

Stress levels on the rise among students

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Barely two days into the SSC exams, two students committed suicide due to exam stress. Despite the state's efforts to reduce stress by spacing out exams, simplifying subjects and even offering concession to pass, if students fail in one subject, educationists and psychi-

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atrists say that stress levels among students are on the rise.

Over the last three months, Neeta Singh (name changed) has been behaving aggressively. A visit to psychologist Arjun John revealed that this was her way of coping with the pressure she was under for her SSC exams. "She was afraid of not being able to revise properly, forgetting matter and, most importantly, not getting into a college of her choice," said John.

Like Singh, there are thousands of SSC and HSC students who are turning to helplines and counsellors to cope with fears of blanking out, incessant headaches and insomnia. "Students should not feel stressed out, because the government is trying its best to make scoring in board exams easier," said Shubhada Vinekar, principal, Manik Vidya Mandir, Bandra.

City-based helplines and psychologists say that new pressures have emerged. "There is an annual 30% increase in distress calls between March and May," said John. According to Seema Hingorani, students are still confused about the best of five and oral exams introduced by the government to reduce anxiety over board exams. "Many of the government initiatives have only confused students even more," she said.