

WINTER 2020/21:

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Stephanie Richardson says she's "forever grateful" to Ottawa Police Insp. Pat Flanagan for his gift of a medallion – as well as his compassion and guidance.

DONATIONS at work

A symbol of hope

*Stephanie Richardson.
 Photo by Robert de Wit.*

On the most tragic day of Stephanie Richardson's life, a symbol of hope was offered to her, giving her the strength she could not find for herself.

In November of 2010, Stephanie and Luke Richardson tragically lost their 14-year-old daughter, Daron, to suicide. In tribute to Daron, Stephanie, Luke, their daughter Morgan, and Daron's friends, created DIFD (Do it for Daron) and began advocating for youth mental health, inspiring conversations, offering education programs and creating helpful

mental health apps.

Since its inception, DIFD at The Royal has raised millions of dollars for various programs, research and initiatives, including the Is It Just Me? youth mental health education program, and the initiation of the DIFD Mach-Gaensslen Chair in Suicide Prevention Research.

The offerings and awareness of DIFD have grown beyond the Ottawa region, its reach ranging from classrooms and cafes to baseball games and hockey rinks throughout North America.

On that tragic day back in November, there was an act of kindness that Richardson will never forget. As she waited with Daron at the hospital for Luke and Morgan to arrive, a first responder – and one of Ottawa's exceptional police officers — Insp. Pat Flanagan, waited with her.

"Pat placed something in my hand and then closed it. He looked at me, and told me that I would be OK," Richardson says. "When I opened my hand, I saw a beautiful medallion. I looked down and realized that he had ripped it off

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



DR. ELLIOTT LEE, Sleep Specialist, The Royal

Sleepless in O-TOWN



During this exceptional time, we may be feeling more anxious and it's understandably difficult for some people to get a decent night's sleep.

Sleep plays a critical role in staying strong and healthy, and to maintain immune function. The things we have to look out for with respect to sleep are quantity, quality, and timing. All three have to be addressed in order to get the maximum benefit.

Some people believe a good sleep is defined by the length of time spent asleep, but quantity doesn't matter if the quality of sleep is poor. Sleeping at the right time – a “sleep window” relative to our own internal clock – is also key.

Maintaining regular sleep and wake times and cutting down on disturbances go a long way to improving sleep. In fact, getting a good sleep at night actually starts with what we do during the day.

DURING THE DAY:

1. Avoid naps, alcohol, and caffeine.
2. Exercise! Ideally we should exercise at the same time every day but if that's not possible, any exercise is better than none. Exercising in the morning can be particularly effective for sleeping better at night.
3. Practice physical distancing but don't forget to connect with people, by telephone, online, or in your community. This connection helps distract us from the anxiety of our current situation and sleep better at night.

4. Try a cognitive technique called “worry time” to displace worries earlier in the day. Every evening, take 20 to 30 minutes to write down your worries and to-do lists. Then tell yourself you are not allowed to think about these things until the next worry time. If done consistently, these things can help train the brain into thinking about these worries earlier in the day, so they don't sabotage sleep at night.

AT NIGHT:

1. Reserve your bed for sleep or intimacy.
2. Maintain a comfortable environment. Make sure you address darkness, noise, and temperature in your bedroom.
3. Stay off your phone or computer in the evenings. There is an “infodemic” of COVID-19 information, which, for the majority of us, does not help us sleep well. Save the news review for the morning.
4. The other issue with mobile phones – besides the psychological stimulation – is the physiologic stimulation from the light. The light from the screens tricks our brain into thinking it's daytime by suppressing the production of melatonin at night (a hormone that facilitates and maintains sleep). Try to avoid using backlit screens within two hours of bedtime.
5. Avoid clock-watching. Sleep is a funny thing – the more we think about sleep, the more difficult it is to fall and stay asleep! It's important to get rid of the clocks (unless there's some important appointment) and generally listen to our bodies to tell us when the body is ready to go to sleep and wake up in the mornings.
6. Develop a relaxing routine before bedtime – e.g. meditation, yoga, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation.
7. Practice gratitude instead of worrying at bedtime. Reflect on things that you are grateful for right now.
8. If you are awake for more than 20 minutes, get out of bed, do something relaxing, and go back to bed when you are sleepy.

These are challenging times, and we are all feeling some degree of anxiety. There is no better time to reevaluate – and hopefully improve – our sleep habits.

MESSAGE TO OUR DONORS: Supporting you remains our top priority

I hope that you and your loved ones are in good health and staying safe amidst the worrisome COVID-19 pandemic.

My most heartfelt thanks and admiration to the dedicated frontline health care workers: nurses, doctors, support and cleaning staff for their tireless work during this exceptional challenge that is being experienced all over the world. The team at The Royal is doing outstanding work to continue caring for our clients.

During this time, I urge you to stay connected with each other as best as you can and to take care of your mental health. While the focus is rightly on physical health and safety during the COVID-19 outbreak, mental health is equally important. Given how quickly the situation has been evolving, it is no surprise that many people are struggling. I encourage you to read and share the Q&A in this update and visit The Royal's dedicated mental health at theroyal.ca/COVID19

Supporting those in our community who are living with mental health challenges remains our top priority. Foundation staff continue to connect daily with our donors through telephone calls and virtual media. We continue to be inspired by the resiliency in our community.

Finally, I also want you to know that my virtual door is always open – please don't hesitate to contact me if you have feedback or concerns.

Stay well,

Mitchell Bellman
President & CEO
Royal Ottawa Foundation
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COVER STORY: cont'd

his chain and placed it in my hand.”

Flanagan, an executive officer to Ottawa's chief of police, said his mother had given him that St. Jude medallion in 1998 to protect him while he was on an overseas mission in Bosnia.

“As a police officer, you wear many different hats. But on that day with Stephanie, the hat I wanted to wear was one of support,” says Flanagan. He pulled the medallion from his front breast pocket of his police vest – where he always carried it – because he wanted to give Stephanie something of significance in that moment; something that would help protect her like it did for him.

“St. Jude is the patron Saint of hope, lost causes and desperate cases,” he adds. “Without hope – next to health – we have very little. Stephanie needed that medallion much more than I did.”

Stephanie is so grateful to Pat and all of the courageous first responders who are there for people in their darkest moments.

“I'm very passionate about our first responders and military – they show such kindness every single day, to so many people like me who have been devastated,” Richardson says. “Without Pat, I can't even imagine how I would have made it through that first day. I know we would have been on a different path without his compassion and guidance. We are forever grateful.”

The Richardson family and Flanagan formed a close bond through the years after that tragic day in November. Years later, Richardson offered the medallion back to Flanagan, but he told her to keep it. He said that the medallion “found a home with her.”

St. Jude, patron
Saint of hope





DONOR SUPPORT: Tablets for virtual care

When Angie walked into the clinic for her appointment with the psychiatrist, Dr. Benjamin Fortin-Langelier was sitting there waiting. He was 120 kilometers away at The Royal Ottawa. They met via video conference on a laptop.

"It's wonderful to be face-to-face with someone," said Angie, a 32-year-old kindergarten teacher. "He could read my face as I was talking, and see my emotions and how I was reacting to his questions. He was able to get a genuine feel for what I was saying."

Angie (not her real name) was able to speak with Dr. Fortin-Langelier from a clinical office at the Glengarry Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic in Lancaster, only 10 minutes from where she lives. Telemedicine saves patients the hour and 20 minute trip into Ottawa for an appointment.

Travelling to The Royal can be a barrier for people who might not have access to transportation, plus the gas and parking expenses. In Angie's case, it also would've meant finding child care for the hours required for the round trip to the city.

"It was a great experience," said Angie. "I talked to the counsellor, my primary care nurse practitioner, and the psychiatrist and was able to see that I was on the right track."

"Virtual care" is the delivery of health care when the provider and the patient are not physically together but are linked by telephone or video link. It is also known as digital care, telehealth or telemedicine.

"The pandemic has forced us to quickly innovate and explore all our virtual care delivery options for people living with a mental illness," says Susan Farrell, Vice-President, Patient Care Services and Community Mental Health at The Royal.

"Imagine being hospitalized without any ability to speak to friends or family," said Dr. Nicola Wright, a psychologist at The Royal. Her elderly patients are often challenged by schizophrenia spectrum disorder and psychosis. "At a



Integrating psychiatric services into primary care using technology is an innovation that is helping The Royal and its community partners meet patients' health-care needs.

time when patients were feeling most distressed due to COVID-19, they were also cut off from their closest, most precious contacts," she added. "It was heartbreaking."

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Champlain Region initiated the COVID-19 Impacts and Responses Champlain Mental Health and Addictions Services Group. The team of over 40 service providers meet weekly to discuss concerns, issues to be escalated, best practices and ways to support each other. There have been several working groups created from this main team including the Virtual Services Group, Return to Service Group, Counselling Group and Congregate Living Task Group.

One of the equity concerns raised during the summer meetings was the challenge for people living in congregate settings accessing their virtual mental health and addiction appointments.

Thanks to donor support, the Royal Ottawa Foundation was proud to play a key role in supporting both inpatients at The Royal as well as partner organizations such as the Shepherds of Good Hope and Serenity House, by providing 36 tablets. These tablets will allow for continued access to critical mental health care and family support.

"We are grateful; the clients can connect with family and friends electronically and attend off-site meetings during COVID," Monique Brisson, Executive Director, Serenity House.

Coping during the COVID-19 pandemic

TAKING CARE OF MYSELF WHILE PRACTICING PHYSICAL DISTANCING

It's hard when so many outlets and activities are canceled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some ideas of how you can take care of yourself at home. Try and do something from two areas each day.



Helpful tips

- Get sleep
 - Stay informed
 - Stay fit
 - Eat well
 - Keep calm
 - Stay social (while keeping your distance of course)
 - Find a creative outlet
 - Learn something new
- See www.theroyal.ca to learn more.



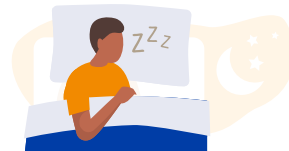
DR. BECK'S TOP 3 TIPS

FOR YOUTH AND PARENTS

Dealing with Stressful Situations

1 First, and most important, rest.

If you are feeling especially anxious or have an anxiety disorder, evidence shows that you should spend 40 per cent of your day resting. What does that mean? What is resting?



Resting includes sleeping and teens need at least eight hours of sleep daily. That's about one third of the day. Other resting activities include exercise, reading, listening to music, napping, knitting or other hobbies, chatting at a safe social distance – any activity that helps you to smile or have fun. I remind the teens in my practice that video games are not necessarily restful and screens on their own can often be more



exciting than calming. For example, I like watching documentaries and movies but I make sure not to watch upsetting shows. *The Silence of the Lambs* is not my idea of a restful movie.

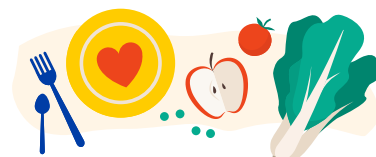
2 The next best thing to do if you're anxious – an activity that counts as restful, in fact – is exercise.

The teens in my inpatient practice complain sometimes if I suggest we go for a walk, but I remind them that what we're doing is actively working against the hormones that cause stress. The research shows that this works more effectively if you can be outdoors, so go outdoors. Use fresh air to combat anxiety!



3 Another thing to do is to eat nourishing food.

Since you're going to be around home anyway while you're socially isolating, why not make your own bread or soup? There is time for oatmeal in the morning and you probably now have more than 20 minutes to think about supper, so make something special.



DR. BECK: Missing my patients

One of Dr. Beck's young patients.

Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I was sitting in my office one afternoon, meeting with a patient online, when they asked, "Dr. Beck, am I going to be able to finish high school?"

As Clinical Director of Youth Mental Health at The Royal, this is one of the many questions I've received from my patients since COVID began. Like many of us, teens are frightened by the virus, but their worries have shifted to their future and all of the unknowns that come with a pandemic.

I work with transitional age youth (16-18 years). Although some people may feel teens don't think much about their education, this isn't at all the case. Most of the youth that I work with know that education is key to better jobs and a better life...but they – and their parents – are nervous and unsure about what their school year will look like.

When I first began the conversation with my patients about going back to school this past fall, many of them said they were scared they might not be able to graduate high school. They worried they'd fall behind with online learning, or that they wouldn't do well enough to get into college or university – a dream for many of them and their families.

With the announcement of an equal divide between attending high school in-person and online learning from home, many youth are trying to adjust to this "new normal". For teens who are already living with a mental illness, and have been socially distancing from their friends for months, this adjustment could be debilitating.

I miss seeing these youth in person – speaking with them in the halls, cooking with them, planning holiday parties, but most of all, I miss seeing their beautiful artwork and



poetry scattered across the walls and bulletin boards of our youth department.

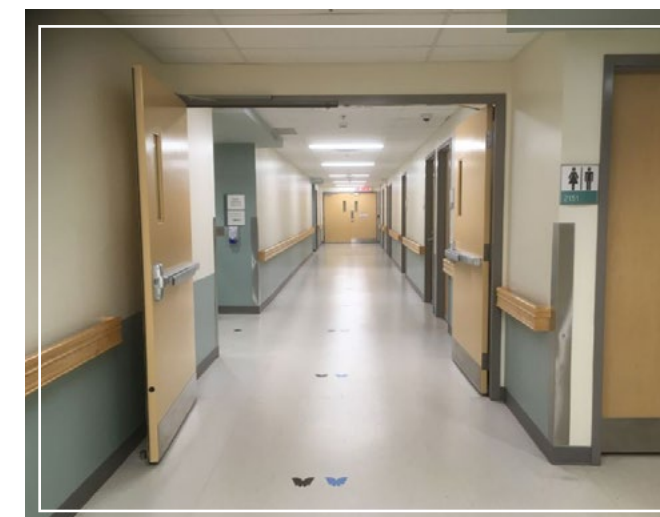
I know how hard my patients work to be and stay well. I've been the person who held open the doors they had to walk through to connect with their best lives.

This isn't only my job – it's my passion – to not only provide mental health support to youth and their families, but to be there for them as a support, mentor, and as someone who truly cares.

The best thing about being a psychiatrist for youth is that I've watched many of my patients grow up to be happy and successful. They are the people they dreamed of being in their poems and artwork.

It's because of the kindness of people like you that they were given the opportunity to succeed in life. When I think about all of the ways that donors have positively transformed the youth program – a new kitchen and a dedicated courtyard, to name just two.

I am so grateful to have such a generous community by our side!





“I’m struggling. I’m having a tough time. I’m drinking too much.”

These are the words I had been feeling and thinking for months before I finally said them out loud to my wife Danielle, and eventually to my coach and Ottawa Senators teammates.

Having that first conversation, as hard as it was, gave me the direction I needed to get help last year for my alcohol dependence.

About a year before this, I was really struggling. At first, I was handling things but then — I wasn’t. I just couldn’t switch it off. I wasn’t being honest with my wife or with myself. Trying to battle through a hangover when you play professional hockey is just not possible.

After another late night last November, I got on the ice for practice and made it through two drills. I said to myself, “I’ve got to get off the ice at this exact moment and get myself some help.” I knew there was no way I could do this alone.

There are so many people, including NHL players and other professional athletes, that live with addiction and mental health issues...issues that aren’t always brought to light, because not everybody wants to be forthcoming about their personal struggles. This is especially true when you’re in the media and often a role model to young children.

SUBSTANCE USE: We can’t do this alone.

But I chose to speak out about my alcohol addiction, so that I might be able to help others who are going through something similar.

I made the decision that it was time to no longer suffer in silence.

At the end of every day, when I come home to my family, I’m not Bobby Ryan the professional hockey player...I’m a husband and I’m a dad. I have to take out the trash every Friday, just like everyone else, and I go through difficult times in my life, just like everyone else.

The only difference is that I’m able to use my platform to talk about things that matter – like mental health and the work being done at The Royal. I want people to hear my story of recovery and say, “Hey, if Bobby Ryan can talk about his addiction openly and get help, then so can I.”

Addiction knows no boundaries. And for many families in our community, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened existing mental health issues and people are turning to substances as a way to cope.

My wife Danielle and my two kids, Riley and Chase, mean the world to me. I don’t know where I would be today without them. While I was working on getting better, all I kept thinking was, “Help yourself, so that you can help them every single day.”

Bedtime is my favorite time of the day now because I lay down with Riley, my four-year-old daughter, and we play “I spy” every night. That kind of family time is something that only two years ago I would have struggled with, because of the place I was in with my addiction.

Now I look forward to quality time with my family and I’m so grateful every day that I have such caring people in my life who continue to stand by me.

Sincerely,

Bobby Ryan

Proud husband and father

Former Right Wing #9, Ottawa Senators