

Ask the Expert – April 2020

Query 1 & 2

4/30/2020 15:26:02	Female	Age 9 to 13	She doesn't study
4/8/2020 7:59:11	Female	Age 9 to 13	Can't study what should we do?

Category: Others

Query by: Unspecified

Response: The information provided is insufficient to guide you. We would need to know if the child not studying is a recent change or if the student has had these problems since the beginning of her studies? Is she unable to understand concepts, not pay attention, both or any other issue with the learning?

It would be important to know if she is facing any challenges in grasping the concepts that are being taught or is stressed about any thing at home, school, with friends, etc. At times, both things could contribute towards the lack of interest. If the lack of interest in studies is due to difficulties in a subject, you can work in close coordination with her and her teachers so that she can be best helped to overcome the learning challenges. Encourage her to seek help for subjects she does not understand, help her set a daily study routine, break her work tasks into smaller tasks if she loses concentration on longer tasks and make sure she is getting enough sleep and exercise. However, if other non-academic issues are bothering her, support her in better dealing with and communicating her feelings and thoughts.

Please also note that the student is passing through the adolescent age. During this time (roughly starting around ten years and above), many children go through a series of normal emotional, physical and social changes. As a result of these changes there is more interest in peers, less interest in studies, spending time with family and adults, frequent arguments and need to exert their own individuality and identity etc. The adolescent period can be overwhelming for adolescents, especially if they lack correct information about the changes that they are experiencing or/and if they feel that there is no one that they can communicate with. Validate and normalize her feelings and let her know that she can talk to you if there is something bothering her or if she has any questions related to growing up. By communicating openly, you will be giving her an opportunity to discuss and share with you in case she is bothered about something and going through a difficult time.

Query 3

4/17/2020 19:04:21	Male	Age 14 to 18	Very angry
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Category: Behavioral Issues

Query by: Unspecified

Response: The information provided is insufficient to guide you. Please give examples of the behavior and the situations he gets angry in. Specify the kinds of challenges that arise from it.

There are many reasons for children's anger. It would be important to know if the change in the behavior is a recent occurrence and what are the situations in which he misbehaves? Children can behave this way if they are undergoing a stressful situation at home or school including being put down, abused, etc.

How do you deal with his behavior? It is important to stress that if you resort to force or physical punishment then remember that this would need to stop as use of aggression and force makes children believe that its okay to use force when they are angry. It also makes them more stubborn and less resistant to change. Communication with him would be the key to understanding the issue and then addressing it accordingly. Explore the underlying reasons for his behavior and then help his address these accordingly.

Query 4

4/16/2020 20:20:04	Male	Age 9 to 13	My beloved son aged about 9.5 years is studying in a reputable school (***** School) whereas, my younger daughter aged about 6.5 years is studying in APS. Both have different point of views on different occasions since birth. They don't play, study, watching TV together etc. Sometimes the situation ends on exchange of hot words and fight. My son is good in study but have an anger personality and wants everything as per his wish which is not possible for us. We have no any idea for solving this issue while we are still trying to change his mind since long. Please guide.
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Category: Behavioral Issues

Query by: Parent

Response: How are you currently dealing with your son's behavior? If you resort to force or physical punishment then remember that this would need to stop so that you can teach him what you are trying to. Use of aggression and force makes children

believe that its okay to use force when they are angry. It also makes them more stubborn and less resistant to change.

Children have their own individual differences and have varying needs to explore and question things around them. Some children may feel threatened due to their siblings, and may express their distress through anger. Some children get frustrated when unable to communicate their difference of opinion and resort to lashing out.

The best way to work towards solving these challenges is to openly communicate with him in a respectful manner. The communication must not be one sided where you lecture him but should be such which allows him to share his thoughts and identify possible and practical solutions to the challenges being experienced. Let him know how you feel about his behavior, your expectations from him in terms of his behavior with his sister. Hear out what he has to say about these issues and ask him to identify possible ways of overcoming these. Some skills you can teach him to better communicate his thoughts and disagreement instead of fighting are:

- Remind him that everyone does not have to have the same opinion over something and that the right to disagree should be respected
- Inform him that interpersonal communication involves tone, body language (eye contact, facial expressions) and words. Let him know that all three need to be watched to communicate respect in the interaction.
- Help him see how shouting, fighting or hitting does not communicate respect and in fact makes a very valid argument weak just because of how one reacted
- Help him identify ways by which he is able to understand his disagreement and communicate it accordingly. Using words like , 'I know what you mean but I don't agree with this.....'
- In case he get very worked up and angry, remind him to let the anger come down a little and then communicate his thoughts. Its okay for him to say that 'I will talk to you later'

Whenever you feel that he has changed some of his habits and behavior, praise him, as that can be the most powerful way of reinforcing the positive behavior. Try out these things consistently and repeatedly, as the change would not occur right away.

Query 5

4/15/2020 17:59:09	Female	Age 14 to 18	i am suffering from neurological disorders , generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder.i experience issues related stress and often freeze in stressful situation such as during an exam. I am getting treatment from MH rawalpindi and AFIMH. i often
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		feel depress that i cannot do anything although i secured 93% percentage in class VIII exams. the most common issue is related to me is on oral tests. no matter how good i have prepared whenever i stand in front of my teachers I actually get blank and cannot remember what i have to say or whatever i have learned.i remain stressful related to my board exams which have been postponed. i want to get out of my these conditions. i actually need help. i hope you'll help me. thankyou.
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Category: Exam Related Anxiety; Mental Health

Query by: Student

Response: Thank you for sharing your concerns. It is good to know that you are seeking professional help for it..

Most of the anxiety that people experience is normal and part of daily life which becomes especially pronounced before an exam, meeting new people, a doctor's check-up. Some people experience more pronounced anxiety that effects their quality of life and thus it becomes important that it be addressed. Anxiety often has two important features. One of them are the physical symptoms such as sweating, breathlessness, increased heart beat, and dry mouth. The other feature is related to the thinking, which often becomes catastrophic, negative or keeps one in a constant state of emergency. All these manifestations impact our decision making and concentration on tasks.

Working both on the physical symptoms and the thoughts is often found to help people bring their anxiety down to a level that is manageable for them.

Identify and minimize your unhelpful thoughts such as 'I will be a failure, 'I need to be the best', 'My parents, teachers and peers will be so disappointed in me', 'I am so dumb' etc. as they just add to the anxiety. Replace these with helpful thoughts such as 'I am going to try my best', 'I may not know a few things but will work to improve them', 'I don't have to be perfect in everything'. If it helps first write down your unhelpful thoughts (that increase anxiety) and then write the helpful thoughts (that help you calm down) and say these out loud while standing in front of the mirror and looking at yourself. Another way to work on your anxiety related thoughts is to check your own expectations from yourself, evaluate and see if the standards that you have set for yourself are too unrealistic and high and discourage you instead of helping you improve.

Try to identify physical and other activities that help you calm down and make them part of your daily routine. Anxiety often produces bodily symptoms such as sweating, erratic breathing, fast heartbeat. Deep breathing and calming activities reduce these bodily

symptoms. Other than that, pursuing a pleasurable interest, talking to friends etc. can also help deal with the stress.

Please note that persistent anxiety and stress can contribute towards lack of concentration and demotivation to carry out tasks. As you are taking in person support, bring this up with your mental health professional, so that they can guide you accordingly. Do write and update us. Best of luck!

Query 6

4/14/2020 18:48:18	Female	Age 9 to 13	AOA. I am a student of grade 8th. I was a topper student till grade 5th. Unfortunately there are some very serious domestic issues in my house due to which I am not able to concentrate on my studies. My grades since the last year have really dropped. This is also affecting my health. Can I please have an advice which can help me improve my studies again and I achieve the target that I have set?
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Category: Family Issues

Query by: Student

Response: I want to appreciate you for writing about your concerns, which goes to show the effort you are putting to take care of yourself.

It must be very concerning and distressful to go through the domestic issues. How have you been managing your distress in this tough time? Are there adults in the family that you can talk to about the domestic issues? Are you physically safe? Many times children feel responsible for either causing the domestic issues in the family or for fixing them. I hope you know that the responsibility for addressing these is with the adults in the family. Do update us on this front.

Feeling distressed persistently for a while hinders our attention and concentration, so the lack of concentration is very natural given your circumstances. Children who go through difficult home situations try a few things to manage themselves better and you can try some of these too:

- Talk to a trusted family member, parent about how the domestic situation makes them feel. Sometimes talking about ones feelings helps.
- Remind themselves that they did not cause or create the domestic problems and that they are doing the best they can under the circumstances
- Focus on their strengths, dreams and what they want to do in life as it motivates them to focus on things that matter

- Try to keep a time to think and worry about the domestic situation and purposely keep worries aside while studying. Writing down thoughts and worries in a diary can also be helpful
- Spend time with siblings and loved ones
- Pursue hobbies and interests besides studies that help feel better.

Since you are based in Lahore and have school and regional counselors on board, we will also advise you to speak to her for guidance.

All the best!

Query 7

4/14/2020 13:33:03	Female	Age 14 to 18	my daughter take a lot of tension about her exams and studies. she also have self-doubt after entering in the school. the teacher of aps do favoritism. she always Pessimist. she a hard working student but no matter how hard she tries the teachers will always choose those student who are their favorite. Give extra marks to them in exams. when she started studying in APS she has been in depression and stress.
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Category: Exam Related Anxiety; Others (Teacher-Student Relationship)

Query by: Parent

Response: Thank you for writing about your concerns. You have mentioned two issues one of the favoritism by the teachers and the other related to your daughter's anxiety around exams and studies. The anxiety may also be further getting heightened by the feeling that other students are being favored.

As far as the issue of favoritism is concerned, we strongly recommend that you speak to the Principal or Section Head of the school and share your concerns. Kindly do share with them the specific reasons and behaviors that have made you arrive at a conclusion about the teachers favoring certain students. By giving them concrete and specific examples you will be better able to communicate your point of view. In case there has been a misunderstanding that would also get clarified.

To help your daughter with anxiety, let her know that anxiety is part of daily life and can become especially pronounced before an exam, meeting new people, a doctor's check-up. Anxiety can make us think catastrophically which in turn affects our decision making and concentration. Help her identify and minimize her unhelpful thoughts such as 'I will be a failure', 'I need to be the best', 'My parents will be so disappointed in me', 'I am so dumb', 'other students are better or liked more by the teachers' etc. as they just add to

the anxiety. Help her replace these negative thoughts with helpful and calming thoughts such as 'I am going to try my best', 'I may not know a few things but will work to improve them', 'I don't have to be perfect in everything'.

Encourage her to identify physical and other activities that help calm her down and make them part of her daily routine. Anxiety often produces bodily symptoms such as sweating, erratic breathing, fast heartbeat and deep breathing and calming activities reduce these bodily symptoms. Other than that, pursuing a pleasurable interest, talking to friends can also help deal with the stress.

It is important to know that it is also perfectly normal for most children to feel a bit of nervousness and stress related to their studies especially when they have to retake exams. Some of the things that you can help her with are:

- Make a study plan in advance of the exams, keeping ample time for preparation of subjects that she finds most difficult. Managing and planning the study time will help her cope with stress and avoid the last-minute panic and anxiety experienced by many students.
- Make sure she is getting enough rest and sleep and eating a balanced diet. A recent study has shown that people who sleep for 8 hours before taking a Math's test are three times more likely to understand and solve the math's problems as compared to people who stay awake all night.
- Sometimes a monotonous study routine makes one lose concentration and get demotivated. Encourage her to take short, well-timed breaks in between the study routine, for her own pleasurable interest, talking to friends etc.
- Help her in setting goals according to the level of difficulty of subjects, and syllabus. Every time she achieves the set goal for the day or week, you can reward her with something that she enjoys doing. Goal setting is an important strategy to boost motivation in students.
- Be available to listen and validate her fears and concerns about the upcoming exams. Sometimes all that a student needs is a listening ear and validation by the parents that they will support their child no matter what the challenges may be.

In addition you may also want to explore other reasons that add to her stress and anxiety and address those accordingly with her.

Query 8

4/14/2020 13:24:26	Female	Age 14	she is dis-obeident, doesn't listen Take a lot of tension about her exams and studies. she also have self-doubt
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Category: Behavioral Issues; Exam Related Anxiety

Query by: Unspecified

Response: Thank you for sharing your concerns. It is important to know that it is perfectly normal for most children to feel a bit of nervousness and stress related to their studies especially when they have to take exams. Sometimes anxiety manifests itself in bodily symptoms like headache, nausea, and gastrointestinal problems. At other times anxiety manifest itself in adolescents acting out, disobedience, and anger. For some people their anger is a symptom of underlying anxiety, and that anger may actually be directly related to the situation that they may be facing. Some of the things that you can help her with are:

- Be available to listen and validate her fears and concerns about the upcoming exams. Sometimes all that a student needs is a listening ear and validation by the parents that they will support their child no matter what the challenges may be.
- Make sure she is getting enough rest and sleep and is eating a balanced diet. A recent study has shown that people who sleep for 8 hours before taking a Math's test are three times more likely to understand and solve the math's problems as compared to people who stay awake all night.
- Encourage her to make a study plan in advance of the exams, keeping ample time for preparation of subjects that she finds most difficult. Managing and planning the study time will help her cope with stress and avoid the panic and anxiety experienced by many students.

Speak to her about your concerns related to her behavior in an open and supportive manner. Talk to her about how communication can be made open and respectful. Make sure you also keep a check on your own tone, body language and words used while communicating to make sure that they are respectful.

Query 9

4/12/2020 10:53:41	Male	Age 9 to 13	I numb my nails with teeth how can I get rid of it I am from 7 A
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Category: Behavioral Issues

Query by: Student

Response: Children bite their nails due to a number of reasons. The cause is clearly not known and there may be different reasons for people doing it.. From your query it is

unclear how frequent and serious the behavior is. Some of the things that you can try are given below.

- Try to understand your anxiety and how have you been dealing with it. Is there a recent change in the family, a move, death, fights in the house, a new class etc.? At times nail biting can be a sign of emotional or mental stress. It tends to show up in people who are nervous, anxious or feeling down. It's a way to cope with these feelings.
- For some people, this may not be due to anxiety but an unconscious habit. Some measures can be taken to remind yourself to not start nail biting when anxious, sad, or even hungry. Choose a code word that will remind you of the nail biting. Ask a trusted adult or friend to remind you of the nail biting by using the code word whenever they see you do it so that you become aware and can check that behavior.
- Keep your hands busy, with a fidget spinner or fidgeting with a pen. Think of alternative activities to do whenever you feel the urge to repeat the habit.
- Too much pressure to stop may actually worsen the habit as it increases the stress so try to make sure that you are not over worrying or preoccupied by this.

Best of luck!

Query 10

4/3/2020 3:39:28	Male	Age 9 to 13	My child is very poor in studies
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Category: Attention, Learning and Concentration

Query by: Unspecified

Response: The information provided is insufficient to guide you. We would need to know if the being poor in studies is a recent change or if the student has had these problems since the beginning of his studies? Is he unable to understand concepts, not pay attention, both or any other issue with the learning?

It would be important to know if he is facing any challenges in grasping the concepts that are being taught or is stressed about anything at home, school, with friends. At times, both things could contribute towards the lack of interest. If the lack of interest in studies is due to difficulties in a subject, you can work in close coordination with him and his teachers so that he can be best helped to overcome the learning challenges. Encourage him to seek help for subjects he does not understand, help him set a daily study routine, break his work tasks into smaller tasks if he loses concentration on longer tasks and make sure he is getting enough sleep and exercise. However, if other

non-academic issues are bothering him, support him in better dealing with and communicating his feelings and thoughts.

Please also note that the student is passing through the adolescent age. During this time (roughly starting around ten years and above), many children go through a series of normal emotional, physical and social changes. As a result of these changes there is more interest in peers, less interest in studies, spending time with family and adults, frequent arguments and need to exert their own individuality and identity etc. The adolescent period can be overwhelming for adolescents, especially if they lack correct information about the changes that they are experiencing or/and if they feel that there is no one that they can communicate with. Validate and normalize his feelings and let him know that he can talk to you if there is something bothering him or if he has any questions related to growing up. By communicating openly, you will be giving him an opportunity to discuss and share with you in case he is bothered about something and going through a difficult time.

Query 11

4/2/2020 12:21:43	Male	Age 6 to 8	How we can motivate our child for perfect studies.
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Category: Attention, Learning and Concentration

Query by: Student

Response: Thank you for sharing your concerns. Please identify the reason behind his lack of motivation towards studies. Also look in to if the lack of motivation is recent or has it always been this way. At times stress about performing better than the rest, or self-doubt, and preoccupation with other disturbing life circumstances or stress at home or school can also affect children's ability to study. See if this may be contributing to his situation.

Some of the things that can help are as follows:

- Provide your child opportunities to learn about concepts and life skills through daily life experiences, games, activities, which children find both fun and educational. Learning doesn't have to be monotonous and boring.
- Check your own expectations from the child to make sure that they are realistic and age appropriate. Make sure you are not expecting him to be studying too much or all the time especially since he is very young.
- Set a routine that includes things that the child enjoys to do besides just studying. Sometimes a monotonous study routine makes one lose concentration and get

demotivated as well. Encourage him to take short, well-timed breaks in between the study routine.

- Help him in setting goals according to the level of difficulty of subjects, and syllabus. Every time he achieves the set goal for the day or week, you can reward him with something that he enjoys doing. Goal setting is an important strategy to boost motivation in students.
- Make sure he is getting enough rest and sleep and are eating a balanced diet. A recent study has shown that people who sleep for 8 hours before taking a Math's test are three times more likely to understand and solve the math's problems as compared to people who stay awake all night.
- Be available to listen and validate his fears and concerns related to academics and life in general. Sometimes all that a student needs is a listening ear and validation by the parents that they will support their child no matter what the challenges may be.

All the best!
