Protecting Your Mental Health
What can you do as a school employee?

The health, safety and well-being of students is a top priority for everyone working in schools. However, it is important that employee's working at schools take care of themselves as well. What can you do to ensure you are protecting your mental health and well-being?

Every day that you go to work you are putting others first. That is why it is so important to take care of yourself too. Please take these steps to protect your own mental health.

1. Recognize and acknowledge your feelings.

Pay attention to how you are feeling and try to notice when you are feeling overwhelmed or under stress. Once we are aware of our feelings, we are better able to make healthier choices to address those feelings.

2. Think of strategies that helped you cope with stress in the past.

Which of those strategies worked well for you? Can you use some of those strategies now?

3. Practice self-care.

Self-care isn't selfish. In order to continue to do the work that you do, you need to take care of yourself. Build up your inner strength by eating well, getting fresh air and exercise when and where you can, and doing the things that make you feel good. Be wary of increased substance use.

4. Take time off to rest.

It may be a hard thing for you to do to at this time, but it is so important to take your breaks and take time off. Being away from work and resting will give you the strength and mental energy you need to keep doing the work you are doing.

5. Get a good night's sleep.

It might be a challenge but try and go to sleep and wake up at the same time every night. Develop a relaxing bedtime routine and put your mobile phone away in the evenings.

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6. Limit the amount of time you spend thinking about COVID-19.

Staying informed is important. However, no matter what your job is, you see the reality of the current situation every day that you are at work. When you are away from work take this time to do things you enjoy.

If you do want to stay up to date on the situation with COVID-19 go to trusted resources like **OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus**.

7. Stay connected with your loved ones.

Our social connections with others are so important to foster our well-being. Even if we cannot connect the way that we used to, reaching out to our loved ones is so important. Call or text your family and friends or stay in touch through social media or online chats.

8. Seek out more support if you need it. It's okay to not be okay.

The work that you are doing is so important. But it is normal to feel the stress and pressure of this situation. Please reach out for further support if needed. Look into resources provided by your EAP/EFAP providers.

There is also support available in our community. Please call the **Distress Centre Ottawa and Region 24/7 – 613-238-3311** in English or **Tel-Aide Outaouais – 613-741-6433** in French.

For more support and information visit **OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDMentalHealth**.

CounsellingConnect.org provides free access to a same-day or next-day phone or video counselling session. This service is for children, youth, adults and families in Ottawa and the surrounding area. There is no waiting list.

You are not alone. We are all in this together!

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