**The Mental Health of Students During A Global Pandemic**

**By Billy Morrell (Year 12)**

Lockdown has impacted the Global landscape on an unprecedented scale; each person around the world has experienced it differently; each with a different story to tell. We students have been placed in a unique paradox however, whilst we are at low risk, it is pivotal that we isolate and maintain distanced learning or safe, mindful in-person learning for the time being to preserve the health of others. It is unknown how this sudden shift in the way we learn and communicate will impact students long-term. Still, it is essential to discuss how it affects us right now, our learning, qualifications, and, most importantly, our mental health. I spoke with my peers about how they feel personally and asked them what helpful hints they have for looking after themselves and staying on track.

Although teachers are trying their hardest, the uncertainty regarding qualifications has often left both them, as well as their students, puzzled about how to move forward. The best thing for students to do, I believe, is to move forward as we would have done, had the pandemic not happened, to prepare us properly for the future. Students must also understand that this scenario is just as new to teachers as it is to us.

Aside from the actual education aspect, struggles with mental health have also been a prominent area of concern. Even those who are lucky enough not to struggle with their mental health are still plagued with witnessing their friends struggling, with little they can do to help. Having spoken to a range of pupils across the exam years and through my own personal experience, I have started to appreciate ways in which both students and their parents can work together to combat these issues and help improve quality of life, a little at a time.

**Ways to improve well-being…**

As might be expected, the main issue is lack of social interaction. Whilst everyone is aware that no matter how much you communicate digitally, through Snapchat's and texts to lagging zoom calls, nothing can replace the euphoria and joy of being surrounded by your friends every day. It’s therefore really important that you ensure you are taking care of yourself, getting enough fresh air, maintaining healthy sleep schedules, and generally looking after yourself. Additionally, planning your days can work wonders: your personal learning will help to keep yourself healthy.

Another comment made to me was to not be afraid to ask your teachers for help. Even though it may be more frightening to do this online, as opposed to when we are in our classrooms, your teachers are more than happy to help you. So, even when we return, ask them for help on things you misunderstood or struggled with during these digital times.

Vitally, it will improve your health to think about the future. Remember that there will be a day when you and your friends can once again hug, have meals and parties, and remember that there will be an end to this pandemic. Now especially, we can be more hopeful than ever with the announcement that many students will be returning imminently. However, all of this is not to say that a return to school and normality will magically fix everyone; we must not forget that mental health issues will continue after this pandemic is over, just as they were before this all began. Ensure you are looking out for your friends and peers, that you care for them, and that you treasure the moments as life gradually gets back to normal.