

## NEWSLETTER FOR FEBRUARY, 2018

Dear Parents,

We wish you, dear parents and all our lovely children, a very Happy New Year!

Each new year heralds the beginning of new things – new horizons to explore, new heights to scale and new achievements to celebrate. To kick start 2018, we would like to address various issues in our ongoing series of online interactions with you. In our continuing efforts to clarify doubts, spread awareness and strengthen the ties between children and parents, we have decided to focus on an area of concern for most parents these days – the Teen years.

As our children grow older, and move from strength to strength, we often find ourselves caught up in the dilemma of being “teenage” parents i.e. parents of children who have entered the period of “Storm and Stress”. The teen years are synonymous with rebellion, negativity, aggression, frustration and myriad confusing emotions, for the teen as well as the parents. Some say, “Blame it on the hormones”, which is true to some extent, because the physical changes that occur during this stage of life create dis-balances which have repercussions at different levels – physical, emotional and social.

February happens to be a happening month for young people. Cutting across barriers of race and religion, Romance fills the air and “Ships” (relationships, to those uninitiated in teenspeak) become a major necessity for our young people. However, everything is not rosy when we contemplate the myriad issues associated with this stage of life – print and social media are rife with incidents that take away your sleep at night, as you contemplate the future of your growing youngster.

So, as concerned parents, what can we do to guide our young people? The answer, as always, lies in communication. The first step in the right direction is the ability to have clear and direct communications with our children. As counsellors who work with young people every day, we have found that there are some ways of communicating with young people, which allow them to realise that they can trust and confide in concerned adults, especially parents.

First, it is necessary for the adult to accept the fact that their “child” is now moving toward adulthood, and that it is time to establish an adult – to –adult bond with them. Treating them like children or talking down to them, or even trying to impose your decisions on them will serve to create a rift and adversely affect what you are trying to achieve.

Learn to LISTEN - Let them know that it is okay for them to talk to you about their worries and fears, and that you will be a patient and supportive listener. Needless to say, you might find it difficult to hold back comments and judgements, but it is necessary for you to do so, as this will make the young person feel that you are making every effort to understand his / her problems and worries.

Next, it is important for adults to realise and accept that School, Academics and Friendship issues are just as stressful to them as our life problems are to us. It is often with great difficulty that a young person opens up to an adult, and when they hear responses like “You are worried over such a small thing?”, it permanently shuts the door on all further communication. Never trivialise their issues.

Do not jump to conclusions and assumptions. Allow them to speak and tell you what is going on in their minds. Sometimes, because of their ongoing struggles with things, they find it difficult to explain in words what they are experiencing, and they may not be able to get the right message across. Always clarify doubts before coming to some kind of understanding of their issues. After giving them a patient hearing, it may help if you summarise whatever you have heard and ask them, “It this right? Is this where the worry is stemming from?” This lets the teen know that you have listened and understood.

While it is necessary to treat all problems as important, it is also necessary to let them know that at times, there are problems which cannot be solved, but life goes on and things eventually turn out all right. There is no need for them to feel that is the end of the world. Here, sharing personal experiences can be helpful in giving them insight into the transience of life in general. However, be careful not to come across as preachy. Most young people “shut down” if they feel a lecture coming on.

Share your feelings with them and let them also share their feelings. Use words that convey emotions and feelings. If you are unhappy or upset with whatever your young person has shared with you, give voice to it. Let them know you are angry or sad or hurt. Staying silent or trying to convey disapproval through silence does not strengthen emotional bonding.

Finally, when discussing solutions, try to give options and suggestions for independent action by the teen himself / herself. Offer assistance and support, provide comfort and a shoulder to cry on, but **do** not be tempted to implement decisions for them. They are growing up, and they must learn to take their own decisions and accept responsibility for their actions.

Daunting though it appears, eventually this stage too will pass, and hopefully, with better communication and emotional bonding, your young person will have grown into a mature adult you can be proud of. And when both of you are much older, you will find that the memories of this time spent together will have made the journey worthwhile.

Best Regards for the month ahead,  
School Counsellors, LMC

As always, you are welcome to send your queries to The School Counsellors at La Martiniere, Kolkata.

For appointments, interactions and discussions with the school counsellors, kindly contact the following numbers:

La Martiniere for Girls: 033 4040 6663

La Martiniere for Boys: 033 4040 6612 / 033 4040 6629