

'How do the experiences of young people at school affect how healthy a lifestyle they adopt?'

There are many ways that school can affect your lifestyle and as a school student I am well placed to say what they are. In this essay I will write about what can lead to a healthy lifestyle and what can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle. School has a huge effect on my life and my future and it is very important that it is a happy and positive environment for me and my friends and that we come out of school, reflecting on a positive and also incredibly effective 5 or possibly 7 years of our life. If school is negative and isn't enjoyed it will have lasting damage to my future and here is what I think about effects school has.

First of all, to be happy at school you have to be having fun. If you enjoy school you are so much more motivated and willing to learn and more likely to be healthy. A huge part of a healthy lifestyle is mental health. I know I can speak for a large majority of students when I say when I am in my lessons I want to be having fun and enjoying myself. I want to be looking forward to lessons and excited to get up in the morning, and I do not want to be counting down until 3 o'clock from Period 1. I may or may not have been guilty of doing that before. A boring lesson and a boring day will lead to getting home and wanting nothing to do with school. If I have had a particularly bad or dull day I want to go home and go out with my friends or play on my Xbox or watch my films and escape the endeavours of the day. In my opinion this is not healthy because it is going to lead to a lazy attitude and a terrible attitude to now be taking into my future when I have a job or go to university or have to look after my children.

That's if I have a bad day. What if I have had a good day? What's different? What makes a good day? What makes a good day at school is 5 good intuitive and entertaining classes. There are many other factors but for now let's look at that. When I'm in class I want to be learning and discovering but I want for my tasks to have a point and to be enjoyable. An example of work that is not enjoyable is working from textbooks, which is dull and often results in you just copying stuff down and not actually paying attention to what it is you are writing and what it means. An example of a good task is if we are being creative with, perhaps, a research task and given freedom to take our work in the way that we want to and to speak and learn from our peers. A good lesson also requires a good teacher who is vocal and helps and instructs you, who doesn't just read from a PowerPoint and set a task and then attend to other chores they have. To be in a positive mind set I want to be able to talk to my teacher about what I'm struggling with and I want my teacher to be open to change and also to care and want me to be the best that I can be. I also want to be doing practical and imaginative work and changing and editing and enjoying my work. I think it is also important to have the chance to speak to our peers and bounce ideas off each other and help each other improve in every way we can while also enjoying ourselves and having a good time.

If I have just five of these kinds of lessons I'll get home and I'll be smiling, I'll be positive and I'll be so much more likely to have an enjoyable evening and to find myself laughing and smiling and (if not eager) and willing to do my homework, and do it to a good standard. Instead of not enjoying my lessons and not wanting to do my homework, I'll do it and feel I owe it to my teacher to do it well and I'll want to impress them. Enjoying my day at school is so important because in reality it turns out to be at least 40 hours of my 168 possible given to me a week including homework, which 70 of I spend sleeping - which leaves me with roughly 40% of my conscious week taken up by school. If I am not enjoying 40% of my life, that's going to be really negative for my life and have an impact on my mental health. Many students suffer from things like stress, anxiety and procrastination. Imagine if

we could have the majority of students enjoying that crucial 40% of their week; it would rub off onto their mental state and how they were out of school as well.

Another key element to my school day is my friends, and what happens at lunch and break. For some people, lunch and break can be one of the highlights of their day. Imagine being someone unlucky enough to live a 30-minute car drive from school with 2 working parents that even struggle to pick you up from school. Break and lunch can be your only time of the week you can see your friends and have the freedom to do what you want. In total we get 55 minutes of our 6 hour 10 minute school day to spend with our friends. That is about 15% of our day at school. During my day at school I look forward to break and to lunch and enjoy spending the time with my friends. The lessons that I work best in are probably 3 and 4 or 5 depending what lunch I am on and that is because I have just come from really enjoying myself and having a good day with my friends and am now in a good frame of mind to have a lesson. To work well in class and to have a good day at school and a healthy mind you have to be taking full advantage of your time at break and lunch and enjoying yourself.

Something that I personally believe Finham can improve is your school environment. Everyone should be going to school feeling safe, happy and at ease. Everyone should be comfortable and themselves at school and it should be one of the school's priority to make sure people are. People at school must be comfortable in their environment to have an effect on their life at home and their life at school. It is important that when you are at school you feel like you want to be there and you want to learn. School for some people can be an escape from an unpleasant home life and a getaway from a hell at home. If you are already having an unhealthy mental life at home, school should be a release and should try and improve your mental state and should at least definitely not be making it worse. A huge part of having an unhealthy lifestyle is not being able to open up about certain parts. If you don't feel comfortable or don't have parents that are going to listen school should be a place where you can talk to any teacher and any friend about it and should be a place where help and support is offered and I believe that at Finham it is and I know that if I had a problem with for instance my lifestyle at home, I can list not only my friends but many teachers I would feel comfortable talking to and I know would really care and try their best to help me, and that's such an important and great thing to feel.

Another huge impact on a healthy lifestyle is physically. At school there should be healthy food options and lots of physical extracurricular options. At Finham there are lots of extra-curricular activities ran every day which can hugely help students who don't have healthy lifestyles try and improve and become healthier people. I know for a fact that if I go to the canteen I can find so many delicious options to have, and I'm sure you've seen the treats and snacks that you can have. However, something I don't often see is something homemade that hasn't just been opened with a pair of scissors and fried, and I also struggle to see healthy food options. Although I can understand this because the more healthy food they put out, it will most likely just annoy students and just lead to more food being wasted because it isn't eaten. But schools should really want to make sure all their students are living healthy lives and eating well. If at school you are led to believe that an acceptable lunch to have is a chicken burger and chips, then what effect is that going to have when you're older and when it's up to you to make dinner maybe not just for yourself but for your children as well? If our generation are convinced that eating unhealthily is acceptable on a daily basis and not just as a treat, then not only is it going to have a lasting effects on their future, it's going to affect their children and their childhood and then even possibly the life of their children.

Another huge effect on children at school is going to be the way they are treated by teachers. Students are going to be more positive if they are rewarded and complemented for doing good work then shouted out and criticised for doing bad work. An important part of being healthy is that you feel you are treated fairly and you feel like you can earn rewards and that there is a reason behind all the work you do. I don't want to feel I am being told to do work for no reason and not only that but even once I've done it I'm not going to be rewarded for working well and trying my hardest. I can honestly say that if I think I am given work or homework that I believe has no importance and I am just being given for the sake of it is going to annoy me and make me less likely to try my hardest and not just to be not motivated for that task but also for other tasks in the future.

Additionally, at our school there are a lot (just like all schools) of children that are naturally going to misbehave and break the rules. Often there will be a reason behind this and even if the kids don't know it themselves it is very important teachers don't treat them differently and try to understand what it is that is leading for them to be having this attitude and this unhealthy lifestyle. Reasons for this are because they are not getting enough attention at home or aren't treated as well at home. It could also be because they feel they aren't good enough or that they are not raised to behave in a way that teachers may expect of their students. Those are just some of the reasons and it may be that some of them aren't right and there are lots more, but for these students to have a better lifestyle it's important teachers try and help them. Some of these kids have had a worse lifestyle because of school because they are treated as if they are just these misbehaving kids. It's the school's job to deal with this however they see fit but being treated differently has an effect on your lifestyle and could make misbehaving a norm for the future of these kids which is going to affect their attitude towards things like getting a job and making friends.

Another point, which I am sure that every student will probably have written about, is homework. This can have a huge effect on how you act around your family and your attitude towards school. I am currently writing this at about 16:00 on a Sunday afternoon. I know for certain that I have been doing my homework almost all day and am not sure what I have achieved. I would much rather be watching Burnley vs. Cardiff or going out with my mates right now but I cannot, because although I am already giving school about 40% of my week, that wasn't enough. Although that percentage did include homework I have definitely spent more than 40% of my week doing school work or school related things. Sometimes, like others, I can understand the importance of small amounts of homework to help remind you of work or continue the learning if the teacher's feel that the lesson wasn't enough time. However I think a lot of the time homework is set for no reason and just ends up annoying and frustrating students. Instead of factorising and simplifying complicated algebraic fractions, I could be discovering a hidden talent and a huge career option or I could be recovering and resting, or spending time with my family. Homework can have a huge effect on the way you act and your attitude. I believe that if you aren't happy and smiling then there is no way you are going to be having a healthy lifestyle. If you are someone that doesn't enjoy school then you have 60% of your week to be doing other things and spending time doing what you do enjoy, but if you are completely loaded with homework and revision it's could, quite honestly lead to you becoming anxious and even depressed if homework is going to overtake your life. Overall, I believe that if you want a healthy lifestyle, homework is not going to be a contributing factor to that.

I believe school can have huge effects on your mental health but whether they are positive or negative depend on the attitude of the student and what the school can do to help and support their students. School can go from a happy place to a depressing place easily and it is important that schools make sure it stays a happy place and people can enjoy their days at school.

By Patrick Dale