

Protecting Your Mental Health

Staying safe while staying social!

COVID-19 has presented many challenges for us as a community. We know that the safest actions for each of us to take is to stay apart. Staying apart doesn't mean that we can't spend time with our family and friends.

We simply have to be creative and find different ways to have fun together! We know that one of the best ways we can protect our mental health is to stay connected. However, we also know that part of being social is having fun! Here are some creative ways to be together, have fun and stay safe!

1. Gather with your loved ones, virtually!

Connect with family and friends through the phone, texting, video chats and social media. Digital tools like **Skype**, **Google Hangout**, and **Facetime** are a just a few of the online platforms that allow us to have face-to-face conversations while maintaining physical distancing. If you miss connecting with your family through meals or watching television together, you can still do that. Set up a time to connect over video chat, and have taco Tuesday together, or share a laugh over episodes of Schitt's Creek.

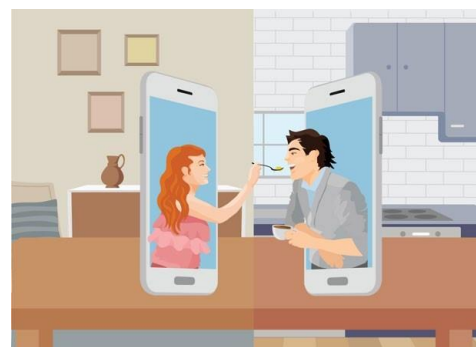


2. Games night anyone?

If you are missing games night, play online. Get a group of friends together through video chat and play your favourite board game together! Challenge your best friend and see if you can sink their battleship or get the group back together for the board game Codenames! The creators of **Codenames** have adapted it so it can be played online! Being at home does not mean being alone.

3. Use technology to have a date night.

Even though we can't go out and do the things we used to do, there are still fun ways to connect with our loved ones. Check out this list from the Royal with many different fun and creative things to do. You and your loved one can take a tour of the Palace of Versailles, or visit a famous national park, or watch an interesting TED talk and discuss. <https://www.theroyal.ca/great-big-list-things-can-help-youcope-while-practicing-physical-distancing-and-self-isolation>



4. How about a girl's night in!

Do you miss your book club or paint nights out with your friends? There is no need! Get together on an online platform that works for you and do something you all enjoy! Discuss the latest book you are reading or check out some of the fun and simple painting tutorials available online. Check out this [playlist of painting tutorials](#) for beginners to get you started.

5. Get a Pen Pal!

Many of the ways we recommend staying connected involve technology. But sometimes it can be the simplest forms of communication that can have the most meaning. Remember being a child and being so excited when you got a letter or a card in the mail? Why not give that feeling to one of your loved ones? Write them a letter or send a card or care package. It might just be the start of a new tradition. Please remember that if you are feeling ill, do not prepare and send care packages.

For a list of COVID-19 symptoms, go to OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus.



6. Remember, it's okay to not be okay.

This is a very unusual time and it is normal to find it challenging. You are not alone. There are people who can help. If you need support please call the [Distress Centre Ottawa and Region](#) 24/7 - 613-238-3311 (Bilingual) or [Tel-Aide Outaouais](#) - 613-741-6433 (French).

[Counselling Connect](#) provides quick access to a free 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.

The [Walk-in Counselling Clinic](#) at 613-755-2277 offers free in person sessions as well as video or phone counselling sessions in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Somali, Cantonese and Mandarin at a variety of different locations.

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

For even more ideas on how to stay Social Wise during the pandemic, please visit [Ottawa Public Health's website](#).

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

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