

How locking us down is bringing us down

MY name is Tanay Toshniwal and I am a 15-year-old studying at Wesley College, and living under “stop-start” coronavirus restrictions in Melbourne.

Over the past year, Melbourne has been jumping in and out of the toughest lockdown restrictions in the world, as if it is a public diving pool.

It has been so severe we could be “caseless” for three months, and then abruptly we are confined within our homes due to a “mystery case” for weeks on end, with no end in clear sight.

By no means have Melburnians had to endure situations such as in India or the US. However, we have had our own struggles with personal and professional relationships during the pandemic.

Since March 2020, when the first cases appeared in Australia, we have been placed in a position of uncertainty, not only in regard to our professional lives (school and work) but also in our personal lives.

Enduring a total of five harsh lockdowns in the past year and a half, the Covid situation has not been easy on any of us, whether students, parents or teachers.

Lockdowns have had a substantial impact, hindering our ability to focus during class and complete work.

Personally, I have been on a “rocky road” with relationships with my friends since I can remember. However, the pandemic and lockdowns have only made the road more difficult to travel.



TANAY TOSHWIHAL

As soon as we exit a lockdown, my relationships slowly, but reassuringly, improve. I see a definite increase in my confidence when around people, and my openness toward others.

But as soon as these relationships have reached a good place, new cases suddenly appear, and we are in lockdown again; meaning the relationships will not develop and strengthen as effectively compared to when we were in school.

Additionally, making new friendships, and abandoning toxic relationships, has been problematic, and the pandemic has made it all the more difficult.

With those who struggle with anxiety and depression, some of whom I know, the lockdowns have not been any easier on them.

I am not saying that it’s all bad. For some people, not being forced into a social environment is more comforting, which is perfectly fine.

For me, I know I need a generous amount of social interaction per day, to not only remain happy, but also remain content with my productivity throughout the day and feel satisfied with my other achievements.

School is not only a place for

learning, but it is also a place for developing strong and healthy relationships. In fact, for most people, it is one of the only avenues available for continuous socialisation.

Despite being a rather social person outside of school, I find school is one of the best places to interact with others.

For people (particularly young people) who require a certain amount of daily social interaction to remain content, lockdown is deeply damaging to them. Limited to only technology, and constrained physical interaction, boredom takes over in the day.

One could argue “just go outside for some exercise”. While this is an effective strategy for mitigating the effects of mental exhaustion, it cannot fulfil our social requirements since it denies us any sense of triumph and achievement throughout the day.

Socialisation is one of the most important aspects of life for children. Being locked inside to prevent Covid cases is simply



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“dodging a bullet”, because in truth we all can go to school and have masks on throughout.

To mitigate the effects of lockdown, teens and children resort to FaceTime or a Zoom call, to interact with others.

However, I can reassure anyone this is not a solution since there is no sense of physical presence or emotion, and therefore after the call we are not emotionally uplifted.

Coronavirus has significantly limited our ability, as young adults, to mature and develop as people within the real world.

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Not only is lockdown a test of motivation within children, but it is also testing their mental strength.

It’s becoming exceedingly challenging to sustain and cultivate a healthy and strong relationship over Snapchat and FaceTime. As a matter of fact, it’s impossible.

During these times, we need to ensure mental health and education is prioritised for children above all else, since this damage can be irreparable.

Coronavirus has not been easy on anyone, and it has been harder on some than others.

However, we have all struggled with our professional and personal lives, and we should seek help where we need it, because without it the situation can be detrimental.

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