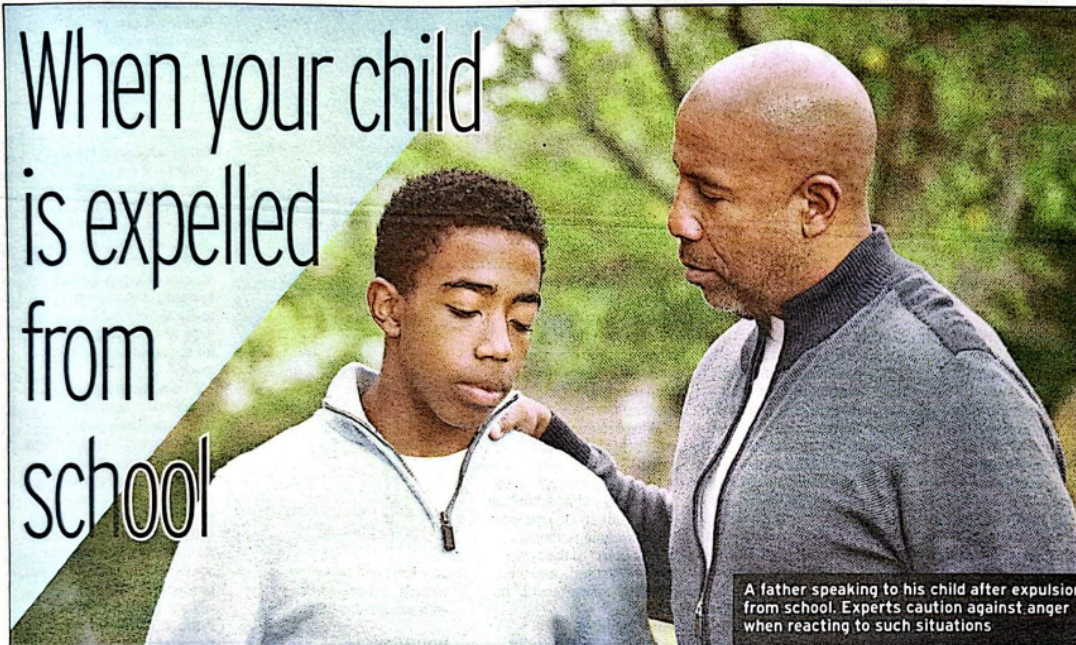


When your child is expelled from school



A father speaking to his child after expulsion from school. Experts caution against anger when reacting to such situations

What should parents do?

An expulsion from school can feel like an end to a child's future, but in reality, it is a disciplinary action, not a life sentence. According to behavioural change experts, understanding expulsion for what it truly is, a setback rather than an ending, is the first step in helping a child recover, writes **DALLEN NAMUGGA**

At 23, Brian still remembers the shame he felt when he was expelled for theft. He says the hardest part was not leaving the classroom, but facing people in his community. "I felt like everyone knew. I stopped greeting neighbours because I thought they were judging me," he recalls. In the months that followed, he withdrew from friends and became increasingly defensive at home. What began as embarrassment slowly turned into anger. "I was ashamed, but instead of admitting it, I became aggressive. I didn't want anyone talking about it." Brian says the expulsion deeply affected his self-esteem. "For a long time, I believed I was just a bad person," he admits. The incident, he explains, made him doubt

his abilities and damaged his self-esteem, reinforcing how easily shame, isolation and negative labeling can shape a young person's identity long after the expulsion.

HOW YOU SHOULD REACT AS A PARENT

According to Rogers Namwiiri, a psychologist at C-Care, a healthcare company, a child's expulsion can trigger intense emotional reactions in parents, including shock, anger, disappointment, guilt and anxiety. While these responses are natural, he stresses that how parents manage their emotions in the first few days is critical.

Namwiiri explains that parents must first regulate their own feelings before addressing the situation, warning that emotionally driven reactions can cause lasting

psychological harm.

"Responding out of anger or panic can negatively affect a child's mental wellbeing," he notes, adding that calmness allows parents to offer meaningful support.

He advises parents to speak to their children in a composed manner and focus on listening rather than interrogating. Allowing the child to explain what happened, without judgment or rushed conclusions, helps uncover the root causes of the expulsion.

"Parents need to do more listening than talking at this stage," Namwiiri says, explaining that effective listening builds trust and opens space for honesty.

Reassurance, he adds, is essential. Children need to hear that they are loved and supported and that the incident does not define who they are.

Namwiiri cautions against blaming language, encourages parents, instead to help the child reflect on what went wrong and identify areas for improvement.

He emphasises that expulsion should be framed as a setback rather than a dead end, noting that there is always a way out.

Namwiiri also warns that certain parental reactions can cause long-term emotional damage.

"Excessive blame, harsh

punishment, dismissing a child's feelings, or comparing them to others may erode self-esteem and emotional security. Over time, such responses can lead to anxiety, depression, anger, resentment, trust issues, and difficulties in expressing emotions."

In severe cases, he notes, children may develop self-blaming tendencies or experience suicidal thoughts.

Language, he says, matters greatly. Parents are discouraged from using statements that shame or label the child, such as "You're always getting into trouble," "This is all your fault," or "You're a disappointment to the family."

Namwiiri says such remarks deepen shame and fear, shifting focus away from growth and solutions.

STRIKING A BALANCE

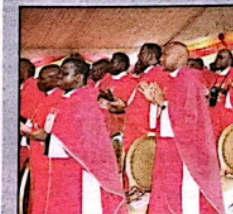
When addressing consequences, Namwiiri encourages parents to strike a balance between accountability and emotional safety. Acknowledging the child's feelings — even when they appear angry or withdrawn — helps them feel understood.

"Rather than attacking character, parents should focus on the specific behaviour that led to the expulsion and involve the child in finding constructive ways forward."

THEOLOGY

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COMMON MISTAKES

He further identifies common mistakes parents make, including over-punishing, reacting with anger, dismissing emotions, or rushing to "fix" the situation too quickly.

These reactions, Namwiiri explains, often shut down communication and prevent children from learning how to cope with stress and responsibility. He says instead of promoting healing, such responses increase anxiety, resentment, and emotional distance.

Namwiiri concludes that while expulsion is a difficult experience, it can become a moment of growth when handled with empathy, patience, and guided reflection.

DEALING WITH THE SCHOOL

Parents need to engage with the school and the wider education system strategically, not reactively.

In Uganda, schools operate under national laws that outline how discipline, expulsions and appeals should be handled, and knowing this

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