



How Has COVID Affected Me?

by Amy Stonehouse, 2022 CTI Fellow
North Mecklenburg High School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Students in grades 9 - 12, any subject.

Keywords: Identity, COVID, trauma, change, self-confidence, pandemic, reflection, personality, journaling, self-awareness.

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: In this curriculum unit, I will provide students with the opportunity to reflect on how COVID has changed them because it is clear in the work that they complete and the behaviors in class. Over the past two years, we have gone from in-person, normal school days, to virtual learning, to hybrid learning, and back to in-person, albeit far from normal. We would be naive to think that this drastic shift in learning has not changed our students and how they see themselves. I've learned a great deal about myself through the process. I have learned that virtual teaching is not one of my talents. I'm willing to be that my students have discovered similar things about themselves.

My unit will focus on self-reflection and discovery, from who my students were before the pandemic and how they have changed. I plan on incorporating a personality test to help students discover characteristics about themselves that they may not have thought about before COVID. I will also incorporate journaling and time of reflection throughout the unit.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to ESL students in English Language Development courses in 10th - 12th grades..

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How Has COVID Affected Me?

Rationale

The COVID Pandemic has changed us in so many ways. I have seen it in myself, as well as in my students. Over the past two years, students have gone from in-person, normal school days, to virtual learning, to hybrid learning, and back to in-person, albeit far from normal. We would be naive to think that this drastic shift in learning has not changed our students and how they see themselves. I've learned a great deal about myself through the process. I have learned that virtual teaching is not one of my talents. I also discovered that I am less technologically challenged than I realized. I'm willing to bet that my students have discovered similar things about themselves.

I am an Multilingual Learner (ML) teacher at North Mecklenburg High School in Huntersville, where the student population is very diverse. Students from many different backgrounds and cultures attend our school, and they have all been affected by the pandemic in some form or fashion. My ML students in particular have been hit hard by all of the changes. They deal with similar stressors that our American students face, along with added stressors like having to learn a second language while also trying to learn the content. Many of them are more successful during in-person classes as opposed to virtual learning.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have seen students change in a number of ways. Students who were previously hard-working and studious, became lazy and less focused. I have seen how relying on technology for all of their schooling has changed their abilities to comprehend and focus. Policy changes within the state and district have further fed this change in my students.

My curriculum unit will focus on self-reflection and discovery, from who my students were before the pandemic and how they have changed. I plan on incorporating a personality test to help students discover characteristics about themselves that they may not have thought about before COVID. I will also incorporate journaling and time of reflection throughout the unit.

ML has straightforward standards, one of which is "Language for Social and Instructional Purposes," which this unit would address. More specifically, it will be centered around Social Emotional Learning, with the core competencies of "self-awareness" and "self efficacy." My hope is that throughout this unit, as students make self-discoveries, they will also find ways to become better advocates for themselves. More so now than ever, students are not willing to ask questions and advocate for themselves. They simply give up if it requires too much work. I hope to find ways to correct this thinking.

Demographics

North Mecklenburg is a diverse school. Out of the 2,216 students, the majority are African American or Hispanic. 59.3% of the students are African American, and 27.6% are Hispanic. We have a White population of 7.5% and 3.2% Asian students. Our English Language Learner

students make up 8.4% of the population and 40% of our student population have high EWI (Early Warning Indicators) which translates to a high probability of dropping out and not graduating. In the 2021-2022 school year, North Mecklenburg students Made Growth and received a grade of C, which was sufficient considering the pandemic and its effects on our students.

The faculty makeup is diverse and well-experienced. Out of 134 staff members, 90% hold advanced degrees and 68% are highly qualified. 60% of our teachers have 7 or more years of teaching experience within CMS. Teachers at North Mecklenburg have a bond that you do not normally find in other schools. There is a sense of family and closeness amongst most veteran teachers. Many have seen more than 5 Principals come and go in as many years. Yet throughout the high turnover among administrators, the teachers stayed and have successfully maintained a level of consistency for the student body, until this past school year. In 2021, we lost all of our administrators, with the exception of our principal, to other positions within CMS. At the end of the 2021-2022 school year, we lost close to 50 teachers and were unsuccessful in filling 14 of those positions before the 2022-2023 school year began. Starting out in a deficit has proven to be a challenge.

North Mecklenburg currently has 187 EL (English Language Learners) students, 11 different languages, and 30 different countries are represented. 95 of these students are what we consider Long Term. This term refers to students that have been in the ML program for more than 5 years. The goal of the ML Department is always to help students exit the ML program and gain a deeper understanding of the English language. This is also so that they can move on to courses that they want to take and pursue subjects that interest them. Exiting the ML Program requires a score of 4.8 or higher on the ACCESS test which students take every year until they pass. As an ML Teacher, I work with English Language Learners through a number of different means. I teach English Language Development (ELD) to students 10-12, in all proficiency levels. I also teach English II, III, and IV for ML students as a sheltered English course, for all proficiency levels, which is a course designed to further support students in their English language development, as well as their content coursework. I also find ways to support other content teachers by providing guidance on how best to support their ML students.

Content Research

I conducted research with regard to how trauma affects identity, as well as how the COVID pandemic has affected students at my high school specifically. After researching the effects of trauma on students' mental health, I conducted a survey at my school to find out how the pandemic has affected our students. The data from that survey is part of the research that I will discuss.

In March of 2020, we were ordered to quarantine inside our homes for what we thought would be 2 weeks. We had no idea that it would end up being several months, and for some, a year or more. This limited contact with the outside world has likely had a negative impact on our identities and the development of them, seeing as how it is a social process.

In the article “Does Trauma Shape Identity? Exploring the Links Between Lifetime Trauma Exposure and Identity Status in Emerging Adults”, written by Inga Truskauskaite, Julia Brailovskaia, Yuika Kamite, Gabija Petrauskaite, Jurgen Margraf, and Evaldas Kazlauskas, the authors state that when “...the identity is constructed through the lens of traumatic experiences, that can shape the understanding of oneself in both a negative and positive way”. One can certainly categorize the COVID-19 Pandemic as being a traumatic experience. We were forced to quarantine which limited our social contact, and for some, limited their exposure completely. The lack of social contact and support has been linked to both mental and physical health issues, which has been exacerbated throughout the pandemic. In the article “Lifestyle and mental health disruptions during COVID-19”, Osea Giuntella discovered extensive changes in physical activity, sleep habits, and mental health amongst college students, which has led to larger numbers of depression diagnosis. In turn, they discovered that even short term correction of these facets of life had proven to be limited in their effect on depression ((Truskauskaite-Kuneviciene et al., 2020). Needless to say, the pandemic has led to a number of mental health and identity related problems among our youth.

Truskauskaite and her colleagues conducted research with college students in Lithuania, between the months of October 2019, and December 2019. They looked at the link between traumatic events, such as disasters, accidents, physical and sexual abuse, serious disease, injury and traumatic loss, and identity processes. Based on this study, one could categorize the COVID pandemic as a traumatic experience in that many of us experienced traumatic loss, serious disease and injury, and even abuse. According to Truskauskaite and her colleagues, experiencing 3 or more of these would be considered “severe exposure” to trauma. They estimated that the “prevalence of exposure to potentially traumatic events among college students ranges between 67% and 85%” (Truskauskaite-Kuneviciene et al., 2020). One could argue that these percentages are much larger post-pandemic.

The bottom line is that identity is constructed through the combination of commitment and choices. The COVID pandemic clearly limited our choices, therefore, had the potential to affect the development of identities. When it comes to understanding identity and how it may change, we need to understand the statuses of identity. James Marcia identified four major identity statuses of psychological identity development, diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement (Marcia, 2020). Diffusion is said to be when a child does not feel as though they have choices and has not yet made a commitment. Foreclosure is stated as being a time when the adolescent tends to conform to their surroundings and expectations of others. Moratorium is said to be a time when the adolescent is in crisis and has not yet made a commitment to their choices. Lastly, achievement is after the adolescent has gone through a crisis and has decided to commit. It is thought that a person’s identity is created through choices and decisions made with regard to

certain social traits. Marcia states that “two distinct parts form an adolescent’s identity, crisis and commitment”¹ (Marcia, 2020), both of which would affect one's identity status.

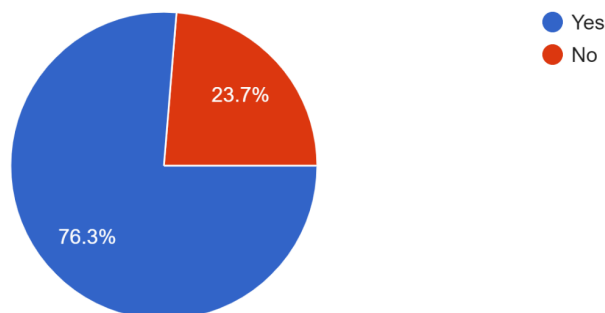
Student Identity Survey - How has COVID affected me?

I decided to conduct a survey of students at North Mecklenburg High School, to see how COVID has affected them and their identities. I asked them questions about what has changed about them since before the pandemic, and if they know why it has changed, in order to help guide the development of my curriculum unit. The findings were fascinating in that they admitted that they have become more lazy and have lacked the desire to be social, all of which I suspected, based on what I see in my classroom on a regular basis. These questions and answers have helped me develop the lessons for this unit.

I polled 115 students at North Mecklenburg High School, 76.3% feel as though they have a clear identity, while 23.7% feel as though they do not have a clear identity. Students were not given a specific definition of identity, so they may have considered different ideas related to identity.

Do you believe that you have a clear identity?

114 responses

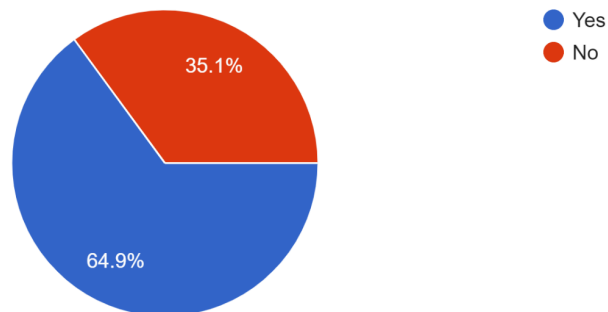


When asked if students felt that COVID had altered their identity, 64.9% said yes, while 35.1% said no.

¹ Marcia J. Identity status theory (Marcia). Learning Theories. <https://learning-theories.com/identity-status-theory-marcia.html>. Published March 6, 2020. Accessed September 18, 2022.

Do you feel that COVID has altered your identity in any way?

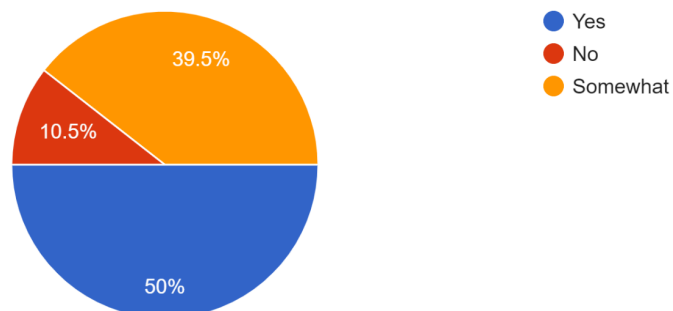
114 responses



50% of the students polled felt as though they had a choice in their identity, while 39.5% said they did not feel that way.

Do you feel that you have a choice in your identity?

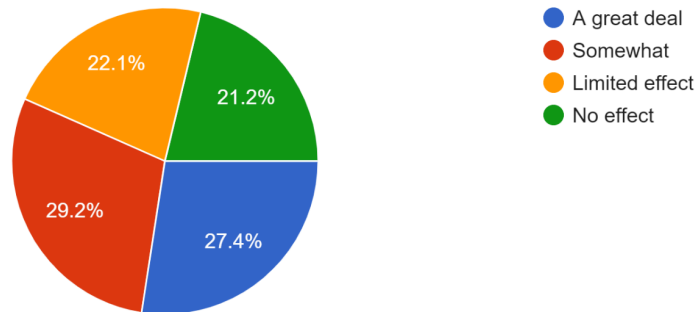
114 responses



When asked to state how much their identity has changed, the division was fairly equal between “a great deal,” “somewhat,” “limited effect,” and “no effect”.

If COVID has altered your identity, how much has it changed you?

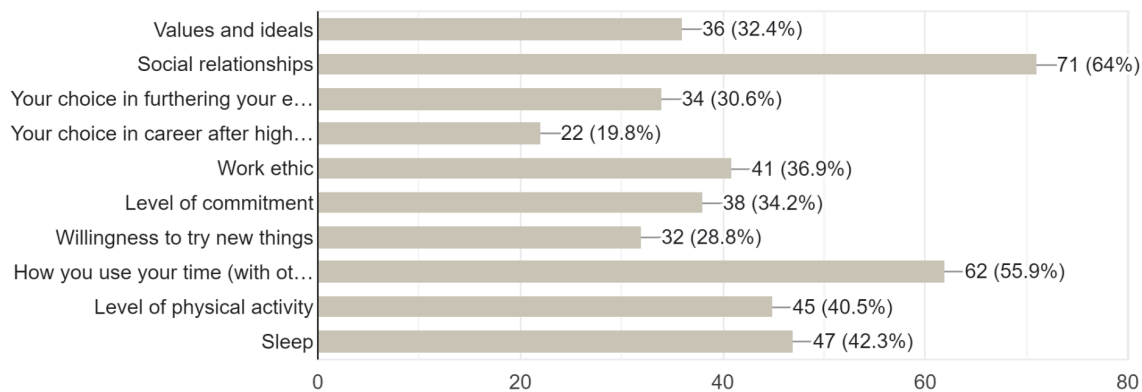
113 responses



When asked what facets of their lives were most affected by COVID, 64% said Social relationships, which makes sense when you consider Stephanie Lawler's definition of Identity. When students had to quarantine because of the pandemic, their social relationships were negatively affected.

If you could identify one facet of your life that has been affected the most, what would it be? Click all that apply.

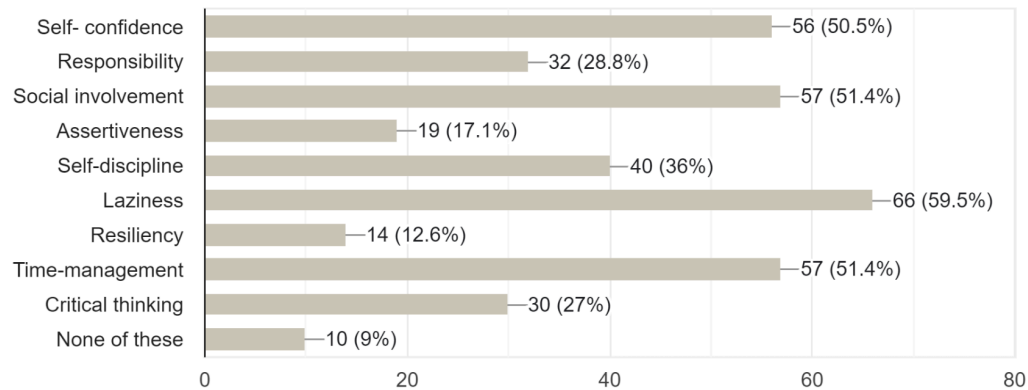
111 responses



When asked what characteristics were have been affected by COVID, 59.5% said laziness, while 51.4% said social involvement and time management.

Which of the following characteristics have been affected by COVID for you? Click all that apply.

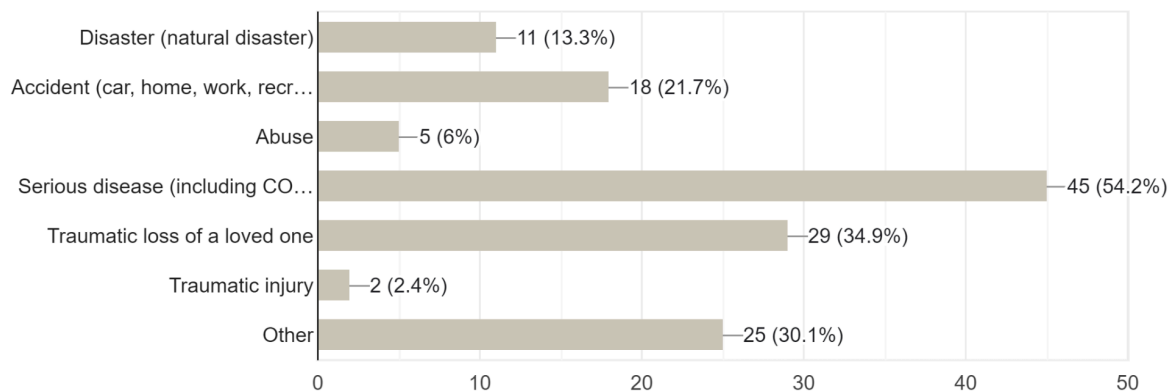
111 responses



Because traumatic events can affect our identity development, according to Truskauskaite-Kuneviciene and her team, I asked the students to indicate any traumatic events that they may have experienced during and since COVID. 54.2% stated serious disease (including COVID), while sadly, 34.9% indicated traumatic loss of a loved one.

Did you experience any of the following traumatic events during the pandemic?

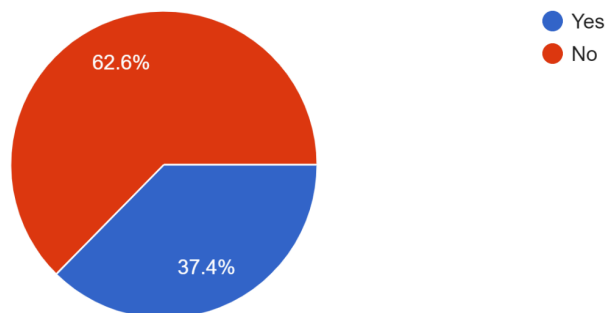
83 responses



When asked to rate their level of commitment, on a scale of 1-5, 5 being fully committed, 45.2% rated 4 out of 5. However, 37.4% said that this level of commitment has changed since COVID.

Has this level of commitment changed since before the pandemic began?

115 responses



When asked to explain how their level of commitment changed, one student stated “it made me lazy when i started online school for example: i didn't pay attention or work in class.” Another student said “The pandemic has made me somewhat anti-social.” Another said “Covid change my routine of life, and my personality.” However, another student said “my level of commitment has gotten better since covid.” The responses varied from positive to negative. Some students became more anti-social, while others became less anti-social. For some, it made their anxiety worse, while for others it allowed them to find other outlets to deal with their anxiety. Clearly COVID has changed us, just in varying degrees.

The survey results have proven that students have changed since the beginning of the pandemic. They have become less social, less confident, lazy and they struggle with time management. It is helpful to know that they are able to identify the changes that they have experienced so that they can then proceed to making the necessary changes in order to become their best selves.

Teaching Strategies

This Curriculum Unit will involve a great deal of reflection and connection exercises. My goal for this unit is to allow students to reflect on who they were before the pandemic, and how they may have changed, and to settle on a more solidified perception of themselves. Becoming more anti-social was a common theme, after speaking with several students about their experience with COVID. I hope to have the opportunity to dive further into this idea in order to find ways to help them become more social again. After having surveyed 109 students, I’m certain that my students can learn from each other, as some have become more social as opposed to less.

In addition to reflection, we will include activities of connection, which would allow students to see that they are not the only ones that may have struggled with their identities and self-esteem throughout the past two years. This will include discussions and socratic seminars that will be conducted in class.

By the end of the unit, students will have reflected on their lives before, during and after the pandemic. Through this process, students will have been able to identify changes in themselves, both positive and negative, and decided what they want to change, if anything.

Lesson Plans

Teacher: Stonehouse	Class: English Language Development (ELD) 10-12	Date: 11/01/2022	No of Ss: 35
Lesson Topic: How has COVID Affected Me?			
<p>Lesson objectives: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify changes that have occurred in themselves since before the pandemic began. - Identify what they like about their new identity, and what they do not like. - Determine what steps to take in order to become the person that they want to be. <p>Standards: SEL Standards for Self-Awareness and Social Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SEL Standard 1A - Identify and manage ones emotions and behaviors. ● SEL Standard 1B - Recognize personal qualities and external supports. ● SE.1. - Understanding the meaning and importance of personal responsibility and awareness. ● M.1. - Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being. 			
Main skill / system objective:	<p>Reflect on and understand the changes that have occurred in students' identities.</p> <p>Determine what changes the students desire to make, if any.</p>		
Secondary skill / system objective:	Listening, reading, writing and speaking skills.		
Presentations / Worksheets / resources	<p>Survey</p> <p>Journal - Students will use this throughout the unit.</p> <p>Socratic Seminar questions</p>		
Materials / Resources / Supplies / Flashcards / etc.	<p>Journals</p> <p>Copy paper or construction paper</p> <p>Markers or colored pencils</p>		

Unit lessons

Essential Question	Objective	Activity	Assignment
How has COVID changed me?	Students will identify what changes have occurred in their own identities since the beginning of the COVID pandemic and reflect on how they feel.	Survey	Reflection Journal
Who am I?	Students will create an infographic illustrating their personality type based on the Myers Briggs Personality Test.	Myers Briggs Personality Test	Infographic
Why have things changed?	Students will discuss and debate what has changed since before the pandemic using the skills found in a socratic seminar.	Socratic Seminar	Reflection in Journal
Who do I want to be?	Students will identify the personality characteristics that they consider to be the most important to maintain or develop through an artistic representation.	Reflection	Vision Board

Lesson	Instructions	Supports
How has COVID changed me?	<p>Students will complete a survey allowing them to reflect on how they have changed since before the pandemic.</p> <p>Warm-up question: Do you think that your identity has changed since before the COVID pandemic began? Why or why not?</p>	<p>Allow students extra time when needed.</p> <p>For ML students, allow them to complete the</p>

	<p>Discuss answers to the warm-up question then guide students to the survey.</p> <p>Reflection: Students will do a 5 minute quick write in their journal, reflecting on the questions that they answered in the survey and their answers.</p>	<p>survey in their native language if needed.</p> <p>Allow ML students to write in their native language.</p>
Who am I?	<p>Students will complete a Myers Briggs personality test to determine their personality type.</p> <p>Allow students to discuss their results and state if they were surprised by them.</p> <p>Students will complete the worksheet that further explores their personality type. Worksheet</p> <p>Students will then create an infographic describing their personality type. Allow students to create it digitally on Canva or on paper. They must include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 interesting things about their personality. • 2 positive and 2 negative aspects of their personality. • 3 images or symbols to represent their personality type. <p>Canva</p>	<p>Allow ML students to complete the survey in their native language.</p> <p>For newcomers allow them to list 3 interesting facts and 1 positive and negative aspect.</p>
How have things changed?	<p>Students will participate in a socratic seminar to discuss what has changed since the beginning of the pandemic.</p> <p>Students will research through newspaper and magazine articles, as well as blog posts and videos, what has changed in our society due to the pandemic.</p> <p>Students will sit in a circle facing each other in order to create a conducive environment for discussion.</p> <p>Possible questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think has changed the most? Why? • Do you think that we are better or worse off since before the pandemic? Why? • What can we do to improve our society today so that we are better prepared should another pandemic occur? 	<p>Allow students to work in pairs as they research. Group lower level ML students with higher level students.</p> <p>During the seminar, allow the partners to sit together.</p>

	<p><i>(Still thinking of other questions...)</i></p> <p>When the seminar is complete, students will reflect on their experience through a quick write in their journal for 7 minutes.</p>	
<p>Who do I want to be?</p>	<p>After completing the survey, personality test and socratic seminar, students will think about what traits they want to hang onto and what they might want to change.</p> <p>They will create a visual representation of this through a Vision Board. This activity allows students to explain their thinking in both words and pictures.</p> <p>Students can choose to create a Vision Board digitally or make a hard copy on posterboard or tri-fold.</p> <p>Some resources to use:</p> <p>www.canva.com</p> <p>How to create a vision board</p> <p>Students will need to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students will need to include words and pictures. Depending on the makeup of your classroom, you can determine how much of each would be needed. ● Characteristics that they want to maintain as they grow older. ● 3 short term goals and 3 long term goals. ● 1 quote that motivates you. ● 2 people who inspire you. ● A gratitude list that can be added to. ● Something that brings you strength. (music, spirituality, the outdoors, etc.) 	

References

1. Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė I, Brailovskaia J, Kamite Y, Petrauskaitė G, Margraf J, Kazlauskas E. “Does trauma shape identity? exploring the links between lifetime trauma exposure and identity status in emerging adulthood.” *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2020;11:1-14. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.570644
2. *Identity status theory (Marcia)*. Learning Theories. (2020, March 6). Retrieved October 24, 2022, from <https://learning-theories.com/identity-status-theory-marcia.html>
3. Giuntella O, Hyde K, Saccardo S, Sadoff S. Lifestyle and mental health disruptions during COVID-19. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 2021;118(9). doi:10.1073/pnas.2016632118
4. Webster N, Goodrich CA, Porter N, Hadley J. *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam & Co.; 1890.
5. Google survey, (Stonehouse). <https://forms.gle/4v1JPsq8c9uezmnn7>
6. Lawler, Stephanie. (2014). *Identity: Sociological Perspectives, Second Edition*. (Malden, MA: Polity Press).

Appendices

1. Link to Survey:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe_CaC4KLM_CuLcOl-xdspTF4kxILbX1eCE50WUB4ntAEi4ag/viewform
2. Link to personality test:
<https://www.16personalities.com/languages>
3. [Personality Type Worksheet](#)
4. [Socratic Seminar](#)
5. www.canva.com
6. [How to create a visionboard](#)