

What is the Upside?

1. It is fantastically reassuring that, while young people may carry the virus (you have responsibilities here to follow advice), it seems very unlikely you will get seriously ill
2. Remember we are privileged to live at a time of peace in one of the greatest cities in the world. There are children in Syria, now, who live daily under the threat of violence – so the war against the virus is something we should keep in perspective – and there are far worse places in which to be quarantined than our city.
3. Your generation has led the fight against environmental catastrophe; it may be that these months are a gift to the world as carbon emissions are drastically reduced; we may lose a couple of months of normality, but in exchange we may gain years of healthier life, and perhaps even help to save the planet – which is not a bad swap
4. As the next generation of leaders in the world, you should see recent events as an example of how quickly you can change people's behaviour; once this is all over, I hope you put pressure on the authorities to do other things, like introducing bike lanes, reducing the number of people who smoke, eliminating graffiti, and sustaining the green initiatives in the city
5. You will these last few weeks have realised, yes, that technology is a wonderful thing, but that there is no substitute for personal human interaction and face-to-face contact; we should cherish our 'real world' relationships with family and friends
6. There will be times you find yourselves bored – yet it is out of boredom that creativity is born; it is from staring at a wall for hours that ideas come and imagination quickens; when I was 16, my parents moved house very far from where we'd lived before; that summer I had little or no contact with friends (there was no Internet in those days), but it was then that I started to read lots of books and watch great films - it changed and enriched my life
7. Routines are important, and this is a time when you can learn something new – a dance routine, a new language, a musical instrument, how to cook; practising a little each day will give you a great new skill that you will have forever
8. At the moment you will be spending a lot of time with your family – and I recognise that for both children (especially teenagers) as well as parents, this can have its frustrations as well as its joys, but you will come to treasure this time when you look back later in life
9. Indeed, thanks to your parents you go to a great school (I am biased here, of course, but I believe it) and so your future, while it may seem suspended for the moment, is incredibly bright – you will have the advantage of speaking at least two languages, being prepared for leadership, and equipped with the knowledge and skills to be successful in life
10. You have the opportunity in this period to develop your inner life, to become a stronger person mentally, to learn to be independent, to cope with frustrations, and this will make you a more mature, fully-rounded as well as a more resilient human being

(Thanks to Dr Jim Davies who has shared this. The original source was a Facebook post he thinks from an educator in Milan.)