CATS TO CATS
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2: Returning to Online School

15 August, 2020

BACK TO SCHOOL

Here are a few quick & important facts about returning to school:

As of July, more than 90% of schools in the state are going online. Our district, LGSUHSD does not have a set date for returning to in-person learning, however it will be working with a 4-phase reopening process:

- Online
- Mixed online and in person (for select activities)
- All-student integration (part time model)
- Return to normalcy

Extra precautions and health checks will be mandatory if/when schools go back to being in-person.

Cats to Cats is not qualified to give advice. Cited information does not necessarily reflect the views of Cats to Cats or LGHS. Students can seek professional help from CASSY, view our Therapy Information page, and crisis hotlines page for outside institutions. We are legally mandated to report any information involving potential or real harm to self or others.

Please see the last page of the newsletter for the full disclaimer.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

The following are opinions collected from the Cats to Cats team & survey results.

PROS OF RETURNING TO ONLINE SCHOOL	CONS OF RETURNING TO ONLINE SCHOOL
➔ Increased flexibility (more freedom and time)	➔ Brings out the "laziness" in students
➔ Courses tend to feel less rigorous	➔ Becomes harder to maintain academic integrity
➔ Less tests	➔ Fewer resources are available and students become "afraid" to ask for help
➔ More readily individualized learning rather than a "one size fits all" learning approach	➔ Harder to get extra help and support
➔ Being able to work when and how we personally want	➔ Seems more difficult to learn new material
	➔ Lack of social interaction

Challenges students may face due to online school:

➔ **Communication and engagement:** For some students, it may be harder to participate and talk during virtual online classes. With some teachers implementing participation points, it may cause students to feel even more stressed, shy, and nervous to talk.

➔ **Feedback:** It may be harder for some students to contact teachers about a question or problem they have. Teachers also may take a while to respond back to emails. Similarly, studies have revealed that many students do not go back and check the 'feedback' of their assignments, meaning that it becomes more difficult to improve learning abilities for students.

➔ **Distractions:** Learning in school is completely different than that of learning at home. Distractions are eased at school by teachers in order to create a healthy and efficient space for students. Online learning poses great distractions due to the comfort of our own homes, and the lessened control of teachers.

➔ **Motivation:** Students also won't be interacting as much with friends and classmates as they would in person. This could cause feelings of loneliness, boredom, and even sadness and stress among some students, which can ultimately lead to the loss of motivation for learning.

➔ **Adaptability of technology:** A large challenge students face is the ability to adapt to an entirely new environment online, which is different from that of the classroom. They must also adapt with technology, which also poses a challenge because many students are not well equipped with stable connections or the knowledge of technology. Poor connectivity leads to challenges of attending classes, and the lack of knowledge of certain platforms make it difficult to complete assignments. Students are forced to adapt to these challenges, which enforces stress upon them.

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

How can you take care of your mental health during this challenging, uncertain time?

Returning to school in an online setting is a new experience for many, and may cause feelings of uncertainty. Fortunately, there are many ways to help you feel more comfortable with this new environment, which may help relieve some of the stress that has come from it.

➔ **Set a regular schedule for yourself,** so that you are able to create a new balanced lifestyle that separates school work and home life. It is important to maintain a schedule as it will become easier to balance the new stressors of online work with the rest of your life.

➔ **Get enough sleep.** Because we now have a newfound freedom during the day, it also means we no longer need to sleep early to wake up early. However, just because we are able to sleep at 2 or 3 in the morning, doesn't mean we should. It is important to still be getting the appropriate amount of sleep so that our bodies are physically capable of learning effectively, which results in less overall stress.

➔ **Socialize and ask for help.** Now that we will no longer be learning in person, new challenges begin to rise as it becomes more difficult to get into contact with friends and teachers who may help you study, answer your questions, and simply be there for you. This is why it is so important to stay in contact with those around you and especially, to create a strong bond with your new teachers, so they can understand the way you learn, and help you adjust to this new lifestyle. Everyone is new to this and we all need people to talk to, and to help us adjust. Don't be afraid to get in contact because it is so important to keep socializing, even if it means virtually.

➔ **Take breaks when you need them.** Parents, teachers, and admin want to create a safe and comfortable space revolving around the new learning environment for their students. However there may be countless moments in which we all begin to feel overwhelmed and overworked. It is important to know that you can take a break and have your moment to relax and manage the stress. Utilize your support system in managing any problem, big or small, that may arise from the bigger issue everyone is facing.

➔ **Make appropriate modifications to benefit your learning style.** Everyone is going through something different during this time filled with uncertainty. Every individual, as a student, will be adjusting to the way things will now work. It's okay to change things up and modify what is going on in your personal life, to benefit and relieve stress throughout the online school year.

- → **Get in touch with tutors.** Having a tutor is not a bad thing. It is important to understand that you may need some more understanding on different topics covered "in" school. Tutors can help you in both relieving stress, as well as getting ahead in school.
- → **Reward yourself!** Taking online classes for a particular duration of time is difficult for everyone that has to go through with that. A very fun way to make sure you get the desired work done is by "rewarding" yourself during and after your assignment. Whether it may be taking a 10 minute break, watching one Youtube video, or even spoiling yourself a little bit, a reward helps maintain a focused mindset which will help you finish your work without facing too much of the extra stress.

This is a time filled with new experiences and uncertainty for everyone. It is important to know that it is okay to feel "lost" and unsure, however everyone needs to realize that there are ways to help alleviate that uncertain feeling.

Sources:

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CATS TO CATS LINKS:

What do you think?
Let us know your opinions on returning to online school!
https://forms.gle/emAXXPV5ScVH65y56

Visit our website's new mental illness page:
The Cats to Cats team has collected information to help educate you on a variety of conditions.
https://www.catstocatslg.com/mental-destress-help-plans

Check out our Instagram:
We post a variety of statistics, student testimonies, and updates on our upcoming webinars.
https://www.instagram.com/lgcatstocats/

Disclaimer for Cats-to-Cats Peer Education Program

Cats to Cats is a peer-to-peer organization. The students on staff are not qualified to give advice or assist directly with any of the mental health issues presented. All informational and educational content is from widely-accepted sources and the testimonies of individuals featured and interviewed. More information on any of the sources or individuals can be found on this page or on our website. The information cited does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Cats to Cats Team or Los Gatos High School.

Students can seek on-campus professional help from our contracted mental health provider CASSY, or view our Cats to Cats Therapy Information page for information on outside organizations. In addition, crisis hotlines are listed on our website.

In addition, if we receive any information involving potential or real harm to self or others, we are legally required to report the incident, which can lead to potential intervention by school or other authorities. The person who contacted us and/or the person's parents will be contacted to verify that the student's parents are aware of the situation and/or that the student is under the care of a professional.

In case of a criminal report, or when in doubt, please contact WeTip at 1-800-78-crime. WeTip receives anonymous and confidential reports and follows up with potential crimes. We encourage all students to be upstanders instead of bystanders when they witness or are the victims of wrongdoing.

COMING SOON ON OCTOBER 24

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Vol. 3: Sexual Assault and Mental Health