

Q & A Mindline



Dr Roshan Jain
Senior Consultant Psychiatrist &
De-addiction Specialist
Apollo Hospitals, Bangalore

Q I feel upset and angry over trivial matters and this is causing arguments at home and difficulties at work. I have been married for four years but we have no children yet. Both my husband and I are working. Unfortunately, we do different shifts, which means we only see each other briefly. He seems disinterested in me and prefers TV over everything else! Our marriage seems to be in turmoil. Please help.

Marriage is a complicated relationship requiring investments right after commitment and inception. Your problems are not unique and probably shared by many working couples, whose lives are consumed by everything else other than quality time for themselves and their dear ones. It's that mismatch of inadvertent or chosen priorities and expectation that appears to be the root cause of your problems. While shift work seems inevitable in a globalized world, it does cause problems for couples and family people. I recommend you 'stop and think' about what is it that you are unhappy about and how that may be manifesting in the form of anger and irritability. Equally, consider 'doing the other thing' when

you are getting worked up. By this, I mean - you deliberately change the way you perceive and react to a situation, absorb it and contemplate a response only if it's needed.

Try and be the calmer person in those ensuing arguments and see the difference. Remember, it takes two to tango! Reflect on the impact of your changed attitude and manner to situation and circumstances. Above all, there is no substitute for quality time with your spouse, especially during off days or weekends. Perhaps you both need to explore and change the shift work or match each other's work timings, so that you are both at home at the same time.

Consider getting rid of the television and you will soon have plenty of time for yourselves and for those who are near and dear to you.

Equally, invest in yourselves in the form of hobbies, nurturing interest and fitness. Remember, a healthier mind and body is a prerequisite for a healthier and happier life.

Q Our 18 year old son has joined the BE course, but has not attended most of the classes for the last six months. He even skipped the internal exams and is hence is not allowed to sit for his first semester exams. He had chosen the civil engineering course and even likes the college. However, he is neither studying nor attending classes. Should we go for a face-to-face psychiatric opinion?

I suggest you gather more information about him and his whereabouts in a confidential manner, from his teachers and friends. Check whether he is or has experienced some form of bullying and harassment, either from other pupils or from the teaching faculty.

Try and learn more about his friends and their hobbies/habits, as it will reflect

his as well. There is an enormous amount of peer pressure these days, which sometimes adds value to academic achievement but at other times, it can be detrimental to one's confidence and self-esteem. Other times, there is pressure to participate in mischievous and unsocial behaviour, including experimenting with drinks and drugs from a young age.

For exploring evidence of regular or excessive drinking and any drugs use - look for slurry and incoherent speech, wobbly gait, bloodshot eyes, sign of injury from fall or fight, frequently being inebriated after a party or drinking session. Also, explore evidence of neglect like dirty clothing, untidy room, disorganized personal belongings etc. Talk to him about what might be happening to him and why despite liking the course and college, he is engaging poorly.

Sometimes, a student experiences significant adjustment reactions to change (from school to college and from being at home to moving out to live independently) and that can manifest in the form of anxiety, avoidance and dissatisfaction, thereby affecting desire and engagement even with things they have chosen.

Reconfirm whether he is happy with the chosen course and college. If not, then it is wiser to change it sooner rather than later, in the interest of his career aspirations and motivation. Nothing is permanent!

It's, vital to have good communication and interactions with children at home as this will facilitate them to approach you first, in the event of crisis, for discussion and guidance. Equally, when there is concern about their behaviour, you can talk to them openly.

Finally, seeking professional advice would facilitate an objective non-judgmental exploration of all the above issues as young individuals open up more when they feel secure and comforted in a confidential environment.