

## Stress in the Pandemic

It is a normal human reaction to get ready for things that are challenging. No matter whether it's an exam or a rugby game, when you know that you're going to experience something that you're not familiar with or you're not an expert in, preparing for it is what we usually do. But when the covid-19 pandemic came in, most of us weren't prepared. The virus only took a few weeks to reach New Zealand, and most of us were engaged in our day-to-day life as cases increased and lockdown was put into force to stop it from spreading. For most of us, the pandemic, or going to school one day and then being told that schools are going to be closed the next day, weren't things that we had been planning to do.

Overall, it's fair to say lockdown was challenging. Not meeting your friends, who you were used to seeing almost every day, keeping up with your schoolwork while trying to get used to online learning and being anxious about covid-19 are just some of the very long list of challenges people faced during lockdown. The challenges you face depends on who you are. 72% of the participants who took a Youthline survey agreed that the experience of covid-19 and lockdown had an overall negative impact to their mental health, and the youth agreed that lockdown made life harder for them more than adults did. So, feeling things none of your friends does or not feeling great during this time period is not something to freak about.

Trying to juggle many things like schoolwork, social life and physical and mental health can be challenging, but there are a couple of things you could do to maintain your wellbeing. For me, doing what I enjoy was the best way to spend lockdown. Engaging in what you like is always relaxing, and giving your full attention to it would help your mental health as well. If you had something you've always wanted to try but didn't have time because of school, lockdown was one of the best times to give it a go. While you won't meet your friends, keeping in touch with them is a good idea, as is spending some time with your family, because most people won't get a better opportunity to do that with work and school. But I think it's important that *you* decide what you do; for example, do what you feel like doing and what you think will be the best.

Stress is normal during these times. One technique you could use to cope with it is to ask: Does this matter to me? Am I able to control it? If your answer is 'no' to one or both of these questions, try not to think about it, and engage in something else that will take your mind off it. Talking with someone you trust, and expressing your concerns is one of the best ways to keep stress under control. There are a lot of other things you could do as well, but usually, what works best for you should be decided by you. Remember, lockdown was hard for all of us. Statistics show that one in five young New Zealanders goes through stress every year, and with the pandemic and lockdown, it probably would have been experienced by most of us. So, if you don't feel great, it's fine, don't think you're different; you're one of the

millions of the people who feel stressed during these times. What's most important is to understand that you're not alone and have hope and positivity.