

Runaway kid...

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in Bangalore alone, and many end up as victims of trafficking. But tracing the girl's address was the next big task on hand. When Ranjita went out to wash her hands, Rekha checked her bag and found a school diary.

"Interestingly, the girl was going to the same school where my daughter was studying. I asked a relative who was present at home to take care of Ranjita and told her that I would be back after fetching my daughter from school. I showed the diary to the school management and asked for the girl's contact details. I got her mother's number by late afternoon. When I called her mother, she literally broke down, saying she had been searching for her daughter since morning and was planning to approach a police station.

I gave her my house address and asked her to pick up her daughter. By late evening, Ranjita's mother arrived, but the child refused to go back with her. She also accused me of trying to cheat her. I do not know how I became a child counselor, but I told her that her mother actually loved her more than her younger brother. Finally, Ranjita went back home and I took a deep breath," said Rekha.

The incident was verified by S Suresh, headmaster of the school. Suresh said, "These days, we get a lot of complaints from students who feel neglected vis-à-vis their siblings. Ranjita's case was similar. We thank Rekha for her presence of mind which saved the kid from potential problems. We counseled Ranjita and her mother, who have promised not to repeat the same mistakes in future."

INVEST IN SELF-ESTEEM

Dr Neha Cadabam, psychologist, unravels the bond between siblings and between children and their parents for us. She says, "While growing up, a child goes through the process of building self-esteem and self-confidence. The 'I am what I am' thinking is generated from parents' opinion. They depend on their parents to form an opinion about themselves. Thus, the parents need to have a clear communication with the child. Both the parents - mother and father - should be equally involved in bringing up their children. When the mother is working, the burden increases as she has to take care of her job as well as manage things at home. In such cases, the father should play an equal role.

"When the mother is pregnant with the second child, it becomes very important for her to establish a relationship between the first child and the new member. It is important for the older child to understand that he/she will have to share their parents.

"If children feel ignored during their growing-up years, they end up with low self-esteem and confidence with decision-making abilities severely impaired."