

ask Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q I am 30 years old and recently experienced shakes, racing heartbeat and sweating whilst on the way to work. I have been working night shifts at a software company for five years. My father had suffered from heart problems at a similar age. Therefore, I urgently consulted a cardiologist who conducted various tests especially ECG, Stress test and Echo. All results were normal. However, I live in fear and feel ill at ease. Please advise.

You rightly visited a doctor to rule out any medical condition. The experiences described can be manifestation of physical health issues such as heart problem, thyroid disorder, diabetes or reduced haemoglobin. Once these conditions are evaluated and ruled out, then we consider lifestyle factors such as stress, job burnout, even caffeine and alcohol excesses, besides secondary anxiety or depression.

It is likely that your anxiety is manifesting in the form of excessive preoccupation or worry about having a serious illness. Sometimes, this is called health phobia or hypochondriasis, which may be part of an anxiety disorder.

You are one of the many who have experienced a health scare. It seems your work-life pattern and perhaps relentless pressure (common in IT/BPO/KPO jobs) to perform and deliver, is taking a toll on your health. Other contributors may be an anxious personality with excessive focus on health concerns, as well as frequent media mention of health issues in the young, which can exacerbate a hypochondriac's fear.

I suggest you consider working only day shifts or switch your job. Perhaps this health scare is a wake up call to prioritise your health and fitness, thereby raising the threshold from being affected by unavoidable stressors. Additionally, I recommend you start regular physical exercise or walk for 45 minutes or one hour daily, eat healthy, small portioned, frequent meals, sleep at least seven to eight hours and keep yourself hydrated with adequate fluids, relax with good music and a book. Importantly, avoid 'shortcut relaxation method' with un-prescribed sleeping pills or alcohol intake. If symptoms persist, consult a mental health expert.

Q My eight-year-old son is studying at an ICSE board school. His teachers repeatedly call us, stating that he does not concentrate and at times is overactive. They feel he needs evaluation by a psychiatrist for hyperactivity condition called ADHD. At home, he is completely fine, well behaved, attentive and cooperative. Is the problem with him or the school?

Young children tend to have a short attention span - they soon get tired and bored of an activity and want to move on to something new. And when disallowed, they can become frustrated. However, it is important to consider whether your child is just restless or has ADHD.

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - a neurobehavioral disorder with significant difficulties of inattention or hyperactivity and impulsiveness or a combination of the two. Usually present before seven

years of age, children are not just very active or inattentive, they also have a wide range of other behavioral problems that present across locations such as school, home and in social settings. Your child seems to have problem only at school.

I think you should have a formal meeting with the teachers to explore the issues. Typically, one needs to think whether your son has any difficulties with his peers or seniors at school, which could vary from bullying or harassment to adjustment problems. Further, look into whether there have been any academic difficulties or decline, and is that due to the subject or teaching methods.

Also, enquire about what efforts have been made to engage him and improve his concentration. (For example: by being flexible with teaching approach and giving breaks, other than complaining.) Finally, and if necessary, see a child psychologist or psychiatrist for formal evaluation and intervention.

Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com
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