

HSC pressure points to yoga



That's the spot: Zoe Deligiannis tackles HSC anxiety with acupuncture from her aunt, Maria.

Photo: *Anthony Johnson*

Hannah Edwards

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STRESSED HSC students are turning to relaxation strategies in a bid to overcome their anxieties. Some schools have launched stress management workshops for year 12 students and their parents.

But not all remedies are as wholesome as massage, yoga and homeopathy, with students taking prescription drugs such as Valium or stimulants such as No-Doz, Red Bull and coffee to stay awake. Drugs such as marijuana and alcohol are also being abused by students seeking to manage their stress.

Adolescence psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg said students were able to access prescription drugs such as Valium from their parents or a GP.

At Saint Ignatius' College in Riverview, HSC students learn meditation, yoga and breathing techniques in the lead-up to their exams.

Director of senior schooling Peter McLean said relaxation techniques helped students "look at the physiology of stress".

Mr Carr-Gregg said parents could help their children manage HSC stress. Nagging, comparisons to other siblings and talking about the financial sacrifice made for the child's education were not helpful. Students should study in the same place each day and work for 50 minutes then take a 15-minute break.

Chinese medicine practitioner and registered nurse **Maria Deligiannis** runs Points of Life in Bondi Junction and has 10 HSC students, including niece Zoe, receiving acupuncture.

Ms Deligiannis said complaints from HSC students included insomnia, anxiety and panic attacks. For Zoe, 17, panic would strike during exams, leaving her feeling "blank" and unable to answer the questions despite having studied hard. Her anxiety attacks became so serious that she collapsed after one test.

Acupuncture, homeopathy treatments, massage and yoga helped Zoe's focus and she has not had a panic attack in more than a year.

"Acupuncture has enabled me to relax," said Zoe, who will tackle three trial HSC exams this week. Common stress triggers among HSC students include worrying about life after school and fear that they will not get into their desired university course.

At student website <http://www.boredofstudies.org> reactions such as "The HSC is such a bully" are posted.

The Board of Studies will again operate its free advice line for students.