

I'm a 20-year-old girl who has, due to a mental illness, become both mentally and physically weak. My mother neither understands me, nor comforts me. Every day, we have fights and she shouts at me, swears at me, and even calls me 'an animal'. On the other hand, my father is hardly ever angry at me and we have talks on various subjects, which my mother calls 'a waste of time'. My mother has never understood me after my illness. Seeing the way my aunt treats my cousin with love, and then seeing how my mother treats me, I feel very depressed. What should I do?

Anonymous, Calcutta

A parent-child relationship is a complicated one and differs from person to person, family to family. By comparing your mother-daughter relationship with that of your aunt's and cousin's, you are doing yourself an injustice and adding to your grief. The grass always seems greener on the other side, and one never knows what truly is going on in another's relationship.

If you have once had a loving relationship with your mother, I believe you will share some of that bond again, but it may take some work and some time. There are many reasons why she may be behaving this way.

Mothers often blame themselves when their children suffer from any illness, thinking that they have failed to do their duty. Sometimes family members blame the mother. She herself may be under tremendous pressure about your illness and may be lashing out at you because she cannot do anything to control the situation, or make you better herself.

Since you have a deep bond with your father, who may be processing the situation better, she may be resenting the closeness you two share. She may also be mourning the loss of the person you were before, the loss of a future for you that she had imagined, the loss of the relationship you two previously shared. However, that doesn't justify this behaviour.

I would strongly suggest that the three of you go in for a few sessions of family counselling. It may also help if you speak with your mother in front of your psychologist/psychiatrist to tell her how you feel and to understand why she is behaving the way she is.

As you have mentioned you have a mental illness, I hope you are keeping your appointments with your psychologist or psychiatrist and meeting him/her for regular sessions. Regarding the physical weakness, I would suggest you visit your general physician to get a general check-up.

Also, if you are on any medication for your mental illness, check to ensure that you are taking them as advised and speak to your psychologist/psychiatrist if you feel it is making you feel weak. I hope you become better soon and regain at least a cordial relationship with your mother.

mind matters



MINU BUDHIA

I am a 19-year-old girl. I have passed 10+2 in 2018 from a Bengali-medium school. My parents, especially my father, always wanted me to become a doctor but I never did.

From my childhood, I have loved the sky and the space beyond. All I have wanted from my life is to become an astronaut. I had to take admission in a prominent exam preparation institute to get coaching for NEET last year, but I came home after four months.

It was a huge shock for my family because my father had already invested Rs 96,000 on it.

Then, in early 2019, I took admission in a college for BSc in biology. I gave up the preparation and my father stopped talking to me for two or three months because of this. He had told everybody that I am going to be a doctor. So, when I said I want to give up preparing for NEET, he couldn't take it. So, from July 2019, I again started preparing for NEET so that my parents are happy.

But now I've come to know that I can become a NASA astronaut by clearing the IIST exam. I don't know what I should do. Is becoming an astronaut for a middle-class girl as impossible as my parents think? I am confused and getting depressed about this. I cannot focus on my studies and my self-confidence has become very low. I am continuously thinking of ending my life and I have no real friends with whom I can share my thoughts. Please help.

AM, Calcutta

No dream is impossible. However, there are many practical aspects that one needs to consider. While I applaud your dream and determination, the field you are looking at is a very niche and highly specialised one. In addition to the academic qualifications, you need to meet multiple physical, emotional, and mental health parameters. I would advise you to find a mentor who has walked this specific path you want to walk on and speak to them about their experiences.

I am not deterring you from fulfilling your dreams, but am asking you to do all the detailed research necessary to figure out



if that is the life you really want to live and if you can commit to the amount of rigorous work and training that will be necessary.

On another note, I would also like to say that one unfulfilled dream can lead to a much better and brighter one. I myself wanted to become a doctor, but I could not as at that time where I lived, girls could only study humanities. Also, I got married very young. But my dream of helping people remained. As a doctor I could have helped people's physical health, but today, as a psychotherapist and counsellor, I am able to help people with their mental health.

So I will ask you to examine the reason why you want to become an astronaut. Once you figure that out, you will also figure out other fields related to

your dream. Your father wishes to secure your future, which is why he wants you to pursue an established field that has a higher chance of security. If you are able to show him what other backup paths you can choose in the field of your interest, it is likely that he will, over time, come to see your point of view.

I can understand that the pressure is huge, especially considering the financial investment your father has already made, but please rest assured that your parents value your life and your happiness above money. Ending one's life is not a solution, and if you feel you are depressed and are having trouble going about your daily life, please immediately visit a counsellor or a psychologist who can guide you through your present state.

I'm a 21-year-old woman pursuing post-graduation from one of the best colleges in the city. Over time, I have noticed that I am devoid of any goal and am only whiling away my time, doing nothing constructive. This restlessness is leading me to anxiety and depression. I can't help thinking too much about my future. I really want to do well in my examination and land a decent job, but maybe my desire is not strong enough. Please suggest how I can train my mind and use all my energy to change myself for the better.

PB, Calcutta

The first thing you need to realise and accept is that you cannot control the future nor can you guarantee the outcome of any path you choose. You can give your best shot for your academic and professional success by concentrating on the now. Take it one day at a time.

When you wake up, the first thing, even before checking your phone, think of three things that you are grateful for at that moment. It could be as simple as the air you breathe, having a roof over your head, knowing that you will get breakfast, or having a loving family.

Next, make your own bed, even if you have a domestic help. Waking up and completing a short and simple task will put you in a better frame of mind as you will have accomplished something.

Then make a list of three things to do that day — one academic, one hobby-related, and one family- or friends-related. For example — study two chapters, play the piano, call a friend or family member you haven't

spoken to in a long time. Tick off the three items as they are completed. This again will give you a sense of accomplishment. For now, when thinking of the bigger picture is leading to overthinking, start with taking a small step every day.

If you enjoy the subject you are studying and want to pursue an academic career by doing an MPhil or PhD, speak to seniors who have taken the same path to know how it is working out for them. It may be that your coursework is not easy for you to comprehend or possibly is quite different from what you had imagined it would be.

Consult your head of the department or any professor who you can speak to frankly to discuss your concerns. The restlessness may even stem from whether you really want to do your masters or if you are doing it because it is expected of you or you think this is the traditional way to go.

Minu Budhia, a psychotherapist, counsellor, founder of Caring Minds, ICanFly, Cafe ICanFly, and TEDx speaker, answers t2 queries related to mental healthcare and adolescence issues. Send your queries to askminubudhia@aringminds.co.in or t2onsunday@abp.in



I WILL ASK YOU TO EXAMINE THE REASON WHY YOU WANT TO BECOME AN ASTRONAUT. ONCE YOU FIGURE THAT OUT, YOU WILL ALSO FIGURE OUT OTHER FIELDS RELATED TO YOUR DREAM