

Dear Dr Prince,

I am bringing my daughter Issy Alderson to see you. I know that appointments are limited in time so I wanted to write down what has been going on so that we give you the fullest picture.

Issy is struggling with anxiety and panic attacks, and has this past week said he feels she may be depressed. The situation has taken a turn for the worse over the past few weeks, but has been going on in a less serious manner for longer than I care to admit.

Issy is a smart, deep thinking, kind and funny, creative girl. For the past 18 months, she has managed to navigate life in a haze of sadness that I put down to a mix of teenage worry and the genetic make up from us her parents.

In writing this, I feel I must also bring to your attention the death of her grandfather in December 2013.

It has been a deeply worrying time; we can count on one hand the number of times she has been out with friends and the number of days she has come out of school happy and engaged.

She started to see someone we know about a year ago who practises psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, and some other therapies and this gave her an outlet to talk, and we saw some improvements. But as these were around changing negative thoughts and standalone situations, the efficacy lessened and actually made Issy feel she was failing because the feelings keep returning. She has refused to go for the past 3 weeks.

Over the past 18 months, she has been having issues with a set of pupils at school. As she was very quiet, they kept trying to engage with her, which made her very anxious. Her faith in teachers to stop them messing around and picking on her in class was low and she wouldn't let me speak to the school about it, saying if I did our trust would be broken.

In the end, the impact of this became too much on her, and us, and my husband Ross went to speak to the school in June this year. He explained she was suffering with anxiety and panic attacks brought on by the pupils, and requested she was not in the same class as one particular person in the hope it would enable her to move on, as everyone matured and grew up. I tentatively broached the subject with Issy and explained that Ross had been in, and she was relieved but still anxious.

When she returned in September, she went into school saying that she felt stronger and she could cope with anything, as she knew she wouldn't be with the person in question.

As I collected her on that first day, it was clear that something was wrong and she informed me that she was in their class. This was the beginning of the descent to where we currently are.

The school changed her class very quickly, and called it an oversight, but the impact on Issy was huge and she was unable to go to school. I explained to the school that she was suffering with anxiety, but it took her art teacher to call me at home to say that she was seeing a pattern and could she help.

Issy has now been off school for 3 weeks, except to go in to see the school counsellor once a week for 30 minutes. The Matron referred her to CAHMS (sic) last week, and called me to say an appointment is on its way, in November.

This week Issy told me her life is pointless and whilst she is grateful for everything she has, she doesn't see the point in it.

But I know that she can still engage with things that give her life meaning - she has a drawing lesson once a week and gets a lot of affirmation and connection out of that. She is like a different person after it, and then hits the ground hard within a few hours.

She isn't eating very much, and has trouble getting to sleep, then trouble getting up. She says she feels sad most of the time but she can't cry.

I feel she needs her feelings to be acknowledged medically to make some progress and then I can start to get a plan together to get her stable, as happy and healthy as possible and then hopefully back to school. If there is any support available to help me with this, that would be great, but I am prepared to deal with this on my own.

I am not going to make any assumptions, but I wonder if you could include hormonal imbalance and Lyme disease in your investigations, if only to stop all the well wishers who are bombarding me with potential diagnoses!

As you are aware, Ross's depression was intense and impacted on us all at the time and it has had a lasting effect on Issy (she has told this to the Matron at school) Despite that, I don't really want her to be put on medication unless it is absolutely necessary, but I trust you to do the best by her.

You were an absolute rock for me when Ross was ill, and I want to thank you for that. I do hope you can give Issy the help she needs.

Best wishes,
Suzanne