

The role of the school counsellor

Edm

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PROGRESS in the education system has allowed advanced schools and colleges to employ other counsellors besides the usual college counsellors. They are the personal counsellors.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, etc., are all hired by such schools for the purpose of counseling. However, most personal counsellors are common individuals who have around six months' training to counsel students in schools and colleges.

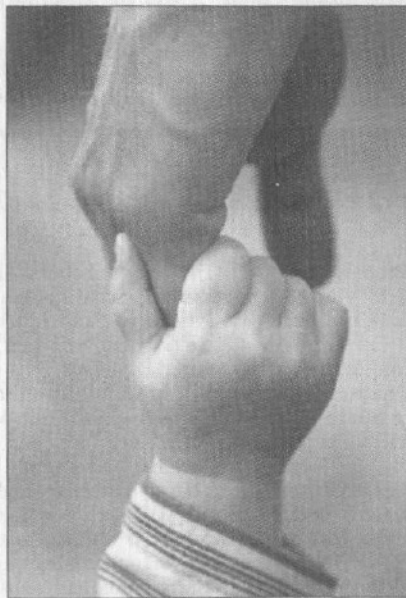
These counsellors are approached themselves by children with problems at home or with their studies or fellow students, etc. But the teacher too may in some cases refer them to a counsellor if they notice a change in behavior or attitude. Whether the child has problems related to the school or is going through external problems, the duty of the counsellor remains the same. They are required to hear the student who has come to them. The child should be allowed to speak and let his/her emotions out for that is how he or she will feel better emotionally and gain more confidence.

If a child has suffered a trauma or is

emotionally unwell, the parents/guardians should be contacted or the child should be referred to a psychiatrist. But no matter how badly the child is traumatized, the counsellor cannot advise the child; neither can they prescribe them medicines. They are not certified to do so.

Unfortunately, in many schools and colleges, the counsellors give out advice which is unethical and which may even be considered a crime in the eyes of the law. For just six months' training after all is not enough to suitably direct a child. There have been cases reported in which severe problems in a child's life have lingered on for many years before any action could be taken for his betterment. Sometimes the advice given ruins the child's personality. Also telling a child who is going through a slight period of disturbance that he/she is in a state of depression is way off the mark. Depression is not just a state in which a child may feel gloomy, it is an illness requiring professional treatment.

The counsellors should only hear what the problem is and try to make the student feel more secure and optimistic. He



should also not have many sessions with the child as the child may become dependent on him and even assume that the counsellor will help him get

more advantages over the other children. The child may also mistake the counsellor to be his or her friend and expect him to give him or her more time and attention, which may be rather difficult to promise.

Another drawback of having personal counsellors in schools is the students' seeing a counsellor after committing a crime in order to make sure that their peers do not discover their criminal act. Then also if the matter about the child seeking help from a counsellor comes out, the child is targeted and made a source of entertainment. There may have been progress in education, the mindset in our society is such that it does not consider people who seek professional help as normal. This is the reason why most people avoid psychiatric help.

Schools and colleges should arrange seminars and workshops in order to avoid this and educate the people on the necessity of seeking professional help. It should be understood that those getting help are not mental. They are just ensuring that their mental health remains stable which may otherwise be disturbed due to work stress or other causes. ■