



Concern lingers over the mental health impact of COVID-19 on young people

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Psychologist Simon Sherry is concerned COVID-19 has robbed young people of pivotal life experiences.

"You don't get to do Grade 8 graduation twice," said Sherry.

"You don't get to do your 16th year over."

With public health restrictions ending next month in Nova Scotia, life will, for the most part, return to a pre-pandemic normal.

"It's pretty exciting to go back to what it once was," said Grade 12 student Joline Naffaa.

"We now get a chance to have normal prom and graduation this year. It feels like it's good for all the Grade 12s in the province."

Grade 12 student Abby Dolomont said the mental health impacts of COVID-19 cut deep, starting with a lack of socialization.

"We haven't really been able to see each other," said Dolomont.

"Or get together, which has kind of been very isolating."

Health concerns within his family forced both of Pete Simpson's children to stay home from school during the Omicron wave. Simpson is relieved his pre-primary-aged son, who is just starting out, will be able to thrive at school and resume typical childhood activities.

"Being social and he's getting out and he's getting active," said Simpson.

"He's not in front of a TV all day."

According to Franklyn Southwell, president of the Saint Mary's University Students Association, the end of COVID-19 restrictions can't come soon enough.

"We had students who had difficulty transitioning to the online model," said Southwell.

"The issue of not being able to see people and being in the classroom and that socialization aspect. A lot of students missed that."

Sherry has major worries about the long-lasting psychological impact of the pandemic.

"The concern is we may have pushed some kids down a different trajectory when it comes to their overall development," said Sherry, who also fears many young people will likely bear emotional scars from this pandemic for the rest of their lives.