

HEALTH

**mind matters**



**MINU BUDHIA**

**From money to peer pressure, your questions answered**

**How do I find a suitable career for myself? Should I run behind money or passion? Should I do what I love, which pays peanuts, or should I do what I don't love but pays really well?**

It totally depends on your support system and your financial condition. If you are blessed with a family that can support you emotionally and financially, definitely do what you love, at least for a few years. If you are excellent at what you do and your work is truly valued by your company, even an initially low-paying job can turn into one which pays at least the market standards, if not more.

One more thing to remember is that you are not defined by what you do. Your job is a part of your life, but it is not your life. If you are passionate about it, it can be wonderful. However, if you are doing a job you don't like to fulfil financial commitments, that is perfectly fine too. In these uncertain times, financial security and stability play an important part in keeping anxiety or depression at bay.

If you are just finishing school or college, opt for a career counselling session. That will help you to focus better. Also try a few different internships. Practical experience in the field will give you a better idea about the kind of work you want to immerse yourself in. All the best!

**For my friends' sake, I pressure my parents for money so that we can hang out in cool places with our girlfriends. I argue with them if I don't get the money and also blackmail them because if I lose my friends I lose**



**everything. Am I right in what I am doing?**

First figure out why you feel the need to pressurise your parents. If it's only to impress your friends or girlfriends, rethink why you always need to visit expensive cafes, restaurants, and so on. Your parents are not ATM machines. Not everyone has similar disposable incomes and it may be hard for your parents to provide the amount of pocket money you want.

The fact that you used the word "pressurised" shows that you have already realised that this isn't the right thing to do. In these uncertain times, your parents may be under a lot of financial stress that you are not aware of. Rather than "blackmail" them, speak to them with an open mind and see how you can help each other. If you're in

high school or college, and are good at academics, ask them if you can give tuitions. That way you will not only be getting money, but also earning it yourself. And this will instil in you self-confidence, self-worth, and teach you the value of money.

Friendships and relationships are both important, but only when you have the right people to hang out with. Make sure you're not being used, taken for granted, or taken advantage of because they think you're trying to fit in. Hanging out at home can be fun too. Play board games or video games, rustle up a brunch or bake together, sing karaoke, watch movies or binge-watch a TV series.

There's loads of things you can do that don't necessitate burning a hole in your pocket. Given the current situation, most of you are mostly interacting online. When you do start going out socially again, try a balance between staying in and going out.

**I take money from my parents' cupboard as they have given me permission to. I take out quite a lot and spend most of this on my friends. My parents are very busy with their work and have never raised any objection about the amounts I've taken. In fact, I've never been asked about what I'm spending on either. I love this freedom, but**

**am I stealing? I really am allowed to take the money.**

More than stealing, it sounds like you're worried about how much you're spending and how you're spending it. The fact that it has rung some alarm bells in your mind means that you're not truly comfortable spending what seems to be a substantial amount. Since you have been trusted with the money, respect that trust and also recognise the privilege you have.

If you feel like your friends always expect you to pay for them, or that you're trying to impress or "buy" friends with the money, slowly stop. Money is important, but it should never be a yardstick by which your friends measure you. You should first be appreciated and accepted for who you are as a person, rather than how much you can spend.

To better understand your dilemma, try a budget journal. Write out all your expenses, no matter how small, in a diary and discuss it with your parents. Share how you're feeling and they will be able to guide you. And if you feel you are spending too much, start a rainy day fund or a holiday fund or a fund for a charitable project you can volunteer with. Learning how to save is a habit that will serve you well in future.

**Two of my closest friends have started smoking. I did try, but didn't like it. They keep calling me uncool and childish since I don't want to. I love my friends but I just don't want to smoke. What should I do?**

Firstly, congratulations on not giving into peer pressure. It takes a lot of strength to say no to your closest friends, and by doing this you have displayed maturity beyond your years. Friendship is definitely important, but it is more important to choose the right friends. You've already embraced self-care by making the decision not to smoke, so stay strong and please do not take up smoking.

If you must hang out with these friends, excuse yourself when they are smoking. Talk to your friends to understand why they started. It may be that they were pressured by others and couldn't say no. If, like many, they did it to feel older or to fit in with an apparently cooler crowd, you may be able to help them quit too. However, if you feel constantly pressured to smoke, and they keep pushing, it may be time to find new friends.



**THERE'S LOADS OF THINGS YOU CAN DO THAT DON'T NECESSITATE BURNING A HOLE IN YOUR POCKET. GIVEN THE CURRENT SITUATION, MOST OF YOU ARE MOSTLY INTERACTING ONLINE. WHEN YOU DO START GOING OUT SOCIALLY AGAIN, TRY A BALANCE BETWEEN STAYING IN AND GOING OUT.**

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