

Traveling in uncharted territory -- virtual learning -- students unable to interact with friends, teachers feeling powerless related to virtual classroom control, loss of experiencing visual sight of emotions hidden behind a mask, onset of depression associated with the lack of personal connections -- and the list goes on.

Youth and adult clubs and organizations have adapted meeting settings to virtual formats instead of face-to-face gatherings. Many times it is easier to simply send out a Zoom link and stay in the comfort of our own homes instead of getting up and dressed to attend a face-to-face event. It's the social interaction and community service projects people crave when getting together for discussions.

All of these virtual format changes will definitely have some longer-term effects on both our youth and adults. After watching a short video entitled "Numb" created by Olivia, a freshman student from Toronto, my concern for our youth has escalated. Please take the time to watch this video that describes what life feels like for a kid who's been forced to learn remotely. It is just over three minutes in length and no words are spoken. Watch here - [Numb](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSkbd6hRkXo)  
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Notes from Olivia -- 'This is just a generalization of the feeling of isolation, not my personal feelings, I for sure haven't been enjoying quarantine, but some have it worse. We have all been going through stuff right now, especially with Black Lives Matter, my struggles are in no way comparable to some things people are going through right now. This is my own experience, some are a whole lot worse than mine. I'm just showing what I know. This is a mini film, Numb by me. I did this for a school project but I'm really happy with how it came out, so I'm posting it here. This took me a combined 3 weeks or so. hope you enjoy! please feel free to share as much as you like, just please credit me and M83, the band who made the music. This is a COVID-19 youth mental health resource hub if you've been negatively affected by isolation. <https://jack.org/covid> song: my tears are becoming a sea - M83 directed by, edited by, written by and starring me'

According to Dr. Tim Elmore, CEO and Founder of Growing Leaders and Millennial and Generation Z Expert, Olivia (Liv) isn't an unmotivated student. She wins awards and loves going to summer camp, but she's in anguish over the situation in which she finds herself. She isn't ready for it. Like millions of other members of Generation Z, she's stuck at home in front of a computer – in isolation and turmoil.

Dr. Elmore feels that one reason virtual classrooms failed is that students weren't ready to manage their own learning. Despite the rapid growth of online learning, many college students say they still prefer the traditional classroom setting. According to the results of a national research study published in *USA Today*, 78% of more than 1,000 students surveyed say that they still prefer to learn in a classroom with some of the reasons including the following:

- **Technical Challenges** – Online learners are often hindered by glitches in technology.
- **Safety** – Virtual learners are frequently exposed to the flaws or dangers of the internet.
- **Lack of Interaction** – Online learners miss out on face-to-face interaction in class.
- **Lack of Motivation** – Virtual learning lacks the natural incentives of in-person learning.
- **Unpreparedness** – Remote learners can become distracted since it feels impersonal.

Catherine Van Weele, a university student who took online courses said, "They are usually easy A's and are time-efficient, but student learning outcomes tend to be lackluster. Students simply complete their assignments to receive credit for a passing grade, rather than genuinely engaging with the course material."

Dr. Tim Elmore asks the question: Have we helped students learn how to manage themselves well? He states that the pandemic didn't cause problems in schools as much as it exposed them. There has been a need to empower students, preparing them to learn in any environment, even on their own, but this means putting them in the *driver's seat*, and us in the *passenger seat*, guiding them by providing an internal compass. Elmore states that when virtual learning is handled well, it makes room for a student to be responsible, to learn self-motivation and self-discipline, but we haven't done this on the whole.

The following are recommendations from Elmore to teach students autonomy in school:

**Connect their schoolwork to a goal they value.** Many students don't see the relevance of their current courses and can't connect the dots to where they want to get in life. Teachers are challenged with demonstrating how their course will actually be useful to the student in the future. Parents need to reinforce the importance of education by asking questions. Do you want to make good income as an adult? Do you want to be able to afford a nice place to live, a car to drive and food to eat? Finishing an education will accelerate reaching those goals requiring a person to be a good learner. In order to reach worthwhile goals realistically, students must cross a bridge called discipline.

**Help them find healthy accountability from people they respect.** Students normally perform better when they are being watched such as fans at sporting events, academic achievements being held accountable by a project group or partner. Encourage students to find an individual to hold them accountable to commitments, someone they admire and esteem so they don't lie about their progress. Accountability usually leads to responsibility. Accountability partners are like guardrails – they guard you and prevent you from veering off the road.

**Level consequences they care about for failure to follow through.** Teachers and parents too often cover for teens who never learn how life works – that there are benefits to following through on commitments and there are consequences for failing to do so. If students are continually rescued from consequences, they won't mature or learn self-management. According to Elmore, maturity occurs when we pay for what we say and do.

**Change your leadership style from prescriptive to descriptive.** Part of the reason students are unready to manage their own lives is that adults (parents and teachers) have prescribed each step of the way for them. Descriptive leadership means we meet with the student and together describe a desired goal, then allow the student to describe the step he or she must take to reach it. If kids learn on a need-to-know basis, we must create the need to know.

During these uncertain and ever-changing times, parents need to be intentional about having conversations with their children. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions for the health of your family and your children. We have entered a period in our lifetime that is currently unpredictable.

This article was adapted from Tim Elmore's "Growing Leaders" Weekly Digest. Please contact Patsy Maddy at your local Extension office to find out more about connecting your youth through our 4-H program, the nation's largest youth organization. General information can also be found on our website at [www.twincreeks.ksu.edu](http://www.twincreeks.ksu.edu) and 'Like' our Facebook page at K-State Research and Extension Twin Creeks District.

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## **Article Header**

**“Many Students Still Not Ready for Virtual Learning”**

**“Chasing Clovers”**

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