

Children react differently to stress; parental trust is the most important



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In recent days, there have been continuous reports of students attempting suicide, a situation that is cause for concern. As parents, we often feel that adults face much greater pressure dealing with work, family, and financial issues than children do. However, Dr. Wong Chung Hin, a specialist in psychiatry, reminds us: "Clinically, cases of emotional distress due to stress are observed in primary, secondary, and university students. Parents should carefully observe any changes in their children's behavior, patiently listen to their thoughts, and refrain from making hasty criticisms. The most important thing is to believe in your children and encourage them to express themselves."

The reasons for emotional issues arising from stress in children go beyond academic performance and include family expectations, peer relationships, school bullying, family problems, and family history. Dr. Wong recalls, "When facing the death of a family member, relatives are often busy dealing with post-mortem matters or various rituals, forgetting to take care of the child's emotions. In addition, some children experience their parents' divorce or even abuse, which can also affect their emotions."

Emotional changes vary, and parents need to be attentive

Dr. Wong further emphasizes, "Some children are more adept at expressing their feelings, but many do not know how to express their emotions. As children grow older, some are less willing to share their feelings with family. Therefore, parents and teachers should pay close attention to any changes in their children's emotions, behavior, and performance."

Parents should pay attention to the following signs:

1. Emotional expressions on the face, such as appearing gloomy, tense, crying, or sad.
2. Changes in lifestyle habits, such as disruptions in sleep patterns (insomnia or excessive sleep), changes in appetite, or spending a lot of time isolated in their room.
3. Unwillingness to go to school.
4. Physical changes, such as diarrhea, and stomachaches. Parents might easily attribute these to health issues, but a deeper understanding reveals their connection to emotional stress.
5. Self-harming behaviors, including self-hitting, cutting, or expressing thoughts like "I don't want to live."



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Each child expresses emotions differently. If the child exhibits the above-mentioned signs only temporarily, returning to normal after the stress has passed, it is referred to as "Adjustment Disorder." However, if the situation persists and continues even after the stress has subsided, seeking assistance from a professional is advisable.

When children have emotional expression issues, parents should start by trusting and not hastily criticizing.

Dr. Wong points out that these emotional problems are often challenging to detect: "Some patients, as mentioned above, may not know how to express their feelings. However, there are also cases where they do express themselves, but their parents or teachers do not see it as a problem. They don't believe the child and instead think that their reluctance to go to school is a sign of laziness. After listening to the child's concerns, parents or caregivers should believe the child and avoid making hasty criticisms. This is also about raising awareness of emotional issues; they may have insufficient awareness and not know how to handle them. Alternatively, they may worry that seeking help will result in negative labels from others and be hesitant to seek medical attention."



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Dr. Wong warns, "Delaying treatment may worsen the condition, possibly leading to irreparable situations. Some parents worry that taking their child to

see a doctor means resorting to medication and fear potential side effects. However, the truth is that medication is not the only form of treatment. It needs to be assessed first and can be complemented with psychological therapy. Many cases involve individuals who believe they are fine or expect to heal on their own after a while, leading to prolonged conditions."

Once a child's emotional changes have been occurring for a significant period, impacting daily life, or if thoughts of self-harm or suicide emerge, seeking help promptly is imperative. Dr. Wong also reminds parents that if a child reads news about suicide recently, parents should be by their side, explaining that this is not a solution to emotional problems, to prevent the news from affecting the child emotionally.