

Q & A Mindline



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Q Our son aged 26 has become isolated, spends much time in his room and does little throughout the day. He is disorganized and demanding. We want him to see a psychiatrist but he refuses. Can we get a prescription without him visiting a psychiatrist?

This is a common query and families often seek advice regarding their near and dear ones who may be suffering from emotional and mental health problems but refuse to seek help or attend an appointment. Based on your description it is quite possible that your son may be experiencing emotional problems, perhaps some degree of depression or adjustment problems which is manifesting in his behaviour and manner.

It's ethically and legally wrong to prescribe and treat without seeing the patient. This is because diagnosis and formulation of problems cannot be presumed based on information from the family but can only be confirmed upon clinical examination of the person in question. This is often followed by a physical health evaluation and investigations including ECG for the heart and baseline blood tests

to ensure that the liver and kidneys are reasonable healthy to prescribe medication if necessary.

Importantly, initial psychiatric consultation is less about prescribing and more about gathering information and coming to a conclusion that single or multiple difficulties exist and that they can be worked through. It's also about establishing working/therapeutic relationships in a secure physical (discrete private office) and emotional space, so that worries embedded in the conscious and unconscious mind can be explored in a confidential manner. If your son becomes aware that no medication will be prescribed without his agreement and that the discussion will be kept strictly confidential, then he may consider agreeing to a one to one consultation and/or therapy.

Finally, he must be informed that there is nothing to lose from a consultation, but only to gain - choices and options that he can consider. By the way, isn't it better to talk to someone who is independent and non-judgemental with no vested interests? Also, the benefits of golden hour (of talking fearlessly) are unmatched. Perhaps, reading this reply and talking to him politely and persistently will persuade him to take the first step to change. A method that he and we all, need to learn is that when there is a problem, we must confide and discuss it before losing hope.

Q I am quite fed up of the fact that my family is always on the phone or computer or some gadget. My daughter, especially is repeatedly checking Facebook updates and other social sites, even late at night. I think her sleep is disturbed and this affects her work and our relationship. Kindly advise.

Your family is one of many who

are caught up in the virtual world, accessing a wide range of unnecessary information and connected to all the people around the world except those around them! And there is now a thing called FOMO (fear of missing out). Here in, a person is hooked onto repeatedly checking happenings across social media groups and literally becomes restless and anxious if he/she is unable to do so.

Technology is here to stay, but while it has connected us, it is also disconnecting us all more than ever. We seem to have lost track of the amount of time and purpose of our online activity. Perhaps social media is contributing to an ever-increasing isolated existence and poorer development of personality - social skills and coping resources. Results are for you to guess - development of psychological problems including anxiety, depression, and possibly later development of maladaptive use of drugs and/or alcohol in the wake of real world difficulties.

Here is some advice for all – Use a smartphone and computer for the purpose of only tracking time online. Choose the use of social media on either the phone or computer, not both. Cut down your membership from the number of social network sites and substitute newly available time with meaningful activity, exercise, sports and other fitness programs. Choose real people interaction over virtual connect (for example, call and wish friends and family on birthdays or occasion) and spend quality time with each other. Importantly, make a standing rule that people are not to use electronic devices at the dinner table, while talking or watching a movie together.

Remember, leading from the front works best in this situation. Set an example of cutting your own electronic device usage before preaching it to others. I think, we all need to get our lives back, choose the real world over the virtual world, reconnect with our surroundings and live mindfully not mindlessly.