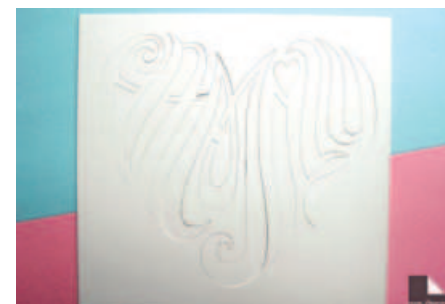
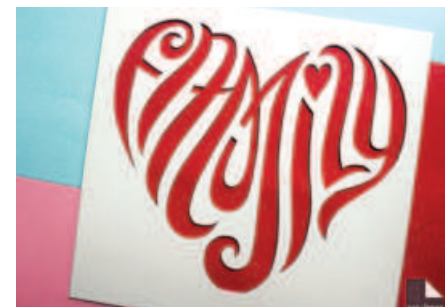
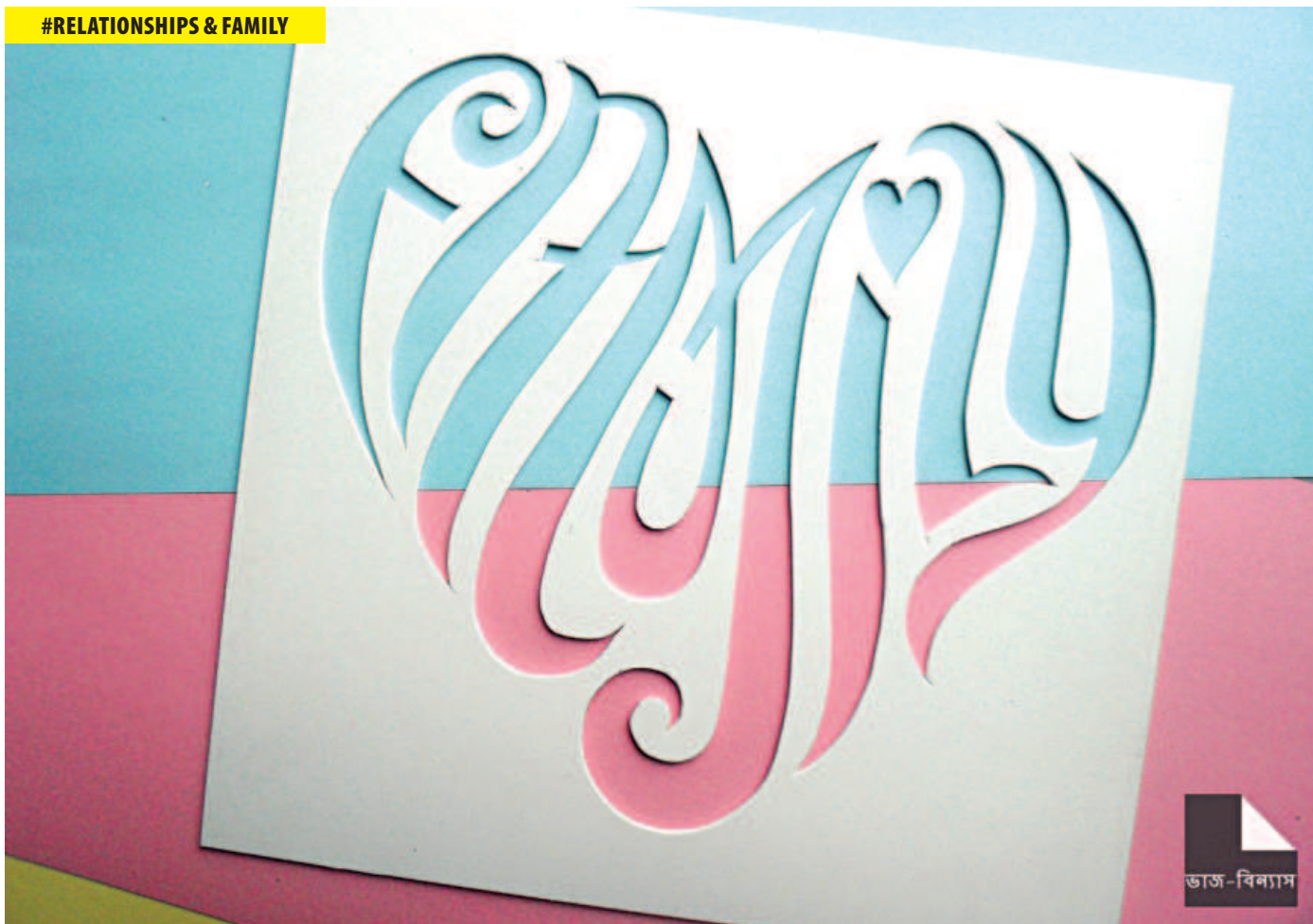


#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY



When parenthood creates distance in a marriage

A path set forth with the hopes of love, friendship, and common goals, frequently runs into unforeseen obstacles. Arriving at a child's life is one such challenge that many couples face. Occasionally, what starts out as the realisation of a common goal can inadvertently cause a drift that turns the couple from husband and wife into devoted but estranged parents.

Shahrina Ferdous, Consultant Psychologist in Serenity, a psychological support centre in Chattogram, tells us how, unknown to us, the arrival of a third or fourth person into the lives of a couple, can sometimes create a distance that goes far beyond just missing a rose on the bedside table.

The sound of small feet can cause a significant change in a marriage's dynamics. The emphasis shifts from being husband and wife to sharing parenting duties. Especially in a country like ours, where social, familial, and parenting duties keep piling, and couples don't even realise when they are being slowly pulled apart until the distance starts to feel almost too much. "The distance between a couple is not the results of an isolated incidence," stresses Ferdous, "Rather, it is the accumulation of a thousand moments that could not be spent together because other duties were more important."

For instance, the husband might find that his time and attention are limited because he constantly deals with supporting the family. He sees this change as a normal development and a vital part of taking on the duties of an expanding family. However, the wife may feel like there is a disconnect in her emotional bond with her partner as she navigates a sea of emotions. Parenting duties may take priority over the loving gestures and special times that were part of their

relationship. Unfulfilled expectations for emotional bonding may lead to a widening gap between partners.

Understanding the Emotional Abyss
Couples need to recognise that having financial stability does not always translate into sharing a healthy emotional relationship. Even in households with a stable income, emotional needs can go unfulfilled due to the pressures of parenthood and personal expectations.

Ferdous, like many other psychologists, emphasizes that mutual understanding is the key to overcoming this delicate situation. Although the husband's primary duty is to support the family, it is equally important to recognise and attend to both spouses' emotional needs. There is a fine line here, and communication is crucial. Although he might think he is doing his part by providing, the husband still needs to acknowledge and attend to his wife's emotional needs.

The wife on the other hand, needs to understand the immense pressure her partner takes in order to ensure a comfortable life for them, and or perhaps change her outlook on affection. Sometimes, changes are not so much as a compromise as they are mere adjustments. They may not be easy, but sometimes the outcome is far better and eventually feeling more natural.

The Therapeutic Bridge

Getting expert assistance becomes a sensible choice when the difference between expectations and reality grows too wide, making it seem almost impossible to bring back the love. Therapists can help couples to reconnect the complexity of relationships by understanding where each of the partners are coming from in their perspective and eventually helping the bridge the proverbial gap.

How do they do this? Ferdous explains that in order to rekindle the sparks that may have faded overtime spouses who are frequently mired by the grind of everyday life, are given homework assignments. These exercises are designed to meet certain needs of each other and clear the path for a deeper level understanding. "The results are not clear immediately," she says, "Since the needs are more emotional than material, it is difficult to bring back exactly how it used to be before. However, oftentimes they will find a new version of the old understanding and that can work even better."

This 'homework' is a proactive strategy that enables partners to actively work toward improving their union.

The therapy process is not a one-way street. Constructive feedback becomes a cornerstone, allowing partners to express their needs, desires, and concerns.

This open dialogue fosters a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives, unravelling the intricate layers of emotional needs.

A vital part of the therapy process is having open and honest discussions to establish reasonable expectations. Couples receive guidance in expressing their emotional needs so that they can jointly create a road plan. It's a path toward removing barriers to understanding, breaking down irrational expectations, and creating a stronger bond.

Certain relationship adjustments are inevitable as time goes on. It is suggested that couples embrace these changes and find beauty in the way their marriages are changing. While parenthood might alter the dynamics of a relationship, it also presents a chance for development, comprehension, and enjoyment of some new common interests.

The birth of a child can create new, challenging, and beautiful patterns in the marriage tapestry. It takes commitment to understanding, communication, and even professional assistance to overcome the complexities that emerge. With the correct resources, a couple can turn their separation into a bridge that deepens their relationship and writes a story of love that changes as their lives go.

By Nusrath Jahan