

## February Newsletter

### College Students Coping With COVID-19 Fatigue



It's no secret that most of us seem to be struggling to cope with COVID-19 fatigue as we are approaching the milestone of one year into this pandemic. It has been challenging, to say the least, to find effective ways to cope and keep a sane state of mind.. The emotional toll is evident across the country, especially for young adults attending college.

The sudden changes that this pandemic imposed on everyone have

left many young people uncertain about the future of their education. This month, we were able to sit down with a couple of college students from different universities across the country who are entering the last semesters of their college careers and get a closer look at how a year into a pandemic has affected not only their studies but their mental health as well. Topics and other important back to school questions are discussed below.

#### 1. How has COVID-19 affected your ability to learn?

“Abnormal is the new normal. Learning in the same room I sleep in has been, well, different. To be honest with you, motivation has been low ever since moving to a virtual learning environment. It's hard not to pull out your phone in a zoom classroom when you don't have a physical teacher to hold you accountable. Zoom fatigue is a real thing, and it's hitting hard. Being involved in such a hands-on major [*Movement Science, Bachelor of Science*] has really affected the way that I can learn. For example, virtual labs have been difficult to adapt to and I miss the social interaction from lab partners and professors. Lastly, the one thing I miss the most and something that has had a great impact on my higher-up educational career has been attending professors' personal office hours. It's hard to connect with my professors over a chat room or a virtual meeting. Before

COVID-19 I enjoyed meeting with them on a more personal level. Being a college student these last couple months has been a test to my and thousands of other college students' ability to adapt and change.” - *Taylor Haartman, Winona State University '21*

2. **Being a college student, how has your mental health changed since the start of the pandemic?**

“My mental health has definitely been altered since the pandemic hit. As a soon-to-be graduate that meant more reassurance and confidence coming from solely myself. The ability to freely see my professors and feel guided in my career was slowly taken away from me. Being a Graphic Design Major requires the full understanding of your client, and their sense of perception needs to be pulled through my designs. That sense of human contact fell through the cracks and challenged me to face myself for all my answers. The pandemic taught my mentality to trust its own thoughts first and to question myself last” - *Amanda Kirmse, Concordia University Wisconsin '21*

3. **Being that college is a popular time for social interactions, how can young adults find safe ways to stay connected with friends?**

“College is most definitely the time for social interactions; people make life-long friends, explore their sexuality, and can even find their soulmates. However, these relationships and interactions have been greatly inhibited by restrictions imposed upon schools due to COVID-19. Despite the physical distance that must remain between each individual, it is still possible, and necessary, for people to find new ways to communicate and build relationships. Some of the ways my friends and I coped with being locked down were hosting PowerPoint nights, an app called Plato, and FaceTime. PowerPoint nights were very fun; we each created a PowerPoint on an outrageous, funny, or interesting topic, and then presented them to one another over a Zoom call. Plato is an app that each individual can download on their phone and play games together online. FaceTime, which is my most important tool, allows me to see the faces of my friends and loved ones, even when we must stay apart. Although it cannot quite substitute face-to-face contact or touch, it is important for everyone’s mental health to schedule a time to build, strengthen, and maintain relationships, and these are good options to do so. One piece of advice I would leave is that, although the physical separation enforced by COVID-19 is difficult mentally and physically when you get through it, and you will, your relationships will survive and grow even stronger.” *Kendra Strohm, United States Army West Point '22*

## How to Cope With COVID-19 Fatigue

Emotional and physical fatigue caused by COVID-19 has affected us all. However, there are a number of different ways to cope with and challenge the built-in frustration and exhaustion from this novel virus. Below are some ways to help relieve stress and ease the mind.

- **Exercise:** Get up and move, even just a simple walk, can release tension and calm the body down. By being activated, we can channel our energy into something more positive.
- **Talking:** Check-in on one another. Emotions are not meant to be locked inside of us forever. Express how you may be feeling with a companion you can trust.
- **Creativity:** Music, painting, and dancing are all examples of healthy habits to help overcome anxiety and stress. Let your creativity flow freely.
- **Constructive thinking:** Control what you can and forget what you cannot. Understand that your feelings are normal and valid.
- **Gratitude and Mindfulness:** Breathe. The most vital thing that we sometimes forget to do. Practice being in the moment and letting stress subside after the day's end.