



# Gonzales Youth Mental Health Survey 2020

Collaboration: Gonzales Youth Council (GYC) & California University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB)

## GYC Youth Commissioners

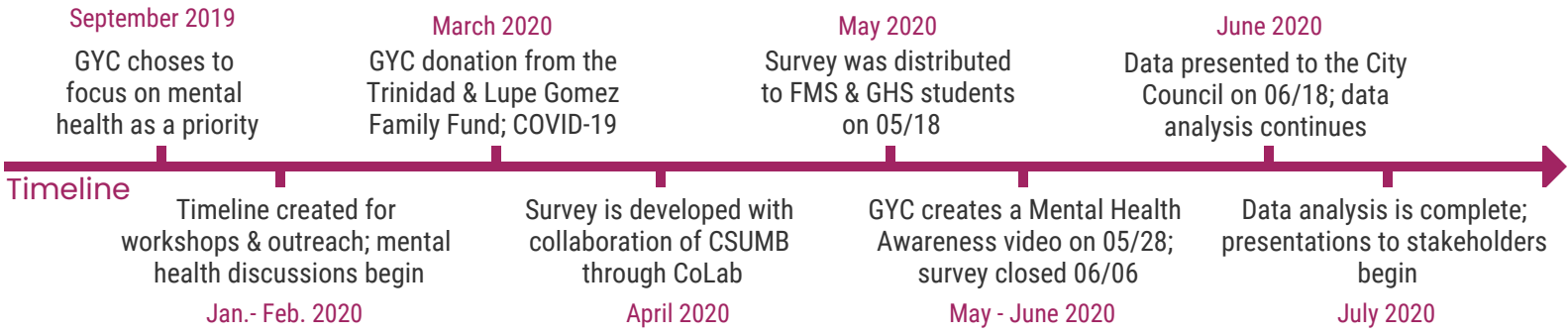
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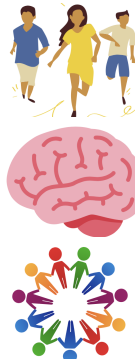
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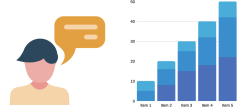


## Research Design

- **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR):** Youth are taught how to perform research to make positive changes in their lives, communities, and other institutions
- **Research Question:** How well are our Gonzales youth doing during the COVID-19 crisis?
- **Goals of the 2020 Survey:** Acquire information to advocate for students' wellbeing and identify what resources to provide in the future

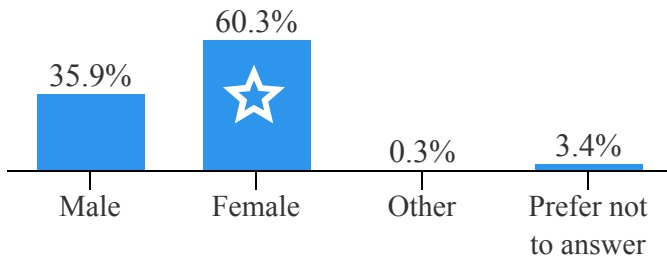


- **Online Survey Distribution:** May 18 to June 6, 2020, to students grades 6-12 (via email) in Gonzales Unified School District. Survey questions covered academic concerns, mental health, overall wellness, and demographic information
- **Mixed-Method Approach:** Qualitative data (open-ended responses) and quantitative data (frequencies, percentages) were retrieved for analysis

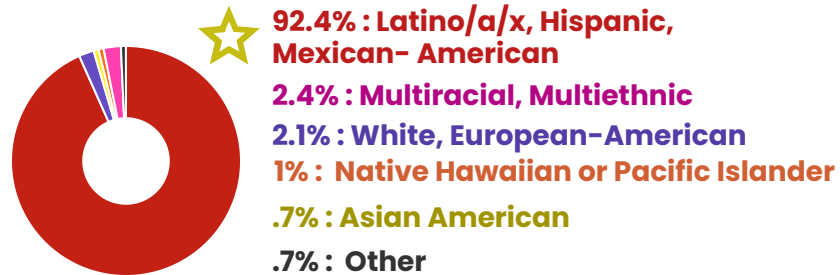


## Demographic Information

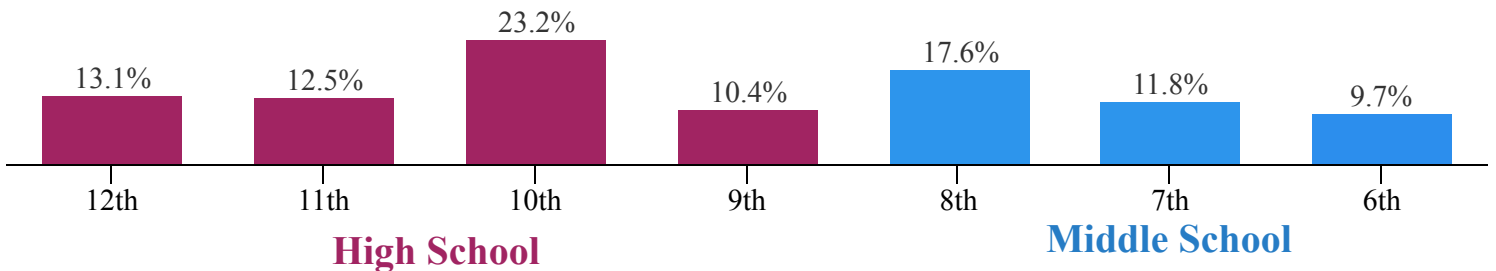
Gender (N = 290)



Ethnicity (N = 288)



Grade in School (N = 289)



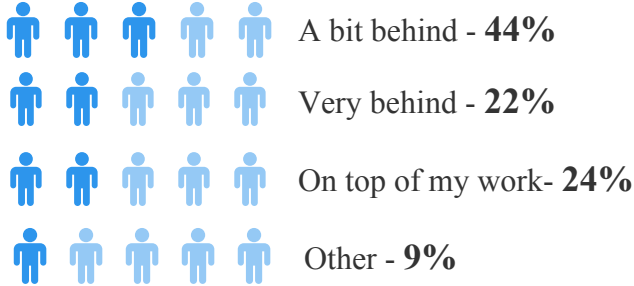


# Academic Success

Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council (2020)

## Workload & Online Learning

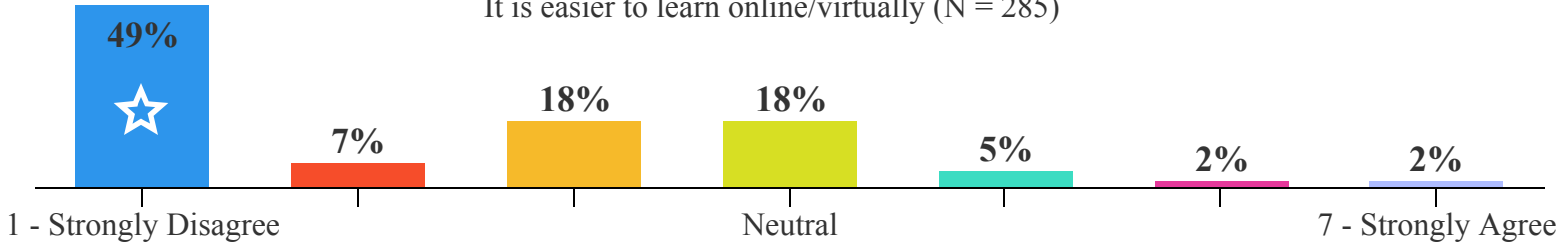
How do you feel you are doing in your classes?  
(N = 334)



What has been the most challenging part of COVID-19 for you? (N = 340)

- "The most challenging aspect for me right now is that the teacher puts in way too much work, more than they do when we're in school."
- "There are multiple assignments being thrown at us every other day."

It is easier to learn online/virtually (N = 285)



## What else did students say about school?



Only **12%** of students said they definitely understand their school material (N = 335)



**31%** of students said their grades have **dropped** or their post-high school plans have changed (N = 288)



**50%** said having an overwhelming amount of homework was **the hardest part of COVID-19** (N = 340)

## How Teachers Can Help

Being motivated for school was one of the primary challenges expressed by students. Here are some potential tips to support remote learners, based on research:

### Other Tips:



Record problems being solved

Host Zoom office hours



Email regularly to check in or answer questions

- Encouragement: Showing genuine care can help students feel more motivated academically
- Growth mindset: Praise efforts, not intelligence
- Emphasize competence over performance
- Interest: Plan a lesson around students' interests



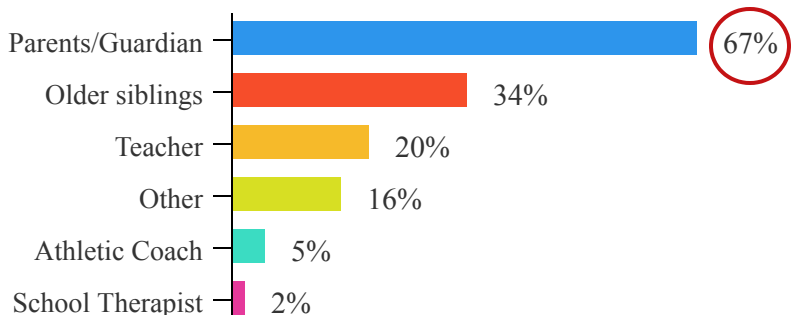
# Families & Social Support

Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council



## Trusted Adults

What trusted adults have you turned to for support during COVID-19? (N = 375)



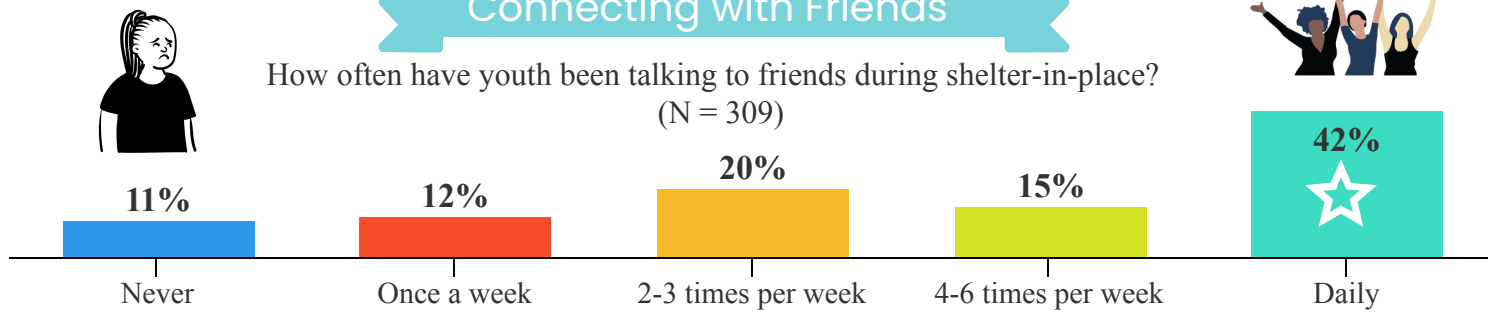
## Grateful

Qualitative themes for three things youth were grateful for: (N = 260)

- 1 **81%** : Family
- 2 **47%** : Friends & social support
- 3 **31%** : Resources (computer, food, shelter, clean water)
- 4 **14%** : Technology (social media, shows, games, WIFI)

## Connecting with Friends

How often have youth been talking to friends during shelter-in-place? (N = 309)

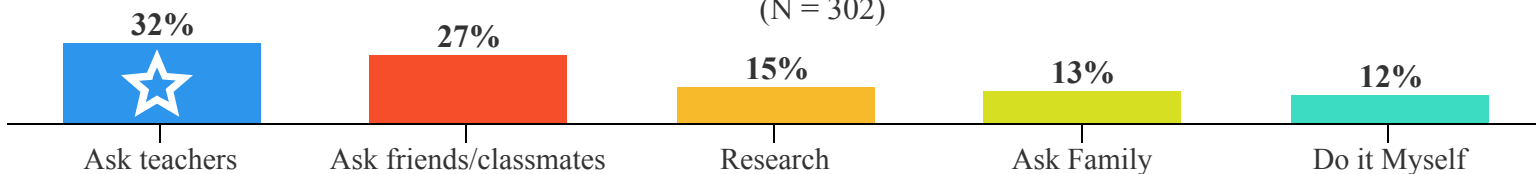


## Schoolwork

**10%** of students said they do not have a quiet place to get work done, and **44%** responded they "sort of" do (N = 335)

**60%** of students said they feel responsible for helping a younger sibling finish their school work (N = 219)

What do you do when you don't understand assignments? (N = 302)



## How Families Can Help

**Students may be struggling to find a location to work or feel pressure to help a sibling finish their schoolwork. Here are some potential tips to support their academic responsibilities:**

- ➔ Help create a daily routine and designate a specific location where your child can complete school work and complete Zoom meetings (it is best if this is a desk space and NOT on a bed).
- ➔ Ask how your child is doing and let them know you love and support them. Be prepared to provide emotional support and work with your youth to reach out to their teacher or the school social worker.
- ➔ Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with COVID-19: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>



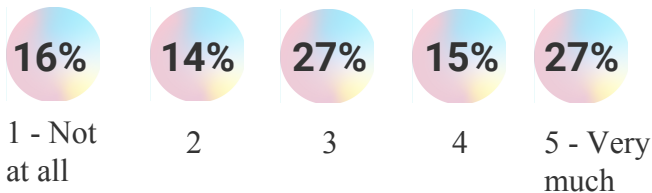
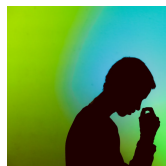
# Mental Health



Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council (2020)

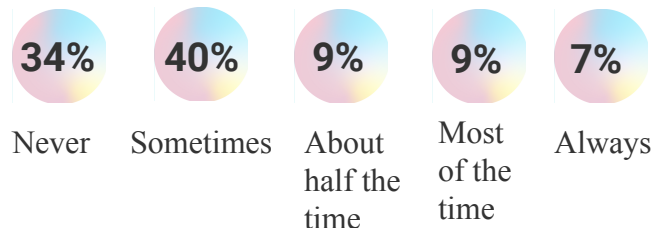
## Stress

Stress: a situation where a person feels tense, restless, nervous, or is unable to sleep at night. Do you feel this kind of stress lately? (N = 354)



## Loneliness

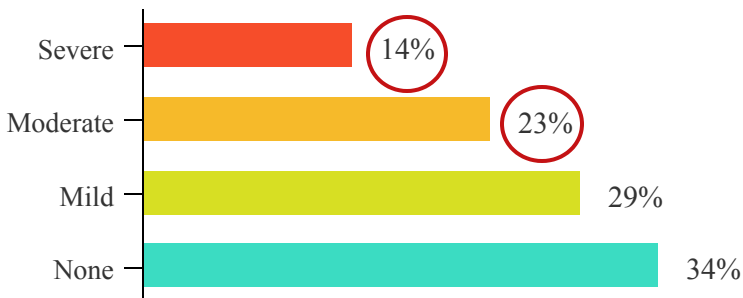
Do you feel lonely? (N = 309)



## Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4)

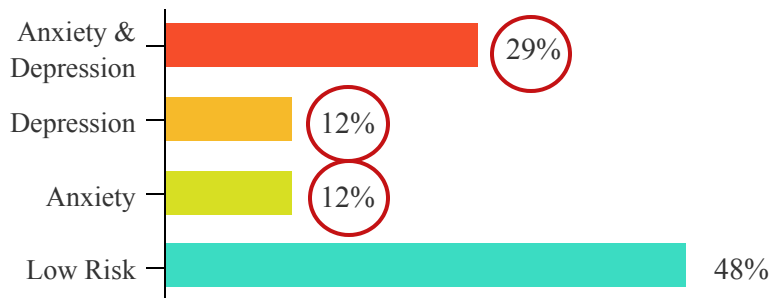
- The PHQ-4 is a reliable screener for anxiety and depression (Kroenke et al., 2009); Chronbach's alpha = .85
- Only high schoolers answered the PHQ-4 questions (N = 176)
- Students were asked to rate how often they felt anxious and depressed over the last two weeks

### Level of Overall Emotional Distress



★ 38% of the students' scores fell within the moderate to severe levels for their overall level of emotional distress

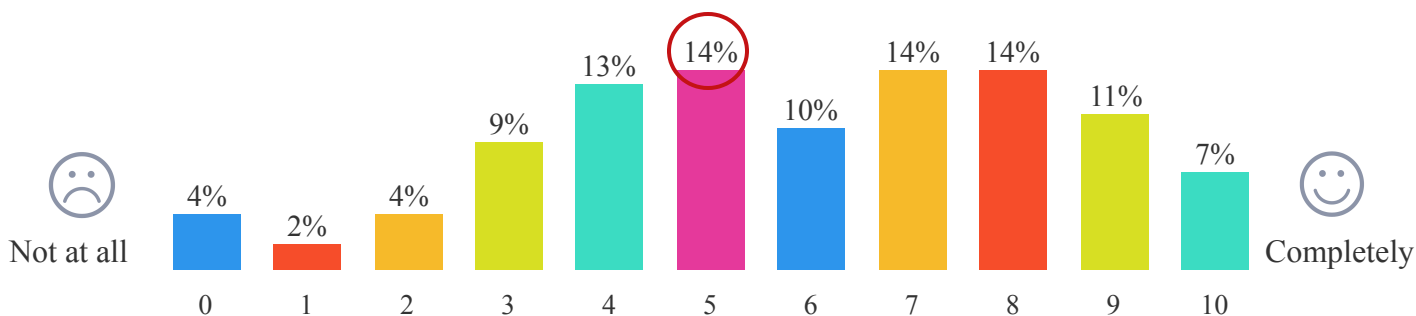
### Risk for Anxiety & Depression (Subscales)



★ 52% of the students scored over the cutoff score for anxiety, depression, or both anxiety and depression

## Happiness

Overall, how happy would you say you are? (N = 305)





# Resilience

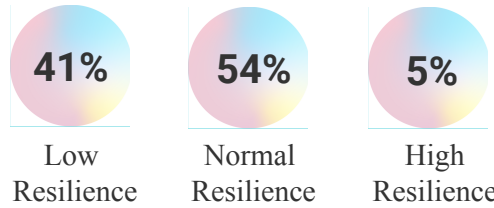


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## Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

The BRS is a 6-item questionnaire (Smith et al., 2008) that asked high school students to rate statements on their ability to recover from hard and stressful events

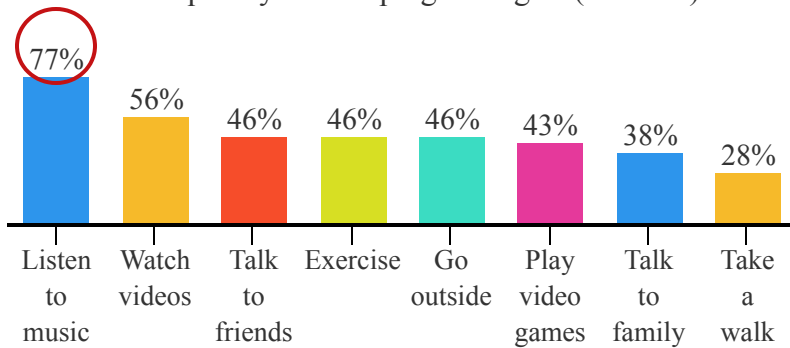
### BRS Categories (N = 171)



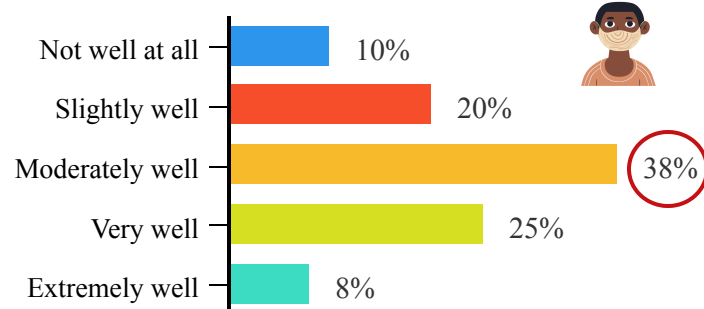
★ 41% of the students are considered to have **low resilience** and only 5% of students scored within the high resilience category

## Coping

### Most frequently used coping strategies (N = 375)

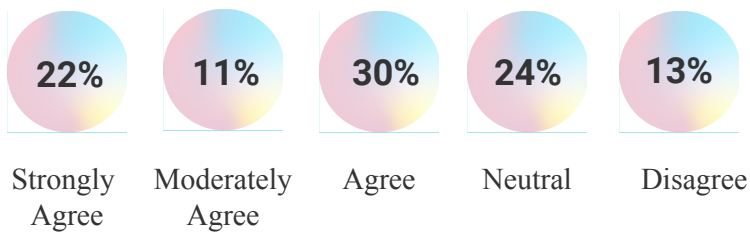


### How well are you coping with COVID-19? (N = 306)

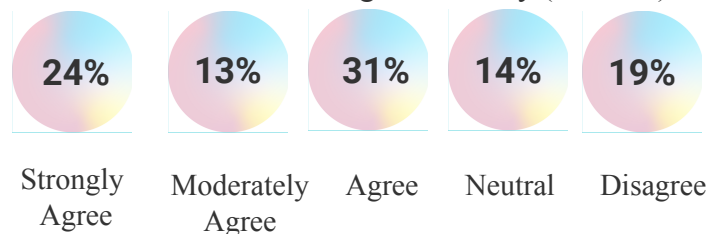


## Digital Wellness

### I find creative inspiration online (N = 285)



### I take intentional breaks throughout the day (N = 285)



## Resilience & Mental Health

**41% of high school students may need help overcoming challenges, and 52% were at risk for depression and/or anxiety. Here are some research-based tips to support students:**

- ➔ Find a place where youth can become actively involved in the community (e.g., volunteering remotely),<sup>1</sup> encourage youth to stay connected with peers and friends, and emphasize the importance of a self-care routine.<sup>2</sup>
- ➔ Learn ways to support young people's resilience, for example, the **American Psychological Association's Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers**: <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience-guide-parent>
- ➔ Help develop youth's competence by focusing on strengths and empower youth to make decisions.<sup>3</sup>
- ➔ Reach out to the Gonzales school social worker, counselor, or community mental health provider if you see warning signs for depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/warning-signs-of-suicide/index.shtml>).

1. Lonczak, H.S. (2020, April 20) 30+ Tips for building resilience in children. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-in-children/>

2. American Psychological Association. (2020, August. 26) Resilience guide for parents and teachers. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience-guide-parent>

3. Building resilience in children. (n.d.) Healthychildren.org. Retrieved on <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Children.aspx>



# Action & Next Steps

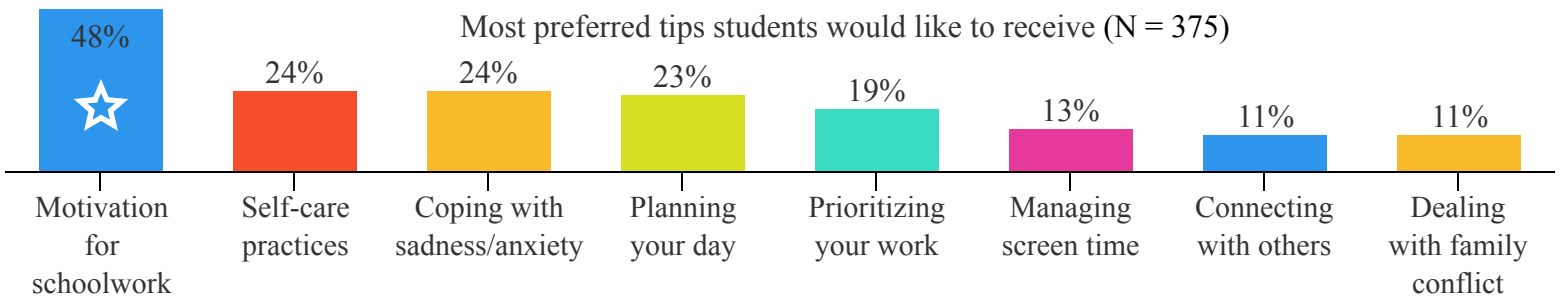
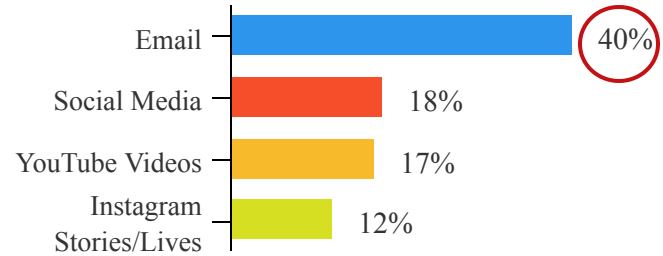
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## Receiving Tips

Would you like tips on how to stay motivated to complete schoolwork and cope during COVID-19? (N = 359)



How would you like to receive tips? (N = 237)



## Tips for Other Youth

Five themes emerged when youth were asked what tips they have for other youth during the pandemic (N = 242)

Theme	Description	Percent	Example Quote
Positivity & Faith	Students endorsed words of encouragement, messages of motivation, to be grateful and have faith	25%	"Everything will be fine. We will get through this pandemic."
Virus Safety	Students wanted other to practice social distancing, wear masks, wash hands, and only leave the house when necessary	18%	"To fight the urge of going out and socializing; to please practice social distancing and shelter in place."
School Responsibilities	Students advised others to do work before it accumulates, keep grades up, contact teachers if needed, focus on school, and try to get good grades	15%	"Do not procrastinate on work because one way or another you will have to finish it if you want a good future."
Distractions / Entertainment	Students encouraged others to read, play games online, listen to music, and watch shows as they are at home	15%	"...stay positive and think ahead. Make sure you are being as healthy as possible, and that you have enough entertainment to satisfy yourself... be healthy, stay smart, be creative, and stay motivated."
Self Care	Students said to take breaks from technology, take walks for fresh air, make time for relaxation, and set boundaries in relationships	14%	"Relax. Take a break once in a while"

## Conclusions

- **Most participants** were struggling to stay motivated with schoolwork
- **52%** of high school students scored above the cutoff score on a screener for anxiety, depression, or both
- **39.5%** of participants wanted to receive tips and support via email

## GYC Next Steps

- Continue to push mental health resources
- Support/advocate for the creation of safe spaces that support youth mental wellness
- Continue to research and share findings to inform distance learning approaches and well-being of youth in Gonzales, California