

TEENTIMES

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

FEBRUARY 2026

**WHAT DOES THE FUTURE
HOLD FOR US?**

FROM TRASH TO VALUE:

Our experience at Level Up 2026

BY ADITI RAJPAL

Students from across St. Maarten had the chance to attend an event called Level Up 2026 on February 6. The event took place at the JW Marriott in Dawn Beach. The World Bank and Caribbean experts assisted the Minister of Education in hosting it. I found the event inspiring and fascinating. We saw how innovation can make a difference, discussed possible future jobs, and learned about major problems affecting our island.

The World Bank is an international organization that helps countries recover from major challenges and strengthen their communities. They offer support in many forms, including funding, advice, and technical assistance for projects. Examples include rebuilding schools, hospitals, and infrastructure. In St. Maarten, they played a role in rebuild-

ing the airport after the hurricanes and also supported the St. Maarten library, helping provide students with a safe place to study and access information. At the event, they showed how development projects come together, and how planning, teamwork, and creativity can lead to real results.

One segment was a 10-minute talk filled with ideas. A speaker shared how creativity and problem-solving can help communities get back on their feet after major disasters. Another speaker focused on waste problems, explaining how Styrofoam, electronics, and construction debris affect our small island, and how some waste can be reused by, for example, turning debris into cement blocks for road construction.

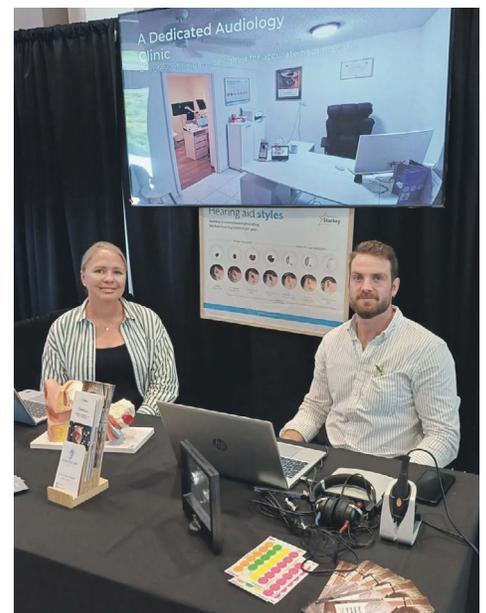
For me, the panel discussions were the most interesting part. One panellist stressed that teamwork and preparation are key to completing large projects successfully. They also discussed long-term sustainability, co-creation, and problem-solving. The second panellist spoke about waste and how it affects everyone. Waste is a major issue in St. Maarten, so

it was an important topic to address. They also explained why trash has value and is not "just trash," emphasizing that everyone, including students, must work together to solve waste-related challenges. They noted that the government is working on the Emergency Debris Management Project, with the goal of ensuring the Phillipsburg landfill closes by 2032.

We also had the opportunity to tour the Exhibit Hall, where a variety of projects were on display. At each stand, you could hear people explain their work and receive a sticker just for visiting. Schools such as Academy, LU, St. Dominic, MPC, MAC, and a few others attended, though not everyone stayed for the full event. Each booth offered hands-on information about sustainability and community projects. There was also a chance to win a laptop by collecting stickers from each stand. A student from Academy won the laptop. Although we were not able to visit every booth, the ones we did see were impressive.

Lastly, we did an activity called the Dream Job Wall,

where the audience explored different jobs that might exist in 2035. It was fun to use our own ideas to imagine what jobs we might have in the future, and what skills we may need. We learned that our future depends on us, and that the information we learn today will matter in the long run. Knowing that we, as young people, are important to the future of our island, my friends and I left feeling motivated. Small actions taken today, such as properly disposing of waste or volunteering, can have a big effect tomorrow.



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Climate Change & Island Resilience:

Riddhi Samtani on St. Maarten's path forward

BY AASHIKA ASRANI



St. Maarten sits on the frontlines of climate change, not because the island is careless, but because small islands feel big global shifts first. Stronger storms, hotter days, coastal pressure, and changing seas are no longer “future” problems, they are conditions that shape daily life, infrastructure, and the economy.

That is why voices like Riddhi Samtani matter. Samtani is a St. Maarten youth climate advocate who has been active in regional climate work and public discussions on how climate change affects small islands, bringing both research interests and lived island perspective to the conversation.

Resilience is not only recovery; it is preparation

In this context, Samtani points to a lesson many islands learn the hard way: resilience is not only about rebuilding after disaster; it is also about planning before the next one hits. St. Maarten's experience after major hurricanes pushed the island to

strengthen standards, build smarter, and invest in long-term strategies that reduce risk and protect people.

Visible impacts of climate change

The effects of climate change on St. Maarten are both gradual and sudden. Slow-onset changes include rising sea levels, coastal erosion, coral reef stress, increased drought risk, and the frequent influx of sargassum seaweed. These pressures strain ecosystems, water resources, and the tourism economy. At the same time, extreme weather events like hurricanes, storm surge, and flash flooding pose immediate threats.

Samtani notes that warmer oceans can help fuel more intense storms, and for St. Maarten, that reality makes climate resilience urgent, not optional.

Policy and infrastructure evolution

Since Irma, St. Maarten has made major changes in policy and infra-

structure. Recovery efforts, including those supported through the World Bank Trust Fund program, pushed stronger environmental, social, and building standards across key projects.

Key improvements include updated building approaches, stronger spatial planning focus, and upgrades to critical infrastructure. Disaster coordination has also been strengthened, alongside more attention to risk mapping and adaptation planning.

Samtani highlights that one of the biggest shifts is moving away from reacting to crises, toward planning for risk. Tools like climate risk mapping and local scenarios matter because they help government and communities make smarter decisions about where and how to build.

Food security and local production

St. Maarten's heavy reliance on imported food makes the island vulnerable when storms disrupt shipping or global shocks raise costs. To strengthen local food security, St. Maarten is exploring climate-adapted options such as hydroponics, vertical or rooftop farming, and community or backyard farming.

Samtani emphasizes that food security is not just an agriculture issue; it is a resilience issue. When supply chains wobble, islands feel it faster and harder than larger countries.

Green jobs and economic opportunities

The transition to a greener economy also creates real opportunities. Jobs connected to solar installation, battery storage, GIS mapping, coastal restoration, waste management, sustainable tourism, water engineering, climate risk assessment, and climate finance are all expected to grow.

Samtani explains that resilience is not only about seawalls and shelters; it

is also about keeping basic systems running when conditions get rough, especially electricity and water. On an island where desalination and daily life depend on power, energy resilience becomes public safety.

Adapting to heat and strengthening resilience

Rising temperatures can increase electricity demand, raise health risks, and strain infrastructure and the power grid. Heat planning, smarter building design, and more green spaces can reduce risk, especially for vulnerable groups like the elderly.

Samtani also notes that one of the hardest parts is balancing short-term development pressure with long-term risk reduction. On a small island, the coastline is valuable and tempting, but it is also exposed.

Priorities for the future

To secure a more resilient future, St. Maarten must stay focused on practical priorities: stronger zoning and development planning, faster renewable energy transition, and real protection for natural buffers like reefs, mangroves, and beaches.

Young people have a role, too. Samtani points out that youth involvement can go beyond awareness and become practical: Environmental education, volunteering with NGOs, internships, community projects, and consistent advocacy for better decisions.

Looking ahead: 20 years from now

With steady action today, St. Maarten could – within two decades – be powered far more by renewable energy, become more prepared for extreme weather, and use climate data more consistently to guide development. Food resilience could improve, coastlines could be better protected, and adaptation could become normal planning, not emergency panic.



Feature

Improving communication between parents and teenagers

BY ALISHA RABESS



Communication in a family is the process of sharing thoughts and emotions among its members. Communication does not always require speaking, as silence can also convey feelings or ideas. Without healthy communication, family members struggle to show respect, share concerns, or understand one another, which can make parent-child relationships more complicated than they need to be.

For teenagers, key concerns often include parents being honest with them, listening without judging or condemning their opinions, and providing emotional support, comfort and attention. Communication between parents and teenagers is an ongoing process that can be strengthened and adjusted over time. When it improves, it creates openness and support that can shape their relationships well into the future.

Why communication gets harder in the teen years

Communicating with teenagers can become complicated because so much changes during adolescence. Teens begin forming deeper peer relationships, their bodies change, they develop personal morals and values that may differ from their

parents' morals and values, and they learn new skills while trying to become more independent.

Adolescence is also a time of major growth and self-discovery, and that transition can create tension at home:

As teens navigate new emotions, changes, and relationships, they may struggle to

express their needs in a way adults understand.

Parents may feel a natural urge to maintain control to protect their child, but that approach can backfire, pushing the teen further away and creating distance in communication.

At times, communication between parents and teens can feel like a tightrope walk. Finding common ground is not always easy, especially when disagreements and misunderstandings arise. What starts as a simple conversation can quickly turn into a heated argument. When communication breaks down and daily interactions become emotionally draining, it can strain the parent-child relationship and create feelings of detachment.

Common topics that trigger conflict

If your home includes conversations about dating, driving, phone use, curfew, drugs, sex, music, or friends, you are likely raising a teenager.

These are common topics, and they are much easier to manage when parents and teens communicate effectively.

What effective communication means

Effective communication happens when the person sending a message expresses it clearly, and the person receiving it understands it the way it was intended. In real life, especially within families, that is not always easy.

Parents are often busy with work, running the household, and managing family responsibilities. Teens are balancing school demands, after-school activities, weekend events, and time with friends. With so much going on, many families do not take the steps needed to communicate clearly and listen carefully, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

Two practical ways to reduce communication problems

Talk more often: The more you talk with each other, the more opportunities you have to share important messages. Good times to talk include before leaving for work or school, during dinner, and on weekends. Try to plan at least one meal a day when the family sits together and talks. Sometimes what you talk about matters less than the habit of talking regularly.

Take extra time for important messages: When you need to tell your teen something important, for example, responsibilities like caring for a younger sibling, take time to sit down and talk face to face. You can also write down the key details and ask your teen to repeat back what they understood. Teens can use the same method when they need to share something important with you.

Why communication matters so much during the teen years

As teens get older, they spend more time away from home. They start making more decisions on their own, and others expect them to take responsibility for their actions.

Even though teens are gaining independence, they are still learning and need continuing guidance. When parents consider their teen's maturity level while offering guidance, it supports confidence and growth. Sensitive, consistent communication helps teens develop into responsible adults and understand that family rules can evolve as they grow.

Conclusion

Communication between parents and teenagers is the foundation of strong, healthy family relationships. When parents choose conversation over control, and teens feel safe expressing their thoughts and emotions, understanding has room to grow.

Listening beyond words, speaking with care instead of fear, and creating safe spaces for honest dialogue can bridge the gap between generations. As teenagers pursue independence, guidance works best when paired with trust and open communication. Parents who listen without judgment, and teens who feel heard, are more likely to build mutual respect and stronger emotional bonds.

In the end, strong families are not built on silence or authority alone. They are built on communication that encourages connection, trust and understanding. When parents and teenagers talk, listen and understand each other, they grow together, and those conversations help shape a healthier future for the entire family.



Dress codes, double standards & the pressure placed on girls at school

Prejudice, in this context, shows up in the unfair dress code expectations and unequal discipline aimed at girls and young women in schools today, with St. Dominic High School as a clear example. Female students are repeatedly reminded not to let their hair pass a certain length and not to wear makeup because it might be a "distraction." Male students, on the other, hand are allowed far more freedom, including showing up with shirts fully off early in the morning and wearing braided hairstyles however they choose.

Even when rules apply to boys, they can feel unnecessary. But what stands out most is how many more restrictions girls face, and how much harsher those restrictions are. Recent actions have made that imbalance harder to ignore. During an assembly a little over

a week ago, an educator reportedly delayed dismissal to restate the dress code to the entire student body, yet the message was not directed at the male students of St. Dominic High School. Situations like that reinforce the impression that discipline is being aimed primarily at female students, even when the expectations are being presented as "schoolwide."

Although some students may come to school with hair styles well past what the school considers acceptable and with full makeup, it does not justify targeting or embarrassing them. A teenager using a bit of concealer to cover acne or other insecurities should not be treated like a threat to learning, and a simple lip gloss or mascara can be about feeling presentable and confident, not about causing disruption. It is difficult to see how these small choices should be framed

as harmful when the emotional reality for many teenagers is that confidence is fragile, and school can already be a high-pressure space.

The mixed message becomes sharper when staff members regularly wear colourful clothing and makeup without issue. If adults can present themselves in varied, expressive ways, then enforcing



ing stricter limits on students, particularly girls, can come across as hypocritical rather than principled. Teenagers should not be made to feel ashamed or unacceptable at the ages when identity and self-esteem are still forming. When schools treat boys and girls differently, it sends a message that girls must carry the burden of "maintaining standards," while boys are given room to be themselves – and that approach suggests the institution is protecting its image more than it is supporting its students.

Longstanding examples also help explain why this debate keeps resurfacing. In earlier years at the school, girls were not allowed to wear pants because it was viewed as masculine and inappropriate, even though norms around clothing have shifted repeatedly across history and cultures. When rules are rooted in outdated ideas about

gender, they can stop being about order and start feeling like punishment, especially when girls are criticized for wanting to feel beautiful in the same way most teenagers do while navigating competition, bullying, and social pressure.

The broader point is that a girl can wear makeup, pants, false eyelashes, coloured hair, or braids and still become just as successful as anyone else, because potential belongs to the individual, not to the preferences of the majority. Real discipline should focus on respect, learning, and safety, not on policing appearance in ways that fall most heavily on female students.

Prejudice is stupid, useless, and old-fashioned, and a community that prides itself on being welcoming should be willing to confront it, including in the places where young people spend most of their day.



The bright side of climate change

BY ARTI BULLAND

When people hear climate change, they usually think of melting ice, extreme weather, and rising seas. And, yes, those are real challenges, but being optimistic is also very important because alongside the risks, there are real, measurable positive effects already happening and some surprisingly cool possibilities for the future. This isn't about ignoring the problems. It is about recognizing that change – even big planetary change – can also spark growth, innovation and unexpected opportunities.

Longer growing seasons

One of the clearest changes that can already be seen is longer growing seasons in colder parts of the world. Spring is arriving earlier and fall is lasting longer. That means farmers can plant earlier, harvest later, and sometimes grow new types of crops that previously couldn't survive there.

As temperatures continue to rise, more northern land may become suitable for agriculture. Regions that were once too cold for large scale farming could become important food producers. This could help boost global food supplies, especially if we combine it with smarter farming methods and climate adapted crops.

Increase in carbon dioxide levels

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is often described as the reason or cause of climate change, and it does trap heat in the atmosphere. But it is also important for plants. Through photosynthesis, plants use carbon dioxide to grow.

Scientists have observed a "greening" effect in some parts of the world over the last few decades. Satellite images show increased plant growth in certain regions, partly because higher CO₂ levels can help plants grow faster and use water more efficiently. This doesn't solve climate change, but it does mean forests and vegetation in some are-

as are becoming denser. In the future, if managed well, this could support reforestation projects on a large scale.

New shipping routes

As the Arctic sea ice melts, new shipping routes are opening up during parts of the year. Ships travelling between Europe and Asia, for example, can take shorter paths through northern waters instead of longer routes. Shorter routes mean less travel time and potentially less fuel use. In a future powered by electric vessels, these northern sea lanes could reshape global trade in a more efficient way. This shows that geography itself can change in response to climate change.



An increase in renewable energy

One of the biggest positive impacts of climate change is not the warming itself, it is how humans are responding to it. The urgency of the climate crisis has pushed massive investment into renewable energy. People are investing more into solar panels. Wind farms are expanding on land and offshore. Battery technology is improving quickly, and electric vehicles are becoming mainstream.

If you look 50 years ahead, it is possible that climate change will be remembered as the turning point that forced humans to fully transition away

from fossil fuels. Cleaner air and quieter cities and many more things could all grow out of this shift. Climate pressure is accelerating innovation.

Greener, smarter cities

Hotter temperatures are pushing cities to rethink their design. Urban planners are adding more trees and parks to cool neighbourhoods naturally. Buildings are being designed with better airflow and materials that reflect sunlight instead of absorbing heat. These changes don't just fight warming, they make cities healthier and more enjoyable to live in. More walkable neighbourhoods, better public transportation and cleaner air are effects of climate adaptation. In the future, cities may feel more like ecosystems than just buildings.

Expanding habitats

As temperatures shift, some plants and animals are moving into new areas. Some regions are becoming more hospitable to biodiversity than before. Of course, not every species benefits but ecosystems are adjusting. In some places, new combinations of species are creating entirely new ecological communities. By this, we can see that evolution is in motion.

The future will not look like the past, but that doesn't automatically mean it will be worse in every way. A warmer world may include longer harvests in the north, greener landscapes in some dry regions, faster global shipping routes, cleaner energy systems, redesigned cities, and a generation that understands the planet more deeply than ever before.

Climate change is a challenge. But it's also a way to be more sustainable. And if humanity continues to respond with creativity, science, and cooperation, the story of climate change might not just be about rising temperatures. It might also be about rising innovation.



The tough side of a warmer future

BY ARTI BULLAND

Let's imagine the future in the next 50 years. The world hasn't ended. Cities still buzz. People still go to work, scroll on their phone. Life goes on. But the background of life has changed. Climate change doesn't usually show up like a big explosion in one day. It happens in small shifts that slowly add up, until one day you realize the world feels different. Here is what a warmer world might really be like.

Heat that is always around

To begin with, consider the heat. Summers will last longer. Heatwaves don't feel rare anymore, they are expected. What used to be "record-breaking" temperatures will just become a regular day. In some places, it gets so hot that being outside in the afternoon isn't just uncomfortable, it is also risky. The timing of outdoor events might shift to sunrise or night-time just to avoid the sun and more extreme heat. The heat leads to air conditioners running constantly. Power grids may struggle to keep up. Utility bills will also rise. Heat changes the rhythm of daily life.

Coastlines slowly disappear

In the Caribbean, beaches are very common. Imagine the sand narrower, the water closer to the road each year as the planet warms. Ice melts, oceans expand, sea levels rise slowly, but steadily. Coastal cities deal with more flooding, even without big storms. Some neighbourhoods build sea walls, also some people eventually move inland. This change does not happen overnight – decade by decade, the edges shift.

Stronger storms

Storms feed on warm ocean water. The warmer the water, the more energy storms can pull from it. That means hurricanes can grow stronger and faster. When they hit land, they often bring heavier rain and stronger winds. It is not that every storm is massive, but when big ones come, they cause more damage. This causes communities to

rebuild again and again. Recovery becomes part of the routine.

Fire

In hotter, drier conditions, forests and grasslands dry out and dry land burns easily. Wildfire seasons are getting longer in some parts of the world. Fires spread quickly and burn intensely. Smoke drifts for miles, sometimes covering entire cities in a grey haze. Even if you're nowhere near the flames, you might still feel the impact, through poor air quality, cancelled flights, or weeks spent indoors. Forests that stood for generations can disappear in days.



Floods and droughts

Climate change makes the water cycle more extreme. Some places get intense downpours that cause flash floods. Streets flood and drainage systems can't handle the volume. Other places face longer droughts. Reservoirs shrink and crops struggle. Farmers worry about every drop of rain. This leads to too much water in one place and not enough in another. Water becomes less predictable and when water is unpredictable, everything else becomes harder to manage.

Food

Farming depends on steady weather. Crops need the right temperatures at the right time. When heatwaves hit during key growing periods, harvests can shrink. Drought stresses livestock. Warmer conditions can allow pests and plant diseases to spread into new areas. Food doesn't vanish but prices can rise. Certain products become less reliable and global supply chains feel the strain. When the climate shifts, the dinner table feels it too.

Nature gets out of balance

Plants and animals respond to warming by moving. Fish swim toward cooler waters. Forests slowly expand north. Some species adapt, but not all can. Coral reefs, for example, are highly sensitive to temperature changes. When oceans get too warm, corals can bleach and die. Since reefs support huge amounts of marine life, their loss affects entire ecosystems. Nature is resilient but it has limits.

Climate change doesn't hit everyone equally

Communities with fewer resources often face greater risks from floods, heat, or storms. Rebuilding costs money. Protecting infrastructure costs money. Adapting costs money. Health systems deal with more heat-related illnesses. Some diseases spread into warmer regions where they didn't exist before. In certain areas, people may leave because living there becomes too difficult due to constant flooding, water shortages, or extreme heat. Climate change isn't just about the environment. It's about people.

The negative impacts of climate change aren't usually all at once. They're gradual. They build. Each change alone might seem manageable. Together, over time, they reshape how the world works. The future of a warmer planet isn't a disaster. It's a steady shift in the conditions we depend on. And the real question isn't whether change is happening. It's whether we're ready for it.



The dreams we're building, and the AI future we're walking into

Part I

Feature

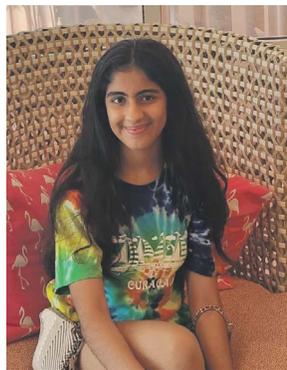
AI is everywhere now, from the apps we use in class to the way companies advertise, design, and even drive cars. It's not just "a tech thing" anymore. It's something we live around, whether we notice it or not.

Our *Teen Times* writers spoke with students about who they want to become, and whether AI will help, change, or challenge those dreams. What stood out most was that nobody sounded like they were giving up. Even the students, who believe that AI will someday take over parts of their field, still see space for people, because their goals are not just about tasks. Their goals are about judgment, courage, connection, and purpose.

Neuropsychology

Jushana Azille is 14 and attends St. Dominic High School. Her aspiration is to become a neuropsychologist. Neuropsychology focuses on how the brain and nervous system affect thinking, emotions, and behaviour, especially after injury or illness. In the future, Jushana's field will likely become more tech-driven, with tools like advanced brain imaging, digital cognitive tests, and AI-assisted analysis helping professionals spot patterns faster and support more accurate diagnoses. Even with those tools, neuropsychologists will still be needed for the human side of the work, interpreting results, understanding patients, and making careful decisions.

Medical AI Engineering



Siyona Gianchandani is 15 and attends St. Maarten Academy. Her aspiration is medical AI engineering. This field combines engineering, computer science, and medicine to create AI tools that improve healthcare, from earlier diagnosis to personalized treatment plans and smarter medical devices. Over the next decade, AI is expected to become more built into hospitals and clinics, helping doctors make faster decisions, predicting health risks earlier, and reducing time spent on paperwork. Siyona's future career will likely require strong skills in math, biology, and coding, plus a serious focus on ethics, especially patient privacy and responsible use of data.

Financial Analyst

Aiden Wattley is 15 and attends St.

Dominic High School. Aiden wants to become a financial analyst, and he chose the field on purpose. He said he did research and found that it is one of the careers least likely to be fully taken over by AI. In his view, jobs like accounting or aerospace engineering could be easier for AI to replace in certain areas, but financial analysts still depend on human judgment, critical thinking, and the ability to read situations that are not always predictable.

Aiden's view is realistic: AI can process data faster than any human, and that will matter in finance. But deciding what the data means, what risk is worth taking, and what strategy makes sense for real people and real markets is not just math. It's decision-making, and Aiden believes that is where humans will still matter.

Real Estate Agent

Jaden dreams of becoming a real estate agent. He likes helping people find homes, and he also hopes the career will allow him to travel. When asked how AI might affect his future job, he said parts of real estate, such as property listings and virtual tours, could be handled more by AI. Still, he believes the personal connection and negotiation skills that make a strong agent come from real conversations with real people. Buying a home is emotional, stressful, and personal. Clients want someone who can listen, advise, and fight for their best deal, not just show them an AI-generated listing.

Firefighter



McAkeylah Blair is 15 and attends St. Maarten Academy, Class 3A4. McAkeylah has the kind of personality that makes you hear her voice while reading. She likes going on walks, trying new food, and says her hobbies are cooking and eating. Her biggest aspiration, though, is serious – she wants to become a firefighter. McAkeylah has always admired firefighters for being brave, strong, and willing to risk their lives to save others. Even though people tell her she is "too small" and "too bougie" for the job, she still wants to chase it, because she wants a career where she can help people while making a real difference in her community.

McAkeylah also understands the future. She believes firefighting can become more tech-assisted and

data-driven, helping firefighters do their work as efficiently and safely as possible. AI could improve emergency response through better mapping, faster risk assessment, smarter equipment, and real-time information during disasters. But the heart of firefighting – running into danger for strangers – is still human.

Nurse



Leneka Weekes is 15 and attends St. Maarten Academy, Class 3A3. Leneka is clear about who she is – she likes to sleep, go to the beach, bake, and be "girly." But her dream is also grounded in service. She has wanted to become a nurse since she was little because she's passionate about helping others and wants to provide care and comfort when people need it most.

To her, nursing is rewarding because it combines science with purpose. When she thinks about AI in the future, she believes nurses will work alongside more AI systems that monitor patients, manage data, and support care. She also sees nurses taking on more tasks connected to patient data and patient support.

Leneka's point matters because healthcare is already moving in that direction. Machines can track vitals, flag warning signs, and handle paperwork faster, but patients still need someone who can notice what a chart doesn't show, fear, pain, confusion, loneliness, and who can speak to them like a person.



Professional Basketball Player

Ruth Paul, 14, attends MAC CSE. Ruth has one big dream – becoming a professional basketball player. She said she loves basketball more than anything and works hard every day because she wants to play in the pros one day. But she has also started thinking seriously about how AI could affect sports, even careers that seem impossible for machines to replace.

She made a strong point: No AI robot has competed in a real NBA game, dunked in front of thousands of fans, or made a buzzer-beater in a championship, at least not yet. Still, AI is already changing basketball in ways that are real:

Training and performance: AI tools help analyse game footage, study opponents, and improve technique. **Injury prevention:** AI can spot patterns of stress on the body and help teams prevent injuries. **Virtual simulations:** AI can create realistic practice scenarios, so players train smarter.

Ruth also asks a bigger question: Could AI ever "play" professionally? She thinks AI might not replace real players, but it could change what basketball looks like. Robotic competitions could grow, AI assistants could help players make better decisions, and fans might experience AI-enhanced sports through virtual reality.

But she still believes humans will always have a place in sports because basketball is not just statistics and movement. It's heart; it's people; and it's pressure – the kind you feel in a packed gym when everything is on the line.

That's where Part 1 lands: Students are thinking about the future with open eyes, and they're not pretending AI is harmless. But they also aren't shrinking their dreams just because technology is growing.

In Part 2, the careers move into hospitality, law, medicine, psychology, and research, fields where AI might become even more deeply involved, but where human trust and human judgment still carry weight.

The jobs that will change, and the human skills that will not disappear

Part 2

AI will not only affect careers that look “technical,” it is also showing up in hospitality, healthcare, education, and law. That’s why so many students are thinking beyond the simple question – “Will AI replace me?” – and are instead asking: “What will my job become when AI is part of it?”

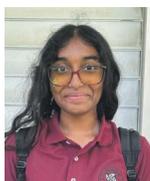
Teen Times writers collected responses that show something important – students are not just dreaming about job titles. They are thinking about responsibility, impact, and how to stay relevant in a world that keeps shifting.



Riddhi Ramchandani, 18, Braida University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands: Hotelier

Riddhi wants to become a hotelier because she likes the idea of welcoming guests, creating positive experiences, and managing a place where people feel comfortable and valued. She believes AI can handle tasks like reservations, data management, and basic customer service, but it cannot fully replace the role of a hotelier. Hospitality requires human connection, problem-solving, empathy, and leadership. Guests remember how staff made them feel, especially when something goes wrong, a missed reservation, a special request, a medical emergency, a family traveling with stress. That is where human judgment still matters.

Riddhi also sees a shift: AI may reduce some jobs, but it will also create new ones. Future hoteliers will need to understand technology and know how to work alongside AI systems. She believes the best way to stay secure is to adapt to new tools, improve communication and leadership, and focus on guest experiences that AI cannot truly replicate. To her, AI is a tool, not a threat, as long as people keep the warmth in hospitality.



Aanya, 17, IB Year 1: Cardiothoracic Surgeon

Aanya wants to become a cardiothoracic surgeon. She says she has always been into science, and once she reached high school, she realized how much she enjoys learning about the human body and making a positive impact on society. She believes the future of cardiothoracic surgery will be influenced by advanced AI and improved medical technology.

Surgeons already use robotic systems that improve precision and can reduce recovery time. In the coming years, AI may help analyse patient data faster and predict complications.

Aanya’s point is simple but important: Future surgeons will need medical expertise, but also technological understanding and adaptability. In other words, it won’t just be “doctor skills,” it will be doctor skills plus tech awareness – and that combination will matter.



Khushi Soneji, 18, St. Dominic High School, IB Diploma: Human Biology

Khushi plans to expand her interests in Human Biology by pursuing a bachelor’s degree and then a master’s in a specialized field. She believes AI is already helping scientists analyse large amounts of data and speed up research. In the future, it could make discoveries faster and more accurate.

But Khushi also emphasized that human knowledge and judgment will still be essential, especially when interpreting results and deciding what direction research should take. Data can be processed by AI, but meaning and ethics still land on people.



Masline Alinda Deavana Dossous, 15, St. Dominic High School, 4th Form: Oncologist

Masline aspires to become an oncologist, a doctor who specializes in diagnosing, staging, and treating cancer. She believes AI will not take over oncology, but will assist oncologists. She even referenced breast cancer detection research where AI systems can detect cancer at an expert level. Still, she believes AI cannot replace the reality that cancer is complex.

Every patient responds differently. One patient may recover from chemotherapy while another deteriorates from the same treatment, and doctors understand those patterns through experience and constant learning, not just data. Masline also pointed out something that often gets ignored: Cancer patients need genuine human support during such a hard time. Oncologists motivate and support their patients, and that emotional support is part of the job. An AI system can provide information, but it cannot sit with a person the way a real doctor can.



Tyrique Walsh, 15, St. Dominic High School: Lawyer

Tyrique wants to become a lawyer – someone qualified to advise people about the law, draft legal documents, or represent people in disputes. He believes AI will not

completely take over law, but will be integrated into it. AI can already complete tasks faster than humans, and he pointed out that there has been research and development showing AI can produce litigation drafts in minutes and handle legal research quickly.

But Tyrique explained why full replacement will not happen. Clients expect human judgment and advocacy. They want someone who can read a room and support them when they are anxious. Law is also built on persuasion. Courtrooms involve personality, tone, and strategy, not just facts. A bot might deliver information coldly, but legal success often depends on human presence.

Lara Abdallah, 17, St. Dominic High School, IB Year 1: Law, Business, and Big Goals

Lara says she is looking forward to studying law in the future, preferably business or international law. She also shared personal goals: Becoming successful, making her parents proud, giving back to them financially, owning a business, having a big home, and building a happy family. Her response shows something real about the future, too: Careers are not only about work, they are also about stability, gratitude, and building the kind of life you want. AI might change the law industry, but Lara’s motivation is human at the core, family, drive, and the desire to build something meaningful.

Magdalena Dorlis, 17, St. Dominic High School, IB Year 1: Medicine, Purpose, and Influence

Magdalena speaks with purpose. She says she is kind-hearted and sensitive to people’s feelings, and that faith and family matter deeply to her. Her aspirations include entering the medical field and using her voice on influential platforms like UNESCO. What she offers is different from a typical “future job” answer because she talks about recognition as reach, influence as service, and success as alignment.

Magdalena wants to advocate for communities, young people, and families, and she wants her voice to bring clarity, hope, and reassurance to people who feel unseen. AI might change the tools around medicine and public speaking, but Magdalena’s goals are grounded in values – the kinds that do not get replaced by software.



Mahika Ramchandani, 19, IB Diploma Year 2: Cardiology

Mahika wants to graduate from medical school and specialize in cardiology. She believes cardiology will change because of technology, AI, and personalized treatments. She

noted that heart disease remains one of the leading causes of death worldwide, which means cardiologists will remain in high demand.

She explained that AI can help detect heart problems earlier through better scans and data analysis. Wearable devices and remote monitoring will make it easier for patients to share health information, reducing hospital visits and putting more focus on prevention. Treatments may also become more personalized, using genetic information to choose what works best for each person.

Mahika does not believe AI will replace cardiologists because the work requires critical thinking, complex decision-making, and hands-on procedures that machines cannot fully perform alone. Her main point is that cardiology will become more precise, more technology-driven, and more prevention-focused.



Sienna Boodram, 18, IB Diploma Year 2: Behavioural and Clinical Psychology

Sienna aspires to specialize in behavioural and clinical psychology. She believes the future of psychology will focus more on prevention and early intervention, not just treatment when problems become severe. As mental health awareness grows, psychologists will play bigger roles in schools, workplaces, and communities, not just clinics.

She believes AI will influence the field by helping analyse patterns in behaviour, track progress, and identify early signs of anxiety or depression. But she does not believe AI will replace psychologists because therapy depends on human connection, empathy, and trust. She sees technology as support, making assessments more efficient and care more personalized, while psychologists remain the human centre of the work.

What all of this adds up to

Across every interview, the students understood the same truth: AI will influence almost every field, but influence is not the same as replacement. In many careers, AI may take over routine tasks, speed up research, and improve accuracy. But people will still be needed for judgment, ethics, leadership, empathy, persuasion, and trust.

And maybe that’s the real lesson from these Teen Times interviews. The future will be full of new tools, but the students who keep their dreams strongest will be the ones who keep their human skills sharp, the ones who can think, adapt, connect, and lead, even when the world is changing fast.

Future

GREEN JOBS, MENTAL HEALTH WORK AND THE FUTURE OF NETWORK TECHS

BY ALISAH KIRTON



As climate change intensifies and energy costs continue to rise, Sint Maarten is looking toward a greener future, and new types of careers are emerging as a result. Across the Caribbean, islands are increasingly investing in sustainable growth to protect their economies, natural resources, and communities. For Sint Maarten, where tourism and marine life are central to the economy, environmental protection is no longer optional; it is essential.

Sint Maarten has faced growing environmental challenges in recent years. Stronger hurricanes, coastal erosion, coral reef damage, and waste management issues threaten both infrastructure and tourism. The devastation caused by Hurricane Irma highlighted the vulnerability of island economies. Recovery efforts have since sparked conversations about rebuilding in smarter, more sustainable ways. Environmental organizations, such as the Nature Foundation Sint Maarten, continue to advocate for marine protection and climate resilience, emphasizing that sustainability must be part of national development planning.

With these pressures comes opportunity. Green jobs, careers that contribute to protecting the environment and promoting sustainability are expanding in the region. Electricity on small islands is largely dependent on imported fuel, making it expensive and vulnerable to global price shifts. Solar energy installations are increasing, creating demand for technicians

trained in renewable energy systems. Industry experts predict that as more households and hotels adopt solar technology, renewable energy careers will continue to grow.

Coral reefs protect coastlines from erosion and support tourism and fishing. Marine conservationists play a key role in reef restoration, pollution monitoring, and environmental education. As climate change threatens marine ecosystems, this field is becoming increasingly vital. Rebuilding after severe storms has emphasized the need for stronger infrastructure. Engineers and construction specialists trained in hurricane-resistant design are now in higher demand across the region. These professionals focus on safer building materials, elevated foundations, and improved roofing systems designed to withstand extreme weather.

Waste management remains a pressing issue on many islands. Recycling specialists and environmental entrepreneurs are exploring new systems to reduce landfill waste. Reducing pollution not only improves public health but also protects the tourism industry that many Caribbean nations depend on. Experts note that green jobs are more than environmental initiatives; they represent long-term economic planning. By investing in renewable energy, sustainable tourism, and climate adaptation, Sint Maarten can reduce costs, attract eco-conscious visitors, and strengthen resilience. Educational institutions and training programs may soon need to adapt to prepare

students for these emerging fields.

For young people in Sint Maarten, the message is clear: Sustainability is shaping the future workforce. Careers in renewable energy, marine science, environmental policy, and green construction may soon become some of the most important professions in the region. As climate issues continue to unfold, Sint Maarten's shift toward green jobs could serve as a model for small island states worldwide, demonstrating that economic growth and environmental responsibility can advance together.

The future of therapy: Mental health in a digital age



Wanting to become a therapist at a time when mental health awareness is growing and more people are seeking support is smart. Therapy is changing from only face-to-face sessions to include online platforms, allowing patients to get help from home. This is especially important in small places like Sint Maarten, where access to specialized mental health services can be limited.

In the future, telehealth services are expected to improve, and artificial intelligence may help therapists track patient progress, notice behaviour patterns, and detect early warning signs of mental health issues. However, even with new technology, the personal connection between therapist and client will always be important. As social pressures, financial stress, and digital life increase, therapists will play a key role in helping people manage anxiety, trauma, and overall emotional health.

The future of network technicians: Powering the digital world



Another aspiring professional wants to become a network technician, a career that is essential to modern communication systems. Network technicians install, maintain, and secure internet and communication networks. As businesses, schools, and homes rely more on digital technology, the need for skilled IT professionals continues to grow. In the future, this career will expand with new developments such as 5G technology, smart homes and smart cities, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and increasing cybersecurity threats.

With more devices connected to the internet than ever before, network technicians will need strong cybersecurity skills to protect data and prevent cyberattacks. For small islands like Sint Maarten, having a strong digital infrastructure is very important. It supports tourism, banking, education, and government services. Because of this, network technicians play a key role in keeping the economy stable and helping it grow in an increasingly digital world.



Jobs that could be replaced in 10 to 20 years

BY THA-LISSA YORK

Artificial intelligence and robots are no longer just a futuristic idea. They are becoming part of real workplaces, and many tasks that people do today can be automated in the next 10 to 20 years. AI replacing jobs is not a shock to most people, especially when we see how quickly it can create images, videos, and written content. These tools show that experts are pushing AI to become more capable every year.

Most jobs at risk share a few things in common: The work is repetitive, predictable, easy to measure, and follows clear rules. When that happens, machines can often do the task faster, more consistently, and at a lower long-term cost. Jobs that are often mentioned include cashiers, call centre agents, and bank tellers.

The following are 10 jobs that could be replaced or heavily reduced:

1. Cashiers

Cashiers handle repetitive tasks such as scanning items, calculating totals, and processing payments. AI-powered systems can use cameras and sensors to track what customers pick up and then charge them automatically, removing the need for a check-out line. This reduces labour costs and can lower transaction errors.

2. Call Center Agents

Many call centre conversations involve repeated questions and scripted responses. AI voice assistants, using natural language processing (NLP), can understand customer questions and respond with the correct information. These systems can also handle many conversations at the same time.

3. Telemarketers

Sales calls often follow strict scripts and rely on customer analysis. AI systems can study customer behaviour and generate personalized sales pitches. Voice technology can also sound more human-like, making it harder to tell whether the caller is a person or a machine.

4. Travel Agents

Booking flights, comparing prices, and arranging accommodations require constant availability and a lot of searching. AI can compare hundreds of flight and hotel options quickly, then recommend packages based on a customer's preferences.

5. Basic News Reporters

Some reporting, especially in sports, entertainment, and finance, can follow a template. AI can scan statistics, earnings reports, or game results and generate fast summaries, sometimes faster than a human covering routine updates.

6. Fast Food Order Takers

Fast food ordering is often repetitive, with limited menu variations. Drive-thru AI can recognize spoken orders and send them directly for processing. Touchscreen kiosks also reduce the need for employees at the counter.

7. Warehouse Workers

Organizing, selecting, and loading packages are repeated physical tasks. Robotic arms and mobile robots can transport heavy items,



scan barcodes, sort shelves, and work continuously without breaks. Many warehouses already use automation, and that trend is expected to expand.

8. Bank Tellers

Deposits, withdrawals, transfers, and basic transactions follow set rules. Mobile banking, ATMs, and AI-supported financial tools reduce the need for in-person tellers. Automated fraud detection systems can also monitor transactions efficiently.

9. Data Entry Clerks

Data entry often involves moving information from one place to another. OCR (optical character recognition) can scan documents, extract the information, and upload it straight to a database. These systems can improve over time and reduce human error.

10. Assembly Line Workers

Many factory roles require repeated, identical movements. Industrial robots can weld, paint, and assemble products with high precision. They can operate faster than humans and require limited supervision.

The following jobs are those that could change a lot, even if they do not disappear:

1. Graphic Designers

Designers will likely see major changes. AI can already generate logos, posters, social media graphics, and quick brand concepts. That does not mean design disappears, but it may reduce entry-level work and push designers toward higher-value skills like creative direction, brand strategy, client management, and refining AI-generated drafts into polished, original work.

2. Web Developers

Some coding tasks, especially basic website building, bug fixing, and template work, can be automated with AI tools that generate code. Developers will still be needed, but the job may shift more toward planning, security, performance, integration, user experience, and building complex systems that require human oversight and accountability.

3. Teachers

Teaching is less likely to be fully replaced, but parts of the job may change. AI can help with lesson planning, quiz creation, grading simple assignments, and providing personalized tutoring support. What cannot be replaced easily is what good teachers do daily: Managing a classroom, understanding student emotions, building trust, guiding behaviour, and motivating students. Teachers may end up working alongside AI, using it as a tool while focusing more on human development and critical thinking.



The Bigger Point: Artificial intelligence does not always erase a job completely. In many cases, it transforms it. Instead of doing the task directly, workers may shift into roles that supervise systems, check quality, manage exceptions, and handle the human side of service. New opportunities are also growing in areas like robotics maintenance, cybersecurity, AI ethics, and technology support, which can become new career paths for people entering the workforce.

HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS CHANGING STUDENT LIFE

BY SANA AGNANI



Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming part of everyday life. What once felt innovative is now something many people, especially teenagers, use daily, whether for schoolwork or organizing schedules. AI tools are not replacing students, but they are changing how learning happens.

classrooms more efficient. Even with its benefits, AI raises important concerns. One major issue is overreliance. Some students use AI to copy answers without fully understanding the material, which can weaken critical thinking and hurt exam performance later on. Ac-

curacy is another concern, since AI can sometimes provide incorrect information. This means students must learn to double-check facts and use AI as a guide, not a replacement for learning.

In the future, AI is expected to become even more integrated into education. Schools may introduce AI tutors that adjust to each student's learning level and provide instant feedback. This could help students who are struggling to catch up, while allowing advanced students to move ahead. However, it could also create challenges related to fairness, privacy, and unequal access to technology across different schools and communities. Because of this, many schools are beginning to introduce rules for responsible AI use. Instead of banning AI completely, educators are focusing on teaching students how to use it honestly and wisely, rather than depending on it.

Overall, artificial intelligence brings both opportunity and responsibility. For teenagers, it can reduce stress, support learning, and improve organization, but it also requires care and self-discipline. As AI continues to grow, the goal should not be to avoid it, but to use it in ways that strengthen understanding rather than create dependence.

Many students use AI as a support system. It can explain complex topics in a simpler way, especially in subjects like science or economics. Instead of spending long hours searching for guidance, students can ask questions directly and receive clear, detailed explanations. For many, this makes learning less stressful because they can move at their own pace without feeling embarrassed to admit they do not understand something.

Teachers also use AI in their work. Some educators use it to help create assignments, generate test questions, plan lessons, or find new ways to explain a topic. This can save time and allow teachers to focus more on helping students one-on-one, rather than spending hours preparing materials. Because of this, AI is shaping not only how teenagers learn, but also how teachers teach, making





TURNING ST. MAARTEN INTO A SMART CITY

BY CHAHAT KAPOOR

As technology has started to highly influence the world, cities everywhere are starting to implement new ways to become a smart city. Governments are realizing that modern technology is no longer optional but necessary for long-term development. A smart city uses digital systems to help improve the standard of living by making services more efficient and organized. For St. Maarten, the idea of becoming a smart city would mean having modernized infrastructure and improved public services. This would be a major step toward preparing the island for a more modern and economically strong future.

Beyond transportation, another major benefit would be an improvement in emergency response during hurricanes and other natural disasters, allowing authorities to quickly communicate alerts, arrange for resources efficiently, and keep communities safe. Digital warning systems could provide residents with immediate updates, avoiding miscommunication and increasing preparedness. By modernizing infrastructure and investing in digital systems, St. Maarten would attract international businesses, investors, and prestigious technology companies. This creates jobs for locals in areas such as IT, engi-

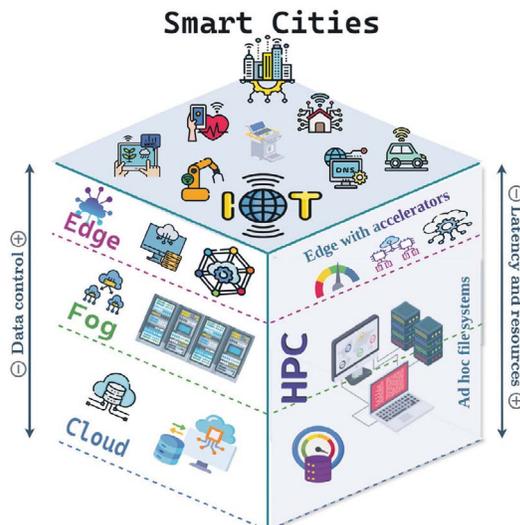
neering, and digital services, which are industries that continue to grow worldwide.

The tourism sector would also benefit, as more efficient services and well-organized public spaces would enhance the visitor experience, encouraging tourists to spend more time and money on the island. A technologically advanced destination could establish St. Maarten's reputation as one of the most innovative islands in the Caribbean. However, becoming a smart city has its challenges. The cost of implementing new technology, upgrading inter-

net systems, and building modern infrastructure would be costly for the government.

For an island like St. Maarten, careful planning would be essential to ensure that investments are sustainable for the economy and do not create financial strain. Privacy and security are also major concerns. Smart cities collect large amounts of data through cameras, apps, and other digital systems in order to function effectively. Without strong cybersecurity measures, this information could be vulnerable to hacking or misuse, putting residents' personal information at risk. Strict data protection policies would be necessary. Therefore, protecting this data would have to be a key priority of the authorities to maintain public trust.

One of the benefits of St. Maarten being a smart city would be convenience for both residents and visitors. Smart traffic systems, for instance, could reduce congestion during peak tourist season when cruise ships arrive, making traveling smoother and less time-consuming. Smart traffic systems could reduce congestion during peak tourist seasons when cruise ships arrive. For example, traffic sensors and AI-powered traffic lights could adjust in real time depending on how busy certain roads are. Over speeding could be reduced through digital speed cameras connected to automated fine systems. License plates could also contain tracking chips to help authorities monitor traffic flow and identify stolen vehicles. These improvements would make transportation smoother, safer, and less stressful.



If all precautions are taken for this development to occur, turning St. Maarten into a smart city would transform daily life on the island in many positive ways. Public services, transportation, and emergency systems could all be better managed through coordinated digital platforms. It could also improve communication between citizens and government agencies. At the same time, it could strengthen the island's reputation throughout the world as a forward-thinking and innovative nation. With precise planning, responsible investment, and strong data protection, a smart city could help St. Maarten grow sustainably, boost its economy, and create a modern environment that benefits both residents and tourists for years to come.

Feature

DATING & CONSENT

IN THE FUTURE

BY SHILOH WILLIAMS



Dating and consent are two words that carry a lot of weight, especially in my generation. To me, dating is allowing someone to explore a romantic connection with you. It is choosing to spend time with someone, getting to know them, and seeing if something deeper can grow. Consent, on the other hand, is giving someone clear permission. It is allowing them to touch you, speak to you in certain ways, or make romantic or physical advances. Consent is not automatic just because you are dating, it is ongoing and intentional. At its core, both dating and consent are about choice. They are about giving your blessing for someone to enter your emotional or physical space.

Right now, dating feels like it is in a rough place. I am 18 years old, part of Gen Z, and from what I have seen through friends and social media, dating can feel confusing and unbalanced. Some girls accept the bare minimum and treat it like it is something extraordinary. A simple text back or a small gesture becomes “relationship goals.” On the other hand, some expect over-the-top treatment inspired by social media couples. If a relationship does not look perfect online, it can feel like it is failing. Social media has shaped unrealistic expectations, making dating feel more like performance than connection. Instead of focusing on character and effort, people compare, compete, and sometimes settle.

Consent also becomes blurred when communication is weak and people are too afraid to speak up clearly about boundaries. The truth is that silence is not consent. Pressure is not consent. “I guess” is not consent. If someone has to beg, persuade, guilt-trip, or keep pushing until the other person gives in, that is not a healthy agreement; it is a power move. Consent is supposed to feel clear, not confusing. It is supposed to make you feel safe, not trapped.

From what I have heard from my parents, dating in the past looked different. It was more traditional and structured. A boy would approach a girl respectfully, sometimes even speaking to her parents first. They would meet in public places rather than casually linking up at each other’s houses. There was effort involved. While drama and cheating still existed, it was not normalized the way it sometimes feels today. Women were more likely to walk away if disrespected, and there was less tolerance for being played with. Effort and intention seemed more visible.

At the same time, the “old days” were not perfect either. Some people stayed in relationships longer than they should have because of pressure, fear of judgment, or the belief that you had to tolerate certain behaviour. That is why this conversation matters now. We can take what was good about the past – like effort, respect, and intention – and combine it with what our generation is learning about boundaries, independence, and self-worth.

In the future, dating could go in two directions. If current patterns continue, it may become more transactional and more influenced by technology, with artificial intelligence, dating apps, and virtual connections replacing real-life interaction. People might get more comfortable chatting behind screens but less comfortable being accountable in person. It could also get harder to tell who is genuine, because it is easy to perform a personality online. Even now, many people fall for “potential” on a phone screen, then realize in person that the connection is shallow.

However, there is also hope. As conversations about boundaries and mental health grow, consent can become clearer and more respected. More people are learning that healthy relationships are not built on games, jealousy, or chasing.

They are built on honesty, consistency, and communication. My hope is that future dating will combine the respect and effort of the past with the awareness and independence of today, creating relationships built on clarity and mutual value.

To make that future real, it cannot stay as a wish. It has to show up in how we date. One way this could happen is by making consent normal, not awkward. Consent does not have to be a dramatic speech. It can be simply: “Is this okay?” “Do you want to keep going?” “Are you comfortable?” It also includes paying attention when someone’s body language changes, when they get quiet, when they pull back, or when they seem unsure. If the answer is not a clear yes, the respectful move is to pause. Nobody loses anything by checking in, but people can lose a lot when boundaries are ignored.

Another way is by changing what we praise. We need to stop celebrating bare minimum behaviour like it is rare. A text back is basic respect. Being loyal is not a bonus. Keeping promises should not be treated as a luxury. When we clap for crumbs, we train people to keep giving crumbs. Standards are not about being “hard to please,” they are about knowing what is healthy.

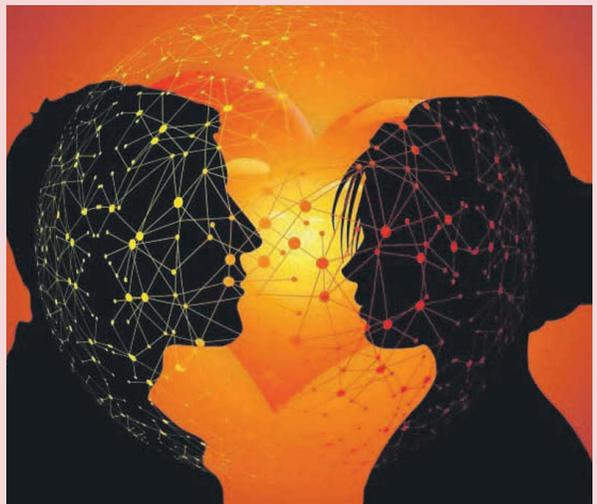
We also have to be honest about the role of social media. A relationship is not stronger because it looks good online. Matching outfits, cute captions, and constant posting do not prove love, they prove branding. Real love shows up in private: How you are spoken to when nobody is watching, how someone acts when they are angry, how they handle your boundaries, how they treat your goals, and whether they bring peace or stress into your life.

It also matters to slow down. A lot of problems start when people rush into intimacy with someone they barely know. When you move too fast, you can ignore red flags. You can confuse attention with care. You can mistake physical closeness for emotional safety. Taking time does not mean being scared, it means being smart.

The future of dating also depends on whether we can handle rejection with maturity. If someone says no, it should be the end of the conversation, not the start of pressure. No threats. No insults. No rumours. No “you led me on.” No guilt. A person does not owe you access to their body or their emotions because you spent money, gave compliments, or did something nice. Respect is supposed to be free.

And, finally, we have to be willing to walk away. That is where a lot of people struggle. When a relationship is full of confusion, disrespect, or constant anxiety, love is not the excuse to stay. If you have to keep begging for effort, explaining basic respect, or shrinking yourself to keep someone, it is already telling you what you need to know. The strongest thing a person can do sometimes is choose themselves.

In the future, dating can get worse if we keep treating people like options, treating boundaries like obstacles, and treating relationships like content. But it can also get better if we raise standards, communicate clearly, and stop rewarding behaviour that harms people. Consent is not a trend; it is the foundation. Dating is not supposed to be a battle; it is supposed to be a choice. When both people feel safe, respected, and valued, that is when dating actually has a future.



Living for the Upload

BY JAHARA LE POOLE

Put yourself in this situation: You and your friends are at the beach taking photos to post on Instagram. You spend around an hour taking photos since it's a big group. Of course, you take the photos around "golden hour" to make them look better, but by the time the photos are taken and you finally sit down to relax, you realize you missed the sunset. Instead of sitting and admiring the beautiful orange and pink horizon, you spent the hour taking photos and trying to capture the most perfect "candid" picture.

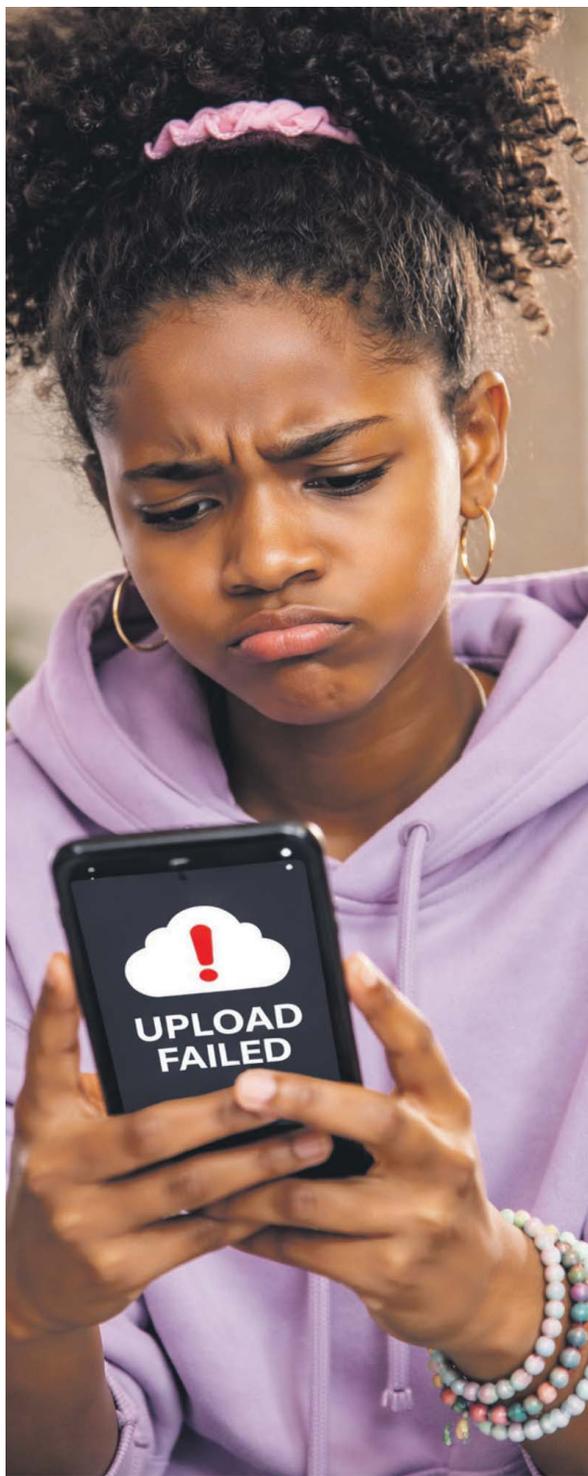
Unfortunately, this is a situation that happens too often to teenagers nowadays, with their phones making them miss out on real experiences. Very often, the excuse is: "Oh, I'm making memories to look back on in the future." But instead of experiencing it first-hand, you spend the time taking photos to impress other people.

After you rush to post on Instagram – so you can be the first in your friend group to upload the photos – you find yourself constantly re-watching your post, trying to see it through the eyes of a stranger. You keep refreshing the page to see who commented and who liked it. Then you start over-analysing every little detail, like how your feet look "weird," how your stomach folds and makes you look "chubby," and how you don't look like the models on Instagram. Suddenly, you feel insecure, and you swear you'll never wear a bikini again.

And what if you did not end up going to this beach day, then you see the photos later on social media and get that "FOMO: Fear Of Missing Out" feeling? You might spend the rest of the day upset that you did not get to take any photos or post anything. This is a true and very sad reality for many teens today. They post themselves on the internet to gain self-confidence and boost their self-esteem, but they often receive the opposite.

Often, instead of finding self-confidence within themselves, they seek it from others, constantly relying on compliments and remarks to feel better. There has also been a recent increase in teens posting "vlogs" and "GRWMs," and aspiring to be influencers in general. For example, when you ask, "What's your dream career?" or "What's your future career?," you will hear at least 50% say "YouTuber" or "Influencer."

Many of them also slack off in school, do not complete their assignments, and fail classes, and their excuse is always: "Oh, I don't need school to become a famous influencer." That is a risky mindset to have and keep over the years, and the consequence is usually the same: They try to become an influencer and fail, because only approximately 2.4% of people, who post on social media, become actual "Influencers."





From “Plane Driver” to the Flight Deck: Piyush Tejawani’s Journey Home

Some dreams start with a quiet interest. Others start with a moment you never forget. For Piyush Tejawani, it began on a flight with his mother that ended in an emergency landing in Switzerland. Everyone evacuated safely after a small fire, but the experience left a mark. Right there, Piyush told his mom he wanted to be a “plane driver,” and he never let that goal go. Back home in St. Maarten, he kept watching planes cross the sky, holding onto a childhood promise that eventually became a career at the highest level of commercial aviation.

1: When did you first decide you wanted to be a pilot, and what sparked it?

Everyone has a different story. Mine is that I was on a flight with my mom and we had an emergency landing in Switzerland. There was a small fire and we all evacuated safely. I told my mom then and there that I wanted to be a “plane driver”. I stuck with it all these years, watching planes fly over our house in St. Maarten.

2: What is your earliest memory of aircraft or the airport on St. Maarten, and why did it stick with you?

When I was around five years old, we flew WINAIR to Saba. I was fascinated by the spinning propellers and loud noises plus the in-

credible view of the flight deck and out the window of the Twin Otter airplane.

3: Walk me through your path to the cockpit, training, licensing, hours, and the biggest turning point.

You will never meet two pilots with the same path to the flight deck. My path involved a small flight school in St. Maarten (which shut down), Western Michigan University for my Bachelor’s degree and primary flight training, moving to Virginia to become a flight instructor, moving back to St. Maarten for WINAIR, and then moving back to Virginia to work for Republic Airways, and finally United Airlines.

Up until the flight instructing job in Virginia, I had about 500 hours of flight time. Now I’m just shy of 5,000 hours. The biggest turning point was in 2020 when I was working for WINAIR and COVID shut everything down. Many of us thought our career progression would be delayed. After a year of doubt and uncertainty, it turned out to be a silver lining because a lot of airlines started hiring pilots to ramp up the post-COVID travel boom. I was fortunate to have the right experience at the right time to make my way to United Airlines.

4: What was the hardest barrier you faced and how did you get past it?



Nothing came free or without hard work. I was only able to complete my primary training at Western Michigan University through the help of Study Financing from St. Maarten, scholarships, and my parents’ help. I also worked a job at the university and was busy seven days a week, 12 hours a day, juggling classes, work, and flight lessons. I got past it by remembering all my parents’ sacrifices – and that pushed me to keep working hard. Now, looking back, I wish I enjoyed it more instead of being frustrated about it.

5: Who were the key people who carried you through this journey, and what did they do that mattered most?

My parents and college roommates were the biggest supporters in the first part of my journey. They motivated me through every step of the way. My girlfriend, who is now my wife, supported me since meeting her at flight school in Virginia. Now I go to work knowing that my wife is taking care of our dog and everything else at home while I’m away.

6: What do people misunderstand about being a first officer at a major airline?

It’s one of the busiest positions at the airline. The first officer does more work than the captain in terms of operating the flight. While the captain is more in charge of people management, the first officer does all the pre-flight and post-flight setup and alternates the flying duties with the captain. We both

get the same training and we are all trained to be leaders. If the captain is not there, then I’m the one in charge and the responsibilities fall on me.

7: Take me into December 30, 2025: What did it feel like to approach St. Maarten from the cockpit on that inaugural flight home?

I’ll be honest; I’ve done it literally over 1,000 times at WINAIR. Flying-wise, it felt the same, but 100 times faster. The best part was hearing my friends at WINAIR and in the tower talking to me on the frequency, and then the water cannon salute was very special.

8: What do you want young people on St. Maarten to understand about turning a big dream into a plan?

It takes a lot of work. There are no shortcuts. There are going to be a million distractions as well. However, once you put your head down and work hard for it, you’ll achieve it.”

9: Looking ahead, what are your goals for the next five years, and how do you want to give back to St. Maarten?

In the next five years, I see myself upgrading to Captain on the Boeing 737. I won’t have much schedule flexibility for a while, but I’ll take it as a new challenge. I’d like to work more with the youth in St. Maarten, empowering them with exploring options for their bright futures.

