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When parents have no time for their children

— By Adele Macdonald | Sep 15, 2014 12:10 am



Mumbai : Suresh Soni (name changed), the only child of a working couple, slipped into depression because his parents had no time for him. The 14-year-old started throwing temper tantrums hoping to get their attention but his parents failed to realise this and passed it off as bad behaviour. Only when he started slashing and biting himself and began talking about killing himself that the message went home.

Suresh was saved in time but several teenagers attempt suicide which is but a half-hearted cry for attention, help and love. According to the National Crime Record Bureau, a teenager tries to commit suicide every 90 minutes.

Manohar Rangnekar, director of Samaritans distress helpline (022-32473267), said, "Three out of ten calls that we get from teenagers is because of emotional disconnect problems." This problem is caused mostly because parents hear what their children have to say but don't actually listen to them.

Counsellors say there is little communication between parents and children since the cyber era dawned. Parents bring their work home and are stuck to their cell-phones and laptops. They barely exchange a few words with their child before they immerse themselves back in work.

Teenager Shyam Guha (name changed), said, "My mother would rather thrash me for doing poorly than hear me out. I found it difficult to understand maths and science and always wanted to study arts." To spite his mother, Shyam deliberately flunked his 11 standard examinations.

"The difference in the thought process of the parents and their children often leads to the child thinking that their parents don't understand them," said Paras Sharma, coordinator of iCall helpline (022-25563291) at Tata Institute of Social Sciences. "These children not only harm themselves but later in life are also more prone to having broken relationships and marriages," said Dr Arun John, director of Vandrevala Foundation, which provides a 24-hour helpline (1860 266 2345) for the distressed.

Heenal Shah, head of the psychiatry department at Nair Hospital, said, "The problem of emotional disconnect in teens can be nipped at the bud if parents build a strong nurturing bond with their child since early years. If the fundamental building blocks of the parent-child relationship is strong, the problem of emotional disconnect will never occur even in their teenage years."

This is the third in an ongoing series on teenage suicides

Adele Macdonald

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