

Hi! I'm Yohan Irani, a rising second year medical student at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. After experiencing a year in another country—away from close family and friends—I decided to reflect upon what my years in school taught me and how the holistic education I received at NPS Koramangala helped me cope in a new environment with new challenges. Did it have a huge impact or was it something I had taken for granted and did not think about after graduating?

What makes NPS Koramangala and all its sister schools unique, are the opportunities they provide us with. Every day, opportunities present themselves through competitions, fests and other interhouse activities that you can participate in. Not only does this make our school unmentionably extra-curricular but also gives us, the students, an especially important task: to choose or not to choose. Reaching out and applying for an event may seem like a piece of cake for some or an ordeal for others. But what matters the most is taking the time to invest in these activities. Investments in opportunities exposes you to even more—as a natural consequence, you meet new people. In your first year at college, you are going to meet numerous people with a varied range of interests, perspectives and backgrounds. As RCSI prides itself on its internationally diverse student body, I have been lucky to make friends from all over the globe. Now before you start losing my point, I want you to think of every new person that you meet as an opportunity that requires an investment of your time—no matter how short the interaction may be. The connections you build through this process will not only give you the friends you'll cherish for life, but also ensure that you have a strong network of connections as your path to your chosen career solidifies. Invest your time, and trust me, connections will form where you least expect to find them. Start now, and you will thank me and your school later.

Obviously, the academic rigor of medical school cannot be undermined, and we are tested several times a semester—monthly MCQ quizzes, bi-weekly anatomy practical assessments, numerous patient reports to write, and additionally, my involvement in clubs and societies to balance out academics and nurture my extra-curricular interests. A workload of this magnitude demands not just long hours of studying daily, but also the determination and drive to commit to it consistently. Luckily, I have been able to manage this and have successfully completed my first year. Of course, I have NPS to thank for that. The work ethic, the discipline and the drive to succeed that our NPS teachers inculcate in us are qualities we will never find in another school, and they serve as a strong foundation and preparation for our lives beyond school. For this, and much more, we must be grateful. If it were not for all the formative assessments and smaller tests, it would be a real struggle to cope with everything in college. So, my advice to you is to stop complaining: whether you have two tests scheduled without a day's break in between, or both on the same day, just remember that it is a mere sampling of what you will experience in the not too distant future, besides being the best preparation you will ever receive.

Taking notes in class was one thing none of us looked forward to. Weren't you, including me, lucky if the teacher forgot to tell us to take notes before she started lecturing? No matter how much you resist and undervalue notetaking, in the years to come it will stand you in good stead academically. Speaking from my experience in college, taking notes helps in two ways: Firstly, it ensures that you note down every detail that your lecturer provides, which you may have otherwise missed. Trust me, this can mean the difference between first

or second-class honours which you will better understand and appreciate later. But the point here is that it is important. Secondly, it confirms that you are actively listening in class. When you take notes, you process details in your mind rather than just mindlessly listening to them in a way that is easy to forget. It will make you stay mindfully present and help you concentrate better to facilitate accurate recall even later. In addition, in an environment where efficient multi-tasking is crucial, note taking helps one to systematically stay organized, keep track of assignments, meet deadlines and so much more. It is imperative that you develop this skill as early as possible. So please, do not neglect taking notes in class or staying organized—whether your preference is jotting down notes in a diary or electronically, the very act of taking notes is critical.

I have often encountered neighbours and friends who have similar reactions to my schooling at NPS.

“Oh wow, you must be smart if you go to NPS.”

No, I am not lying—these dialogues really did occur. Clearly, this is reflective of the fine reputation our school has earned and the reality of what it is expected of an NPSite—ask anyone, and they will agree. Here, I want to emphasize on what it truly means to be smart.

I believe that ‘intelligence’ is a word understood by a few but worn well by many who often go unrecognized. If you think that the previous sentence should have been the other way around, keep reading and my message will be clear. You are in school for a reason and you strive to continue your education in college, but one thing remains the same: the expectations people have of you are only based on what you have accomplished so far. Yes, you must study. Yes, you must try and do your best, and yes, there will be people pushing you to do all those things because they have confidence in your ability. You wouldn’t have reached this stage of your life if you couldn’t. The hard truth is that most often people form their opinions of you based merely on what they see on paper. Thus, good grades are important. But grades do not define you, and they are not the sole determinant of intelligence. They only position you on a map with thousands of others, like you and me, who are in this pursuit to fulfil personal and professional goals and aspirations. What really determines your ‘intelligence’ are the following:

- The decisions you take
- The actions you base off them
- How you treat and react to those who support or challenge you
- And finally, how you express gratitude for their support in your achievements, and how you pay it forward

Academics is an arduous, but highly rewarding journey. There are no short cuts and there is not an easy way out. But trust me, when I say that it all works out in the end, and you are going to do brilliantly. When you finally ace those exams, it does not just prove that you are intelligent. Instead, it proves that your intelligent decisions were the driving force that generated success. Intelligence is not about the end result—it is about the journey that never seems to end, it is about the struggles, the sleepless nights and the occasionally not-so-good scores. So, thank these factors for their contribution in making you the person you

are, and the next time you are pulled up by a teacher or given constructive criticism to improve, embrace it as one of the many gifts that school has to offer.

I feel that I have probably written more than I had initially anticipated, so let me wrap up with a few concluding thoughts. As you enter any new phase in life, whether it is college or a new year in school, think back and be proud that you have made it this far. Try your best to be curious and engaged. Be sure to seek and seize every upcoming opportunity, and make sure to work hard and be well prepared. It is natural to feel nervous and apprehensive at times, but it is even more essential that confidence takes over, so you take advantage of each moment that comes your way. Do not ever let your fears cloud or obstruct the creative process of learning and achieving or hinder your growth in any way.

Most importantly, when you find yourself amid chaos and uncertainty, remember that life is not about waiting for the storm pass, it is about learning to dance in the rain. Enjoy the journey that you embark on, and take every step as an opportunity for learning, developing and evolving into a better version of yourself.

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