



# Growing up, not grown-up

12-year-old Rohini had always been a quiet child. She seemed to prefer the world of books to any outdoor activities. Attending birthday parties or sleepover with friends was not her 'thing'. Being the only child of her high profile journalist parents, Rohini was exposed to various influences from early childhood. Their living room was often the hotbed of heated debates on the current political scenario, the global art scene, music, football, literature and more. Perhaps it was an urge to be noticed and be a part of her parents' 'intellectual' world that made Rohini gravitate towards books that were much beyond her level of understanding and maturity. Freud, Marquez, Ashapura Devi and Manto jostled for space with Enid Blyton, Lewis Carol and Sukumar Roy on her book shelf. Initially her parents were mildly amused by her 'adult' interest, and perhaps a tad pleased that their daughter was showing signs of 'superior intellect'. They even began to feel a sense of pride when their pre-teen daughter chipped in with a comment or two during their addas with friends at home. Rohini's mom, however, started getting worried when she realized that their daughter seemed to have no friends her age. The concern increased when she came across some of Rohini's scribbling that reflected dark thoughts of violence and death. Rohini seemed to be getting increasingly withdrawn. Her parents were left completely shaken when one day they noticed slash marks on her arms. They decided to take her to a psychiatrist. The Doctor told them their daughter was showing signs of acute depression, and Rohini's was not an unusual case. He said that increasingly parents were coming to him with teenagers and pre-teens who had psychological problems and needed treatment and prolonged counseling. Peer pressure, parental expectations, the self inflicted burden of the need to excel in a very competitive world were perhaps some of the reasons for this growing problem. For Rohini's parents this was an eye-opener. They had never felt that they had put any pressure on Rohini, yet they realized that it was their lifestyle that had played a major role in instigating their daughter's condition.

