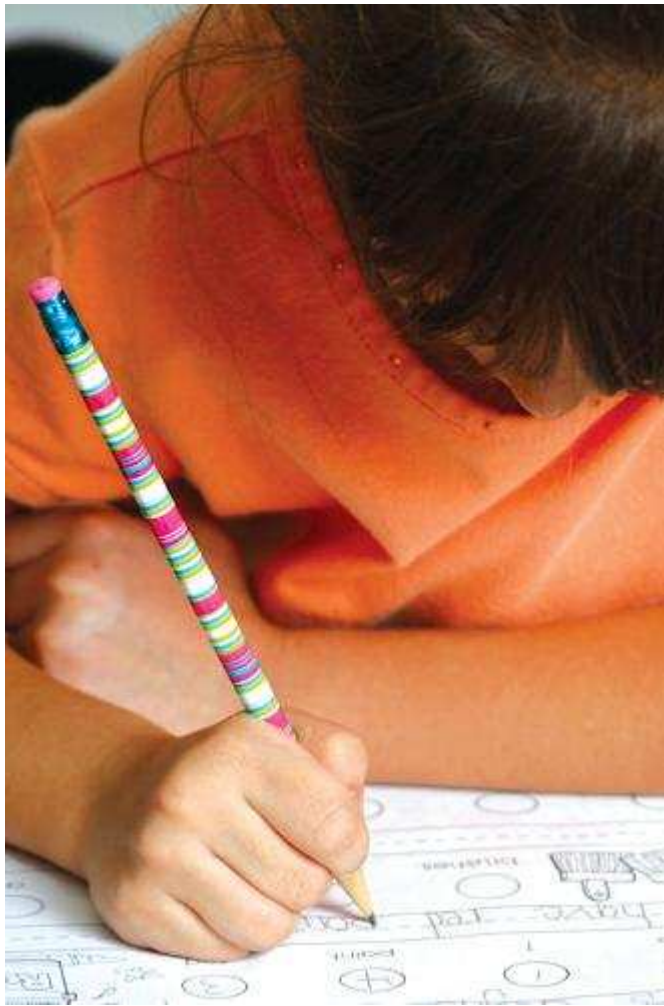


Student's self-esteem

By Dr. Douglas Berger, M.D., Ph D. | [ASK THE EXPERT](#)



QUESTION:

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My 12-year-old son is in his second year of middle school. He has always been shy. On his fourth day of his first year in middle school, he had a very intense altercation with his homeroom teacher and now doesn't go to the class. He does go to the school, now with another homeroom teacher, but studies in a spare room by himself for a few hours and then comes home after lunch. He takes and passes the tests. Even if the teacher brings him to the door of the class he refuses to go in. He plays well with his friends and also goes to night classes at a Japanese juku school happily. He is bright and cheerful, and cooperates well with his parents' instructions. What should I do? *Pam*

Your description seems to rule out a problem like depression, ADD, or defiant behavior. It sounds like he has always been sensitive and he experienced a traumatic altercation with the homeroom teacher last year, making him avoid returning to that class.

I would guess that returning to the class after so many months would be an unbearable embarrassment to him and I would neither expect him to return to this class nor try to force him into that. If he can still graduate with his current study, I would suspect he will do better when his school changes as he enters high school. If not, perhaps he can enter another school the

following year.

He could also use some coaching and counseling to treat his sensitivity. Perhaps joining a tour of Outward Bound, a camping and leadership building group in the US, and/or taking up some karate lessons might help his self confidence. There is also the possibility that he made a good decision to avoid a bad teacher and has made a compromise by at least going to the school and studying and going to the *juku*, but it has been going on too long now so I agree that some kind of intervention as I mentioned is warranted, otherwise he will not adaptively confront difficulties and challenging people in the future.

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The discussions herein are meant as general information and advice only. Each person needs to make their own personal life decisions and to contact a mental health professional for consultation if deemed appropriate.

