**MIND – Blog insight into a 21-year-old in lockdown**

The current situation has taken a huge impact on everyone and their everyday lives. Being a 21-year-old during these testing times are especially difficult as a young person who heavily relies on their social life. Since us social butterflies are unable to meet with our friends and family, it can be easy to slide down the slippery slope of mental health. Therefore, it is important to encourage and support one and other through the current circumstances, and myself as a young person can relate and sympathise with those who are struggling through these extraordinary times.

I have currently finished my third year of University from home, which wasn’t quite the ending of my three intensive years of study I imagined. 2020 was meant to be the year of celebrations and new opportunities for me and my friends, but since the global pandemic has hit hard on the world these exciting plans have all been cancelled. As we know, mental health is a long hard battle that many of us must cope with on a day to day basis, and as a result these restrictions in the world are hinging deeply on those who are suffering. Although, it is important to understand that some who haven’t experienced mental health issues in the past are still valid to have feelings of worries and concerns during these circumstances. I for one can relate to these feelings.

Every person will have experienced the impact of COVID-19 in different ways to others. For some, people will be enjoying the freedom and safeness of home, although for others it may have extremely challenging and traumatic affects. Young people’s well-being and mental health can heavily rely on socialising with others, therefore the challenges we are all facing in the global pandemic are leaving worries and uncertainty for the future. As a young individual, my experience during lockdown has been a struggle. I can’t see my friends which I usually do daily, and this has left me feeling deflated and anxious. However, these times make me so thankful for technology, in how we can call and FaceTime each other with a click of a button. Technology has been my saviour and kept me going through these unprecedented times, allowing me to interact with others virtually through different activities. I now have weekly quiz nights with family and friends as this has allowed me to interact and socialise with others as normal as possible – It’s basically like being at the local pub! Although the past few months have been hard, finding new activities and innovative ways to help you feel good do really help! Exercise has also been a huge help during lockdown as this has given me the chance to release any anxiety I have, and this immediately makes me feel so much better within myself. This can be something as simple as going for a run, following an online workout from home in the comfort of my pyjamas, or even just taking my dog for a long walk. All these activities have positively impacted on my mental health and encouraged me to keep going and stay busy during lockdown.

Although finding new activities are a great way to help your mental health, sometimes reaching out and talking to someone will be a lot more beneficial and effective. Due to the current circumstances this can sometimes be hard to access, however, throughout the pandemic services are offering online/telephone support through different organisations. Charities such as MIND offer a range of services, this includes 24 hour online/telephone support which are there to assist and encourage those who are struggling throughout these testing times. These services are put in place to help and support those in need. This can range from receiving advice and support for issues that may be affecting your mental health and well-being, or even just picking up the phone and having a chat with someone!

The key message I have for those who are struggling is to talk to someone, whether that be a friend, a family member or even someone through a support organisation. Whatever your worries or concerns may be, everyone is going through something in life and these unprecedented times are greatly impacting on these. As a 21-year-old, I sympathise and understand the pressures and uncertainties my age group are facing. Whether that be job worries, relationships with family and friends, or even money concerns, therefore, it is important to recognise and use the support and help that is available to us. Otherwise, participating in activities can contribute in having a positive impact on your mental health and well-being. For example, use the time to start a new hobby - whether that be reading a book, exercising, or perusing an interest you have in something. Set goals and challenges for yourself, do the things you have always said “I don’t time have for that”, and support and look out for one and other through these unprecedented times.