



REHAB CLINICS GROUP

Embracing Change, Inspiring Recovery

STUDENT GUIDE TO MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

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1.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

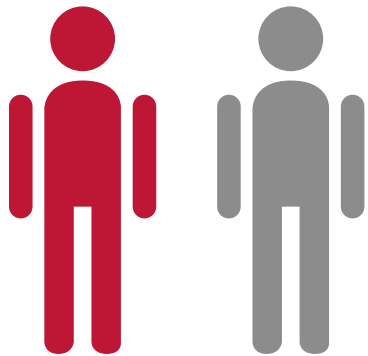
Across the United Kingdom, it is believed that mental health problems impair the lives of 1 in 10 children and young people. Sadly, many mental health problems are left undiagnosed and untreated. This has caused at least 70% of young people to experience mental health problems in later life.

Regrettably, mental health problems, especially in young people, are often left unaddressed and, as a result, spiral beyond control. Typically, this is due to a lack of understanding regarding the support that is readily available to those that find themselves struggling with anxiety, depression or even post-traumatic stress disorder. Unfortunately, as confirmed by the RCPCH, untreated mental health problems have caused the number of young people taking their own lives to increase across the country.

“As COVID-19 has crippled the world over the last 12-months, the number of young people suffering from mental health problems have continued to soar for varying reasons.”

In a bid to tackle mental health disorders and ensure that young people and students have access to often life-saving support, various campaigns have recently been launched to ensure that students receive mental health support

via their education providers. Mental Health Foundation is just one of the organisations hoping to ensure that mental health education is provided to students.



“1 in 2 of young people report less motivation to carry out the activities they usually enjoy”

As the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown imposes an increasing number of restrictions and continues to have ramifications of the lives and futures of young people, this guide has been produced for education providers in order to provide insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect students' mental health.

Guidance on how students can best manage their mental health going forward has also been outlined to ensure that education providers can offer relevant support to students in order to manage and mitigate mental health disorders.



2. THE IMPACT COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS HAVE ON STUDENTS

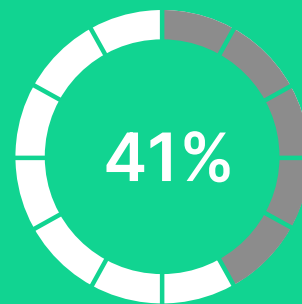
In a bid to combat the spread of COVID-19 over the last 12-months, the British Government has continued to impose various restrictions that dictate what individuals can and cannot do in their day-to-day life.

While these restrictions were implemented to save the lives of millions of people across the country, they have sadly come hand-in-hand with several implications.

Unfortunately, many of the restrictions have a direct impact on the lives and education of young people.

From being unable to secure work upon completing university studies to being unable to sit exams and attend colleges and universities of their choice, the impact COVID-19 restrictions have had on students are undeniable.

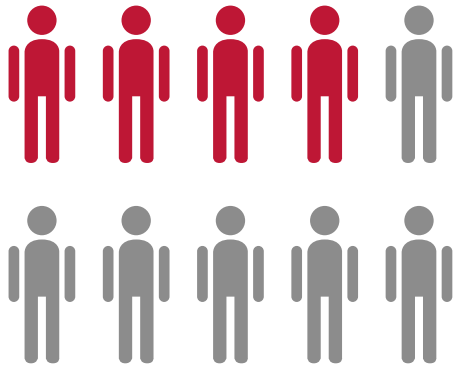
Sadly, the restrictions and consequences of lockdown have seen many young people lose heart when considering their future. Research carried out by Censuswide



“41% of students and young people believe that their career aspirations and goals for the future seem impossible to achieve and obtain”

claims that at least The Prince's Trust has further confirmed that 44% of young people state that COVID-19 has lowered their future aspirations.

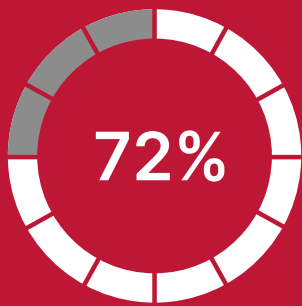
Furthermore, restrictions have made it somewhat impossible for students and recent graduates to take the first step in securing their future. Research conducted among students in 2020 determined that



“40% of students have found that job and internship contracts were terminated due to COVID-19 restrictions”

3. HOW HAS THIS AFFECTED MENTAL HEALTH?

Although the above restrictions may appear to be obstacles that can be overcome over time, for students, the inability to attend lessons, the termination of contracts and the inability to visualise what their future may look like has undoubtedly led many to struggle with an impaired mental health.



“72% of young people feel more stressed and anxious than usual”

As expected, overall, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions has caused the number of people struggling with mental health problems to soar. Studies have determined that



“31% of young people have experienced symptoms of depression within the last 12-months”

Regrettably, these figures have increased from previous years and sadly show no sign of slowing.

4. THE ESTIMATED IMPACTS OF ANY FURTHER LOCKDOWNS

Although many remain optimistic that further lockdowns will not be necessary as the Government purchases and rolls out vaccinations, it is somewhat impossible to determine whether the end of lockdowns are in sight at this present moment in time.

However, from reviewing research previously carried out, it can be determined that further lockdowns could have a detrimental impact on millions of young people's mental health.

Extended periods of isolation and an inability to secure graduate and future roles combined with already prevalent mental health problems could see an increase in the number of young people requiring treatment for mental health illnesses.

Failure to obtain treatment could lead to an unfortunate increase in the number of individuals losing their lives to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.



“43% of young women feel pessimistic about the future compared to 31% of men”

5.

SIGNS AND MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESSES

Although to the naked eye it is somewhat impossible to distinguish whether a young person is struggling with a mental health illness, there are various signs and symptoms that will arise if a mental health illness is present.

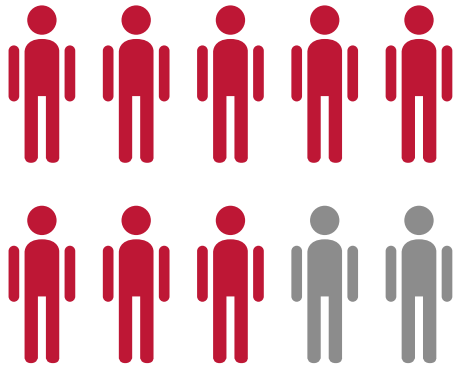
Signs and symptoms to look out for if you believe a student is struggling with a mental health disorder include;

- **Extreme agitation**
- **Lack of concentration**
- **Inability to complete simple tasks**
- **Increased fatigue**
- **Changes in appearance such as weight loss and change in complexion**
- **Becoming somewhat irritable**
- **Reduced energy levels**
- **Appearing deflated**
- **Lack of interest in subjects that once excited them**

If you have observed any of the above signs and symptoms in a student, approaching them to provide support is imperative. As and when the time comes for you to do so, you must take the time to listen to the student in question. You must show empathy, and you must respect their wishes.

If they would prefer not to discuss their concerns with you, you could recommend that they contact confidential helplines, talk to their family or seek advice from a medical professional.

You will also need to discuss any observations with the student's family if you believe that there is a cause for concern.



“73% have felt the need to ask for help concerning their physical and mental wellbeing”



6.

TIPS ON HOW STUDENTS CAN BETTER MANAGE THEIR MENTAL HEALTH DURING LOCKDOWN

As students face further lockdowns, increased bouts of isolation and uncertainty regarding their future, mental health problems are likely to surface. However, various tips can help students better manage their mental health.

If you have identified that a student is struggling with their mental health, or have been approached by a student in need of support, there are various tips that you can recommend to ensure that students can better manage their mental health during lockdown.

Below, we have outlined just a few of the tips that you can provide students with.

1. **Take Advantage Of The Benefits Afforded By Journaling** – Across the world, millions of people have come to realise the benefits that journaling has. Often, in therapy, journaling is recommended to ensure that those in recovery for mental health disorders can stay control their emotions and overcome any negative associations as and when they arise. When considering an individual's mental health, journaling can help students relieve themselves of any pessimistic thoughts, feelings or worries by merely putting pen to paper.
2. **Set SMART Goals** – Setting goals may seem somewhat pointless, especially considering 41% of students and young people believe that their career aspirations and goals for the future seem impossible to achieve. However, when setting SMART goals, students will soon

realise that they can, in fact, continue to work towards their aspirations and goals for the future. Not only will this boost motivation, but it will help manage and alleviate any mental health problems while encouraging a positive outlook on life.

3. Talk to teachers, parents and friends – Across the country, at least 30% of mental health problems are undiagnosed as individuals struggle to seek support. However, when taking advantage of the support available to them and discussing their concerns with others, students will have the opportunity to adapt and alter their outlook on life. Sharing their worries and concerns with others will help students better manage their mental health and reduce the lasting implications

If you wish to obtain guidance on how best to support a student, we welcome you to contact us.

Our team is on hand to offer sound advice and provide suitable recommendations to ensure that your students secure the help they need to preserve their mental health in the near and far future.

REFERENCES

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