

## RELAX MOM, I'LL BE FINE (I THINK)

By Sreelekshmi Prithviraj

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I have lived in Kuwait for almost 17 years and was raised here, so I've sort of adapted to the Kuwaiti way, I suppose. Growing up, I was dependent on my parents for almost every single thing including being dropped off or picked up from somewhere or for money and even laundry. I didn't realize that one day I would have to do everything by myself.

When I left for school to Bangalore, I learned the hard way.

This was a new city for me. I didn't at the time know anyone there. I was just this random girl with big hopes and dreams like the rest of my generation. It was there, living in this new city, that I came to realize all the responsibilities that would fall to me.

So here's a list of a few things that I learned when I moved out of my parents' home and magically became an adult.

1. Like most people who join university, I could have stayed at the university dorm. But I chose not to because I thought my freedom was at stake. Bangalore, for us Indians, is a pretty exciting place, especially for teenagers. So, I went on a house-hunting trip with my cousin to find a place that would guarantee my safety and meet my requirements. Surprisingly, this went quite well because I found a place I liked quickly and managed to move in with a friend.

2. Money was something I got whenever I asked for. If I went out or wanted to buy a dress, my parents paid. Never did I actually realize how much I spent in a month, let alone a week. Once I joined college, this changed. My parents gave me a monthly allowance and I had to survive on this. If I asked for more, there would be questions. I hated answering these questions because I had to look back into what I spent my allowance on, and it sounded pretty silly.

So I had to learn how to manage my money. I had to maintain a weekly budget and keep some aside for leisure, which was where I spent most my money in the first place. It took time adjusting to the whole account system I created in my head. I had rent and bills to pay, manage my weekly groceries, etc. I realized this only after moving out, mainly because all these things were taken care of by my parents.

3. Food was the biggest problem I faced. I love to eat - I'm sure many people do, but when you are a person who loves eating but has no idea how to cook, it can be tough. Many students have the option of the college canteen, but since I stayed off campus, I had to manage on my own. I asked for a tiffin service, which I got sick of eventually. So my friends and I just ended up ordering takeout meals almost everyday. That's how we spent our money - on food, which seemed right at the time, but it's not easy living like this because you end up eating unhealthy and you get sick because you don't know what you're eating.

That's when I started buying groceries and tried learning how to cook. Cooking seemed fun the first few days but it's a hard job. It involved standing over the stove hoping your food isn't burnt or hasn't been stolen by a roommate, because a lot of people shared the basic utilities. You eventually get sick of cooking, but that's the only way you're going to learn and survive.

I had to learn from scratch and on my own. I could have learned with my mom, but I had procrastinated. It's only when you're stuck in a certain situation that you regret a few things. It is after all the survival of the fittest. Cooking is easy but cooking healthy was pretty hard and it took me at least a year to figure it out. I didn't even know there were so many types of pulses until I went into a grocery store to look for a specific kind.

4. Like I mentioned earlier, I lived with my parents for 17 years. So now, I had this sudden freedom and I didn't know how to handle it. There were so many new people around me of various backgrounds, and getting into a crowd and finding people I could relate to was hard. A few even influence you, sometimes for good and sometimes for the worst. It took some time realizing who was good for me.

5. When you join university and start living away from people you knew your whole life, it makes you sad. Yes, there is an excitement to leave, but you soon realize you aren't protected like you used to be. You start missing the old things and you start having memories and some even make you cry yourself to sleep because it's not the same anymore. Things are changing and you're not used to this change.

It was like this with me. I felt lazy and sad almost every day and

also got sick a couple of times. But I moved past it with time. I missed having my parents around to protect and take care of me. I missed my brother and the thought of missing to see him grow up into a teenager made me sad. Although I hadn't left for good, it made me feel like my entire world was tumbling down.

You keep counting the days so that you can run back home and finally be happy. But don't depend on that. Try to be happy wherever you are. Because sometimes only

when you move away can you actually start living and finally be the person you always dreamed of being. Sometimes you even lose friends in the process, but then you make new ones. These experiences make you a stronger and better person.

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