

Top tips to get through

TOP TIPS TO GET THROUGH

Top tips for looking after mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19 and beyond.

Looking after our wellbeing is essential right now. We can't afford not to do it. Our tips below are based on the *Five Ways to Wellbeing* and Te Whare Tapa Whā.

Pick what works for you, adapt it, and keep at it! We're right there figuring this out alongside you and we'll have more ideas, practical advice and ways to connect with us in the coming days.

Find ways to connect

Connecting with others is so important for our wellbeing and helps to make us feel safer, less stressed and less anxious. We can support each other to get through this.

Some ideas to connect include: writing emails that share a favourite memory, playing video games with mates, playing online scrabble or other board games, joining or starting a virtual book club, sharing a favourite karakia or waiata with your friends on social media, having video catch-ups with workmates, calling friends and whānau who are in self-isolation and reaching out to neighbours to ensure everyone has what they need to get through.

Find ways to take notice

Notice the beauty in the world around your home. Take time to feel the sun on your skin, breathe in fresh air whenever you can, make a list of what you're grateful for, take the time to thank someone for how they make you feel, do a mindfulness exercise on YouTube, watch the plants in your home or outside your window growing and changing with each passing day.

Find ways to be active

We know this is a tricky one without gyms or sports but it can be done! Play 'the floor is lava' with the kids, do a yoga class online, try out a new workout on YouTube, go for walks or runs outside (just stay 2m away from others!), use the cans in the pantry as weights, stretch.

Find ways to give

Give compliments, think about a skill you have you could share with your whānau/flatmates/friends, share a favourite recipe, let people know you're there to help (and tell them what help you can offer – e.g. can you pick up food for a neighbour when you go shopping? Can you help your friends' kids with their English homework

via Skype?). Check in on neighbours and members of your community who may need to hear a cheery voice or need a helping hand.

Find ways to keep learning

Staying curious and engaging with the world around you is a great way to uplift your wellbeing. Pick a question you've always wondered about and take some time to look it up. Call your parents or grandparents and ask them questions about life when they were growing up. Research your whakapapa or family tree. Look up stories, myths and legends from different cultures. Discover the name of the iwi, hapu, maunga and awa of the place you live. Download an app like Duolingo and start learning a new language. Ask your tamariki/kids to teach you something they learned at school.

Spend time with nature

While staying at home doesn't mean you have to stay indoors all the time, it might feel safer for you to do so!

Think about how you can connect with nature from your home. Can you bring some nature indoors? Put up pictures of maunga (mountains), whenua (land), moana (oceans) or awa (rivers) that have meaning to you. Have a chat with your pot plants (this really helps them grow!). Listen to nature sounds – birdsong is a lovely background noise while you work. Open the windows as often as you can. Take time every day to feel the sun or the wind or the rain on your skin.

Keep taking your medication

Don't stop taking any of your regular medication without first talking with your doctor. Phone or email your GP to get any new prescriptions you may need. If you're staying at home and that's throwing off your routine, set reminders to take your medicine when you need to.

If you're currently getting help with your mental health, continue with this if possible.

Talk to your GP, counsellor, case worker or mental health team about how they can continue supporting you. Can your appointments take place over the phone, via email, text or video chat? What tips do they have to help you get through? Who can you call if you need help urgently? Write this down so you have it handy when you need it.

Stick to your routine (or start a new one)

Routines sound dull, but they're good for our mental health. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time, eat at regular times, shower, change your clothes, have regular e-meetings with colleagues or virtual coffee dates with friends, do your chores. This will help you to manage your days and adjust when life starts to go back to normal.

Explore different ways to relax

Many of us haven't stretched our 'relaxation muscles' in far too long. It might take a bit of trial and error to find what works for you. Maybe it's lighting a scented candle, switching off with a good book, playing a video game, having a silent disco, talking to a mate, watching ASMR videos online, reading a book, getting creative and making some art, try our mindful colouring, journaling or watching movies. We all need to find things that help us switch off and reenergise our minds and bodies.

Limit the amount of news you follow

Pick one source you trust (like the Ministry of Health's website) and check it once per day. If you want to keep checking in with news coverage, take notice of how it makes you feel and set time limits or restrict your news sources to just one or two if you need to.