

Something (funda)mentally wrong

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A report published today announces very worrying statistics about the mental health of the youth of the UK. 1 in 5 children have symptoms of depression and almost a third (32%) have thought about or attempted suicide by the age of 16. A number of other alarming statistics are revealed in the report published by mindfull.org, amongst which are the ones revealing how difficult it is for young people to get help with their mental health challenges: on average, children showing symptoms of depression who speak with more than one person end up speaking with 22 people before getting help, and almost half of young people (47%) never get the help they want.

While mental health is still something of a taboo, in this country people are becoming more free to talk about their mental challenges. The stigma associated with mental illness is disappearing as more and more people are open about their challenges and admit to seeking help with their mental health. In the UK, Stephen Fry is a famous example of someone battling bipolar disorder. What is most worrying about this report, however, is the younger age at which people are being affected. The daughter of Michael Jackson, Paris, recently attempted to kill herself. She is only 15 years old. Unfortunately the reason why her attempted suicide made news headlines and not the plethora of other teenage suicide attempts is the fact that she is famous.



Yet what I feel is newsworthy is the fact that the greatest cause of death amongst people (male and female) aged between 15 and 34 in the UK is... suicide.

For a global picture of the problem of suicide, I recommend this page from the Samaritans [www.samaritans.org/support-us/why-support-samaritans/facts-and-figures-about-suicide]. Also today I read this report about the Japanese phenomenon of *hikikomori* [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23182523], people who seclude themselves in their room for long periods of time.

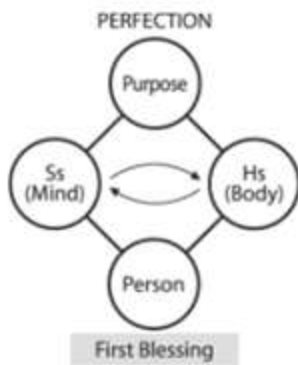
I'm not painting a hopeful picture here. It appears as if not only are people busy trying to destroy each other, but the self-destruction of humanity is far more successfully accomplished by people taking their own lives. If Satan wants to wipe out humanity, this surely is one of his most effective weapons towards that cause.

And I point the finger squarely at Satan. And towards the evil spirit world too. And it is with some authority that I do so, because I have struggled with my mental health too. And the reason I have been able to conquer my demons is because I know, ironically enough, that demons are responsible for pressuring me in a spiritual battle.

I have contemplated suicide. I have experienced bouts of depression. I still am cautious with my emotions as I'm aware that my Achilles heel, my potentially fatal flaw, is my battle with depression. I would say that for the last 7 years I have been relatively stable, but there have been terrifying episodes beforehand.

Can this happen to a 2nd generation Unificationist? Surely if you know about God and you've received

abundant blessings from True Parents and our community you wouldn't feel that way? Well, I'm afraid to say I'm not alone. Just like the rest of the population, we also have to struggle through these issues. I was moved recently by an interview with the daughter of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Katharine Welby, about her struggle with depression. The son of the famous pastor Rick Warren, Matthew, unfortunately ended his battle with mental illness in the most tragic of circumstances. Clearly, being religious does not make one immune from mental illness.



Unificationists have a powerful theology that explains the importance of the perfection of individual character through the unity between mind and body, centring on God. Clearly, mental illness presents a dysfunction of the first blessing. If we are serious about our pursuit of the three great blessings, then surely help is required to empower people to begin receiving the full blessing that should be the command to 'be fruitful' (Gen. 1:28). We also have a powerful ministry in Chung Pyung which liberates those spirits hanging around us who interfere with our lives. I was fascinated to read in some recent editions of the Today's World magazine that True Mother's mother, Soon Ae Hong [real Da Mo Nim], practiced prayer healing before joining the HSA-UWC; it seems as if she is not continuing with a similar job.

There is huge pressure on young people today to be happy all the time. When we experience difficulty or challenge, there's an opportunity for young people to begin the spiral of thinking & feeling that can lead to mental illness. Jesus taught in the Beatitudes a powerful lesson on happiness, learning to count the blessings that others would struggle to identify as blessings (Matt. 5:1-12).

All Unificationist blessed families are commissioned by True Parents to become tribal (and even national) messiahs. With the Vision 2020 campaign, we are invited to do home church activities, serving our local communities so that we can open to door to give abundant blessings to them, and the first great blessing is foundational. It is our duty, I feel, to take up the issues of mental health that afflict our communities. We have an incredibly powerful understanding of reality that, if shared, can empower people and liberate them from their mental health challenges. I concede that some people suffer from really difficult mental health problems. I don't want to ignore the fact reality that for people with some forms of schizophrenia and anxiety, medication is necessary to recreate a desensitised normality. But my conviction is that such methods offer only a sticking plaster, not a cure, for the fundamental issues.

Mrs. Susan Crosthwaite is travelling around UK communities to prepare us for the visit in September of Prof. Yuji Otomo, a Japanese clinical psychologist and counsellor who has been helping families. I feel as if this kind of ministry is necessary to develop. While a small number of people may feel called to support such a ministry, the rest of us can still help people by being sensitive to the mental health struggles that people around us face. Often the hardest thing for people with mental illness is to find people who acknowledge and support them. Let's feel brave enough to address this difficult topic and be caring enough to support those we know who suffer.