borders: How one cynic embraced a long distance relationship

Published Date : August 3, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/08/love-across-borders/>

CAN you go the distance? Marcella Purnama gets personal about long distance relationships and their chances of success.

I used to be a non-believer of long distance relationships. I felt they were too tough and no one could ever withstand the hardship of not being able to be with the one you love physically.

Throughout high school I said to myself, "I don't want to be in a long distance relationship. Not now, not ever."

I congratulated those who were in one because I could imagine how hard it would be.

Then when graduation came and all of my high school friends scattered across the universe, I saw those long distance couples crumble. One by one, they broke up – until no one was left.

Moving onto my university life, I made new friends. I listened to those who were still trying to make their long distance relationships work, encouraged others. Saw the pre-wedding videos of those who made it through.

Then, I met someone.

First date. First anniversary. Life was perfect. And it stayed perfect.

But after a year together, he decided to move to Singapore for work. Suddenly, I was faced with the real possibility – no, the truth – of getting into a long distance relationship. I hadn't thought about it for a long time. Then I remembered how I used to despise it.

I thought, "How could I find myself in these shoes?"

Then again, how could I not?

He was, and still is, worth it, despite all my prejudices about long distance relationships.

The first time we said goodbye, it was a catastrophe. I was crying non-stop on the last date, trying to hold on to every second we had left. I would no longer be one drive away, I would be one plane trip away. I was taking solace in his commitment and trust. I knew his heart was genuine.

When it was time to part ways, he gave me a high five. I knew he was feeling emotional too and he did it to lighten the mood. It worked. I gave him a small laugh. Then he walked away, turning one last time to give me the most beautiful smile and disappeared among the crowd.

How I wished I could run towards him and plead for him not to go.

When people say distance makes the heart yearn more for the other, they're right. When you finally get to meet your significant other after a long separation, it's one of the best things in the world. But at the end of the day, it also sucks, because you know you will be separated once again.

Having said goodbye four times now, I can confidently say there's no "getting used to" saying goodbyes. Not now, maybe not ever. The feeling of holding his hand for the last time in a long time is quite excruciating.

But those who are in long distance relationships know we choose to be in one because it's far better to be with someone who is committed continents away, than to be with someone who's only metres away, but his heart isn't in it.

During my last holiday break, I met up with some of my high school friends who were once in long distance relationships, and they gave me some words of advice for my own.

"Good luck on that," said one of them, who had broken up with his girlfriend of three months after she went overseas.

Another gave me a weird look, half pitying, half amazed that I chose to go the distance.

I could sense what they were thinking. It hadn't work for them, it wouldn't work for anybody else.

Long distance relationships are not for everyone. They are hard and they are harder than a lot of things. But they are worth it in the end. Because he's worth it.

Do you think long distance relationships work? Share your thoughts in the comments box below.

Would you date someone who's already taken?

Published Date : July 27, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/07/dating-someone-who-is-already-taken/>

WHEN you fall for someone who's already taken, should you let your head or your heart rule? Meld columnist Marcella Purnama asks.

She's taken, but she's not married yet, so I can just steal her from her boyfriend... can't I?

It's a tempting thought, I know.

You think you deserve the girl/guy. You think you arrived a second too late in their life. You think that makes your moves okay because it's up to them to decide whether they want you more than their current partner anyway.

Well, my friends, please don't.

Even though I'm writing this primarily for the male population, females should listen up too. Just because the males are usually the chaser doesn't mean the opposite sex isn't guilty of doing this either.

Last week, I was chatting with a friend I haven't talked to for ages. I asked about his love life.

"There's a problem. Huge problem," he said.

"She already has someone."

He's not the first one to say something along those lines to me this past month.

A couple of weeks back, another friend of mine came to me looking for advice about a new crush.

He said, "She's a catch. She's great. We connect... but she's taken."

I've never been in this situation myself, but my friends got me thinking, when you have a crush on someone's significant other, do you keep chasing them or do you fall back?

My friend said his crush began as innocent chats. Then, they started messaging each other, talking on the phone with each other, having coffee together, even going to the gym together. This guy was so sure the girl was dropping hints and signals that he no longer cared that she was already committed to someone else.

It's true, she's not married, so she's still technically available. But let's do the reverse psychology thingy. If you keep on chasing her and she finally ends up with you, can you guarantee she won't just fall for somebody else while she's in a relationship with you?

"I tried to stay away from her," my friend insisted.

To this, I replied, "You didn't try hard enough."

"But she kept coming back," he shrugged.

I was about to give him a lecture about not feeding something that would eventually have to die, but decided not to. Instead, I listened to him talk happily about spending time with his new already-has-a-boyfriend crush. He loved waking her up in the morning, walking her back to her place, being in the same classes as her and taking the same subjects, even studying together.

If only she was single...

"You should stay away from her," I said, pleaded even.

"I know," he sighed.

Bingo! And here's the biggest problem for me, you know you're not supposed to chase someone who's already in a relationship, but you do it anyway.

When my friends admitted this, I was speechless.

I know this is probably not everyone's cup of tea and definitely not everyone's values, but I believe in the reap-what-you-sow in life philosophy. Call it karma, if you wish.

By admitting that he knew his actions were wrong, my friend had left me stumped. I could no longer stand by and listen to him tell me what signs and hints the girl had given him to show she was interested.

I took a deep breath and said, "You already know what to do."

"I know," he said.

"It's just hard."

If it were up to you, would you continue to have a crush on someone's significant other?

Unpaid internships – unethical exploitation or a necessary evil?

Published Date : July 20, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/07/unpaid-internships-unethical-exploitation-or-necessary-evil/>

WE all want them, but are unpaid internships just a form of accepted exploitation? Marcella Purnama shares her thoughts.

Your alarm starts buzzing. It's 7am. You're wondering why on earth you have to wake up that early, but then you remember: you have work today.

You hit snooze once and suddenly it's 7.13. Reluctantly, you try to kick your blanket off, only to shudder in the cold winter morning. Impulsively, you pull your blanket back up again and hit snooze for the nth time. When you wake up, it's 8.07.

In panic mode, you rush to the shower, dump everything into your bag, snatch your nearest coat and your apartment keys, check the tram timetable on your iPhone and curse the lift for being too damn slow. Without even taking a second to breathe, you sprint to the tram stop, only to become a human sardine because it's packed full.

Arriving at your workplace 15 minutes late, you pray hard no one will notice or that they'll at least assume you're late because you went to grab breakfast. You try to survive the next eight hours without caffeine, taking long lunch breaks and making frequent trips to the kitchen to get green tea, English breakfast tea, earl grey tea or to refill your almost-full water bottle.

When the clock strikes 5pm, you politely enquire about everyone's weekend plans while packing up. You silently (or publicly) make your exit and march home, only to find your room in a chaotic state because of the morning rush, and your assignments left undone. Opening your laptop, you realise you still have two final essays to do and you haven't done even a single bit of studying in preparation for the three exams you'll be having in two weeks.

But the worse part? Your 9 to 5 work was unpaid... I know, it sucks.

I recently got a three-month internship at a well-respected company. Two months in and I'm sulking a little bit about the fact that I'm not getting a salary. I have worked 9 to 5, two days a week, for two months. For the 128 hours that I have spent working, I could have gotten \$1,500 at least if I was working part-time elsewhere.

Of course, I love my placement and I'm immensely grateful that I've got this internship. With too much competition around and limited opportunities offered to students (especially international students), I know this is a golden opportunity. I might not be getting paid, but I'm getting experience – invaluable experience that will serve me well on the next step toward my dream job.

But working two days a week without being paid, on top of going to uni full time, is no easy feat.

Is it unethical for workplaces to want people to help them do stuff without paying them? I honestly can't answer that one.

If I were to conduct a poll, I'm guessing the result would be that paid internships are heaps better than unpaid ones. But unpaid ones are still better than no internships at all. How else will we gain experience?

And in the midst of this horrible economic crisis, your academic marks mean little to nothing (unless you want to do a Masters and all that, of course). In the job market, experience is your best friend. We don't need to be told twice. But are we willing to pay for that experience with our time and energy, but no expectation of remuneration? Sometimes, we are.

When I first started, I was kind of relieved I wasn't being paid because that meant I'd be less responsible for everything. If I made any mistakes, they would understand. If they asked me to do hard stuff and I failed a little bit, they wouldn't punish me because I'm unpaid and they should be grateful I'm helping them at all. But is this really the case?

Now that I have more experience, the excitement that I started my placement with is starting to drain. Waking up early in the morning is painful. Going home after work, but not being able to watch TV because I have heaps of assignments and studying to do is agony.

But I guess that's also part of my internship training: to still do my best, despite the less-than-perfect circumstances.

If I had the chance to repeat the last two months of my life, I would still choose to do my unpaid internship. As exploited as I feel, I would rather be exploited with experience in hand than not be exploited and be left with zero knowledge in my brain.

Do you agree with Marcella? Are unpaid internships exploitation or is it all worth it to gain the experience you need to get a good full time job in the end? Share your thoughts below.

Why gaming can make you a better person

Published Date : June 21, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/06/gaming-can-make-you-a-better-person/>

MELD columnist and ex-gamer Marcella Purnama shares her thoughts on why video games might actually be making you a better person.

When I say I was a gamer, I really was, and not just a mild one. Was I hardcore? Perhaps. You be the judge.

I once finished Final Fantasy VIII five times just to have all the limit breaks, get all the characters' level to 100, have all the Guardian Forces, finish all the side missions, collect all the cards, download the four different walkthroughs and [fall in love](#) with the main character, without ever touching a thing called a gameshark. After all, my dignity and pride would never allow me to cheat.

Sounds extreme? Well, I've done the exact same thing with Legend of Mana, Legend of Dragoon and Final Fantasy VII, to name a few. And I've tried to marry five different girls in Harvest Moon. ... okay, that sounded a bit wrong.

I've also perfected the art of Chocobo Racing. I've played a bit of Gran Turismo, Tekken and Final Fantasy IX (because disc two keeps freezing and no stores sell Play Station 1 games anymore...).

I've gone weeks with minimum sleep. Snapped at anyone, and I mean, anyone, who dared disturb me when I was battling the bosses. Endured my mum's wrath when I skipped dinner... yet again.

When Nintendo DS came along, I (humbly) self-proclaimed myself a good Mario Kart player, even though I didn't actually own a DS. I even battled my (male) peers in high school and gained a respectable (if not questionable) reputation for my skills. There was only one person who I couldn't beat. But I still kicked ass without spending hours playing the game and without drift.

Yes... you read that right. I am a Mario Kart player who doesn't do drift.

While I didn't think I had a problem, my parents obviously did because they refused to give into my pleas and buy me a Play Station 2. I never did get to play Final Fantasy X, but once in a while, a friend would come to my house with her PS2 in tow and we'd play Fatal Frame and Devil May Cry.

If you've never played Fatal Frame, you won't know how scary it is, especially when we vowed to turn off all the lights while playing it. Dang, that game was so scary, we usually wanted to just be an observer, not a player.

I am (or was) a good Dance Dance Revolution player, both with feet and the stick, and I took pride in becoming one.

There were benefits to being a gaming addict outside of simply finding something to fill the hours with. Socialising with the guys was easier because I knew their vocab.

Clearly, non-gamers would never understand limit breaks, cross-square-triangle-circle or some other combination, boost, magic, attack, heal, potion, junction, etc.

Most girls wouldn't even care, which put me at an obvious advantage when I was looking for a prom date.

I played Time Crisis and Initial D at the arcade, although I never become good at them (too much money would be spent playing those).

And then, somewhere during my senior high years, I just stopped playing... everything.

Age caught up with me too soon, I guess. Since that day I haven't played a single game. At least, none that requires serious effort and brain power.

Still, I am proud to call myself an ex-gamer. Those years spent gaming taught me perseverance and the importance of trying again and again, even if you've been defeated by the boss 20 times already.

These games forced me to think outside the box, to complete a mission and not give up because I needed to finish in order to go to the next level. They taught me to look at the details, to master the art of perfection.

Or at least, that's what I believe.

Not to say that it's cool to be ex-gamer. How many girls out there are, or were, gamers? Not many I bet.

Somehow with the creation of iPad and iTouch, games have lost their spark. When children become bored of one game, they switch easily. When they're stuck, they never want to try more than twice to overcome the bosses. Of course, this is just a theory, but wouldn't these actions then manifest in your ideologies and attitudes towards the rest of your life?

Maybe. Maybe not.

Of course, now I have become one of those girls who can't stand guys who play excessive video games. Not at this age. If they play and still function at a normal level, good. But if they neglect everything else to just finish a game, then there's clearly a problem.

When I look back at my youth, I am proud of what I've accomplished. Those hours spent gaming, contradictory to what you might think, were not lost at all. As [Randy Paush](#) once said, "Head fakes exist".

I believe that I wouldn't be who I am now if it weren't for all those hours spent trying to beat the bosses.

And you know what? I had fun. I can share my gaming stories with others instead of recapping vague memories about studying and extra tutoring outside school. And if that doesn't make it all worth it, I don't know what does.

Do you agree with Marcella? Do video games teach us important life skills? Share in the comments box below!

Forget myki – I'm holding onto my Metcard

Published Date : May 30, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/05/forget-myki-im-holding-onto-metcard/>

VICTORIA's ambitious smartcard ticketing system, myki, promised efficiency and convenience. But as Marcella Purnama muses, it seems to have fallen short on both counts.

Last year, I took a vow to hold onto my Metcard for as long as I could. It has now been two months since the phasing out of weekly, monthly, and yearly Metcard sales. I'm currently one of 70 percent of commuters who are still holding onto our metcards – and I will be doing so for as long as I possibly can.

For me, the controversial \$1.35 billion smartcard ticketing system has been disappointing, as throughout Melbourne you'll find non-operating myki readers and long queues of frustrated commuters waiting to touch on and touch off.

While myki was first planned in 2003 as a [smartcard technology](#) that would provide “quicker, easier, and cheaper public transport”, I found myself traveling slower as commuters queued for one malfunctioning myki reader after another. It's also been a common sight to see perplexed tourists and complaining travellers on a daily basis.

This all makes me wonder whether replacing our “disposable paper tickets” – in a bid to contribute better toward the environment among other things – is even worth the money, time, and effort.

The tipping point for me was when the Victorian Ombudsman found that the seemingly innocent , [Singapore-like public transport ticketing system](#) had cost [at least \\$350 million more](#) than originally budgeted.

So there goes my tax, along with another million obedient citizens'.

To top it off, last year alone, there were [2049 documented myki card malfunctions](#) - definitely not a good move for myki to earn my trust.

And I'm not alone. Take these commuters who [voiced out their complaints](#) to the *Herald Sun*.

“With myki, hundreds of people are forced to queue up for one single not-working myki reader. Please dump this annoying ticketing system,” Victorian traveler Phong wrote.

Plus, as if they were reading my mind, others wondered why the government chose to replace the decades-old Metcard system in the first place.

“The government should have left the Metcard system alone. There was nothing wrong with it,” Frankston commuter Arthur said.

While technology should be getting more advanced rather than having glitches, myki has shown the total opposite. A friend of mine, Ivan, told me that he is particularly distressed when trying to add credit to the cards.

“If I touch on on a tram and then the reader says that my myki credit hasn't been topped up, then what should I do? Should I go to the myki vending machine somewhere and pay for the second time?” he asks.

Of course, I'm biased, and another friend of mine actually has a different opinion, saying that they are of similar systems.

"I think myki is more convenient, as you can easily recharge your myki," he says.

"But, overall, I don't see much difference between myki and Metcard."

Years in the pipelines

Call me a skeptic, but you only need to look at this history of myki to understand where I'm coming from.

In 2003, the Labor Party formed the [Transport Ticketing Authority](#) (TTA) – a body whose job was to oversee Victoria's current Metcard system and manage the new myki system as well. Back then, TTA chief executive Bernie Carolan said myki offered the "[best possible fare](#)" guarantee as it included automatic calculation of the cheapest fare.

In 2005, then Premier Steve Bracks and treasurer John Brumby promised myki would be fully operational by 2007. A promise, which would not be fulfilled until five years later.

A contract was then signed with Melbourne-based foreign company [Kamco](#), whose job was to construct the \$1 billion Myki system.

As Premier Bracks resigned in 2007, treasurer John Brumby then took his place and myki's first trial on buses was completed. However, myki's trial runs on metro trains were not completed until 2009.

In 2010, three years after the promised fully operational public transport system, myki had finally been installed in buses and trams. But in July, even Ted Baillieu, who was in opposition at that time, referred to myki as "[the most useless piece of plastic in Australia](#)" – an opinion he seemed to change when he was eventually elected as Premier.

So you see, even nine years and three Premiers after plans for its implementation were first announced, myki, in my opinion, has yet to see its first signs of success.

Perhaps RMIT's Paul Mees said it best when he [wrote his opinion piece in 2010](#), agreeing the system should be scrapped.

"The most popular [view] is that cancelling the project would mean the \$700 million spent to date would be wasted," he wrote.

"This is correct, but continuing with the project will waste a further \$650 million over the coming years.

"Throwing good money after bad is usually a dumb idea."

Criticisms fall on deaf ears?

To my utter disbelief, in June 2011 the new state government decided to keep myki, saying that \$1 billion more of the taxpayer money would be needed to scrap the system.

So what has the Baillieu government promised then? Eliminating short-term cards, not including V/Line intercity and long distance coach services until the Myki system is proven reliable, and not installing Myki vending machines on trams. Not many benefits for the commuters, if I may say so myself.

And clearly, constant delays, budget blowouts, and malfunctioning systems are a pretty clear reflection of the government's ability to deliver on its promises as far as this is concerned.

But what is there to do? Myki and Metcard systems will still be operating hand in hand until the end of this year.

By then, the forced migration of Melbourne public transport users on to the new smartcard system will be complete.

Are you happy about the switch to myki? Tell us below.

Rebound: Only this isn't basketball, it's relationships

Published Date : May 24, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/05/rebound-relationships/>

IT'S funny just how heartless we can be when our hearts are broken. Marcella Purnama reflects on the pain of being a rebound and feeling like a distraction until someone better comes along.

The only thing sadder than being the "other" person in a relationship, is being someone's rebound. And no – I'm not talking about basketball.

My first experience with being a rebound was in the short period between a farewell party for a friend leaving for Bali (a trip I didn't end up going on for various reasons, but that's a different story) and my end-of-school prom night.

The man in question had been my best friend since junior high – right up until he got together with this girl in senior high. Our friendship had crumbled.

But when he broke up with his girlfriend and prom night drew closer, we found ourselves reconciling at the goodbye party.

To my utter disbelief, he then left me a bouquet of roses, complete with a love poem, in front of my house on prom night shortly after – gifts I didn't discover until the next morning.

While I didn't really expect the roses or the poems, I knew something was up. I'd heard way too many stories of boys acting strangely after a breakup to take this as just a sweet gesture.

A few days later, he left on his end-of-school trip, leaving me alone with my confusion.

But it didn't take long for the gossip mill and the miracle of technology to bring me the news: he'd gotten back together with his girlfriend.

Just in case you were wondering, and if you have been following my relationship columns, this is the guy in "[My friend, you have been dumped](#)".

Suffice to say I was shocked. Never before had a guy acted amorously towards me, only to get back with another girl. But as far as first rebound experiences go, I'd say I got off easy. I mean I didn't even become emotionally attached to him or anything.

But it was crazy to see what a guy can do during his relationship "mourning period". And I did learn an important lesson from the whole thing - if any of your friends of the opposite sex have just experienced a breakup, never, ever, and I mean, never, try to get close to them, even if it's just out of genuine sympathy to cheer them up. Let their mates of the same sex do that.

Now if I had only taken my own advice...

My second rebound experience was completely different story. To say the least, it was a bit dramatic. Here's the fairy tale version:

Once upon a time, there lived the gorgeous, stunning and feminine Princess B. Many handsome, young princes had approached her for her hand, but in the end, it was Prince A from a faraway land that got the honour of being her partner.

After being together for quite some time, Prince A knew in his heart that he wanted to be with her forever. One day, he got down on one knee and asked her to marry him. She said yes.

But not long after that, Princess B started to have second thoughts. She decided to flee from the impending nuptials. Feeling betrayed, Prince A jumped off the cliff into depression. With Princess B nowhere in sight, his friend, Commoner M, tried to heroically save him from the pit of gloom.

Suddenly, Prince A became unusually nice, giving Commoner M signals that he was interested. She picked up on these signals but while she was interested in Prince A, fate had a mind of her own. Commoner M chose not to show Prince A how she felt. Instead she disappeared and let the two royal highnesses get back together again – as she knew they would – but it hurt like hell to do it.

Well, I don't even know what to say about that. Don't play with fire or it will burn you, maybe?

I guess I should have learnt my lesson the first time around. Being someone else's rebound can be really painful. You feel used and unwanted, like you're just there to distract the person until someone better comes along.

But if I ended this article by just bemoaning the terrible experiences I've had being a rebound, I'd be a hypocrite.

I've been on the other side before.

I remember making someone my own rebound. I'm not proud of it, but it's the truth.

I was in junior high at that time and in puppy love with a senior. After a short courting period, he gradually made his exit. Someone else tried to court me shortly after, while I was still in my mourning period.

Guess what happened next?

But... my record of being someone's rebound and making someone my rebound is still two to one – so I guess I'm forgiven, right?

Well, maybe not.

It's crazy, really crazy, what we can do when we're broken-hearted. But it's even crazier for me to think that I can try to cheer my friends up who've been through the same ordeal, or try to distinguish between love and loneliness, when I've been guilty of being on the other side.

Have you ever been someone's rebound? Have you ever made someone yours? Share your experiences with us below.

She's just not that into you

Published Date : April 30, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/04/shes-just-not-that-into-you/>

WHY is it so hard to tell a friend the person they like doesn't like them back? Marcella Purnama weighs up whether being a good friend means lying to save feelings or telling the truth and breaking hearts.

A friend calls you out of the blue and says he's in love with a girl. He tells you the story of how he met her and that he thinks he can score a goal.

He has high hopes, but then you recognise the symptoms – the girl never looks for him first, never calls, doesn't get his signals – and you know straightaway she's just not interested.

You're about to break the news, but then you see his eyes beaming with child-like hope and the words that come out next, accompanied by a fake smile, are not really yours.

"Don't give up chasing her," you say.

"Just keep on trying and see how it goes. Who knows? Deep down, she might like you too."

Oh boy.

Why is it so hard to tell your friend that the girl of his dreams is just not that into him?

In our young adult lives, love is the norm. Conversations about boy-girl relationships rank high on the list of the most talked about topics among friends. We're always so excited to hear someone else's love story, especially from the one doing the courting. It's easy to recognise the symptoms of unrequited love, but it's hard to be the one giving the diagnosis.

I wish I had the nerve to tell my friends the truth. It would save them some cruel heartbreaks, especially after they've invested so much time and energy into loving someone. But then the question is, do they really want to hear the truth?

Personally I would find it heartbreaking if someone told me he's "just not that into me". It's like being forced to give up before you've even entered the battlefield. Wouldn't I look like a coward? Wouldn't I look like I'm just playing around with his feelings and that I don't take things seriously?

Just recently a friend of mine told me about his crush. As he started talking, I reminded myself I needed to be honest with him because I have offered too much "sweet talking" over the past years. I could see the symptoms. It's harsh, but as a girl, I know when a girl is simply not interested. In other words, she was just being nice.

I tried to form my words and the first sentence I could utter was, "It's not a good sign".

But what came next?

He tried to make the situation sound better. Then the excuses began: but what about the time she did this? That means she's happy with me, right? A couple of months ago, she sought out my company. That means that she misses me, right? And the list goes on...

Then I realised, he might not want to acknowledge the truth at all. He was probably already aware of the truth. He just wanted to hear it from the girl he's been longing to date.

In the end, isn't that what we all want? If our heart is going to break, can't we at least hear it from the person responsible for breaking it?

There's this unspoken decision everyone has to make when courting someone: If you find out your crush doesn't like you, you have two choices. You can give up easily and look like a player who doesn't really want her bad enough or you can keep on fighting for her, even though you know there's only a one per cent chance that you would succeed.

And then there's this unspoken decision everyone faces when they have a friend one who's currently courting someone: Do you tell him that she's just not that into him or do you lie and cheer him up when he's feeling down and defeated?

Which hat would you wear? The honest friend or the supportive one?

Well, on that day, I wore both.

I told him honestly that his chances were slim, but it was up to him to decide whether he wanted to keep on going or not. If he decided the latter then I told him I would be there to listen to his stories.

But as I step back from what I thought was the right decision, I came to the conclusion that I had no right breaking this heartbreaking truth to him. That responsibility lies with another girl – the one girl that he thinks about day and night.

Do you think you should tell your friends the truth when the person they like doesn't like them back? Share your views in the comments section below.

Do you believe in platonic relationships?

Published Date : April 20, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/04/do-you-believe-in-platonic-relationships/>

WHEN it comes to the opposite sex, how many times have you heard friends chime, “Oh, we’re just friends”. Marcella Purnama explores the topic of platonic relationships and explains why she is a skeptic.

Platonic relationships form when boy meets girl and they become best friends. While some believe it can happen, others are a bit skeptical about their existence... including me.

For girls, the norm is to have another girl as your best friend. For boys, it's pretty much the same, which makes life difficult for girls (like me) who have boys (like them) as best friends.

I've always liked to be friends with boys. Why? Gosh, their lives are so simple! No gossip, no celebrities, no fashion. It's more about sports, fun and games.

When I hang out with the boys, I don't need to pretend to look excited at their new notebook and say things like, “Aww, that's so cute.” I don't even need to think about not hurting their feelings. If I don't like it, I'll just say it, and somehow, guys can handle that kind of honesty better than girls.

I can challenge them to a game of Mario Kart, talk about superhero movies and argue over the latest match between Federer and Nadal without even trying to remember who the hell Kim Kardashian is.

You can be as frank as you want and they won't backstab you because boys usually don't want to talk about private stuff. There's no messaging, no chatting on a day-to-day basis with other boys, unlike girls, so the secrets you share are safe(r) with them.

Boys use logic, so when I am clouded by my emotional blues of sadness, their words strike me like lightning.

And for a girl (like me) who doesn't want to know about the latest trend in fashion, be in touch with *America's Next Top Model* or gossip about the dress Jessica Alba wore to the Academy Awards, boys are just plain easier to get along with.

I love playing badminton, but sadly none of the girls in my friendship circle play, so I end up playing with the boys. I love playing table tennis, but it's hard to find girls who will agree to doing anything other than grabbing a cup of coffee or window shopping, so I end up playing with the boys.

I love doing outdoor activities, but not many girls do. So when the choice is between going to the shops and going to Seaworld, the shops will always win for girls... every single time. So I end up going to Seaworld, theme parks and the zoo with the boys (again).

In a sense, boys are easier to talk to and easier to handle (boyfriends are different stories, but don't get me started). They won't comment on your weird sense of fashion (at least not out loud), your branded or unbranded bags or how much weight you've gained during the weekend.

But is there such a thing as a platonic relationship?

In my humblest opinion, when you befriend the opposite sex, it's either because you're just “sometimes-friends” who occasionally go out in groups and chat about random topics or you're lovers.

You can't really be best friends with the opposite sex. On what do I base this belief? Personal experiences, mainly, but the opinions of my guy friends too.

When boy meets girl and they spend too much time together talking about private matters, sharing too many laughs and exchanging too many smiles, one or the other will end up having amorous feelings and the friendship will crumble. And then you can't go back to being friends once more.

Looking back, every single one of the male friends I considered to be my best friend eventually did something to destroy that platonic relationship. One gave me a flower on Valentine's Day. One gave me a love poem, twice. Another asked me out on a dinner date. The other gave me a bouquet of roses after prom night.

As yet, up until this time last year, I was still a believer in the platonic relationship. Then I had dinner with some skeptical guys who were convinced friendships between boys and girls do not exist. I began to question my belief as well. When they asked me, "Do you have a good male friend who has never fallen for you before? Or vice versa?" I couldn't say yes.

And so today, my relationships with the opposite sex can never cross that level into becoming good friends. It's either being just friends or being more than friends. It's harsh, but it's completely and utterly true.

Do you believe in platonic relationships? Share your views in the comments box below!

My friend, you have been dumped

Published Date : March 29, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/03/friend-you-have-been-dumped/>

SOMETIMES when it comes to relationships, it's not the boyfriend or girlfriend that gets dumped, but the unsuspecting friends... just ask Marcella Purnama.

For most of us, dating has been a fact of life since we were 12.

We entered high school with anticipation that the opposite sex would look more charming and undeniably less irritable, and suddenly on Valentine's Day, we'd get flowers and chocolate just like magic.

And so it begins... A boy asks a girl out, says he likes her and boom! Welcome to the Couples Club. Then without any formal announcement, this club starts with the couples-only-activities like double-dating.

After the honeymoon period, congratulatory statements from your peers and being accredited as Facebook official, the couple seems to suddenly have no time to talk to their good friends.

Then they have a fight, and they're back, asking their friends for advice. Only it's short lived. The couple gets back to together and, well, you my friend, will be dumped... again.

In high school, I was dumped. Not once, not twice, but a couple of times. Not by a boyfriend, but by my best friend. We'd been friends since Year 7, but when he got a girlfriend in Year 11, he dumped me.

It happened so fast. He was asking this girl out and next thing I know, they were a couple. Soon, I was seen as a threat. Fine, I backed off.

Then the girl got jealous because her boyfriend and I, with some other friends, were practicing in the school's chapel (I was the pianist, he was the MC). Heck, I never even saw him as a potential partner. But the girl got mad at him, the fights went on and on, and suddenly I was accused of ruining a relationship. Right, so I tried to disappear.

From then on he'd only say hello to me in the school hallway if his girlfriend wasn't around.

Obviously, I felt a bit betrayed, I was 15 when this happened, remember? So I crossed him off my best friend's list. But then a couple of weeks later, he was suddenly talking to me, wanting advice on an issue that was very important – a fight with his girlfriend.

I thought, okay, he needs someone to talk to, so there I was. What I didn't know was I had fallen into the devil's loop.

When he got back together with his girlfriend, I was dumped... again. When he got a fight, I was sought... again.

This happened for quite some time until I finally confronted him, telling him I was not a puppet who could be summoned at will. He apologised then found another friend who could be summoned at will. Oh well, if that was the price of friendship.

I wasn't alone though. All of his friends were complaining that he had no time for them. When they broke up, well, it was not a pretty sight.

Although we remain friends and are in a good (or at least healthy) friendship, the loop still exists. When he has a fight with his current girlfriend, he still calls me to chat. When everything is alright, he still gives me the cold shoulder.

Not that I feel any hatred towards him or whatever, but I wonder if this has happened to anyone else. Moving past high school and puppy loves and into our early twenties, I still see so many couples who belong to that very exclusive couple club. Its members consist of two people and they do everything together.

When they break up (not that I jinx it, it just happens), they have no friends and suddenly they're lonely when they should be hanging out with their friends with a bucket of ice cream and karaoke or all-nighter gaming and paintball match.

Of course, not all couples are like that. But if you have been dumped by your 'taken' friends, well, welcome to the club. I was once a member too.

The Youngest Child Syndrome

[Meld's 2012 top opinion piece - had over than 3,500 views by September 2012]

Published Date : March 16, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/03/youngest-child-syndrome/>

THE sister of two very talented and successful women, Marcella Purnama tells us why being the youngest child isn't always as fantastic as everyone says it is.

Most people say the youngest child has it the easiest. They're the spoiled ones who can't do anything wrong, after all. But if you're the youngest, like me, you'll know that's not true. Often it's actually the opposite. We're the ones who have it the hardest.

Generally speaking, the oldest child is usually the boss, the planner, the leader. They're born with that natural instinct to lead and to find out about stuff, whether it be organising a holiday trip or asking a stranger how to get to the supermarket.

They're the ones the parents turn to when they need something done. They're usually more confident, more responsible, more stubborn and more opinionated. This is called the Oldest Child Syndrome, and my older sister is a perfect example.

The middle child is usually referred to as the "odd" one. Well, the theory is that the middle child can't beat their older sibling in authority and they can't beat their younger sibling at getting their parents' attention, so they're stuck in the middle.

Middle children are usually introverts who keep things to themselves. If the oldest child and youngest child have similar personalities, the middle child is usually at the other end of the rope by themselves. At least, my second sister is and she definitely has the Middle Child Syndrome.

The youngest child, as many of you know, is spoiled and more of a follower. They're forever referred to as the baby – it's a name that's stuck with them for life. Even when they've grown up, their parents never really understand they're no longer children.

The youngest child usually demands more attention from their parents and are a bit of a rebel. They're too used to walking in the footsteps of their older siblings and that makes them want to break free and prove to the world that they're different. At the very least, I do. This is the Youngest Child Syndrome.

Of course, there are plenty other syndromes, the Single Child Syndrome, Oldest Child being Male Syndrome, Youngest Child being Female Syndrome and whatever other combination you can think of, but in my family, we're perfect examples of the Older, Middle and Youngest Child Syndromes.

When you have siblings, it's hard to run away from the inevitable comparisons. I know, I've been there, and it's not that my parents and teachers and friends want to do it, they just do it unconsciously.

When my parents try to correct my mistakes, they start their lectures by saying, "When she was your age, your older sister never..." and it goes on.

When you go to school, you go to the school your older siblings went to years ago. Usually you're taught by the teachers who taught them earlier and they'll inevitably make comments like, "Ah, you're her

little sister". Immediately, deep down, you begin to question whether you're on the same level as your older sibling. It's inevitable.

Looking back, I took triple science and extension maths in senior high school because my sister took those same subjects before me. I chose to major in psychology and media and communication when I had the slightest freedom at university partly because I wanted to prove to the world that I was different. I wanted to shout that I was me and not my sister.

My parents know that, for sure. They love each of us for our distinct abilities and talents, but sometimes the unconscious comparison is still there, and when your older siblings are the closest living people to perfection, it gets even harder.

My oldest sister is the multi-talented one. She can sing well, dance well, perform well, play the piano and guitar and be the MC at any event. She is a natural leader, able to organise every party, every holiday trip without a single mistake. She is clever and is currently on her way to completing a PhD in Bioscience in Singapore.

When people look at her, they know she is the soul of the party. With her bubbly personality and her beautiful looks, it was little wonder she was prom queen and the boys worshipped at her feet. She is taken now, married to a wonderful guy a little more than a year ago.

My middle sister is the smart one. Have I told you that her UAI (Universities Admission Index, now called ATAR – Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) was 99.95? She was a science student and is now a doctor in Melbourne. Her friends love her and she always has the right values and morals.

She is a very good writer, and if she chose to be one, I believe her book would be the next number one international bestseller. Not to mention she has a very good eye for fashion and I trust my sister's opinions even more than my own. She is a very good listener and a philosopher. She is kind, loving and gentle.

In summary, they're the most perfect people I have ever known and I love them (I've also self-diagnosed myself as having a "sister complex obsession").

But their perfection does nothing for my self esteem.

As far as people are concerned, I will always be someone's "little sister", especially when it comes to my middle sister. In high school, my teachers had the highest expectations of me because she held the unbeatable record of having the best UAI in the school's history.

At home, my parents hope I'll be more like her – easy to teach and someone who will adopt the right morals in life.

In church, it's the same thing. I am her shadow. Coming to Melbourne four years after her made me "her little sister" all over again. On Sundays after church I never get asked to go to lunch if my sister isn't there. Sadly, they never really think of welcoming me as a separate being. They just think of me as "her little sister".

And maybe that's why I'm trying so hard to be someone so different to my siblings.

Don't get me wrong, I am immensely proud to be their little sister, they are everything an older sister can be.

But maybe, a part of me wants to be known as who I really am, without comparison to those who are very dear to me.

Sometimes, people forget that part.

No pain no gain? The importance of being beautiful

Published Date : March 2, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/03/no-pain-no-gain-importance-of-being-beautiful/>

WHAT makes you feel beautiful? Is it makeup, clothes, shoes? Or are you a believer that beauty comes from the inside out? Meld columnist Marcella Purnama hangs up her heels after a prolonged battle between love and loathing.

Here's my self-confession: I'm not a fashionista, and I doubt I'll ever be. I'm not a beauty/make-up geek, and I'm oblivious to the latest trends and big brands.

I'm definitely not a high heels girl.

Not that I don't want to be.

During those Sweet Seventeen parties, I used to borrow my older sister's cocktail dress, and my mom's lowest high heels. I detested wearing them at first, but later my feminine side finally kicked in – and I grew to appreciate the gorgeous dresses, beautiful high heels, and curled hairs.

I tried on make-up for the first time when I was 18 – I was signed up for a make-up lesson, where I learnt about applying eyeliner, eye shadow, mascara, concealer, foundation, eyebrow pencil, and blush-on correctly.

I reserved the make-up for holidays (usually Sundays when I didn't wake up late) and mostly for special occasions. But with high heels, it was a love-hate relationship.

I loved high heels because it made me look pretty, gorgeous, and a whole lot taller. It was a confidence booster, and sometimes it was the one thing that attracted the opposite sex. But I hated it, because after an hour or so, my feet would invariably be covered in blisters, and plead me to release them from the torture.

I vowed each night after a party not to wear high heels ever again. But by the next party I would find myself trying on a beautiful dress, and thinking to myself, "Oh boy, it would go lovely with a pair of new high heels." And the cycle went on.

The diagnosis for my love-hate relationship with high heels finally came thanks to my sister who is a doctor.

I have *hallux valgus*.

Not a severe one, of course, but it is a condition whereby your big toe (called the hallux) starts to deviate inward in the direction of the baby toe. So instead of growing straight, your toe bends. Scary, isn't it? And it will bring even more pain if I'm wearing high heels.

The last time I wore high heels (the 3cm ones) was during my sister's graduation a couple of months ago. I literally couldn't walk after one hour. The pain was unbearable, and yes, I vowed to never wear high heels, again, except for some grave circumstances (marriage?).

After some psychological reasoning with my feminine side, I have finally decided that a pair of gorgeous flats would do just fine. Sure, I'll look like a dwarf among those pretty, long-legged girls with high heels. Not to mention how it may look slightly weird with a cocktail dress.

But at least my feet won't hurt, and it will make me happier than just my supposed-to-be-better-looking outer appearance.

I will be able to walk for hours, run if the occasion demands. And even though people (hopefully) might (not) notice something odd at the party (yet I can't really escape the reality when a group photo is taken), who cares?

An old friend once asked me once on why I didn't wear high heels.

"They would look good on you," he said.

And I'm glad I could say, "I love my feet too much to do so."

The same goes for fashion, corsets, the new Korean wave haircut, dieting, and over-gyming activities.

I'll eat desserts whenever I feel like it, have instant noodles for supper even though I just ate dinner two hours ago, and finish that last bit of cake when no one wants to.

I'll apply make-up when I feel like it, dress nicely when I want to (or if the occasion rightly demands), and wear sandals on every other occasion.

I'm healthy, I love my body, and I'm happy. If beauty is painful, I'd rather be me and pain-free.

Puppy Love

Published Date : February 13, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/02/puppy-love/>

ON the eve of Valentine's Day, Meld columnist Marcella Purnama revisits her teenage infatuations and realises her memories, good and bad, are all still crystal clear.

First brush with love

I was 13, still thin with no flabby arms and a tanned complexion from playing in the sun too much. My friends and I, with a few teachers, were enjoying a vacation at the beach to celebrate the completion of another successful school sports competition.

We played in the swimming pool and then the four of us went to the beach to taste the salty water. It was the first time the guy I liked held my hand, and even though I don't remember how it physically felt, I remember being happy and stressed at the same time because two of my good friends liked him too... a lot.

Crushes are stupid

Can I remember my first crush?

Yes, it was all the way back in fourth grade primary school. I don't remember how I came to like him, but I remember that I used to stalk him, literally. I would look at him every chance I got, and then try to look away before he noticed a pair of eyes was watching him. I couldn't help it, there were no Friendster, Facebook or even Twitter to make my stalking invisible.

The next time I liked a guy, I was in sixth grade. He was two years older than me, tall, skinny, pretty attractive and infatuated with basketball. We met at a youth group and he asked my sister for my phone number. Six months later he moved to Australia to continue his studies and I remember giving him a red t-shirt as a farewell gift.

Now that I think about it, my infatuation sounds a little bit stupid. He called me from overseas once, but the call was the last time I heard his voice. We met several years later at a wedding and, oh boy, it was awkward. But we all do stupid things when we're young and in love, don't we?

Saint Valentine

During junior high school, I made my first heart-shaped Valentine's Day chocolate and gave it to the guy who first held my hand. He told me it was delicious, but I still don't know if he was just being nice or really meant it. Oh well, I guess I'll never know, but I do remember being disappointed that no one ever gave me a single red rose, something I'd dreamed about getting for years.

Love can be hurtful

Moving on to senior high, these were the years when I made the most mistakes. I hurt three of my friends, and I know by the way they looked at me that I left a scar on each of their hearts. But I was blinded by another guy who captured my heart and threw it away for no reason.

He was younger than me, athletic, kind, funny, and I'd say, quite good looking. He had a bit of a temper, but back then, I didn't think that mattered. He treated me the way I liked to be treated, but after six months, he was gone. I still don't know why. He said there were no reasons for our separation, just lost feelings, but it shattered me. Hard. At the time, I thought I would never trust another guy, but I can tell you now, that wasn't true. Time would heal any wound.

And just a couple of months ago I heard from him again. He apologised for what had happened. His call took me by surprise, but I was more surprised when I discovered that I had longed for those words. Until then, I hadn't realised that the past *still* haunted me.

What happened during that brief love story is something I'm not proud of. Sure there are things I remember fondly, the Sweet 17 parties, prom night, graduation night, my first bouquet of flowers, love poems and those silly crying-till-you-fall-asleep nights. But I hurt three of my friends, giving them hope and stealing it back, and although we've apologised to each other and gone on with our lives, I still regret my actions sometimes, knowing that I should have been a better person.

Growing pains

I should have been, but I wasn't, and I accept what now has become a part of me. I made some stupid mistakes, but without them, I mightn't have learned to treasure love as I do now – for love, is a pure blessing.

We might look back now and recognise these feelings as youthful infatuations. But when you're young and in love, puppy love does feel like the real thing.

On Celebrating Chinese New Year

Published Date : January 20, 2012

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2012/01/celebrating-chinese-year/>

CHINESE New Year is right around the corner, and Marcella Purnama shares her thoughts on celebrating this thousand-year-old tradition as an Indonesian-born Chinese.

Most of you know that I'm Indonesian, but if you want get specific, I'm actually Indonesian-Chinese.

Like most of my Indo-Chinese friends, my grandparents travelled straight from mainland China to start a better life in Indonesia, but we still pass down our (diminishing) Chinese tradition to each generation and celebrate Chinese New Year as a family annually.

As a kid, I'd look forward to Chinese New Year for the *hong bao* (red pockets) and to see how much money I'd earn for that year.

Nothing has changed, except that now I also look forward to the Chinese New Year's Eve's eight-course dinner (eight is considered a lucky number in China), which always consists of abalone, shark-fin soup, lobster and many other treats. Not to forget the glasses of red wine that always accompany the meal.

During this time of the year, Chinese families go visiting, which means meeting your grandfather's four brothers and three sisters (and their children and grandchildren), and your grandmother's ten sisters and two brothers (and their children and grandchildren).

You have no choice but to sit in the car, venturing from one house to the next, answering superficial questions, eating oranges and cakes, and wondering why these strangers look so friendly and are giving you money.

That said, I still think it's a good tradition. It acts as the thin red line that connects you to your extended family, even if you didn't know they existed before this celebration.

While every Chinese New Year falls on a different date (this year, it's January 23), my family's routine never changes.

I'm always the slowest to get into the car to go visiting, but always the quickest to get the money.

I hate sitting in the car, visiting someone I don't know and probably never will, and seeing strangers act as if they've known me all my life, even though they just met me.

I hate the small talk: Who's child are you? Where are you studying? What are you studying? How old are you? With each question, I'm forced to smile as a sign of respect to my elders, even though I know as soon as the conversation ends, they'll forget everything about me.

But for some reason this year, I'm actually looking forward to meet my extended family. Sure, it will be the same old routine, but isn't that what you do with your long distance friends as well?

When you're an international student, you forget your old friends for a year and during those brief summer holidays, you frantically try to contact each other and demand a catch-up.

People are busy with their lives. We're busy with our own.

In fact, considering how busy we are, it's a miracle that Chinese living in other countries still respect traditions like New Year, especially when you factor in the influence of globalisation.

No matter how many years have passed since they left China, most Chinese will spend this time of year decorating their houses, cooking fancy meals, buying fruit and cakes and preparing red pockets of money for their extended family.

Chinese New Year's celebrations are really worth the effort though. It's a time of year when children can get to know their uncles and aunties, nephews and nieces can say hello to each other and brothers and sisters who may already have their own lives and families can meet each other and chat just like they did when they were kids.

I think, it's tradition that's worth preserving no matter how busy we get in the future.

On graduation and beyond...

Published Date : December 22, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/12/on-graduation-and-beyond/>

MARCELLA Purnama shares her thoughts on graduating and preparing to pursue her own career dreams – no matter what others may think

On November 13, 2009, I walked onto my school chapel stage wearing a black robe and mortarboard, ready to receive my certificate after finishing two and a half years of senior high school. I was 17.

Two years later, I'm sitting at my dining table looking at a photo of myself on that auspicious occasion, and wondering what I have become since then.

A few weeks ago I attended my sister's graduation. After six tiring and tearful years, she finally graduated from med school and will work as a qualified doctor next year.

I saw her walk onto the stage at Melbourne University's Wilson Hall and receive her certificate as she was congratulated on finishing her degree. Then came the valedictorian speech.

While the speech was full of humour and inside jokes about the medical world, I took my hat off to the girl. She didn't lie. Her journey of learning really was packed with tears, sweat and blood. And I realised, the piece of paper my sister was holding was only a symbol of completion. The true completion of any degree lies in a person's journey.

I'll remember that.

I went back to my old high school recently and saw those not-even-17-year-old students giggling about the sorts of things we all talked when we were the same age.

I saw the young girls and boys in green-checkered uniforms, and thought, "oh man, did I look that young and immature when I was their age? Did I look that naive?"

The funny thing is, I always see myself as being "old enough" to do things. I wonder: how will the adults see me now? Still a spoilt kid who doesn't know anything?

And uniforms.

Didn't we all have issues with uniforms? Socks too high, too short, too colourful. Skirts too long, too short, too tight, too sensual. Hair too long, too short, too much gel. Shirts unbuttoned, shirts untucked, shirts too small, shirts too big. No opportunity for individuality or self expression.

But now I miss wearing a uniform.

You don't have to "be different". You don't have to worry about whether the girl in your class yesterday saw your purple T-shirt, and whether – because you're wearing it again today – she thinks you have a personal hygiene problem or are just too lazy to do your laundry and iron. Personally, I prefer the latter assumption.

When it comes to larger-scale worries, I still wonder whether I'm really doing the right degree and major.

As a science student, I know I took a complete U-turn by eventually pursuing a degree in psychology and media and communication.

People had always envisioned me as a doctor, a scientist or maybe an engineer. But I don't want to be any of those things.

I'd like to be a journalist, a columnist, a writer. I'd like to open my own cafe someday. I'd like to be an educational psychologist. I'd like to be a wonderful wife and a terrific mother. I'd like to publish my own book. I'd like to travel, to learn how to ballroom dance and leave a legacy. I'd like people to remember my name.

But I have friends who are not as lucky as me. One friend wanted to do psychology, but stuck with engineering because her parents said so. Another liked fashion design, but her parents wanted her to do business.

Deciding whether to do what you love or do what others expect you to do is always a battle.

I'll be graduating in a year's time at the age of 20. If you think I'm too young to graduate, you're right. But who knows what lies beyond? Honours degree, Master's degree, work, internships... the future looks so blurry right now. I still haven't decided which road I'd like to take.

But whatever the end result may be, I'll just take one step at a time – sipping on a cup of green tea and cherishing the journey along the way.

If I've learnt anything from my experience or that of my sister's, it's that you should always follow your own path in life. If you're doing something you love, then you're already well on your way to being the best and most successful person you can be.

What are your worries about graduation and the future? Share in the comments box below.

The ugly truth – finishing a degree to start another one

Published Date : October 24, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/10/ugly-truth-finishing-degree/>

NEWS flash: 15 years of education haven't really prepared you to face the world. No, now you need 20. Marcella Purnama deals with the disappointments of finding a job as an international student.

News flash: 15 years of education hasn't really prepared you to face the world. No, now you need 20.

Most of us have gone through six happy years of primary school, the place where we first made friends, bruised our knees and broke some rules. Then we had six exciting years of high school, the place where we first made enemies, got attracted to the opposite sex and started our first serious learning.

And then most of us began university life.

But after moving half way across the world and enduring three years of sleepless nights combined with a dozen different part-time jobs, international students are nowhere closer to achieving their career dreams.

In an era where education matters, it's as if work doesn't matter. I have stopped counting the number of friends who are unable to get a job after graduation. In the end, they work part-time in yet another retail store, or worse, they end up going back to their home countries.

Not all international students invest \$100,000 to come here, receive an education and make their way back home. We want experiences, we want to get a job and we want to put our skills on the table.

The most common rejection letter my friends have received includes the line, "Based on some factors critical for success in the job to which you applied (e.g. skills and experience) you were not the most competitive candidate ... and the company's policy is for their candidates to have permanent residency."

A friend who graduated from a Master of Business Information Systems earlier this year said to me, "When I'm on holiday and want to apply for an internship, they ask for permanent residency. If I haven't graduated yet, I can't apply for permanent residency. Now when I'm applying for work they ask for experience. But no one wants to give me a job because I've got no experience. But how can I get any if no one will give me a chance?

"Companies ask for a minimum of three-year experiences in a related field for a graduate programmer position. I've even checked the websites twice to console my disbelief."

Despite Melbourne's recent nomination as the world's most livable city, I still have my doubts. The Australian Bureau of Statistics shows unemployment rates have risen to 5.3 per cent. Almost 26,400 people have lost their jobs and *The Age* economists predict another 100,000 will lose their job by the end of the year.

If companies are letting go of their experienced workers, they're not going to be hiring newbies.

So the ugly truth is, a bachelor degree only prepares most international students for yet another degree, at least, that's what has happened to me.

A psychology student, I just learned that while we were sitting in lecture theatres for three years, swallowing theories like they were the Bible, first year students in New Zealand were visiting child care centres, putting those same theories into practice.

Is it the education system? Or is it just me?

So after weighing up the prospect of months and months of unemployment, international students like me will be considering an alternative – a Master's degree or PhD. Another three to four years of education which doesn't guarantee us a place in the workforce anyway.

And now for the second ugly truth. There's no guarantee we will get into a Master's or PhD program either.

In order to do Master's in psychology, you need to get an honours degree. Roughly 10 per cent of the students who enroll in honours get in. So out of the 700 odd students studying psychology, only 70 of them will be accepted into honours.

And how many of these 70 students will eventually get into Master's? 20. I'm betting they will have to be HI students.

Am I being overly pessimistic?

Undergraduate international students not only need to strive for the prize called HI, they still have to worry about their future, doing part-time jobs and applying for internships.

Do we stand defeated in an ailing economy, walking past retail stores with 'closing down sale' signs on their doors?

I just hope this is still university and not a pressure cooker.

The definition of success

Published Date : September 28, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/09/definition-success/>

"I'M 19, halfway through my degree, and currently obsessed with thinking about my future." Meld reporter Marcella Purnama thinks out loud as an unexpected meeting provokes some serious introspection as to what success looks like.

I'm 19, halfway through my degree, and currently obsessed with thinking about my future.

I don't know why, but I was sitting on the bench outside David Jones recently and I felt like I didn't want to grow up, at least not yet.

An old friend with her new US accent had come to Melbourne for holiday. It was another evening catch-up over coffee. That was, until her dad wanted to see me.

Her dad, looking so intellectual in his late 40s, wore a knitted black jumper and light brown cotton pants. He carried a small man bag that looked like a Louis Vuitton. He was, without a doubt, a very successful businessman.

When he approached us, he was holding a transparent bag. Inside were a pair of new white shoes with blue and red stripes. "These are Italian-made. Very good, very strong, very expensive," he said to my friend, holding the shoes to her eye-level. To me, they just looked like another pair of white Adidas sports shoes.

"Hey Dad, this is Marcella, the one who likes coffee," my friend said. But rather than reply with the usual, 'Hi, how are you?' My friend's dad jumped straight to the point, "Oh Marcella, do you want to work for me?"

Not waiting for an answer, he added, "Let's go inside David Jones and walk while we talk."

Giving my friend a weird, sheepish look, I reluctantly entered the upmarket fashion store in sandals, hair whipped into a frenzy by the windy Melbourne weather and a \$10 bag that had been soaked by an unexpected thunderstorm.

I immediately saw the glossy shining tiles. I felt the warmth of the bright light. I smelt the thick perfume in the air. Then it hit me. After two years of living in Melbourne, I had never actually been inside David Jones.

We went up the escalator and he started to look at men's clothing. "I'm very passionate about retail and I want to open a cafe," he said. "Frankly, I want you to be someone who I can mobilise in Melbourne and learn the coffee culture from. My daughter highly recommended you. She said you're a fast learner, a reliable person and the top student back in high school."

The words hadn't even sunk in before he started to speak again, this time to my friend, "What do you think of this shirt? I guess I should buy two and give one to JJ."

Shifting my attention to the shirt, whose brand name escapes me, I was sure I'd seen a similar top – the usual green-red-blue squared shirt that you might find in Jayjays. But this was in David Jones and it cost \$150.

"Oh, JJ is an old friend. He's is one of Indonesia's top interior designers and he's really into fashion," he said. "Our family has a lot of connections."

Without even trying them on, he grabbed two shirts, one a medium, for himself, and the other in a large, for the man called 'JJ'. He gave the two shirts and his wallet to my friend and asked her to go to the cashier.

"Okay, where was I? Oh yeah, I'd really like to learn more about the coffee culture here, but I have no time. My passion is retail, my plan is to open a coffee business and I've heard that you are very keen to learn about coffee.

"Of course, I'll pay you and give you compensation. We can communicate through emails and Skype," he said.

He went on to tell me about his worldwide businesses and travels with first class tickets, while his hands touched each of the merchandise and his eyes wandered through the store.

He then pointed to a white t-shirt bearing a man's face. "This one is so beautiful," he said astonishingly. I tried to use my deepest imagination and see the t-shirt through my artsy eyes, but it didn't work. "And the material is so good," he said. Well, it cost \$200 and it was Dolce & Gabbana.

By now, I was thinking of my dad and how he chooses his clothing according to what he calls the 'three Cs' – comfortable, cheap and convenient.

When I tuned my attention back to my friend's dad, he was rambling about the I am meeting he had in Sydney the next day and the brand new \$800 espresso machine that he "accidentally" bought earlier. I found myself secretly wishing I never become rich.

"There was an auction in Singapore several months ago," he said. "There was this ancient coffee book that had been preserved so carefully and even wrapped with coffee beans inside – to keep the aroma alive. We ended up bidding for it. It cost \$300,000."

I tried to convince myself that this book was what successful people out there called 'an investment'.

Then again, I rarely even buy textbooks, and when I do, I prefer to buy online.

Finally, after what, for me, seemed like ages, he said to his daughter, "I'm hungry. Let's go find Mum and have dinner."

I followed them down the escalator. He asked me to think about it and email him my answer. Before stepping out of the building, he asked me one last question, "I heard your sister is a medical student, she must be smart, eh?"

Well, a courtesy talk, although late, was better than never, "Yes," I said with pride, "she is the genius one."

Then came the shocking revelation. "How arrogant," he said laughingly. Was he joking or was he sarcastically saying that? I'd rather not know.

After two minutes of waiting for his wife, he said to his daughter, "I'm very hungry, I'll go eat dinner first. Do you have a cell phone?" Then, facing me and shaking my hand, he said this with a smile on his face, "Think about it and email me. It's nice to meet you." Then, he was gone.

Still lost in thought, I sat down on one of the benches, took out my cell phone, and called my dad. As much as I want to be successful, I know I still want to be the woman who is able to wear a \$10 bag and go inside David Jones with pride.

Life overseas: getting comfy under your own skin

Published Date : September 8, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/09/life-overseas-getting-comfy-under-your-own-skin/>

AS AN international student, you're constantly confronted with cultural differences. Sometimes, it's hard to know how to react. Originally from Indonesia, Marcella Purnama reflects on life overseas, and getting comfortable under your own skin.

The first time I was really impacted by a cultural difference was when I asked my former year 12 English teacher a question.

He was a man in his early 40s, an Australian who was teaching in Indonesia. I asked him, "Excuse me, sir, do you have any suggestions on how I can improve my English as I'm planning on taking media subjects?"

He turned to me and replied, "Of course, Marcella, but I'm no longer your teacher, you don't have to call me 'sir'. Just call me Rafeek."

As an Indonesian, I was raised to address anyone older than me with a title that respected and acknowledged his or her authority. This man who was old enough to be my father, but was asking me to address him by his first name. I was shocked. Should I follow his advice? Would I be seen as someone who didn't know how to respect her elders? Was it appropriate for a 17-year-old to be seen as an equal?

After I moved to Melbourne, I encountered even more cultural shocks. The first and biggest was back in my first year at university. I was new and a little naïve and had no idea about *Prosh Week*. I learnt about it the hard way.

I was in a lecture theatre with 400 others, trying hard to stay awake and listen to the lecturer rambling about social relationships in psychology. Suddenly 15 students, both men and women, ran into the theatre and onto the stage.

Now that wouldn't have been so shocking, except they were naked.

My first thought was, "Is this even legal?" A friend sitting next to me, turned pale and squealed in horror, covering her face as these people flashed their bodies. She hadn't even turned 17 yet! I know nothing like that would ever have happened in Indonesia.

But as time goes by, I learn more about Australian culture, adopting some quirks and neglecting others.

Australians are independent people. But as an Asian, I like to hang out in big groups and do things with others. If you've ever eaten in a restaurant in the city, you'll have seen a live demonstration of this theory. The loudest table in the room is almost always Asian.

But even though I still don't get Australian jokes, I know exactly why Melbourne is now the world's [most liveable city](#). The people are very friendly and the lifestyle is very relaxed.

Like most Melbourne-born people, my typical day begins by complaining about how unreliable the public transport is, although it's undoubtedly a hundred times better than in my home country.

I then continue with a sulk about how undependable the weather forecast is. After that, I often take advantage of the relaxed Melbournian life to stop at my favourite cafe and socialise over a cup of coffee, just like the locals do.

And yet, as an Asian trying to fit into Western society, I always feel like I'm part of two worlds and two cultures. There will always be a language barrier, different foods, different values, different thoughts on certain matters and a different lifestyle.

But as Darwin said, "Humans will eventually learn to adapt". Gradually, I'll learn to talk just like the locals do. At the same time, I'll still address those older than me with their proper title, if I'm speaking to other Indonesians.

I'm eating more sandwiches for lunch, drinking more coffee for breakfast and talking and writing in English 80 per cent of the time, but I still crave rice for dinner, drink Chinese tea for supper and share jokes in Indonesian with my peers.

Am I comfortable wearing two skins? To be honest, I'm not sure. But regardless of how much English I speak, how much Western food I eat and how much coffee I drink, deep down I'm an Indonesian and will always be.

It was Indonesia's Independence Day a couple of weeks ago and there's an Indonesian national song I'd like to leave you with:

"Even though there are many countries I've been to,
that people say are so full of riches and beauty.
But my country and my home,
there, I find happiness.
I will not forget my land,
my homeland, I honour you"

Tanah Airku (My Homeland) – Ibu Sud

How important are grades to you?

[Meld's 2011 top opinion piece]

Published Date : May 27, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/05/important-grades-you/>

THE first time I discovered grades ruled my life was when I was preparing my high school graduation speech.

I came across American student Erica Goldson's words, which struck a deep chord in me. She said in her valedictorian speech:

"I have successfully shown that I was the best slave. I did what I was told to the extreme. While others sat in class and doodled to later become great artists, I sat in class to take notes and become a great test-taker. While others would come to class without their homework done because they were reading about an interest of theirs, I never missed an assignment. While others were creating music and writing lyrics, I decided to do extra credit, even though I never needed it."

We sometimes forget that education is about learning. It becomes apparent now as I enter university, that I used to study for the sake of studying, for the sake of getting good grades.

Even now, it sometimes still feels like a frantic race, as people around you strive for that prize called high distinction for every subject. There's nothing wrong about excelling in our studies of course. In fact, we ought to do our best to get good marks – but how good is good enough?

My elder sister is in her final year of medical school at Melbourne University. She is at once excited, anxious and scared. She is uncertain about her chances of getting a job here in Australia as an international student, and there are not enough training places for everyone. She resents the fact that friends will have to compete against each other to get the top marks and top jobs.

For me, I've long given up trying to "compete" with my peers, especially local students for whom English is their first language. If you've ever sat in on an arts tutorial you would know how difficult it is to get a word in, let alone be heard. It takes courage, lots of it.

At other times it is easy to forget the joy of learning when you are faced with a seemingly never ending stream of assignments, tests, and exams. It is tempting to measure your success based on your grades. If I do well, I will be happy. If I score badly, I will feel miserable for the next few days, especially when you have a straight H1 student sitting by your side.

Of course, not every student thinks like me. I know a friend who holds a very different attitude towards university life.

"Pass is enough," he tells me.

"But more than that, it is a bonus. For me, grades are important. I always aim to get C at the very minimum. But I never sweat at it too much. Knowledge itself is more important than some written exams."

I stand convicted.

University was never meant to be a pressure cooker. We come to learn new things, not just for the getting of good grades or jobs. More than that, we learn because we are passionate about what we are studying. It's all about seeing the bigger picture. Good grades aren't the guarantee for success in life.

I watched a Bollywood movie called *3 Idiots* last night, and there's a quote that I want to leave you with:

"Most of us went to college just for a degree. No degree meant no plum job, no pretty wife, no credit card, no social status. But none of this mattered to him, he was in college for the joy of learning, he never cared if he was first or last."

Marcella Purnama is a second-year psychology and media and communications major at Melbourne University.

Coffee: the quintessential Melbourne experience

Published Date : March 31, 2011

URL : <http://www.meldmagazine.com.au/2011/03/coffee-the-quintessential-melbourne-experience/>

WHEN Marcella Purnama moved to Melbourne she didn't just fall in love with the city, she fell in love with its favourite pastime, coffee. She shares her infatuation with the aromatic brew.

Sitting here in a well-known [five-bean-rated](#) cafe sipping my cup of coffee, I begin to wonder about how I came to fall in love with this divine culinary art form. Was it the aroma? Was it the caffeine? Was it the silky milk froth that you can never make at home?

Fascinated, I put down my cup and started thinking, but nothing came. I looked around, getting lost in the busy afternoon of people ordering their brunch and laughing to each other with their cups of coffee in hand. After a long pause, suddenly, I smiled, I knew exactly why I loved coffee.

Do you still remember your first cup? Mine was back in Indonesia when I was still in high school. My older sister and I went to Starbucks and she ordered a mocha. She insisted I should take a sip and I did. I didn't like it. It tasted weird and I gave the takeaway cup right back to her.

My second exposure to coffee was here in Melbourne. As a first year university student, I was told coffee would become your best friend in times of chaos. Inspired, I went, again with my older sister, to Gloria Jeans and both of us ordered a mocha. But this time, I saw coffee in a different light. It became much more than a drink. It became an elixir rich in flavours. Bitter, kind of sweet, acidic.

Before I knew it, I started visiting cafes around town hoping to find the best shot to satisfy my passion.

For me, coffee became an expression of art translated into a cup. Now I can't get enough of that smell of roasted coffee beans when I first enter a cafe. That rich, flavourful and pleasant aroma. I love the perfect rosetta formed using the silky froth that sits atop an untouched latte – it's beautiful. I love the nutty, aromatic smell just before I take my first sip. And I love the warm, lovely sensation that stays on my tongue for a few seconds afterwards.

But to be honest, I'm not just infatuated with the coffee itself. I have always loved the atmosphere of a cafe as well. It's a place to chill and catch-up with your friends. A spot for a romantic evening with your partner. Or just a chance for you to relax, escape from your problems for a while and get lost in a totally different world.

People who love to drink wine will know that balance is the Holy Grail. Like wine, the bitterness and acidity of coffee needs to be in perfect balance for it to be a good cup. But let me tell you this, no one can force you to like a certain type of coffee. Soy latte, decaf mocha, strong cappuccino, espresso or weak flat white – it's all your choice.

My first decent cup in Melbourne was at Seven Seeds, and I go back there once in a while when I want to indulge myself. The warehouse cafe definitely has that city style, with bicycles parked next to the

door. As I enter, I can see the vintage roasting machines and coffee plants on display. Strong coffee aromas awaken my senses.

With high hopes and higher expectations, I find a comfortable seat in the corner and wait for the waiter to bring me the menu. "Regular latte," I say, and not long after the waiter brings it. I can feel the caffeine rush to my brain after the very first sip. The thick, lively and acidic coffee is the perfect temperature. The texture of the frothed milk is smooth, silky and viscous, with not a trace of bubble. It's exactly the cup of coffee that always makes me want to hug the barista and tell him how awesome he is.

It was a lovely afternoon indeed.

Seven Seeds is at 114 Berkeley St, Carlton, just outside the CBD, close to both the Queen Victoria Market and Melbourne University. It's open Monday to Saturday 7am-5pm and Sunday 8:00am-4pm. Details: www.sevenseeds.com.au

When did you fall in love with coffee and where? Tell us in the comments section below.