Good Morning Everyone,

Most of you probably already know who I am - my name’s Lucy-Mae and I am a student in year 10 - and today I am here to encourage each and everyone of you to contemplate how making slight changes to your life can improve your overall health; this is something that I have always held extremely close to my heart.

First of all, we must all be on the same page about what ‘health’ actually is. The World Health Organisation (otherwise known as the Who) defines health as the state of physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Put simply, health is an overall state of being - not just staying out of the doctor’s surgery.

I’m going to ask you all a question; how do you stay healthy? Sounds simple, right? Well I can guarantee half of you would name a sport and the other half would declare they only eat salads but how long would it take just one of you to name meditation or even therapy. My guess, a long time. Society has relentlessly drilled the idea that a person’s health is determined by the number on the scales, you only hold value if you can squeeze into the smallest size shirt, and worst of all young people accept it as gospel.

Teenagers maintain the ideology that their only reputation is based solely on a number that, when they pass on, won’t even matter. Do you really believe in 100 years time, someone will comment on the fact you were 10kg lighter than the next person? No, that’s what I thought.

We as a society need to do better. Why prioritise running in P.E over an extra wellbeing class?; suicide is a greater killer than heart attacks. Now before the football team starts shooting daggers into the back of my head, I’m not saying we should scrap all sports from the curriculum - health is the overall state of being, remember? I’m simply highlighting the injustice our national curriculum does to our current generation. Mental health is more accepted than ever so why are we still teaching children lessons like we are stuck fifty years in the past. We as the students need to stand up and take action, after all we have to face the consequences. Our own thoughts can be killers too.

We as a society need to be more aware. I vividly remember back to a doctor’s visit in year 5, I was told that if I didn’t stop eating sweets I’d be going down the path of childhood obesity and I’d never be able to look back. You may think a nine year old won’t pay that much attention to what is being said around them - especially in a doctor’s office. Do you know what actually came about because of that doctor’s visit. A life filled with one constant lie; I’m not hungry. Our ‘health’ system drove a young impressionable mind to starvation in order to (in theory) save her health. Not once did anyone think about the consequences that would have on my mind, my mental health nor my future. Nutritious food is important and at any age you should always strive to consume a balanced diet but, please, never give in to the pressures of the repulsive world around you. One chocolate bar won’t hurt. Having a cheat day won’t hurt. Have that takeaway with your family because healthy living is not starving yourself off salads all day. You deserve better.

We as a society need to connect. This pandemic has brought to light more than one issue, whether that be political or economical, but one issue that has really been spotlighted is the lack of social skills between the younger generation. Raise your hand if over the past 10 months you have lost a friend because you just didn’t find the time keep in touch. Raise your hand if over the past 10 months you have lost a friend because you couldn’t communicate your feelings clearly to them. Keep your hand up if this wouldn’t be the case if you had been allowed to spend more time refining your social skills - putting them into good practise. Children as young as 3 years old are conditioned to think that being told to sit in silence for 6 hours a day is normal human behaviour.

How many of you have been told off because you spoke in the classroom? Communication, socialising and interacting are not just primary human behaviours; they are also basic human necessities. Scientists would argue that Chronic loneliness is as dangerous as obesity. Do you now see how important it is to talk? To free your mind of the ideas that need to flourish? This isn’t a reason to start acting up in class but it is a reason to start taking back control over your health; you can start with little steps. Talk to someone new today.

Are you starting to understand the true meaning of “healthy?

Society will prime you to think that the only way to be healthy is to work out for multiple hours a day and to live off a strict diet of low fat chicken and lettuce. We’re teenagers. Our health starts with the aspects of our mind. Start meditating for 10 minutes a day. Or speak to that new girl at school - maybe you’ll start a budding friendship. Maybe take that large step and reach out for help. No matter how big or little your step is, you are in control; health is subjective. What’s the point of looking like a model, if it means you might not be here tomorrow?

Thank you.