

mind matters



MINU BUDHIA

I'm a 30-year-old, unmarried woman. An introvert, I don't use social media. Since completing my post-graduation in HR in 2013, I've been trying for government jobs. I've appeared for exams more than 25 times, but couldn't crack any. After six years, I have no confidence left to do any job. My peers have gone way ahead of me in life and this makes me suffer from an inferiority complex. I've become a recluse, and get cold feet before any interview. I've always wanted to be an independent woman, but now it seems like a distant dream. I feel worthless, lost and devoid of any purpose in life. Am I not good enough?

First of all, you must congratulate yourself on your dedication to a goal. That you have stuck to taking the exams for six years, especially without any positive results, shows your determination to give your

best, no matter the situation. I can understand that it may seem disheartening to have not landed your dream job, but it is still not too late. The skills that you have developed while preparing for these exams are also an asset. To start, you can approach a number of exam coaching centres or tutorials that coach school students for a part-time, if not full-time position. You can also consider applying to local private schools in your area or even start giving private tuitions yourself. Even starting a micro business of your own in an area of your interest can work.

Like you, there are a very large number of students who face this same problem when they reach the cut-off age for government exams. Please do not base your self-worth on this. You are worthy of finding and having a good career and you will overcome this feeling. You just need a bit of time. Someone is always doing better than another person in life and career-wise, so do not lose heart by comparing yourself with your peers.

Give yourself the opportunity to start afresh, and you are likely to lead the independent life you have always wanted. And if you find yourself still struggling with confidence issues, visit a counsellor for a few sessions and specific guidance. Wishing you all the best for your future!

HEALTH

Over time I have noticed that I have developed some negative traits that I want to get rid of. I constantly feel fatigued, am plagued with internal conflict, fear of failure, self-criticism, self-disgust, self-neglect, and am addicted to pornography. I have poor social skills, no meaningful relationships, am indifferent to those around me, and have major trust issues. I'm a 23-year-old working in Calcutta in the IT industry and live with my parents. Sometimes my anger borders on aggression and I've nearly hit my mom. I cannot discuss my problems with my parents, but I want to get help and am open to visiting a psychologist or psychiatrist and even trying medication so my life can go back to normal. Please guide me towards a plausible solution.

In today's world of instant communication and instant gratification, we seem to have forgotten that building and nurturing relationships isn't as quick and easy as making instant noodles. Having a support system of friends and family is an essential thing in our lives. When that support is not there, it is easy to withdraw into a shell, become indifferent to the world around us, and give up on building new relationships.

Poor social skills often impact one's self-confidence and self-esteem, leading one to refrain from forming new bonds of love or friendship and developing trust issues. Negative experiences in the past can complicate matters further. And the fact that you are unable to share your fears and disappointments with someone, possibly because of the fear of being judged, fuels your social isolation. At this time, watching pornography provides you with a distraction and release from your frustration at not having a real-life meaningful relationship. And your self-criticism, self-disgust and anger issues also possibly stem from your shame at your addiction.

It is good to hear that you are open to visiting a mental professional and I advise you to do so immediately before things escalate as your frustration is leading to anger issues that are causing you to become potentially physically abusive.

I'm a girl in my late teens and I used to be an extrovert. I suddenly find myself allergic to all kinds of human interaction, no matter how short. Whenever I find myself with a lot of people, in school or at a party, I feel drained. I've become excessively rude to my loved ones. Even when I'm alone, I spend my time overthinking, dwelling on past mistakes, doubting my abilities and panicking about my future. My leisure activities have now become a nightmare. I'm physically, mentally exhausted, jaded and feel a compulsion to run away from everything and everyone I know. This is the year of my board examinations. Please help.

Being a teenager can be quite difficult, especially your late teens where you need to make career-related decisions that will impact and influence your future. The emotions you are going through are quite natural if you're feeling like this for a short time period, especially since you are naturally stressed about your board examinations.

It could also be the result of any unfavourable event in your life that has dealt a blow to your self-confidence, making you feel like you are losing control over your life. Or maybe someone close to you has let you down. It is important to find the cause to be able to understand why you are feeling the way you do.

The feelings you have described are sometimes also part and parcel of growing into ourselves. As we mature, many of our old behaviours, lifestyle choices, and even choices in friends change. It could also be the result of anxiety surrounding the uncertainty of a new future. However, if you have suddenly lost interest in all the things you once loved, are constantly fatigued, and your eating and sleeping patterns have changed drastically, I would suggest you visit a counsellor.

This is especially important if you have been feeling low for over six to eight consecutive weeks as these may be the signs of depression, but one cannot diagnose that without carrying out the relevant tests and meeting the person.



I'm a 42 year-old man and I have a strange problem. I am extremely afraid of sleeping alone in the house. I'm constantly worried and anxious that there is a ghost or a soul around there somewhere. I've tried many things to divert my mind but have failed. Because of this problem I've had to leave many jobs which required travelling and outstation tours as I just can't sleep alone in a hotel because of my problem. Please help.

Each of us have something we are scared of and there is no shame in admitting that. The fear of being alone and the fear of what is lurking in the dark at night is quite common. Many adults have never spent a night alone in an apartment or home in their entire lives, and if that is the case with you, it may be one of the causes of your anxiety. That you are specifically scared of ghosts or souls may be the result of some childhood trauma that happened related to being left alone. It could also be a result of our rich folklore and the tales we hear and tell children to scare them into falling asleep quickly.

Since your fear is having a negative impact on your career, it is essential that you seek professional help. A counsellor or psychologist will be able to help you find the reason why you are afraid and also give you coping tools and mechanisms necessary to overcome your phobia.

Minu Budhia is a psychotherapist, counsellor, founder of Caring Minds, ICanFly, Cafe ICanFly, and a TEDx speaker. Write to askminubudhia@aringmin ds.co.in

