

Healthy Talk

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Working at Home with Children

The Healthy Workplace Committee understands that this is an especially difficult time for Students, Staff, and Faculty who are currently working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For parents with children at home, working remotely may be challenging and cause additional anxiety. Since many staff at the University of Waterloo are also parents, here are some tips for working at home with children:

1. Find a schedule that works for you and one that is best for your family.

Your workday does not have to be from 9 am to 5 pm or a consecutive 8 hours. Discuss this idea with your team and stress the importance of creating a customized schedule that will best suit you and your family. For more information, visit: todaysparent.com

2. Prioritize your workday.

Find a time in the day when you are most productive and get your top priorities worked out then to make room for lower energy tasks throughout the day. This way you will have sufficient energy and motivation to complete prioritized tasks. For more information, visit: todaysparent.com

3. Try a variety of activities with your children such as cooking, learning, or attending workshops.

- PBJ on a stick is a fun, easy, and healthy idea for lunch. Cut sandwiches into fourths and alternately thread grapes, sandwich squares, and banana slices onto skewers. Find this recipe and more here: tasteofhome.com/recipes
- The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) offers a variety of fun and educational at-home activities for children and teens in grades 1 through 12. Find them here: rom.on.ca
- Experts at McMaster University have created an online tool for child development to support parents and help children thrive. The tool offers various activities on the topics of thinking and learning, social and emotional, movement, and language for toddlers to kindergarteners. For more information, visit: playandlearn.healthhq.ca



The Role of an Employer During the Pandemic

According to a study conducted by The Conference Board of Canada (2020), 84% of study participants reported worsened mental health concerns due to the onset of COVID-19. During this time of uncertainty and anxiousness, employers must establish concrete plans to help their employees with rising mental health concerns.

The Conference Board of Canada (2020) states the following mental health tips to help employers, help their employees:

1. Focus on providing meaningful work, supporting the whole employee (keeping in-mind family, work, and social lives), and utilizing proven mental health assessment tools.
2. Understanding the role of the workplace in building overall mental health.
3. Exploring the pros and cons of coping strategies used by employees and recommending healthier options.
4. Promoting the use of counselling services and employee assistance programs.
5. It is important to stay connected with employees to reduce overall stigma, isolation and loneliness.

Find more information from The Conference Board of Canada here: [conferenceboard.ca](https://www.conferenceboard.ca)

Some other tips:

Emphasize that a 9 to 5 schedule is no longer necessary, rather it is important to find a schedule that works for employees.

With children and other personal commitments, it can become challenging to work consecutively for 8 hours or even follow the schedule of an 'average workday'. Allow employees to create their schedules and prioritize tasks accordingly.

Stress the importance of taking breaks.

Taking breaks for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual activities is endorsed and essential for overall health, wellness and productivity.

Reach out and remain approachable.

Ensure that employees have ample resources to help them succeed in a time of uncertainty. Employers should create a forum for employees to share personal and professional updates, invest in teleconferencing technology and collaboration tools.

[Listen to Dr. Bill Howatt, Chief of Research at The Conference Board of Canada, discuss the 'New Normal' – new work, new habits, new relationships, etc.](#)

[Listen to Dr. Bill Howatt talk about his ups and downs throughout the pandemic and how to find the silver lining in all of this.](#)

“Ultimately, the greatest lesson that COVID-19 can teach humanity is that we are all in this together.”
- Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

Keeping Active While Working Remotely

One of our major goals this summer is to stay healthy and ensure that the people around us are safe. Although this may not be your ideal summer, here are some at-home activities you can take part in to stay active and make the most out of your time at home.

Effortless Gardening

Did you know that you can recycle the scraps from certain foods and re-grow the food at home? For example, you can grow hot peppers from leftover seeds. Just collect the seeds from habaneros, jalapeños or any other peppers, plant them in potting soil and keep in direct sunlight. You may also plant them in your garden if it is hot outside!

Find more information here: diyncrafts.com



Quick & Healthy Dinners

Some days deciding what to cook for dinner can be a time consuming and agitating task. Shrimp Fried Cauliflower Rice is an easy and delicious meal that you can make in less than 40 minutes! By substituting the shrimp for lentils or soy, this can also be a tasty vegetarian dish.

Find this recipe and more here: foodnetwork.com/recipes/shrimp-fried-cauliflower-rice

Virtual Meetups with Friends and Colleagues

With several reliable teleconferencing technologies such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Cisco WebEx, Skype, and more, connecting with people through a screen has become much more accessible. Having virtual lunch or coffee dates, virtual workouts, or completing online jigsaw puzzles together (jigsawpuzzles.io) can become the new 'normal' and act as ways for you to stay connected with friends and colleagues.

Find more ways to stay connected here: flexjobs.com

Additional Resources

[More Information on the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[More Tips on Supporting your Children through the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Learn about the Importance of Spiritual Wellness and how you can incorporate it into your life through meditation, yoga, etc.](#)

