

Happy medium

FINDING BALANCE: Setting clear boundaries between work and play has enabled three undergraduates to indulge their passion for making K-pop dance videos while maintaining good grades

SUZIEANA UDA NAGU
suzie@nst.com.my

FINAL-year Biomedical Science major Dayana Anith Suhainih keeps a tight schedule this semester break.

The Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) undergrad works nine hours, six days a week as a part-time promoter of a broadband service at a shopping mall in Putrajaya during the day.

She dances with other members of the Korean pop (K-pop) dance cover group Epsilon in Cyberjaya for two hours every night.

Dayana Anith goes through a similar routine when classes are in session.

"I am taking four subjects this year and I spend most of my time working on my final-year group project in the lab. I also have four papers to complete and two tests to sit before the final examination. I still practise dancing at night and on weekends," she says.

Dayana Anith embodies the traits of the so-called Generation Y, those born between 1981 and 2000, who value their work-life balance and live by the adage, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

"Work needs to fit in with their lives, and they are not willing to arrange their lives around the demands of work," wrote Marilee Peters, communications director of British Columbia Council for Families (www.bccf.ca).

Many students will be tied up in their school career once the academic calendar starts again at the end of this month.

While some are able to piece it all together, others may learn the hard way, perhaps after failing an exam or not being able to meet deadlines.

They should take a leaf from Dayana Anith's book as she seems to have found a happy balance between her studies and interests.

"I must have both my studies and dance in my life," she says.

The key to excelling in all her pursuits is focus.

"I pay attention to my studies when I am in class. Similarly, when my group is working on a dance project, we make the most of our time in the studio," she adds.

Setting clear boundaries has enabled Dayana Anith to indulge her passion for making K-pop dance videos and maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.7 every semester.

"My life is compartmentalised into studies and leisure. My classmates see me as a student who works hard to get good grades. Those in my K-pop circle know a different side of me — someone who is committed to promoting Malaysia in the international K-pop scene through dance," she says.

Described by family and friends as a high achiever and a perfectionist, Dayana Anith admits that school was her only priority when she was younger.

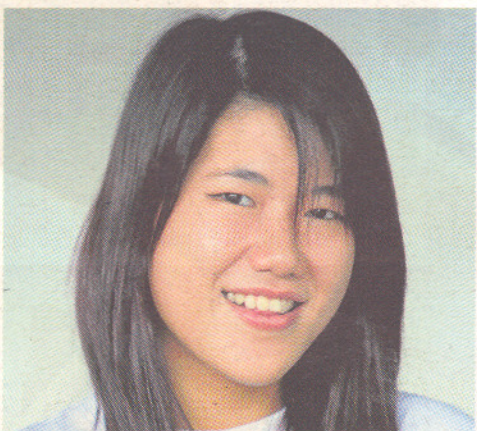
"Dance became a big part of my life only after I fell ill in late 2008," adds the former medical student.

Spending four months in a hospital after being diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus, which attacked her kidney, forced Dayana Anith to reassess her life.

"I got sick easily because of the medications and had severe edema (swollen feet) that made it difficult to walk. It made me realise how short life



Norshaheza Hassan



Adiba Jehan Suhainih



Nor Izzati Hassan



Dayana Anith Suhainih



Epsilon's practice video of 2NE1's *I Am The Best* attracted **69,717** views

is. I regretted not going after my passion, which is dance. I never got round to doing it before because I was too focused on my studies," she says.

When Dayana Anith recovered in 2009, she changed her course to Biomedical Science which would allow her to work in a medical lab without being directly exposed to patients and diseases.

She also began actively seeking other K-pop dance enthusiasts, which led her to befriend fans with whom she formed the group Epsilon in 2010.

Epsilon, which is the fifth letter of the Greek alphabet, started as a five-member group which covers songs by popular South Korean boyband SHINee.

It has since added other K-pop artistes such as 2NE1, Teen Top and Miss A to its repertoire.

Its YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/dayslaelia>) has 3,209 subscribers and some 1,153,943 viewers have seen their videos.

The band — which also comprises members Adiba Jehan Suhainih (Dayana Anith's younger sister and an Accounting student at UPM) as well as sisters Nor Izzati Hassan (an Advertising major at Limkokwing University) and Norshaheeza (a Human Resource executive) — won bronze prize in the second UCC (User created content) contest organised by South Korean English entertainment channel Arirang TV last year.

It was the only group to be nominated in the Best Dance category — the other nominees were solo dancers — and the only winner from Malaysia in the event, which received 352 entries from around the world.

The group had many highs last year but poor social life is part of the price of success.

"As a group leader, I demand a lot of commitment from the members. The time that they spend working, studying or with family is theirs, but I need them to devote the rest of their free time to the group," says Dayana Anith.

The practice schedule is intense so the girls do not have much time to shop at the mall or watch the latest movies at the weekend like most young people their age.

However, they hardly miss that lifestyle.

"In fact, we are itching to start dancing again when we go on a break after a busy period because we miss it," says Dayana Anith.

Being in the group has taught them valuable life skills not imparted in the classroom.

"I used to struggle with dividing my time for all the things that I want to do. Being in Epsilon has taught me to manage my time and to prioritise," says Nor Izzati, who aspires to work in advertising.

Dayana Anith now knows what it takes to be a leader.

"I learned to manage myself before I can handle others. My communication skills have also improved as I have had to deal with sponsors and event organisers while promoting Epsilon," she says.

It has introduced Adiba Jehan to an entirely new world.

"Prior to joining Epsilon, I was not even interested in dancing. But I have always fancied myself being on stage singing or playing in a band. It has opened my eyes to dancing. I don't mind a career in showbiz if the chance presents itself," says Adiba Jehan, who maintains a CGPA of 3.71.

Epsilon is now part of an international network of like-minded young people.



"We have quite a following among global K-pop fans who never fail to leave a comment every time we upload a video. We consider them friends," she adds.

Spending most of their time together has strengthened their bond.

"We have had many arguments in the studio but we are like sisters now, despite our age gap and lack of common interest before," says Adiba Jehan.

Perhaps the most important value they picked

up is to seize the moment and give everything their best shot.

"Epsilon had only a week to practise before its first public appearance in 2010. It was a disaster but the moral is that we had to start somewhere. We have improved so much now. It proves that there is no better time to do something that you like than right now," says Dayana Anith.

More in YOU next week