

Anxious parents & students turn to helplines

Shreya Bhandary | TNN

Mumbai: The phones of helpline centres were ringing all through Tuesday after the HSC results were announced. But volunteers and counsellors manning these helplines observed an interesting trend. "It wasn't just anxious students who were calling us. Parents, too, were seeking our help on a range of issues from how to download their child's scores to counselling tips for students who had fared badly," said Malini Shah, a senior counsellor with Aavishkar, a helpline running in the city.

Vijaysheela Sardesai, chairperson of the board, urged students not to lose hope, even though performance has dipped over the last two years. "We have a new option called 'class improvement' for students who feel they haven't scored the desired marks. Students who have passed the HSC exams but had expected better marks can apply for the class improvement scheme and can give a re-examination in October for the same subjects or all subjects. We will announce the dates for this in the month of June or July."

Most of the helplines averaged around 80 to 100 calls on Tuesday. "A lot of the parents were not even aware of how to check their child's marks online. Later in the day, after lakhs of students accessed their mark-sheets, people were calling in to discuss their low scores and their academic options for the future. Many were worried about their parents' reaction," said Johnson Thomas, director of Aasra Suicide Prevention Centre. He said that the helpline received a few calls from anxious students who were contemplating ending their lives as they had failed to make the cut or had scored really low marks.

Vandrevala Foundation, the city's only 24/7 helpline number received almost 70 calls from parents wanting to discuss their children's results with counsellors. "Around 20% of the total calls came from students

Call For Help

● Vandrevala Foundation: 25706000

● Aasra Suicide Prevention Centre: 2754669, 2754667, 9820466726

● Maitri Institute of Psychology: 25364041

● Mindtemple: 26289792, 26288928

● Aavishkar: 24227515, 9870496238

Advisory

● Students must learn to accept their scores. Marks will not define what you will become in life

● If you are unhappy with your scores, consult a lecturer or close friend to discuss what your options are

● Parents should avoid using sentences like "I told you so" or "You will never improve". It will affect your child's self-esteem

● If you notice a change in the behaviour of your child and see signs of depression, consult a psychologist or counsellor as soon as possible

who were really depressed and worried about their scores. They didn't know how to disclose it to their parents. We had to make sure they didn't take any extreme steps," said Sandra Francis, a psychologist who works as a counsellor with Vandrevala Foundation.

Despite the fact that the pass percentage had dropped noticeably, there was a shift in the mood of callers, said those who manned the helplines.

"We received many calls from students wanting to know where they could submit their papers for revaluation or what steps they had to take to give the exam again in October. This came as a pleasant surprise, as in previous years, most students would talk about suicide," said Shah from Aavishkar. She added it was a good sign that children were taking a healthy approach to the HSC results.