

Closure – Week 1.

Message to Students, Staff & Parents/Guardians.

As we come to the end of the first full week since our schools closed it is important to look at where we are at as a school, in our families and in our own-self.

The now all too familiar term of 'social distancing' and 'self isolation' immediately led me back to reread a book I first read in 2014 and have subsequently given to some close friends and colleagues on their retirement. It is to book that to me and many of us would initially seem counter-intuitive, '[*The Village Effect. Why Face-to Face Contact Matters by Susan Pinker*](#)'. Ultimately the conclusion of the book leads you to one distinct view – that despite the benefits of technological advancement in education, society and work it is face-to-face interaction and strong personal relationships, bound by verbal and non verbal cues, in our homes, school and work places that make us healthier (physical & mental) smarter and more successful.

Throughout this week we have grappled with what we hope is a new short term reality – a decline in that face-to-face contact in our community. Teachers have embraced technology to replace that valuable face-to-face classroom interaction and personal relationship. Students have engaged enthusiastically and diligently with the work. Parents have provided every available resource they have to support their family's learning and safety. All of this going on while life

around us is different. All of the while we have carried our own concerns, questions and emotions? Our values of Unity, Truth and Love can help to guide us in all of this where we care for each other in a spirit of team work, patience and understanding.

A number of things have happened this week worth noting for each of us;

- Oral exams cancelled in the Leaving Certificate with students receiving 100% of the marks for that element of their exam.
- Practical performance exam cancelled in Music at both Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate with students receiving 100% of the marks for that element of their exam.
- Deadlines for all project work at Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle pushed out to May 15th.

I am aware for each of us ***manging our day is difficult for various reasons***. For some of us we just want to be left to our own devices and left to study or work without interruption. For others we need the support, the crutch if you like, of online lessons, notes and communications. For more there is work to be done at home on the farm or business during the day. We offered some advice around this in our post earlier in the week '[Managing our Day](#)'. We are in the early stages of this and as described in our Charter we are a 'Learning Community'. In that regard you can click on this [link to complete a short anonymous survey](#) around how you feel our remote teaching and learning is progressing. This will inform us as teachers, students and parents as to what we could do differently to try to improve for the benefit of all of us – students, teachers and parents alike.

Be kind to yourself through all of this. Keep things slow, steady and simple! Learning to use new technology can be draining and challenging on top of creating resources and

studying or preparing for assessments in a climate of uncertainty. We and in particular our exam students should work on the assumption that exams are going ahead and remain focused for that challenge. Remember that the DES and SEC do not act in a vacuum and accommodations will have to be made that do not disadvantage any student. Some of these we may agree with and others we may disagree with but we should not dwell on them or allow them to consume our thoughts. Try to filter out the social media hysteria and euphoria that is prevalent around this.

We have ***strong pastoral supports*** for each of our community members in the college and they are still available. If you need to talk with someone then please do. Do not keep your worries and anxieties to yourself. If you do not want to talk with friends or family then you can email our Chaplains, Ms Bolger or Fr Collender, and they will be in contact with you. This time may also provide an opportunity for our 5th years to research courses and programmes. Our Guidance Counsellor, Ms Byrne, will keep you up to date with any changes or pertinent information through text to parents, twitter or on our website. Their email addresses should you need them are;

- helen.bolger@goodcounselcollege.ie
- michael.collender@goodcounselcollege.ie
- jane.byrne@goodcounselcollege.ie

There are many other external supports such as [Parentline](#), [Childline](#), [Barnardos](#) , [Ferns Diocesan Youth Services \(FDYS\)](#) and [TUSLA](#) available to offer support to each of us should the need arise and you will also find more details on our [Child Protection](#) page.

Staying physically active will help to maintain our wellbeing. Our Physical Education Department have given some valuable resources for all of our families, including parents and staff, to try out. Click on the links below – many of the

resources are great fun for all of you and get the heart rate going.

- [Introductory letter from PE department](#)
- [Links to great activities](#)

Finally, thank you and well done to everyone in our community for their work this week. If we can help in any way myself, Aidan and PJ are more than willing to support you. Just ask. Our contacts are;

- mark.obrien@goodcounselcollege.ie
- aidan.obrien@goodcounselcollege.ie
- pj.walsh@goodocounselcollege.ie

The weekend is upon us and it is important that we all close the screens and look inwards to ourselves, our families and loved ones. Catch breadth and catch up with those around you, share how you are and ask others the same. Remember, this will pass and it is our relationships with one another that will sustain us.

Take care of yourself and the ones you love.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aid O'Brien'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Aid' and last name 'O'Brien' clearly distinguishable.