

16/7/20

I regularly see people who I know for a fact are not bubbling posting pictures of themselves hugging on Instagram.

And yes, not hugging people is hard. But I think quite mathematically about these sorts of things, and the equation I come up with when deciding whether to break social distancing looks like this:

(Welfare gained from hugging people) VS (Risk of transmission * value of the lives of potentially multiple people who would die as a result)

A lot of people don't seem to think it through like this, or they just value hugs more. One of the two. And at some point I will deem that it's more beneficial to hug people than for the small risk of transmission, but that's not yet, and for me will be when government guidance changes.

Final thing - one interesting argument I've heard for people meeting up from various households in a group of >6 and "getting drunk and making out with each other then hugging goodbye" is "it's our choice" and "at our own risk", and the thing is... It's not really their risk, being young people. It's all the people badly at risk who are connected to each of them directly and indirectly. Maybe government communication could more clearly point this out?

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The way my school has been dealing with it has seemed somewhat below that of most others, despite being seen as a very large and high-achieving school.

It has only been in the last half term (May-July) that most teachers have really started using Teams. This is despite it being set up and being ready to use very early on - one teacher in particular has been setting weekly work and doing one or two weekly video lessons throughout the entire time, whilst some have only really started setting anything recently.

There have been a couple teachers who have dumped the booklets we'd have worked through with plenty of guidance in class on us for 8 weeks of work, telling us to get it done near the end of it and taking it in but giving no feedback.

The best teachers in the lockdown have been the ones giving timely feedback to work submitted - for several, I've gone several weeks without acknowledgement of the work being submitted or any marks/feedback from it. Even acknowledgement that it was done or done well is enough, otherwise it doesn't feel like there's any reward, though I understand that teachers also have

home teaching to do with their kids, or other home commitments, though at this point there should be little excuse for failing to use the technology.

I know some in my class have been flatly avoiding all work the entire time, failing to check emails. The interesting thing with this is first that, as far as I know, most teachers have not been following up well. And many would argue that this is because “it’s not their GCSEs”, which is somewhat fair enough. From a behavioural science perspective, however, having no reward or consequence within a small and related timeframe will not reinforce any gain or loss from doing/not doing the work. In a similar way to with doing/not doing homework, this means that the only consequence will be GCSE results, something that it is not possible to learn from and use to inform future actions relevant. (Though mocks may do this a little, they will not give adequate time to adjust in response and will also seem less consequential.)

In summary, I think that feedback and following up work from teachers after a week or so of students not having done it, or after repetitive failure to do work will be good for students in the long run.

One thing our school has done to alleviate stress and the effect of workloads is giving a “consolidation week” where minimal or no work should be set by teachers, to allow students to relax and/or catch up.