

1. Introduction

Suicide is a major social problem in India and around 5,000 deaths occur annually because teens kill themselves. There is no variation in numbers for the gender, as both men and women commit suicide in equal numbers, but both have different reasons. But there is this small and beautiful section of the society-our children. Recently, there have been many suicide cases reported among teenagers, ie, under the age group of 15-24 at the maximum. Why are these children committing suicide and what drives them to take such an extreme step??...!! There are no proper answers for these questions as the reasons are many, depending on the child's environment and his/her mental status.

India being the software hub and Bangalore being the Silicon capital, most of the engineering colleges have a facility for interviewing the students before even they pass their exams and get selected for particular companies, who come for campus selection. But it is also sad to say that India has the largest suicide rate in the world and Bangalore has more, compared to all other cities. This clearly shows us that people are more pressurized with jobs and financial necessities.

Here is a brief story of an IIT student who committed suicide recently as he failed to get a job in campus recruitment. G Suman, a second year M. Tech student from Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, was found hanging to a fan in his hostel room in IIT, Kanpur. He had nurtured high hopes of making it in the campus selection. But he got upset over not getting selected. Friends and teachers of Suman said that he rarely met anyone and often used to lock himself in his room, not making much of an appearance with people around. When the incident occurred, some of his close friends observed that he did not come to have his breakfast and even lunch that day, which drove them to take a check. When his friends knocked on his room door, there was no answer and they found him hanging from the ceiling fan. Some of his friends said that he was upset for the past few days and he had poured his heart

out to them a number of times about his disappointment over not getting a job due to the economic recession. He would say to friends, "Even after studying so much, I am not able to get a job." The deep disappointment drove him to the extreme step.

This clearly shows that Suman and many youths who have committed suicide or thinking of killing themselves do not have an idea about what they are doing, but it is simply a manifestation of a previous depression or any such mental disorders. Most of the time, people give previous hints about what they might be up to, either directly or indirectly. In case of Suman, his friends knew that he was upset and with more observation and care from them, it could have been reported either to a helpful teacher in the campus or to a dear family member. Maybe he could have been saved if he had received proper guidance from some elderly person. This person would have probably counselled him, telling him that losing an interview selection in campus would not spell the end of his career path. He would have also pointed out that there were a lot of recruitment drives going on in the country and that good would always happen to persons with confidence in them.

The mind is not fully developed in adolescents and they have very less experience towards life and dealing with emotional issues. More cases of women committing suicide than men have been reported in India and worldwide. There are various reasons for a teen to attempt suicide, mostly based on emotional matters. Reasons like having less grades in academics, death of someone dear to them in family or friends' circles, love affairs and failures, unaccepted marriage proposals, sexual harassment, incapacity to cope with the competition, financial insecurity, many reasons like these leads one to decide on suicide, though the three major reasons for teen suicide are academic disappointments, relationship failures and financial downturn.

Many times, adolescents cry for help when they attempt suicide and they really do not wish to die. Due to the circumstances, without finding a way out for their problems, they commit suicide.

Children do not wake up in the morning and say that they will commit suicide today. Something might have been missing in their lives since a long time and suicides are just a manifestation of that. It is very much necessary to observe a child's behaviour even if he/she is a grown adolescent. As discussed earlier in Suman's case, usually most of the people have passed on the message through various ways that they are thinking of committing suicide or there is some kind of a threat. Sometimes they tell their close friends that they do not wish to live or that they are finding problems in adjusting to their surroundings and people around them, while some write poems or stories on death, some look lost without showing interest in anything, keeping themselves locked in their room for hours without having an appetite even to eat.

A recent estimation of suicide deaths in Bangalore

Year	Male	Female
2006	1,302	706
2007	1,575	855
2008	1,327	677

Cases	Causes
80	Family problems
75	Illness
9	Love affair
5	Exam fears
7	Unemployment

2. Suicide Risk Factors

Depression is one of the basic risks for suicide. Though there are many reasons for completed suicides, all come under the category of depression. There are different causes for one to attempt suicide such as psychiatric disorders and social disorders. Psychiatric disorders are seen in people who have trouble with their minds whereas socially disordered people will be led to death when there are any social issues which they might not be able to manage. Lets see what kind of behaviour and other causes lead to suicide.

Psychological disorders

Psychological disorders are mainly classified, based on the mental status and those who have problems of the mind. Depression is one of the major psychological disorders. Though all people with depression do not commit suicide, still depression is a major factor for increase in the risk factor for suicide. Most times, psychiatric disorders are genetic. Major psychiatric illness such as bipolar disorder, major depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders and substance abuse (includes alcoholism), which runs in families, increases the risk of suicidal behaviour. When the psychiatric disorder is recognized among the suicidal patients, their behaviour can be monitored.

There are many such mental disorders that make someone think of committing suicide.

Teen aggression

Everyday, we come across news on teen aggression, of many youth getting into trouble after fighting with someone or some kind of scandals. This also happens in our homes when your teenage kid shouts at you or slams his/her bedroom door in anger or stays out all night or breaks chairs or things when they are denied something. Today's generation have a very different view on society and they have very less tendency to make any kind of

adjustments. Most of the time, teens get aggressive either when they do not get things in their own way as how they like or if they find difficulty in doing something. A teenage boy or girl can get violent by ragging in schools and colleges, bullying, fighting, gang rivalry, sexual harassment, physical harassment. Someone has said that no one is a born criminal. Like that, even children are not born with aggressive nature. Behaviour is developed, depending on the surroundings in which they live. Children always interpret their elders and learn same things as what their parents do. Hence, it is very much necessary for a parent to give or be a proper example of themselves to their children. Children with aggressive behaviour do not tolerate someone ordering them or asking them to do something and there are many chances that they get into wrong habits and wrong company of friends. They might even begin taking drugs, resort to robbery, etc.

These days, teens are more addicted to Internet and there are lot many such websites, giving them ideas of violence and hatred, which they find more attractive at that age. As both the parents work, kids spend most of their time alone at home and find browsing an interesting pastime. Many even lose marks in academics by wasting time in browsing instead of studying. Hence, as a parent, it is necessary to make sure your children are properly engaged and taken care of in your absence.

Violence in media

The media plays a major role in lives of teenagers. Most of them are always attracted to the movies and other forms of media, which pass on most irrelevant messages and they have some violent lyrics, which make a teen behave aggressively. The government is unable to do anything to prevent the public violence in India like rowdyism and other forms that make the teen think of becoming violent. This kind of violent behaviour makes them more depressed with things around them and finally lead them to suicide.

Impulsiveness

Recent research has shown impulsiveness is a symptom of psychiatric disorder often associated with suicidal behaviour. An adolescent is at a very risky age in human life where he/she gets exposed to various new people and newer things in life. These suicidal tendencies get fostered when they get exposed to someone who has already committed suicide within their families or friends, increasing the risk of suicide. The risk also gets increased when they have a previous history of attempting suicide.

Depression

As previously discussed, most people do not die because of depression. However, the risk is more with persons suffering from major depression. Depression is a major cause for suicide among women many times. A person falls into depression due to many circumstances such as social isolation, substance abuse, history of illness, feelings of hopelessness or desperation, failure in achieving personal goals and some many more like these increase the risk of suicide. Teenage depression has more to its story rather than just bad moods or broken hearts. Initially, it gets started with clinical illnesses that affects 20% of the teen population and is left untreated. This leads to serious development of violent behaviour and attempt to suicide.



How to recognize depression

People who appear depressed may not appear that they have some problems or issues. Instead, most of them stay calm and it will be very difficult to make out if the person is having problems in day-to-day life. Only keen observation from family and close friends can reveal that there are changes in behaviour. Some of the changes that you might observe in a depressed person are Feelings – Feeling sad, anxious, bored or unwanted.

- ◆ Energy – Tired, fatigued, difficulty to do anything, slowed movements
- ◆ Sleep – Waking up in odd times, oversleeping and trouble in sleeping
- ◆ Thinking – Slow thinking, poor concentration, forgetful or indecisive
- ◆ Interest – Loss of appetite, less interest in work, personal relationships and life seems dull
- ◆ Value – Reduced sense of self-worth, low self-esteem or guilt
- ◆ Aches – Headaches, chest or other pains without a physical basis
- ◆ Live – Not wanting to live, suicidal thoughts or dreaming of death

When we say festival is a time for celebration, we can also say it is a sad and depressed acronym mood, which shows a person facing difficulty to live. If any of these festival symptoms is persistent for weeks, than probably it is a depressive episode to the person and he/she needs the attention of a doctor or counsellor immediately.

There are different types of depressions: Some of them are

Reactive depression

This is a condition when there is an extension of the normal upset feelings of unhappiness due to emotional feelings such as the death of a family member, relative or a close friend, marriage break-up, loss of employment. Emotional matters such as these make a person more stressful and feel low about life. Reactive depression also can cause certain setbacks causing health problems such as pain in their body parts like backaches, headaches and many more, which make the person more vulnerable and leads to more disappointment.

Unipolar or endogenous depression

Unipolar disorder is a biologically inherited one which is similar to other depressive disorders. The disappointment often provokes its onset. The symptoms are as similar to the above mentioned festival symptoms in how to recognize depression.

Bipolar disorder

It is estimated that around 12-15 million Indians are diagnosed with bipolar disorder and many of them commit suicide every year. The study shows that about 25 to 50 percent of individuals with bipolar disorder make at least one attempt of suicide. Bipolar disorder is similar to depressive disorder. In addition to depressive disorder, one finds bouts of elation or mania in bipolar disorder with which the depression alternates. Although elation is a pleasurable experience, many times it can have a serious effect on one's life.

Some of the symptoms of bipolar disorders are

- ◆ Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- ◆ Significant change in weight (loss or gain)
- ◆ Often misses school/ college or bad performance
- ◆ Reclusive, withdrawing from friends and family members
- ◆ Quick to show anger/ rage
- ◆ General restlessness or anxiety
- ◆ Overreacts to criticism or even constructive suggestions
- ◆ Seems very self conscious, guilty
- ◆ Unusual problems with authority
- ◆ Frequent health complaints despite being healthy
- ◆ Lack of motivation
- ◆ Use of drugs or alcohol abuse

- ◆ Mention or thoughts of suicide

Dysthymic disorder

Here, there are less severe chances of depression diagnosed when there is any persisting depression at least for more than a year. This disorder is linked with development of major depression, increasing with the other disorders. Get treated for this disorder and you can prevent more severe illnesses.

Some of the symptoms of this disorder are

- ◆ Frequent physical illness such as headache
- ◆ Thoughts of running away from home
- ◆ Outbursts of shouting, complaining, unexplained irritability or crying
- ◆ Being bored
- ◆ Lack of interest
- ◆ Social isolation, poor communication
- ◆ Increased anger
- ◆ Alcohol or substance abuse
- ◆ Reckless behaviour
- ◆ Difficulty in building relationships

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a mental disorder that usually occurs in late adolescents or early adulthood, though it can be seen at any age of life. Every person having this disorder experiences it in a different way. The symptoms of Schizophrenia have three categories: Positive symptoms, negative symptoms and cognitive symptoms. On basis of incidents in childhood, schizophrenia is classified into early onset schizophrenia (onset before 18 years of age) and very early onset schizophrenia (onset before 13 years of age). In the

early 1800s, Pinel, Esquirol and other French Psychiatrists described the behaviour of patients whom we would now characterize as schizophrenics.

Positive symptoms

A positive symptom is psychotic behaviour not seen with healthy people. People with these positive symptoms are hardly noticed and they often become invisible with the reality being in a dreamland of illusions. They include the following:

- ◆ **Delusions:** A person suffering from schizophrenia has illusions or beliefs which might not be true, such as a feeling that someone might be following him or her or someone might hurt him or her by cheating, harassing, poisoning, spying or plotting against them or the people they care about. These beliefs are called “delusions of persecution”. Sometimes, they even have illusions like they have some special powers and may even think they are someone else, such as a famous historical figure.
- ◆ **Hallucinations:** These people usually hear voices like there is someone talking to them when there is nobody in real life. Sometimes they can even see, smell, taste and feel things that are not real.
- ◆ **Thought disorder:** Persons suffering from thought disorder behave in a very abnormal manner, demonstrating bizarre behaviour. Usually, they face dysfunctional ways of thinking and this form is called “disorganized thinking”. They might talk in a very abnormal manner, which might be difficult to understand called “thought blocking” and the persons can also stop talking abruptly in the middle of the sentence. If they are asked why they stopped, they might answer that the thought about what they were speaking had been taken out of their minds had made them silent. Finally, they might utter meaningless words or “neologisms”.
- ◆ **Movement disorders:** In this disorder, a person might feel difficulty in movements. He or she may repeat certain motions

over and over. In extreme cases, the person might be catatonic. Though catatonic persons are not seen much these days, people often came across them when there was no medication available for schizophrenia. The unusual posture for an extended interval is called as catatonic schizophrenia. A patient having this type of disorder may stand on one leg, raise one arm above the head, place the other hand and arm in a tight fist behind the back and remain immobile for long intervals.

Negative symptoms

This is most commonly seen with people having less interest in themselves and those feeling low. They might have less interest in social interaction and rarely feel like expressing about their requirements. These negative symptoms can be mistaken for depressions but it is a schizophrenic disorder. Some of its symptoms are

- ◆ Flat effect – A person's face does not move. He or she may talk in a dull monotonous voice.
- ◆ Lack of enthusiasm in day to day life.
- ◆ Lack of ability to begin and sustain planned activities.
- ◆ Speaking little even when forced to interact.

People with negative symptoms often need help in daily tasks and they are even unhygienic. They might look lazy or unwilling to do something for themselves, but the problems are symptoms of schizophrenia.

Cognitive symptoms

- ◆ Like negative symptoms, cognitive symptoms are also difficult to recognize. They can be detected only after performing some tests. Cognitive disorders show some symptoms, which are:
- ◆ Poor executive functioning – ability to understand information and use it to arrive at decisions

- ◆ Trouble in focusing or paying attention
- ◆ Problems with working memory – ability to use information immediately after getting it
- ◆ Cognitive disorder makes it difficult to work and live normally and earn a living. They cause great emotional distress.

Types of schizophrenia

In early years, schizophrenia was termed as a single disorder, but many researchers now believe that there are several different types of schizophrenic disorders. Emile Kraepelin classified three different groups under an earlier name for schizophrenia called Dementia Praecox. He classified them as catatonic, hebephrenic and paranoid. Bleuler, another researcher added a type that he called it as simple schizophrenia.

Simple schizophrenia

Simple schizophrenia has a gradual onset and does not show up until the age of adolescence. People with this disorder are less noticed as it does not show much of the symptoms and will be passed eventually. A person who might be suffering from this disorder may only show lack of interest in day to day life or minor behavioural patterns. These kinds of symptoms are excused in adolescence and termed as normal things in teenagers. But it is a simple schizophrenic disorder.

Hebephrenic schizophrenia

Hecker discovered this disorder in 1871, although Kahlbaum previously used the term. This disorder occurs during the early stages of adolescence. It is normally seen at the time of puberty due to the changes that occur in the body then. At the time of puberty, adolescents face many changes in the body like melancholia, mania and confusion. In these cases, there can be a quick termination in psychic enfeeblement and a final deterioration.

The prominent features of hebephrenic schizophrenia are

delusions and hallucinations. This disorder is seen in early stages of adolescence and it often produces chronic impairment.

Catatonic schizophrenia

Kahlbaum researched catatonic schizophrenia in 1874, which is also called as “tension insanity”. In this condition, a patient sits quietly or completely mute and motionless, immovable with a staring countenance. His or her eyes will be fixed on a distant point, without any movements or any reactions to their sensory impressions. It was assumed that catatonia was the symptom of a structural brain disease. Catatonia is the most clearly visible type among schizophrenic patients because of its rigid immobility and wild excitement.

Paranoid schizophrenia

Paranoid schizophrenia is usually seen mostly in late adolescence and during old age. It is primarily associated with delusional behaviour. A person with this type of schizophrenia is usually seen with more anger and this anger and paranoia can lead him or her to violent actions. This disorder is the most organized type within all the other types of schizophrenia and hence, there are chances of an individual may escape notice by the authorities for an extended period.

Undifferentiated schizophrenia

There are no proper medications for this type as the researchers are still not able to differentiate this type. A person suffering from this disorder shows symptoms of all the schizophrenic disorders such as delusions, hallucination, formal thought disorder, but the patient cannot be classified into one type or shows the symptoms of all the types. This kind of symptom is termed as a chronic dead end as each symptom is shown in early stages of the illness and when the illness goes to an extreme end where treatment does not lead to any change. The symptoms intensify where they cannot be differentiated.

Case History: A 21 year old person had impressed his entire neighbourhood and earned a good name as a very silent and nice boy and so, when people spoke about him. The truth was not revealed until his parents took him to the mental hospital. He was considered to be a model youngster in comparison to all other children in the locality as a well – behaved, obedient and calm boy. A long study revealed that he had problems in making adjustments since his childhood. He had problems of chewing the bed sheets and was bed-wetting until the age of 14. He rarely played with other children and did not have any close friends. During his high school days, he often locked himself in his room for hours and refused to come out even for his meals. During adolescence, he avoided girls. Until 10th grade, he scored well in his exams but gradually his scoring declined and his teachers started complaining to his parents. Teachers said that he spent most of his time in classes by daydreaming. He was irregular in college and rarely finished his assignments. Due to his mother’s prodding, he began looking for jobs, but never came across any. Though he got selected, he never stayed onto one single job and left them within three months, having problems with concentration. He spent most of his time in bed, staring at vacant places or out of the window. He rarely spoke to any family members and even started refusing to take bath and shave himself. When his mother forced him to change his clothes or have a bath, he would shout at her and use filthy language, forcing her to leave the room. On one such occasion, he got so much angry with her that he threatened to hit her if she failed to leave him alone and this made the parents take him to the doctor for observation.

Loneliness

If persons feel lonely or feel they do not have anyone, it is a very risky mental illness. Normally, most of all feel lonely at one time of their lives. But for some, loneliness is a persistent feeling. Depending on the environment and circumstance, people start feeling like they are unwanted or there’s really nobody who cares. A person,

when he or she starts feeling lonely, will lose his or her self - esteem and self – confidence. A teen child feels lonely due to various reasons. In today's world, due to stiff competition among all the sectors, its become necessary for both the parents to work and children of such parents are left back at home to be taken care by some domestic help provider or they might even go to day care schools and homes. In such cases, it is very likely that the child misses his or her parents and longs for more love and affection from them. Such times, the children even build up negative feelings, getting an impression that their parents do not like them or that they are unwanted by society. These feelings can occur in childhood to anyone, not only poor children, even the children of rich families. It was not spared even for the royally inbred Princess Diana who expired due to an accident. Though Diana is well known for her royalty and helpful approach towards everything, she had similar problems of loneliness in her childhood as her parents had trouble with each other. The princess had even attempted suicide many times though she was rescued.

Feelings such as these are hard to erase and it is the duty of parents to see that their children do not feel neglected and if they find such symptoms of loneliness, it is necessary that parents or close friends or some dear relative talk to them and make them understand that everyone loves them.

Symptoms of loneliness

Teenage children feel lonely when there are particular feelings building up in their minds and they are not able to share them with anyone. Such children have to be observed and treated properly to help them not to feel vulnerable. The child looks lonely when the following factors are seen in him or her:

- ◆ No much social interaction with anyone
- ◆ Lack of interest in doing anything
- ◆ Less appetite

- ◆ Weeping most of the times
- ◆ Craving for someone to show some love
- ◆ Aggressive behaviour when asked to do something
- ◆ Stubbornness
- ◆ Staying indoors and being shut in the room

Teen anxiety

Anxiety is a normal feeling which everyone faces in his or her daily lives. It's normal to feel nervous and anxious before any big day in one's life, particularly during stressful periods. For many, being anxious is more beneficial as it boosts up their mind to perform well, either in the exams or some other activities. For some, anxiety goes beyond stress and can lead to mental disorders either before the big day of the incident or after it, when they are not able to perform as they want while occasional stress is nothing to worry about and can be healthy. Teenagers find that their daily life can be interrupted by the intense, often long-lasting fear or worry.

In comparison to elders and teenage children, the way of thinking differs and teenaged kids feel anxiety for every simple thing in their lives, let it be with their personal matters or with any official or public matter, though it is mostly related to emotional feelings of being caught while committing any mistake or a fear of not being recognized.

Teens normally face a lot many challenges in their schools and colleges, either with their academics or any other kind of co-curricular activities. All those who participate or take part in any kind of challenge want to win and as we know, only one can win if it is any kind of race. Today's children are more pressurized to win rather than to participate. In such instances, children face more anxiety and nervousness, which can gradually lead to mental disorders.

This kind of instant feeling of anxiety among children and also elders can lead to personal health problems and they may find difficulty in sleeping. A recent study shows that people with less sleep and more stress in life gradually develop mental disorders like depressions and others. Some even get stomach aches and vomiting. One of the major problems faced by a teenager at the time of anxiety is lack of concentration.

Anxiety disorder can also be genetic and hereditary. However, it is not necessary that when a family member has an anxiety disorder, a child also should have it, but when there is a history among the family members, chances are high for one to develop similar anxiety disorder.

There are many anti depressants to treat these kinds of anxiety and depressions. Neurotransmitters are the ones which regulate the mood in the human brain. An imbalance of serotonin leads to problems like anxiety and depression. Hence, most of the anti-depressants are treated with increasing serotonin content of the brain neurotransmitters, though this is not an efficient treatment.

Statistics on teen anxiety show that most of the adolescents develop this major symptom. Eight to ten per cent of adolescents suffer from anxiety disorder.

Case history: Ram was an intelligent boy and scored high marks in his academics, being the first in class always. During the period of his SSLC examination, he felt very nervous, as it was the first board exam and as he was the only son of his widowed mother, he wanted to study well and take care of her by securing a good job when he grew up. Just three days prior to the examination, he suffered from severe headache and was not able to concentrate on studies. His mother took him to the doctor who prescribed some medicines and said it was nothing but anxiety due to examination and he needed to rest for a while. He took the medicine and slept soundly in the night. After a few days in the examination hall, Ram faced a similar headache with temperature

of around 100°F and he could not concentrate on his question paper. Though he knew the answers, he could not recollect them due to the severe pain. Finally he finished writing the paper and submitted it. When the results were out, he realized that he had failed in that particular paper. This made Ram feel very depressed, as he was the best in the class. He could not tell his mother about the results and so he committed suicide in his bedroom.

Recently, two teenagers reportedly committed suicide in Mumbai due to poor academic performance.

Separation anxiety disorder

This disorder occurs when there is any kind of death of close relative or a family member, or a pet, change in school, movement to a new neighbourhood or to a different place. All these which include a kind of separation for the child can cause separation anxiety disorder. This can occur anytime in pre-school age and before 18 years of age. This disorder occurs equally in the case of both boys and girls, although the treatment is more sought by females.

Symptoms of separation anxiety disorder include

- ◆ Anger - They get angry over simple matters and at unwanted circumstances
- ◆ Depression- They show depressive symptoms
- ◆ Fatigue – They feel much tired most of the time and seem to be dull
- ◆ Extreme mood swings – Their mood changes quite often
- ◆ Substance abuse – Use of drugs and other kind of abuses like alcohol etc
- ◆ Secretive behaviour- Teenage kids mostly have secrets with them, but with this disorder, they tend to behave very secretly, which makes it difficult for others or even their parents to

know what they do.

- ◆ Changes in sleeping pattern – There will be change in the way they sleep with a difference in the pattern or sometimes they even have disturbed sleep.
- ◆ Eating habits – They show less appetite and have less interest in eating of their choice.
- ◆ Bad hygiene – Negligence about one’s body and keeping it clean
- ◆ Persistent reluctance or refusal to go to school because of fear of separation
- ◆ Physically ill most of the time. Somatic symptoms such as palpitations, sweating, trembling, stomachache or headache.

Panic disorder

A panic disorder is a feeling of fear in a child or an elderly person-of them being attacked by something or by someone or could be related to anything else without any reason of why they are attacked or they feel so. A person suffering from this disorder is not sure about when the next attack would come and he or she keeps worrying most of their time that it can happen even in their sleep. Children with this order wake up in the middle of the night with a sudden shock of being attacked and they might even feel scared. It can be dangerous for such children to sleep by themselves, as they need someone to comfort them when they wake up suddenly. An attack generally peaks within 10 minutes, but some symptoms may last much longer. Panic attack is more common among females than males. This disorder is sometimes genetic. Not everyone who feels a panic attack can have this disorder. For example, someone who gets a panic attack once may not face the problem again ever. People who repeatedly face this problem should seek treatment, especially if it persists for more than a month.

Case History: Brinda is a bright student studying in 10th grade

and was brought for medical observation recently by her parents. She said “It all started in the last semester of my 10th grade and I had joined this school newly. I was getting prepared for my internal test and suddenly my hands started shaking and my heart began beating faster and I felt that I would die. When I feel like this, I do not feel its real (disconnected from reality). I feel like I am losing control and I am frightened. I was not able to breathe and I had a feeling that things were crashing on me. I felt as if something bad was going to happen to me and could not stop worrying. I am afraid of another attack due to which I do not get back to my classes and take up any other tests.”

Symptoms and first aid

- ◆ Chest pain
- ◆ Shortness of breath
- ◆ Dizziness or abdominal distress
- ◆ Heart palpitation
- ◆ Feeling sweaty, weak, faint or dizzy
- ◆ Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ Smothering sensations or a sense of unreality
- ◆ Fear of impending doom or loss of control
- ◆ Illusions of having a heart attack or losing his or her mind or is on the verge of death

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive- Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a disorder characterized by intrusive, unwanted, repetitive thoughts and rituals performed out of a feeling of urgent need. Adolescents may have thoughts of violence and fear that they would become harmful to the people who might be close to them. People with this disorder

may have persistent thoughts of themselves touching imaginary things or counting, performing sexual acts that are repugnant to them or may even be troubled by thoughts that are against his or her religious beliefs. The disturbing thoughts or images are called obsessions and the feeling of performing some act of religious rituals is called compulsion. OCD is a common thing found in most of everyone in daily life due to stress and lack of time, for example, checking if the stove is off many times before leaving the house while going out, but for people, having this as a disorder makes them uneasy for every hour with the feelings and thoughts and it is very distressing. Many times, they realize that what they are doing or thinking is senseless, but they are not able to stop it. In such a case, they become more vulnerable and upset with themselves and they attempt suicide.

Morbid guilt

Often these obsessions take an extreme form. There are people who are haunted by fear of themselves going mad. A woman reads a headline in the newspaper of child being murdered and is haunted by terrifying thoughts that she herself might harm the child. Whenever she sees a knife or a razor, she is afraid that she might do something irrational. These fears may not occur in daily life, but they might develop into anxieties and can cause serious trouble in a person's happiness. Usually all obsessions, morbid fears and compulsions are the result of battles that had taken place within us in our childhood.

Case History: Recently, there was a discussion between a parent and a counsellor about an adolescent kid having problems. The parent said, "My son goes into the bathroom for hours and will not come out. We plead, threaten and demand, all to no avail. We don't know what he is doing in there. At night, he refuses to go to bed until he has checked all the locks on the doors, turned the lights off and on in every room and checks the knobs on the stove. He says he is afraid that someone is going to break in and harm us. Once we get past that, he says he's afraid that we will all die from

poisoning due to fumes from the gas stove. These things go on every day and are becoming a problem”.

When the counsellor interrogated the son, the answers which he received from him, was “I don’t understand what my parents are upset about. I don’t have any bad habits. I am simply checking the locks on the doors because sometimes my parents forget to lock them. There have been a spate of robberies in our area lately and I just want us to be safe. My mom forgets to turn the stove off sometimes and I don’t want to get poisoned by carbon monoxide. I don’t stay in the bathroom too long. I just need to be alone sometimes and that is the only place I can be. Well, maybe I take my shower over several times because I just don’t feel clean. The soap just won’t wash off my skin and out of my hair. Sometimes I have to wash my hair three times as opposed to once because three is a lucky number and one isn’t. Sometimes at school, it takes me longer to read because I count the lines in a paragraph. But I don’t see anything wrong with that. My parents are just too nosey...!”

Symptoms

A person suffering from OCD can have symptoms such as these:

- ◆ Need of urgent involvement in any religious rituals
- ◆ Plagued with the thoughts of unwelcome people or images
- ◆ Obsession with germs or dirt
- ◆ Feelings of doubt and checks things repeatedly

Psychosis

Psychosis is a term that covers a group of mental illnesses showing the onset of symptoms at the moment following child-birth. This is seen mostly in a woman who has given birth and it very much related to bipolar disorder and depressive disorder. This psychosis disorder is endogenous and hereditary which is passed on to the next generation. The symptoms of manic disorder (Bipolar disorder) and acute polymorphic disorder

(Schizophrenia) are seen right immediately after a fortnight whereas depressive symptoms are developed later.

Symptoms

The symptoms of psychosis are as similar to the symptoms of the other mental illness mentioned above such as euphoria, over activity, decreased sleep requirement, flight of ideas, increased sociability, disinhibition, irritability, violence and delusions. These symptoms are more severe in psychosis when compared to bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

Othello syndrome

Othello syndrome is also called delusional jealousy, erotic jealousy syndrome, morbid jealousy or sexual jealousy.

This was first seen and named by the English psychiatrist John Todd in 1955.

People with this syndrome tend to have delusions of infidelity of their spouse or partner even when the partner is totally loyal. The Othello syndrome affects males and females to a lesser extent. It has a strong association with violence. This syndrome may occur by itself or in the course of paranoid Schizophrenia, Bipolar disorder, alcoholism and cocaine addiction.

People suffering from this syndrome can go to the extreme of troubling their spouse or partner by getting tests done of their infidelity, repeated interrogation, accusing them of cheating and being disloyal, searching for evidence. These kinds of things between couples can seriously threaten their marital lives and many a times, people end up in divorce and some commit suicide. Teenagers who face this problem will not be aware of it and due to less maturity; they even go to the extreme step of stabbing or stalking their partner to death and may even kill themselves.

Recognition of syndrome

- ◆ People with this syndrome can be recognized with its symp-

toms and be treated, such as,

- ◆ Recurrent allegations of infidelity
- ◆ Searches for evidence
- ◆ Repeated interrogation of the partner
- ◆ Tests of partner's fidelity
- ◆ Stalking

Psychosomatic disorders

When a human being has problems with his mind, it's a natural thing for him to develop physical illness or some other kind of physical problems as the body is interconnected to the mind and its thoughts. This kind of physical illness caused due to problems with the mind that might have been afflicted with some kind of psychological disorders is called psychosomatic disorder or illness. This disorder often occurs with symptoms related to the nervous, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and respiratory genitourinary systems and can also affect the skin. When this kind of illness is persisting for a long time without being treated, the patients face much distress in their daily lives and attempt suicide. Hence, securing the right treatment after proper diagnosis for any kind of illness is very much necessary.

Some of the physical illnesses that may have symptoms of any of the psychological disorders are:

Chronic illness

Adolescents who have chronic disorders such as asthma, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, cancer and cystic fibrosis are more vulnerable to psychosomatic disorders. People with chronic illness mentioned above find it more problematic, getting into psychological feelings. For example, a child with diabetes may repeatedly experience a feeling of weakness and become shaky, when her blood sugar is low. During this time, the child gets

frightened and emotionally distraught, which can be defined as spells. As time passes on, she begins to experience fright and gets distraught in the absence of low blood sugar.

Similarly, like this, teenagers face many health disorders related to psychosomatic causes such as respiratory diseases, psychogenesis cough, vocal cord dysfunction and hyperventilation. All these illnesses have treatments when properly diagnosed and can save adolescents feeling vulnerable and taking risky steps of attempting suicide.

Ductless glands

It is said that there is a link between the mind and body and this is proved by these ductless glands or endocrine system. These glands are connected with emotions. Depending on our mind emotions, feelings such as happiness, grief, fear, confusions and more, produce physical changes in reflection of these emotions.

Heart strokes

We all know that heart strokes are normally caused by hypertension. But this hypertension can be an onset symptom or sometimes it can be because of hidden anxiety, anger and hostility. As these feelings are hidden and not expressed, they become chronic. Coronary artery trouble can occur to those who might refuse to exercise regularly and who eat too much fat content.

Stomach disorders

There is a saying as we speak through our stomach and it is very much true that the mind of a human being and his stomach are interconnected. Like all other organs, the stomach is used as a symbolic expression. Most people, when they describe about their distress or anger or feelings, talk such as “It makes me sick of thinking of it” or sometimes they say “I cannot swallow this insult” and so on. This shows the long relationship between the mind and the stomach psychologically.

Trouble arises in the digestive system when there are any problems in our minds, such as acidic. One finds that people with psychological illnesses may face problems such as pain in stomach, less appetite to eat, indigestion and diarrhoea.

Headaches

A headache is a signal in our body, indicating that there is something wrong and it needs our attention. Quite often, it has its origin from some emotional conflicts, sometimes there are definite organic basis for it. In such cases, visit your doctor and check out the reasons for it can be more helpful. Some of the possibilities, which can cause these headaches, are high blood pressure, kidney disease, glandular disturbances, migraines or anything relating to brain disorders. But after diagnosis, if there are results showing that there no such health related problems for headaches and the person is normal and healthy, than there are possibilities of emotion related problems causing mental illness and in turn causing psychosomatic disorder. A physical expression of struggling thoughts in our minds is headache. These headaches can become chronic and the person may suffer severe pain and may not be able to concentrate on his or her daily activities.

High blood pressure

High blood pressure is a common problem seen in most of the people. It affects people at all ages and is more seen in people who are more stressed. Sometimes when a person experiences high blood pressure, there are chances that he has trouble with kidneys or adrenal glands. It could be because of secret loss, insecurity, dilemma or annoyance in his or her life. Whatever the cause might be, the first step would be to visit the doctor.