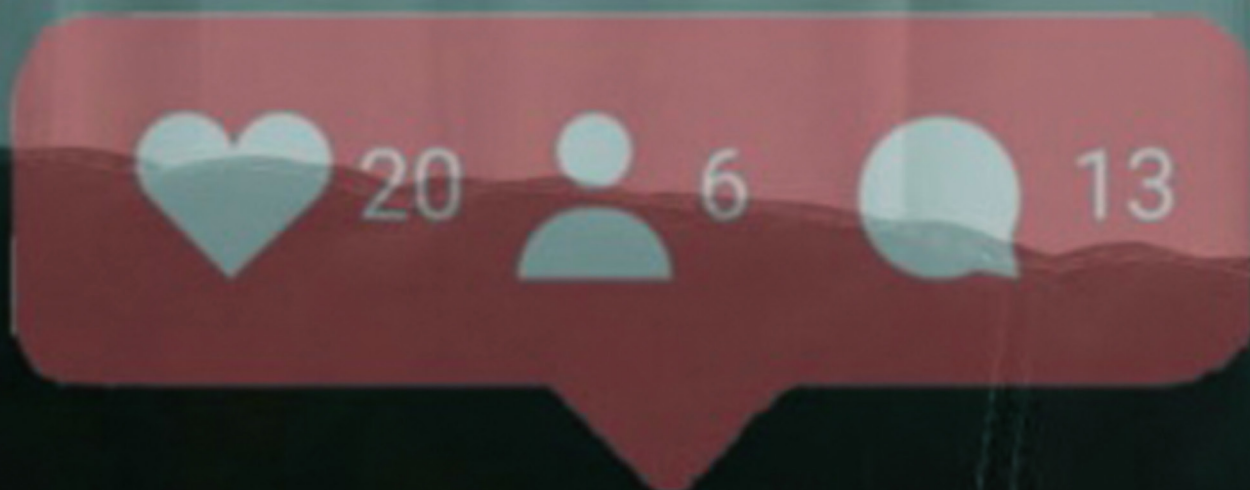


INSIDE THE TEEN MIND



***social media 2
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T Laney Lark and Samantha Pelter
eens and mental health, two words that are often spoken about together. With the Covid-19 Pandemic, teens are finding platforms on social media to speak up about mental health.

According to a Kantar study, with a 61% increase in social media usage during the quarantine from the first wave of the pandemic, numbers of teens with symptoms of anxiety and depression have spiked. In fact, one in four parents have reached out to professionals to try and help their teen.

Considering the brain isn't fully developed until at least the age of 25, the teenage years are arguably when the mind goes through the most important growing and changing socially and emotionally. So what happens when these teens are cut off from the life that they once knew and thrown into a world of technology and isolation?

A survey of 977 parents found that over 50% say that their teenagers used social media and texting to contact their friends every day, while only 9% said their kids were seeing their friends in person. Not only is that much screen time detrimental to teen health, not being able to have in person socialization hurts overall brain development, making teens and children struggle to make emotional connections and pick up on social cues, according to the Final Inquiry Project.

Some aspects of social media actually helped with connection during the quarantine. Social media is more relevant now than it ever has been in past times. People

can meet from other sides of the world or share art to the world that otherwise would have been kept to themselves. This means new opportunities and the ability to make new friends and try new things. But even positive things like that come with problems.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, teenagers would go to school and see peers their age on a regular basis, but without that interaction, teens are left to look on social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. With social media platforms comes a warped image of reality. Seeing only models and edited photos everyday can lead some teens to a state of comparison that can magnify social anxiety and depression.

Focusing and comparing the number of likes and amount of followers teens have online can bring up serious social anxiety, according to an interview from Penn Medicine that looked into how different the numbers of likes and followers that one teen might have from another could also lead the way to a sense of disconnect and comparison. The idea of popularity is an old concept, but is enhanced in the digital age.

Social media is not fully to blame for this increase in teen depression and anxiety. In most cases it is likely there was already underlying depression or anxiety symptoms. Things such as prolonged parental stress, uncertainties about the future, new school routines as well as social media could very well be contributing factors.

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“With Social Media platforms comes a warped image of reality

-Laney Lark

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THE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECT

But, this isn't new to teens, in a survey of 920
13-17 actually 70% of teens describe anxiety
problem for them and their peers.

becoming more obvious to parents. Accord-
tional poll conducted in March of 2021 from
Health of 922 parents, 46% of parents of teen-
een to eighteen report that their teen's mental
declined since the start of the pandemic.

Children's Hospital Conducted a poll which
at 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys experienced
anxiety during the peak of the pandemic.

on Sense Media, a non-profit that promotes
et usage for children and teens, did a study on
relationships with social media. They conclud-
% of teenage girls use social media every day,
of teenage boys use social media daily.

do we try and fix it?

tt's poll also found that 70% of parents who
eir covid rules (to still fit with CDC guidelines)
teen's mental health improved. Mott pedia-
ry L. Freed said, "families should encourage
ructions that follow COVID-19 safety guide-
as spending time outside or participating in
wearing masks and socially distanced".

also the option to get help from a professional.
rent, sit down with your teen and talk to them
t could happen personally for them to get back
o better mental health.

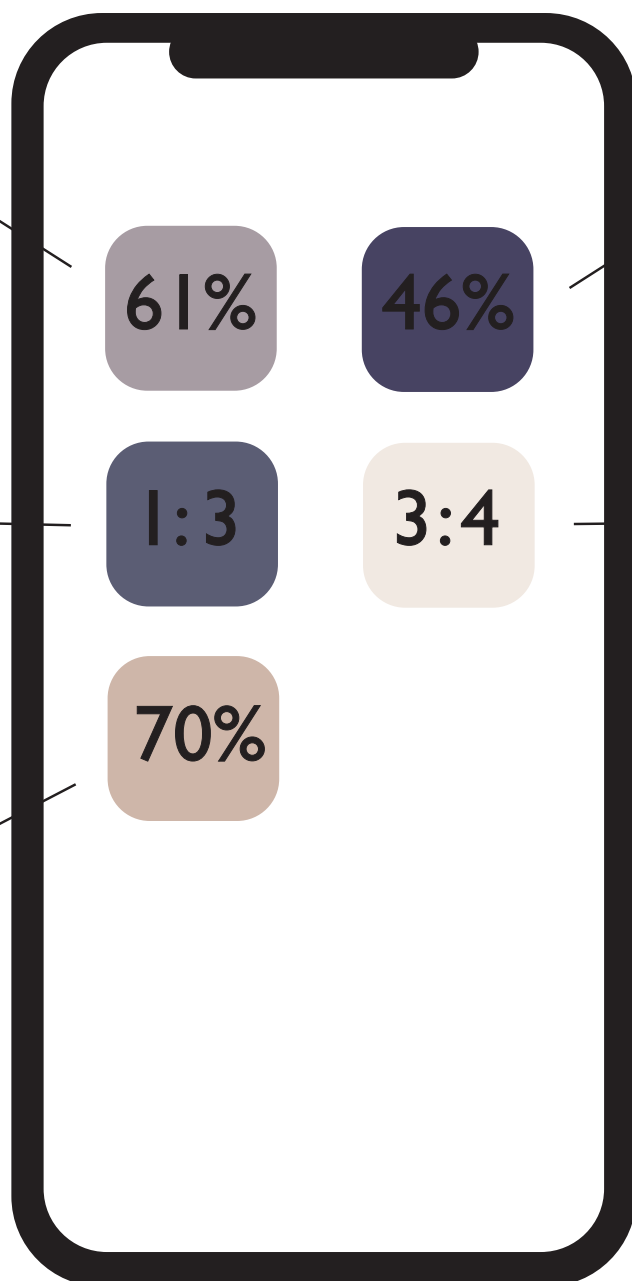
social media usage
increased 61% after
the first wave of the
pandemic

1 in 3 adolescents
will have anxiety
disorder symptoms
by the age of 18

70% of teens describe
anxiety as being a big
problem for them and
their peers

46% of parents report
teens' mental health had
declined since before the
pandemic

3 in 4 parents report
that the pandemic
has negatively im-
pacted their teens'
relationships with
the their friends





Hopes and fears in COVID world

Erica Richardson

With 70% of Americans receiving at least their first vaccine shot and the end of the pandemic on the horizon, many students face pressure for post-high school decisions as the 2021-2022 school year draws near.

In interviews conducted over text message, several rising Seniors voiced their major concerns about post-secondary life as “money” or “career.” Rising Junior Milo Palmer voiced another uncertainty in an interview over text: “Where do I get food? How do I not starve in college while also not eating ramen?”

Ballard High School rising Senior Cameron Patel is going into their second year at Ballard and said, “The biggest anxiety I have is balancing the course load of college with my newfound financial responsibilities.”

Many seniors are facing similar worries, specifically about the cost of college. In a study from Pew Research Center titled “5 facts about student loans,” among college graduates with a bachelor’s degree ages 18-29, 49% of them have student debt.

Along with concerns over student debt, the pandemic has also had a profound impact upon students’ core relationship to school. “The pandemic has shown me that I can take care of my mental health and still thrive as a student. My suffering isn’t a necessary element of being successful,” Patel said. Similarly, in an interview over text, rising Junior Jonathon Boram-Collas at Ballard High School said, “I care less

about some subjects.”

With the pandemic stretching on to 16 months, comprising nearly half of the class of 2022’s high school years, rising seniors are getting restless. Rising Ballard High School senior Will Shepard said, “I can’t wait to get out.”

As the pandemic winds down and life begins to resemble pre-pandemic conditions, the realities of senior year start to set in. In an interview conducted over text, rising Ballard High School senior Cecile Turner said “I feel like I have less time for everything and feel pressured to make up experiences.”

While the pandemic has put a significant damper on the class of 2022’s high school experience, it has had some benefits. “[It’s] shown me that activities I take up simply because I enjoy them are as worthwhile as hobbies that have academic or monetary benefits,” said Patel.

When asked about what these seniors are looking forward to about life after high school, rising senior Cecile Turner said, “Living without family and discovering who I am living by myself.” Cameron Patel is optimistic about college. “I’m most excited about the wide range of courses I can take after high school, plus the opportunity to explore a new city and meet people from completely different backgrounds.

Anaya Lamy

Planning for the future is hard enough. It was made more difficult when COVID-19 caused schools to shut down, all classes to switch to virtual learning, and ultimately changed the entire college experience. For current sophomore at the University of California Berkeley, Kora Lamy, the college experience she was looking forward to did not meet her expectations due to the pandemic.

“I think the transition from high school to college is already hard because I feel like I was someone who worked my whole life to get to college and I generally already knew what I wanted to do and then factoring in like the pandemic it just made it hard,” Lamy said. “You’re told like after high school you’re supposed to have all these opportunities and there’s so much more to come and just to have it all be -- you know --zoom meetings makes it hard --it makes it hard to look forward to the next step.”

Lamy’s struggle with anxiety and depression made making new friends and achieving her full potential more difficult.

“I think there’s a lot of things I would have done differently, but it’s also hard to differentiate for me because I do think mental health played a large factor in it. It’s easy to say ‘oh I wish I had gone out and made more friends or tried to make more friends online,’ but depression and anxiety get in the way of that, so it’s hard to beat myself up over that. -- With all the stuff I have going on it was honestly pretty impossible for me,” Lamy said.

Not only was Lamy’s mental health declining, but the resources to reach out for help were also becoming more limited.

“I feel like it was hard to even receive advice because when you’re spending a lot of time with other people you may get unsolicited advice or they can see you’re struggling but with COVID you’re in your own bubble. No one’s gonna notice that except for yourself and no one is gonna you know take action for yourself,” Lamy said. “I think it’s not a shameful thing to get advice from other people, to get help, to learn from others and learn from your own mistakes.”

Knowing that some of the best parts of college can be taken away due to the pandemic, it can be difficult for current high schoolers to feel like college is even worth attending right now.

Despite everything, Lamy still doesn’t regret her decision to attend college. “It does benefit to have a more realistic point going into it because it is going to be different then you may have expected.”

As a new batch of seniors approach their new year of high school it is beneficial to understand that college may not satisfy the preconceived perspective that many have going into the experience. It is important to be realistic with yourself and know your needs and limitations when planning your future.



SPORTS MEDICINE

finding healing on the field

Liv Talerman and Asha Woerner

COVID-19 allowed for many to pursue their hobbies, but athletes found this nearly impossible, largely impacting their mental health.

Many players were afforded the opportunity to play their sports during this pandemic, with only the ability to practice on their own to prepare for their upcoming season.

“It wasn’t nice because going to high school and having tryouts was stressful,” said sophomore two-sport athlete Amelie Schmid.

Players weren’t given the social aspect of sports during COVID. Missing out on the team bond and the daily interactions can take a toll.

“I have a lot of friends through sports, just like you have school friends,” said Schmid.

These interactions are lost through the loss of activities. Daily acquaintances are an important aspect to social fulfillment and growth.

With an increase in depression and anxiety in COVID alone, studies show that those who returned to play sports in the fall of 2020 had lower rates of anxiety and depression.

According to News Medical Life sciences, a medical website, 80% of students who played a fall sport showed zero signs of anxiety and 57.7% of students who played a fall sport showed minimal to no signs of depression.

The study included 559 Wisconsin high school athletes from grade 9–12, ranging in ages from 13–19.

Another thing missed with sports is the moral support and energy a packed stadium gives. Coaches, players and fans all benefit from the electric energy on game night. Players felt a shift in mood with significantly less fans and safety precautions.

“It was just parents, and everyone was spread out. So even when there were fans, it didn’t feel like there was,” said Schmid.

Not everything was negative. Mask wearing became the new normal for athletes. Causing them to become more conditioned than before.

“I feel like in a way it made me better because it made me have better endurance, and I have to work harder,”

said Schmid.

Not only was the mask wearing another speed bump in returning, but the condensed seasons often tired the body and led to higher chance of injury. Especially after not playing their sports for months.

“The short seasons created a lot of stress on the body,” said Schmid “It felt like at the end of season everyone was burning out.”

According to the Frontiers on a study of

the German soccer league, “Players had 1.13 times the odds of being injured following the COVID-19 lockdown, with a 3.12 times higher rate of injury when controlling for games played compared to injury rates pre-lockdown.”

Overall, COVID-19 showed itself as a setback to many athletes in several ways, however sports continue to boost morale and quality of life.

