

A SHOT OF HOPE TALK IT OUT

Pandemic has affected mental health of students in many ways

TOI has launched Talk it Out, a series under which our expert counsellors will answer readers' mental health queries. This week's advice is from clinical psychologist Dr Shwetambara Sabharwal

My 23-year-old son lacks motivation and has lost his confidence. He says he wants to do something but at that moment he is just blank. He sleeps almost the whole day and can't sleep at night. He has completed his BTech and was planning to go abroad for master's but is stuck here due to the pandemic. What can I do to get him out of this state of mind?

— Anonymous

This must be difficult for you. Your son's dazed state is completely understandable. The pandemic and subsequent impact on students has been impairing in many ways. If these symptoms have persisted for over two to three months, I strongly recommend seeking a clinical psychologist for diagnosis and therapy. As a parent, it is important for you to stay emotionally connected with him. Spend time with him, allow him to express himself, encourage self-care and simple routines for eating, sleeping, reading, exercise, and small chores and responsibilities around the house. These may not come easily to him so be patient. Do remind him that our self-worth does not lie in our achievements, performance and accolades. It is to be built and nurtured inside of us without conditions.

I am a 17-year-old student studying in class 12. I am really stressed out and confused as my parents and grandparents

want me to join a profession in which I am not interested. I think that I am selfish in not taking their dreams and aspirations into consideration. On the other hand, I feel that I do not even have the right to choose a profession where my interest lies. My cousins and friends are preparing for what they want to do, and here I am, still clueless. Please help me understand who I should listen to.

— Anonymous

I see where you are coming from. While having separate views on career possibilities within families can cause some stress, from another perspective, it can also help us explore various ideas. It indicates that your family is personally invested in you. Communicating your wishes to family does not necessarily mean lack of respect or conflict. Do share your feelings with them. Opting for career counselling and discussing aptitude, interests and potential with professionals can help you make better decisions. Avoid comparing yourself with cousins and friends. I have always believed that confusion and consideration give us opportunities to take a wider view of things as opposed to making up our minds too early in life. Your success and happiness does not depend on how early you know what you want to pursue.

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