



Mental health and COVID-19 for public servants: Balance family life

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Mental health and COVID-19 for public servants: Balance family life

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[Information for employees: COVID-19](#)

! If you are in distress, please contact your [Employee Assistance Program](#) or nearest [crisis / distress centre](#). If it is an emergency, call 9-1-1 or go to your local emergency department.

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Talking to your children about COVID-19

If you're a parent, you're undoubtedly concerned about your children during this difficult time. How do you speak to your children about what's going on, the changes, the emotions? Here are a few ideas.

Inform without alarming

- be sure to manage your own anxiety so as not to transfer it to your children
- start by listening to them and asking them questions so that they lead the discussion and express what they want to know
- don't blame any age group or people from a specific country, ethnicity or race for the spread of COVID-19
 - show compassion for all victims around the world and go easy on the others
- create a sense of control
 - explain that we're all helping to fight the virus by adopting sanitary measures such as staying home, washing our hands, coughing into our elbow and keeping our distance from others

Adjust your language

- use vocabulary at their level
- use images as needed to concretely explain the invisible (the virus)

- always tell the truth

Working from home when you have children

Many parents are working from home and taking care of their children at the same time—it's not easy! Where do you start? Here are a few suggestions.

Establish a routine for you and your children

- adjust each person's routine to his/her own pace
 - it takes several days to establish a family routine
- get up, eat, exercise and get dressed at regular times
- keep them busy with their own routine...with flexibility and no pressure!
 - an hour for reading, an hour for crafts
 - where needed, an hour for chores or music practice or sports
 - an hour for video games or television
 - some school boards or educational institutions have made resources available online to parents and students
- give them some leeway
 - if the schedule is too rigid or you give too many chores, you risk discouraging your children and seeing them act out
- trust your older children and rely on each of them to help one another

Spend quality time together

- make room for family activities during the day
 - walks, playing in the yard, board games
- when you're with your children, be fully attentive, with no distractions

- you can suggest that they set some video-conference times with their friends, cousins, grandparents, etc.

Adjust your pace

- avoid overexposure to news about the pandemic
- take your breaks, just like at work, give your mind and body some air, and then return to your duties
- keep your supervisor informed of your varying schedule
- lower your expectations regarding productivity
 - don't feel bad about yourself for not having everything in order, you're allowed to let go!

Adjust your work habits

- find a separate space to work in your home where your work tools are within reach
- tell the children who is "in charge" and that they're not to disturb you, except in an emergency
- if you have a spouse or partner who also works from home, plan alternating days, half-days, or time slots when you can be undisturbed and 100% focused on your work while the other person takes care of the children
- use a flexible work schedule
 - for example: work for an hour or two before the children get up or after they go to bed
- limit distractions that interfere with productivity (e.g., social media, chores, etc.)

Family violence

With everyone being asked to stay home, spending 24 hours a day under the same roof with someone who has a violent temper can mean added danger. Extended periods of contact, financial difficulties and anxiety about the situation can also lead to conflict. Here are a few steps to consider if you or someone you know is in a situation like this:

- **in an emergency**, call 9-1-1
- consult the [victim services in your area](#) or your [Employee Assistance Program](#)
- despite orders to stay at home, in a [violent situation](#), leave your home as soon as possible and get help
- most [collective agreements](#) have provisions recognizing the need for a [leave for victims of spousal violence](#)
 - this includes parents of a dependent child who is the victim of domestic violence by a person with whom the employee has or had an intimate relationship
- if you witness violence, do not hesitate to contact the police

Additional resources

Government of Canada

- [Responding to Stressful Events: Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Responding to Stressful Events: Helping Teens Cope](#)

Canadian Mental Health Association

- [Caring for children in the COVID-19 crisis](#)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

- [Talking to children about COVID-19 and its impact](#)

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