

## Life in lockdown - my experience

We are all living in uncertain times, which has affected nearly every aspect of our lives. As we work and study from home, juggle the demands of home schooling and live in a more isolated world, it is important to remember, you are not alone.

We are sharing your stories of how you are finding lockdown, how you look after your own mental health and any hint and tips you may have to help others during this time.

**Our first blog in the series is from year 11 student, Francesca.**

### Pre-lockdown life

Before all this madness, I had such a busy schedule with dance training, college and getting out with my friends. I was also looking forward to starting my final year in school and prepping myself for exams and Sixth Form College.

I'm a really social person - you could say I love making memories, whether that's competing in dance competitions or simply having dinner with my girls at the weekend. I never really appreciated just how much social interaction meant to me until it was taken away.

### Current lockdown life

What can I say, apart from online dance training or walking my dog, (only when it is not raining!) I haven't been able to make many memories.

As a year 11, in these uncertain times, I'm focussing on my online learning, making sure I'm up to date with my study deadlines and staying on top of my workload. As I'm going to Sixth Form College in September, I know it's vital I enhance my independent study skills.

Fortunately, being at home 24/7 with no distractions has given me plenty of time to do this (maybe it's not been too bad after all). It's been hard not being able to attend open evenings to view my college options, so I've had to make my decision purely on the course content.

I can't speak for other year 11s, but it's safe to say I was delighted to hear about the cancellation of GCSE exams this summer, that probably makes me sound very lazy - I promise I'm not. I only felt this way because during December I had my mocks. Thankfully, I did quite well, achieving 4-6s in all my subjects, but after hearing the announcement of yet another national lockdown immediately after Christmas I was hugely apprehensive and stressed that my year would be at a massive disadvantage and unprepared to sit exams.

Whatever we end up being assessed on, I'm just happy we're not having to go through the stress of not knowing if exams were happening or not, and I know other students would agree with this.

### **Motivation in lockdown #3**

I cannot deny that staying motivated has been a challenge throughout these worrying times. The constant bad news of more infections is all we hear about. It's no surprise many of my friends and I have to come to terms with the fact we probably won't have the same summer we had planned. But as hard as that sounds, I'm feeling confident that things will only get better. I'm hoping once we come out the other side, I can start to get excited about my new college, meeting new friends, going on holidays and just spending time with the people that mean the most to me – something I have probably taken for granted but certainly won't in the future.

For however long this lockdown lasts, I'm trying to workout as much as possible to keep my fitness levels up. I'm fortunate to have a dog so I can go walking, so I am able to escape my bedroom! I have also discovered I rather like coffee and online shopping.

Spotify and Netflix are my new best friends but staying connected to my real friends has been so important to keep my mood positive. I don't think I have ever used Snapchat or Facetime this much before in my life. Sadly, it's the only way any of us can talk and catch up with each other - so to all the parents, sorry if we're keeping you up at night talking, we're just having our daily lockdown chinwags.

### **My advice to any other teens**

Accept that it's OK to not feel motivated every day, because you have to remember this will be over eventually. It doesn't feel like it now, but we will be living our best lives soon and making up for lost time and thinking back to the days when our only conversations were 'what time is our live lesson', 'see you on Zoom' or 'you're on mute'.

To other year 11s I would say to try your hardest during these times, everything counts, and it will all be worth it in the end when you get into college to study your chosen subjects. For me, I am hoping to secure the grades I need to study criminology, business and musical theatre, which I am really excited about.