LETTERS: Recently, I received news from my son, who is abroad, that his varsity mate had hanged himself in the dormitory. In the same evening, I heard from a retired colleague that one of her grandchildren’s friends, who was only 12, took his life by jumping off a high rise in the United States.

In our own country, a young adult, who was an all-rounder, ended his life recently. It is disturbing that young people who had the world ahead of them resorted to such an act. My concern is what we teach in school and at home to ensure that children, adolescents and young adults do not think of ending their lives.

Do we teach our students to appreciate life and nature? Do we instil resilience in children from young? Do we talk about life and death to the younger generation?

I did a course on "Health and Disease" at the Faculty of Medicine at Universiti Malaya during my undergraduate days. A senior professor lectured that we could not plan our birth, but we could plan to die in dignity. Dignity, according to him, is to live a full-fledged life based on where we started right up to a happier position later in old age.

I think it is important to educate children from young about life and death and not instil hopelessness in them, as each of them has his life journey to lead.
The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us to appreciate the simple things in life, such as valuing time, learning to be silent and saying positive things. If we have to reprimand someone, do it constructively.

Many a time, we think that only adults go through stress in life, having to juggle between work, home and social responsibilities. Even a young child at home may undergo stress, but quite often it is not addressed.

Worse still is when individuals do not show any sign of stress and suddenly end up leaving the world. It is all very personal.

For a start, schools should stop focusing on exams and grades, at least during this Covid-19 pandemic, and instead concentrate on the wellbeing of students.

Media and social media platforms should focus on humour and joyful living rather than just on economy and finance. Yes, money is important, but it cannot buy happiness, or take away stress or bring back a lost life. Teachers and parents play a key role in ensuring that children and students are always happy and cheerful.

Many simple yet effective activities can be carried out together as a family or as a class while still adhering to physical distancing. The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us a great deal about resilience, having hope and accepting the challenges of a new normal.

In the meantime, let us educate ourselves and our children and students to stay joyful and happy.

**Dr Vishalache Balakrishnan**

Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya