

THE IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH DURING A PANDEMIC

Covid - 19, Hybrid Learning and its effect on your brain
by Jose Ontero

When it comes to talking about mental health, it feels like the same conversation is being had every time. It can be exhausting, repetitive, or even irritating to talk about such a large subject so frequently without making much progress in normalizing discussions about it.

Mental health is one of the most important issues to know and talk about with and amongst teenagers. Adolescence, more specifically high school, is arguably the most formative time in one's life, emotional and social changes, and a learning environment completely different from elementary or middle school. High school has proven to be a time in which mental health conditions can arise.

Half of mental health conditions start by 14 years old, but most cases are undetected and untreated according to the World Health Organization.

When you read that, where does your mind wander to? It would be no surprise if when you read "mental health condition" your mind immediately went to depression and anxiety. Now, there's nothing wrong with that, in fact it's understandable since depression and anxiety are probably the most infamous and commonly talked about.

A possible explanation as to why the discussion about mental health can seem



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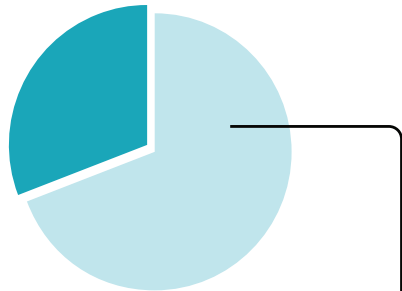
OF MENTAL HEALTH

student survey responses

During The Pandemic:

634%

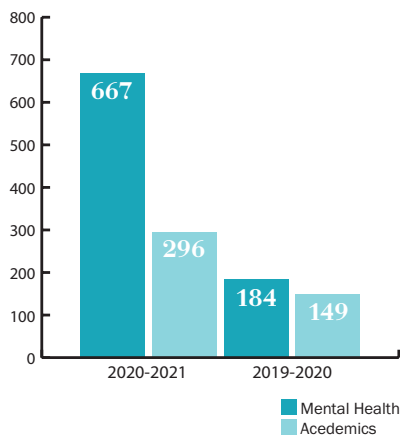
There has been a 634% jump in use of online tools to ease their anxiety.



69%

of counselor meetings involve mental health.

Compared to last year, there has been a 362.5% increase in the number of mental health related counselor visits and a 289.2% increase in counselor meetings in general.



“The pandemic has put a pause on many aspects of life, but mental health is not included in that paused world. During these unpredictable times our lives are not entirely in control.”

873%

There has been a 873% increase in those seeking information about Depression.

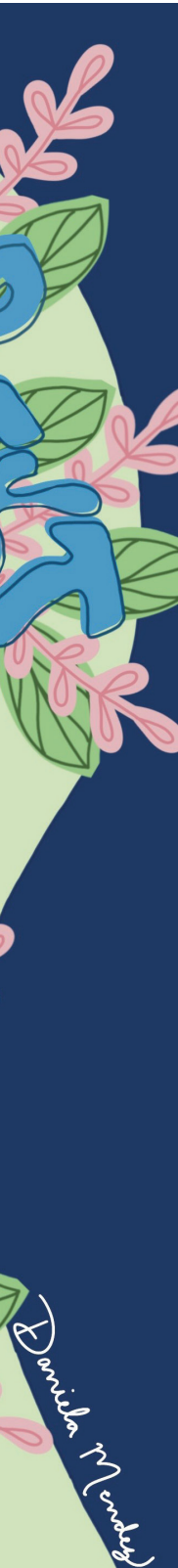
repetitive is the lack of varied information. Because of this, the broad term of “mental health” dissociates from many other conditions, including ADHD, ADD, OCD, and eating disorders. Having the understanding that there are more mental health conditions than depression and anxiety is the first step to having a good conversation about it without having a negative impression on the matter.

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It has been a long-standing issue among students that school assigns too much work and leaves little to no time for much else. It’s difficult to go to a high school and find someone that doesn’t complain about the amount of work that there is to do, and that is no different here at RJ.

Whether or not, too much work is assigned or there is still the underlying problem of lack of sleep. According to the CDC, teenagers from ages 13-18 are should get between 8-10 hours of sleep per 24 hours. And it’s widely known that adults should get 8 hours, at least. While many people do get the suggested amount of sleep, about 7 out of 10 high school students, nationally, don’t get enough sleep.

Lack of sleep can lead to anxiety, and reasons for lack of sleep may be connected to stress. There are still other ways that lack of sleep is detrimental, but it still affects mental health. Everyone is connected to the subject of mental health, some more closely than others, that’s why it is important to stay informed on the matter and talk about it. The first step to talking about it is knowing about it.



by: Molly Nichols

MIND REALLY MATTERS

FIRST HAND ADVICE FROM REGIS JESUIT STAFF ON HANDLING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC

It's hard to understand this type of health when you've never experienced it before. Ashlan Christensen, a first-year teacher, said that most of her adult life has been shaped by becoming educated on taking care of her own mental health. This type of health can make people seem lazy, antisocial, or weak but that's simply not true.

"People used to be much more flippant in just telling someone who was struggling to 'suck it up,'" said Scott Alcorn. "Now we're much more willing to acknowledge that mental health issues are real."

Staff members around Regis Jesuit have been adapting to several new changes with this pandemic and it has made lots of changes to their perception and reaction to mental health.

"It wasn't till just a few weeks ago that I realized, 'Oh, wow, I'm just really afraid of COVID all the time.'" That fear was really messing with me and I didn't even realize it," said Mr. Alcorn.

It's been difficult for a lot of teachers to not become agitated and to manage the new complexity of their jobs.

Pastoral for example has become much more difficult, being able to plan retreats that are fun and safe is almost impossible.

Ashlan Christensen being a first-year teacher said flexibility is key, making sure you are doing what is best for your students can be difficult, but always be trying to work in their best interest.

Doc recommends finding concrete and safe ways of dealing with your emotions during this time. Things such as taking walks, hanging out with pets, and watching TV shows and movies that make you feel good. Of course, there are other options. Ms. Christensen suggests external relief, take the bus somewhere

and cry in public or sit in a cafe to be around others while at the same time being alone. The best thing you can do is talk to a professional, sometimes it just takes someone else to help you through it.

"Life is really hard, and sometimes we can deal with the challenges on our own and sometimes we just can't and need someone to help us out," Alcorn said.

As a country the United States is making progress in normalizing mental health and its importance, but there is a long way to go. Millions of people don't have the resources or financial means to seek adequate mental health care when they need it the most.

Sophomore Luthien Winnica '23 said reading books, watching TedTalks, and learning to listen will be how we move forward.

"It's impossible to be stigma free because there are always going to be people that will stigmatize things," she said. "That goes for many things, you can't have a perfect world."

At Regis Jesuit the staff and administration are supportive in educating students about the importance of mental health. They are optimistic that in the future it could even be considered simply human nature, for now they are making small steps towards big changes.

Christensen and Winnica have teamed up to create a club that focuses on educating others about mental health and spreading awareness. Mind Matters is a place where you are not expected to share your experiences, but rather

to learn more about the subject of mental health with the people around you.

There are several misconceptions in our society about conditions such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and borderline personality disorder. Some symptoms that come along with these ailments are often "scary" to those who aren't as knowledgeable around the subject. "The key is to remember these are medical terms used to help people and not adjectives," Christensen said. "Using them that way can diminish the experience of people who do live with these experiences."

It is always an important reminder to stay judgment free, and realize that all the emotions you are feeling are only temporary.

"Pandemic, politics, parts of my life have definitely changed," Winnica described. "The best part is that I've changed, now I perceive life and priorities differently." "My one suggestion is for you to go easy on yourself, embrace life," said Doc.

"It's important to note that everyone has mental health, beyond self care as taking a bath or buying something," Christensen explained. "I'm hopeful to see awareness of mental health as just that, a component of our health." She stresses that the important thing to remember is that everyone right now is grieving. Grieving for normalcy, grief for COVID-19 victims, and racial violence victims. Treat people with gentleness, and work to normalize mental health.

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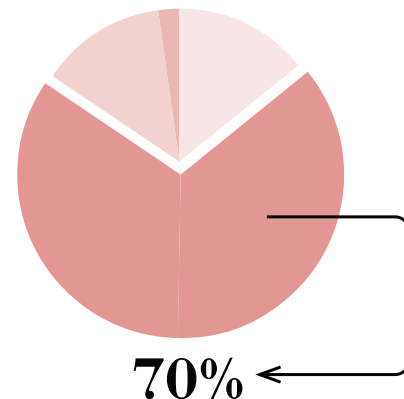
OF MENTAL HEALTH

91 out of 240 faculty responded

Teacher responses:

74%

of teachers are stressed about their student's wellbeing



of teachers continue to work 5-15 hours after 3PM

On Sundays before school, teachers often feel Stressed and Exhausted, but there are a number of teachers that feel prepares and fine for the upcoming week.

