

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

They dropped out at 16 as they could not cope with the pressures of school and growing pains. But Mr Gideon Leow and Miss Lena Lee, both 22 now, returned to their studies and aced their O-level examinations.



# Comeback kids

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TNP PHOTOS: KOK YUFI-ENG

## Ex-gaming addict wants to fight cyber crime

**He thought his life was over at 15.**

But last year, at 22, Mr Gideon Leow scored four distinctions in the O levels which he sat for as a private candidate. The results were released on Monday.

But there was a time in Mr Leow's life when he put a knife to his abdomen and thought of plunging it in.

It was only the thought of his mother that kept him from doing that.

In 2006, his cybergaming addiction led to poor grades and he ended up in "the worst Secondary 3 Express class in the school".

To make matters worse, his voice had not broken, leaving him with a high-pitched voice which made him sound like a girl.

Then, much to his horror, he did not get his choice of co-curricular activity. Instead of the Computer Club, he ended up in the symphonic band where all the other members were girls. "Because of my voice, 15 of the 30 classmates picked on me," said Mr Leow. He now works part-

time as a guest services agent with Pan Pacific Singapore.

Seeing no reason to go to school, Mr Leow had retreated into his world of cybergames. "I was absent so often from school that my parents and teachers thought I had lost interest in my studies and allowed me to drop out," he said.

That was when Mr Leow started living in his bedroom. "I didn't even emerge for meals. My mother had to deliver the food to my room," he said.

### DEPRESSION

Mr Leow said he went into depression and even entertained thoughts of ending his life. "Once I put a knife to my abdomen and was about to plunge it into my stomach when thoughts of my mother stopped me," he said.

But it was 2½ years ago, on receiving his enlistment letter, that he asked himself what he was doing. It was also at that same time his elder sister invited him to attend church.

"It was a new phase in my life. That was when I realised that my life is not rubbish... I decided to turn my life

around," he said.

Mr Leow, who does not play computer games any more, signed up for courses at the Institute of Technical Education but he wanted more. Then he learnt about City College and its O-level programme and decided to try it out.

Mr Leow, who got a bursary to study, said: "I found the environment here different from that of secondary school... I was motivated to study and some day get a university degree," he said.

So motivated he was that he scored four distinctions at the O-level exams last year – in English, mathematics, combined sciences and principle of accounts.

Unfortunately, his mother was not around to see this achievement. "She died during my second year of NS," he said.

Mr Leow hopes his results are good enough to allow him to study digital forensics at Temasek Polytechnic.

CEO of City College Kenny Low, 38, said: "Our team is greatly inspired by the courage and accomplishments of Lena (see report, right) and Gideon."

