



Welcome to your third **HFCS Wellbeing Newsletter**. When the first **Newsletter** was released there were 169 total cases of COVID-19 in Ireland. Yesterday, the total number of cases reached 2,615.

This week I decided to dedicate the entire **Newsletter** to our students. I asked students share their experience of the effects of **Social Distancing**, and the ways they are **supporting their wellbeing**. **PLEASE NOTE:** Students wrote these reflections prior to the introduction of **Stay At Home** measures on Saturday, **March 28th**.

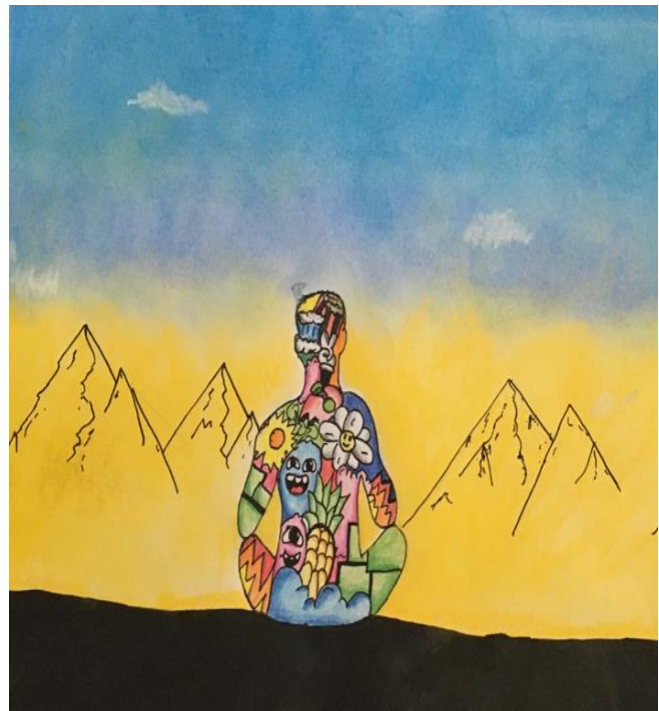
- Thank you to Lenny, Ben, Alex, Halle and Stefan from 6th Year; Alex and Nikki from 5th Year; Cian, Divine and Niamh from Transition Year; Andrew, Sophie and Ross from 3rd Year; Adam, James and Naglis from 2nd Year; and Norah and Kevin from 1st Year. Without their willingness to share their experience with us, this **Newsletter** would not exist.
- Many thanks also to Ms. Conneely and her 1st, 2nd and 5th Year Art students for this week's artwork and photographs. These were created during this period of remote teaching using the theme **Keeping Calm**.
- Many thanks also to former student **Hazel Clifford** for agreeing to share her **Social Distancing** experience. Hazel is an actress best known for starring as Sharon in *The Snapper* at the Gate Theatre, for which she was nominated for Best Actress at the Irish Times Theatre Awards. She was also nominated for Best Young Talent at the Renaissance Film Festival for her role as Cara in the short film *Starry Night*.
- Finally, the PE department would like to share a **Padlet** link with lots of exercise classes to do at home. These include HITT workouts, Dance, mindfulness and wellbeing techniques, as well as running programmes and yoga. Link: <https://padlet.com/jphipps16/9xqz8ncjpqhg>
- If you have feedback on this resource or content suggestions, please email wellbeing@hfcs.ie

Pádraig Meredith
Wellbeing Coordinator

Alex (6th Year) spoke of the heart-breaking reality of having an ill parent and the fear and isolation that causes: "I'm currently finding the social distancing to be quite isolating. Although I feel disconnected from my friends and family I'm aware of the significance of it. For me personally it's to protect people like my mother who are most at risk of dying of this rampant virus. As she suffers from lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and crones disease she must be particularly cautious when leaving the house and that applies for me too. I find it frustrating that I can no longer hug my own mother and have to stand at her bedroom door to hold a conversation with her, but as you know it's to ensure her own safety and wellbeing in these perilous times. The social distancing is beneficial in the sense that it has significantly slowed the spread of coronavirus and bought ample time for researchers and our healthcare system. It's an easy task to practice, for example when I go for a run I tend to run off the path on the grass to avoid coming in close contact with people. The most amazing thing is that the two metre distance I maintain while running determines whether my mother lives or dies. I know it sounds harsh but that's the ugly truth. So to anyone reading this I implore you to practice social distancing because you may very well have saved someone's life."

Artist: Sean Paul (2nd Year)

Alex also shared how supports his wellbeing in a variety of ways, and provided some advice to us: "I find exercising is hugely important for supporting good mental health. It boosts your dopamine (feel good hormones essentially) and this is majorly important during these difficult and daunting times. I tend to do my studying early in the day and bring my dog for a walk after and I like to stick to this routine as it gives me sort of structure during a time when there seems to be no order at all. Playing PlayStation with my mates is another thing I do as we can still have the craic like we usually do but it's all just done online. I started watching *The Witcher* (deadly show btw for those of you who like *The Elder Scrolls*, *Lord of The Rings*, etc.) and I've found watching



shows and movies helps me to relax and relieve stress. With the release of Disney + on Tuesday there are more than enough movies and shows to keep you occupied provided you've done some exercise and studying."

Kevin (1st Year) shared how easy it is to forget for a split second about the new rules on Social Distancing: "I find the social distancing a bit hard. When I'm out on my road with my friend we might forget for a second and end up being too close and then we back away. Sometimes it can get boring when I have nothing to watch and it's annoying that I can't go anywhere anymore. Sometimes I even wish I'm back in school. And I miss training. For my wellbeing I play football (soccer) out my back or on my road with my friend. I've also been cycling a lot more, but when I'm home I just watch random movies on Netflix or YouTube or play with my niece."

Niamh (TY) shared her frustration with the people she met who weren't taking social distancing seriously: "I am staying at home all the time so social distancing is not hard but last week we did go for a walk. It wasn't that my family were not social distancing from everyone else, it's that no one else were taking it seriously at all. Considering that in our house we have someone with a



low immune system we really need to be careful. It really made me frustrated that no matter how careful we were, and no matter how far away from people we walked, everyone else was on top of each other. I find it nice to be spending time at home with my family now though and I have also taken it upon myself to teach myself guitar!"

Artist: Viktorija (2nd Year)

Niamh also shared how she is supporting her wellbeing by sticking to a routine of different activities: "It's really hard to keep up my fitness during the quarantine, because I would normally go to the gym, but at the moment I'm painting my wardrobe! It gives my time to think and to just listen to some music which I love to do. I'm also doing home workouts in my back garden as much as I can. I still get

up every morning as if I was going to school then at 9:00am I start some school work take one project a day and when I finish it I take the rest of the day for whatever needs to be done, whether that's helping my mam around the house, or just chilling out watching television or scrolling through TikTok."

Alex (5th Year) shared how playing Xbox helped him stay connected digitally to his friends: "Well I find it challenging not being able to go out and see my friends as much as I'd like, and not being able to go training. To support my wellbeing I'm staying occupied by watching a new show on Netflix called Ozark, and playing Xbox with my friends".



Artist: Hollie (2nd Year)

Bernhard (6th Year) shared the challenge associated with the lack of a routine: "For me, the most psychologically taxing aspect has been losing grip on time. The routine of seeing your peers and teachers first thing in the morning indicates "regularity", for me anyway. As for supporting my wellbeing, I try to write at least once a day. Keeping tabs on my state of mind and my goals brings some order to an otherwise less structured routine."

Sophie (3rd Year) shared how she is spending quality time with her sibling: "I find it challenging not being able to see friends and family, and having to sit in for most of the day. I have been enjoying going on walks up the hills and playing sports with my brother."

Divine (TY student) offers her experience: "I think the most challenging thing about social distancing is that I can't really do my favourite outdoor activities being stuck at home. Being at home isn't the worst thing either, I've been able to catch up with things. I've missed out on time with my family, I have more time to meditate and more time to take care of my health by having more sleep. Those are things that I've done at home to support my wellbeing."

Norah (1st Year) talked about how the Social Distancing has resulted in more quality time with her family: "The thing I found frustrating is being at home all the time, but it is good in a way because I get to see my dad more now that he working from home. Also I can take a break from my work whenever I want. My family and I have started a plank and squat challenge so every day we see how long we can hold a plank and how many squats we can do. We have developed a chill hour where we just play on our tablets and Xbox and also whenever I am free from work I like to just sit down with a book and read. I enjoy riding my bike and doing Art during the day too."

Adam (2nd Year) shared how he is unable to visit his Nanny who is sick at this time: "At the moment I am finding social distancing quite difficult as I cannot see my friends or family. My nanny is sick, but we cannot visit her which is quite sad. I also do not like the amount of work we are getting I understand we need work but it is very hard to keep on top of. I do like that we don't have to wake up early to go to school, and when I have done my work I have the whole day ahead to do something. I play football so I need to keep fit so I exercise once a day either go out and play football or go on a jog or just do a small workout in doors to stay fit. It helps me to calm down when I'm doing all of this. I also play my PlayStation a lot because this quarantine is very boring and there is nothing else to do."



Artist: Sara (1st Year)

Nikki (5th Year) shared her frustration at not knowing when this current experience will end: "I am finding the social distancing kind of hard since I can't see my friends and I miss my family members. I am also finding it frustrating not knowing what exactly is going on or when it is going to stop. I do like the time to do things I normally wouldn't have like runs, walks and nice chats with people on the phone. I also like that I get sleep! I am going on a lot of walks and runs to keep on top of my mental health since usually football would be my way out and that's no longer on right now. I started a new Netflix series and I'm playing board games

with my family. I have been having a lot of group calls with my friends too which is fun too."

Naglis (2nd Year) spoke of the challenge of learning outside of the classroom: "There's many good things about not having to go to school but there's many bad things at the same time. It's much harder to learn under these circumstances. I know I have been having trouble with the work, because it's much harder to do the work at home then in school. In school there's nothing to distract you such as family or the temptation of going off and play your Xbox or PlayStation and stuff like that. Then there's also the fact that if you have trouble with the work you can't really ask for help and be able to get it immediately. There's also the fact that technology can be quite difficult sometimes and almost always has something wrong with it.



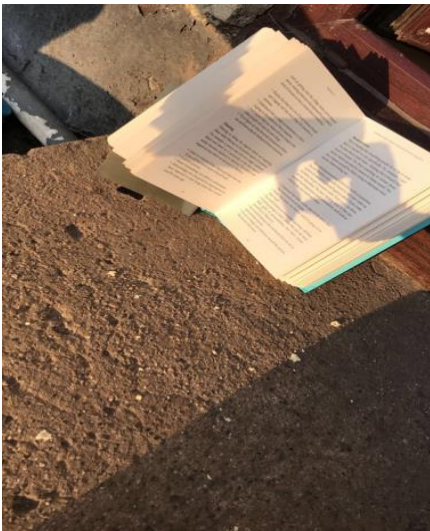
Artist: Goral (1st Year)

The few good things about this is the fact that you get to stay at home and for some it's much easier to focus on doing work at home than at school, There's also the fact that you can spend more time with your family and you can enjoy what little freedom you have at the moment. All jokes aside though in the long term the school shutting down is definitely going to worsen the outcome of most of peoples learning. To keep myself from going mentally insane I've been spending time with my family going outside my back garden and enjoying the weather the past days. I've been playing lots of sports. My routine personally has been completely ruined because now I wake up at completely random times rather than when I used to wake up at around 7:20 am every day. I personally have been having lots of trouble because of this. I've been finding it harder to focus and it's much harder to learn off of videos than being in a classroom and learning the material for an hour."

Ross (3rd Year) provided a diary of his time in quarantine: "So like the rest of the country myself and my family are trying to practice social distancing by keeping to our own space and trying to distance from each other, except for my brother who works in town and still has to travel to work every day as he can't work from home. We all have our own little sections for our work. Me and my dad share the kitchen table, I'm at the top and my dad at the bottom. My mam works from home from time to time so she has the best setup in the front room with a proper desk and monitor.



Things that I find frustrating are constantly being indoors, I like to be active all the time and I normally would be doing something every day but now I'm lucky to be out twice a week. This is the hardest part of the whole experience. I can't see my friends so I'm left with just my family - which is boring!



To help my wellbeing I'm basically listening to music constantly. This drives my mam and dad mad because I can't hear them when they are calling me. Since my dad is working from home we've been going up to our local mountains, Slade Valley in Saggart to go mountain biking. Mountain biking is my favourite way to relive stress. The mountains are the best place for being alone and having a little peace and quiet away from all the Coronavirus News."

Photographer: Louise (5th Year)

Andrew (3rd Year) said that "social distancing is difficult as I have been unable to see my grandparents. It's frustrating not being able to leave my house and go out to my friends, but I know it's for the better. I'm keeping myself occupied by doing stuff around my home and school work is also helping. I usually go on walks also every day and I've started a new series on Netflix."

Halle (6th Year) shared that she missed the simple ordinary aspects of life which are changed: "the most challenging thing about social distancing is that I'm not able to spend time with my friends, or just go to the cinema or eddies rockets with them for a brownie. I'm going for walks with my friends Rachael and Amy. We walked the Saggart mountains the other day."

Cian (TY) shared how spending time with his family is supporting him: "I find not going to training and being able to see my friends challenging, but I'm play football with my brothers and parents to support my wellbeing"



Artist: Aishah (2nd Year)

Stefan (6th Year) shared how drawing and skating were ways he is supporting himself at this time: "The most challenging thing about social distancing is not being able to visit family members. Something I do to support my wellbeing is draw and skate".



Lenny (6th Year) shared: "It's harder than I thought. I'm not used to staying in all day. Not being able to see my friends and socialise is really hard, but I will not take my freedom for granted again after this. Going on walks and keeping in touch with people over the phone. Taking breaks from school work and keeping up with the news. Also going to work which gets me out of the house for a few hours."

Artist: Angeli (2nd Year)

James (2nd Year) expressed how dramatically his lifestyle has changed as a result of the social effects of Coronavirus: "At the moment I'm finding the social distancing extremely challenging as I'm not used to this kind of lifestyle. I'm kind of just eating food and playing Xbox and stuff in my spare time (because I have a lot of it) and I'm also playing football in my garden a lot."



This week, I also spoke with acclaimed actress and former HFCS student **Hazel Clifford** about her experience of **Social Distancing**, and the ways in which she is **supporting her wellbeing**. Hazel said, "to be honest I finding the social distancing quite hard at the moment, but over the past week I feel things have been made easier because of FaceTime. It's been the key to

keeping up with all the people I love and we can all still chat and have a laugh, and take an hour or two away from the anxiety we all have, and the stress and pressure at this very uncertain time. I have to keep reminding myself that **YES this is a very serious time, but it's ok to laugh and smile and be happy even when it feels like there is no joy!**"

Hazel went on to say that that her wellbeing is always number one on her list: **"If you don't have a clear head and heart we can't get through our day to day lives, and we should take this time to mind ourselves! That time is needed to stay positive. Lead life at the moment with a kind heart.** Every day I have been getting up early to do yoga which has really helped to ground me and get me through my day! I'm learning Irish on Duolingo because that is something I never did at school because I was exempt as I'm dyslexic - so that's super fun! And yes I did say Irish is fun - it's our language! I am watching so many films that I have never gotten to watch, and this week I am going to try and finish a book, because that is something I have never done since I left school - no joke! I am minding myself as best as I can and making sure I stay present and positive at this time! **Stay at home! Call your friends! Tell jokes! Laugh!**"

Speaking to Hazel reminded me just how hilariously funny she was as a student in my Music Class. I have to admit it sometimes made my job very challenging, because if there's anything that will stop me from getting through my lesson plan, it's getting a fit of the giggles, which happened many times teaching Hazel. This Wednesday is **April Fool's Day**, so my reflection this week is to steal Hazel's words:

**"Stay at home!
Call your friends!
Tell jokes!
Laugh!"**