

The pandemic has been especially tough for the students and shone a light on many of the internal issues that the United States has remained unsolved. Forced school closures and social isolation have affected everyone, but significantly those that live in poverty. Many do not have access to a stable internet, laptops, and essential equipment to adjust to the online learning environment. On top of that, a mental health crisis is quickly emerging as many students have lost access to mental health services. The fact of the matter is that this pandemic has impacted many students' social, emotional, and mental well-being. Not everyone can adapt to this new learning environment as quickly as some others might. Students struggle to find motivation for online assignments, deal with losing loved ones, and miss important life events.

During this quarantine, it was challenging for me to navigate. I was a high school senior when all of this started. Fortunately, I was able to adapt to the new learning environment quickly. In the beginning, it felt unreal. But going to the summer was when reality hit for me. I didn't get the chance to work like I wanted to and hang out with friends in the summer. Pretty much locked up in the house for months. It felt lonely and depressing. However, I managed to be on FaceTime with friends 24/7, but it's just strange because I miss seeing them in person. Quarantine was also when people start to figure out who the real friends are and losing people here and there. However, I did work on myself and discovered what I want to do in life.

Going on to college is when I started to lose motivation and struggle to get myself out of bed every day. It just feels like this would never end and that it's the same thing every day. There is no excitement or looking forward to the next day. It's almost like, what is the point? Jobs and internships are difficult to find nowadays. Classes are more challenging, and online learning is just not the same as face-to-face. School is already

hard enough for in person. Now people are just stressed, depressed, and other things happen in their homes too. For many, going to school was their way of escaping from homes. There is just a distant feeling with the online format. Many students feel "disconnected" from the world. Not only are students affected by this pandemic, but parents and teachers are as well.