ARTICLE: **SCHOOL LEAVING RITUALS (AND PREPARING YOU FOR LIFE)**

**For immediate release.**

Remember those years in secondary school where as a junior you would wonder into the bathroom and be met with a solid row of older girls preening before leaving the school’s compound? In trying to fathom that ritual I couldn’t see what all the hoopla was about – after all they were only going home. Their hair had to be combed, invariably slicked. ‘Baby’ hairs were emphasized drawing attention to the freshly washed face. A zap of deodorant or a cologne upped the fresh smell quotient. Ashy legs were not to be tolerated so the counter top bore an array of bottles of lotion. And this recollection would not be complete without mentioning the explosion of powder splattered across chests, and peeping above the top button of their blouse. Look good, smell good, ready, now to hit the road.

What might have appeared as unnecessary and excessive in hindsight had a connection to addressing good hygiene practises in their adolescent years. Bodily changes, for example the growth of underarm hair and the monthly period that overstayed its welcome by several days, necessitate private check -ins to maintain freshness.

Outbreaks of acne pimples, the result of increased oil secretion and bad habits such as touching one’s face, are minimised with the cleansing of the face. Now you understand what the nubs of hand soap were for back then.

For the adolescent it is important that they do not neglect the care of their teeth. This means changing their tooth brush 3 to 4 times for the year, regular brushing and flossing after meals, use of a mouth wash to reduce plaque and bacteria – all of this in between routine 6-month trips to the dentist. The poor condition of teeth and gums caused by bacteria can set off other health concerns in the body. So, getting in the habit of dealing with oral health is a lifelong practice that makes a lot of sense.

Maybe we will look at it differently the next time we can’t get a space at the basin in the washroom to only wash our hands – they are practising.

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