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FIGURING FATHERHOOD
BY EHSANUR RAZA RONNY



Nosebleeds are sometimes cool



QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

What goes up, must come back out.

EVERYTHING scary has a beginning that people sometimes overlook. Like the day a teenage kid comes home and says, "Dad, I might have put a slight scratch on your car." And then you go out to see half the right side headlight and the bumper is gone. Gone as in disintegrated like a glass balloon chased by a feral cat. Stuff happens.

Nosebleeds are a precursor of scary things to come. I'm not talking about regular nosebleeds due to cold and fever. Those are easier to handle. Doctors say it is fine if it is not a continuous flow or a continual occurrence. Children manage it fine. I am yet to see any child experiencing their first nosebleed and becoming scared witless. It's the parents or grandparents that make the matter a situation so terrifying that the US military needs to be called in with their Iraq invading peacekeepers. Concerned parents/grandparents often huff and puff only to find out a nosebleed is just that. It is no weapon of mass destruction. The peacekeepers can go back.

How to deal with a regular bleed? Just lay the child down, wipe away the blood and reassure them that this is cool. Action heroes and butt kicking heroines don't worry about blood. They often have a red patch just below a nostril for extra – cool effect. It's okay to worry, but no need to turn on the sirens.

It happened to my four year old just a couple of days ago. I was at home sitting at the PC wondering what to write for this column while checking out cars for sale. The son approached to see what I was seeing. It was a beautiful 1979 Datsun with unmolested bodywork and perfect chrome bumpers. The wife screamed. I replied reassuringly that I was not buying the car. Then I looked at the kid. His nose was bleeding. The wife dropped everything, came rushing while telling me to make an appointment with the doctor. I was finding it funny but I didn't dare laugh cause then I might have a bleeding nose. The woman can punch.

Turns out, my son put a rolled up plastic sticker up his nose. That cut the lining. Previously he had put a red seed up his nose, seeds that he has been collecting as treasure. And much earlier, my brother –in-law in his misguided youth had put up a screw inside his nose. He couldn't unscrew it as easily. I too had a dart gun pellet in my nose cause I shot myself. This is a precursor of scarier things to come due to kids trying out things they shouldn't, logically. Like a massive dent on the car.

My son was just trying it out but it ended up scratching his nose and causing a bleed. I was just twirling my toy gun like RoboCop when it fired. Stupid things happen. I was also trying to take a tight turn quickly when I nicked a tree with my father's car. It was a slight scratch that in bright sunlight oddly looked like a smashed headlight. I paid for it. I learned my lesson. I hope my son learns his lesson and never puts things up his nose.

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

BY NIGHAT ARA, Psychiatrist, Counsellor and Therapist



Society's slings and arrows

Dear Doc

I have extreme claustrophobia which reaches a point when I can't even get into an elevator with more than four people in it. And using public transports like a bus is out of the question. Can you please tell why I feel the way I do and what can be done about it?

- Syed Mohammed

CLAUSTROPHOBIA is a kind of phobia (fear) which is a manifestation of Anxiety Disorder. Anxiety is actually a mixed emotion although a specific kind of fear is a major contributor in this case.

From a physical perspective, persistent problematic anxiety feeling (anxiety disorder) is the outcome of chemical imbalance in the brain. Nervous System has acquired heightened sensitivity and neurons start firing indiscriminately once it is triggered by some cue in the environment. It has lost its capacity to self-regulate the intensity and frequency of electrical and chemical impulses in the brain. Anxiolytic medication (different varieties are out there in the market) can help to correct the imbalance and give you relief.

From psychological perspective, any emotion (e-motion) is energy in motion. Anxiety is a manifestation of excessive suppressed emotional energy in unconscious mind. Fear is a normal emotion that tells us to run from danger or take necessary precautions, etc. In your case, an apparently benign situation (elevator, bus etc.), probably any closed space evokes a danger signal (false alarm!). A consequent physiological response ensues to the false alarm.

Claustrophobia (an unhealthy coping mechanism) can be a brain conditioning (stimuli-response relationship) that has resulted from an early life experience of feeling trapped (could be symbolic though) in a closed space. Memory, stored at an unconscious level, once triggered can lead to an automatic response which is out of proportion to present context.

Psychotherapy may help to bring that unconscious memory to the surface and then help to unlearn the faulty response and replace it with healthier conscious coping strategies. It is important that you seek help as quickly as possible. Otherwise the older the symptom gets, the harder it becomes to erase the pattern. It is not unlikely that untreated claustrophobia gets further complicated with panic attacks on top of it.

Unfortunately, these potentially disabling mental health symptoms often get minimised by other health professionals and family members. As a result, people have to live a compromised lifestyle for a prolonged period of time and eventually start getting depressed. This is how anxiety and depression tend to feed each other and form a vicious cycle. Be proactive and look for professional help and be ready to cooperate in getting to the root cause of this issue.