

## THE MENTAL HEALTH OF A JUNIOR DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAKS

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They say that junior year is the most important year of our high school lives. "It's the one colleges really look at - so you better do well," is what my mom would say to me the entirety of the summer before school started. It wasn't like I planned on not listening to her.

School started as any other year has; annoyingly early and immediately stressful, but I was used to it so I didn't really mind as much as I would have a couple years ago. I wasn't necessarily overwhelmed with work so I thought this year would be pretty easy, but as time went on it got a bit more stressful. The work got a little harder and continued to pile on. Still, no matter what I managed to keep on top of it. I was fully set on trying my hardest no matter what hardship I came across.

March 12th, 2020 was the last day I had in school. Throughout the day, teachers had been talking about possible outcomes because of the COVID-19 outbreak so I had an idea that we would be taking a break from school. Originally, I thought we would just be out for the rest of the month, but eventually it was announced that we actually would not be back for the rest of the year. My grades weren't the best and I had been worried about my community service hours so that just did not sit right with me. It was a huge change and I really did not know how to handle it. All of a sudden, my classes were switched to online and the teachers were assigning even more work than they did before.

Obviously, I was struggling to keep up. The normal 3-5 assignments I had due by the end of the week were suddenly changed to 7-10. The constant emails and Zoom calls were just too much of a change for me. Not only was I having a difficult time with school, but being locked in my house for weeks at a time also got to me. I felt like I was losing my mind.

I felt the need to cry at least once a day or at least throw something at a wall. Things were just not working out in my favor. The more the school year continued and the outbreak worsened, the more I felt disconnected with the rest of the world. I wanted to tell all of my teachers to just stop assigning more work for me to do. I couldn't handle it! I had to put up with my family for longer than I was used to, the unreasonable amount of work, and the AP Spanish test. I was just so sick of everything.

As the school year came to an end, I ended up extremely disappointed. Because of how disconnected I felt, I had no motivation to do any better than I already was. The more hopeless I felt, the less I cared to do well. It wasn't like I wasn't aware of my grades; I was. I just did not want to fix them.

I was getting extremely frustrated with everything. I couldn't understand why everything wasn't just getting better. I just wanted to leave the house and do anything else than what I was stuck doing at home. Everything was blowing up in my face and nothing felt the same. I would get angrier at everyone as time went on and I didn't know who to blame for it. I had never wanted to go to school more than I did/do. Really, I was indifferent about the whole situation. I didn't actually know if I was happy about not having to go to school or sad. I feel like I wished to stay home and not have to wake up so early every day, but when it came down to it, was I happy about that wish coming true? I didn't know. I still don't know.

Now that the discussion on whether school would be opening up or not has opened, the confusion has only gotten worse. Am I supposed to be excited about the possibility of being able to go back? I just don't know how I am expected to feel about the entire situation. I mean, I can see my friends again but the risk is still there. I wouldn't want to risk the health of my family members so is it selfish of me to want to go back? COVID-19 has only set off more stress and confusion that a person my age doesn't need.

Nothing makes sense when it comes to situations like these anymore. It all leaves me, and plenty of other people, extremely defeated. As time goes on, I begin to feel more and more unlike my usual self. The pressure of trying to accomplish all that I can in such dire times began to take over my life as quarantine started. If school resumes and I am put back into my usual environment, I'm not sure I'd be able to handle it the same way. But I'm also not sure if I would prefer to put myself out there

again or not.

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