

Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in Jacksonville, Florida
[Conversation Forum - Parenting Issues]

>>> zafar_hyder, Florida 02/04/05 1:21 am >>>

We have a friend living in 5-mile radius of our home in Jacksonville, Florida. Yesterday morning after getting up for school his 16 years old son killed himself. Apparently he did not like School. It is devastating to the family and the Bangladeshi Community here. He was an extremely nice shy kid. zh

From: Syed Islam
Subject: Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in US
Date: Thu, 3 Feb 2005 10:29:50 -0800 (PST)

Zafar:

I heard the very sad news yesterday. My prayers are with the family. I still can't believe that this nice kid can do such a thing. I had hard times breaking the news to my son, who knew him quite well.

Litton

From: Muin Chowdhury
Sent: Friday, February 04, 2005 12:51 PM
Subject: Re: Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in US - more info

Thanks for your inputs, especially to Zafar for shaking us up, thanks to Azim, Reza and Shafik for their valuable comments.

I want to move forward with one open ended question for you all.

As parents, what are we afraid of? That we put so much restrictions or demands on our children? Are we in the process of creating some laboratory trained guineapigs? Please share your experience with us.

May Allah give us what is good for us.

Muin

From: Saif M. Mamoon
Sent: Friday, February 04, 2005 3:53 PM
Subject: Re: Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in US

This truly is a tragic and very sad incident. Of all the conflicting pressures our children are subjected to, personally I feel that academic ones are the most severe.

Parents should not pressure their kids to get all A's in school. I know of parents mistreating their child just for getting a single "B". It would be nice to be a perfect 4 pointer (or a 4.5 pointer with plenty of Honors and AP Classes) in High school. But when it comes to college admissions, GPA is just one admission criteria. Important thing for High Schooler's to know is to try their best academically, but also to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities.

We tell our 10th grader to try her best, be stress-free, and tell her that what is destined to happen will happen. I still every night go over my daughter's Math homework, and explain to her any

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mistakes she made, and discuss as to how her other classes are going. This way I know I am in touch with her academically, and help her in any way I can.

It is also important to take vacations in between semesters and definitely summers, and have all participate in the planning. That way the children know they have some fun activity to look forward to beyond their very rigorous academic life.

Best wishes to all.

Mamoon

>>> Zafar Hyder 02/05/05 12:55 am >>>

Litton, unfortunately the child (Gourov) did not confide his frustrations to Bengali friends/kids. It is now clear that all his non-bengali friends knew that he wanted out of that school, he told them **"I am removing myself from this school"**, no body figured what that meant. He was an average to good student in middle school. His parents moved him to Stanton High from another high school in August 2004 to start his tenth grade. Stanton is a very good but very tough school. He was drowning He told his parents, they thought he would catch up after a while. One more thing - but please do not make this a prime thing - the gun was his father's. The important thing is he had suicidal thoughts, not that the gun was readily available. May god place him in Heaven zh

>>> Najmul.Karim 02/05/05 3:50 am >>>

I think we should get into the practice of taking help from councillors/psychiatrists which is taboo in our culture. This is more important for our kids who are struggling to adjust among competing cultures. Another important thing I believe we should save some of our weekends. In most cases our weekends are taken away by social parties with hardly any time left for spending with family (quality time is not even the focus). We are like passengers of a crowded train except who do not know the destination and whose vigilance is totally relaxed and get shocked once robbery happens.

Najmul

>>> Reza.Islam 02/05/05 4:25 am >>>

I cannot imagine what the parents are going through. I have two teenager boys. I shared this story with them this morning. We reminded them that no matter what, they can share their problems with us. There are times when I feel sorry for our kids here. As far as I recall, our teenage years were much more care free. Here there is the pressure to do good in school, maintain our religious and cultural obligations, fit in with the other kids, peer pressure in school, etc.

We have at least one meal together as a family every day. We believe that our kids are never too old to get a hug. We strongly encourage our kids to talk about their day. Of course, they do not share everything. We have our share of arguments, whether it is spending too much time chatting on the internet or their choice of hip hugging baggy pants. It's too bad that parenting doesn't come with an instruction manual. One can only hope that we are doing the right thing. I would appreciate further discussions regarding parenting experiences in this forum. Maybe we can learn from each other.

Reza

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>>> Sharif M Alamgir 02/05/05 6:43 am >>>

Here is my input:

Just go back 40 years ago and start moving forward slowly 1 year at a time.....until you left the touch of your parents!

Do you see, how you were brought up,...There was 3 things in our parents mind (inherited from their parents...) 1) Study, 2)Study and 3)study or we will hammer you if you don't do good at school!!. If your report card does not show among the top three, you are in trouble.

This phobia will drive anybody insane..... and guess what, **WE ARE DOING THE SAME THING TO OUR KIDS !!**. Maybe it does not show directly ..but it is there, the pressure is there. Trust me!! In a way, it is a cruelty to the kids. You can call it abuse.

I am sure (I like to think I am wrong)....what drove that kid to commit suicide is purely from that respect.

Yes, we are at fault,....parents,...and from grand parents...and beyond that!!

I am saddened by the News,..it wasn't his time to go!! The peace they will be looking for, will never befound!

..sharif

From: Syed Hasan

Sent: Monday, February 07, 2005 2:07 PM

Subject: RE: Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in US - more info

Muinul and all:

Good questions, and I can see that we are heading for another round of discussion.

My question to all of you - Given a second chance, how many of us would really be interested in studying engineering again ?

And finally my favorite lines from **Khalil Gibran**..... I believe every word of it.

" Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams."

Iqbal

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From: Najmul Karim
Sent: Monday, February 07, 2005 2:24 PM
Subject: RE: Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in US - more info

Excellent quotation. Thanks for sharing it.

As per your question I was always in conflict between career promise that engineering offers and things I truly like (International relation ship/political philosophy etc). A joke about French in this context. We all know that that France has significant left leaning but most often elect right wingers/conservatives. The joke is French has their heart in left pocket but keep their money in right pocket.

I still cannot make my mind on this (engineering) like many things in life and still need more time to resolve this conflict.

Najmul

Mohammed Islam, 02/07/2005 03:52 PM
RE: Tragic incident for a Bangladeshi friend in US - more info

Really a sad event - as have said by many. I know/heard of at least three recent stories, although not such tragic. One involving a teenage child who was so unhappy that he went to the authorities to have him legally separated from the parents. The other involves a teenage child who gave up on schooling for good. The third one involving a teenage college girl who got married with a Hispanic boy friend without even informing her parents. She was living with her parents, very quite and really nice girl. She did not give any hint to her parents about the relationship or the intent to get married. It was a shocker.

Take it easy with the kids! They are in extremely difficult situations imposed upon them, not their own choosing.

Shafiq, Sacramento

>>> Haris Awal 02/08/05 2:33 am >>>

My prayer goes to the child and his family.

I really appreciate Shafiq and Mamoon's valuable parenting advice. I would like to add one of my own experience to this: good peer/associations. We need to find a good way to evaluate our kids' associations without their knowledge, and advice them how to improve their team if needed. Beside parents, kids spent most of their time with their class mates/friends. Friends, if one has some, are the most influencing elements in one's life.

Haris

P.S: If we are lucky to have our kids with both parents living with them, one parent should do the parenting and the other should try giving them the space they need.

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Gouranga Banik wrote:

Great Job IQBAL to quote Khalil Gibran. We should not forget that the quote would be our relationship with our kids. Gouranga

>>> Kazi Enyetullah 02/08/05 9:23 am >>>

I am very sad at this tragic event. My heart goes to the family who lost their son in this incident. May be we should all learn from this. This proves that our kids are growing up here with tremendous pressure on them. Long ago when we all grew up in Bangladesh, we did not have this kind of pressure at all. Now a days kids are under pressure to learn Bangla, Arabic and probably another language such as French or Spanish. Not only that, we expect them to be in top 3 or 5 of their classes. This puts tremendous pressure on them and sometimes we even forget to consult with them. The best thing is to always talk with them, find out if they are facing any trouble etc. But sometimes we are too busy (weekend party etc.) to discuss this. I hope there is a solution to this.

Enayet

From: S. Islam
Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2005 9:23 AM
Subject: Re: What are we afraid of?

Let us make it a conversational forum to share ideas and thoughts; yes, I will start with Muin's question...

Of course, we are all afraid of one thing or the other. It is also true, most of the things we worry about will never come true! That does not help much; we do still worry! One medicine I find useful is to be brutally honest to myself in whatever I do. This is not easy; we must also recognize we will fail in this pursuit but important thing is to keep that focus in mind.

I like Reza's suggestion to share experiences on raising children here. Our roots, thoughts, and expectations are similar and I believe we could learn a great deal from each other if we can share our experiences in a non-judgmental (be honest! if not fully, at least try to be non-judgmental) way.

If you ask me: what do I really worry about my kids? Of course, on a day-to-day basis, yes, thoughts do cross my mind: whom are they hanging around with? What are they doing on IM? How much time are they putting for the math test tomorrow? etc. etc...But these are transitory thoughts....what really worries me is what do I need to do now so that when I am not around, she will have to make tough choices what will dictate those choices? I do try get into discussion with my daughter on these topics.

She knows she is free to share any of her thoughts including the story of a friend who thinks his brother is cool (in a typical Bostonian sense, of course!) to a very sad story of another friend who was raped when she was ten, and to the hate mail she gets from another person who feels Muslims have no right to voice their opinion in response to an article my daughter had on her blog on the challenges of Interfaith dialog.

An open discussion, with a deep sense of trust, with kids is essential if we want to at least try to

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Influencing them. We, Bengali (perhaps other expatriates as well; think about the last scene from Big Fat Greek Wedding), have a tendency to "over impose" our thoughts/ideas/prejudices on them. We must recognize they are growing up here. Yes, doing well in school is important but there are many other things that are also important. We must try to strike a balance.

One of the reasons, I can tell, I decided to stay back here is to have the freedom to choose (of course, with all its positive and negative manifestations). Yes, as Muslim we also know we are responsible for our own choices. We must also provide that choice to our kids.

This is a long e-mail, longer than I thought it would be, but my bottom line is that: let us try to be a part of their "head and heart" so that as Iqbal very nicely quoted Gibran...through their head and heart at least we can hope to have a glimpse of their thought process and visit "tomorrow" with them.

Shafik, Boston

From: Najmul Karim
Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2005 11:00 AM
Subject: Re: What are we afraid of?

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I also find that being honest to oneself is very helpful. At a time it is very difficult but success rewarding. In the same context I also find being straight is much better than being manipulative and being straight is much better than disguise truth to make it look better. This pursuit is also difficult and deprives one of short-term benefits but it is much healthier for one's emotional balance. That in turns becomes more "**organic**" and "**environment friendly**" to one's family and society that we live in.

Najmul

From: Kiriti Roy
Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2005 1:37 PM
Subject: Re: What are we afraid of?

I think, we need to make friendship with them. Talk about their daily life, like school, game, their friends, movies, songs, food and what not. Spend time with them. Minimize the gap between parents and children. In this place we suffer from friendship-less-ness, so do they. So make friendship with them. Try to be a person in their world. I think this may help.

Kiriti

From: Haque, Mohammed
Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2005 4:45 PM
Subject: Re: What are we afraid of?

Children are quick to see our hypocrisy - so we should strive be a honest role model. If we want them to adopt a certain type of behaviour or values, we have to practice that as well. And always be hopeful and positive. In some of these Deshi circles, there are all these negative talks that sometime may sips into our kids. I personally think that this is a wonderful time to be alive. The possibilities are endless.

Azim

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"S. Islam" wrote:

This is a very sad news. My prayers are for the parents and hope they get the strength to deal with this tragedy.

There is a lesson in this for all of us, as Azim pointed out as well. Our kids are growing up here with pressures and expectations from us (parents), their peers (friends and society), and our roots (this is true for all expatriates). We must recognize our children are Muslims, Americans, and Bangali. There are no easy ways to reconcile these competing values and identities to strike a balance.

One way to, at least we can hope, do this is "to try to get into their heart and head". This will require a genuine desire and effort, despite our own hectic schedules, to be involved in all of their day-to-day activities. It will also mean we have to deal with their sometimes weird and strange (or should I say apparently moody and arrogant!) tantrums in a "non-judgmental" way. Bottom line: I think is to keep the communications open all the time and under all situations and be supportive of their struggle to strike a balance in all that we expect from them.

At least, this is what we try to do with our teenage daughter. I have no idea how it will work out in the end but at least we will know we have given our best effort at it.

Shafik, Boston

>>>> Haris Awal 02/09/05 4:25 am >>>>

Truthfulness or hypocrisy, which will bring you result? Manipulation or motivation?

Child's maturity plays a important role in our dealings with him or her. My father waited until I was in 10th grade to tell me, "in your age any female will attract you whether it is goat or lamb, so be careful about your emotion". I think it had a very strong effect on me, I don't know whether it would have the same effect if I were in 5th grade or so.

We need to have due respect to our children's personality if they have developed one already. This is becoming a very good discussion for parents like us, especially with teenage children. Your inputs are much appreciated.

Haris

From: Hasan, Syed
Sent: Wednesday, February 09, 2005 11:26 AM
Subject: RE: What are we afraid of?

All:

I can see that everyone is participating in discussing this crucial parenting issue. Thanks for those eloquent writings!! You guys are simply great (where are the girls? Rubina, Kauser, Lopa ?)

I have discussed the whole incidence with my 10-yr old and asked his opinion. At the same time we discussed the 'Columbine' shooting incidence and how this suicide could easily turn into another similar horror story as he had access to a gun and bullet!! My son is not a verbose person - the only thing he asked if the kid was bullied at school.

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Does our weekend social gathering taking a toll on our kids? I know it is pretty intense in some communities. Is that something to think about for the non-residents?

Please keep it pouring.

Iqbal

>>> Najmul Karim 02/10/05 4:02 am >>>

My kid is only about five and therefore I disqualify myself from providing concrete ideas like many others provided from their experience with teen age kids. Never the less I have serious concern (just by observation now more than 16 years) on the way people spend their family lives in most communities. In most cases people are busy during week days with their job and during weekend they try to catch up domestic works (grocery, cooking, house cleaning etc) and whatever time is left they spend in weekend parties/socialization. Event if people don't discuss negative things (as Azim said) still there is no time left to spend with spouse and kids. If they are running into frustration or deep trouble we will not even notice for a long time and when we do notice we will provide right solution.

I spent eight years in Baton Rouge, LA. Here is the situation of two families who are just random samples from people we all interact with. In both cases their sons/daughters are succeeding in career (studying in MIT and Berkley).

Case 1 (Son): Her mother is frightened to death these days as her son bring girl friends at home and closes bed room door. In my eight years in Baton Rouge, I don't remember whether the y had a single weekend without party. Both parents are very nice people and fairly educated but now things are turning out against their expectation.

Case 2 (Daughter): She is very good, speaks fluent Bangla. She does not have any boy friend. But her parents are sensing that she wants to get away from them. Her parents spent all their life in US in Baton Rouge. Now they are moving closer to their daughter's schools in a different coast. They both have to change their job and they sold their house (a big 3200 sqft house) they bought only one year back. I don't know when their chasing will end. Their daughter may change school, probably will take job in entirely different state etc.

I believe unless we free ourselves from the prison of excessive of socialization we will suffer in long run though it may not happen known fashion but it definitely will happen for most.

Najmul
