

# The Impact of the Pandemic on Youth Mental Health: A school-based perspective

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- Role of Guidance Counsellors: Mental Health

- Triage & referral as needed
- Crisis intervention
- Short-term counselling
- Follow-up

## ● Pre-Pandemic: Trends in Guidance

- Self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Identity (ex. gender)
- Interpersonal conflict with peers
- Family issues
- Low motivation
- Substance abuse/dependency
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts/self-harm

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# Pandemic impact: Quarantine begins

March 13th onwards

- Challenges for school-based professionals

- How do we adapt our in-person model to reach our students who need us most?
- How do we reassure our students when we ourselves did not have the answers?
- How do we engage our students and provide the support?
- How do we triage effectively?
- How do we support and intervene with our at risk kids?

## ● COVID 19- Quarantine: March 13th onwards: Student perspective

### Challenges

- Worry about basic needs
- Fearfulness
- Uncertainty
- Isolation
- Disengagement
- Loss of routine and activities
- School year-grade 6/11 milestones
- Changing parameters/Ministry directives

### Unexpected Gains

- Time with family
- Pause in the hectic pace of life
- Time to take on new activities
- baking, cooking, working out, reading, family movie nights
- Sense of purpose-part-time jobs

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Pandemic impact: Return to school

*“This affected everyone: we all got worse..even if you went into this healthy...we didn’t all come out healthy..*

“

*Julia-Sec V- September 2020*



- Schools/Routines had changed

- Changes to the schedule ex. Virtual/asynchronous learning/part time scheduling for seniors
- Mandatory face coverings/masks
- New restrictions to promote safety and distancing
- Class bubbles/no cafeteria/less contact and access to their peers and staff/no lockers
- No extra curricular activities/sports
- Teachers have lost their classroom/harder to seek out trusted adults in the building

## ● Cycle I: Sec I/II: Trends

- Increased anxiety, worry
- Struggles with motivation
- Harder to engage in the classroom
- School avoidant behaviours/absenteeism
- Somatic symptoms
- Increased dependence on video games, screen
- Self-harming behaviours/suicidal ideation
- Parents contacting the school seeking support for their kids

*“I feel like life is on loop. I’ve tried everything to feel ok....I am just not ok..*

“

*Vincent-Sec V*

- Cycle 2: Sec III (Grade 9)

- Increased anxiety, worry, panic attacks
- Increased behavioural issues/acting out
- Struggles with motivation
- Harder to engage in the classroom
- School avoidant behaviours/absenteeism
- Somatic symptoms
- Increased dependence on video games, screen/drug use
- Self-harming behaviours/suicidal ideation
- Disengagement/easier to fall between the cracks
- Had to deal with the most disruption during the school year(Full-time/part time)- online classes

*It feels like it is never going to end...  
nothing to look forward to and I feel so  
tired all the time...*

“

*Cricket-Sec IV*

## ● Cycle 2: Sec IV/V

- Students thrown into a more independent learning environment /with high academic demands
- Decrease in academic performance
  - Worry about their permanent record
- Increase in crisis intervention, panic attacks,
- Suicide ideation & attempts, hospitalizations
- Significant increase in students seeking professional help- huge wait lists
- Easier for students to get lost and detached
- Absenteeism at an all time high..
- *Some of our students started doing better academically and emotionally with the 50/50 schedule.*

## ● Final Thoughts: Guidance Perspective

- Innovate and find new ways to connect with our students.
- Students are resilient and are finding ways to adapt to this ongoing pandemic:
  - Keeping a routine, changing clothes, connecting to close friends even virtually, reconnecting with core values
  - Students have a new appreciation for their mental health.
  - Have learned new skill sets



Thanks!

ANY QUESTIONS?