

**ASK THE EXPERT QUERIES**

**Category: Grief, Trauma and Abuse**

**Query 1**

Dec 2014	Male	Age 09 to 13	His name is ***** ... and doesn't pay attention to others. He had a friend named Ibrahim and used to talk a lot about him and had fun with him but ever since he moved away he doesn't mention him and doesn't talk much, should I take him to visit him in Multan or should I buy him a ps4 which he demands if I don't take him from Karachi. He doesn't talk much.
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**Query by: Parent**

**Response**

From your query it appears that the change in your son's behavior occurred after his friend moved away. Missing someone that one is close to is a natural feeling. If your son's friend has just recently shifted, give him some time to naturally get back to feel his usual self. You can also talk about the change that you have noticed in him, validate his feelings and give him an opportunity to talk about what he misses about his friend. Help him stay connected to the old friend through letters, email, phone call and encourage him to identify other children in his class that he could now interact with. Let him know that while no one may be able to replace the friend, he can still look for others who share similar interests and thoughts that he shared with his friend, Ibrahim. As for buying a PS4, it would completely be your choice. However, it is important to point out that at times, both children and adults, compensate for feelings of loss, sadness through material objects and if this becomes a pattern of coping, it might not be very helpful in the long run.

**Query 2**

Jan 2015	Male	Age 09 to 13	The blood curling events of December 18 has left my 14-year-old daughter traumatized. She refuses to go to school as she is haunted by the thought that something like that could happen again. I have tried everything but nothing seems to help. What should I do to get her to go to school again?
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**Query by: Parent**

**Response**

It is understandable for children to feel anxious, traumatized and afraid after the incident of December 16. The fact that she is also a student of an army school must be adding to the stress. Some of the things that you can do to help her through these concerns and fears are as follows:

- Ask her about her main concerns and fears. Validate and acknowledge her feelings and let her know that incidents such as these make children and adults both feel the way that she is feeling. Tell her that there is no right or wrong about these feelings.
- While you do validate her fears and concerns, let her know that the best way of dealing with these feelings is to identify ways of coping with them. Help her identify her inner strengths and strategies to cope and calm her fears. These could include, writing her thoughts down, talking to a friend about the issue, distracting herself from the negative thoughts by making herself busy in other activities, hobbies, physical exercise.
- Help her differentiate between helpful and unhelpful thoughts and ways by which she can try reducing the unhelpful thoughts. Example of helpful thoughts could be, I am safe, I am with my loved ones, My school will help take care of us, One bad incident in a school does not mean that all schools would have similar incidents. Example of unhelpful thoughts could be, I am never safe, Everyone is out to get us, If I step out of the house something bad would happen to me or my family etc. Some ways of reducing the unhelpful thoughts are

taking deep breaths, visualizing oneself to be in a calm and relaxing place, doing positive meaningful things in life such as helping someone in need, volunteering for a cause, writing about the issue etc.

- Talk to her school administration and find out what security measures are being taken. Share these with your daughter, only to an extent that will help ease her concerns related to security.
- Ask her to reconnect with her friends and see who all would be going to school.
- Tell her to identify one or two 'safe persons' that she can talk to if she feels afraid and overwhelmed at school.
- Help reduce any over generalizations and exaggerated fears by letting her know that such incidents may not happen in all the schools and that all people may not necessarily be out there to harm them.
- Monitor her viewing of TV and social media news related to the event and school security issues as it may be adding to her distress.
- Maintain her regular routine as that will help her normalize and get a sense of control on life.

**Query 3**

Jan 2015	Female	Age 09 to 13	My student is about ten years old. I have been noticing for the last one year that she is not showing that much response which I want from her regarding class participation. She does not read a loud, has nothing in excuse regarding homework why has not done. Understands me or not. Just stands with head in bow
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**Query by: Parent**  
**Response**

You mentioned that you have noticed this in the last one year, does this mean that she was not like this before? Children show such behavior either if they are upset about something or if they have a learning issue. Try talking to her separately and ask her what you have noticed and how you can help her improve this. You can also share with the principal and ask if the other teachers who take her class, notice the same issue and how they have been tackling it. You can also meet with the parents to determine the root cause and how she can be helped. Working together with the parents can be very helpful as both of you would be helping her through using similar strategies.

**Query 4**

Jan 2015	Female	Age 09 to 13	My child is very sad all the time and she is loosing her confidence. Day by day she is geting weak
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**Query by: Parent**  
**Response**

We suggest that you talk to her at the earliest to get a better insight into her situation. It would also be important to observe other changes in her behavior and routine especially related to sleep, appetite, studies and interpersonal relationships. There could be a number of factors that can cause children to feel sad such as a change in their life circumstances at home and school, an upsetting and traumatic experience, etc. We suggest that you talk to her in a supportive and non-threatening manner about the changes that you have observed. Let her know that you would be open to listen to anything, no matter how difficult it is for her to share. This will help build her confidence and trust and she may talk to you more openly.

If after talking to her you feel that she has undergone a traumatic experience, encourage her to see a mental health expert (a therapist) who can help her work through her feelings. She may also benefit from a check up from a mental health expert if she has not undergone any significant life changing experience yet you continue to observe significant changes in her appetite, sleep pattern, energy levels etc. It would be important to rule out and if required treat any form of depression or other mood related disturbances.

**Query 5**

Sept 2015	Male	Age 06 to 08	my child is admitted in class one in the above school, and after two months his behaviour has completely changed, he started fighting with others and afraid to face teachers and parents, he behaves while studying as some one is going to beat him. his concentration and confidence has shaken, where as he obtained 86% marks in two check points. moreover he stoped sharing class activities especially any untoward incident with him. regards your help is required
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**Query by: Parent**  
**Response**

The change in your child’s behavior appears to be brought about by some external stressors and pressures. He seems to be upset and scared of something and one would need to explore the cause so that it can be immediately addressed.

Some of the changes that children react to include changes in the family situation, adjustment in a new class, conflicts in the family, exposure to any form of violence within the family or outside, death or illness of a loved one, an accident, experience of bullying, sexual, emotional and physical abuse, etc. if you are aware of a recent change and think that the child maybe reacting to it, then talking to him about that change, allowing him to express his feelings and helping him develop better coping skills will help his behavior to settle down. Try to understand his fears and concerns related to the change and address them accordingly.

If you are not aware of any obvious change, then finding out the reason would be essential before these can be addressed. Talk to your child when he is alone with you, in a calm and non-threatening manner about the changes you have observed in him. Allow him the space to respond. Some of the statements that might help you start the conversation are:

“I have noticed that you appear afraid and sad and are not your usual self. Children can feel this way when something bothers them. This does not mean that children are bad or weak. I want you to know that no matter how big or small that issue is, you can talk to me about it. Talking about situations that make us feel sad, upset or angry or just talking about our feelings help us become strong. When we talk to a parent, a trusted adult, they can help us deal with it in a healthy manner.”

Make sure that you are not harsh, critical or too anxious when you speak to him as he may shy away for talking openly. He might take a bit of time to open up and in the meantime keep observing his behavior and spend time with him on daily basis.

Once you are clearer about the issues bothering him, you can work towards both addressing that stressful situation and helping him cope with it. If needed, write to us for further support or consult a mental health professional for guidance.

**Query 6**

Sept 2015	Male	Age 09 to 13	Sir, my son is 10 years 8 months old, studied in class seven. sir, from the last six months he is feeling fear while sleeping in separate bed. from the age of 4 he is sleeping with his
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			grandmother but now he is afraid to sleep with his grandmother and also on separate bed in parents room.
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**Query by: Parent**

**Response**

Finding out the reason for feeling afraid would be the first step towards helping your child out. It would be important to explore if he is only afraid of sleeping in a separate bed or if he has developed other fears too e.g. about going alone somewhere, being around certain people, etc.? It would also be essential to know if there any changes in his sleep and appetite pattern, energy levels, mood, etc. All this information will help determine whether the change in behavior is only restricted to sleeping on a separate bed or effecting other areas of his functioning.

Talk to your child in a calm and non-threatening manner about these fears to have a better understanding of the situation. Ask him about other things that bother him or he is afraid of and how he think you as a parent can help him. Make sure that you are not harsh, critical or too anxious when you speak to him as he may shy away for talking openly.

Based on the nature of severity of what you further find after talking to him, if needed, write to us for further support. If the issue does not settle down despite talking to him, then he may also benefit from seeing a mental health expert as it would important to rule out and if required treat any form of anxiety, depression or other mood related disturbances.

**Query 7**

Mar 2016	Female	Age 14 to 18	I am a student of 8th i wont like to tell up my name here so the thing is i've been through some matters in my life since i'm born that doesn't lets me live like normal some of em are still in my life but taking so much stress about it idk i feel so pain in my nerves that sometimes i get blackouts even i've loss confidence on my self ..i've take stress of that thing that my friend ditched me! If there's any place else to tell up my everything do tell!
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**Query by: Student**

**Response:**

Thank you for sharing your concerns. It appears that you are going through stressful life experiences since a long time and now it is affecting your physical health and relationships. I encourage you to seek in person support. Talk to your parents about how you are feeling or an elder sibling, cousin or a teacher so that they can guide you and take you to a counsellor. Some of the teachers in your school have also been trained on children's emotional health issues and they may be able to link you to a sensitive and understanding counsellor. Do write and update us.

**Query 8**

Feb 2016	Male	Age 14 to 18	Teachers should not be allowed to spank or beat children
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**Query by: Unspecified**

**Response:**

Thank you for raising this matter, as this is a serious concern for APSACS. Is this being practiced in your child's school? I hope you are aware that corporal punishment and hitting is strictly banned in the Army schools. We suggest that you also bring this matter up with the concerned authorities of the school and we will also be communicating this like wise.