



HEALTH

mind matters



MINU BUDHIA

From studies to negative thoughts, your questions answered

Q: In my group, all of my friends are toppers. They never get below 90 in any subject. I've tried very hard but my marks just don't go above 60-65. I feel so ashamed. How can I be better?

The first thing to do is to have faith in yourself. Academics is definitely important but it isn't everything. If you are doing your best, studying diligently, and are still having trouble with specific or all subjects, try speaking with your school counsellor.

It may be that you have a learning difficulty that you can work on either with extra help from your teachers or with a special educator. You can also try to find a tutor/mentor/friend who can help you study. Sometimes, all you need is a change of study methods or a study buddy who will help you to stay focussed on your goals.

Another thing to consider is whether you are having academic difficulties only this year, or whether this has been happening for a few

years. If it is only this year, it could be possible that a different matter is rendering you unable to focus on your studies. If something is troubling you at home, if you're having relationship troubles, if you're getting bullied, or if you've recently started losing interest in your favourite things and are feeling overwhelmed or alone, please speak with a counsellor.

Also, try a career counselling test that will help you understand your strengths. Once you know which subjects you are best suited for, you can concentrate your efforts on those, and plan your higher studies accordingly.

My father has left my mother for another woman. Seeing this, I'm also of the opinion that relationships should be freeing and that monogamous relationships don't work. So I have multiple girlfriends. Am I right?

Sorry to hear about your parents but there may be a lot more details and reasons for the dissolution of their marriage that you may not be privy to. And just because it didn't work out for your parents, doesn't mean a monogamous relationship won't work out for you.

Right or wrong would depend on what two consenting individuals agree to at the beginning of a relationship. If both are happy to be in open relationships with multiple partners, that's their individual choice.

Trust is key in any relationship, romantic or otherwise. When two people genuinely commit to each other, there's a certain level of security, the feeling that this person has your back. It's a promise to grow together. However, people do change over time, and sometimes they can grow apart.

If you feel that you want an open relationship or that you want to date multiple people, discuss that with your potential partners. Be clear about what you're looking for from the relationship and be respectful of their response.

However, cheating on your partner, or pretending to be monogamous while going behind their back and dating someone else, is a breach of trust.

I'm a 26-year-old man trying to maintain perfect mental and physical health via the latest advised methods. However, I tend to make up hypothetical stories in my mind where I'm the victim and enjoy thinking about the fact that people are sympathising with me! For example: Small health issues of my parents make me imagine scenarios where they have died because of the illness and people are looking at me thinking how sad my life is, how I have to struggle by myself and they offer their sympathies. It's not that I'm not concerned about my parents and want their demise, but looking closely I have realised that I tend to go through those types of thinking where I'm the victim and tend to enjoy such thoughts. However, practically, such thoughts do not seem rational to me and seem to have become my mental comfort zone. Please suggest practical exercises or techniques to come out of this.

It is a good sign that you have reached out for help as something definitely seems to be troubling you. If these thoughts are occurring very often, then you should definitely consider consulting a counsellor or psychologist to guide you via therapies that will be specifically suited to your unique situation. Till then, here are a few things to do:



Start a mood diary. Any time these thoughts surface, write down the exact scenarios, what you were feeling and doing right before these thoughts started and what you felt right after the thoughts went away. Include as many details as possible.

Start and stick to a routine for your day. Approach your health as a combination of both mental and physical health. Adopt healthy morning and night routines, make sure you're eating right and exercising, and schedule at least a call a day with a family member or a friend.

Start writing about your childhood memories. Has anything happened in your childhood that may be giving rise to such thoughts? Is there any particular negative experience that you went through and during which the sympathy of others made you feel safer? Or are you worried about a negative outcome and the worry is manifesting itself via these thoughts? Writing these down can help to bring about some clarity.



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