

On-screen idol, off-screen fatal

By [Dia Rekhi](#) | Express News Service | Published: 9th September 2018 |

K Sunaina* was introduced to the Netflix show '13 Reasons Why' by her friend. Soon she was hooked on to the show.

CHENNAI: K Sunaina* was introduced to the Netflix show '13 Reasons Why' by her friend. Soon she was hooked on to the show. "I connected with the protagonist in a way that I cannot explain," Sunaina said. "As someone who was bullied in school, I felt



her pain and cried every time it got too real for me. When she killed herself, I remember thinking briefly that it was probably a painless way to deal with my issues too. I had already started wearing black nail polish, thick kajal in my eyes and had begun to cut myself. I realised that it was a form of release for me too."

Her mother, however, caught her cutting herself one day. She immediately spoke to her and took her to a therapist, who helped her overcome her depressing thoughts.

Cyber psychologist, Nirali Bhatia, said that one of the primary reasons the media has such a lasting impact is because of the strength of the visuals. "Visuals always resonate with viewers," she said. "When these visuals are particularly morbid or gruesome, they tend to stay in your memory for long. Even the scene in 13 Reasons Why where they show the protagonist committing suicide, is very graphic and long. Apart from influencing a viewer on how to go about the act, it can also make those who are sensitive to such visuals have nightmares or develop a phobia of bathtubs or blades." She added that anything glamourised on screen piques the interest of viewers, especially impressionable young adults.

"Media plays a crucial role in shaping the lives of young adults," said Dr Balakrishnan, psychiatrist at Ramachandra Hospital. "Popular culture influences the clothes they wear, the activities they indulge in and the way they interact with peers. Teenagers learn from what they see, hear and experience which is why television shows and films can influence them as many end up idolising actors, especially if there is an absence of role models at home."

Psychological counsellor, Sneha Hindocha, said it was imperative for parents to be understanding, open and supportive of their children. "You might put some controls on what they can watch, but if they really want to watch it, they will find a way. Besides, monitoring them will only drive them away. It is essential to be your child's friend. Give them their space and privacy, but be available whenever they need you, and make sure you are consistently available. They should have that confidence in their parents and family."

(* Name changed on request)

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2018/sep/09/on-screen-idol-off-screen-fatal-1869803.html>

