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**Cheating—Why do students take this ugly path?**

“Cheater!”—We hear that often, whether it’s a game or a relationship. But over here in our school, it’s sad that we have to see this kind of issue among our students. It’s everywhere, from assignments to exams especially.

When it comes to defining the word “cheating”, the definitions come in different forms. It can be lying about your work or finding an excuse to take more time to finish your work while other students have a limited time only.

Cheating in exams is a serious problem, occurring quite seldom in our school. There have been more than 20 reports of cheating in this school year, which brings shame to our school’s reputation, since the 20 cases are from both the junior and senior form students.

Our team has evaluated the reasons that cause cheating among students. From thorough discussions with teachers and students, we found out that students who are stressed and are pressured by teachers and parents to do well in academics as well as in extracurricular activities tend to cheat in exams a lot. They have at least 40% more chance of cheating, whether it be in assignments, tests or exams.

Stress is caused by the misbalance of the students’ extracurricular activities and studies, since they don’t want to be an embarrassment or a disappointment to anyone. Their desire to excel in these activities pressures them to cheat. Most people assume that doing it once will not do any harm, such as when it comes to copying homework. But later, they will start relying upon cheating, making themselves reluctant to work hard or balance everything in life. And this even leads to cheating in exams.

A series of failures also leads most students to find cheating as the only way out. When students fail a subject or a test many times, they start feeling helpless, and to escape from their parents’ taunts and lectures, they take this path of cheating. Sometimes, we can understand that the students have low self-esteem in believing in themselves. They start to lack the initiative to work on new ideas, if they fail regularly in their attempts. They start believing that they are not creative enough, but actually they are not being original enough by taking the path of cheating.

Students fail to understand that their failures cannot limit them and force them to take up cheating as their only option. When they are exposed to the world, especially in public examinations, they will suffer and regret. Even in the workplace, they will struggle to have ideas. It’s better to struggle now rather than regretting later.

Since Hong Kong is an international city, many multinational companies invest here and set up their offices here as they can rely on the city’s development and progress. The development of the environment around the students also affects them, increasing the chance to cheat. A competitive environment makes students cheat in assignments and exams, especially through the Internet, as technology is advancing and providing a vast amount of access to information. The students may think that a specific website or app can ease their workload, but actually they may start relying on the technology platforms, which can become a habit later on, thus hindering their development of original and creative ideas. The school’s competitive environment forces the students to take the Internet’s help or use their friend’s homework as a “help” tool, which leads to more social circles of students to cheat.

In these challenges, the students lose the essence of being truthful and honest, especially towards themselves because, simply, the students are lying to themselves about their work. They tell themselves that the work they have copied is theirs, which means they claim the work as theirs even though it’s not. Sometimes, they get into serious consequences of being dishonest, especially if it develops into a habit, and they can get expelled or never get to take their public examinations ever again due to misconduct, which will make them regret for the rest of their life.

It’s also a matter of trust. We always need to keep people’s trust safe like a crystal ball. It can break because of our silly mistakes and never can the pieces be attached together again. There will always be scars and the broken parts to be seen, which will remind us of our wrongdoings.

So, why make a fool of ourselves when we are gifted with the knowledge and creativity that some unfortunate people don’t have? Are you a puppet who will act and dance according to other people’s wishes?

Think thoroughly.

Chris Wong