

Battles depression, turns stand-up comedian

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Calcutta: A year ago, Naman Chandak had attempted suicide after a daunting battle with depression and then admission. Life seemed hopeless for him then.

Now, he makes people laugh. Seriously.

Besides pursuing his graduation at St Xavier's University, New Town, he is a stand-up comedian.

On Saturday, he was a sought-after man among principals who wanted to invite him to their schools.

Naman, 19, was a recipient of The Surrendra Paul Memorial Award for Courage at The Telegraph School Awards for Excellence 2023. A thunderous applause greeted him as his story was told. Many princ-

pals raised their hands when host Barry O'Brien wanted to know if anyone wanted to invite the comedian for a performance in their school.

Naman, who was a student of Don Bosco, Park Circus, was glowing.

In this short life, Naman has seen life like few have.

As a schoolboy, he slipped into depression when his closest friend abandoned him. That was close to his board exams. He fought on and scored 92.5 per cent. From there, he went downhill. "I could not sleep. I started taking pills and developed a habit of self-harming," he said. He also dipped into substance abuse.

Then came the darkest day. "One evening in June last year, I was nearly dead. It was a miracle that I survived," he said.

And the turning point. "I thought life has given me a second chance and I must make full use of it. I always nurtured the dream of becoming a stand-up comedian. Now I decided to become one. I had nothing to lose," he said.

He is now a management student. Naman has participated in 45 competitions of stand-up comedy and public speaking and has won positions in 42.

Speaking to Metro over the phone, he said two lines of a Hindi saying for those who feel depressed with life: "Dil na-ummed toh nahi nakaam hi toh hain / Lambi hain ghum ki shaam magar shaam hi toh hain (The heart is not hopeless, unsuccessful it is / The evening of sorrow is long, but it is only an evening)."



Naman Chandak receives The Surrendra Paul Memorial Award for Courage at The Telegraph School Awards for Excellence 2023. Picture by Pradip Sanyal