



CASE STUDY

From “No Light in Her Face” to a **Living Room Full of Light**

How a 16-Year-Old Diagnosed with Depression
**Came Back to Herself Through a Systemic
Parallel-Track Intervention**

THE FAMILY

Sandhya Sharma (Mother)

Hyper-vigilant by her own admission. Caught in the exhausting 'middle space' between a rigid, highly structured spouse and a daughter who was retreating from the world.

Aditi Sharma (16 years old / Daughter)

Diagnosed by a psychologist with clinical adolescent depression. Prescribed antidepressants. Experiencing profound behavioral shutdown, hypersomnia, and academic paralysis.



Program: Inside Out Labs, Parallel Parent + Child Track

All names used in this case study have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals involved.



THE HEADLINE OUTCOME

The daughter Sandhya could not reach — the one who would not look up, flatly refused to study, and wouldn't let anyone near her hair — became, in her mother's own words,

“

just like a normal family again.

Sandhya, Mother

”

Aditi started smiling, sharing her daily life, and taking independent charge of her choices. She began waking up to mornings that were no longer defined by tension.

The quiet engine behind this transformation

Sandhya committed to doing her own internal work in parallel with her daughter.

THE CHILD'S CRISIS

What Was Happening to **Aditi**

“

Our entire family was going through a very difficult time.

Sandhya, Aditi's Mother

”



By the time Sandhya reached out to HKT, Aditi had already been processed through the conventional mental health system. A psychologist had diagnosed her with **child depression** and **initiated a course of antidepressants**. However, isolating the symptom chemically wasn't reaching the root cause.

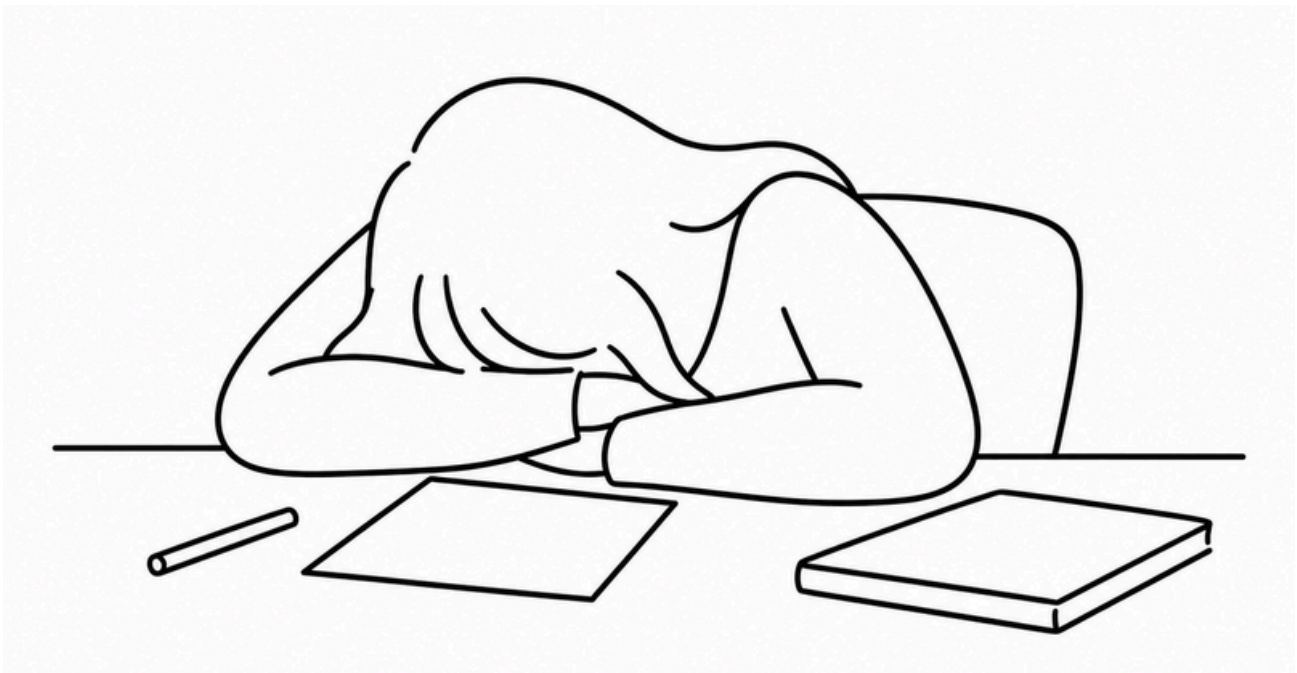
THE VISIBLE DECLINE

1 The "Freeze" State (Hypersomnia)

Aditi began sleeping for hours at a stretch. Daytime, nighttime—it didn't matter. This wasn't laziness; it was a **nervous system locked in a deep defensive shutdown**.

2 The Extinguished Light

As her mother recalled: "She was all the time morose and had that dull face. Anybody could see it... like a child who has just **lost everything**."



3 Active Academic Refusal

She didn't just avoid her schoolwork; in the middle of her high-stakes JEE (Engineering entrance exam) prep, she completely withdrew her participation. **“She just refused to study. Absolutely. She said, 'No, I'm done. I'm not doing this.'”**

4 Cognitive Detachment

Even when sitting in front of a screen or notebook, she wasn't present. **“She was somewhere in a different world thinking... just harping on loops.”**

5 Physical Self-Abandonment

She stopped grooming herself. Her hair became an incredibly volatile, emotionally charged topic that **no one in the house dared to raise.**

THE MEDICATION QUESTION

After a few days of experiencing no relief and reading about the side effects online, Aditi unilaterally rejected the antidepressants. **She decided,**

“

This is not for me... I'm not going to have this.

Aditi, 16 year old

”

The medication stopped, but the heavy, suffocating depression remained.



THE PARENT'S PARALLEL CRISIS

What **Conventional Therapy** Had Missed

Every counselor the family visited prior to this focused exclusively on Aditi. The institutional assumption was clear: **The child has a problem. Work on the child.**

“

Most of the time it was on her. Nobody was telling us, okay, somewhere you are also wrong. You need to change a lot too. The parents feel the counselor is on their side because they are the ones paying... Finally, the child just says, 'I don't want to go,' and the whole purpose is defeated.”

Sandhya, Mother

”



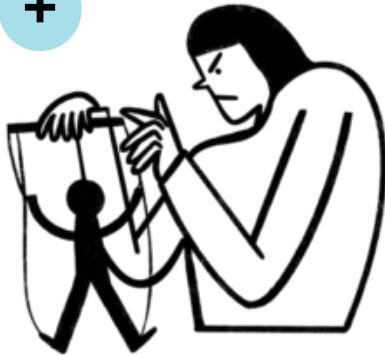
Sandhya knew, quietly, that the family system itself was operating in a state of **high dysregulation**. When Aditi fell into a trauma loop, the parents matched her state with their own reactive behaviors. **“Our behavior was very childlike... Whenever she was throwing tantrums, we were doing the same thing. It wasn’t very regulated,”** Sandhya admitted.

THE 3 CORE SURVIVAL PATTERNS SANDHYA WAS CARRYING:

Chronic Hyper-Vigilance

Sandhya lived in a state of intense, constant anxious forecasting. **“Even if she’s walking, I’m thinking four steps ahead—okay, there’s a boulder there, keep to my left so I’ll be able to protect you.”** This crushing vigilance bled into Aditi’s studies, sleep, and personal space, eventually causing Sandhya to experience physical heart palpitations.





The "Stickler-Controller" Anger Loop

When anxiety peaked, it converted into rigid control and shouting matches. “I was actually very angry... I used to think, 'Why is she not doing this?'" Daily shouting produced zero results. This anger was never the message Sandhya wanted to send; it was simply the only survival mechanism her own nervous system knew how to deliver.

The Fractured Middle Broker

Sandhya was caught in a structural crossfire. Tied to the intense pressure of JEE preparation, her husband ran a highly rigid, uncompromising academic regime ("Wake up at 4:30 AM, study 10-12 hours a day"), which completely broke Aditi's fragile confidence. Trying to preserve her sanity while staying loyal to both sides, Sandhya felt split down the middle: “**Beech mein, idhar bhi main, udhar bhi main. I could do justice nowhere.**”



WHAT INSIDE OUT LABS DID DIFFERENTLY



Concurrent Parallel Tracks:

We rejected the "problem child" paradigm. Aditi entered her own personalized curriculum to build internal emotional literacy, while Sandhya simultaneously entered her track to identify and unlearn her core survival patterns of hyper-vigilance, control, and anger.



An Objective, Trusted Outside Anchor:

Because parental communication had become completely entangled with historical anxiety, Aditi had entirely stopped listening to her family. Inside Out Labs provided an approachable, highly objective, yet deeply respected adult outside the family dynamic. This gave Aditi a safe space to confide her internal chaos without fear of triggering a parental lecture or panic attack.



The Gentle Re-Installation of Individual Agency:

We systematically dismantled the parental control and policing mechanisms. The entire onus of Aditi's life, daily choices, and academic execution was gently but firmly placed back into her own hands.



THE RETURN

She Became **Herself** Again

“

The main thing is, she wasn't smiling much. All the time she was morose. That dull face. Anybody could see it. Now there is that light around her.

Sandhya, Aditi's Mother

”

The breakthrough did not begin with school grades; it manifested directly in the **atmospheric safety of the home**, starting with Aditi's face.

THE BEHAVIORAL SHIFT PROFILE

What Was (The Survival Loop)	What Became (The Thrive State)
<p>Constant Sadness & Flat Expression</p> <p><i>“Dull face, morose, looking like she lost everything.”</i></p>	<p>Natural Vitality Restored</p> <p><i>“The light returned. She is smiling and engaged.”</i></p>
<p>Acute Morning Tension</p> <p><i>Mornings began in somatic dread, anxiety, and battle lines over waking up.</i></p>	<p>Regulatory Calm</p> <p><i>“She gets ready. She comes for breakfast. Just like a normal family.”</i></p>



What Was (The Survival Loop)	What Became (The Thrive State)
<p>Total Academic Paralysis <i>Active refusal to study; complete avoidance of conversations about her future.</i></p>	<p>Intrinsic Motivation & High Agency <i>She willingly approaches her mother on her own to say, “Mama, I should have studied. This is so simple.” Sandhya remains quiet, letting her daughter hold her own realization.</i></p>
<p>Defensive Boundary Protection <i>Pushed her mother away out of exhaustion: “Go, I don’t want you to sleep here.”</i></p>	<p>Authentic Relational Safety <i>Playfully invites her mother back into her personal space: “You sleep here. I’m scared.”</i></p>
<p>Complete Emotional Shutdown <i>Total withdrawal; wouldn't share any details of her internal thoughts or social life.</i></p>	<p>Open, Fluent Connection <i>“She chats to me throughout the day. She’ll share – okay, this happened, this boy said this.”</i></p>

The Daughter Sandhya **Couldn't Reach** Became the **Daughter Sandhya Enjoys**.

————— “ —————

“I enjoy her company. And I really think she does too.”

Sandhya, Aditi's Mother

————— ” —————



THE PARENT'S PARALLEL SHIFT

What Sandhya **Unlearned**

While Aditi was stepping out of her freeze response, Sandhya was systematically rewiring the **behavioral patterns** she brought into every room:

1 **Anger Transformed into Curiosity and Empathy:**

The old impulse to **yell** or **force compliance** was replaced with **real empathy**. “Now that anger doesn't come up as anger. I try to see what she's thinking, what is the difficulty she is facing — instead of trying to control her.”

2 **Termination of the Fixing Impulse:**

Sandhya successfully **unlearned the habit of constantly stepping in** to try and fix her daughter's problems, allowing Aditi to build her **own internal resilience**. “She should figure out things on her own — which she is. I see that. It's playing out.”



3 **Dismantling the Middle Broker Role:**

By stepping out of the anxious middle space between her husband's rigidity and her daughter's collapse, Sandhya forced the family system to **balance itself** organically.



4 **Maternal Pattern Interruption:**

She learned to catch her **anxious nagging loops** in real time. The impulse to control didn't instantly vanish, but her choice to act on it did.

5 **The Morning Reset:**

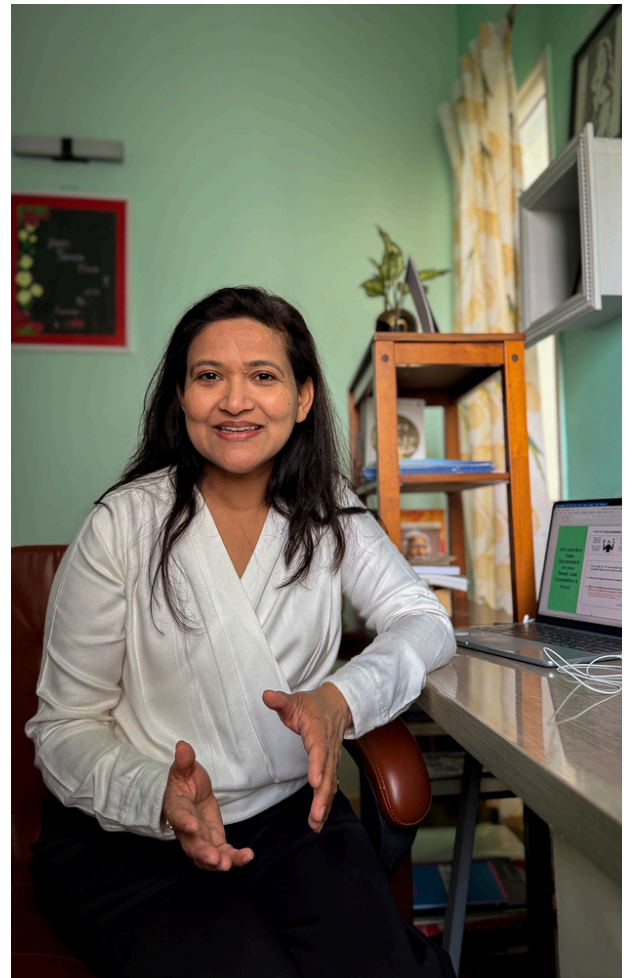
“I used to be tense the moment she woke up. Now, we are just like a normal family. **The way she starts her morning sets the door.**”

EXPERT ANALYSIS

Why This Worked

By **Aparna Gupta**, Founder — Inside Out Labs Curriculum, Helping Kids Thrive

- **The Reality of Parental Power:** When an adolescent sinks into depression, the default instinct of schools, parents, and traditional clinicians is to focus entirely on the child. Sandhya's family had been told exactly that through **medication, rigid study schedules, and blame**. But a developing brain does not heal in a vacuum; it heals directly within relationships. Every single day, the regulated—or dysregulated—nervous system of the parent in the room becomes the emotional climate the child is breathing. What made Aditi's case different was not heroics; it was that her mother sat with the harder, data-driven question: ***What if some of this is mine to change?*** Not out of guilt, but as actionable data.



When she replaced hyper-vigilance with self-awareness, calm, and empathy, she did not just feel better herself. She gave Aditi a safer nervous system to reorganize around—and Aditi did. The child-only therapy and medication had failed. The relationship did not. **This is not parental blame; it is parental power.** The exact same neuroscience that causes children to absorb our ambient anxiety allows them to mirror our regulated calm, if we do the inner reps first.

- **Breaking the Survival Loop:** When one is depressed, they are caught in a survival loop. Emotionally overwhelmed and unable to break out of it, they often adopt avoidance as a coping mechanism. Aditi's excessive sleeping and withdrawal was a protective coping response. The Inside Out Labs curriculum systematically enabled Aditi to exit this survival loop by giving her **somatic (Conscious Connected Breathwork)** and **mental fitness tools (Positive Intelligence/PQ reps)**. This dual approach helped her safely process stuck emotional weight and systematically activate her Middle Prefrontal Cortex (the Thrive Brain), shifting her from reactive defense to conscious, intentional autonomy.

A MOTHER'S CLOSING WORDS

What Sandhya Would Say to Another Parent About the Inside Out Labs Curriculum:

— “ —
Absolutely go for it. The approach is very different from any counselor we had met. She was approachable. Aditi could speak to her, and she looked up to her with respect. Every word she said meant something, and Aditi tried to follow it.

And you told us, work is needed by both sides. The parent and the child. That is exactly what brought positive change in her.

Sandhya, Aditi's Mother

