

## NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL, 2015

Dear Parents,

Greetings from the School Counsellors !

At the start of the new academic session, we found ourselves wondering about the various issues we would like to address in our ongoing interaction with all of you, through this newsletter. After the initial, mostly positive, reactions which we received for this newsletter, all has fallen silent at your end. We sincerely hope that our efforts to spread awareness and empower you in your tireless efforts at parenting are of some use to you. As always, please feel free to share your thoughts and views with us via email, at the school email address mentioned in the school diary, or personally, through prior appointment.

We would like to begin this academic session by putting the spotlight on the actual reason why most schools today have counsellors. As professionals and as parents ourselves, we are only too vividly aware of the stress and pressure that children undergo as they move from one rung of the educational ladder to the next. These may precipitate a variety of behavioural and learning problems which are often solved through a few sessions of individual counselling, behaviour modification techniques, study strategies and so on. However, in some cases, we usually find that the problems are not of a mild nature, and the student is found struggling with issues of more serious psychological import. At this juncture, the student would require a variety of more organised support, both within the school and at home.

A child who presents symptoms of a psychological disturbance of any kind is usually referred to the school counsellor, an individual who is qualified and trained to make a preliminary assessment based on personal interaction and observation of the child and feedback from teachers. The parents are then informed and a request is made for a more detailed psychological assessment, for which a referral is usually provided to a mental health professional ( Psychologist / Psychiatrist ) outside the school. This assessment may provide a confirmed diagnosis of some kind or it may even rule out any serious disorder. Thereafter, the child might require to follow a course of medication and psychotherapy, as the need demands.

It is, however, not as easy as we have just outlined in the earlier paragraph. Our first hurdle arises when we interact with parents. As parents ourselves, we fully comprehend the shock, dismay and mental upheaval any parent would go through when first informed that the child might be having a problem, that too of a behavioural and psychological nature. It is this, coupled with the age-old societal attitudes towards mental health and mental illnesses, which builds a mental block in the mind of any parent, and results in what we clinically call "denial", or the inability to accept the fact that there is a problem. It is this denial which prevents any further intervention of a beneficial kind, because if, as a parent, we are unwilling to accept the existence of the problem, then how will we even begin to seek a solution?

Denial is, in itself, more damaging than any disorder or problem that might exist. It hinders practical thinking and logical reasoning, and it is usually emotionally restrictive as well, because the thought pattern that emerges from it is, "What will others think or say?", rather than a more useful "What can I do to help my child?". Denial prevents any kind of problem solving action and it further compounds the issue, because every day spent in denial is one more day of struggle for the child who is genuinely in need of some kind of help and assistance.

Another form of denial is brushing the issue under the carpet with a dismissive statement like "Boys will be boys", especially in relation to behaviour which is inappropriate and not in keeping with the ethical tone of the school. Of course, children will be playful and mischievous, and they will also break rules. However, when the misbehaviour moves away from being a harmless prank or an accidental breaking of school rules, and when a particular pattern of behaviour emerges, it is wise to accept the feedback and act on it at the earliest.

We would like to reassure you, that frightening as it sounds, issues of a psychological nature can often be reduced to a minimum with a little bit of understanding, counselling and in some cases, good medication. Fifty percent of the battle is won when we are able to overcome our mental blocks and accept the problem. Thereafter, the student himself or herself feels relieved to have the necessary therapeutic interventions that will empower him or her to move ahead, upwards, towards their academic goals.

The purpose of this newsletter is, therefore, to underline our need for your cooperation, understanding and acceptance – together, we can help our children to be the best they can be!!

We wish each and every one of our students a very successful year ahead, with new horizons to explore and new peaks to conquer!!

With regards,  
The School Counsellors at La Martiniere Schools, Kolkata

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

La Martiniere for Girls : 033 4040 6663

La Martiniere for Boys : 033 4040 6612