

PARENTS, KIDS LEARN NEW LESSONS

As pressure mounts, parents and children try to cope

IT's October, mid-term exams are over, and parents know more or less where their kids stand in the rat race. Which means anxious parents of those in the 10th and II PUC have already started trickling in to counsellors in the city, kids in tow. And counsellors are handing out coping skills.

"It's the parents who undergo stress, and pass this on to their children. But they must see the situation from the children's angle," says S Krishnaswamy, clinical psychologist, Samadhan Counselling Centre.

Agrees Meera Ravi, counsellor, Purna, "It's a perpetual anxiety, some parents want 'to tighten the screws now itself.' It's sad because if the child doesn't perform well, the cause may not be what they think it is, it may be something else altogether. It's important to go to the root cause. Also, parents have unrealistic expectations."

Says Krishnaswamy, "A parent of a child in SSLC

said, 'my boy is intelligent but not doing enough. He's stubborn, does not listen to us.' But the children themselves may be anxious — due to peer pressure, sibling rivalry, emotional disturbance, depression — so we teach them techniques to cope."

At the same time, Samadhan assesses the parents for family dynamics and acts as an interface between the child and parents. "Some parents may be autocratic, others permissive. When one parent is autocratic, the other permissive, the child gets a split message and gets confused."

STRESSED OUT

Some parents interfere even with timings. "They say, get up in the morning and study, that's the way we studied. But a child may study better at night. We tell parents, let go," says Jyothi Sharma, counsellor, Samadhan.

In fact, all you need to say is, "Whatever happens, we are there for you," says Ravi. Agrees Sharma, "We must be there only to hold hands — if something goes wrong, parents may repent."

Samadhan has put a guidance and support system in place, bringing counselling for 10th and PUC students to



their doorstep. It screens the family environment, parental aspirations, interpersonal harmony between parents; and then screens the student for ambition levels, routine habits and pressure; counsels both parents and students, has the student drawn up his own study plans, ensures motivation levels are good, and goes back and forth until the child tides over.

COPING TIPS

- Empower rather than rule over the child.
- Give positive strokes. Don't refer to the child's inadequacies.
- Don't suffocate the child. Give him sufficient space. He too is worried about his future.
- Be approachable and available for the child. Listen to him.
- Don't ground the child, allow for recreation — watching TV, chatting with friends.
- Be calm and give him emotional support.

— Meera Ravi

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