

NEWSLETTER FOR JANUARY, 2015

Dear Parents

'A twelve year old girl from a reputed school in a metropolitan city was taken into police custody and sent to a juvenile home for severely assaulting her classmate. What began as a normal tiff, with one girl pushing the other in a fit of rage, uncannily hit a delicate nerve in the other, leading her into a state of coma.'

'In another incident, yet another sixteen year old landed in a juvenile home when he tried to sneak alcohol to school, just for 'fun'.

All of us have come across reports like this in the newspaper. In both these instances, what could have passed off as normal teenage misdemeanors was booked under law because the authorities i.e. the parents in the former case, and school in the latter, chose to send a strict message to the entire student body, as they felt enough was enough.

Many times seemingly harmless acts and things done 'for fun' can spin out of control and lead to severe consequences. It is commonly believed that occasional, teasing or bullying, or a little peeping into your neighbour's answer script, a prank call, or lifting off someone's mobile, money or notes does no harm. But it should be well understood and remembered that all these seemingly trivial acts, are punishable by law. The only difference is that while adults are sent to jail or prison, minors i.e. children below 18 years of age are sent to remand homes, irrespective of their social, financial or educational status.

The living condition of these homes is quite deplorable, almost hellish. Gory stories of abuse, lack of food, sanitation and basic living conditions keep trickling into the media. Children staying here are expected to correct themselves, and for that purpose, they are made to do community work, take vocational training and meditation classes. But the merciless environment in these homes and the intermingling of seasoned offenders and first timers usually results, in the latter also becoming like the former, thus leaving no scope for their return to a life of normalcy and dignity in the outside society.

The trauma that the parents of juvenile convicts go through is no less. The sense of shame, disappointment and separation from their children is a punishment for them too. And the truth of the matter is that these things are no longer merely newspaper reports or happenings of another world, but they are happening closer home.

With the advent of social networking sites, the lines dividing public and private space have blurred like never before. When one friend vents her anger and hatred for another friend publicly, maligning her reputation with false or sometimes true allegations and comments, the victim goes through severe trauma, often pushed to the brink of suicide. In such cases, the victimizing friend or friends can be charged in a case of abetment to suicide. This can also happen when there is unnecessary gossiping or discrimination against someone, for differences in background, looks, status or religion.

The bottom line is that till the law of chance is in the favour of the child, he or she may get away with small and big mischiefs and crimes. But if caught, and reported against, the law is not kind to children or adults.

In this scenario, it becomes our responsibility to show zero tolerance for morally and legally unacceptable behavior, right from their childhood, make them aware of the legal implications/provisions of misdemeanors and encourage them to lead a socially healthy and productive life.

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