

# A Message from the Vice-President, Human Resources



July 27, 2020

## Recommended Practices to Promote Mental Health and Wellbeing

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the University's move to an essential services model, we all have altered the way we live and work to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our community's health and safety. While adapting to new ways of working both on campus and remotely at home, many of us have also experienced increased pressures in our family and personal lives. We appreciate your continued dedication and efforts and sincerely thank you.

We recognize that during these times of change, it is not uncommon to feel additional stress, anxiety and pressure. For those working remotely, the boundary between home and work may blur, making it challenging to disconnect and unplug from work. Because of the added stressors related to the pandemic, we strongly recommend that whether you are working remotely or on campus, you try to incorporate the 5 mental health promoting practices outlined below to help reduce burnout and enhance work-life balance.

<b>Set boundaries for when your workday ends.</b>	As the lines between work and home blur, it becomes easier to extend our workdays into evenings and weekends. Set boundaries when planning your workday and scheduling meetings. Protect these boundaries unless you are dealing with an urgent matter.
<b>Book meetings in 50-minute increments or less.</b>	This practice will allow you to build some breaks into your calendar. Taking short breaks to stretch your legs, get some fresh air, etc. can keep you energized and focused during the rest of the day. This practice can also make you feel less stressed on those days filled with back to back meetings.
<b>Don't send emails in the evenings or weekends unless it is urgent.</b>	Sending e-mails after work hours can generate a sense of pressure to respond even if that is not the sender's intentions. Even though after a busy day of meetings we may be inclined to send e-mails after hours to "catch-up", we should limit those to urgent matters only.
<b>Schedule a weekly meeting-free day or half day</b>	Scheduling a weekly meeting-free day or half day in your calendar will allow for some focused time to accomplish tasks and move key projects forward. Scheduling this day or half day on a Friday may help you finish the week feeling less overwhelmed. Protect these meeting-free times unless you need to schedule/accommodate an urgent meeting.
<b>Take vacation time</b>	Vacation time provides an opportunity to rest and re-charge. While we recognize that during these times travel options and other activities may be limited, we strongly encourage everyone to schedule vacation time as you ordinarily would. Vacation time can help relieve stress, reduce the incidence of burnout and boost your mental capacity. It is critical for work-life balance. Make sure to disconnect and unplug from work during your vacation time.

Incorporating these mental health promoting practices at work may be challenging for many of us, but it is important that we all do what we can to achieve a balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.

As a reminder, we continue to have supports available through Morneau-Shepell (EFAP provider) to help address any stressors that may be impacting your/your family's wellbeing. I encourage you to visit the [Human Resources website](#) for contact details.

Stay safe and well,

Rita LaCivita  
Vice-President, Human Resources