

the Big ASK

giving young people a chance!

BIMONTHLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS AND TEACHERS
VOLUME 1, NO. 1, AUGUST 2000

CHOOSING A CAREER?

In this issue...

There has not been a more exciting time to be young. The dot com revolution has thrown up successes who are in their early twenties, in their teens, and sometimes even younger. They are potent symbols of success of an entire generation. For all of you.

There has never been a more difficult time to be young. For these few success stories have raised aspirations in the million hearts who then have to contend with their own average or less than average performance, a pass mark that denies them entry to the stream or college of their choice.

Perhaps they don't!

If you look at success stories, not very many are toppers from the most prestigious schools and colleges. Our own President certainly did not follow this route, nor did some of the most eminent names in any field of endeavour. And don't let people tell you that these people were especially gifted. Perhaps you too are similarly gifted. You have to just go out and prove it to the world!

With all sorts of skills. However, to succeed in any field, you need to have awareness both of the opportunities of the world outside, and of your own particular talents. Most of us never achieve our full potential because we are constrained by our own fears. Pursue your dreams with energy, discipline and perseverance, and success shall be yours! However, success is just a stepping stone to our real goal: happiness and fulfillment. And it's important for you to determine what makes you happy.

So you are on your way to adulthood?

What fun! What a pain!!

Suddenly the world is standing on its head. Sometimes it seems nobody understands you. Sometimes you don't understand yourself! "You're too old" you're informed one minute, and the very next minute they're told "you are too young"!

The pressure of the board exams is giving you nightmares. It does not help to have parents nagging you to get-off-the-phone-get-down-to-studies; asking innumerable questions about where you are going, with whom, how and what time you will be back; worse still, comparing you with their friends' kid who is "doing so brilliantly, making his parents proud..."

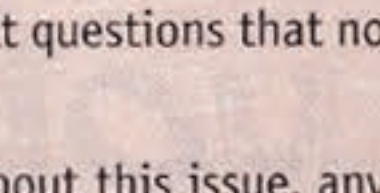
To add to your confusion, your body is changing. New and strange feelings and emotions suddenly make you feel that the world

askline 4176128

MONDAY - FRIDAY, 1-6 P.M.

If you are a teenager, a teacher or a parent and there's something troubling you, call on this number.

Anything you discuss will be kept strictly confidential.



time. Not for you, and certainly not for your parents.

How do you cope? Who do you turn to? Why, the Big ASK of course!

Everything that concerns you concerns us. This is a must-have guide for all young people and for their parents too. It will inform, guide, counsel, and answer questions you did not know whom to ask.

Let us walk the teenage years together!

askwrite-in

Write in to the Big Ask Let's be friends!



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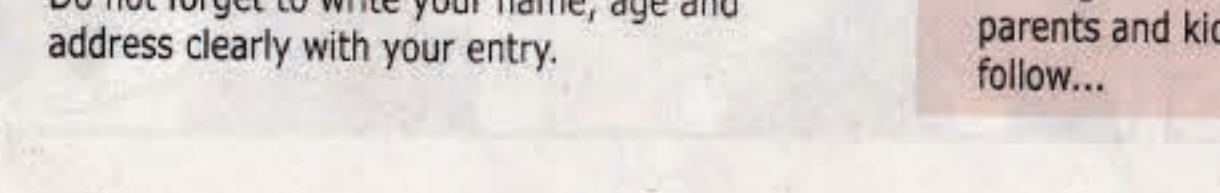
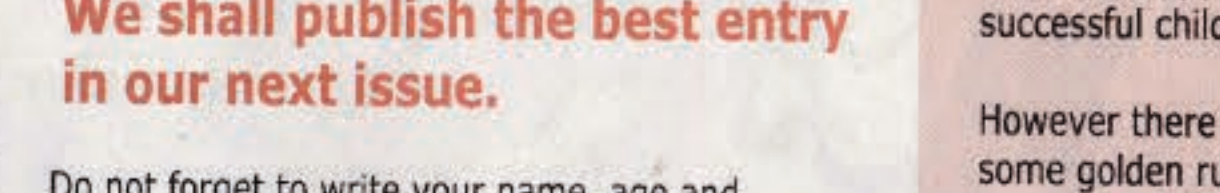
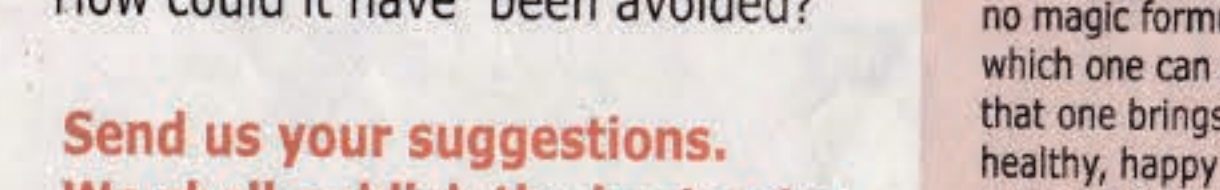
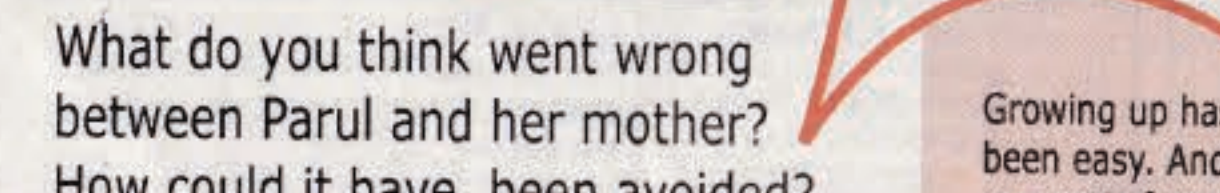
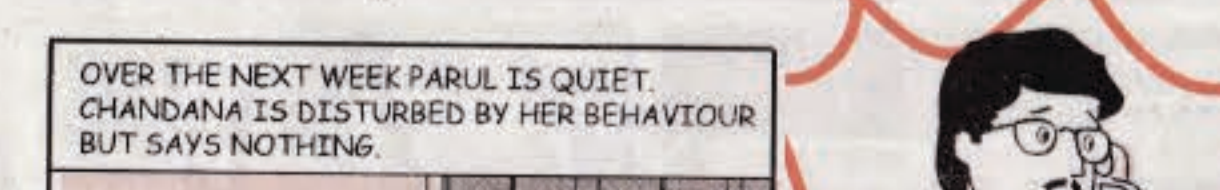
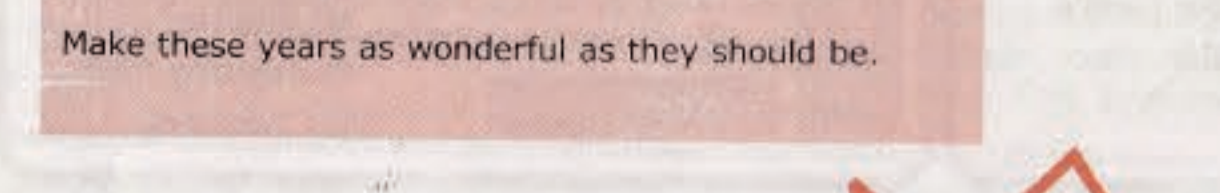
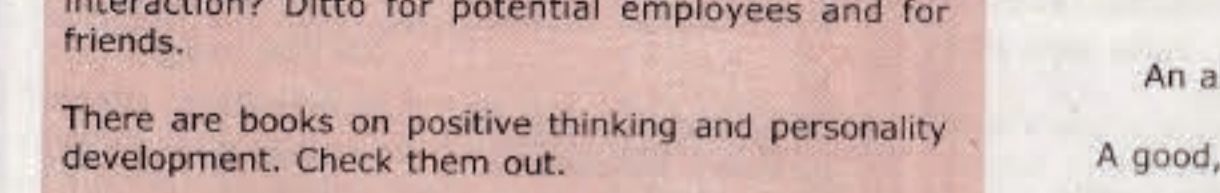
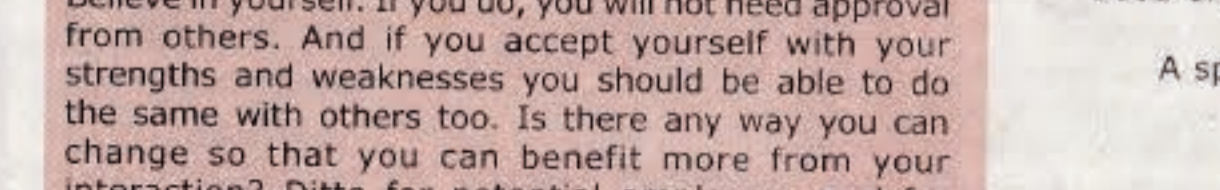
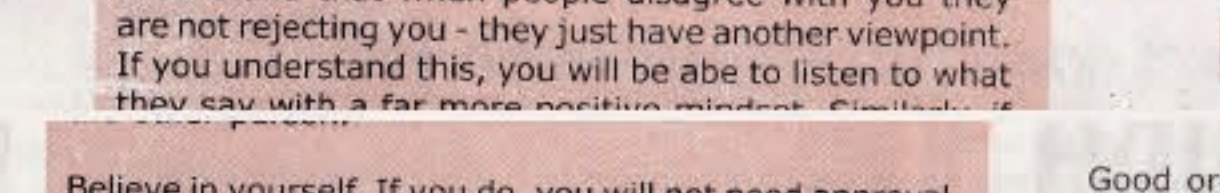
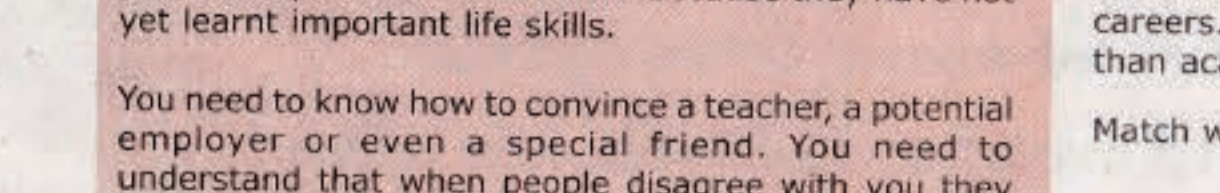
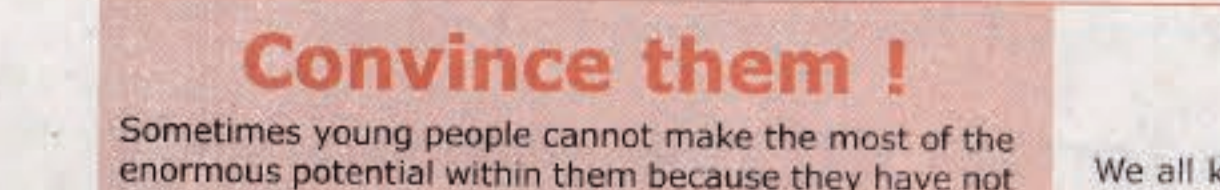
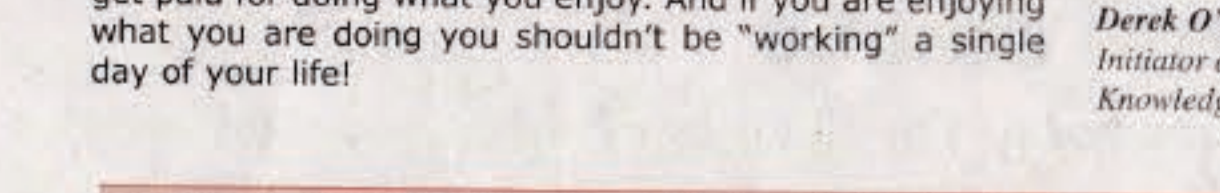
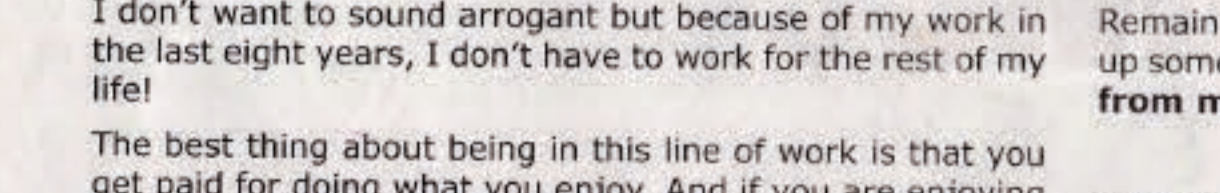
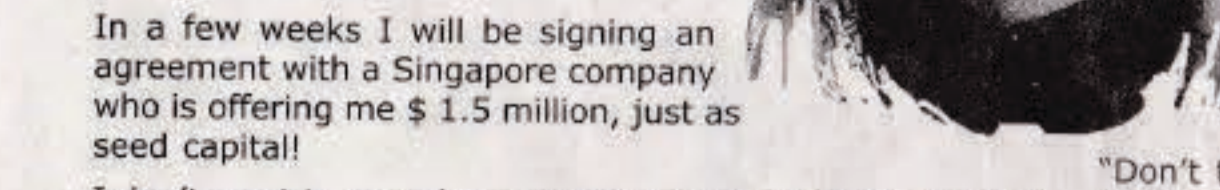
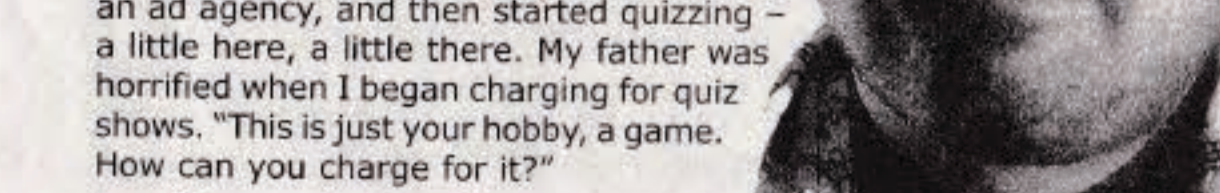
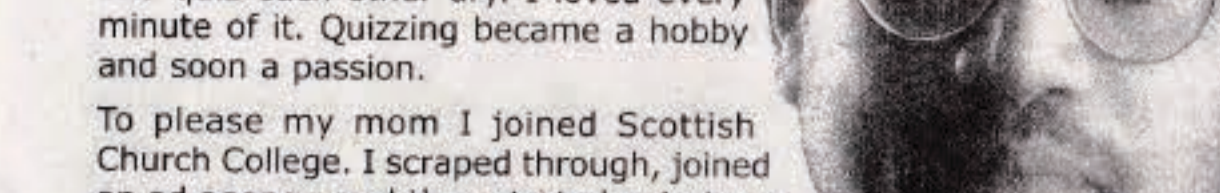
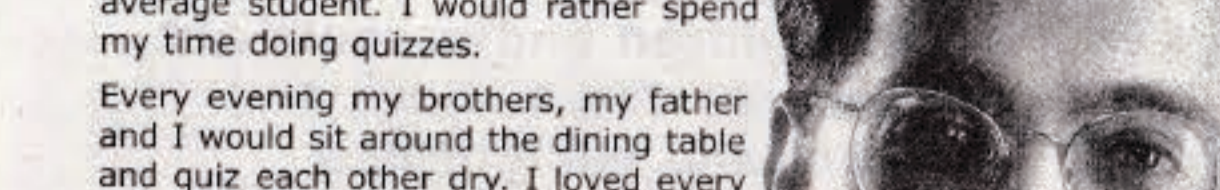
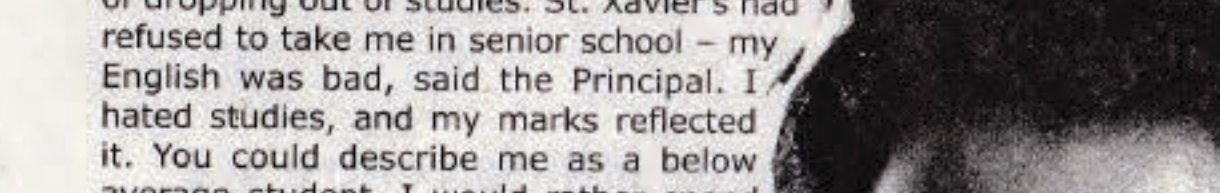
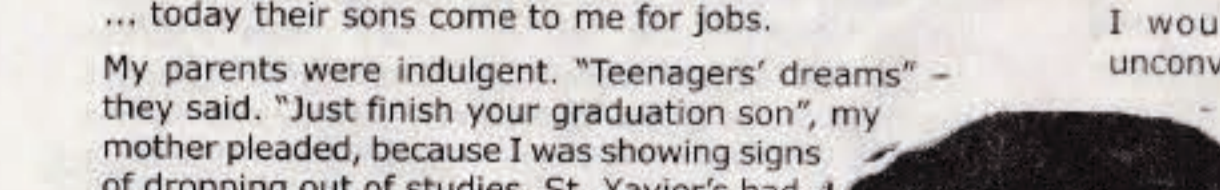
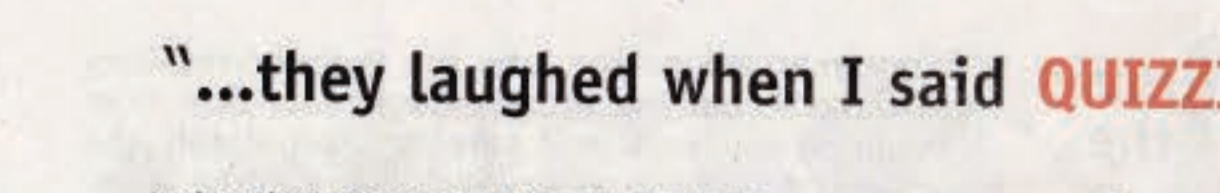
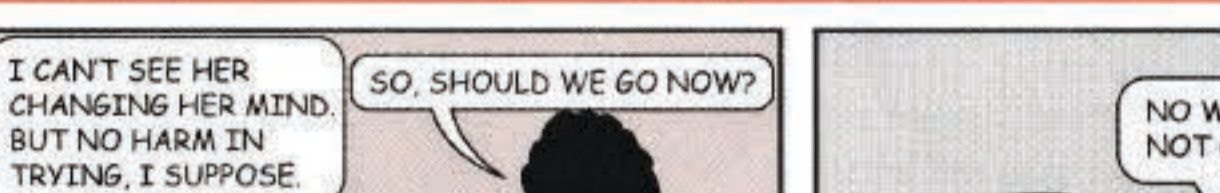
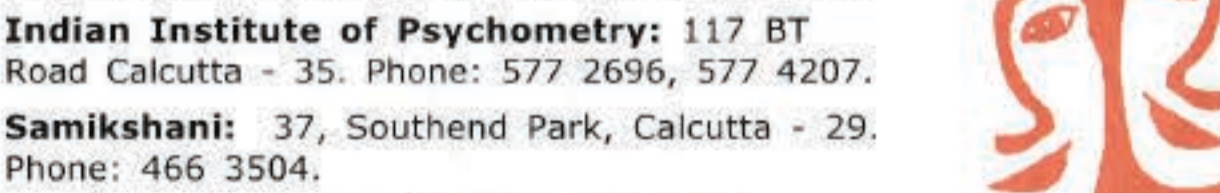
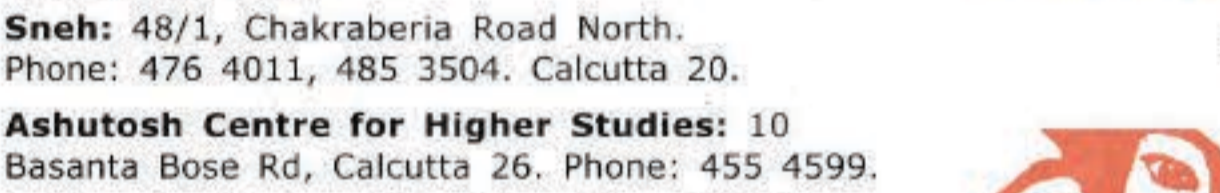
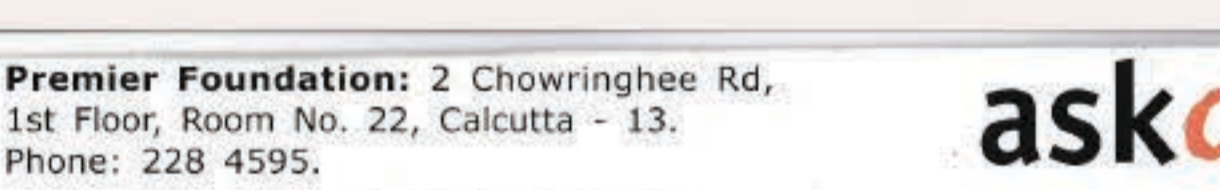
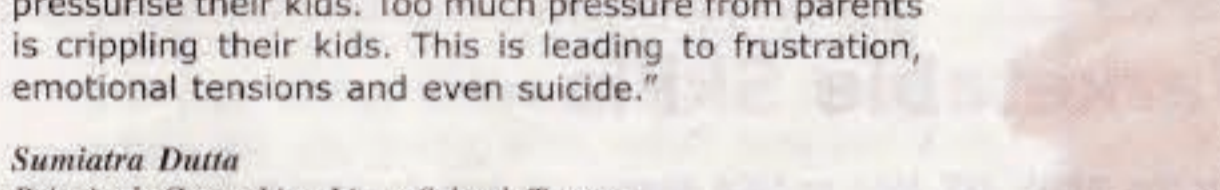
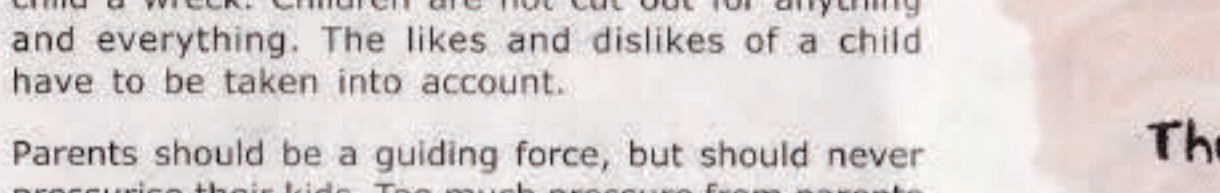
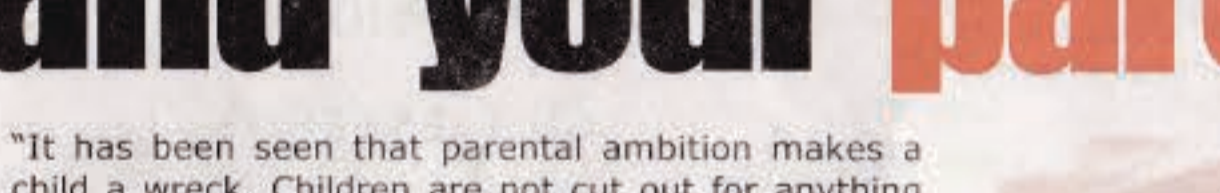
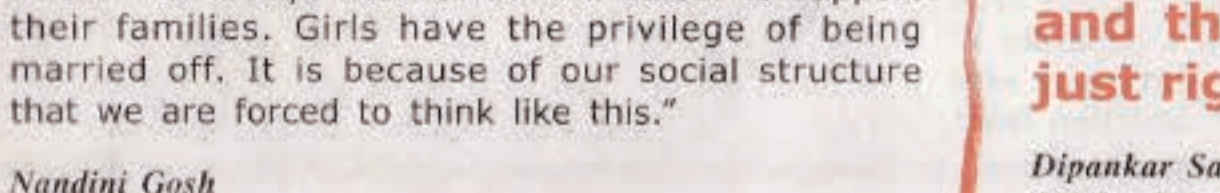
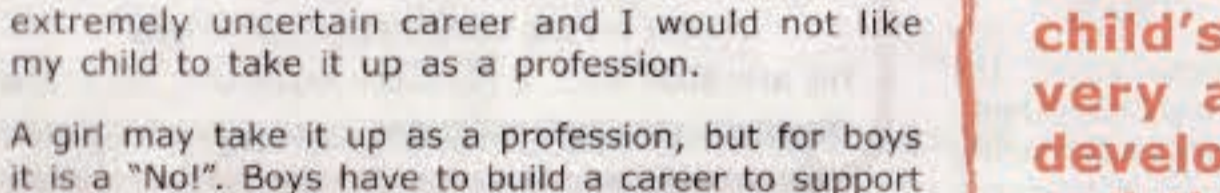
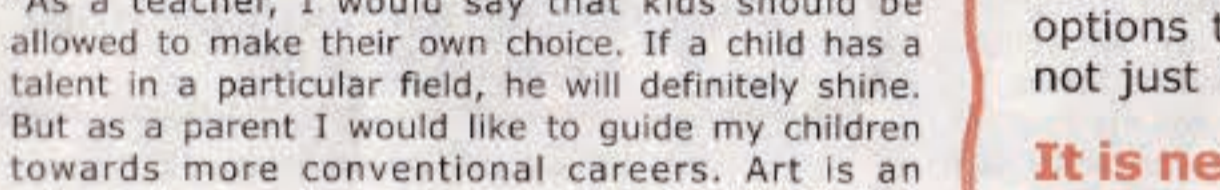
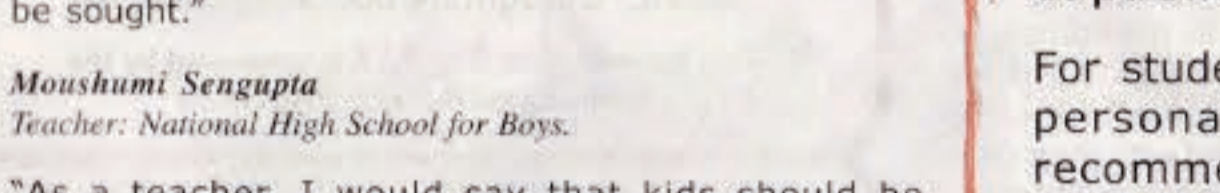
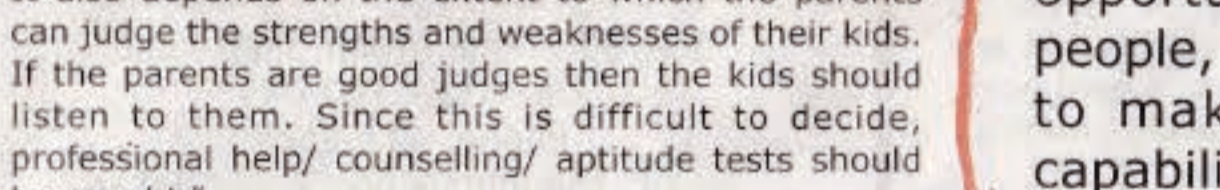
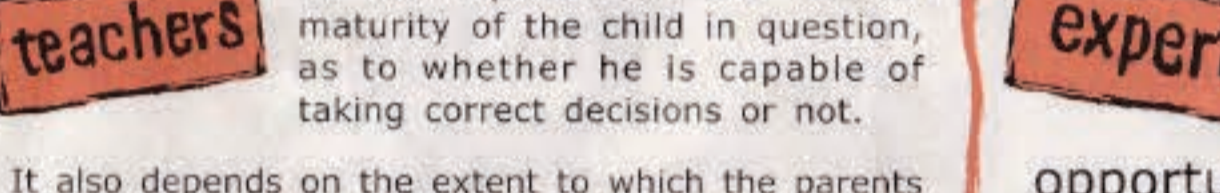
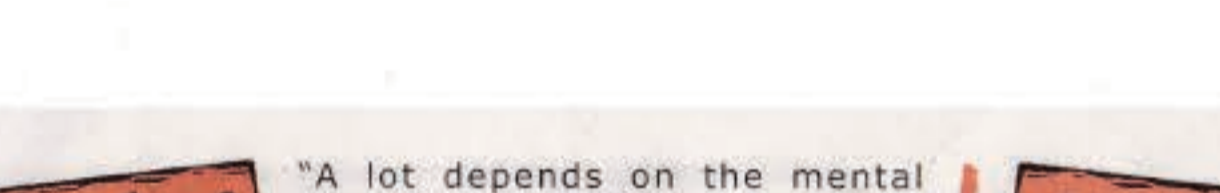
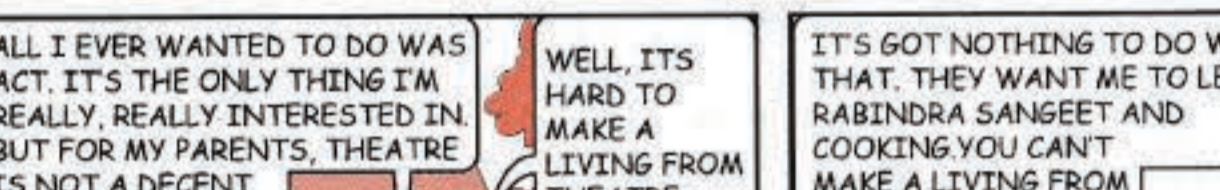
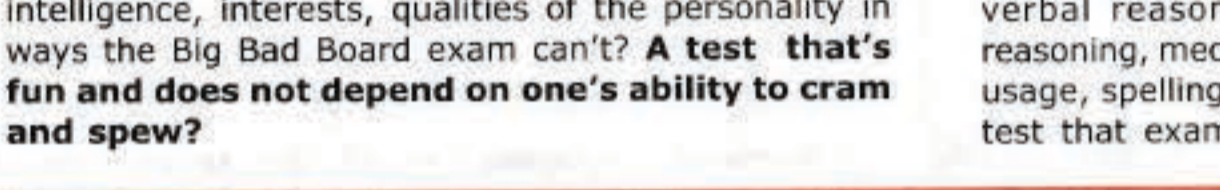
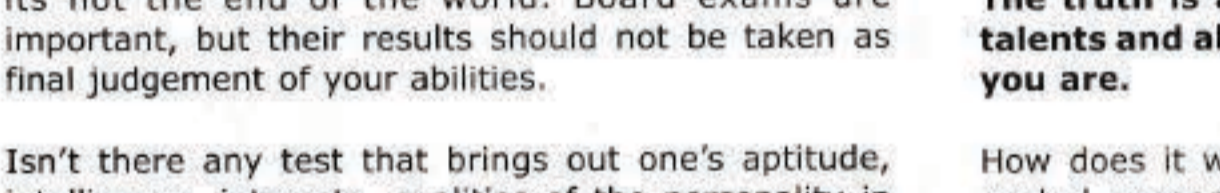
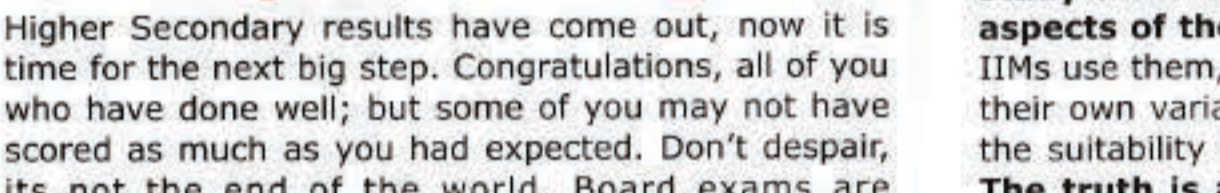
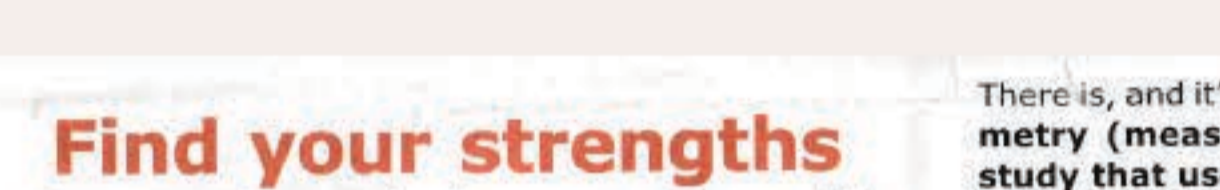
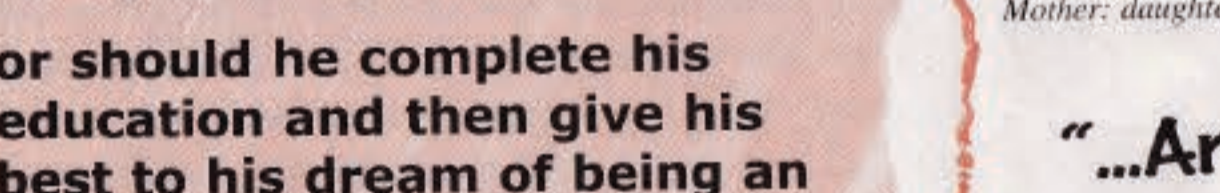
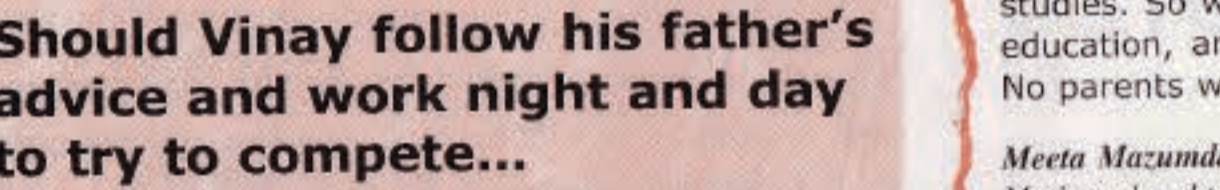
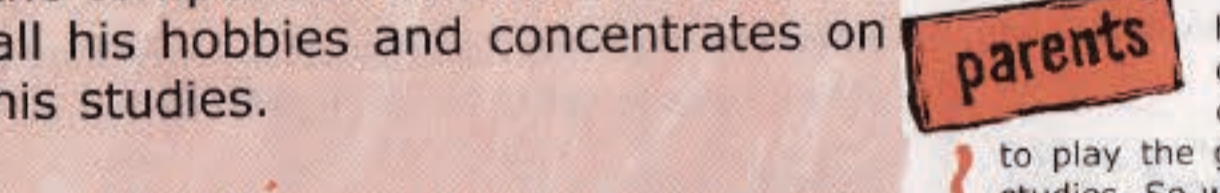
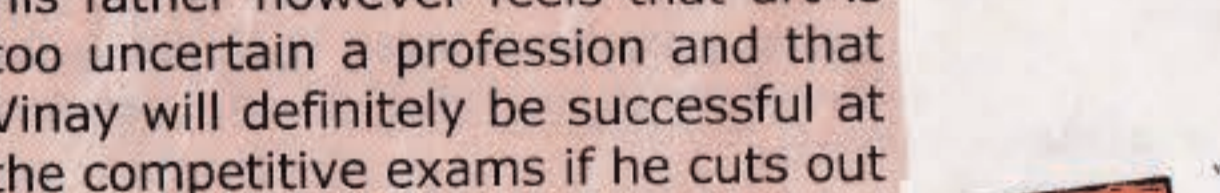
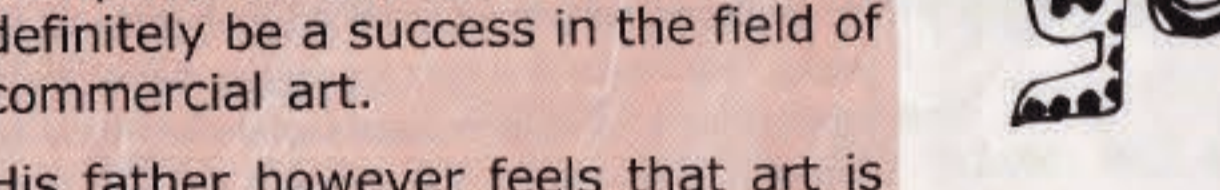
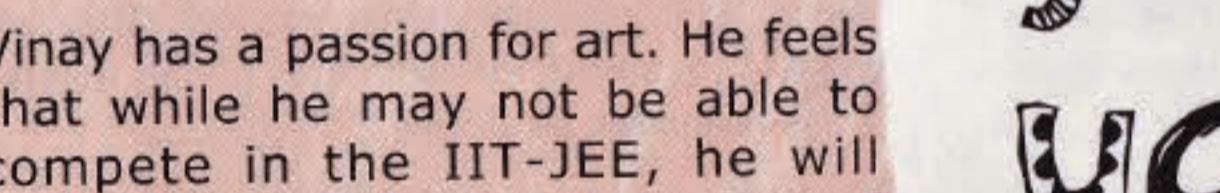
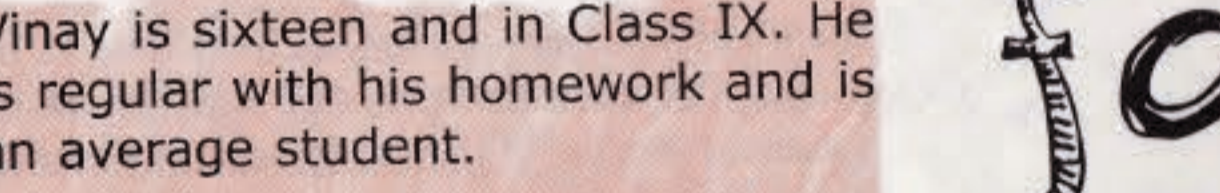
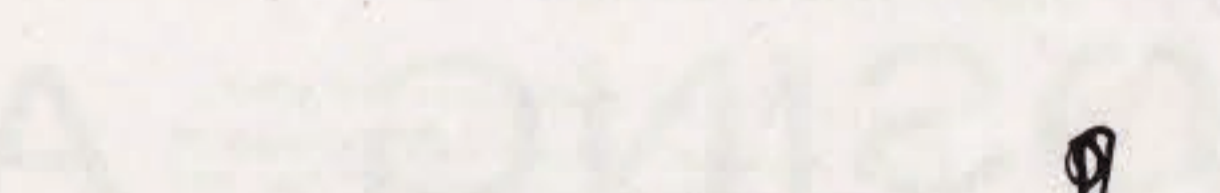
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teens little babies

This is a story of two families who live in neighbouring buildings in Southern Avenue, Calcutta. Nita Roy and Chandana Maity have known each other for over twenty years. Their husbands work in the same office and their daughters Riya Ray and Parul Maity have just finished Class XII.

Like many young people all over the country, these two girls are also trying to find out how best they can manage their education, career and also their personal lives.



children

"In today's world, it does not matter whether you are an engineer or a doctor. What matters is whether you are successful or not, so one should do what one is good at."

Sanjay Saraf
13 yrs.
Class VIII, Julien Day School, Gangasagar

"If a child is pressurised to take up his or her parents' choice, his chances of failure are higher. After failing, he will obviously feel bad, but if he takes up something for which he has an aptitude, his chances of failure are less."

Aditi Das
15 yrs.
Class X, St. Agnes Convent School, Hourah

"I was in Vinay's place I would listen to my father and take the IIT exams. Parents have far more experience and know what is best for their children. I am going to do computer technology as that is what my parents have advised me to do."

Mohit Agarwal
17 yrs.
Assembly of God Church School

"...I would listen to DAD..."

Swapnil Dhar
Father: son (17 yrs)

"...unless there's exceptional talent..."

"...chances of failure are less..."

"...do what you are good at..."

"...Art has no future..."

"...I think Vinay's father is justified. Art has no future. I would not want my son's daughter to pursue such a profession. My daughter likes to dance and my son likes to play the guitar. In fact they often neglect their studies. So what should I do? Let them neglect their education, and allow them to pursue their hobbies? No parents want their children to suffer later on."

Meeta Mazumdar
Mother: daughter (12 yrs), son (19 yrs)

"Vinay's father should not force him but should make him understand that art has no future. For example my son loves cricket. Given a chance he'd quit studying but that's crazy. We belong to a middle class family. If he doesn't have exceptional talent then he will not shine. My son plays reasonably well but not well enough to be in the Indian team. So what happens in the future? He'll neither succeed as a player nor will he have enough education to earn a living."

Children should realise that we parents are not their enemies but want the best for them."

Swapan Dhar
Father: son (17 yrs)

Find your strengths

Higher Secondary results have come out, now it is time for the next big step. Congratulations, all of you who have done well; but some of you may not have scored as much as you had expected. Don't despair, it's not the end of the world. Board exams are important, but their results should not be taken as final judgement of your abilities.

Isn't there any test that brings out one's aptitude, intelligence, interests, qualities of the personality in ways the Big Bad Board exam can't? A test that's fun and does not depend on one's ability to cram and spew?

There is, and it's called psychometry. **Psycho (mind), metry (measure)** is a branch of psychological study that uses special tests to quantify various aspects of the mind and personality.

IITs use them, many institutions have their own variation of psychometric tests to evaluate the suitability of prospective students or employees. The truth is academics is not all. Keep all your talents and abilities alive; they all make you who you are.

How does it work? There are a battery of tests for verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, abstract reasoning, mechanical ability, space relations, language usage, spelling usage and clerical speed and ability (a test that examines your ability to work with lots of

detail with speed and accuracy). There are verbal and intelligence tests besides.

Each test can take up to two hours. The entire batch of tests are usually taken over two days.

The minimum level of educational qualification required of the examinee usually corresponds to Class X.

Although the results of some of these tests seem self explanatory, professional counsellors can interpret many more aspects of one's personality from the results.

Here are some organisations in Calcutta that administer psychometric tests professionally, though not all of them provide career counselling.



teachers

"A lot depends on the mental maturity of the child in question, as to whether he is capable of taking correct decisions or not."

It also depends on the extent to which the parents can judge the strengths and weaknesses of their kids. If the parents are good judges then the kids should listen to them. Since this is difficult to decide, professional help/ counselling/ aptitude tests should be sought."

Moushmi Srangutta
Teacher, National High School for Boys.

"As a teacher, I would say that kids should be allowed to make their own choice. If a child has a talent in a particular field, he will definitely shine. But as a parent I would like to guide my children towards more conventional careers. Art is an extremely uncertain career and I would not like my child to take it up as a profession."

A girl may take it up as a profession, but for boys it is a "No". Boys have to build a career to support their families. Girls have the privilege of being married off. It is because of our social structure that we are forced to think like this."

Nandini Gosh
Teachers, Bodhisattva School, Bagaihati.

experts

"Many parents are unaware of the opportunities that exist for young people, or are confused about how to make best use of the child's capabilities."

For students like Vinay we do a thorough personality and aptitude test and recommend career or higher education options that best use all his capabilities, not just his academic achievement.

It is necessary to understand the child's inherent strengths, be very aware of all the latest developments in the industry, and then find the niche that is just right for that child."

Dipankar Sarkar
CEO and Counselor, Premier Foundation, Calcutta
For contact address, see box below.

"Every year around the time the Higher Secondary results come out, we are inundated with calls from despairing students and parents. Fortunately the number of extreme cases have reduced over the years. We at SNEH try our best to ensure that the stress does not precipitate to distress. Parents are not always the best judge of their children's abilities and as a result there can be enormous tension when there is a difference of opinion. At home, parent-child communication is usually biased, that is they cannot communicate as equals."

At the counselling centre we help children and parents get into each others shoes and understand each others problems.

In many cases we administer special tests to find out more about the child's interest, personality, aptitude and intelligence of both the child and the parents. For in-depth career information, we usually recommend them to experts in the field."

Dr. Ruchi Jain Gupta and Ms. Nandini Datta
Psychologists and Counsellors
Society for Nature, Education and Health (SNEH), Calcutta
For contact address, see box below.

and your parents advice!

"It has been seen that parental ambition makes a child a wreck. Children are not cut out for anything and everything. The likes and dislikes of a child have to be taken into account."

Parents should be a guiding force, but should never pressurise their kids. Too much pressure from parents is crippling their kids. This is leading to frustration, emotional tensions and even suicide."

Sunilatra Datta
Principal, Grace Ling School, Tongra.

...boys should go for more conventional professions...

Bottomline

There are many opportunities today for all kinds of skills and abilities.

Academic achievement is not the only thing to consider.

- * Be better informed of your choices
- * Find your inherent strengths
- * Keep your interests and hobbies alive
- * Seek help from good counsellors

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Sneh: 48/1, Chakraborty Road North. Phone: 476 4011, 485 3504. Calcutta 20.

Ashtosh Centre for Higher Studies: 10 Basanta Bose Rd, Calcutta 26. Phone: 455 4599.

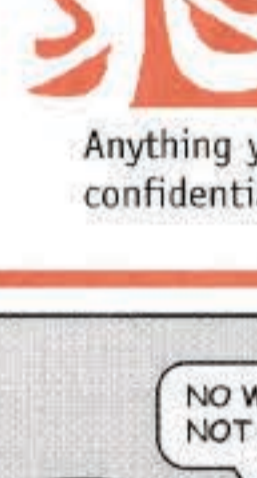
Indian Institute of Psychometry: 117 BT Road Calcutta - 35. Phone: 577 2696, 577 4207.

Samikshani: 37, Southend Park, Calcutta - 29. Phone: 466 3504.

Institute for Career Studies: Ms V. C. Subaiya, Excel-P, 154/C Linton Street, Calcutta - 14. website www.brainvisia.com

askcounselling

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For face-to-face counselling by a trained and experienced psychotherapist, in English, Hindi and Bengali, make an appointment on the askline 417 6128.

This service is free for young people. Anything you discuss will be kept strictly confidential.

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Illustration
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Photography
Show Packaging



"...they laughed when I said QUIZZING would be my career..."

...today their sons come to "me for jobs".

My parents were indulgent. "Teenagers' dreams" they said. "Just finish your graduation son", my mother pleaded, because I was showing signs of dropping out of studies. St. Xavier's had refused to take me in senior school - my English was bad, said the Principal. I hated studies, and my marks as below average student. I would rather spend my time doing quizzes.

Every evening my brothers, my father and I would sit around the dining table and quiz each other dry. I loved every minute of it. Quizzing became a hobby and soon a passion.

To please my mom I joined Scottish Church College. I scraped through, joined an ad agency, and then started quizzing - a little here, a little there. My father was horrified when I began charging for quiz shows. "This is just your hobby, a game. How can you charge for it?"

In a few weeks I will be signing an agreement with a Singapore company who is offering me Rs. 1.5 million, just as seed capital!

I don't want to sound arrogant but because of my work in the last eight years, I don't have to work for the rest of my life!

The best thing about being in this line of work is that you get paid for doing what you enjoy. And if you are enjoying what you are doing you shouldn't be "working" a single day of your life!

I would say that though my choice of career is unconventional, it has needed all the ingredients that any other profession needs for success - hard work, research and more research, number crunching, meeting deadlines.

I have 52 people working in my company. You'll be surprised at the kind of professionals who have come to me for jobs because they are bored with their own bankers, engineers, autoCAD draftsmen, maths scholars (with an American degree), MBAs. They have all come on board with me. And they tell me that for the first time in their life they're having fun doing their job!

I call this profession "Knowledge Work". It's the first time in the history of mankind, I think, that people are being rewarded for being knowledge gatherers! I have a research team of 35 people, I have a separate IT department, a team that comes up with ideas, and a full-service Production Team for my programmes.

What advice do I have for youngsters who are about to make career choices?

"Don't take up a job unless you are passionate about it. Remain unemployed. Think what you would enjoy and set up something. Be an entrepreneur. But don't take money from mummy and daddy!"

Derek O'Brien, age - 39.
Author of *Brainwala Quiz*; Co-creator; Mastermind and owner of Global Knowledge Portals (erstwhile Big Ideas).

the Big Ask

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Coming Up

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Convince them!

Sometimes young people cannot make the most of the enormous potential within them because they have not yet learnt important life skills.

You need to know how to convince a teacher, a potential employer or even a special friend. You need to understand that when people disagree with you they are rejecting you - not just your idea or viewpoint. If you understand this, you will be able to listen to what they say with a far more open mind.

Believe in yourself. If you do, you will not need approval from others. And if you accept yourself with your strengths and weaknesses you should be able to do the same with others too. Is there any way you can change so that you can benefit more from your interaction? Ditto for potential employers and for friends.