

Important Information regarding counseling

Dealing with results – A few useful tips

Broadly speaking examination results should be treated as a spring board to future achievements and better prospects. Examination results can cause a great deal of anxiety to the students and parents alike. However, a consistent family support system can be of help.

Parents should look out for the following signs:

- **Physical symptoms**, such as sleeping or eating more or less than usual
- **Mental symptoms**, such as loss of concentration and interest
- **Emotional symptoms** such as tears, tantrums, panic attacks
- **Addictive symptoms**, such as excessive drinking or smoking or using pills
- **Self depreciating comments** "I knew I'll never pass or never do well or...Mohit's much brighter than me....."

Must Dos for parents:

- ❖ Do not nag the child. Be supportive and encouraging.
- ❖ Help the child to develop self-discipline, self-direction, self-confidence and a sense of achievement.
- ❖ Just good schooling and tuition are not substitutes for emotional cushioning.
- ❖ Help the child in maintaining his confidence especially when he seems discouraged by his dropping marks or grades. Do not displace your anxiety on the child.
- ❖ The achievement goals should be realistically set according to the child's capability.
- ❖ Praise the child when he does well. Encourage the child's performance with positive statements like, "well done", "you can do better", rather than saying "that was not enough".
- ❖ Do not harp on previous failures or results.
- ❖ If achievement expectations are too high it may lead to greater anxiety.
- ❖ Humor relieves tension. Be light and humorous with the child.
- ❖ Try to gain your child's confidence and discuss problems. Help to find a solution.
- ❖ Exams are not the end of the world.
- ❖ Accept that expectation for every one to do well is unrealistic.
- ❖ Involve the child in decision making.

- ❖ Be aware of the market demands and do not concentrate on traditional courses alone. This will narrow down the options considerably and cause stress.
- ❖ Many students do better after school because of maturity and greater focus, course of interest, rise and awareness level and exposure to options.
- ❖ Avoid criticizing or comparing the child with others.
- ❖ Make the child feel important and loved.
- ❖ Listen to your child.
- ❖ Take help of a professional counselor in case of a conflict or depression over the result.

The students should:

- Assess priorities, assets and difficulties
- Follow a normalized routine atmosphere at home.
- Should not imagine extreme consequences and worst situations.
- Should not magnify failure or demean themselves.
- Contact the teachers or counselors on feeling low or anxious or disinterested.
- Develop alternative coping strategies and de-focus from the pain.
- Learn to be positive.
- Learn to relax.
- Talk to family and friends.
- Stop worrying. Result is not the ultimate decisive factor.
- It is more important to choose the next options.
- Find out and update with wide and varied career choices. Invariably the decision should not be based or influenced by the friends.
- For an average performer or below average, skill based/vocational courses are best choice.

High risk Behaviour: Drug Abuse, Self Harm, Aggression

Basic Symptoms

- Behaviour that is potentially harmful to self or others.
- Behaviour relating to consumption and abuse of psychotropic drugs or commonly used medicines like cough syrups, sleeping pills, painkillers, without prescription.
- Behaviour related to smoking and consumption of alcohol.
- Self-harming behaviour like Suicide, Wrist slashing, hitting self, Starving deliberately etc.
- Harm to others in the form of abusive and aggressive behaviour like rash driving or violence to others in any form.

Dos and Don'ts for Teachers and Parents

Dos:

- ❖ Discourage the Behaviour.
- ❖ Keep communication channels open
- ❖ Talk about the negative and long-term effects.
- ❖ Teach (quick) relaxation/breathing
- ❖ Teach anger management
- ❖ Teach him/her to evaluate consequences.
- ❖ Talk about the need for sharing information.

Don'ts:

- ❖ Do not punish or reprimand harshly.
- ❖ Do not moralize or make person feel guilty. Help him/her to think of it as a problem needing help.
- ❖ Assertively say 'No' to the demand for taking cough syrup, pills etc. to relieve anxiety or improve concentration. Even short-term, temporary relief with the help of these drugs should be highly discouraged.
- ❖ Do not prescribe medication.

Handling Suicide

A lot many suicides are impulsive while others are well planned. Impulsive students are likely to decide on the spur of the moment. **Hence it is important to buy time.**

Common feelings in suicide

- A crisis that causes intense suffering and feeling of hopelessness and helplessness.
- Conflict between survival and unbearable stress.
- Narrowing of patient's perceived options.
- A wish to escape.
- To punish self and/or to punish others with guilt.

Indicators for increased chance for suicide

- Withdrawal Behaviour for few days
- Mention of suicide repeatedly.
- Suicide note
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- A history of serious psychological problems.
- A history of impulsive, poorly controlled and destructive Behaviour.
- A history of continuing academic problems and learning difficulties.
- Adjustment difficulties with family, school, peers etc.

Interventions

- The student should be advised to contact a professional counselor as soon as possible.
- Efforts should be made to encourage him/her to talk.
- A student who is severely depressed and expresses absolute helplessness about future is more at risk than a student who talks about casual things.