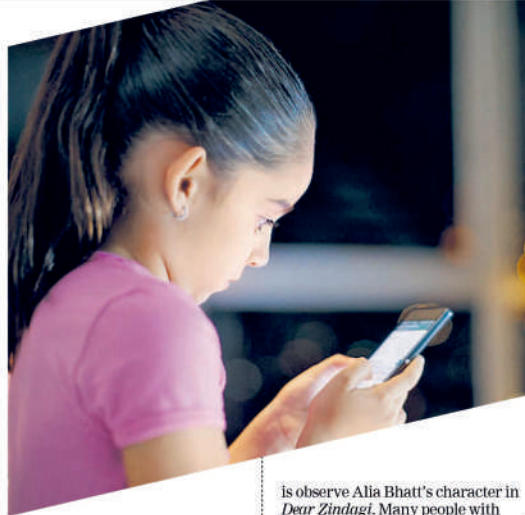


HEALTH

**mind  
MATTERS**



**MINU  
BUDHIA**



**My son is 14. He has lost interest in his hobbies, his friends, wants to stay alone, and is frequently rude and angry. Please suggest how to handle this situation.**

It is usual for teenagers to undergo a number of physical, mental, and emotional changes that make them feel awkward, frustrated, unattractive, and misunderstood, leading to low self-esteem and low self-confidence. Lashing out and wanting to stay alone for a small period of time is part of growing up, but if this behaviour has been getting worse for over a month, a positive action to take would be to visit a counsellor.

**My 11-year-old daughter is glued to the screen. She won't eat, sleep, or do anything without my phone. She even cries, hits out and throws tantrums in public when I don't give**

**the phone. What should I do?**

Children today are given phones and tabs from their diaper days. While parents often do this to keep them quiet, still, entertained, and safe in one place, it has undesirable side effects. The ideal way to go about it is to slowly reduce the screen time. Make a routine covering each day of the week and have fixed times where she can use the phone under supervision. Explain that screen time is a privilege and not a 24x7 affair. At all other times keep your Internet disconnected or password protected. Children mimic the behaviour of their parents. So actively limit your own time using the phone to set a positive example. When she does follow what you say, reward her with positive experiences instead of material things or food.

**My girlfriend just started going to a counsellor. Our**

**friends found out and are making fun of her. She says she's depressed, but she never looks sad and enjoys hanging out with our group. What do I do?**

In a country where the stigma associated with mental health issues is very high, the way her friends are reacting is sadly very common. Awareness is the best way to de-stigmatise mental healthcare. Educate your friends by sharing correct information and videos with them about depression and mental health. A simple way to understand

is observe Alia Bhatt's character in *Dear Zindagi*. Many people with depression are good at hiding it, and outwardly go about their daily lives like they have no care in the world. She has shown excellent judgement in getting the help she needs and should not be made fun of for it. Continue to support your girlfriend by being there for her and being okay with talking or not talking about what she's going through.

**All of us tried drugs at a school friend's party. Everyone was trying, so I did it too, but I didn't want to. There's a party next week. How do I say no without looking uncool?**

Our friends play a very important

role in our lives, often influencing us both for the good and the dangerous. Peer pressure can be difficult to stand up to, but you have shown a lot of courage and self-care by sending in your question. People who force you to try anything that is life-threatening, or even something you don't want to do, are not real friends. In fact, they are the uncool ones. At the party, explain that you're not interested in doing drugs, but are not judging them. However, if you think you might be forced, for this time, make up a good excuse to bunk this party. It might be time to find some new friends.

**My classmates say I'm stupid and laugh at everything I say or do. I hate myself. I want to change. Please help.** You are important. You are valued. You are loved. It is very important you understand this. We love our family and friends, but forget to love ourselves. If your classmates are making fun of low grades because you're having trouble with your academics, sports or extracurricular activities, speak with your parents or a trusted teacher. A little bit of extra help is all you might need to improve your grades.