

Differing Actions

Amid the scientific and medical components of the pandemic lies a social one - the request for Americans to stay home, away from school, away from work, and away from each other. With no end in sight just yet, the Center for Disease Control or CDC has urged for a limit to outside interaction for the time being to combat the outbreak. For many Americans, however, these stay at home orders haven't been easy.

"As statistics prove most people have a low chance of dying from this virus unless you have an underlying condition or are over a certain age. This is why people are still going out. Some people also just live their life on the edge and simply don't care if they get sick because they know they can fight it off," Mackenzie Balcer, senior, said.

COVID-19 mainly spreads from people being in close proximity to one another. The more people that are together in a group, the likelihood of contracting the virus becomes higher. Simply put, as we stay away from each other, we lessen the

change of both spreading the disease and contracting it ourselves. Both government officials and medical professionals have asked Americans to 'social distance' and 'flatten the curve'. These phrases refer to actions that should be taken to limit the spread of the disease. The 'curve' that is being discussed is the amount of cases we will face with social distancing guidelines and without social distancing guidelines. A flatter curve should mean less stress on our already over-burdened medical facilities. The curve will begin to flatten by individuals taking the steps that have been outlined by the Center of Disease Control (CDC) and other health professionals to social distance.

"What we should do as a society is stay home if we don't need to go out. Also, if we do need to go out then we should be socially distancing ourselves from other people. Lastly, we should be wearing gloves and masks and washing our hands frequently so this outbreak can end," Haleema Rajah, sophomore, said.

These seemingly simple guidelines, however, are not being followed by all Americans, raising questions that are both moral and medical. College "spring breakers" openly flaunted the stay at home orders, continuing to gather and party even as the country braced itself for the growing pandemic. In places like Miami, New Orleans, and even New York City, young adults continued to go out during the early stages of the pandemic. The most common reason stated - "We're young, what could go wrong?" Videos flooded the media of college students refusing to leave their spring break resorts while others continued to board airplanes en route to their destination - defying 'essential travel' orders.

"I would say to the spring breakers that it is selfish to continue normal activities like spring break. There are Americans who are being asked to sacrifice major life events like weddings and proms and are doing so to ensure the safety of loved their loved ones. There will be time to go out and celebrate once this virus is under control but until then we should be doing our part in containing it. They may not realize it but everyone is at risk whether it is the virus itself or spreading it to someone who is more susceptible," Kaitley MacDonald, history teacher, said.

Regardless of reasoning, however, the threat that exists from a lack of social distancing is real. While young people may not experience the most severe symptoms of the virus (though many have), they still possess the ability to spread the disease to those that might - raising the question; why do many young people still think it's ok to risk the lives of others.

Dr. Bruce Aylward, Senior Advisor to WHO Director General stated that, "One of the things that terrifies me now is, as this is spread in the West is, there is this sense of invulnerability

*Illustrations by: Sahara Serrano
Design by: Emily Condon*

The far-reaching social impact of COVID-19 and why many young people don't seem to care

Grace Tutelo, editor-in-chief, Layla Odeh, editor, & Sahara Serrano, staff

among Millennials. And absolutely not," Aylward went on to warn young people, "This is one of the most serious diseases you will face in your lifetime. And recognize that and respect that. You are not an island in this, you are part of a broader community, you are part of transmission chains, if you get infected you are making this much more complicated and you are putting people in danger, not just yourself."

Laura Kalmes, Ph.D, a philosopher and social critic explained that the desire for young people to disobey orders is not entirely their fault, however.

"What happened in Florida should be a lesson to us about the social, economic, political, and educational failures of society," Kalmes said. "Throughout their lives, they have been imbibing an anti-government rhetoric espoused by the political establishment, neatly packaged in corporate-sponsored textbooks, and repeated at the pulpit and dinner table. These intersecting discourses laud personal freedom and liberty at the expense of the common good. This has, unsurprisingly, engendered deep mistrust in the state's interference with their lives."

President Donald Trump even commented on the behavior of young Americans, stating, "We don't want them gathering, and I see they do gather, including on beaches and in restaurants, young people. They don't realize, and they're feeling invincible."

Still, most young people seem to be getting the message.

"I think social distancing is very beneficial, by helping contain the virus. I think the main thing that we as a society should do is actually try to follow the guidelines that the CDC has put in place. If everyone is active in doing their part to help limit exposure, then this disease can be contained in less time," Katelyn Tutelo, sophomore, said.

One of the big risks of this particular virus is that people can have it without feeling any symptoms or showing any signs, meaning one is asymptomatic. This puts others at risk for contracting the disease and leads to infecting hundreds of more people, increasing the number of cases and potentially the mortality rate. By only going out when it is essential and keeping a distance from others, the spread will slow down making a return to normalcy sooner than later. This phenomenon has impacted young people who fail to recognize that their behavior can have a tremendous impact on those around them, even if they are "feeling good".

"It's unfortunate that some of the younger population did / do not follow the social restrictions in place. Although the virus appears to have a higher mortality in the older population, the

younger population is facing similar infection rates. Unknowingly, they possibly pass the virus onto their parents, grandparents, or aunts and uncles, all of which likely have a higher chance of death if infected," Michael Kull, APN, said.

That sentiment is not lost on all of the younger generation, however:

"Social distancing goes a long way. It would help us because it's less contact outside, and it wouldn't put ourselves at risk along with others. That's why it is best to stay home throughout this pandemic because, in the end, we will get through this together. We have to keep taking appropriate precautions," Nicholas Petrosino, senior, said.

Others agree.

"The only businesses that should be opened are those that provide the necessities for us to get by at this time (grocery stores, home stores, fast foods, ETC). I believe that there shouldn't be any sort of interaction between customers and employees, only with the exception of gloves and masks used. Maybe, we can start to adapt to placing orders on our phones/computers/tablets so that way, we can pick up our items in person to make a quick and easy purchase. It would involve less time being used up and less interactions, which can lead us to a quicker recovery and/or a flattening of the curve," Angela Ndoaj, freshman, said.

The virus may most notably be easily contracted by older individuals, but if one thing these rising amounts of cases have taught us, it is that science and this virus do not discriminate.

"The coronavirus has resulted in things that no one could have imagined. It has closed all schools, leaving many kids wondering when they will get the opportunity to go back. However, there have been ways given to us by the CDC to help end what is happening. If we all do what we need to, even if it is not what we want to do, our lives will go back to normal," Natalia Cinfuentes, sophomore, said.

