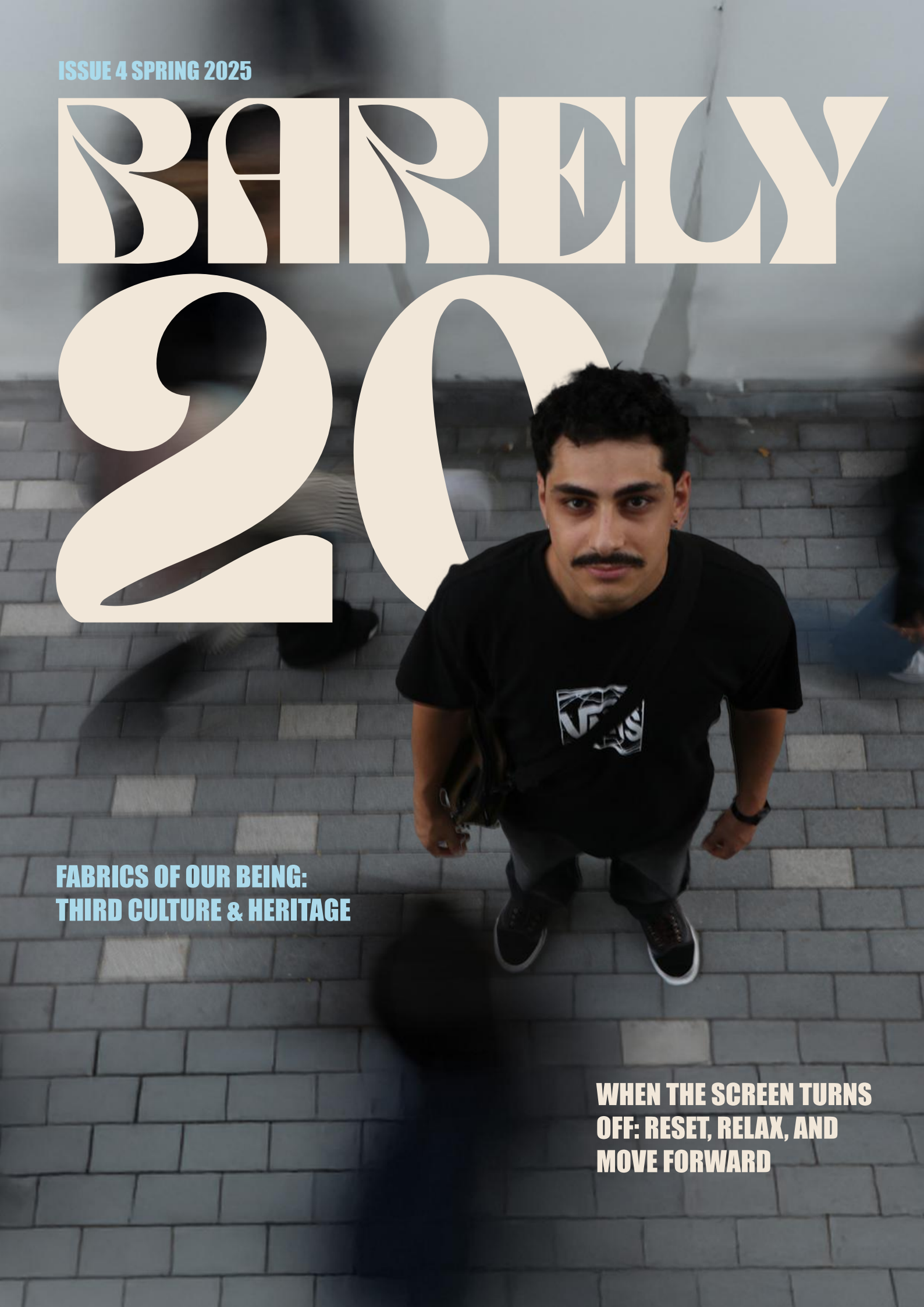
ISSUE 4 SPRING 2025

BARELY 20



FABRICS OF OUR BEING:
THIRD CULTURE & HERITAGE

WHEN THE SCREEN TURNS OFF: RESET, RELAX, AND MOVE FORWARD

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FABRICS OF OUR BEING

You're barely 20, in a café somewhere between Al Quoz and Al Ain, sipping karak, wearing a hoodie that says "NYC" while texting in Arabic, Russian, Spanglish, or a mix only your friends understand. Someone asks you where you're from, and your answer starts with a pause. "It's complicated."

THAT PAUSE? THAT'S THIRD CULTURE

In the UAE, it's practically a rite of passage. You grow up between timezones and traditions, homesick for places you've never lived. You know when to say "In sha Allah," how to explain Eid holidays to your Western friends, and why it's lowkey weird to choose just one country on a form that asks for "nationality." This is the third culture experience: being raised in a culture different from your parents, while also never fully belonging to the country you grew up in.

But here's the thing, we make our own fabric. We stitch together stories from our Desi grandma's recipes, our Arab dad's playlist, our Filipino friend's slang, and the soft sense of belonging that only you can feel in a room full of strangers. We're patchwork people. And in the UAE – one of the most multicultural countries in the world

– we don’t just exist between cultures, we thrive in that in-between.

Much like the in-between of being barely 20, neither a “kid” nor an “adult.”

And yes, it can be confusing. Like when your accent changes depending on who you’re talking to. Or when you have to translate your feelings before you can explain them. But it’s also a superpower. You’ve learned empathy without a manual. You’ve mastered adaptation without a map. You know what it means to carry your identity in fragments and still call it whole.

And maybe that’s where heirlooms come in.









These heirlooms are proof that even if we feel untethered, something is holding us. Something was passed on. Through objects, yes. But more through feeling. The quiet wisdom, the inherited resilience, the unspoken values stitched into who we are. Maybe that's what it means to grow up here, now. To live in a place where cultures overlap like threads in a tapestry. To feel like you belong everywhere and nowhere. To know that you're still weaving your story.

Not just out of fabric from your heritage or the city skyline, but from every late-night phone call, every meet-up, every accent you carry, and every moment you decide to honor where you come from while creating who you want to be.

The fabric of your being? It's not finished yet. It's still being woven. Beautifully, chaotically, and completely yours.

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WHAT EVERYONE'S WEARING IN SUMMER 2025

If there's one rule this summer, it's this: style should feel like you. Functional, expressive, and most importantly, heat-proof. Fashion this season is all about embracing comfort, personality, and layering with thoughtful choices.



Polka Dots

Bold dots on sheer layers, pants, or co-ords. Vintage? Nope. Fresh and fun.

Boho Chic

It's back – but refined. Think breezy knits, loose trousers, and flowy sleeves in warm tones. Effortless and earthy.



Shoes

Night = Heels. Day = Flats. Keep both in your summer mix.

Labubu Keychains

Weird? Yes. Cute? Also yes. Hook them onto totes for a pop of playfulness.

Silk Scarves

Not just neckwear – wear them as belts, bag charms, or even tops. Lightweight + high impact.



Denim on Denim

Still strong. Smarter now. Go for matching sets with baggy jeans and sleeveless vests. Bonus points for cowboy boots.



WHERE TO FIND IT

Switch up your summer aesthetic with versatile, quality pieces or unique thrift finds!

BOHO CHIC

Women: H&M Crochet Tunic Dress – Cream

AED 449.00



POLKA DOTS

Women: M&S Polka Dot Maxi Skirt

AED 109.00





Stilettos: Charles & Keith Strappy Heels

AED 350.00



Birkenstocks: Boston Suede Leather – Unisex

AED 779.00

BOHO CHIC

Men: M&S Knitted Cotton Shirt

AED 229.00



DENIM ON DENIM

Men: Next Denim Shirt

AED 219.00





Silk Scarf: Aldo Navy Scarf – Multi-Use

AED 129.00

WHEN RELATABLE GETS RISKY

You're scrolling. It's late. A clip appears, someone describing a habit you thought only you had - zoning out mid-sentence, overthinking every interaction. You pause. "That's so relatable. Wait... is that me?"

That moment when content feels so familiar it's like looking into a mirror. Whether it's a TikTok about ADHD or a reel titled "How I Survive My Worst Days," these emotionally charged snippets make us feel seen. Our generation has normalized confrontation. We've brought the invisible struggle, mental health, into the open. We've learned to cope through humor, sarcasm, and memes. The only way to carry the weight of life is to laugh at it first.

But relatability can be a double-edged sword. In trying to make mental health easier to understand, self-diagnosis trends simplify complex personal journeys into symptom checklists. We start seeing ourselves in everything. It can feel validating, but also confusing. Sadness becomes a slideshow; healing becomes a hashtag. What started as release can shift into performance.

That doesn't mean we stop consuming. It means we stay aware. You don't need to post every breakdown to feel understood. You don't need to fit into a box to be taken seriously. There's power in being seen, but also in being private. Choosing silence over performance, rest over productivity. Some moments are just for you, and that's okay. So if you're overwhelmed, pause. Laugh at the chaos.

Easier said than done. We know the risks. We know the rewards. But how do we navigate with both care and clarity?



WHEN THE SCREEN TURNS OFF

DOOMSCROLL DETOX



Ever find yourself saying, “Just five more minutes,” only to look up and realize it’s already midnight and you’re still staring at your phone? You’re definitely not alone. From bedtime scrolling to that first groggy swipe in the morning, it’s easy to feel like we live more through our screens than through our own eyes. The line between work and rest blurs as we doomscroll endlessly, while deep down, our minds quietly crave stillness. Though we sometimes manage to step away from our screens, it’s never easy to fully unplug.

Our feeds are filled with fast-moving “sludge content,” movie scenes layered with video games or cookie-cutting, all flashing by at lightning speed. It’s like we’ve trained our attention spans to expect fireworks every five seconds. But here’s the twist: Some students claim that watching these videos helps them focus while studying. Strange, right? But it speaks to something deeper, we’re wired for connection and curiosity, even if it shows up in unexpected ways.

So, how do we gently shift back toward the present? How do we reclaim our time in a world that’s constantly asking for our attention?



The good news is that we can choose differently. Gen Z is many things: bold, adaptive, and constantly redefining itself. Sure, we joke about having short attention spans, but we're also the same generation that's leading conversations on mindfulness, mental health, and digital boundaries. We get to decide what kind of relationship we want with our **screens.**

You can begin with small steps. Try giving your phone a little rest by turning it off an hour before bedtime. It's worth a shot. Maybe you rediscover your passions and hobbies. Maybe it's you, just entering your twenties, stepping out to truly experience life as we're meant to during this vibrant decade. We deserve to live fully and savor the joy of our twenties. Maybe it means trading one late-night scroll for a few pages of a good book or a peaceful moment of reflection. Tools like "Do Not Disturb," screen-time trackers, or app timers can help – but so can something simple: a pause, a deep breath, and the choice to be more present.

We don't want to look back on our twenties with regret, realizing we missed out on experiences by spending too much time doom scrolling instead of truly living. Being part of a tech-driven generation isn't necessarily a bad thing; everything's evolving, but it would be nice if we navigate it with more intention.

Remember, taking a break from your phone isn't about disconnecting from the world; it's about reconnecting with yourself. And with a little intention, a bit of patience, and a lot of grace, we can build a rhythm that feels good, one scroll-free evening at a time.

TIRED OR JUST LIVING IN 2025?

It's midweek, and everything feels like both too much and not quite enough, a rhythm many of us know all too well. In 2025, exhaustion isn't always about doing more. It's about existing in a world that never really powers down. With endless notifications, side hustles, and the pressure to always be on, it's no wonder we're all running low.

The truth is, your creativity and your well-being aren't mutually exclusive. They thrive together. But hustle culture, especially in today's hyper-connected world, tells us otherwise. We've learned to measure our value by output and productivity, even when our bodies and minds are calling for rest. Think about how often we scroll for inspiration while ignoring our fatigue. How rest feels like slacking even when it's survival. But here's a quiet truth: Slowing down might be the smartest move you make all week. More has been sold to us as better. More work, more content, more proof that we're making an effort. But sometimes prioritizing your needs and reducing mental noise, is actually what brings clarity.

We already know this story. Burnout, constant connection, the need to unplug. We're aware. And we have heard the solutions too: screen limits, digital detoxes, better boundaries. But knowing isn't the hard part. It's the doing. Implementing change feels heavy when chaos has become routine.

So maybe we start small. One shift. Try turning your phone off an hour before bed, just to see how it feels. Give your mind a chance to settle. Maybe that quiet moment leads you back to a forgotten routine, or simply helps you feel more like yourself. This decade is meant to be vibrant, messy, and full of discovery. We deserve to show up for it.



LIFE MOVING FORWARD

As life moves forward, the nature of friendships begins to shift. In your twenties, everything happens quickly: opportunities, expectations, and the shift in relationship dynamics. Especially platonic ones. Some connections will stay strong, while others naturally drift apart.

This isn't about losing people but about growing into new versions of yourself and the world you're creating.

After university or major life transitions, keeping in touch isn't always easy or automatic anymore. Soon, life will start pulling you in different directions – new jobs, cities, and routines – and that's all part of moving into the next chapter. It's normal for friendships to change, and sometimes it's bittersweet.

For example, many Gen Zers find that their closest friends during school become less accessible as everyone starts working or moving away. The people you once talked to every day slowly become "we should catch up soon" texts that never quite land.

What matters is how you carry these changes with kindness, understanding, and a willingness to accept that some bonds deepen with intention and growth, while others gently fade.

Letting go doesn't have to mean hurt; it can mean making room for new experiences.



ALUMNI INTERVIEWS

HASSAN H.

Hassan specializes in transformative growth, AI-driven innovation, and ethical governance – Class of 2016.



Q: How did your friendships evolve in your 20s?

"They got cold but got way deeper. I stopped chasing big groups and started cherishing the ride-or-die circle who stuck around when life got rough. Some friendships quietly faded, and that's okay, people grow differently. No hard feelings, just love for the time we had."

LAASYA K.

Laasya, assistant producer at The Kris Fade Show – Class of 2024.



Q: What would you tell your 20 year old self?

"I'm proud of my past self. I'm here because of her. I would advise her to put herself first, and not tolerate disrespect from anyone. People walked all over me, coming out of that, I am unsure why I let it occur. Any disrespect is still disrespect, no matter how small."



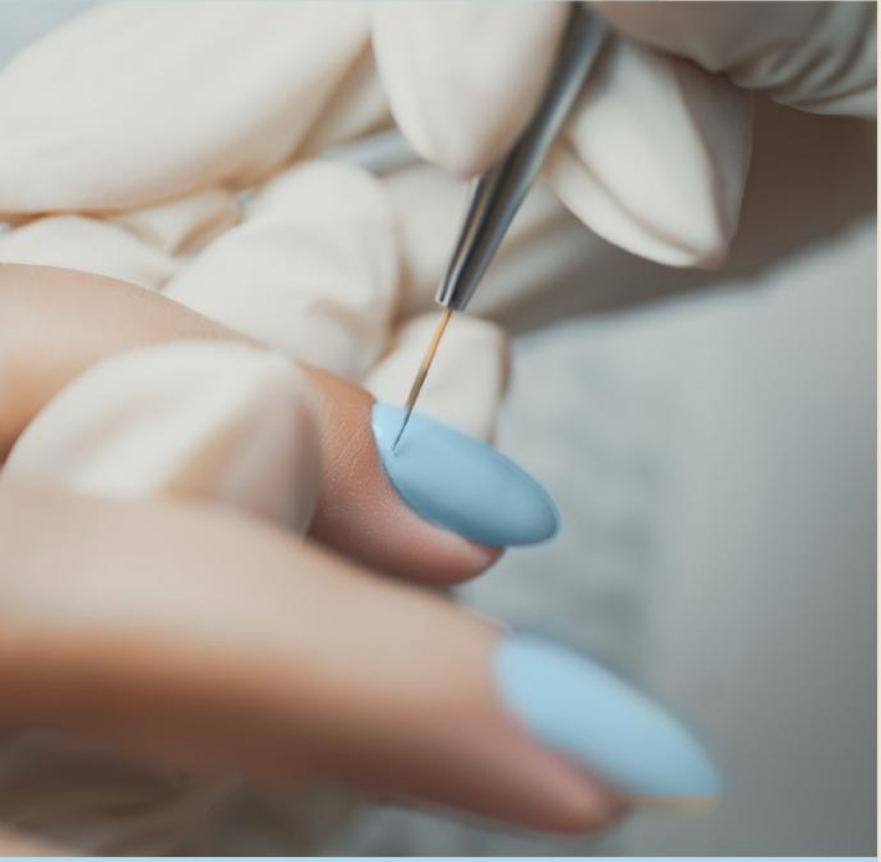
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SUMMER

OUTDOOR EDITION

Let's be real, summer's all about making the most of the season, but in the UAE, that means playing it smart. When the weather's right, it's golden hour adventures and spontaneous outdoor hangs.



Paddleboarding

A full-body workout that's all about balance, calm, and ocean vibes. Try it at Kite Beach or Palm Jumeirah.



Beach Football

A fun, sandy twist on the classic game that's equal parts exercise and chaos. Head to Saadiyat or Kite Beach.

Night Cycling

Cool evening rides that mix fitness with freedom under the stars. Explore Al Qudra or urban city routes.





HOBBIES

INDOOR EDITION

When the heat hits hard, it's all about staying cool indoors without killing the vibe. Whether you're after movement or mellow fun, there's a hobby here for you.



Indoor Padel

A fast-paced, social sport that blends tennis and squash. Play at Padelx or The Alley DXB.



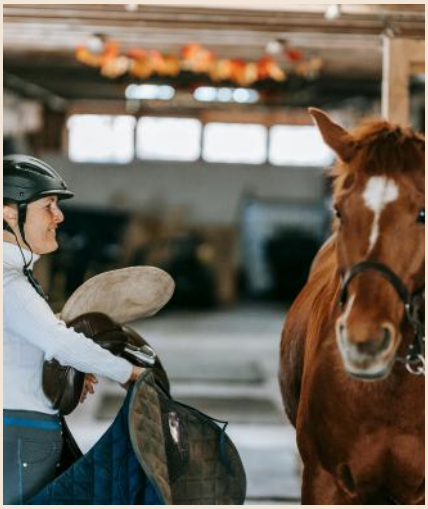
Indoor Rock Climbing

A challenging hobby that pushes both body and mind. Climb at Rock Republic or Adventure HQ.



Indoor Horse Riding

A graceful hobby that builds trust and skill with your horse. Available at Al Habtoor Riding School.



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TARIQ ABU SAMRA
BLOOMINGBOX CEO

BLOOMINGBOX INTERVIEW

At 20, most of us are still trying to make sense of deadlines, jobs, internships and who we want to be. For UOWD alumnus Tariq Abu Samra, that age wasn't about being the next big success, it was about absorbing everything he could. But even then, he yearned to create. Years later, he created a venture, built not from certainty, but from daring to begin.

"We had no clue how to run a business," he admits with a laugh. "But we had a vision and we just started."

The leap he took would land him firmly on his feet at BloomingBox. What started as an affordable-luxury gifting idea, with curated boxes of flowers and treats, has now grown into a regional business with its own warehouses, supply chains, and production facilities across the UAE and KSA. But the heart of BloomingBox remains simple: creating beautiful, thoughtful moments that feel personal.

What makes Tariq's story so relevant to us isn't the success. It's the start. He didn't wait for more experience, a bigger bank account, or a perfect plan. Instead, he embraced what he now calls "productive ignorance."

"When you're 20, you're not supposed to know everything. But if you're willing to learn and stay curious, that's enough to get you going," he says.

His honesty about the messy middle – the unknown of the in-between – is comforting.

Tariq recalls stretching small budgets, learning from failure, and figuring out things the hard way. He encourages students to stop waiting for the "right time" and instead get comfortable with discomfort. "People think the fear goes away once you start, but it doesn't. You just get used to moving with it."

Though he now runs a company with operations across the region, Tariq still sees his university days as critical. "UOWD helped me build a foundation of independence. I learned how to think critically, ask questions, and find my own solutions."

His advice to those who feel overwhelmed by the pressure to figure everything out before 25?

Don't.

"You don't need to have all the answers. You just need to take one small risk. That's how it starts."

In a world obsessed with overnight success, Tariq Abu Samra reminds us that being barely 20 isn't a limitation, it's leverage. You're not late. You're just getting started.



KRIS FADE SHOW INTERVIEW

The Kris Fade Show, one of the UAE's biggest morning radio programs, is known for its mix of humor, real talk, and genuine connection with listeners. Behind the laughter and energy is a team that's been through a lot to get where they are, especially in their twenties.



For them, these years weren't defined by certainty or strategy, but by trial, error, and figuring things out along the way. Each of them carved their own path, often without realizing they were even on one.

Kris and Big Rossi worked various odd jobs just to survive, and Priti Malik moved to Dubai in her early twenties with no plan, just a feeling that something bigger might be out there. Few of them knew what "success" meant at the time, but they showed up anyway. Big Rossi states, "Getting through the day was my bar for success, in my twenties."

"I didn't know what I wanted back then," Kris said. "I just kept saying yes until something made sense."

That openness, to people, to opportunities, to detours, reflected in their stories. So did the idea that experience matters far more than titles or money early on in life. Most of them started by doing whatever they could. Cleaning studios. Running errands. Shadowing people they admired. It wasn't glamorous, but it was real. And more importantly, it taught them how to work, listen, and grow.

It's not really about working for free, you're trading time for access. For insight. For chances.

Beyond the hustle, though, it was the small human moments that stuck. Priti got her break not because of a résumé, but because she said a simple "hello" every morning. Which led to small talk. Then conversations. Then opportunity.

You can have all the skills you may need, "but if you don't have a personality," Kris adds, "you won't get to where you want to go."

The message was clear: soft skills aren't soft at all. Being kind, being present, being real, that's what moves people forward in this next phase of life.

There's no set pace for your twenties. What looks like drifting is often just the part no one talks about. What matters is showing up. Making the effort. Saying hello. Not just for the job you want, but for the person you're becoming.

Your personality is your power. Use it.

KRIS FADE
HOST/PRESENTER

BIG ROSSI
PRODUCER/PRESENTER

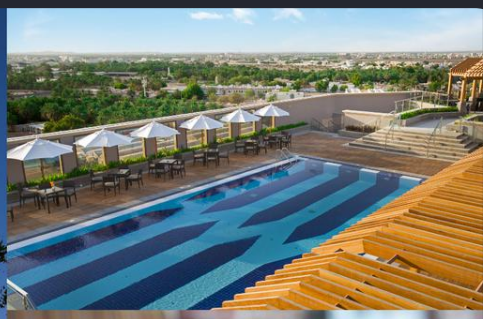
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INTERVIEW WITH JUMANA

"In your twenties, everyone seems to have it all figured out, until you realize most of us are just starting to grasp what we really want"

JUMANA ABDU RAHMAN

CONTENT CREATOR

Before becoming one of the region's most followed content creators (14+ million across platforms), Jumana Abdu Rahman was studying law. "I was a very studious kid," she chuckles. "But when something felt right, I just did it." What started as a hobby – posting photos online and experimenting with a camera – quickly sparked something more. Her passion.

"There wasn't even an industry for content creation when I started," she explains. "But I kept going. I wasn't earning anything, but I had enough to survive."
Her father's advice shaped her drive. He taught her the importance of being consistent, disciplined, and most importantly, staying genuine. It's something she still lives by.

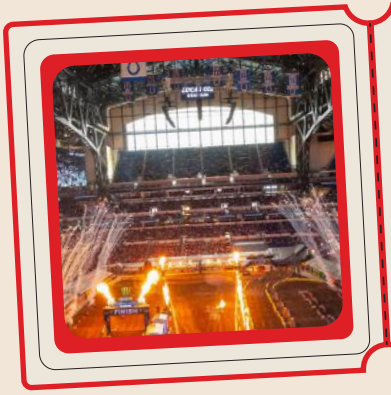
And then it happened. 14 million views. "That's when I realized this could actually be something," she says. Opportunities blossomed, and in 2020, her face adorned the tallest tower.

Yet, despite the spotlight, Jumana holds on to her core. "You evolve. You might become more reserved; you might stop liking apple pie. But your core? That stays."
Her journey isn't just about viral videos or big breaks. It's about finding clarity from within – listening to your own voice. As she puts it, "You have the answers inside you, you just need to listen."
She celebrates every milestone, no matter how small, and always sets her sights on what's next.

For her, it's about steady steps towards a bigger vision. Cheer for others, stay true to yourself, and always work to outgrow the person you were yesterday.



EVENTS CALENDAR



ARENACROSS WORLD TOUR FINAL

JULY.5
2025

HIGH INDOOR
MOTOCROSS ACTION

ETIHAD ARENA - ABU DHABI



BIKEERA RIDE

PEDAL FOR A GREENER DUBAI

JULY.12
2025

DIGITAL PARK - DUBAI



THRIFT MARKET

VINTAGE FINDS
IN COOL COMFORT

JULY.20
2025

TIMES SQUARE CENTER - DUBAI

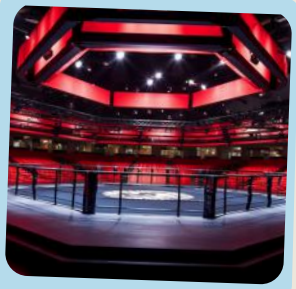
EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Weekends At The Avenue

Skip the mall and head to Alserkal Avenue every weekend this summer for live music, art, vintage fashion, and local eats. It's Dubai's cultural heartbeat, no ticket needed, just good vibes and creative energy.

Thrift Market – Summer Edition

Ditch the fast fashion and dig into vintage treasures at this indoor market pop-up. On select weekends, Times Square Center turns into a thrifter's dream, cool, quirky, and full of character.

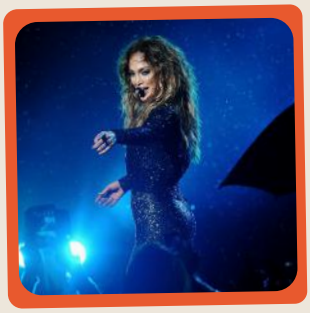


UFC FIGHT NIGHT

WHITTAKER VS. DE RIDDER

JULY.26
2025

ETIHAD ARENA - ABU DHABI



JENNIFER LOPEZ

UP ALL NIGHT LIVE

JULY.29
2025

J.LO's ONLY MIDDLE EAST SHOW

ETIHAD ARENA - ABU DHABI



HARRY POTTER

FILM CONCERT SERIES

SEP.6-7
2025

MAGIC MEETS LIVE ORCHESTRA

ETIHAD ARENA - ABU DHABI



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A road trip's guide to being

BARELY 20

2025 EDITION



Three fresh graduates.
One beat-up car.
An unforeseeable detour.

What began as a celebratory road trip for Hasan, Casey, and Myra quickly spirals into a tangled web of twists and turns.

Stranded with their car half-buried in gravel, tension tightens around the three friends. Perhaps their struggles run deeper than just a detour and a broken-down car.

As an inner turmoil forces them to confront who they are and who they're becoming-they find themselves battling two challenges at once: the unforgiving road and the even more disarrayed journey within.

Follow along as they navigate the trials of an unexpected detour-one that may lead them exactly where they need to be.



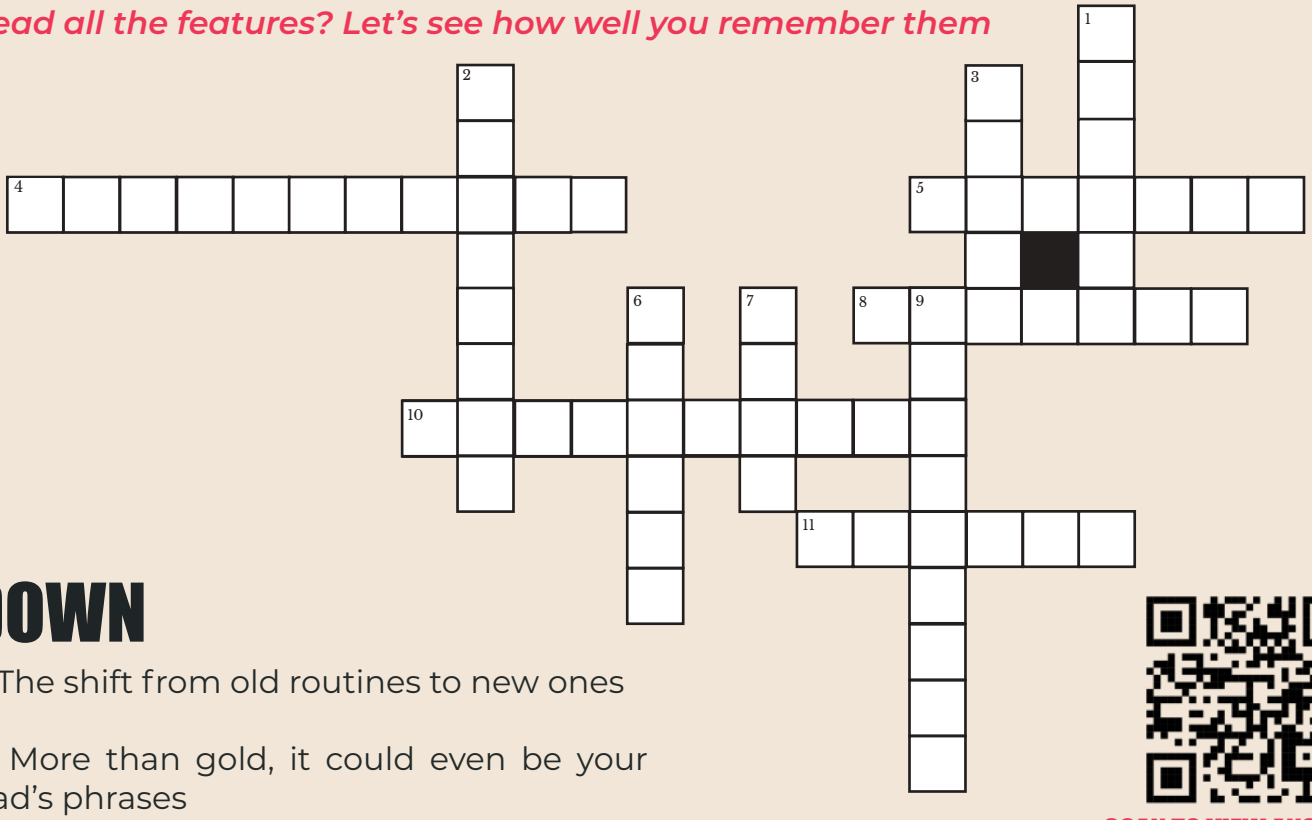
MAZE DETOUR

WHOSE PATH WILL YOU TAKE?



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Read all the features? Let's see how well you remember them



DOWN

1. The shift from old routines to new ones

2. More than gold, it could even be your dad's phrases

3. A break. A moment of stillness, not forever, just for now

6. "You have the answers inside you, you just need to _____"

7. They both have a crust, but what's something the Earth has that a pizza doesn't?

9. When content feels familiar, it's like looking into a mirror

SCAN TO VIEW ANSWERS!

ACROSS

4. What a simple "hello" can lead to

5. When "doing the most" leaves you feeling the least

8. Missing out on life by not being _____

10. That spiral you get into when one swipe leads to another

11. You don't plan it, but sometimes it's the best part of the trip

SCAVENGER HUNT












We have drawings hidden throughout the magazine.

Can you spot them all?





from the Barely 20 team!





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