



Protecting Your Mental Health What can you do as an essential worker?

During COVID-19, many people are working from home, self-isolating or not working because their workplace has closed. However, there are many essential workers still going to work to keep our community going. We want to thank each and every one of you for the important work you are doing!

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 at this very challenging time:

1. 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. *“Set boundaries – strive for work-life balance. Take breaks, especially media breaks! Recognize those things within your control and choices you can make. We only have power over ourselves and our reactions/responses!”* - Juliet Haynes, MSW, RSW, Family Engagement and Experience Coordinator at The Royal.

2. Practice self-care.

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. *“Meet basic needs – attend to personal hygiene. Be mindful of self-care. Practice relaxation by slowing down your breathing and scheduling ‘nothing time.’ Exercise.”* – Juliet Haynes, MSW, RSW, Family Engagement and Experience Coordinator at The Royal.

3. 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. For additional sleep tips from the experts, check out this page on [theroyal.ca](https://www.theroyal.ca/news/covid-19-ga-good-sleep-troubled-times).
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4. 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. Dr. Bhatla, Chief of Staff at The Royal, recommends checking your favourite news source once or twice a day and then stepping away from the screen.

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

5. Stay connected with your loved ones.

When you are working, you are busy. Use some of your time off to reach out to your loved ones and stay connected. Call or text your family and friends or stay in touch through social media or online chats. Maybe send a letter to people you don't see often. *“Use virtual means to connect with friends, family, colleagues, and other supports. Schedule regular check-ins with others. Are you living with people or pets? – hug them! Hug a teddy bear! Give yourself some self-love!”* – Juliet Haynes, MSW, RSW, Family Engagement and Experience Coordinator at The Royal.

6. 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. If you need support please call the [Distress Centre Ottawa and Region 24/7](https://DistressCentreOttawaandRegion247.ca) - 613-238-3311 in English or [Tel-Aide Outaouais](https://TelAideOutaouais.ca) - 613-741-6433 in French.

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

If you are a healthcare worker, COVID Frontline Wellness is here to support your well-being. Please visit the website at theroyal.ca/covid-frontline-wellness.

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.

Thank you for your ongoing work to keep our community safe and healthy!

You are not alone.

We are all in this together!



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