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 Print**IIT-Gn to students fighting depression: Just say 'all is well'**

Concerned about rising cases of suicide among final-year IIT students, institute trains 24 students to identify and counsel peers who need psychological help

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The Indian Institutes of Technology, known for their bright minds, meritorious achievements and engineering innovations, have been in news lately for a shocking spike in suicides among final-year students. This year, till September, the IITs witnessed seven suicides, highest in four years.

So, final year students of the first batch of IIT Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn), graduating in 2012, decided to address the issue by involving other IITS to find ways to recognise signs of depression and prevent self-harm. It hosted a pan-IIT Gymkhana meet on Saturday.

On its part, the institute has selected 24 students and trained them under experts so that they can identify and counsel peers who need psychological help. It has also hired full-time and part-time counsellors.

Ajinkya Kulkarni, a fourth-year mechanical engineering student at IIT Gn says, "Recently, the institute selected 24 students for peer counselling after conducting a written test and an interview to rate their attitude and commitment to the cause. We received training from a Hyderabad-based expert in suicide-risk assessment and how to pull such students out of distress."

Contrary to popular opinion, Ajinkya, who is also the general secretary of the students' body, does not blame the academic system for suicidal tendencies among the students.

He says, "Whenever an IITian commits suicide, society blames the education system. This is not right. We have to learn to deal with such pressures, strike an emotional balance through tactful self-control."

Director of IIT Gn, Sudhir Jain says, "We have set up a multi-tier structure to help students deal with the stress of student life. It is not necessarily the academic pressures, it can also be family or relationships that drive them to such extremes."

A debate held at the institute on Saturday revealed that parental pressure, psychological stress, fear of failure, cut-throat competition and troubled love life could also push

