

Just 15, she's stressed over school and hears voices. Luckily, her mum is quick to get her help

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THE loud noises prevented her from sleeping at night. But the problem was not one of noisy neighbours.

Nobody else could hear those voices except for the 15-year-old student.

Fortunately, her mother spotted signs of her mental disorder and sought help last October.

The teenager is not the only one among young Singaporeans having psychological issues and seeking help.

Some doctors say they are seeing more students seeking help for mental conditions. (See report on facing page.)

Today, Audrey (not her real name) is still on medication, which keeps her mentally stable.

We are not naming her because she is a minor.

Initially, when Audrey complained of disturbed sleep because of people shouting at the void deck, her mother thought it was unruly teenagers hanging out late downstairs.

Their flat was on the fourth floor, so it was possible to hear people talking loudly downstairs.

Then, Audrey started to tell her that somebody was shouting her name at night and saying he was in love with her.

The mother, a 42-year-old housewife, decided to sleep with her daughter in her room for a week to see who the prankster was.

The mother recalled: "I thought it was strange when I didn't hear anyone shouting at night, but my daughter kept complaining people were shouting at her, even though it was quiet.

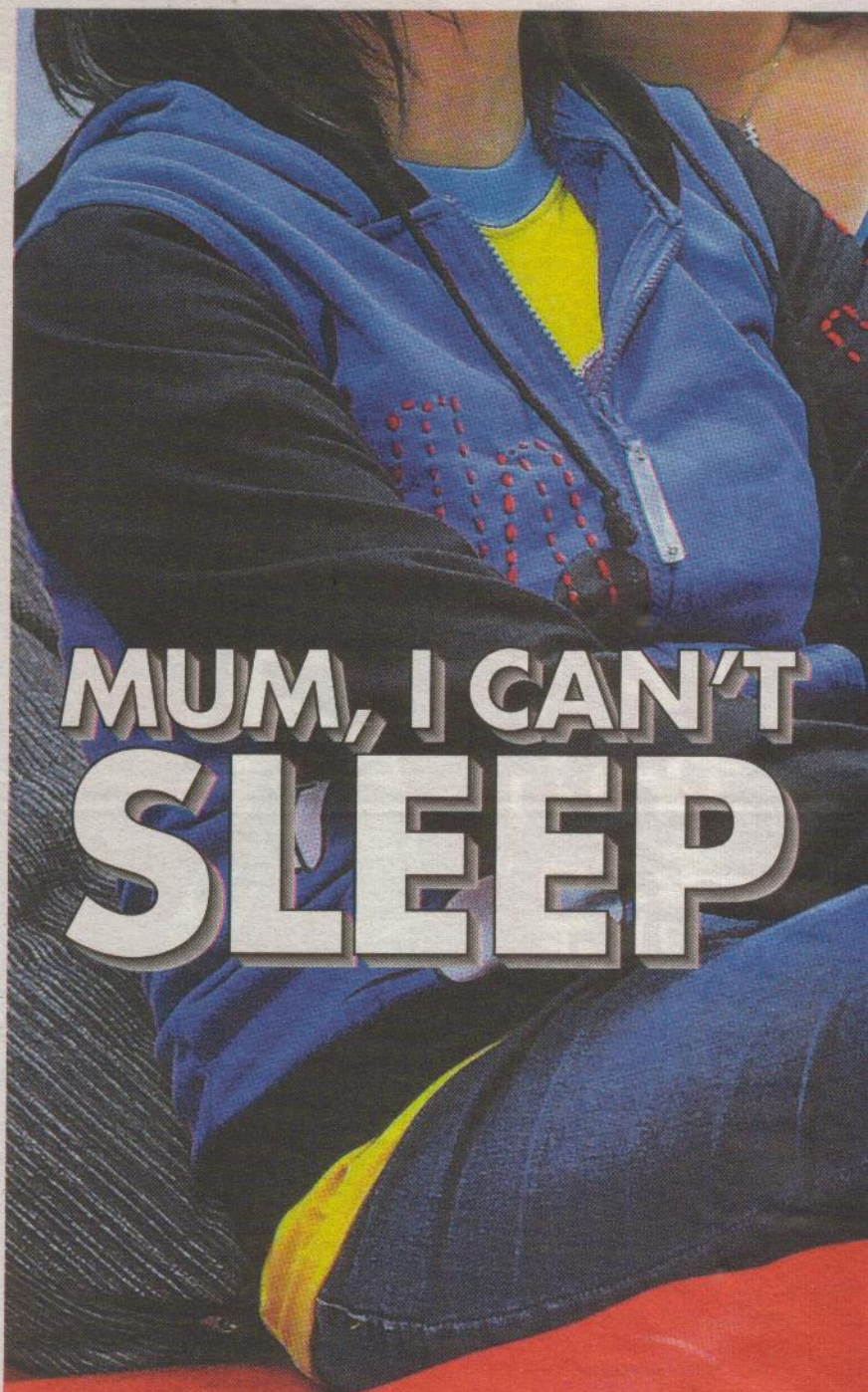
"I even took her downstairs to see for herself that there was nobody there."

Mrs Lim realised there was a problem when her daughter still insisted there were people shouting at her.

"She got upset at not being able to sleep. I got more worried when she started to shout and scold the people she heard. She also got angry with me, saying I refused to believe her."

At first, her daughter was plagued by the voices only at night, but after a few days, she also heard voices during the day.

So her mother decided to take her to the Tze



**MUM, I CAN'T
SLEEP**

**A MAN IS
SHOUTING
MY NAME**

Hng Wellness Studio in Hougang for therapy.

Miss Porsche Poh, the executive director of the Wellness Studio, said: "When Mrs Lim first took her daughter to our centre, I realised her condition needed medical care.

"She was unstable and was talking to herself. She said she wanted to kill someone, which was quite worrying."

Miss Poh informed Audrey's mother of where to seek help, such as the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and other private clinics.

Audrey was subsequently warded at the IMH last October for a week. Her mother did not want to say what sort of treatment she received or what her diagnosis was.

Audrey said: "At first, I blamed my mother for sending me to the hospital."

But she realised it was necessary during her counselling sessions later.

NOW, SHE HEARS JUST 1 'VOICE'...

The teenager is now determined to overcome her mental disorder. She could even joke.

"Now the only voice I hear is a real one – my mother telling me to mop the floor," she said with a grin.

Mrs Lim, while relieved with her daughter's progress, regrets not seeking help sooner.

That was why she decided to share her story.

She said: "I want to share with other parents to not take your children's feedback for granted."

She said she had at first dismissed her daughter's complaints of problems at school as growing pains.

Audrey said that while her parents did not pressure her in her schoolwork, she had high expectations of herself, and irrational fears of her future.

She attributed a lot of her pressure to her secondary school, a neighbourhood school. She claimed that students were constantly reminded to aim for high grades.

She also had problems making friends, and had been bullied in primary school, and then in secondary school.

Her mother said: "It is easy for parents to neglect a child, especially working parents. Children these days face a lot of pressure in school."

She also said it was important for parents to accept that their child has a problem.

She said: "Don't think that your child is mad. People must understand that mental disorders are treatable. It's like having a flu. One is physical, the other is mental. It is important to get early treatment."