

MIND MATTERS

# BACK TO THE BOOKS

If you feel like going back to studying, do so by all means — and ignore the naysayers



★ Studying at a later stage of life might not be as daunting as it could appear initially

It's never too late to learn and study. You are never too old for that. You can always restart your student life in your second innings of life. So many times there are many unfulfilled childhood dreams that you can pursue later if given the opportunity. I did it and so can you!

### WHY STUDY AGAIN?

So, why should you study again? There are so many reasons for this. But the main reason is that you simply want to. Empower yourself. Education is the only way to meet your goals to achieve what you want in life. Our reasons may all be different, but they all lead to the same destination — achieving something we want.

**Do it for your self-confidence:** In the movie *English Vinglish*, Sridevi's character enrolled herself in spoken English classes to improve her command over the language. Her husband and daughter made her feel "not-good-enough" for not speaking English fluently, affecting her confidence. So, when she saw an opportunity, she took it and started learning again.

In the movie *Dasvi*, Abhishek Bachchan plays a popular but corrupt politician who has studied till class 8 and signs with dots and lines instead of a signature. He starts studying in jail so he can pass class 10 because he no longer wants to be "illiterate" and also to fulfil

his mother's dream for him to be educated.

When I started Caring Minds, I was judged. I was not taken seriously. 'A venture by an industrialist's wife for killing time'. That was one of the remarks. But my homework was solid. I did my studies in mental health and became a certified mental health professional.

**Do it for an unfulfilled childhood dream:** I had always wanted to become a doctor when I was a young girl. However, in a small town like Tinsukia in Assam, humanities was the only option. I got married and came to Calcutta with my unfulfilled dream. I got blessed with two daughters — Preeyam and Prachi. Prachi, God's special child, was created by him as my Ikigai. Her diagnosis of ADHD, Low IQ, and Bipolar Disorder shattered my world to the point where I became suicidal.

After my rebirth I became a student all over again. As I received my doctorate, I remembered my late father, the joy he would have felt seeing his daughter receive this esteemed recognition.

**Do it for a better career/professionalism:** Career progression, whether you're an employee or an entrepreneur, often depends on improving both your industry knowledge and the degrees on your wall. As a psychotherapist, I had the

knowledge in my field, but one thing I had no expertise in was psychometric tests. As the founder of a mental health OPD clinic and institute (Caring Minds), I had to sign reports. Clinically, qualified clinical psychologists would do the assessment and sign, but before any report would go to the client, I needed to sign, and I didn't want to sign blindly.

So, I started learning psychometric testing from one of my own clinical psychologists. Over the years, I can say I've become far better than many new formally trained clinical psychologists because of my experience and knowledge. This shows the importance of informal training too.

**Do it because you love learning:** I started with two-three essential courses and now I can't stop attending workshops, seminars, presenting papers and symposiums at psychiatric and psychological conferences. Knowledge is a constant in my life. It gives me a rush I cannot explain in words. This journey of empowering myself with knowledge continues... After all, success is an ongoing journey.

### FREEING YOURSELF FROM DISTRACTIONS

One thing I have realised is that when you are free from material desires, your thirst for knowledge increases. These are distractions in our journey of learning. When

Arjun was aiming for the fish's eye, he removed all distractions. Only then could he kill the moving fish. As I made myself distraction-free and started healing people, I started changing. To my surprise, I also didn't realise the change.

When I get a small good remark or review, it makes my day. That is the fruit of my hard work and dedication. The more I heal others, the more I heal myself, the more I get connected to life. Life is the same, the circumstances are the same, challenges are the same, or rather sometimes tougher, but now the purpose of life looks bigger, greater.

As God closes one door, he always opens another. He gave me purpose. He fulfilled my childhood desire by bestowing a doctorate degree on me through Adamas University. I am touching lives. I am making a difference.

When I slowly started to enjoy the smaller things of life, the laughter, the grief, everything, I realised I was both a student of life and a student for life. Each day, each experience serves as a valuable lesson, shaping my understanding and perspective on the world. Life has given me some of my toughest exams and has been one of my strictest teachers. And it was the book of life that led me to books, to becoming a student again.

*"Arise awake and stop not until the goal is reached."*  
— Swami Vivekananda



MINU BUDHIA

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\* Minu Budhia receiving her doctorate from Adamas University

## BEFORE YOU START STUDYING

Before you restart your academic adventure, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

**Identify your interest area and your strengths:** While we all have various areas of interest, we need to narrow down to one or two which not only really resonate with us but also are something we can be good at. This is very important because it will help you stay motivated throughout the study period.

**Follow market trends and do in-depth research on the courses, institutes, study formats based on your subjects:** Look through websites, brochures and social media to see the options available to you in detail. See what courses/subjects are trending and what industries are growing and have potential for further growth.

**Check the accreditation and reputation of the institute you plan to enrol at:** Go through the course types to pick one that appeals to you (certificate, diploma, PG diploma, masters, PhD). Decide which format is best suited to your daily life (online, in-person, or hybrid classes) and find out whether it has full-time and part-time options.

**Talk to people who are connected with that subject:** Those who are studying it now, those who have passed out recently,

and those in your contemporaries who have studied that subject.

**Identify short online courses:** Before you spend your precious time and money on a long-term academic commitment, do a couple of short online workshops or courses on that subject to reconfirm your interest. These small workshops can also add to your career.

**Become more tech-savvy than you are currently:** Technology is constantly evolving and so is the way we study. Learn how to make the best of digital and social media. Learn Chat GPT, watch educational videos on YouTube, use Grammarly to check your writing, etc.

**Travel, if required:** If the best course available for you is outside the city or country, if you can travel, don't hesitate. Go ahead and travel for your studies.

**Start building your support system:** Find the cheerleaders within your family and friends circle, especially your spouse and/or children. There will be ups and downs on this journey. So, having someone close who understands your issues is essential. And, of course, ignore all the naysayers and toxic people who discourage you.

For me, my pillars of support are my husband Sanjay, and my daughters Preeyam and Prachi. Their unwavering encouragement and love have been essential to my progress. Their radiant spirit adds

that extra layer of joy and motivation to my journey.

## DURING YOUR STUDYING PERIOD

Once you have signed up for a course, there are some simple but important things you need to keep in mind.

**Turn your weakness into strength:** While I was a topper in school, I was always terrified of examinations. I used to have actual nightmares before exams — I would dream that I had left questions unanswered or that I had run out of time. All these fears came flooding back again when for my counselling course I had to appear for exams. However, once I successfully completed the first course, these fears slowly started fading away.

**Schedule proper break time in your study schedule:** Just like in school, break time is essential.

Don't cram for hours. Instead, use modern time management methods, like Pomodoro, to maximise your time.

**Don't hesitate to fake help:** Our retention power as adults continuing their education is not the same as college freshers. Ask for notes, previous solved papers, practical and project references. Keep an open mind and keep young college students as your tuition teachers — this allows you to ask questions without feeling too shy. **Always aim for a professional qualification:** If you are studying to move ahead in your career in the same or a different profession, make sure the course qualification

is recognised by that industry nationally and if possible, internationally.

**Prepare to be stressed:** There's no denying that studying again is going to add some stress to your life. So, if you're prepared for it, you will feel less scared and more excited.

This is a message to all my future late bloomers:  
*Kehte the log jo, kaabil nahin hai tu,  
Denge wahi salamiyan,  
Dil thaam ke jahan, dekhega ek din,  
Teri bhi kamyabiyaan!!*

Pictures: istock and the author

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