

# mind matters



**MINU BUDHIA**

## HEALTH

I am a 30-year-old state government employee, working for the past five years. I panic when I have to use a lift. I feel like I am having a major respiratory issue and may have a heart attack in no time. I don't have any heart-related issues. These symptoms have become more prominent over the last

10-12 months. I am also a bit scared to board trains for any long journey. I have been diagnosed with 'generalised anxiety disorder' and my doctor has prescribed two medicines to control anxiety disorder. But I don't know if it is helping

because I still panic if I have to stay at any other place except my house. The feelings that come to my mind are that if I have to be hospitalised, who would be there to look after me and so on... and eventually, palpitation starts. These issues are creating problems in my personal as well as professional life. Hence, I request you to advise some measures so that I can live a happy, stress-free and panic-free life.

*K.C., Cooch Behar*

I must congratulate you on seeking help and getting treatment for your 'generalised anxiety disorder' diagnosis. It is so good to see the stigma around getting help for mental health issues slowly and steadily decreasing. If you are already under the care of a psychiatrist and taking medication, I would advise you to speak with him/her some more about your issue, as they will already have a specific

treatment plan.

If you are under the care of your general physician for your medication, I would advise you to speak with a counsellor or psychologist who will tailor specific coping mechanisms for you.

In terms of some general things you can do, the first one would be to lower your caffeine intake. If you are used to having multiple cups of tea and coffee or energy drinks, opt for green tea instead. Also, if you feel an anxiety or a panic attack coming on, try this 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise.

Take a few deep, long breaths first. Then look for five things/objects you can see around you, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. I hope this will help you. I would advise you to continue with your medication under the supervision of your doctor. It may take some time to have effect, but it will most definitely help.



I completed my BSc in 2017 and am preparing for banking and SSC examinations. Despite several attempts and much study, I have not been able to achieve any success. So I have decided to stop pursuing the dream of a government job and now want to join a private company so I can help my family financially. But I find myself unable to do so and I have no idea why. Whenever I try to take some action towards securing a private sector job, for some reason I don't know, I stop myself. I have been staying by myself in a mess/ hostel for the past two years. I really want to leave this place but due to a strong bonding with my friends here, I can't leave. I have decided to continue my preparation for these government exams till June next year and then join some skill-development courses or start applying for private jobs. I am already 23 years old and I just want to set my life in order. Please guide me.

*J.J., Odisha*

It takes a lot of dedication, hard work, concentrated study, and a bit of luck to crack examinations where the applicants number in hundreds of thousands if not lakhs, and where the number of open positions are in a few hundreds. The majority of those



**I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU ON SEEKING HELP AND GETTING TREATMENT... IT IS SO GOOD TO SEE THE STIGMA AROUND GETTING HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES SLOWLY AND STEADILY DECREASING**

I'm a 16-year-old girl in love with a boy who is four months younger than me. We've been in a relationship for over two years. In August he moved to Agra with his family. I managed the last few months by studying hard and even came first in class. We didn't have any contact between us, but over the past few days we're in touch again. I don't have any friends from childhood. I think I'm getting into depression. I love him and I can't leave him. Now my exams are just about to start and I'm not able to focus on my studies at all. It is too much and I just want to run away from everyone. Please help me.

*T.A., Calcutta*

That you have identified your problem and have asked for help is very important and shows your maturity even at this young age. As hard as this may be to hear, running away from our problems is not the solution, but the beginning of more problems. The pain from the loss of young love is one that many of us, across generations, have felt. It is natural to feel the loss of a companion who is so close to our heart and, consequently, feel distracted and dejected, but that should not stop you from living your life. It is very commendable that you are doing so well academically. It is important for your future, and you must work towards maintaining this high standard.

who appear in such examinations, when not finding a positive outcome, end up in private jobs, so don't consider this a failure. It is quite possible that you will flourish even better than you had imagined and find yourself far more successful in the traditional definition of success.

Now coming to your issue of being unable to leave your hostel. It is quite natural to form strong bonds of attachment with fellow students, especially in such high-pressure situations where it feels like they are the people who best understand what you are going through. This connection has quite possibly made your hostel a comfort zone that you do not want to leave, especially when the future seems so uncertain at this point. Another reason could be that you feel like you may betray your friends by moving forward and finding success in a different field. If the bonds of friendship you have formed are true, they will stand the test of time and distance. I wish you good luck for your forthcoming exams and wish you a bright and happy future.

You've also mentioned the lack of friends from childhood. As your boyfriend was also filling your emotional need that is fulfilled by friends, I am not surprised that you feel forlorn and depressed as your attachment to him is a great one. It also seems that your self-confidence and self-esteem has taken a hit. The first friend you need to make is yourself. You are your own best friend and you must treat yourself with the same love and care as you would another.

Once you have done that, a simple way to make an attempt at making new friends would be to join a hobby class—singing, dancing, painting—whatever you like. When you are around people who like to do the same things as you, it is quite easy to make acquaintances, if not friends.

In today's time, with the advancement of communication technology, one is not only able to e-mail, text, call, one can even video call in real time. Long-distance relationships may be difficult, but are certainly not impossible. You two can keep in touch this way and see how it goes.

*Minu Budhia, a psychotherapist, counsellor, founder of Caring Minds, I Can Fly, Cafe I Can Fly, and TEDx speaker, answers 12 queries related to mental healthcare and adolescence issues. Send your queries to askminubudhia@caringsminds.co.in or t2onsunday@abp.in*