

THE PARENTS' CHAT ROOM

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi



Q: Dear Dr. Trivedi,

I am 19 years old and am in college. I don't have any friends because I am shy. I'm a God-fearing, a person, but had difficulty with making and keeping friends and not very pretty and my brothers always teased me. And I'm dark and no one will marry me, if I am having trouble keeping friends, I'm sure a husband will be very hard to find for me. What should I do to make people like me and want to be my friend?

A: Thank you for your question, reader. What you're presenting as a dilemma is not really an uncommon scenario. Most people encounter such situations growing up as part of their assimilation process into society. While it may be true that most people experience this process in their teenage years, or sometimes even sooner, it is nevertheless an acquired part of 'growing up'. It is something that each of us has to work through and learn to do on our own.

Feeling shy in a given situation is the result of focusing too much on one's inner self and not enough on the outside situation. Having family members tease you about something that you are sensitized to has probably hurt your efforts to a degree. Nevertheless, through practice and patience, shyness, too, can be overcome.

First you'll need to change your mind frame. Just as you can't imagine someone learning to swim without getting into water, you must accept that overcoming shyness without throwing yourself into social interactions would be next to impossible. Therefore you must engage yourself in as many social interactions and situations as often as possible.

It is also unfair of a few to start thinking about your chances of marriage, while you're still trying to overcome shyness. That sounds like someone in first grade, worrying about their SATs. By focusing on such a long term goal, you are only increasing your anxieties in the present situation. This makes it harder for you to overcome shyness. Instead, if you focused on meeting people and

having fun talking to people, you would overcome shyness naturally. Another important trick to remember as you interact with other people is to keep your mind distracted from the worry about being shy. This way, you will minimize your worrying and being overly self-conscious. Much like when you first learned to ride a bicycle, you'll be coasting through conversations without even realizing you are doing so. As for finding friends, as you overcome shyness and feel comfortable with expressing yourself, you will naturally pull those people towards you that are most likely to be your friends. The bottom line is that you need to get out there and start practicing. Best of luck to you.

Q: Dear Dr. Trivedi,

Our three-year-old son has started waking up in the middle of the night crying for no reason. He does not say anything about a bad dream. Now, he just wants to sleep in a room, and sometimes we let him. We have not had any tragedies in the recent past, and he is otherwise such a good child. Is this normal? Please help.

A: As part of usual developmental process of children, a number of behaviors that we would generally consider upsetting manifest themselves as normal part of the growing process. What you're describing is one of these behaviors. It is quite normal for children of all ages to wake up in panic and sheer terror and not be able to be woken up. Furthermore, the child may not even recall what happened in their dream when they finally do awaken. These episodes are known as night terrors.

Sometimes they have an association with a traumatic experience, but this is not required. Likewise, increasing the child's comfort level at bedtime may help the child's sense of calmness and help minimize the risk of such night terrors. Notwithstanding, left on their own, these episodes usually go away in a few days to a couple of weeks. Episodes lasting longer than that, or presenting with other symptoms, such as big-time headaches, changes in vision and nausea and vomiting should be further evaluated by a physician as soon as possible.

Dr. Trivedi is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist. He treats children, adolescents and adults.

Please send your questions to parentschatroom@citymasala.com

