

UNIT 1 GROWING UP

SECTION 1 How Daddy Played Ping Pong

I. Answer the following

1. How did Daddy's view on ping-pong change? What brought about the change?

Daddy realized that ping-pong was not the most important thing in the world. The change came about after his team played the Moscow tournament and took second place. By then he had begun to miss his school a little, and the worst of his obsession had subsided.

2. I said 'one bright day', but little Daddy's parents considered it to be one of the darkest days of their lives. Why was the day considered bright for little Daddy and dark for his parents?

The day was bright for Daddy because it marked the start of his obsession with ping-pong, a phase he went through while at school. Though his obsession faded after some time, even as an adult, he never felt that the year was wasted. However, for his parents that phase in their son's life was dark because it was a time that left them worried and confused. Daddy nearly dropped out of school and they had to take him to see a psychiatrist because his behaviour was so abnormal. Hence from their point of view, that was a dark time.

3. What did Daddy lose because of his obsession and what did he gain?

Daddy's obsession with ping pong led him to give up studying, doing his homework, getting good grades, and even dropping out of school for a while. It also made him dishonest and secretive with his parents, and he tore up his teacher's letters to his parents and kept them in the dark about everything he was doing. However, Daddy made new friends during that time, all of whom shared his love for ping pong. He became a member of the junior team, knew every Moscow champion by sight and was greeted as an equal by the famous Falkevich brothers. Daddy's obsession probably taught him some valuable lessons about winning and losing, exposed him to a new world, and left him with some lifelong memories. Perhaps it also taught him the value of a balanced life, as after a while he went back to school and graduated.

4. How did the teacher try to help Daddy? Why did she not succeed at first?

The teacher tried to help Daddy by talking to him and explaining that there was a limit to everything. She tried to convince him to pay attention to his schoolwork and failing grades. When Daddy ignored her, she tried to help by writing to his parents. However, her letters never reached his parents because Daddy tore them up. In the end, surprised that she did not hear back from his parents, Daddy's teacher went to meet them at home and they finally found out what was going on.

5. What doctor did the parents take Daddy to? What did the doctor first presume was wrong with Daddy?

Daddy's parents took him to a professor who had spent his life treating crazy people. From the questions that the doctor asked Daddy, it appears that the doctor presumed that Daddy was either depressed, had some mental health issues, or was being bullied at school.

6. How did the doctor help Daddy?

The professor helped Daddy by realizing that he was in sound mental health and understanding that he just needed to work off his obsession. He extracted a promise from Daddy that he would return to school in September, and convinced his parents to let him play ping pong till then. By doing this, Daddy was able to keep playing until he himself began to miss school and realize that ping pong was not the most important thing in the world.