

Relax: school's advice to tiger moms and dads

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New Town: A new-age Calcutta school is advising parents of Class X students to give their children some me-time, allow them to party once a fortnight or month and strictly avoid building pressure on them by setting high performance benchmarks.

The Newtown School, whose first Class X batch will be writing the board exams next year, has been organising counselling for the parents of 80 students once a month in the evening since August. The school decided to directly address parents after a "circle time" with the Class X students threw up interesting

conversations.

The students had been asked to speak out about the "one worry inside their heads".

Most of the students spoke about being weighed down by the burden of academic expectations while preparing for their board examinations. One of them said it was "as if a demon is coming to eat us up".

Satabdi Bhattacharjee, principal of The Newtown School, told Metro knowing what the Class X students felt was a revelation. "Somewhere we are putting a lot of stress on them. If students are anxious, they will not perform optimally. The idea is to see that children are not stressed out," she



Teachers, students and parents at a counselling session at The Newtown School

said.

The sessions with parents are held after 6pm so that professional commitments don't come in the way. "The idea is to have everyone join in and

facilitate an engaging dialogue between the school and the parents. We did not want it to remain an exercise with only a few people showing up," an official of the school said.

Children are allowed to be present during the sessions meant for parents and voice their fears and anxieties.

The most common advice to parents is to create free time in their children's timetable. "Children should also be encouraged to do group study because at times they learn better with peers around," a teacher said.

Many parents mention during the sessions that they take their children out for dinner, shopping and movies, but are unable to comprehend that a child needs a peer group to open up or ventilate his or her feelings. "With most children living in nuclear

families, they do not have anyone to share their woes with or vent out what is trapped inside," Bhattacharjee said.

Yoga instructor Ritu Singh has made changes to her son's timetable since attending a session, allowing him more time to sleep and play.

"It was an eye-opener. I realised that as parents we often unnecessarily put pressure on our children and do not let them be. I used to wake him up early so that he could study and I would constantly remind him to come back home early when he stepped out to play. I now realise this is not how a 15-year-old should be leading his life," she said.