



Staying healthy at home:

**Advice for UN staff
for protecting
your mental health
during COVID-19**

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Changes to our lifestyle can adversely affect our wellbeing. It is always important to protect your mental health, particularly during this difficult period. This will help you to support others, including family members and friends, and to fulfil your role as a United Nations employee. It is only natural to feel stressed as we face unprecedented professional and personal challenges. There are many things we can all do to support and manage our wellbeing during this time.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BASIC NEEDS: SIMPLE ACTIVITIES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 1 TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY.** Ensure you stay hydrated, eat a balanced diet, and have sufficient sleep and rest during the day.
- 2 STAY CLEAN.** Try to look after your personal hygiene as you would if you were travelling to the office each day.
- 3 GET PHYSICAL.** Make sure you do some physical activity every day. Be imaginative with exercise; there is a lot you can do even if you are indoors. Consider online resources that can be completed with minimal exercise equipment.

MINIMIZE FACTORS THAT NEGATIVELY AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- 4 MINIMIZE UNHELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES.** Smoking, alcohol or the use of other recreational drugs will have a negative impact on your mental and physical health in the long-run.

- 5 SEEK ACCURATE INFORMATION.** A near-constant stream of information can cause anxiety or distress, particularly when it includes misinformation or unsourced rumours. Manage your consumption of news and information; seek updates and guidance at limited and specific times of the day from health professionals, your national health authority, and the [WHO website](#).

STAY CONNECTED

- 6 IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS (WORK-RELATED AND SOCIAL).** Don't be afraid to express your needs to your friends, your colleagues or your managers. Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to protect your mental health and reduce loneliness and boredom during physical distancing measures.
- 7) REMAIN VISIBLE.** Set up regular times to connect with colleagues and managers so you can update others on your current tasks and progress, and check in on how

others are coping when working from home. Stay in regular contact with any external partners you may be working with.

DO WHAT WORKS FOR YOUR WELLBEING

8 THE CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE DIFFERENT, BUT WELLBEING STRATEGIES THAT WORK FOR YOU REMAIN EFFECTIVE.

For example, make time in your daily schedule to engage with favourite art/culture/entertainment. With a new working schedule and lifestyle, think about learning a new skill, or attending an online class. Set aside time for relaxation or spiritual practices, if they are part of your life.

GET ORGANISED

9 **CREATE A DAILY ROUTINE.** In this extended teleworking period, time management is particularly important. Ensure you are providing ample time for working as well as ample time for your personal life and family. In emergency or other high-pressure environments, there may be a tendency to overwork or to blur the boundaries between work and leisure. Creating structured activities and routines will help you feel more in control of your time and environment. Routines can also be very helpful for staff working from home, who may be also providing care to their children.

10 **MAINTAIN BOUNDARIES.** Start and finish work on time by creating clear

boundaries between work and personal life as much as possible. Set alarms to remind you to take breaks. Do not fall into the trap of overworking because there are few distractions; your mental health may suffer in the long run.

11 **HELP YOURSELF MAINTAIN FOCUS.** If possible, designate an area of the home as your work area. When it is time to finish work, leave your materials there.

12) **BE COMFORTABLE IN YOUR NEW WORKSPACE.** Be aware of your workspace, audio setup, and desk and chair comfort which can affect your posture and productivity. You may choose to wear work clothes or work shoes to help you feel prepared for work; and leisure wear to help you transition to personal time, just as you would when coming home from work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit:

<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/wellness>

For more general information related to mental health and the United Nations System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, visit:

<https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/>

For WHO guidance go to:

<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronavirus/mental-health-considerations.pdf>