



A Guide for Maintaining **Health and Wellbeing**

Government
Health & Safety Lead

New Zealand Government

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A guide for maintaining health and wellbeing

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

**“It is health that is real
wealth and not pieces
of gold and silver.”**

MAHATMA GANDHI

Our health is central to our overall wellbeing. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), healthy individuals and populations are happier, more productive and live longer.

Research has found strong links between our physical health, mental health, social connectedness, family health, and our sense of fulfilment and ability to live life in a way that feels meaningful. The Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health reinforces the importance of nurturing all four cornerstones of our health: Tinana, Hinengaro, Wairua and Whānau.

TE WHARE TAPA WHĀ MODEL OF HEALTH

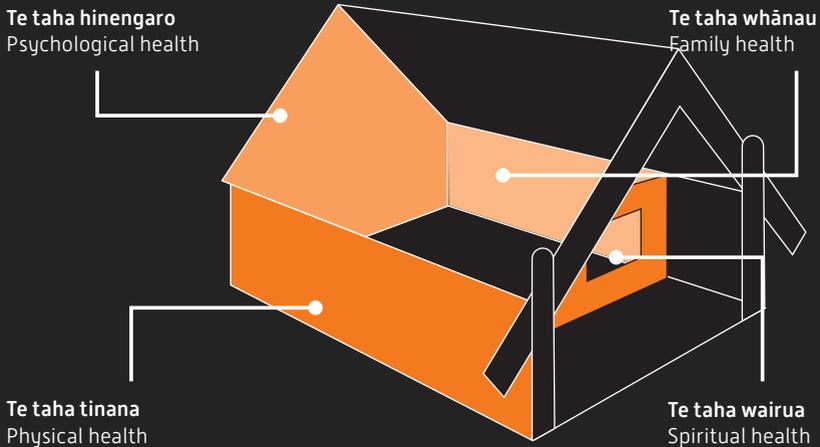
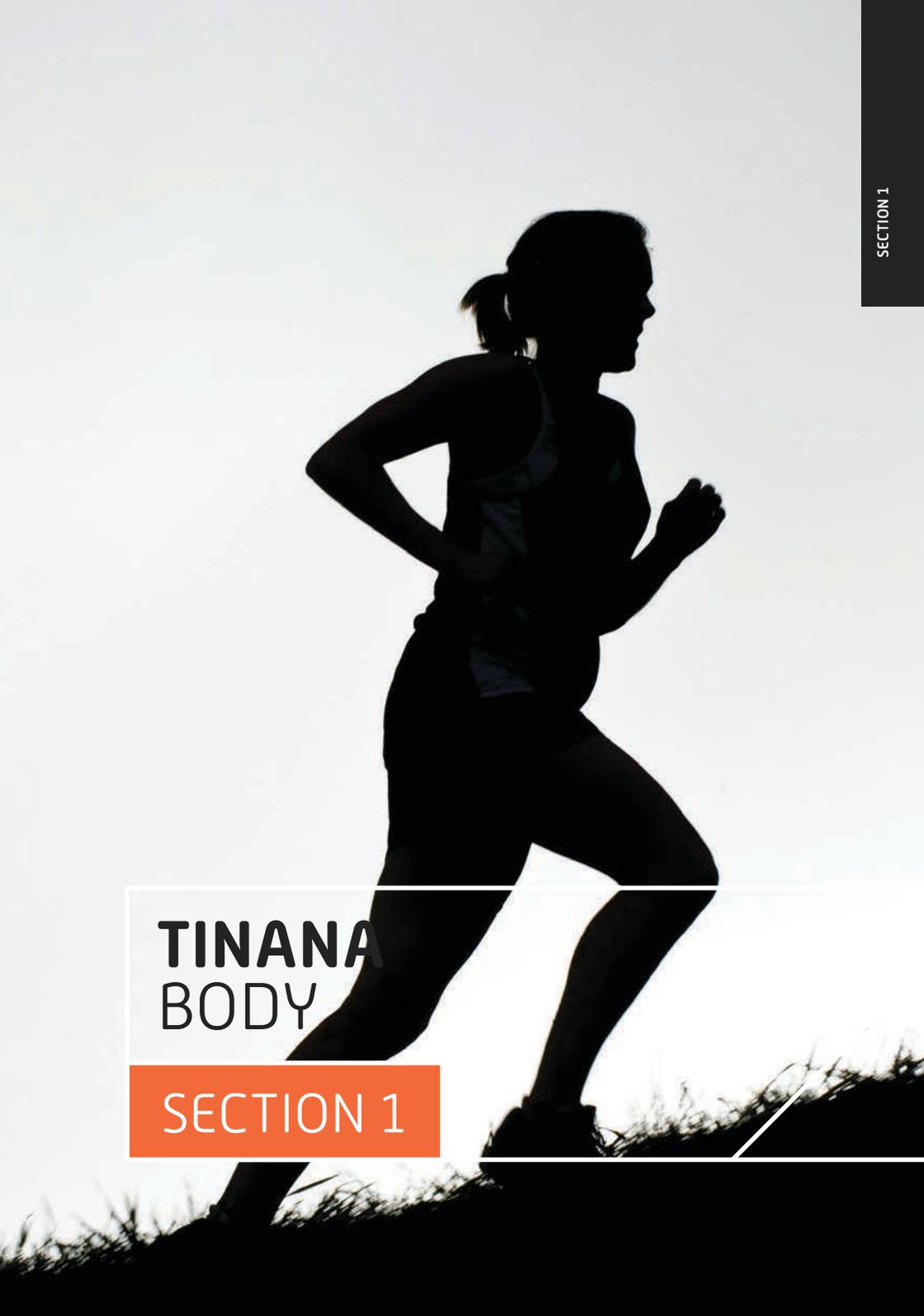


Figure 1: Te Whare Tapa Whā Model of Health¹

Our health over time is shaped by complex interactions between our environment, individual life circumstances and experiences, our body's physiology, resilience levels and self-care. This resource emphasises that health is not a stable dimension and that health can fluctuate over time. While not all factors that impact our health are always in our control, there are a range of things that we can do to keep us healthy and performing at our best, and to help us regain our health when we are not doing so well.

This booklet is divided into four sections spanning the four domains of our health. A range of tips and self-management tools are provided, and at the end of this resource you will find a list of additional sources of information and support (Appendices 1-3).

¹ Mason Durie 1982 hauora.co.nz/te-whare-tapa-wha-mason-durie



**TINANA
BODY**

SECTION 1



TINANA BODY

Your physical health is likely the area of your health you are most aware of, and the area you are most likely to seek help for if you notice you aren't feeling 100%.

Maintaining good physical health decreases your risk of developing certain health conditions, like heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. Being physically healthy also helps you to manage life's challenges and stay healthy across the other domains of health, helping you to stay fit for your job, and protecting against fatigue, injury and illness.

Although physical ailments are often the most obvious health concern, chronic issues that build up over time can be hard to detect. It's important to regularly monitor your overall physical health, keeping an eye out for any change, and getting checked out if you (or someone you know) are concerned. It may turn out to be nothing to worry about which will give you piece of mind (sometimes just worrying about things can make us sick!), and if there is something wrong, getting onto it early will increase your chances of a fast and full recovery.

Staying physically healthy can sometimes get harder as we get busy, and often as we get older. However, prioritising your health is important at any age and there is a lot we can do to help ourselves. You are probably doing many of these already. The basic things are healthy diet, regular physical activity and getting enough good quality sleep, but there are many other lifestyle factors such as limiting your alcohol intake and not smoking that are important too.

OPTIMISING PHYSICAL HEALTH

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Adults should do a range of physical activities rather than just one type, as different types of activities are good for health in different ways. For example, aerobic activities are good for the heart and lungs, and for reducing the risk of developing various non-communicable diseases. In contrast, resistance activities are good for strengthening muscles, increasing lean body mass and reducing the risk of falls.

With this in mind, the five activity statements below and their descriptions have been developed by the Ministry of Health.²

The Ministry of Health advises that to live long and healthy lives, New Zealand adults should make regular physical activity part of their lifestyle.



Sit less, move more! Break up long periods of sitting.



Do at least 2.5 hours of moderate or 1.25 hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.



For extra health benefits, aim for 5 hours of moderate or 2.5 hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.



Do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week.



Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.

2 Ministry of Health, Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults

GUIDELINE	REDUCES THE RISK OF									
	CERTAIN CANCERS	TYPE 2 DIABETES	OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY	HEART DISEASE	LUNG DISEASE	FALLS	EARLY DEATH	POOR-MENTAL HEALTH	WEAK MUSCLES	BRITTLE BONES
Sit less, move more! Break up long periods of sitting		●	●							
Do at least 2.5 hours or 1.25 hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week	●	●	●	●	●		●			
For extra health benefits, aim for 5 hours of moderate or 2.5 hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		
Do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week		●	●			●		●	●	●
Doing some physical activity is better than doing none	●	●	●	●	●		●			



Sit less, move more! Break up long periods of sitting.

Why?

Sitting for long periods during waking time increases the risk of poor general health, and a range of health conditions, irrespective of regular physical activity.

SCENARIO	HOW TO REDUCE SITTING TIME
At work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Break up long periods of sitting by standing up to stretch regularly.> Stand during meetings, when taking phone calls or when reading.> Walk to talk to colleagues instead of phoning, texting or emailing them.> Take regular standing breaks from driving.> Use a height adjustable table to change between standing and sitting.
Travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Replace regular car journeys with public transport or active transport.> Try walking, cycling or scooting short trips.> Reduce sitting time during travel by standing on buses, trains and ferries.> Get off the bus/train one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.> Take regular breaks when travelling in a car or on a motorbike.
Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Limit television, computer use or other seated activities when at home.> During leisure time, turn off the TV/computer/other screen and go for a walk.> Stand up and stretch when advertisement breaks come on TV.> Stand up while fishing, preparing food, checking emails or making phone calls.
If you have a physical disability	<p>Some people may not be able to stand due to their health condition, such as people who use wheelchairs or who have limited mobility. For these people, the focus should be on doing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> regular chair-based activities such as arm cranking> wheelchair circuits> wheeling with friends and wheelchair sports or programs such as 'Sit and Be Fit' or 'Chairobics'. <p>These activities increase the heart rate and breathing as well as strengthening muscles.</p>



Do at least 2.5 hours or 1.25 hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.

Why?

Spreading physical activity across the week has the greatest health benefits.

What are the best physical activities to do?

Any physical activity that raises the heart rate and makes breathing harder than normal is good for health, no matter what a person's level of fitness is to begin with. For example, walking is a great physical activity for most adults. It increases fitness, costs little or nothing, is low impact on the joints and has a low injury rate, can be done almost anywhere, does not require specialist equipment and can help to achieve all of the Activity Statements.

See the Ministry of Health's Eating and Activity Guidelines for a more detailed list of activities that can be done for overall health and wellbeing.



For extra health benefits aim for 5 hours of moderate, or 2.5 hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.

What are the best activities to do?

To achieve extra health benefits, people need to do activities that are suitable for overall health and wellbeing (i.e. those needed to achieve Activity Statement 2), but for longer, more often, or at a higher intensity.

One way to achieve this is through High-Intensity Intermittent (or Interval) Training (HIIT). HIIT is short periods of vigorous intensity activity with a brief recovery period in between. HIIT can be an efficient use of time and is good for health as it can improve aerobic and anaerobic fitness, strength, power and speed. It can also increase heart health and insulin sensitivity and reduce blood pressure, cholesterol and abdominal fat.

It is worth noting however, that for some people HIIT can produce more stress on the body and is therefore counter-intuitive to overall health. Find an exercise routine that feels good for your body and then mix it up within that range of activity.



Do muscle strengthening activities at least two days each week.

Why?

Regular muscle strengthening and weight bearing activities help to reduce the risk of developing metabolic syndrome, pre-diabetes, osteoporosis and osteoarthritis and of having falls and fractures.

What are the best activities to do?

Many people believe that doing muscle strengthening activities means going to the gym to lift weights. However, there are plenty of other ways to strengthen muscles. For example:

- > do push-ups, sit-ups and squats at home and at no cost
- > carry children or heavy bags of shopping
- > try waka ama/oe vaka, rock climbing, aqua aerobics/aqua jogging, walking up hills, climbing stairs, digging in the garden.

Weight bearing impact activities such as walking, running, jumping and rope skipping are also good ways of strengthening muscles and bones.



MORE INFORMATION

Read more about tips for getting and staying active at Appendix 4 on page 114.



Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.

Why?

Doing any physical activity is generally beneficial for health.

What about people with other health conditions?

People with health conditions such as morbid obesity or heart conditions should check with a health practitioner or physical activity specialist to identify appropriate activities for them.

A Green Prescription is one example of a service that can provide personal advice and support on becoming more physically active as part of managing an individual's health.

Isn't physical activity hard work?

Doing some physical activity doesn't need to be hard.

People are more likely to do physical activities regularly when they are enjoyable and easy to add to their daily routine. For example, people can add physical activity into their daily life by:

- > playing actively with their children or grandchildren
- > walking, cycling or riding a scooter to places such as work, church, shops, the library, sports training or the fruit and vegetable market
- > turning on music and dancing
- > taking the stairs instead of the lift
- > doing active jobs around the house such as cleaning, vacuuming, gardening, hanging the washing on the line, mowing the lawn or DIY.

OPTIMISING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

One important way to manage your stress, whatever its source, is to be physically active. Changing your physical state can help change your mental state. Physical activity relaxes the resting tension of muscle spindles, and this breaks the stress-feedback loop to the brain. By breaking this loop you tell your brain that your body isn't stressed anymore, that it must be ok to relax.

Regular physical activity benefits your brain by:

- > reducing tension
- > easing aggression and frustration
- > providing an increased sense of wellbeing
- > improving sleep
- > aiding concentration.

RESOURCES

Ministry of Health guidance on being active at different life stages with health conditions: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/physical-activity/being-active-everyone-every-age

See the Ministry of Health 'Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults' for more information. www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/eating-activity-guidelines-for-new-zealand-adults-oct15_0.pdf

HEALTHY EATING

Nutrition plays an important role in your daily life. A well balanced, healthy diet is essential to achieving peak physical and mental performance.

The Ministry of Health has developed five healthy eating statements, along with their descriptions below, to inform what an optimum diet looks like. For more information, see the Ministry's Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults.

FIVE HEALTHY EATING STATEMENTS

Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods every day including:



- > plenty of vegetables and fruit
- > grain foods, mostly whole grain and those naturally high in fibre
- > some milk and milk products, mostly low and reduced fat
- > some legumes*, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry (e.g. chicken) and/or red meat with the fat removed.

*Legumes include lentils, split peas, chickpeas and cooked dried beans (e.g. kidney beans, baked beans).

Choose and/or prepare foods and drinks:



- > with unsaturated fats (canola, olive, rice bran or vegetable oil, or margarine) instead of saturated fats (butter, cream, lard, dripping, coconut oil)
- > that are low in salt (sodium); if using salt, choose iodised salt
- > with little or no added sugar
- > that are mostly 'whole' and less processed.



Make plain water your first choice over other drinks.



If you drink alcohol, keep your intake low. Stop drinking alcohol if you could be pregnant, are pregnant or are trying to get pregnant.



Buy or gather, prepare, cook and store food in ways that keep it safe to eat.



Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods every day

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit

Why?

Vegetables and fruit provide vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre as well as many other phytonutrients (beneficial chemicals found in plants).

RECOMMENDED FOOD GROUP

Vegetables and fruit
(including fresh, frozen, and canned)

RECOMMENDED AMOUNT

Eat at least five servings per day:

- > at least three servings of vegetables and
- > at least two servings of fruit.

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES

Vegetables (non-starchy)

- > 1/2 cup cooked vegetable (e.g. pūhā, watercress, silverbeet, kamokamo [squash], carrot, broccoli, bok choy, cabbage, taro leaves)
- > 1/2 cup salad or mixed vegetables.

Vegetables (starchy)

- > 1 medium potato (135g) or similar sized piece of kūmara, taewa (Māori potato), yam (Pacific or NZ), taro, cassava or green banana (technically a fruit).

Fruit

- > 1 medium apple, pear, banana or orange
- > 2 small apricots or plums
- > 1/2 cup fresh fruit salad
- > 1/2 cup stewed fruit (fresh, frozen or canned).

Grain foods, mostly whole grain and those naturally high in fibre

Why?

Eating whole grain and high fibre grain foods is linked with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, weight gain and some cancers, such as bowel cancer.

RECOMMENDED FOOD GROUP

Grain foods, mostly whole grain and those naturally high in fibre (includes some breakfast cereals, breads, rice and pasta).

RECOMMENDED AMOUNT

Eat at least six servings per day.

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES

- > 2 breakfast wheat biscuits
- > 1 whole-grain bread roll
- > 1 sandwich-slice whole grain bread
- > 1/2 cup muesli
- > 1/2 cup cooked porridge
- > 1 cup cooked pasta
- > 1 cup cooked rice.

Milk products, mostly low and reduced fat

Why?

Milk and milk products are highly nutritious and contain protein, vitamins and minerals. Specific vitamins include riboflavin, vitamins A, D and B12, while minerals include calcium, phosphorus, zinc and iodine.

RECOMMENDED FOOD GROUP

The Ministry of Health recommends that adults choose **low and reduced-fat milk and milk products** to reduce their intake of saturated fat and total energy (kilojoules).

RECOMMENDED AMOUNT

Eat at least two servings per day (choose low or reduced-fat options).

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES*

- > 1 glass milk (250ml)
- > 1 small pottle yoghurt (125-150g)
- > 2 slices cheese (40g)
- > 1 glass calcium-added (fortified) soy milk (250ml).

* This serving size advice is under review

Some legumes*, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry (e.g. chicken) and/or red meat with the fat removed

Why?

Eating patterns that include legumes, nuts, fish and other seafood are linked with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, weight gain and some cancers.

However, it should be noted that eating processed meat (e.g. salami, bacon, ham and luncheon) is linked with a higher risk of colorectal cancer according to the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF). In addition, processed meats can be high in fat and salt.

The WCRF also reports that eating more than 500g of cooked red meat (equivalent to 700–750g when raw) each week is linked with a higher risk of colorectal cancer.

*Legumes include lentils, split peas, chickpeas and cooked dried beans (e.g. kidney beans, baked beans).

RECOMMENDED FOOD GROUP

Legumes, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry or red meat with fat removed.

RECOMMENDED AMOUNT

Eat at least two servings of legumes, nuts or seeds a day

OR

Eat at least one serving of fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry or red meat a day.

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES

- > 3/4 cup cooked dried beans, split peas, lentils
- > 30g nuts or seeds (small handful)
- > 1 medium fillet of cooked fish (100g)
- > 1 egg (50g)
- > 2 drumsticks or 1 chicken leg
- > 2 slices cooked meat (approximately 100g)
- > 3/4 cup mince or casserole.



Choose and/or prepare foods and drinks:

With unsaturated fat instead of saturated fats

Suggestions:

EXCHANGE		FOR
Butter	➤	Margarine or other plant-based spreads
Lard and/or dripping	➤	Water, small amount of plant-based oils, e.g. canola
Full-fat milk, high-/full-fat cheese	➤	Low and reduced-fat milks, reduced-fat cheese
Coconut cream	➤	'Lite' coconut cream or coconut milk or dilute with water
High-fat takeaways	➤	Healthier takeaways, e.g. salad-rich kebabs or wraps; vegetable-rich non-fried Asian rice or noodle dishes
Highly processed high-fat convenience foods, e.g. some snack bars and crisps	➤	Whole or less processed foods, e.g. vegetables, fruit, unsalted nuts

That are low in salt (sodium); if using salt, choose iodised salt

AMOUNT OF SODIUM

- > Low-salt foods have less than 120mg of sodium per 100g.
- > Moderate-salt foods have 120-600mg of sodium per 100g.
- > High-salt foods have more than 600mg of sodium per 100g.

With little or no added sugar

Having a diet that is low in added sugar is a key part of a healthy eating pattern that is linked with a lower risk of excess body weight and related non-communicable diseases.

That are mostly whole and less processed

Diets high in vegetables, fruit, whole grains and those naturally high in fibre, legumes, nuts, dairy (including low-fat options) and fish and seafood are linked with better health and less non-communicable disease. These diets are low in processed meat, refined grains, saturated fat, sugar-sweetened foods and drinks, and salt/sodium.

Whole foods

Whole foods are foods that are close to their natural state but may have been harvested, washed or cleaned ready for consumption or cooking. Examples of whole foods are fresh vegetables and fruit, raw legumes, raw nuts and seeds, eggs, fish, chicken and red meat (with visible fat removed).

Less processed food

Foods that have undergone some processing, but have kept most of their physical, chemical, sensory and nutritional properties (adapted from Dwyer et al 2012) are considered to be less processed. If they are processed, this is usually with the aim of making the food:

- > safer – for example, pasteurised milk products

- > healthier – for example, low-fat milk, which contains less energy (kilojoules) and less saturated fat than full-fat milk
- > more convenient to use – for example:
 - » whole grains that have had their outer inedible husks removed but still have the edible parts of their structure
 - » wholemeal flour ground from whole grains
 - » frozen, packaged vegetables and fruit that may have been frozen quickly to keep their nutrient content
 - » canned legumes, vegetables and fruit with no or minimal added sugar and/or salt, which have been prepared and cooked ready for use.

Foods high in fat and sugar are addictive. While it may seem difficult to reduce or cut out these foods at first, over time your body WILL adapt and you won't crave these types of foods.



Make plain water your first choice over other drinks

Why?

Plain water is the best choice of drink because in most cases it is exactly what the body needs. Plain water also contains no energy (kilojoules) so will not increase a person's total energy intake (and ultimately their weight).



Limit alcohol

Why?

Drinking too much alcohol can cause health problems as well as injury. It can also make some existing health conditions worse.

There are times when it's best not to drink alcohol at all, such as if you're on medication that interacts with alcohol or are about to operate machinery or a vehicle. You should also not drink alcohol if you could be pregnant, are pregnant or are trying to get pregnant.

If you drink alcohol, keep your intake low. The Health Promotion Agency's low-risk drinking advice below provides guidance on drinking levels to keep your risk of alcohol-related harm low.

This advice uses standard drinks. The standard drinks measure is a simple way to work out how much alcohol you're having. One standard drink equals 10 grams of pure alcohol. This is about one small glass of wine (100ml) or a bottle of regular strength beer (330ml) or a single shot of spirits (30ml).

All bottles of wine, beer, cider and spirits and all cans and casks are required to have standard drinks content on the labels. Look out for wording about standard drinks or for the standard drinks image. When you pour an alcoholic drink at home, you're probably pouring different amounts every time. By checking the standard drinks label, you'll have a good idea of how many drinks you are serving out of each bottle, can or cask.

For more information about alcohol, visit the Health Promotion Agency's website alcohol.org.nz. You can also check your drinking with the Is your drinking okay? quiz on alcohol.org.nz/quiz.

If you have trouble with alcohol and need help, talk to your doctor or call the Alcohol Drug Helpline on 0800 787 797, visit their website, or free text 8681.

For more information about alcohol, see the Alcohol section of the Health Promotion Agency's alcohol website: alcohol.org.nz

Reduce your long-term health risks	Reduce your risk of injury	Pregnant women
NO MORE THAN	NO MORE THAN	NO ALCOHOL
 	 	
STANDARD DRINKS	STANDARD DRINKS	STANDARD DRINKS
Daily	On any single occasion	There is no known safe level of alcohol use at any stage of pregnancy.
and no more than 10 a week and at least 2 alcohol-free days per week		
and no more than 15 a week		



Buy or gather, prepare, cook and store food in ways that keep it safe to eat

Why?

Food safety is about making sure that food is safe to eat and does not make people sick. It is estimated that around 200,000 New Zealanders suffer a foodborne illness every year. Furthermore, most foodborne illness (food poisoning) is preventable.

Keeping food safe

When buying food and drink:

- > always check the use-by date of each food before buying it
- > avoid foods with damaged packaging – for example, dented or swollen tins, ripped packaging, broken seals
- > choose undamaged and unripe (or just-ripe) fresh vegetables and fruit.

If gathering food:

- > always wash food like pūhā and watercress thoroughly after gathering or buying from others who have gathered
- > before gathering shellfish or other seafood, check with the local regional council, public health unit and the 'marine biotoxin alerts' on the Ministry for Primary Industries website (www.foodsmart.govt.nz) for information about any areas contaminated with algal blooms or other hazards.

When storing food:

- > keep the fridge at or below 4 degrees Celsius
- > store raw meat away from other food, for example, on the bottom shelf of the fridge so the raw meat juices do not drip onto other food
- > follow storage advice on labels
- > cover leftovers and store them in the fridge (within two hours of cooking) and use within two days of cooking.

When preparing and cooking food:

- > always thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water, and dry them properly before handling food, or between handling raw meat and other food
- > always prepare food on clean surfaces and utensils that have been cleaned with hot, soapy water
- > reheat any leftovers until they are steaming hot before eating them
- > be aware of food that is at higher risk of being contaminated by pathogens – for example, meat, chicken, fish, milk products, rice and legumes.
For these foods:
 - » store and cook them safely
 - » if in doubt about the safety of the food, throw it out.

RESOURCES

See the Ministry of Health 'Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults' for more information:

www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/eating-activity-guidelines-for-new-zealand-adults-oct15_0.pdf

Check useful Apps here:

dietitians.org.nz/public-info

NUTRITION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Recent evidence suggests that diet quality is a modifiable risk factor for mental health disorders. In other words, healthy dietary patterns that consist of a high intake of vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, nuts, seeds and fish, with limited processed foods, have been shown to have less association with the probability of, or risk for, depression. In contrast, unhealthy diets high in processed food, processed meat, refined carbohydrate, salty and/or sugary 'treats' and sugar-sweetened beverages, have been shown to have a greater association with depression and anxiety.

RESOURCES

For more resources on eating and activities for the public, see the Ministry of Health resources below. These include information for:

- > Babies and toddlers
- > Children and young people
- > Pregnant and breastfeeding women
- > Older people

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/eating-and-activity-guidelines/resources-eating-and-activity-public

RECOMMENDED DIETARY CHANGES FOR NEW ZEALAND ADULTS

Ministry of Health's recommendations for dietary changes:

LIMIT ▼	INCREASE ▲
Processed meat Red meat* Drinks and foods with added sugar Highly processed foods that are high in refined grains, saturated fat, sugar and salt	Vegetables and fruit Legumes Fish and other seafood Nuts and seeds Whole and less processed foods
* Eat less than 500g cooked meat per week (equivalent to 700-750g when raw).	

EXCHANGE	FOR
Refined grains	➤ Whole grains and high fibre
Butter	➤ Unsaturated vegetable oils and oil based spreads
Higher-fat milk products	➤ Low-fat milk products
Sugar sweetened beverages	➤ Water, low-fat milk, diet drinks

SLEEP

Sleep is important for healthy brain function, emotional wellbeing, physical health, energy and appetite regulation, healing and repair, immune system function, productivity, work performance and safety.

Not sleeping enough, or sleeping badly, can affect your reaction times, increasing the risk of accidents around the home, at work, out and about and on the road. Researchers have also linked lack of sleep to depression, suicide and risk-taking behaviour, increased blood sugar levels, obesity, heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and strokes.

How much sleep do you need?

The National Sleep Foundation recommends seven–nine hours of good quality sleep a night for adults up to the age of 65, and seven–eight hours for those over 65. Some people naturally sleep slightly more or slightly less than these recommended hours.

Ways to improve your sleep

Bedtime routine

- > Maintain a regular sleep pattern by going to bed and getting up at around the same time each day, including on the weekends.
 - > Relax and unwind before bed. Try to spend the last hour you're awake doing calming activities like reading, having a shower or bath or doing mindfulness activities. Mindfulness is discussed at the end of the 'Mind' section (page 60).
- > Don't watch the clock or stay in bed when you're wide awake. If you are still awake after 20–30 minutes of trying to get to sleep, try sitting in another room reading for a short time.
 - > Avoid sleeping pills unless your doctor or pharmacist recommends them. You should only use sleeping pills in the short term, or occasionally.

Sleeping environment

- > Keep your bedroom conducive for sleeping. Remove distractions like televisions and portable electronic devices from the room.
- > Keep the bedroom quiet and dark, at a comfortable temperature. This is different for everyone, but generally falls within the range of 15–20°C. Make sure your bedding is comfortable too.

During the day

- > Keep active. Moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity is best, but even light activity during the day can help you sleep better at night. Try to avoid a lot of activity just before bedtime.
- > Alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes can disrupt your sleep. Try to avoid these, and avoid eating large meals within two–three hours of going to bed.
- > Daytime naps can affect your night-time sleep. Keep your daytime naps short (less than 30 minutes). Napping in front of TV in the evening will make it harder for you to get to sleep.
- > Getting sunlight in the morning and avoiding bright lights in the evening can help your body to get into a better sleep routine.

Night shifts

If you regularly work night shifts, you may find it hard to get enough good quality sleep during the day. In this case:

- > try wearing dark sunglasses to reduce the sunlight on your commute home
- > keep to the same daily routine if you can
- > use ear plugs and eye masks to reduce noise and light in your bedroom
- > use blackout curtains or put boards over the windows in your bedroom to block out sunlight
- > avoid caffeinated drinks and food, and avoid alcohol close to bedtime
- > having short naps can help.

When to see a doctor

See your doctor if you:

- > have persistent trouble getting enough good quality sleep and the recommendations set out here aren't helping
- > wake a lot during the night
- > consistently feel very tired during the day
- > have trouble staying awake during the daytime
- > snore severely.

All of the above information was taken from the Ministry of Health.³

MORE INFORMATION

Read more about sleep at Appendix 5 on page 117.

SCREENING – WHOLE BODY HEALTH

Visit your doctor for regular checkups, particularly as you get older. Preventive care can detect disease or prevent illnesses before they start. Tell your doctor if you have a family history of a significant medical condition. Keep an eye out for signs that you are not tracking OK. It's important you contact your GP or local health treatment centre if you have experienced any of the following over the last four weeks. Remember, early recognition and action will prevent issues becoming more chronic and debilitating.

- > Severe headaches or migraines
- > Chest pain
- > Difficulty breathing
- > Dizziness
- > Fatigue
- > Stomach complaints
- > Skin rashes or infections
- > Physical injuries – breaks, abrasions or sprains
- > Other concerns about your physical health.

WOMEN'S AND MEN'S HEALTH

Breast cancer and prostate cancer are leading causes of death. Breast cancer affects 3,000 NZ women each year and rates of prostate cancer in men are similar. Talk to your doctor about when you should start getting mammograms or prostate checks. You may need to start screening early if you have risk factors, such as family history. One way to detect breast cancer is to do a monthly self-exam.

Women aged 21 to 65 should also get routine pap smears every three years. Adults should get screened for colorectal cancer starting at age 50, and your doctor may want to check for other types of cancer depending on risk factors and family history.

RESOURCES

You can find out more information about common health issues:
www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living

HEALTH RISK AND LIFESTYLE FACTORS

Physical health risks can impact our overall health. Our lifestyle choices can influence our physical and broader overall health.

CHRONIC PAIN

Pain related to injuries can greatly undermine your sense of wellbeing. Chronic pain has been linked to general disability, emotional distress and depression. It is also common for people to self-medicate with alcohol or other drugs when struggling with chronic pain.

Left untreated, pain can impact negatively on occupational, social and recreational functioning. It is important to get effective treatment for your physical complaints if you are to minimise your risk of developing, or aggravating, other conditions. Your mind and body really are one united system that cannot be neatly divided for the purposes of physical and psychological treatments.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight can reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some forms of cancer. It can help ensure that your bones and joints are not under too much stress.

Eating well, being active and getting enough quality sleep are key elements to help support a healthy weight, increase your energy levels, support mental health, and maintain activities of daily living.

Weight loss

If your goal is to lose weight, below are some tips on getting started.

Have a plan

- > Seek advice from a registered health practitioner, such as a dietitian, doctor or practice nurse.
- > Write down your goals and reasons for losing weight.
- > Keep a food diary or use a phone app/tracker to keep a record of what you eat.
- > Focus on your total energy intake over the whole day, rather than how often you eat. There is no clear scientific link between body size and the number of times you eat a day. However, the more often you eat, the more likely you are to unnecessarily increase your energy intake.
- > Include your family in your goal to make healthier eating choices, and look for support from friends and family to achieve your weight loss goal.

What you eat

- > Eat breakfast each day, so you don't overeat later in the day.
- > Eat more vegetables and fruit. Most people don't eat the recommended three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit each day. Vegetables and fruit are high in vitamins, minerals and fibre and low in energy (calories).

-
- > Plan meals ahead, and where possible pack or prepare lunches in advance, to help you avoid the temptation of buying food that is high in saturated fat, salt or sugar. Involve your household (your partner, family or flatmates) in this task.
 - > When you eat out, order half or smaller portions, share with others, or ask for a doggy bag to take extra food home.
 - > Prepare healthy nutritious snacks to keep in the fridge or handy (e.g. vegetable sticks or pieces of fruit, nuts or plain popcorn).
 - > Don't snack directly from bags or containers. Instead, put one serving onto a plate.
 - > Drink water throughout the day.
 - > Cut down on alcohol. Alcohol contains energy, and can influence your food choices.
 - > Cut down on sugar-sweetened drinks, such as fizzy drinks, fruit juice, energy drinks and sports drinks. These contain large amounts of energy from sugar, and are bad for your health.
 - > Eat together as a family. Your healthy choices will encourage your children to eat healthier too.
 - > Avoid watching TV while eating. Children, young people and adults all tend to eat more while watching TV. The same effect may also happen with other screens (e.g. computers and phones).

How you eat

- > Think before you eat. Are you hungry, or are you wanting food because you are tired, bored or stressed? Are you just eating it because it's there?
- > If you eat when you're stressed or bored, have a plan for those times, such as going for a walk or bike ride. Try to identify and address the cause of your stress or low mood.
- > Chew your food well, and eat slowly. Be mindful, and pay attention to food while you eat. Stop eating when you feel full.
- > Use a smaller plate to control your portion sizes.
- > Read food labels. The Health Star Rating makes it easier for you to choose healthier packaged foods – foods with more stars are healthier than similar foods with fewer stars. Alternatively, read the nutrition information panel on the back of packets, and choose the food product with the lowest amount of saturated fat, sugar and sodium per 100 grams.
- > Don't ban any particular foods. This can make you want them even more. Instead, try to only have these foods as a special treat, in a small portion.
- > Make your home junk-food free, to help you to avoid impulse eating.

Get active and get enough sleep

- > Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a day, and if possible 60 minutes.
- > If you have not been active for a while, or have been unwell recently, start your physical activity slowly, and build up gradually.
- > Some people find it helpful to set themselves a physical activity goal, such as being able to walk or run 5km at a time, or to complete a particular event. Some find it easier to do physical activity in a group setting, or with friends. Others prefer to do physical activity alone, walking the dog, or using a Fitbit, activity-tracking app or pedometer. Consider 'active commuting' (walking, running or biking) to work or part of the way to work. Think about what motivates you, and what you can maintain long-term.
- > Don't forget that sleep is important. Have a regular sleep routine. Try to aim for seven–nine hours of sleep a night (seven–eight hours if you're over 65).

Monitor your progress

- > Some people find it helpful to check their weight regularly (e.g. once or twice a week) at the same time of day to monitor progress and stay motivated. Remember, water retention and hormone fluctuations can affect weight, especially in women.
- > Researchers have found that even very modest weight loss (as little as 2.5kg) can result in health benefits.
- > One slip-up is not a reason to give up. Managing weight is hard. Go back to your goals, and consider whether you need to change anything in your plan to help you stay on track. Seek help if necessary.
- > Remember, it's better to make small changes to your lifestyle that you can maintain long term than drastic changes that you cannot sustain.

For more information on Healthy weight, see the Ministry of Health guidance at: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/healthy-weight

ALCOHOL USE

Alcohol consumption can be pleasurable for many people. However, too much alcohol can cause injuries and short and long-term health issues, such as damage to your liver, and an increased risk of some cancers.

Low-risk alcohol drinking

The Health Promotion Agency's advice to keep your risk of alcohol harm low is:⁴

- > Men – drink no more than three standard drinks a day. No more than 15 per week.
- > Women – drink no more than two per day. No more than 10 per week.
- > Have at least two alcohol free days per week.

To reduce risk of injury:

- > Men – no more than five on any single occasion.
- > Women – no more than four on any single occasion.

There are also time when you should not drink alcohol, such as if you are pregnant, could be pregnant or are trying to get pregnant.

One standard drink is 10g of pure alcohol and is equal to 330ml of beer (4%), 100ml of wine (12.5%), or 30ml of straight spirits (42%).

FACT OR MYTH?

"Drinking some or small amounts of alcohol is completely safe or of no risk"

ANSWER: MYTH

Even when drinking within low-risk limits, a range of factors can affect your level of risk, including the rate of drinking, your body type or genetic makeup, your gender, existing health problems and if you are young or an older person.

Tips for lowering alcohol risks

- > Know what a standard drink is
- > Keep track of how much you drink – daily and weekly
- > Set limits for yourself and stick to them
- > Start with non-alcoholic drinks and alternate with alcoholic drinks
- > Drink slowly
- > Try drinks with a lower alcohol content
- > Eat before or while you are drinking
- > Never drink and drive
- > Be a responsible host
- > Talk to your kids about alcohol.

IS YOUR DRINKING OK?

Check out how you are going using the quiz on www.alcohol.org.nz/quiz.

⁴ www.alcohol.org.nz/help-advice/advice-on-alcohol/low-risk-alcohol-drinking-advice

TOBACCO USE

Smoking and tobacco use have been linked to a range of health issues and the sooner you quit the better. You'll also notice a big impact on your budget – someone who smokes half a pack a day can save \$70 a week by giving up. Quitting isn't always easy, but help is available.

You can:

- > contact Quitline through www.quit.org.nz, a website that also gives you heaps of other reasons to quit, or by phoning 0800 778 778 for a Quit Pack and support over the phone, online and by text.
- > find information and local help in your region to stop smoking with Smokefree www.smokefree.org.nz/help-advice/stop-smoking-services
- > use phone apps such as Goal Post (goalpost.it).

PRACTICING SAFE SEX

Safe sex is good for your emotional and physical health. The safest form of sex is between two people who only have sex with each other. Use protection to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms are the most effective form of prevention. Read more about STI's online: www.justthefacts.co.nz/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis/facts-about-stis-sexually-transmitted-infections-stds and talk to your doctor if you have concerns or want to get tested for STIs.

PROTECTING YOUR SKIN

Sun exposure is linked to skin cancer and other skin damage. It's best to limit your time spent in the sun and/or be sure to wear protective clothing and a hat when you are outside. Use sunscreen year-round on exposed skin including your face and hands. Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays (the NZ Cancer Society recommends at least SPF 30), and stay away from tanning booths.

While it's important to protect our skin from the sun, it's also important to recognise that exposure of our skin to the sun stimulates the production of Vitamin D in our body, which is important for healthy bones. While this is the case, Vitamin D can also be obtained from a range of food.⁵

More information on protecting your skin and Vitamin D:

Protecting your skin: sunsmart.org.nz

Vitamin D: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/healthy-eating/vitamin-d

LIVER CARE

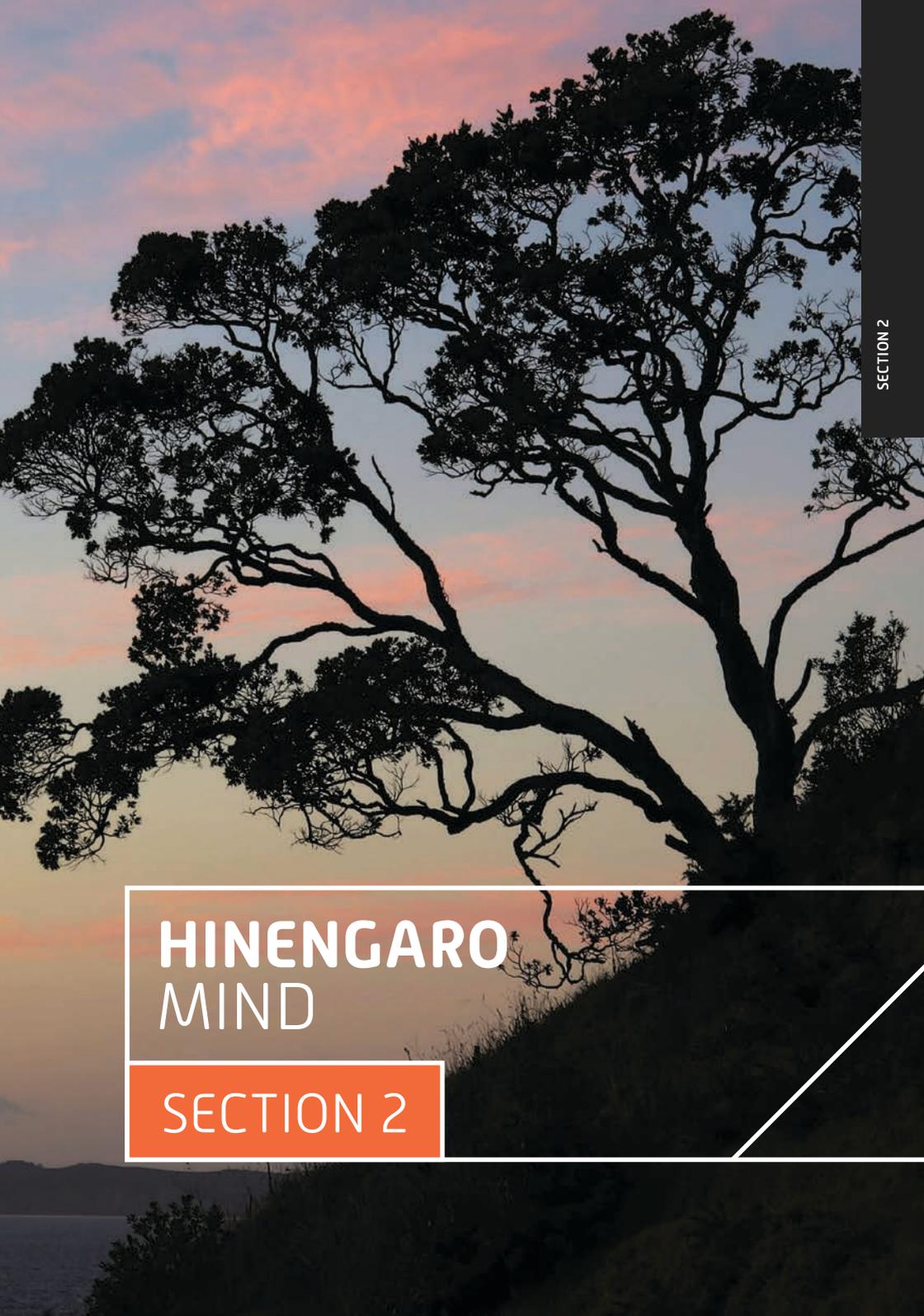
Our liver is one of our best friends when it comes to health. It works hard to burn up fat and to excrete substances that our body no longer needs.

Too much alcohol or diets high in processed food and drinks reduce the performance of our liver. You can 'detox' your liver by simply improving your diet and reducing your intake of alcohol, sugary drinks and coffee.

ORAL HYGIENE

In order to keep your teeth healthy, it is important to develop a good dental care routine early in life and maintain your teeth as you get older. You can do this by practising good oral hygiene (brushing twice a day and flossing regularly), eating a healthy diet, and supplementing these good habits with professional care when necessary. Check out the guidelines for maintaining good dental hygiene:

www.wikihow.com/Care-for-your-Teeth



HINENGARO MIND

SECTION 2



HINENGARO MIND

Mental health is about how we think, feel and act as we deal with life's ups and downs. It also helps to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, make decisions and go about our daily lives. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life.

Being mentally healthy is not necessarily about being free from problems. Some stress in our lives is good and can help us perform at our best; resilience is about being able to bounce back from life's setbacks, and even to grow as a result of dealing with challenges. Everyone feels worried, anxious, sad or stressed at various times in their lives. Sometimes the cumulative impact of events in our lives, our relationships, physical health, jobs and family wellbeing, can become challenging and affect our mental health, even in circumstances where we previously thrived. Sometimes these thoughts and feelings do not go away, and are severe enough to interfere with daily life.

Mental health, like physical health, exists on a continuum. It is a dynamic changing state that can deteriorate or improve depending on life circumstances. As can be seen from the NZDF Mental Health Continuum (Figure 2), this can affect what we do (behaviours), how we feel (emotions) and how we think (cognitions).

The World Health Organisation describes mental health as 'a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'

New Zealand Health research suggests that around one in six adults will experience some form of psychological distress or mental illness in any given year over their lifetime.

	HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
MOOD	Normal mood fluctuations; Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/impatient; Nervous; Sadness/overwhelmed	Anger; Anxiety; Pervasively sad/hopeless	Angry outbursts/aggression; Excessive anxiety/panic attacks; Depressed/suicidal thoughts
ATTITUDE	Good sense of humour; Performing well; In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm; Procrastination; Forgetfulness	Negative attitude; Poor performance or workaholic; Poor concentration/decisions	Can't perform duties/control behaviour or concentrate; Engaging in behaviours which appear to be markedly out of character
SLEEP	Normal sleep patterns; Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping; Intrusive thoughts; Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep; Recurrent images/nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep; Sleeping too much or too little
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Physically well; Good energy level	Muscle tension/headaches; Low energy	Increased aches and pains; Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses; Constant fatigue
ACTIVITY	Physically and socially active	Decreased activity/socialising	Avoidance; Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone; Changes to appetite (increased or decreased)
HABITS	No/limited drug and alcohol use/gambling	Regular but controlled drug and alcohol use/gambling	Increased drug and alcohol use/ gambling – hard to control	Frequent drug and alcohol or gambling use – inability to control with severe consequences; Out of character decision making e.g. spending

Figure 2: NZDF Mental Health Continuum (Based on work of Keyes 2002 and adapted from the CF Mental Health Continuum with permission).

Common markers of mental health status are grouped into six themes: **mood, performance, sleep patterns, physical health, social interaction and activities.**

The model goes from healthy adaptive coping (green), to mild and reversible distress or impairment (yellow), to more severe, persistent injury or impairment (orange), to clinical illnesses and disorders requiring more concentrated medical care (red). As the continuum shows, a person can have a mental health problem or concern without having a diagnosable mental illness.

Where we sit on the continuum at any point in time can shift depending on life experiences, cumulative levels of stress, levels of resilience (natural and learned) and levels of support. By leveraging tools and strategies we can learn to minimise the impact that life experiences can have on mental health. It is important to be aware of what the signs are that may indicate the need to use additional coping strategies, or to seek assistance when it is too difficult or no longer helpful to try to go it alone.

People can experience a range of mental health experiences that will change over time.⁶

This range can include the following:

1. People who are experiencing optimal mental health (sometimes referred to as positive mental health). This group will be engaged, generally happy, sleeping and eating well, experiencing positive relationships, and with a strong sense of meaning and purpose in life. This group is likely to experience better physical health and higher productivity.
2. People who are mentally unwell and/or have a diagnosed mental illness, who are receiving treatment but still able to work (perhaps with modified duties).
3. People who lack general mental wellbeing, and a sense of being reasonably happy with life. They will often show up as disengaged and unmotivated employees who lack meaning and purpose in their daily lives. According to decades of mind/body research this group is likely to have higher rates of physical illness and workplace accidents.
4. People who don't meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental illness, but who may be highly stressed or distressed due to their work or home life, or perhaps a traumatic life event.

THE ROLE OF STRESS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE

Stress is one of the key influencers on our mental health and can affect where we sit on the mental health continuum at any time. Stress can trigger or exacerbate the development of more serious episodes of mental illness, or reduce our coping and resilience levels.

While it is fairly obvious that life events, such as threat to life, divorce, bankruptcy or the death of a loved one, may negatively impact on physical and mental health, daily stressors can exert an even greater influence in the long term. The tipping point between healthy coping and a negative impact on our health starts when our perceived ability to cope is eroded. The cumulative impact of stress can shift your tipping point. Therefore, you should understand how to identify the unique tipping points of yourself and others.

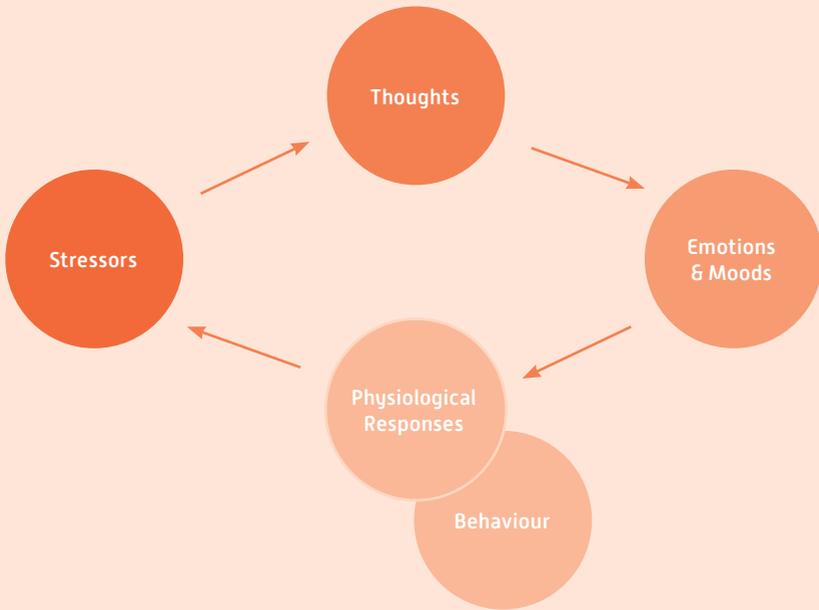
As the continuum shows, a person can have a mental health problem or concern without having a diagnosable mental illness. However, there may be early signs that all is not well. For example, a person may engage in behaviours which appear to be markedly out of character. In instances where a mental illness is diagnosed a person's thoughts, emotions, and/or behaviours are more adversely affected and, if untreated, their functioning will be impaired, resulting in a general loss of quality of life. However, with the right treatment, those suffering from a mental illness can be helped to function more effectively and/or make a full recovery.

THE STRESS CYCLE

Life stressors can affect our thoughts, moods, and behaviours, and over time, our physical health. Each of these are interconnected and can either reduce or perpetuate the stress cycle.

When we perceive situations as dangerous or threatening, this activates the 'fight or flight' response. So how we interpret life events has a huge bearing

on how much stress or anxiety we experience; our body doesn't tell the difference between real and imagined events so if we imagine (perceive) a bad outcome, our body reacts to the thought as though it were actually happening.



OPTIMISING MENTAL HEALTH

RESILIENCE

Resilience means being able to bounce back from, or manage your way through, challenges life throws at you. It doesn't mean being unrealistically happy and trouble free all of the time. We can think of a resilient person as being like a spring... they can bend and stretch and get a bit bent out of shape but eventually they spring back to shape and continue to function as they normally would. In contrast, other structures are more prone to breaking when placed under stress (like a twig). Resilient people are able to thrive in spite of conditions that are difficult, and they are able to recognise what things they can control. Resilient people also make the best use of the resources they have knowing that life is often not perfect.

What does resilience look like and how do we know when we are resilient?

- > The demands we face are challenging rather than demoralising
- > Our health is generally good
- > We have healthy habits and good social connections
- > We can identify and use all of our resources to help us stay strong.

Resilience is about taking action to manage whatever life throws at us. Surprisingly it is often small actions that can produce a big upturn in our quality of life. This section will guide you through some simple, practical actions that you can take to improve your resilience and performance.

Follow the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand's recommendations for Five Ways To Wellbeing and the tips and tools on the following pages.

CONNECT

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

BE ACTIVE

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

TAKE NOTICE

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

**KEEP
LEARNING**

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

GIVE

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

In order to manage our resilience, it's important that we pay attention to what is helping us to be resilient and what is hindering our resilience. The next exercise (the Bucket Model) is a good place to start to take stock of your levels of resilience.

BUCKET MODEL OF RESILIENCE

Think of your resilience as being like a bucket of water. The water is resilience but the bucket has holes that drain this resilience away. This exercise gets you to identify what those holes are, how you might plug them, and how you might top up the resilience levels. The bucket represents your level of resilience at any one time. Resilience can drain through holes in the bucket. The holes represent life stressors. They are things that reduce your ability to cope [e.g. restricted sleep, high workload, unwell family members, or a myriad of other things].

Fortunately, the bucket of resilience can also be topped up by things that help you

to cope. Identify the things that increase your resilience; leveraging what you already know can help, as well as drawing on the tools in this section. Things that top up your bucket include the things that you enjoy, the things that make you feel whole again, relaxed or in control. Things like playing sport, walking on the beach or having a family dinner.

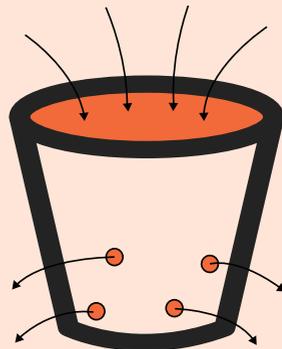
MORE INFORMATION

Use the Mental Health Continuum model and self-assessment tools at Appendix 3 to help build awareness about your own mental health, levels of resilience and any areas where you may be at risk.

Fill out this **Bucket Model** to help you realise what fills your bucket as well as what drains it. It may help to think on it for a while. Once you know what your bucket looks like you will be able to prioritise things that fill your bucket and build your resilience, and be wary of things that drain it.

Identify the things that currently help keep your bucket full. What else can you do to help fill your bucket?

Identify the things that are draining your resilience... work out what you can change and accept the things you have no control over.



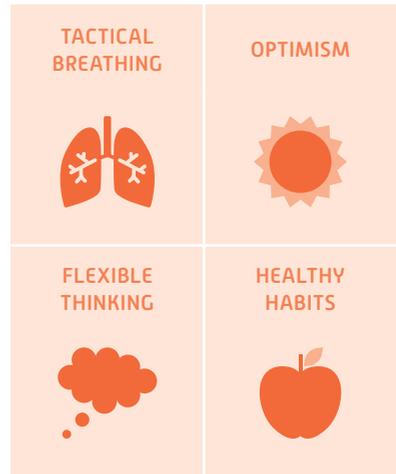
RESILIENCE TOOLS: THE BIG FOUR

'The Big Four' resilience strategies found to be most effective are:

- > the importance of practising healthy habits (exercise, diet and sleep)
- > diaphragmatic breathing
- > practical problem solving strategies to manage life challenges
- > having an attitude of positivity; this might include hopefulness that things will improve, being able to find positive experiences even in the face of hardship, or belief in one's own ability to cope or to effect change.

Use the Mental Health Continuum model and self-assessment tools in Appendix 3 to help build awareness about your own mental health, levels of resilience and any areas where you may be at risk. The range of tools and strategies provided can help build resilience and performance, and target aspects of your thinking, emotions and behaviour that may be having a negative impact on your mental health.

Resilience tools can help you to build resilience and performance, and target aspects of your thinking, emotions and behaviour that may be having a negative impact on your health. The Resilience Framework promotes tools for maintaining resilience. Collectively these make up The Big Four:



The Big Four Resilience Tools

International research has shown these tools to be effective in building resilience and assisting people to bounce back from difficult and challenging situations.

Like any other skill these skills must be learned and practised regularly. It is important that there is regular opportunity to reinforce and practise these skills.



Tactical breathing

Tactical breathing is one of the most effective skills to manage stress and keep you in the optimal zone for performance.

Aside from the obvious, breathing is useful for reducing nerves or anxiety at any time, but particularly during a stressful situation when nerves may impact your performance or during/after physical activity.

Tactical breathing can decrease your physiological arousal, help you return to baseline and even assist with the removal of by-products formed during physical activity. Professional athletes have been using this information to improve their performance for many years. This skill is very effective, but it needs to be practised. This is particularly important because when we are stressed our natural physiological reaction is to breathe rapidly and shallowly. This actually increases your stress levels. With practice you can be more successful in quickly calming this natural physiological reaction down.

The key is to breathe abdominally, taking deep slow breaths through your nose into your diaphragm. This delivers oxygen to the brain, relaxes the central nervous system, calms you down and improves your performance. Breathing through your nose helps to cool the blood flowing near your brain. This offsets the rise in temperature that may accelerate stress responses and prevent you entering a 'hot head' state.

Not surprisingly, breathing is exceptionally easy, and just like the other resilience strategies you can practise this skill anywhere, at any time. There are many guided breathing apps available to

download. Look for one that focuses on long, slow breathing.

Otherwise you can try the following:

HOW TO: TACTICAL BREATHING

1. Breathe in through your nose for a count of four.
2. Hold for a brief second.
3. Breathe out through your mouth or nose for a count of six (long, slow breath out).
4. Hold for a brief second.
5. Repeat.

Stand, sit comfortably or lie down. Place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your upper chest. Remember you need to breathe deeply into your diaphragm. Visualise your belly filling like a balloon.

To start with your mind will wander during this activity. If you notice you have become distracted just bring your attention back to your breath.

If you practise this daily for four minutes, for one to two weeks, you will be able to use this skill during stressful situations when your anxiety goes up; you won't have to sit or lie down, or place your hand on your abdomen. You will simply need to take a few deep tactical breaths, and this will reduce your arousal level. Again, this skill will only be effective at these times if you practise it beforehand.

Try tactical breathing during a stretch session at the end of a workout, when stopped at the traffic lights while driving, or while waiting in line at the supermarket.



Flexible thinking – Problem solving and goal setting

When people have a lot going on in their lives, it is common to feel threatened and overwhelmed by problems, and the thought of having to deal with them. Using a stress diary can be useful to identify the problems and then apply **problem-solving** techniques to gain more control over them. This can reduce the feeling of being threatened or overwhelmed.

Goal setting has been proven to reduce arousal levels, help control stress, improve performance and help to manage setbacks and obstacles. When something seems overwhelming it is useful to break it down into achievable objectives and develop a plan for achieving these; this will help build resilience and a feeling of control.

Goals need to clearly define what you want to accomplish. Using **SMART (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound)** criteria ensures that the goals you set will be achievable and improve your performance. Once you have set your goals work out your plan for achieving these by prioritising and problem solving.

Accept that some events are beyond your control. Invest time in things you can control, and accept the areas that you can't.

STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Write down the problem causing you worry or distress.
2. Think broadly about your options for dealing with this problem, good and not so good, write them down.
3. Write down the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
4. Identify the best option(s) to deal with the problem.
5. List the steps needed to carry out each option (bear in mind the resources needed and any pitfalls to overcome).
6. Review your progress in carrying out your option(s):
What have you achieved?
What still needs to be done?



Optimism and self-talk

It's our interpretation of situations that drives the level of stress that we feel, rather than the situation itself. This means how we perceive life events (the things that happen to us, challenge us, make demands of us, or that we perceive may have consequences for us) has a huge bearing on how much stress or anxiety we experience. Perception is shaped by what we think, how we think, and what we say to ourselves in our head (our self-talk). For some reason humans are hard-wired to notice the bad stuff and pay more attention to it than the good stuff.

A simple exercise that you can do is called 'Three good things.' A couple of times a week pay some attention to

three things that are going well or that you are grateful for. This could be as simple as finishing work early one day, winning a prize, or getting some good feedback on your performance.

Often, we can be overly harsh and unjust to ourselves in a way that we would never be with friends or team members. While we talk to ourselves constantly, we rarely stop to consider what we are saying or test our own assumptions. When these messages are negative...

"How could I do such a foolish thing!"

"I know I won't be able to achieve that"

"I'm an idiot!"

... and when we don't counter them, we can start to believe them, lose our self-confidence, and the negative talk can become self-fulfilling.

LIFE EVENTS AND CYCLE OF STRESS

	OPPORTUNITY / OPEN MINDSET	THREAT / CLOSED MIND
Thoughts	<p>"I can do this"</p> <p>"I can't do this yet"</p> <p>"I can become better at this"</p>	<p>"I can't do this"</p> <p>"I'm no good at this"</p>
Mood/Feeling	Excitement, anticipation	Anxiety fear, discomfort
Physical Sensations	Alert, muscles primed	Jitters, sweating
Behaviours	Engage, problem solve, action	Get angry, avoid problem
Outcome	More likely to succeed and feel optimistic about future	Situation not resolved, negative thoughts strengthen

First, identify thoughts that contribute to stress. What are you telling yourself?

Then, challenge these thoughts:

- > Is this thought helping me be resilient?
- > What other ways can I look at this situation?
- > What evidence do I have that this thought is true?
- > What would I say to a friend in this situation?

When our perception changes (either because perceived danger or threat ceases, or because we alter the way we think about or interpret the situation)...

"This is not a threat or danger to me."

"I can deal with this."

"I'm learning from what happened."

... the 'fight or flight' response is turned off.

Become more aware of your thoughts and the effect they have on your life. Following the performance of a difficult task or skill, think back to what was running through your head while you were performing. What sort of words ran through your mind when you made a mistake? Or when you forgot what to do? How did it make you feel? Emotion provides clues to the content of your subconscious self-talk, and helps you identify if it is helping or hindering you in achieving your goals and performing well. You may find some of the language was negative. You may have blamed yourself for making a mistake or expressed frustration or even anger.

While it is important not to disregard one's feelings or experiences, it is equally important not to be overwhelmed by

them. It means maintaining hope in the face of adversity; thinking that things will eventually get better, while doing what it takes to make those things happen.

Positive self-talk can have a number of benefits for your performance. Developing mantras that you say to yourself may boost your confidence and reduce the stress associated with being in a challenging situation. The words you use can also act as cues to keep you focused on the task at hand and stop your mind from wandering to unrelated thoughts.

MORE INFORMATION

Read more about attitude and other mental skills in Appendix 6.

Learn to recognise and modify your thoughts

First, identify thoughts that contribute to stress.

- > What are you telling yourself?
- > It may help to keep a stress diary.

Then, consider...

Is this thought helping me be resilient?

- > What other ways can I look at this situation?
- > What evidence do I have that this thought is true?
- > What would I say to a friend in this situation?

Finally, modify the thought or replace it with something more positive and constructive.



Healthy habits

As we discussed in the previous section, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and maintaining healthy eating habits are important. Often when we are under stress or busy our eating patterns change. We may not feel like eating much or we may eat a lot. We may also crave certain foods, especially those containing sugar, like chocolate! If you are aware that you are in a stressful environment, monitor your eating patterns and ensure you are eating properly. Take time to eat, not at your desk and preferably with others.

Sleeping well and getting a chance to unwind and relax is also very important. There are many ways to do this, playing sports, doing yoga, reading, or simply doing nothing every now and then. Having people to rely on and talk to is important for wellbeing, so put time into those relationships, be a good friend yourself and people will be there for you during tough times.

When you have a healthy lifestyle you can cope with challenges better:

- > Identify the healthy behaviour you want to implement
- > Identify the barriers to implementing and continuing this behaviour
- > Make a plan to overcome those barriers.

OTHER RESILIENCE TOOLS

RELAXATION AND AROUSAL REDUCTION

You can't be stressed and relaxed at the same time. The relaxation response uses breathing and relaxation to counter the negative effects of stress. Arousal reduction allows our rational brain to remain in control, without letting emotions hijack our behaviours and impact upon our performance. As a mental skill, arousal reduction is simple and effective. No one around you will even know that you are doing it.

By the time you get to step three of this activity, you should notice that your attention is focused externally and your body and mind are starting to relax. Arousal reduction distracts your mind, allowing you to maintain control and perform highly in whatever situation you are in.

Arousal reduction is a useful technique that you can use anywhere, at any time. It is helpful for dealing with situations when you notice that your nerves are impacting on your performance. You can use it either before, during or after a stressful or high-pressure situation or experience. This technique is also particularly useful when you need to stretch yourself (think fast running over distance), to push past the point where your mind is telling you to stop (in these instances, look around you and notice five things).

HOW TO: AROUSAL REDUCTION

1. Look around you, notice five things you can see.
2. Now be quiet. What are four things you can hear?
3. Think about your body. Notice three things you can feel on your skin.
4. Sniff the air. What are two things you can smell?
5. Focus your attention inside your mouth. What is one thing you can taste?

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a method of relaxation with proven effectiveness. It relieves muscle tension, and can help switch off the 'fight or flight' anxiety response as the nerves in our muscles change the type of signals they transmit to the brain. The brain stops sending panic messages to our nervous system, and a general feeling of physical and mental calmness begins to prevail.

The two main principles of this technique include:

- > tensing muscle groups (one at a time) to become aware of the feeling of tension
- > relaxing the muscles and feeling the tension in them subside – as if flowing out of the body.



MORE INFORMATION

Read more about relaxation techniques at Appendix 6 on page 120.

EXERCISE

Allow about 15 minutes for this relaxation exercise. Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted.

1. Sit in a comfortable straight-backed chair, with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Close your eyes and use the controlled breathing technique for about five minutes.
3. Tense each of the following muscle groups for five seconds, then relax them completely for 15-20 seconds [pay particular attention to the different sensations of tension and relaxation]:
 - » Curl both your fists and tighten your biceps and forearms (as if lifting weights). Relax.
 - » Wrinkle up your forehead. Tighten the muscles in your face causing your face to wrinkle;
 - » Purse your lips and press your tongue against the roof of your mouth; hunch your shoulders. Relax.
 - » Arch your back as you take a deep breath into your chest. Relax.
 - » Taking a deep breath, gently push out your stomach. Relax.
 - » Pull your feet and toes backwards, tightening your shins. Relax.
 - » Curl your toes at the same time as tightening your calves, thighs and buttocks. Relax.
4. Now resume normal activities in a calm and peaceful manner.

IMAGERY

Imagery and self-talk can boost your confidence and help you visualise positive outcomes. Imagery can be used on its own as a mental skill, but becomes especially powerful when used in conjunction with other techniques such as arousal reduction and goal setting. It's essentially arousal reduction for a task we have not yet completed - it involves imagining ourselves performing perfectly in an upcoming situation. Imagining ourselves successfully achieving goals makes us much more likely to actually achieve them.

Imagery can include all of our senses but most commonly consists of visual detail, which is why it is often referred to as visualisation. The best way to prepare for a task is to physically practise it, but research has found that mental rehearsal (imagery) also creates changes to the brain and improves later physical performance.

For example, mentally running through what a perfect performance in a task you have coming up would look, feel, sound and even smell and taste like, activates many of the same mental pathways involved when you actually perform the activity. This helps to strengthen the neural connections to allow you to perform at the top of your game. Imagery can also be used to prepare for unplanned events or obstacles that arise. Imagine the 'what ifs' that might be distracting you. What if I get a flat tyre on my way to my job interview? What will I do to minimise the impact on my performance? Having a plan for different situations will allow you to respond calmly and effectively.

TALKING/SUPPORT

Often during times of stress, we withdraw socially (not in the mood, tired, too much to do). Activities we previously enjoyed are often the first to go when we are feeling stress.

One of the first rules for managing stress is never worry alone. Talk with someone you trust. Talking helps you feel more in control. Talking to your partner or family member can ease your mind by reassuring you that you're okay or that the problem can be solved. They may also help you reflect on the situation and get the facts straight. When you're stressed, you tend to exaggerate the situation, making it worse in your mind. Your 'talking partner' can offer a different point of view – a different way of seeing the situation. Sometimes just the process of verbalising the situation can help.

Parts of the brain also thrive on social contact. When activated these can help you deal with stress more effectively, and boost your immune system. Research shows that people who have close personal relationships experience fewer health problems, live longer, and are less depressed and anxious.

Even doing things for total strangers can benefit our mental health. Doing something generous, considerate or helpful for another person, even a complete stranger, can help us feel happier, better about ourselves and better able to cope with our problems. Random acts of kindness are deliberate but spontaneous attempts to improve someone else's day without expecting anything in return. They don't need to be anything big. For example, you could pay for the coffee of the person behind you in line, help someone struggling to carry something heavy or just complement a stranger on your way to work. Trying to do one random act of kindness everyday can be a good way to pay forward the support and kindness you get from those in your life.

NEED TO TALK?

If you're feeling anxious or just need someone to talk to, you can free call or **text 1737** any time, 24 hours a day.

You'll get to talk to (or text with) a trained counsellor. This service is completely free.

Call or text 1737.

TAKE A BREAK

Our bodies and minds need breaks from work and stressful activities. When you feel tension rising and energy falling, take a break (go for a walk, make a cuppa, chat with colleagues, climb some stairs). Also, be sure to schedule longer breaks (extended weekend, short getaways, longer holidays) as well. Make time every few hours for a 'human moment' – a face-to-face exchange with a person you like.

HUMOUR

Humour and laughter are natural and healthy ways to release tension, and put aside serious thoughts for a while. Several physiological changes occur with humour – in the cardiovascular system, the immune system, and musculature. Cognitive function is improved, cortisol levels are reduced, and the immune system is boosted.

The vitality of thoughts and emotions is boosted, enhancing self-esteem and the ability to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.

SMILE!

Believe it or not, involuntary emotions and the corresponding muscle movements triggered by our environment send signals to our brain, which create physiological changes in our bodies. For example, a red traffic light that makes us frown causes our body to tense, whereas the sight of a friend that causes us to smile results in a little feel-good party in your brain. For starters, smiling activates the release of brain chemicals (endorphins and serotonin) that work toward fighting off stress.

These chemicals relax your body and can also lower your heart rate and blood pressure. Many of today's pharmaceutical anti-depressants also influence levels of serotonin in your brain, but smiles are free!

Positive relationships are good for your health; they have been shown to reduce cardiovascular activity, blood pressure, cortisol level, cholesterol, vulnerability to catching a cold, depression, anxiety, cognitive decline, and improve sleep and immunity.

TRY THIS

1. Close your eyes. Pay attention to what is happening inside your body. Notice your mood and emotions.
2. Now, force your face into a frown. Bring your eyebrows together, and pull down the corners of your mouth. Now, think about your mood and emotions. Any change? Leave your face in a frown, and now try forcing yourself to feel happy when your muscles are tense, your face is frowned, and your brow furrowed. Feeling happy?
3. Let's try again. This time, smile. Pull your cheeks up and allow the lines around your eyes to crinkle. Pull up the corners of your mouth. Let your face fall into a smile. Now have a think about how you feel and what emotions you are experiencing.
4. What emotional changes did you notice this time?

Fake it till you make it, baby!

Even if you're not actually happy, activating the muscles associated with smiling can fool your brain into thinking you are. It's not just that our brains are happy and make us smile, it can also be the opposite; we feel the smile and become happy. But, for this to work, you need to do it right. A true, genuine smile uses all the muscles in the face, including the 'laugh lines' around your eyes. Engaging all these muscles is important, even in a fake smile. If you're smiling on purpose to help your mood, you want to smile until your cheeks lift and you feel your laugh lines crinkle. And smiling is contagious so if others see you grinning they too will reap the rewards.

MINDSET

If you feel stressed when doing a task or assessment, it's good to be able to call on strategies to manage this and keep your performance on track. Mental skills are commonly used by professional athletes and teams, like the All Blacks, and can be used to maintain stress at an optimal level, prepare for performances and preserve a positive mindset under pressure.

Growth mindsets, resilience and mental skills offer practical ways we can improve our response to stressors, change negative thoughts to positive ones, choose productive behaviours and manage our physiological responses. These techniques, when learned and applied, will give you an edge that no amount of physical training can achieve.

Growth vs fixed mind-sets

Positively managing the way you think helps to alter thought patterns which in turn shape our behaviours. Our brains are very malleable and the way we think changes the connections in our brain. Beliefs about our ability, performance and learning orientations have direct influence on our learning as well as resilience.

Mindsets can be changed. Focus on the process and not the outcome. Embrace challenges and think about what you get out of difficult experiences rather than just the outcome. When you master something new reflect back to a time when you couldn't do it. This will help you realise that you do have the potential for growth. Through the repetition of growth

mindset statements and activities, we can create new connections in our brains which promote a growth mindset, which then influence how we think and how we take on challenges. **Realising our potential** is an important aspect of maintaining positive mental health. A growth mindset is fundamental to this as our potential is always much greater than what we can do currently.

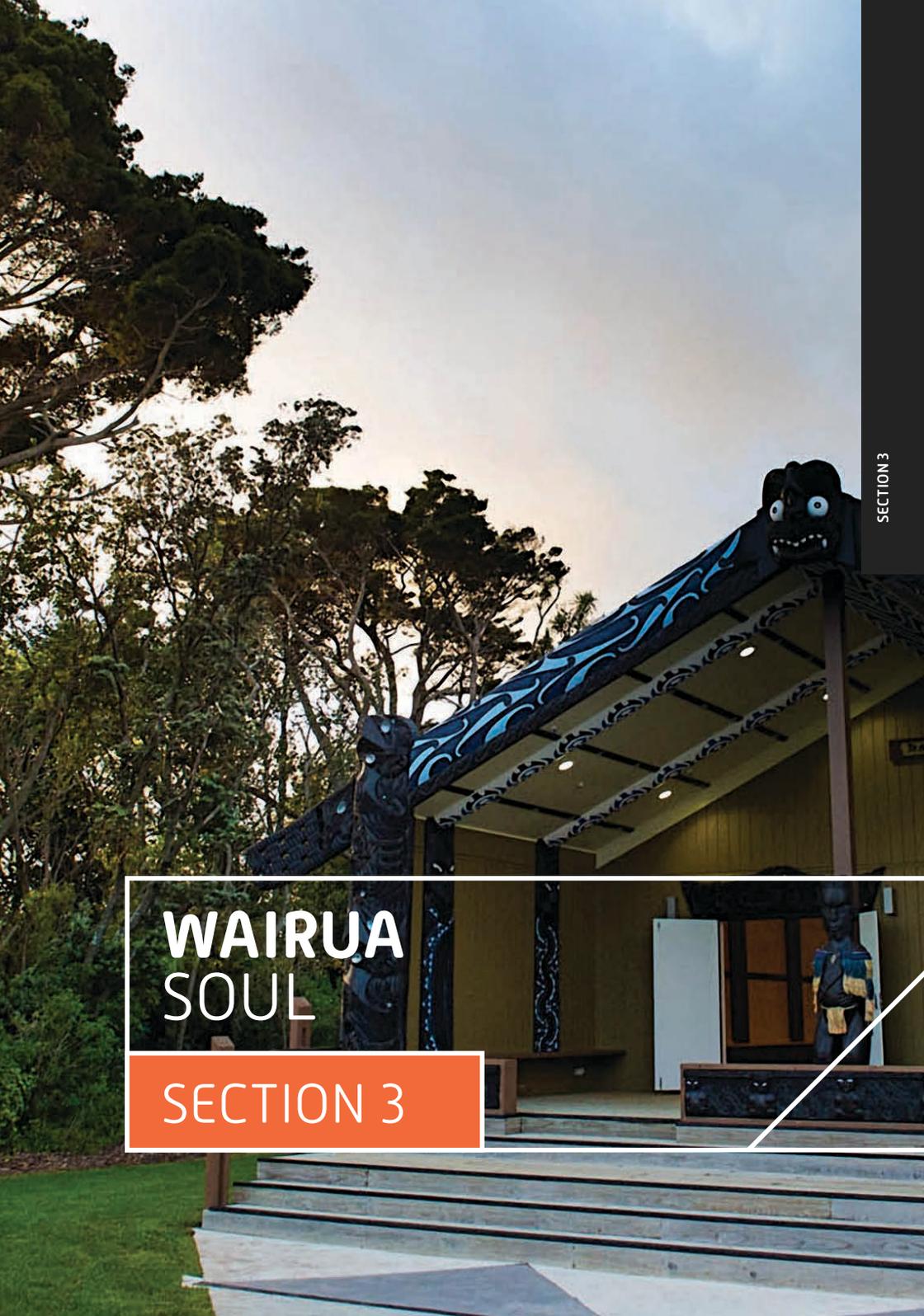
Check out this short Ted Talk on Mindset and how it can be changed at this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNboKXc
Check out other useful Ted Talks: www.ted.com/playlists/299

GROWTH MINDSET	FIXED MINDSET
Focus on growth	Focus on the outcome
Success comes from hard work	Success comes from talent
See failure as a chance to learn and improve	Failure means you have reached the limits of your ability
Intelligence and abilities are malleable so learning and development are continuous	Intelligence and abilities cannot be changed
Practice makes perfect	Having to work hard is a sign of low intelligence
Persist when faced with obstacles	Struggle to bounce back from failure, give up on difficult things
Set learning orientated goals	Try to validate intelligence through successes

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the process of bringing your attention to the things occurring in the present moment. If we think of the mind as a garden, mindfulness is like observing the garden without judgement. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad. This allows emotions to pass more quickly and results in us being less likely to focus or dwell on the negative. Much scientific research has been completed on mindfulness, across a range of demographics, populations, cultures and countries. The results indicate that mindfulness is strongly associated with greater wellbeing and better perceived health. At first mindfulness meditation may seem like a waste of time but stick with it. Like any skill the more you practise the easier it becomes and the more enjoyable you will find it. Because there are so many different ways to practise mindfulness, don't be afraid to shop around and find something that works for you. It may be mindful eating, yoga or even mindful walks.

Mindfulness apps are one of the easiest ways to practise mindfulness meditation. The seven short exercises (in Appendix 6) may help get you started or check out this website: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/21



WAIKUA SOUL

SECTION 3



WAIRUA SOUL

Spirit and spirituality can mean different things to different people. A person's spirit or spirituality is hard to define, but broadly it is the non-physical part of a person; the source of our emotions, our character and even our soul. It deals with aspects of human life that are both intensely personal and difficult to describe.

Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. In general, it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves and it typically involves a search for meaning in life. As such, it is a universal human experience – something that touches us all. People may describe a spiritual experience as sacred or transcendent or simply a deep sense of being and interconnectedness. Our spiritual self is where we find our sense of belonging, our connections with certain people or groups of people, and with places.

WHAT IS WAIRUA/SPIRIT?

Māori have always recognised the significance of wairua (spirituality) for wellbeing and good health in general, and this is a human truth that really applies to all people. Wairua describes the capacity to have faith, and to recognise the links between you and others and the world around you. It doesn't necessarily mean having a religious belief, although this might be an important part of your spirituality.

Wairua is also reflected in places and people we feel a connection to - the place you grew up, the beaches you surfed, lakes, mountains and rivers or the lands your ancestors fought for. You will also have spiritual connections to certain whānau, friends, hapu or iwi. These are powerful bonds that can help you maintain your 'belonging' with these groups even when things are not going well or you are far away.

There may be times in your life when you will feel you have lost your way. This can leave you feeling unsettled or disjointed within yourself, or you may feel like you don't 'belong' anywhere. These feelings can start to affect other areas of your life, such as your relationships with your family or the people at work – at its worst you may even have a strained relationship with yourself.

The good thing is that even if you feel you have lost your spiritual way, you can find your way back. It might just take a little help from others to re-establish your connections with those important people and places.

Is being spiritual the same thing as being religious?

For some people, but not for all, developing a sense of spirituality does involve connecting with a specific religious belief or practice. But you do not need to identify with a religion or set of beliefs to look for and find a larger spiritual meaning in life. Spirituality is the recognition that something beyond ourselves influences us and the world around us. While some people associate that 'something' with the notion of a deity or god, others may not.

What does spirituality have to do with my health?

Research suggests that cultivating some sense of spirituality can help people build their sense of identity, meaning and purpose in life. It can also help people find more significance in relationships, better handle adversity, and experience life more fully. Studies have also indicated that having a sense of meaning or purpose in one's life (even while struggling to understand exactly what that meaning is), is associated with better overall health.

OPTIMISING SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Spiritual health brings satisfaction and happiness, just as physical health does. But you can't get healthy spiritually by joining a gym.

If you are interested in developing your own sense of spirituality, you might consider pursuing one or more of the following.

SENSE OF IDENTITY

Sometimes we feel like we have lost our direction in life and we are not sure what to do about it. Fulfilling your own life starts with finding your own individual purpose or belief, which takes honest self-reflection. Once you find your purpose, your belief, your why – the way you look at life and the world will change. You will see life with more clarity, you'll become more creative, and you will have more confidence in yourself. Your innovativeness will grow alongside your passion for life. You will find your identity and place in this world.

MORE INFORMATION

Read more about Finding Your Why at Appendix 8 on page 129.

MEDITATION

For centuries, people of all different beliefs have practised meditation as a strategy for connecting with their own sense of spirituality, and disconnecting from the demands of everyday life. Research indicates that meditation can be helpful in reducing stress, speeding recovery, increasing the quality of life, and, in some instances, reducing pain.

Meditation can be divided into two different approaches:

- > **Concentration meditation** focuses an individual's attention on a single object, and continues to return the focus back to that object, even when their mind wanders. Focusing on a specific object creates a neutral point to centre one's energy and attention. People often use a mantra, which is a simple word or phrase repeated over and over again, a visual object, or even the breath. This type of meditation has been found to be useful for achieving relaxation, which in turn can reduce stress.
- > **Mindfulness meditation** focuses a person's attention on the present moment – sounds, smells, feelings, thoughts and physical sensations – without attaching judgement to them. As is the case with concentration meditation, a person's mind will tend to wander. When that happens, the goal is to recognise it and bring the mind back to the present moment. Mindfulness meditation has been associated with reduced stress, increased quality of life, reduced pain and faster recovery from injury or illness. See also the earlier section on Mindfulness.

VALUES AND BELIEFS

It's important you are able to live life in a way that is aligned with your values and beliefs. The difference between how you are and how you want to be is in the actions you take and the thoughts you think. Your thoughts are shaped by your perception of how things are and this is shaped by your beliefs. Changing your beliefs will change your actions.

Stop Keep Start

If you feel you have too much going on in your life, or that what you're doing is not fulfilling, take a piece of paper and draw three columns. Ask yourself the following questions:

- > What am I going to stop doing?
- > What am I going to keep doing?
- > What am I going to start doing?

PRAYER

Prayer is often used to cultivate a stronger spiritual/religious connection, ask for guidance to cope with difficult life events, seek forgiveness or help in forgiving others, or express a sense of gratitude. Books, websites and information provided by specific religious organisations can all be helpful in understanding more about how others have benefitted from prayer, and how you might incorporate prayer into your own life.

COMMUNITY

Many people find comfort, strength and guidance on their spiritual path by sharing with others. The most familiar examples of spiritual community are religious organisations, or congregations, which are organised around a specific set of beliefs. Think about your specific beliefs, and what you are hoping to gain from the experience, and find out more about the beliefs and practices of nearby groups. Many people tend to make these decisions based on the religion or spiritual practice they experienced while growing up. It's important to remember that as an adult, your views may have changed and you may want to explore a broader range of options.

- > **Reflect on your beliefs.** Maintain the principles of your faith by writing down the things you hold to be true. If something is troubling you, don't hide it from yourself. Share it with someone you trust, and discuss your concerns together.
- > **Spend quiet time in nature.** Connect with the natural world by going on hikes and walks. Find quiet places to sit and observe the plants, animals, and clouds. Turn your phone off so you can quiet your mind. Don't check your texts or take pictures.
- > **Foster empathy for others.** Develop empathy towards all people by paying close attention to the people who surround you. If you find yourself feeling contempt, disgust, or hatred towards others, take a deep breath and try to see things from their perspective. Think of what they may have suffered, of what they fear, and of the things that bring them feelings of joy and safety.
- > **Express yourself creatively.** Creative exploration will strengthen your spiritual understanding. For example, try singing, dancing, baking, decorating, painting, writing, or even gardening.
- > **Volunteer.** Focusing on others will help you develop yourself. Find a cause you care about and donate your spare time to it. Look at local organisations that could use volunteers, start a fundraiser, or begin your own volunteer group.

FINDING BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE

Balance is spending the right amount of time to meet your responsibilities and take care of your needs. There are many common causes of imbalance in life including: a lack of focus and not planning ahead; never saying 'no' to requests, mixing work and personal time, difficulties in relationships or personal issues or neglecting self-care. It's important that you know your limits and set boundaries. Consider what you can reasonably accomplish, set priorities, work out your schedule and practise self-care (looking after your own health and wellbeing).

WHĀNAU CONNECTION

SECTION 4



WHĀNAU CONNECTION

Our social and family health is the fourth cornerstone for overall health.

Whānau can be defined in different ways, but a common meaning is the extended family, family group, or a familiar group of people. A lack of social connection and harmony in our relationships with others can have wider impacts on our health. When our relationships are not going ok or we don't feel we have people around us we can rely on to talk to when times get tough, it's time to do something about it.

Research shows that people who have close personal relationships experience fewer health problems, live longer, and are less depressed and anxious. Doing things for other people has also been found to have a beneficial effect on your own health.

Family and friends play an important role in our overall health. Every family and relationship can go through stressful times. It's important to be able to recognise potential signs of trouble and know what you can do about it. Sometimes there can be some good and very explainable reasons why relationships are having problems; perhaps you are dealing with a major life change, the kids are being a handful, or your relationship is going through a rough patch. At other times though, the problem can be caused by things that are more difficult to understand or come to terms with.

The nature of employment can sometimes place additional strain on daily living and relationships. Sometimes we may need additional support to manage difficult times (e.g. relationship issues, health problems, financial issues and bereavements).

Family members are also likely to be the first to notice when things are not going ok. While people can often 'keep it together' at work, health issues often show in the home environment (e.g. withdrawal, low mood, aggression, restlessness, alcohol use and difficulty sleeping). Keep an eye out for changes in behaviour. If you or your family member is experiencing any of these symptoms be proactive in dealing with them before they become more of a problem.

Social support and being able to talk to someone trusted act as protective factors in the emergence of many health issues. Mates and family members are in a good position to keep an eye out for each other and will often be the first to notice changes in behaviour.

KEEPING FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS STRONG

It's easy when life is busy to take our relationships and family for granted. It is important to nurture these relationships alongside juggling the other things going on in our lives.

When relationships break down, it can be difficult to see a path forward. Try out these tips for keeping your relationship strong:

- > **Make time for family.** Life can be very hectic and it's all too easy to take those closest to us for granted. It's important to prioritise your family even when it's hard to find the time.
 - > **Keep communication lines open.** Whether it's tackling big issues or just dealing with the day-to-day stuff, keep talking. Sharing thoughts, feelings and problems with those close to you helps to keep relationships strong and shows your support for each other.
 - > **Plan healthy and rewarding activities together.** Sharing important and meaningful activities can help families stick together. Those activities can easily fall by the wayside when families are under the pump. If your family is going through a stressful period, plan some rewarding activities together.
- > **Stay connected to friends.** It might seem odd but a great way of improving your relationships within your family is to make sure that your outside relationships are healthy as well. In the same way that friends are an important source of support for individuals, communities are important supports for families. Get your family involved in school, sporting or other community groups.
 - > **Work out what's important.** If you're stressed and overwhelmed, re-evaluating what's really important to you in the short term might allow you to take some pressure off your family. Talking through what's important and what can wait gives you breathing room and a sense that you're working together.

SOCIAL FITNESS

It's important to keep connected with others, even when life gets busy.

- > Strengthen relationships, communicate openly, and accept support from close family members and friends. Cultivate meaningful social relationships.
- > Use communication to enhance relationships, such as active listening and responding, expressing interest, and giving encouragement or praise.
- > Good friendships and relationships will make you stronger, happier, more creative and more resilient to challenges.
- > Nurture relationships and make time to keep connected with friends. Maintain a balance between work and personal life.
- > Keep an eye out for your mates. Remember that your mates will be there for you too if the going gets tough.
- > Learn effective skills for dealing with conflict, difficult opponents, and other people when they are negative or being difficult.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be fun, exciting, and fulfilling. But relationships can also be difficult to manage for a range of reasons, real and imagined. Developing a relationship, even dating, can be stressful, and even during the best of times relationships take work.

The qualities of significant relationships

GOOD	OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE
A feeling of trust	A lack of trust
Give and take	Things are one sided
Warmth and caring	A sense of distance, uncaring
Feeling physically safe	Unsure of physical safety
Loyalty	Not reliable or faithful
Feeling relaxed and comfortable	Anxiety, uncertainty
Truthfulness	Dishonesty
Enjoyment	Feeling unhappy
Understanding	Confrontation
Good will	Resentment
You can express yourself	Guarded in what you say and do

When a relationship is new or under stress, there are things that can help.

Before getting into a new relationship:

- > Make sure you are ready – consider hanging out with groups of co-workers and friends rather than having a single partner if you don't feel you are ready for anything more.
- > We learn from our experiences – each person you date will help you learn what is and is not important to you in a relationship. This will make it easier for you to know when a relationship is right and you'll work hard to make it work.
- > Know what a healthy relationship involves.
- > Be realistic in your expectations and willing to work for the relationship.
- > Communicate openly to make sure you are both on the same page.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Good communication is critical. Healthy relationships thrive on good, ongoing communication. Good communication works because everyone is clear about what is going on, no one is making assumptions, and everyone has the opportunity to clarify and focus on what needs to be fixed.

Good communication requires [all] people to be open with each other, and be involved in improving the relationship. Useful communication strategies include:

- > being open and honest
- > sharing with your partner
- > using “I” statements
- > avoiding magical thinking (trying to guess what others are thinking or assume they know what you are)
- > having reasonable expectations
- > showing appreciation
- > taking the time to listen
- > not ignoring your feelings
- > fitting your communication style to the relationship and situation
- > not making assumptions.

Communication can be harder over distances. Some things that can help are:

- > phone call, emails, instant messaging
- > making notes ahead of time about what you want to talk about. List at least two specific things you want to share, and at least two things to ask about
- > during your call watch your time so you cover important items and listen carefully and show interest in what is said to you
- > send electronic or printed photos.
- > video and text postings on social media and personal website
- > writing letters.

MORE INFORMATION

Read more about staying connected, building sense of belonging and overcoming loneliness at Appendix 9 on page 132.

TAKING CONTROL OF LIFE CHALLENGES

SECTION 5



TAKING CONTROL OF LIFE CHALLENGES

There are many obvious sources of stress and challenge in our lives, in particular, exposure to traumatic events and significant physical health issues. Other sources of stress are less extreme but the cumulative effect of these can be significant.

A list of useful contacts and resources are provided in Appendices 1-3 (pages 100-113).

WORKLOAD

Busy workloads, career pressures, and demands for increased productivity are in almost all areas of the workplace. Over time stress can be a constant factor in our professional lives and on the homefront. We can choose to ignore this, and work unreasonably long hours to stay on top of things, even though working harder and longer can be counterproductive. The alternative is to work more intelligently, by focusing on the things that are important for job success, and reducing the time we spend on low priority tasks.

Prioritise

Understand the priorities of your role, what constitutes success within it, and focus on these activities to avoid task overload as much as possible.

If you are overloaded with work your performance will drop. If you can't achieve everything that is important or required at work, tell your manager. It's okay to say 'no' to taking on extra work.

If you are struggling on the home front or with other commitments, identify and focus on what is important and let go of what can wait.

When you need to focus on a particular task, small actions can make a big difference: shut your door, turn off your cell phone and email alerts, and at work consider using an automatic email response to let people know that you are currently not available.

Create a 'Stop Doing' List

We all have 'to do lists', but what can you eliminate to make room for what energises you and brings you closer to achieving your goals?

Focus on your strengths

Focus on your core business – that which you do best.

Avoid fighting battles you don't need to win

Pick your battles wisely. In the heat of the moment, stop for a second and think: is this truly worth fighting for? Can you be content to know that you are right without having to prove someone else wrong?

Focus on your priorities

Minimising stress means looking at life through a holistic lens – physical, psychological/ emotional, spiritual, and whānau/social. What are some daily practices that you can introduce to create reserves in each of these important areas of your life? [e.g. spending more time with family and friends, focusing on a healthy diet.]

Take a break.

Our bodies and minds need breaks from work and stressful activities. Setting up intervals of 25-60 minutes of devoted work focus and taking five-ten minute breaks in between will help make you more productive. When you feel tension rising and energy falling, take a break (go for a walk, make a cuppa, chat with colleagues, climb some stairs). Make time every few hours for a 'human moment' – a face-to-face exchange with a person you like.

Make time for hobbies and other activities that energise you to help you maintain balance and keep you energised and motivated throughout the work day. Also be mindful that it's easy to take work outside the office and constantly stay connected. Turn off notifications,

email and the laptop when you are engaging in the other aspects of your life. Setting some sort of on/off switch will help to conserve your energy and allow you to rest and refuel for the times when you're switched on. And ensure you schedule longer breaks over extended weekends and leave periods.

Remember to practise healthy habits. Getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and maintaining healthy eating habits are important. If you are going through some difficulties in the workplace check out this link: www.mentalhealth.intuto.com/public/course/784686. This toolkit provides some basic information about mental health problems in the workplace, and about your rights and responsibilities as an employee.

Managing change

Change often feels disruptive and, at times, even a bit traumatic. A new role, a reorganisation at work, a new relationship, a new beginning can all feel a little scary. Because of this, many people try to avoid these things. Nevertheless, change is a part of life and essential for progress. Imagine getting up at the same time each day, doing the same thing day after day, it would get boring right?

Embracing change puts you in the driver's seat and helps you turn threats into opportunities. Approaching change with an open mind and focusing on the positive elements will help you to navigate change successfully.

Over time, daily hassles and work pressures can wear you down. You might start going through each day somewhat mindlessly, living on autopilot and doing things by force of habit. Do you...

- > feel mentally drained and exhausted by the end of a typical day?
- > feel rushed, even when you are running on time?
- > have trouble doing things at a slower pace, even when you have the time?
- > tend to think about what is coming up in your day rather than being in the here and now?
- > often want to be left alone when you get home?
- > find yourself sighing a lot during the day?
- > forget to take breaks because of pressure you feel under?
- > find it difficult to relax even when you have free time?
- > prefer activities that help you to zone out when you have free time?

- > have trouble motivating yourself to do things that are healthy for you?
- > feel like you are multi-tasking even at home?
- > tend to bring your stress home with you?
- > often wake up at night and think about things that are stressing you out?
- > notice that you get impatient and irritable about little things?
- > often do tasks (like household tasks) without even thinking about them?
- > feel like taking time to relax means you'll fall behind on some duty or responsibility?

If any of these resonate for you it is likely that daily stresses are building up and having an impact on how you are functioning. Often this is very subtle, and it's only when you take a minute to review how you are doing that you notice. It's important that you stop this process from escalating to the point where stress damages your health.

USING WORK TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

While working can contribute to distress and mental illness, according to the Mental Health Foundation, work can also be of major benefit in people's recovery from mental health problems. For this reason, workplaces are arguably the third biggest mental health support sector across the country, after the formal mental health system and primary health care services.

Every day many employers provide EAP services and support staff through mental health crises, and increasingly employers are building psychological health into their health and safety plans.

There are three broad areas that employers can adopt to improve mental health in the workplace. These include:

- > building a positive, psychologically healthy workplace environment
- > taking a proactive, fair and empathetic approach to distress, addiction or mental health problems in the workplace
- > supporting employees to adopt behaviours that boost positive mental health and wellbeing.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

Financial pressures can affect everyone. Many young people over-commit financially by taking on loans or hire purchase agreements without thinking through whether they can afford them, or allowing for unforeseen financial demands. Sometimes it might be an unexpected bill that causes financial pressure, a partner losing a job, dropping to one income to raise a family, or a relationship split. Check out sorted.org.nz and other useful websites with budgeting advice at the back of this guide.

ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS

When a behaviour or activity is very pleasurable (at least initially), and when it also seems to help to relieve problems or lift low mood, there is the potential to become over-involved in the behaviour. When you begin to rely on an activity to make you feel better, and when you are struggling to control your involvement even when it is evident to you that it is harmful, the process can be referred to as an 'addiction'. The best way to avoid developing an addiction is to restrict your involvement in potentially problematic behaviours. Frequent and regular (especially daily) engagement in a behaviour greatly increases the risk of that behaviour getting out-of-hand.

Addictions can take many forms. Some of the most common ones that people experience are listed in the following pages.

Tobacco

Nicotine in tobacco is a very seductive drug. It has the unique properties of being both calming and improving alertness – a powerful addiction combination. The great risk is that over time, the person's health will severely deteriorate (with a high risk of emphysema or incurable cancer), adding further to their psychological distress.

Alcohol

In New Zealand, the most common drug problem, leaving aside tobacco (which is the biggest killer in the long run), is alcohol. Excessive alcohol impairs your ability to function effectively and to relate to other people. It can cause great difficulties in areas such as physical health (liver and brain damage, and increased risk of many types of cancer), relationships, work, and finances.

MORE INFORMATION

If you are not sure whether your drinking habits could be a problem for you, or how to cut down, take the self-assessment and find out more information about alcohol use at www.alcohol.org.nz/quiz.

Other drug use and misuse

Many people also use other drugs (e.g. cannabis or prescription medications) to excess. People use substances (such as drugs) for a range of reasons, including for pleasure, to facilitate social occasions, as a coping mechanism, for health reasons, and for body enhancement. All substance use brings a risk of harm.

This harm can range from individual physical and mental effects such as mental illness or heart disease, to those impacting on friends, family and colleagues, including relationship breakdown and financial issues. Ensure that any drugs you take have been prescribed for you and that you take them in accordance with prescription guidelines. If they are not helping you, go back to your doctor.

Drug use is different from drug abuse. All of us have to take prescription medications from time to time, and for some they are a lifelong companion. This is not abuse if we take them as prescribed by a doctor. Drug abuse is a pattern of drug taking that results in harm to your health, relationships or your ability to do your job properly. Drug abuse can include legal drugs (or other substances), when you feel like you need to increase the amount of prescribed medication without medical advice. Even if you don't feel like your drug use is out of control, it might be causing problems in your relationship, or you might notice you're also drinking more than usual. Some people use drugs as a way of coping with unpleasant feelings.

Gambling

Many New Zealanders enjoy buying the odd Lotto ticket, playing the occasional pokies game or enjoying a day out at the races. However, for some people, gambling becomes addictive and causes havoc for their family, whānau, finances, work and friendships. You are particularly at risk if you use pokie machines often.

New Zealanders are amongst the highest gamblers per head of population. That's not necessarily a problem in itself, as gambling can be recreational and enjoyable. The same principle applies with alcohol; it's about keeping the balance right, and fitting gambling around a healthy lifestyle. Problems arise when losses exceed what can be afforded, and when the over-riding motive is to win money or to escape from boredom and low mood. It is then very easy for things to go horribly wrong, with massive repercussions for bank balances, debt and relationships. Fraud is common when problem gamblers desperately 'chase' their losses to try and repair the damage. Sports betting is the next potential wave of problem gambling, as bets can be placed at home, many types of bets can be laid, and new odds are provided as a game unfolds. Effective treatments exist for problem gambling, once the person recognises they have a problem and want to do something about it. Most people with a gambling problem eventually bring it under control.

You can find out more information about gambling and how to manage this at: choiceofnotchance.org.nz

PARENTING

When we become parents there's no universal 'how to' manual and mostly we learn as we go along, because everyone's situation is different. However, we all need help from time to time, and although close friends and family can be a good source of help, sometimes it's hard to ask. When you need good quality third party help, Plunket and other recognised organisations are a good place to start.

MORE INFORMATION

Check out useful resources on parenting in Appendix 2.

DEALING WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE?

Violence is not just physical. It can include things people do (intimidating acts), and things people say (threats). It can also mean making people do things they don't want to do, or preventing them from doing things that are important to them. Some questions you might ask yourself to see if you or your family has a problem with violence, include the following.

Within the past year:

- > has your partner, another family member or friend ever felt afraid of you?
- > has anyone scared you, or threatened you, or someone you care about?
- > has anyone tried to control you, or make you feel bad about yourself?
- > have you been hit, pushed, shoved, slapped, kicked, choked or otherwise physically hurt?
- > has anyone forced you to have sex, or do anything sexual, in a way you did not want to?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you or your family may need help. People can change angry, aggressive and violent behaviours with support. A good place to start is contacting your doctor or other mental health professional. If someone is making you feel unsafe or afraid, call 111 and ask for NZ Police, or if you need information about where to get help, phone the Family Violence info line on 0800 456 450. Remember that the safety of children comes first, so contact NZ Police if you are in a situation that is risky for your children or yourself.

PROBLEMS WITH ANGER?

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion. However, it can be a problem if you find it difficult to keep anger under control. If you want to try and control your anger, try the four 'R's':

Recognise your early warning signs e.g. do you get sweaty, red in the face, clench your fists or feel your temper rising?

Retreat from the situation and spend a bit of time alone.

Relax so that you are in a much calmer state and in a better position to look at things from a different perspective. People with anger problems often tend to think in ways that fuel their anger. Ask yourself a really simple question, "is this worth getting angry about?" Check out the tips and tools in this resource to help you to relax and to think the situation through.

Return only once you've calmed down and have your anger under control.

MORE INFORMATION

Check out more resources on managing anger in Appendix 2.

TROUBLED BY MEMORIES?

After a distressing or traumatic experience, it's normal to relive what happened and even have dreams about it. If it gets too much, we might deliberately try to block it out and force ourselves to think about something else. This usually settles down within the first week or two. But if it keeps going, and you don't feel like you're able to come to terms with what has happened you might have a problem with post-traumatic stress.

What is post-traumatic stress (PTS)?

PTS is marked by clear physical and psychological symptoms such as reliving events, nightmares, anxiety, memory and cognition problems, and other physical and mental health issues. It can also be associated with difficulties in social or family life, including job stability, relationship problems, family discord, substance misuse, and difficulties in parenting.

About two thirds of New Zealanders will experience at least one traumatic event in their lives (such as car accidents, assault, difficult childhood experiences) that has the potential to cause PTS.

Do I have a problem with PTS?

In the first few days and weeks following a traumatic event, you might experience strong feelings of fear, guilt or anger, feel jumpy or have trouble sleeping. There's no firm rule on how long it will take to get back to your normal way of life but if you're still struggling after a couple of weeks, it's probably time to ask for help. Check out the resources at the back for more information and where to go for help.

AFFECTED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

If you have been affected by an incident of sexual violence, it is important to remember that it was not your fault, and that support is available.

Safe to Talk is a free helpline, available 24/7.

You can speak anonymously at any time by:

Calling 0800 044 334

Texting 4334

Emailing support@safetotalk.nz

Or live webchat on safetotalk.nz, which also has a range of resources and information about sexual harm.

DISCRIMINATION, BULLYING OR HARASSMENT

Bullying is defined as an ongoing, unreasonable behaviour, which is unwelcome and often intended to humiliate or undermine the recipient, but is not specifically unlawful.

Workplace bullying is a significant hazard in New Zealand⁷. According to the Mental Health Foundation, bullying affects people physically and mentally, leading to increased stress levels, decreased emotional wellbeing, reduced coping strategies, lower work performance, and disruptive workplaces.

An environment in which bullying behaviours are tolerated harbours fear and anxiety, and diminishes the mental wellbeing of recipients. Other people are impacted by the negatively charged emotions and it can affect the entire organisation.

The most effective way to prevent the continuation of discrimination, bullying or harassment is for you to state clearly to the respondent that the behaviour is unwanted and request that the behaviour ceases.

LONELINESS

Contrary to what many people believe, loneliness isn't just a result of being alone or an absence of friends. Sometimes we can pretend to be upbeat, positive and happy, but underneath feel a bit unworthy of healthy and respectful relationships, or not know how to find these.

CONCERNS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

As noted in earlier sections, there are a number of common mental health issues that a great number of New Zealanders deal with every day.

MORE INFORMATION

You can read more about common mental health issues at Appendix 7 on page 125.

Here are some tips for conquering loneliness:

- > **Realise that loneliness is a feeling, not a fact.** Nurture your support network. Even if there is only one person to start with, you can build on it. Don't underestimate the importance of what you have to offer and other people wanting to spend time with you.
- > **Expand your social network.** Online social sites are an ideal place to meet people and to explore hobbies, interests and social groups.
- > **Keep an eye out for your inner critic's attempts to sabotage you.** Pay attention to thoughts like "I am too [fat, skinny, ugly, boring, tall, short] for anybody to want to date", "I wish I was funnier and had interesting things to say", or "people never seem to get me."
- > **Replace negative self-talk** with affirming messages, such as, "I am perfectly lovable and likeable just as I am," and "I welcome love, friendship and support into my life."
- > **Fight the urge to isolate.** Sometimes you have to force yourself to do exactly that which you are dreading – like putting yourself out there.
- > **Weed out unhealthy relationships** and create space in your life for relationships that fuel your spirit.
- > **Ask for what you need.** Find your voice. Tell people what you need from them to alleviate loneliness. Friends respond to direct messages for help and support. Give it a try, you might be surprised!
- > **Take action.** Don't wait for an invitation. Be willing to take a risk, be proactive and invite people to share in your life, whether it is for coffee, lunch, a walk, an event or a gathering in your home.
- > **Recognise the importance of being alone and enjoying solitude.** Being alone is not the same as being lonely; it provides peace, quiet, freedom, space and the opportunity to connect with your deeper self.

SELF-HARM AND SUICIDE

People hurt themselves for lots of different reasons. It can be used as a way of dealing with painful feelings, as a way to punish themselves, or perhaps as a way of asking for help. For others, life has become unbearable and suicide might seem like the only way out. If any of this sounds like you or someone you know, it's important to seek help.

Self-harm

Self-harm is the direct, deliberate act of hurting or injuring your body, without necessarily wanting to die. It's a way some people cope with intense or very difficult emotions, or overwhelming situations and life events.

Common ways of self-harming include:

- > cutting skin on wrists, arms or legs
- > biting and scratching at skin
- > head banging and punching self
- > burning of skin
- > hair or eyelash pulling
- > taking overdoses of drugs or medication
- > taking poisonous substances
- > inhaling harmful substances.

Self-harming is not uncommon. If you self-harm you are not weak or crazy. It typically means you are overwhelmed by how you are feeling right now and this is a way you hope will help you feel better.

After self-harm you might feel better for a while (often with a momentary sense of calm or release of tension), but the feeling won't last long. If you keep self-harming it can make things worse.

It can harm your physical or mental health, or damage your relationships with other people.

Self-harm does not necessarily mean you are suicidal, most people who are self-harming are not considering taking their own lives. However, for some people the thoughts and feelings behind the harming behaviour can evolve to suicidal thoughts.

Self-harming behaviours can become addictive and hard to stop. Seek help from someone you trust or refer to the list of resources provided in this guide.

Suicide

Suicide is something we don't like to talk about and we hope it will never touch our lives. Sadly some New Zealanders take their life each year and many more think about doing so or do other self-harm behaviour. It may be that you, a loved one or a mate may be at risk, either right now or in the future, and it is important to know what we can do to prevent yourself or others from becoming a suicide statistic.

Sometimes, people who try to hurt themselves have just lost someone or something they cared about. Maybe a close friend or loved one has passed away, or a relationship or career has come to an end. Sometimes the stresses and strains of life, things like financial problems, relationship issues and physical pain, can build up to the point where it seems that life isn't worth living. But remember that all of these problems can be solved – not easily, not perfectly, but there are solutions and there are people who can help.

One of the myths about suicide is that you have to be severely depressed to attempt suicide. While being severely depressed increases the risk of suicide, the vast majority of depressed people never attempt suicide. Many of those who do attempt suicide are not clinically depressed at the time. Suicide may follow domestic disputes, separation from partners and families, intense anger at a sense of injustice, work problems, debt, legal problems, chronic illness and other major life problems, with or without depression. It is not possible to accurately predict who will attempt suicide, except that past suicide attempts increase the risk for future attempts. Some people with many risk factors will not attempt suicide while other people, who seemed to have few risk-factors, may shock others with their attempted, or completed, suicide.

Some of the major risk factors for suicide are:

- > social isolation
- > unresolved interpersonal conflict
- > mental health conditions
- > alcohol or other drug use problems
- > severe physical conditions, including chronic pain
- > access to firearms or other lethal means.

If you have these risk factors, it is strongly recommended that you seek professional help.

Having suicidal thoughts or feelings?

Whatever is going on for you that has led to how you're feeling right now is unique to you – but having suicidal thoughts is not. Having suicidal thoughts can be overwhelming and frightening. It can be very difficult to know what to do and how to cope.

It is common to feel that there is no solution to what you are going through and not to want to burden others.

Tell someone what you are thinking if you are having thoughts about taking your life.

It's important to tell someone you trust so you can get the help you need to feel better. If you can't immediately find someone you know to talk to, there are always people who are contactable by phone and who are willing, able and available 24 hours to help you. If you are in a serious crisis or you need urgent help, do the following:

- > If you are in immediate danger call 111.
- > Call your local mental health crisis assessment team or go to local hospital emergency department.
- > Contact a helpline: Lifeline 0800 543 354, Crisis Support Services 0508 828 865 or Men's Line 0800 636 754.

For more information and links to mental health resources, including the warning signs for suicide, visit the resources listed at the back of this guide.

Suicide survivor

"I had lost all hope that I would be, or could be, well and happy again. My mind just wouldn't let me believe it. My feeling of being a burden on my family overrode any thoughts of the consequences ending my life would have on them.

Did I attempt to take my own life? Yes, I did. I was very lucky that my family intervened in time and got me the help I so desperately needed.

Am I happy to be alive and getting mentally healthy again? Yes, I am."

You are not alone; lots of people have thoughts about killing themselves and have found a way through. Seeking help can be hard but there is a way forward, even if it does not feel that way.

Are you worried someone is thinking of suicide?

If you're worried that someone might be thinking about suicide, don't be afraid to ask them directly.

If someone has thoughts or feelings about suicide, it's important to take them seriously. Below is a list of warning signs for suicide. Most people thinking about taking their own life will try to let someone know, but they often won't say so directly. If someone shows one or more of these signs, it doesn't necessarily mean they are suicidal, but it's likely they need your support. Some people who are suicidal might not show these signs, and some warning signs may not be obvious.

Contrary to common belief, it is often helpful to ask if the person is having suicidal thoughts. More than likely, if the person is having such thoughts, they will experience some relief in being asked.

People who feel suicidal might try to hide what they are going through or pretend they are okay.

Recognise warning signs and take them seriously. If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. However talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life.

Knowing you are there to support them can help them feel better, but sometimes they need additional help too. Don't try and go it alone, help them get the help they need. It's important you have support too; helping someone through a difficult time can be scary and confidential advice and support is available to help you as well.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- > Having access to things they could use to hurt themselves, like a rope or gun
- > Reading or writing about suicide online, or post photos or videos about suicide
- > Becoming obsessed with death
- > Becoming isolated or withdrawn from family, whānau and friends
- > Seeming unable to cope with any problems they may be having
- > Telling you they want to die or kill themselves
- > Having changes in mood – becoming depressed, angry or enraged
- > Hurting themselves – for example, cutting skin or taking an overdose
- > Feeling worthless, guilty, whakamā or ashamed
- > Having no hope for the future
- > Using drugs or alcohol to cope with difficult feelings or thoughts
- > Sleeping a lot more than usual, or stop getting enough sleep
- > Seeming to have lost interest in life, or things they used to enjoy
- > Giving away possessions, paying back debts or 'tying up loose ends'
- > Stopping taking their medication
- > Suddenly seeming calm or happy after they have been depressed or suicidal.

WHAT TO DO

SALT

See, Ask, Listen, Tell/Take

If you think that someone might be at risk, pay attention to changes in their behaviour [SEE], trust your instincts and ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide [ASK, LISTEN]. Some ideas for what to say are:

- > "You haven't seemed yourself lately, how are you doing?"
- > "I'm worried about you, let's have a chat."
- > "I'm worried you might be planning on hurting yourself – are you?"
- > "Are you thinking of taking your life?"

Reassure them that help is available, and that you will help them find this [TELL/TAKE].

GETTING HELP

Reaching out

Sometimes during times of stress we withdraw socially, are not in the mood, tired, or think we don't have the time. Activities we previously enjoyed are often the first to go during times of stress.

One of the first rules for managing stress is never worry alone. Talk with someone you trust. Talking helps you feel more in control. When you're stressed, you tend to exaggerate the situation, making it worse in your mind. A 'talking partner' can offer a different point of view, and provide reassurance that you are okay and that the problem can be solved.

Sometimes, due to concerns about the stigma or not wanting to be a burden to others, it can be hard to ask for help. There may be times when you or a mate needs help, but struggle to reach out. It is important that we can recognise the signs of someone struggling, and that we know what to do when we spot them.

A list of places you can go for help is provided in the next section. Some of the barriers to seeking help can include a lack of understanding about the domains of health, and not recognising that we are not tracking ok. Sometimes we don't want to be a burden on others, and sometimes we just want to manage things ourselves. There can also be stigma associated with both physical and mental health issues, and concern about the impact seeking help may have on our career. It is important to recognise that seeking help early will aid your recovery, and that seeking help is a sign of strength; sometimes we can't go it alone.

RESOURCES

For more information on the respective areas of self-harm, see the following Mental Health Foundation resources:

www.healthed.govt.nz/system/files/resource-files/HE2502_Are_you_worried_someone_is_thinking_of_suicide.pdf

www.healthed.govt.nz/system/files/resource-files/HE2545_What_happens_now.pdf

www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/A-Z/Downloads/having-suicidal-thoughts-finding-a-way-back.pdf

KEEPING AN EYE OUT FOR OUR BUDDIES

The philosophy behind recognising stress reactions in other people, in some respects, is very simple. Any sort of change in behaviour, that can't be explained, is cause for concern. It will likely be reflected in the yellow and orange columns in the Mental Health Continuum (page 40). However, everyone is different, and the impact of events on people and their reactions will be different. Changes in behaviour to watch for may include the following.

- > **Temperament:** A usually easy-going person may become difficult to be with. Laughing, joking and fun disappear and people can seem lifeless, dull and apathetic.
- > **Standards:** Someone who usually takes pride in their appearance may let things slip. Someone who usually likes to perform tasks to their best ability may produce sloppy work.
- > **Interests:** Some people who had a range of interests may be completely disinterested in prior interests. In addition, their range of interests may narrow to include only those things that are causing them stress. Often, lack of interest is evident in appearance, health, or diet and these things often can create further problems.

“Anyone who willingly enters into the pain of a stranger is truly a remarkable person.”

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN
IN MEMORIAM

- > **Decision making ability:** Some people may make uncharacteristically rash decisions. Others may be very rigid, in that they stick to a decision even if it needs to be adapted to changing circumstances. Others may vacillate between alternatives and some people may have so much trouble with simple decisions that they want other people to make decisions for them.
- > **Pace:** Some people become extremely active, trying to do lots of things – they become almost “hyper”. Others slow down, and even though they may think they are productive, may achieve very little. There is an obvious slowing down, mentally and physically.
- > **Control:** Some people exhibit less control over their behaviour and emotions when they are under stress. They tend to play hard (perhaps even getting into trouble) and/or be more expressive and emotional. Others are over controlled, and try to keep their emotions and feelings in check.

-
- > **Memory:** Some people have problems with their memory when they are under stress. They are often absent-minded and forgetful, especially of those things outside their narrowed field of focus.
 - > **Susceptibility to illness:** Someone who is usually very healthy may seem to be sick all of the time, or complain of minor illnesses.
 - > **Personality:** Some usually sociable people withdraw, and spend less time with other people than they normally do. Other people go the other way and become more socially oriented, wasting no excuse to go out. People who may not usually get angry can easily become angry for trivial reasons. Others may be irritable much of the time.

Mates are there for each other in the good times and the bad. Being there for a mate in the good times is usually easy and enjoyable. But when a mate goes through a rough patch, it can be hard to know what to do or say. This can be particularly challenging if your mate is not just having a bad day, but experiencing a mental health difficulty.

The good news is there are some simple steps you can take to look after your mates, regardless of what challenges they may be facing. These steps are sometimes called 'Mental Health First Aid', and can be remembered using the simple acronym: **REACT**.

Knowing you are there to support them can help them feel better, but sometimes they need additional help too. If you are concerned about someone, contact a health professional (medical officer, nurse, psychologist, social worker) for advice. Do not try and manage it alone. It's important you have support too; helping someone through a difficult time can be scary. Confidential advice and support is available to help you as well.

MORE INFORMATION

A list of where to go for help and additional resources is provided at Appendix 1 and 2 on pages 100-107.

RECOGNISE
symptoms
of health
difficulties

One of the easiest ways to do this is to know your mates well. Any change in their usual behaviour is often the first sign of a health problem. Other symptoms of difficulties can include physical reactions like nausea, sweating or shaking; thinking reactions like poor concentration or negativity; behavioural changes like disrupted sleep; excessive drinking/smoking or increased aggression; and emotional reactions like sadness, anger or anxiety.

ENGAGE
the person

After you've recognised any of the symptoms, engage with your mate. Talk to them – for example, you might say "I've noticed X, Y and Z, are you ok?" Have this conversation in a private environment if possible, just be yourself and listen to them.

ACTIVELY
listen

Once you have engaged with your mate, you need to actively listen. Active listening involves both hearing and accurately understanding what the speaker has said. Your job during this step is to listen to your mate, reflect back what you are hearing and clarify any differences ["so it sounds like you're feeling angry because of X, Y, Z, am I right?"]. Allow your mate time to vent if need be, and don't be afraid to allow some silence in your conversation – sometimes people need silence in order to think. This is not the time to argue with them, tell them you know how they feel, or try to solve their problems. Simply listen, reflect and clarify.

CHECK
suicide risk
and risk of
harm to
others

If, after engaging and actively listening, you are at all concerned that your mate is at risk of suicide, self-harm or harm to other people, you need to ask them about it directly. For example, ask your mate, "have you been thinking about suicide?" If they're considering suicide or self-harm they must be taken to a doctor for assessment. If they're considering harming others, the police need to be involved. In both cases, you need to remove any threats where it's safe to do so. You should never agree to keep secrets or leave them alone if they are in crisis.

TAKE
action

If your mate is not suicidal or homicidal, and you are no longer concerned about their health, you might choose to simply monitor them. However, if you think they would benefit from support, there are numerous avenues of referral that you can access, which are listed in Appendix 1.

Remember, mates don't ignore their mate who is struggling, or think that someone else will help them. Be a mate in both the good and the bad times – use the REACT Mental Health First Aid strategy if ever you're concerned about a mate's mental health.

Talk to a mental health professional if you are concerned about someone.

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APPENDIX 1

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

PHONE LINES

For any crisis, including medical emergencies, call 111.

WHO	NUMBER TO CALL	ABOUT
Need to Talk Helpline	1737	Free call (or free text) to talk to (or text with) a trained counsellor
Lifeline	0800 54 33 54	Confidential counselling service
Healthline	0800 61 11 16	Free health advice from trained registered nurses 24/7
SHINE	0508 74 46 33	Domestic abuse helpline 9am – 11pm, 7 days
Depression helpline	0800 11 17 57	24/7 telephone counselling support for those experiencing depression
Womens Refuge	0800 REFUGE or 0800 73 38 43	24/7 crisis line for women dealing with violence in their lives
Mensline	0800 63 67 54	Helpline for men
Alcohol Drug Helpline	0800 787 797 (or free text 8691)	24/7 confidential non-judgemental help and advice
Youthline	0800 37 66 63 (or text 234)	24/7 helpline
Citizens Advice Bureau	0800 36 72 22	Free independent service to help people understand their rights and obligations and to provide the confidence and support to take action
Parent helpline	0800 56 88 56	Support, practical advice and strategies for all parenting issues

APPENDIX 2

USEFUL WEBSITES, TOOLS AND APPS

There are a range of useful websites that have information and tools for managing and building physical and mental health.

FREE DOWNLOADABLE PHONE APPS:



Breathe2Relax – portable stress management tool



Calm – tools to meditate, sleep and relax



CBT-I Coach – improving sleep habits and dealing with insomnia



Headspace – guided meditation



High Res – tools for managing daily stress and building resilience



Living Well – practical resources and support and suggestions to support living a healthier lifestyle



Lose It – weight loss programme and calorie counting



Mindshift – aims to help teens and young adults cope with stress and anxiety. Issues: anxiety, depression, general well-being, head injury, post-traumatic stress, and stress



Mood tracker – tool for tracking emotional experiences over time



MYRIVR – enables the community to connect to and self-refer to services, based on needs



Nike Plus Run – running and motivation related tips and tools



Nike Training – workouts and fitness plans



Performance Triad – information and tips for healthy habits including sleep, nutrition & activity



Virtual Hopebox – resilience tools

> **myhealthapps.net** is a UK-based directory of useful health apps

USEFUL WEBSITES

General health information, stories and tools

- > **www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living**
Information about health issues and healthy living
- > **www.menshealthnz.org.nz/health-topics**
Information about men's health issues
- > **www.hpa.org.nz**
Health Promotion Agency – Inspiring New Zealanders to lead healthier lives
- > **www.livingwell.org.au**
Practical resources and support for men
- > **www.myrivr.co.nz**
MyRIVR gives you access to over 20,000 helpers from more than 7,000 health and social services across NZ
- > **www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services**
Information about finding a GP, fees and supporting services
- > **www.healthpoint.co.nz**
Information about healthcare providers, services and common treatments
- > **www.healthed.govt.nz**
Public health resources which support healthier New Zealand communities

Nutrition and physical activity

- > **www.ausport.gov.au/ais/nutrition**
The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) website contains a range of resources, including fact sheets, recipes, and research, and a detailed supplement and sports food section
- > **www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/eating-activity-guidelinesfor-new-zealand-adults-oct15_0.pdf**
- > **www.dietitians.org.nz/public-info**
Useful info and apps
- > **www.gmb.io/ff**
GMB Focused Flexibility
- > **www.stack.com/c/flexibility-training**
Stack Flexibility
- > **www.healthykids.org.nz**
Ideas to get your family eating, moving and sleeping well

Alcohol

- > **www.alcohol.org.nz**
Information, advice, research and resources to help prevent & reduce alcohol-related harm
- > **www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz**
Information on how and where to get help with alcohol and drug problems

Tobacco

- > **www.smokefree.org.nz/help-advice/stopping-smoking**
A list of services in New Zealand to help you stop smoking
- > **Text 4006**
Stop smoking text number

Gambling

- > **www.choicenotchance.org.nz**
Support for problems with gambling

Mental health, resilience and relaxation

- > **www.mentalhealth.org.nz**
Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand – information, stories, tools and support
- > **www.thelowdown.co.nz**
Information, stories, and interactive site designed for young people dealing with daily living
- > **www.beyondblue.org.au**
Information about recognising and managing anxiety and depression (Australia)
- > **www.likeminds.org.nz**
Aims to address stigma and discrimination sometimes associated with mental illness, contains resources, help options and stories from people with mental illness
- > **www.livemoreawesome.com**
Information about managing depression, initiatives and events
- > **www.leva.co.nz**
Support for Pasifika families and communities to build positive health and wellbeing outcomes
- > **www.thiswayup.org.au**
Online self help courses (Australia)
- > **www.headspace.com**
Meditation and mindfulness made easy
- > **www.buddify.com**
Mindfulness tools
- > **www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/21**
Mindfulness tools
- > **www.depression.org.nz**
Information, resources and support for people with depression or anxiety
- > **www.depression.org.nz/get-better/the-journal**
The Journal – A self-help tool to support people experiencing depression
- > **www.calm.auckland.ac.nz**
Computer Assisted Learning for the Mind (University of Auckland)

-
- > **www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh**
Self-help resources for recognising and managing stress (Ministry of Health)
 - > **www.mentalhealth.intuto.com/public/course/784686**
Mental Health in the Workplace – Employee toolkit produced by the Mental Health Foundation and State Services Commission containing info about mental health problems in the workplace, and about your rights and responsibilities as an employee
 - > **www.vitalityworks.co.nz/mental-wellbeing-for-new-zealand-workplaces**
Tips for creating a mentally healthy workforce
 - > **www.depressiontoolkit.org**
Tools to learn how to manage mild to moderate stress and depressive symptoms
 - > **www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/controlling-anger**
Tips for controlling anger

Social support services

- > **www.cab.org.nz/Pages/home.aspx**
Information and advice, community directory
- > **www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us**
Social support services and entitlements

Finances

- > **www.sorted.org.nz/Sorted**
Free website with a range of Information, tools, financial guides, and links to additional resources
- > **www.cab.org.nz**
Citizens Advice Bureau

Families and relationships

- > **www.supportingfamilies.org.nz**
Support, information and resources for those supporting family members with mental illness
- > **www.govt.nz/browse/family-and-whanau-separating-or-getting-divorced/relationship-counselling**
List of community organisations and local support
- > **www.areyouok.org.nz**
Includes a range of services to help including family violence programmes
- > **www.barnardos.org.nz**
Barnardos provide support and advice for parents, children and families
- > **www.familyworks.org.nz**
Provides counselling for families and parenting programmes
- > **www.skylight.org.nz**
offers services to those facing tough times of change, loss, trauma and grief. Whatever the cause, and whatever their age (including for children)
- > **www.govt.nz/browse/family-and-whanau/separating-or-getting-divorced/relationship-counselling**
Relationship support

Parenting

- > **www.vodafone.com/content/digital-parenting/parents-and-carers.html**
Tips for parents to help their children stay safe in the digital world
- > **www.parenthelp.org.nz**
Parent help
- > **www.skylight.org.nz**
Skylight provides resources for parents such as tips for setting limits or helping children deal with separation
- > **www.standforchildren.org.nz**
Stand delivers family development programmes and home and school based social work services
- > **www.kiwifamilies.co.nz/articles/relationship-services**
Information about maintaining healthy relationships
- > **www.familyservices.govt.nz**
A range of providers and community support groups in your community across all of NZ
- > **www.skip.org.nz**
Tips for parents of under five year olds

Youth and children

- > **www.sparx.org.nz**
Online tool for young people sponsored by Ministry of Health
- > **www.headspace.org.au**
Website for young people for when life gets stressful
- > **www.reachout.com**
Australian youth mental health information service that includes a variety of apps and tools for young people

APPENDIX 3

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

	HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
MOOD	Normal mood fluctuations; Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/impatient; Nervous; Sadness/overwhelmed	Anger; Anxiety; Pervasively sad/hopeless	Angry outbursts/aggression; Excessive anxiety/panic attacks; Depressed/suicidal thoughts
ATTITUDE	Good sense of humour; Performing well; In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm; Procrastination; Forgetfulness	Negative attitude; Poor performance or workaholic; Poor concentration/decisions	Can't perform duties/control behaviour or concentrate; Engaging in behaviours which appear to be markedly out of character
SLEEP	Normal sleep patterns; Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping; Intrusive thoughts; Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep; Recurrent images/nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep; Sleeping too much or too little
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Physically well; Good energy level	Muscle tension/headaches; Low energy	Increased aches and pains; Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses; Constant fatigue
ACTIVITY	Physically and socially active	Decreased activity/socialising	Avoidance; Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone; Changes to appetite (increased or decreased)
HABITS	No/limited drug and alcohol use/gambling	Regular but controlled drug and alcohol use/gambling	Increased drug and alcohol use/ gambling – hard to control	Frequent drug and alcohol or gambling use – inability to control with severe consequences; Out of character decision making e.g. spending

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Rate where you think you are on each of the six dimensions based on the last two–four weeks. Remember where we sit changes depending on what is going on in our lives, so don't worry if you're not tracking so well at the moment. Be honest as this will help you to understand what you can do to shift back into the green.

What should I do?

GREEN

Healthy adaptive coping

The same tools we use as buffers in times of challenge will also help us to thrive and perform to our potential every day. Maintain a positive attitude, nurture support systems, focus on the task in hand and break problems into manageable tasks. Continue to strengthen resilience and build peak performance.

YELLOW

Mild, common and reversible distress or impairment

Recognise limits and take breaks. Get adequate rest, food and regular physical activity. Identify and resolve problems early. Use self-management tools and support strategies to build mental health.

ORANGE

Severe, persistent injury or impairment

Make self-care a priority, maintain social contacts; don't withdraw. Use self-management tools and support strategies to build mental health. Talk to someone and seek professional help if you are worried.

RED

Clinical illnesses and disorders requiring more concentrated medical care

Talk to someone you trust and seek help from a mental health professional. Look at Appendix 1 for resources and how to access them.

RESILIENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Complete and score the assessment below to accurately determine your current resilience levels. This will help you to identify possible areas to focus on to help you through change.

Score each resilience statement as follows:

RESILIENCE STATEMENT	SCORE
I approach new situations with enthusiasm.	
I enjoy achieving the goals I have set.	
I can apply the organisation's values in my work.	
I express my feelings appropriately.	
I enjoy learning new things.	
I take responsibility for my results.	
I ask for support when I need it.	
I recognise when I am stressed.	
I believe I can influence the direction I take in life.	
I actively maintain contact with others.	
I eat a well balanced healthy diet.	
I take time out for myself when needed.	
I think challenges offer me some lessons.	
I know my own strengths & weaknesses.	
I know how to relax under pressure.	
I have a positive view of my future.	
I have a plan for my work tasks.	
I keep myself physically fit.	
I am able to retain a positive outlook during change.	
I know what the purpose of my job is.	
I build strong networks.	
I am realistic about what is possible.	
I show empathy to others' difficulties and concerns.	
I have a strong set of beliefs that I follow.	
I am generally optimistic.	
I bounce back from difficulties.	
I act when opportunities arise.	
I act decisively when things are not working.	
I undertake activities outside work for my own enjoyment.	
I organise my time and prioritise tasks.	
Total Resilience Score:	
Match your score against the table on the next page.	

How well am I doing with my resilience?

SCORE	RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT
0-20	You struggle with change and uncertainty and might find things feel stressful at times. You probably prefer life to be a bit more certain and stable so that you can relax and look forward to things. It is possible you find yourself spending a lot of time feeling as though everything is a struggle. You may feel that things 'happen' to you and around you because you have no control or influence. You can definitely help yourself by identifying areas where you want to make improvements. You may find it helpful to develop a plan of action. It might help to get someone to support you with it, as a coach or mentor.
21-45	You have some skills and strategies for handling pressure, tough times and difficulties. However, they probably tend to come and go, especially if you feel as though things are mounting up. When this happens, you find it harder to think and act positively. You may have difficulty coping with the demands you feel are being made of you. Think about where you can take some actions to raise your scores and start to increase your personal resilience.
46-70	Many people would probably think that you are quite good at dealing with change, challenge and pressure because you are usually able to use your resources to do so. On balance, you are more positive in the way you view things, and able to handle set-backs without getting too down about life. Being able to do this some of the time does tell you that you could do it more often, and become even more resilient in the face of difficulties. Think about specific elements that might need attention, and plan to start doing something about them.
70-90	You have a number of skills and personal qualities which help you to cope with pressure, from whatever source. In fact, you probably quite enjoy challenge and change and handle yourself confidently. You recognise that you are able to take responsibility for yourself, your thoughts and your feelings. This helps you maintain a resilient attitude and to stay positive and have a strong sense of purpose and direction.

The checklists below are designed to help you reflect on and plan to build your resilience.⁸ Research suggests that focusing on these areas will help build your resilience.

1 – PERSONAL	2 – IN MY TEAM AT WORK	3 – MY WORK PATTERN
I take short breaks regularly to stay fresh.	I take an interest in the experiences and feelings of colleagues.	I am able to prioritise and re-prioritise activities.
I get physical activity or walk during the day.	I welcome new members of staff, inform them of protocol, and check on how they are settling in.	I can say no to taking on more work.
I feel fresh and refreshed.	I participate in social activities associated with the workplace.	I ask for help or support.
I express positive comments about my work, my colleagues and my own value.	I practise active listening skills in discussions.	I am responsive to unexpected requests.
I laugh or smile frequently.	I am reflective (rather than abrupt) in conversations with peers.	I disclose needs and perspectives or opinions in constructive and open ways.
I engage in social and pleasurable activities away from work.	I spend time with colleagues during the day.	I keep lists, update calendars and plan ahead.
I spend enough time away from work to be in regular contact with partner, family and friends.	I recognise when colleagues need time to be alone or not disturbed.	I come to work and leave work within standard working hours.
I reflect on my feelings regularly.	I respect the privacy of team members.	I am able to complete work schedules without needing to work overtime or take work home.
I am planning for a vacation.	I celebrate special events with team members.	I take leave when it is due and disconnect completely from work.
I spend quiet time listening to music, reading, in reflection, meditation or in prayer.	I respect and try to understand differences between team members.	I share with my manager how I prefer to be managed.
	I encourage colleagues to look after themselves.	I reflect on my work practices.
	I consult with colleagues for their opinions on work issues.	I think about future goals or desired vocational pathways.

8 Adapted from Save the Children Fund USA Staff Support Programme Stratos NZ.

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

Another approach to building and maintaining positive mental health is, the Mental Health Foundation's approach; The Five Ways to Wellbeing.

- > Give
- > Be Active
- > Keep Learning
- > Take Notice
- > Connect

The Mental Health Foundation has also created a toolkit to support this approach⁹ which is available on their website www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/42.

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING



9 Five Ways to Wellbeing at Work Toolkit: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/42

APPENDIX 4

TIPS FOR GETTING AND STAYING ACTIVE

TIPS TO HELP YOU GET ACTIVE

- > Diarise regular exercise like you would any other important meeting.
- > Make sure you've got comfortable shoes/clothes and shower gear at work if you need it.
- > Build physical activity into your daily life.
- > Plan to do more jobs around the garden and house.
- > Walk/cycle to work or park further away and walk the last bit of your commute.
- > Take the stairs.
- > Walk to see a colleague rather than calling or emailing.
- > Have walking meetings.
- > 'Play' more – with the kids, with the dog, or on your own.
- > Create a buddy system with friends, family or colleagues to encourage you to be physically active more.
- > Set a goal – it might be to walk three times next week, or to run the New York Marathon next year!

TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY ACTIVE

- > **Start slowly.** When we become much more active than usual, the risk of injury goes up. If you're just getting into high-intensity aerobic exercise like running, it's important to pace yourself and not overdo it.
- > **Add variety.** With consistent training the body will adapt to a particular exercise, which is why it is important to vary the routine. This will also help you stay motivated. Consider cross-training, adding new activities and exercises, or just doing something physical for fun.
- > **Fuel your body** to optimize your health and performance. What you eat and drink is just as important as when and how much you eat and drink. Eating more calories than you burn will increase body weight, but consuming too few calories will likely cause you to feel tired and perform poorly.

-
- > **Minimise the likelihood of injury.** If you have a health condition or have been injured, talk to your doctor about an appropriate fitness programme for you. Injuries can occur during fitness training, but there are a few easy steps we can take to lower our risk of getting hurt:
 - » **Listen to your body.** Increasing physical activity levels suddenly (in volume and/or intensity), extending duration and not allowing sufficient time for recovery can all lead to overtraining and injury. Listen to the warning signs your body gives you. If your body is tired or too sore from a previous workout, take a day off, cross-train, or work out at a much lower intensity.
 - » **Warm up and cool down.** Every workout should begin with a warm up, which is necessary to prepare the body for exercise by increasing heart rate and blood flow to working muscles. Every workout should end with a cool down. Time spent performing five to 10 minutes of low-intensity cardio activity followed by stretching immediately after the workout will decrease muscle soreness and aid in recovery, both helping to prepare the body for the next workout. Read and watch more about warming up at ACC's SportSmart website: accsportsmart.co.nz/warmup
 - > **Stay hydrated.** This means drinking enough water/fluids before, during and after exercising. Experts generally recommend drinking about six-eight cups (1.5-2L) of water throughout the day. However, if it is hot or you are exercising or playing sport you may need more. A good indicator of your hydration is the colour of your urine – it should be pale yellow; if it is dark yellow you are dehydrated.

WHAT IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT TIME?

First ask yourself whether you really don't have time or if something else is getting in the way? If work, a dislike of physical activity, poor organisation, or family commitments are putting you off, take a step back and look for solutions. Sometimes physical activity itself can improve your efficiency at work or home. Physical activity that clears your head may help you focus so that the time taken to be active is actually earned back due to greater productivity.

If time is still an issue, be physically active while you work or are doing other jobs. Do squats while you brush your

teeth, calf raises while you wash up, or prone holds while you watch TV. Any physical activity is better than none so do bite size chunks when you can and they'll soon add up.

If time is still an issue, low-volume High Intensity Interval training or HIIT is an efficient way to train. Alternating intense bursts of activity with low intensity recovery periods can improve cardio-respiratory fitness and help control blood sugar levels and blood pressure. HIIT has also been shown to reduce injury risk and improve mental health.

Remember, do not launch into strenuous physical activity if you are unwell or out of condition.

What is your 'fitness age'?

A recent study of fitness and lifespan suggests that a person's so-called fitness age is a better predictor of longevity than chronological age. The good news is that, unlike your actual age, your fitness age can decrease.

Fitness age is determined primarily by your Vo2max, which is a measure of your body's ability to take in and utilize oxygen. Vo2max indicates your current cardiovascular endurance.

Getting your Vo2max accurately assessed can be expensive and time consuming, but this online tool estimates your Vo2max based on factors such as your age, gender, waist circumference and exercise habits. It's not perfect but it will give you an idea: worldfitnesslevel.org.

People with a fitness age significantly below their chronological age have a significantly reduced risk of dying prematurely... a good incentive to be physically active!

FALLING ASLEEP

Unfortunately getting to sleep is one of those cases where 'the harder you try, the harder it is.' We all know that concentrating on or worrying about falling asleep makes the achievement even more elusive. Checking the clock only to realise you've been in bed for 45 minutes without nodding off can be frustrating and only serves to make you more alert. Similarly, for many, lying in bed is the first time all day that they have time to think.

It can be hard to relax with the barrage of important, but non-urgent thoughts competing for your attention. Worries, responsibilities and to-do-lists can all start ruminating in our brain and prevent sleep. It can be hard to stop counterproductive thoughts entering our minds, so instead of simply trying to block them, we can replace them with calming, sleep-inducing alternatives.

Thought exercises that occupy sufficient cognitive space to hold off unwanted thoughts may be effective tools. This is where the age-old advice of counting sheep comes in but there are some (arguably more effective) alternatives you can try. Before doing any of these techniques get into the position in which you will fall asleep. Don't worry if your mind wanders, just gently bring it back to the activity and pick up where you left off.

- > **Imagine a place where you feel relaxed.** What does it feel, look, sound and smell like? It could be your favourite beach, a waterfall in the bush or anywhere you feel calm. It can be real or imagined - but try to go into so much detail that you feel as though you really are there.
- > **Imagine a process.** It may be a walk you take regularly, a task you do often that has many small steps or a routine you go through. Picture the process in detail, paying attention to minute details and imagine that you are actually going through the motions.
- > **Try progressive relaxation.** Imagine your body relaxing one part at a time from your toes to your head. Go slowly and remember to relax even your jaw, eyes and the muscles around your skull. You may find it easiest to contract a muscle as tight as you can and then let go or simply will the muscle to relax. As you let go of tension you may feel as though your body is becoming heavier, this is a sign that it's working. Imagine yourself slowly sinking deeper into your mattress.
- > **Try counting backwards.** Start at 1,000 and count backwards in 7s. For a slightly easier version try starting at 300 and subtracting in 3s. Along with distracting you the exercise may give you an outlet for your stress.

- > **What are you grateful for?** While it may sound like an American holiday tradition, taking the time to consider three things that you are thankful for – be they big or small – can put you into a positive state of mind. If done regularly, this exercise can help you approach sleep with a more positive mindset.

Focus on your breath with this technique⁹:

Rhythmic Circular Breathing for Sleep

Feel the breath filling up slowly from the diaphragm through your chest, up to your mouth, then, as you breathe out, imagine yourself blowing the breath out of your mouth, round in a circle back and through an imaginary hole in your tummy to the diaphragm. Take the rhythm fairly slowly. Now you understand the principle, try it. Breathe in from the diaphragm slowly through the chest to the mouth, counting to four and blow it back to the diaphragm in another count of four. Pick your most comfortable, fairly slow, rhythm. The most important part of this is the full involvement of the mind in the circular process of breathing. Keep a mental picture of the circle in your mind and follow it round at all times, making sure that the mind concentrates on and thinks only of this circular rhythm. Then, as there is nothing more interesting going on, you will fall asleep.

9 Livingston-Booth (1985).

TIPS FOR WAKING UP

- > **Don't hit snooze.** Although it's tempting to stay in bed for as long as possible, sleeping in short intervals until you absolutely have to get up will not do you any favours. Try an alarm app that requires you to solve a problem or take a photo of something before it will turn off. This will force you to wake up fully and give you more time for a low stress morning routine.
- > **Get up when you first wake up.** When you first wake up your head is free from clutter and distraction. Use this to your advantage. Instead of reaching straight for your phone before you get out of bed, get up and think through your day ahead while you get ready.
- > **Make your bed.** A simple but effective way to start off a productive and organised day. Getting dressed as soon as you get up has a similar effect.
- > **Open the curtains or turn on the lights.** Darkness causes an increase in the hormone melatonin that helps us fall asleep. Light has the opposite effect. Exposing yourself to bright light early in the morning tells your body it's time to get up.
- > **Talk to someone.** Social contact in the morning can help to break your morning slumber. Alternatively, play some upbeat music.
- > **Wash your face with cold water.**
- > **Physical activity.** It doesn't have to be much but a brief bout of physical activity can speed up the waking process and make you feel more alert.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION¹⁰

Sleep deprivation impairs our higher order thinking such as decision making, planning and execution. These functions occur in the brain's pre frontal cortex. Because of its importance in our daily lives and the role of sleep in recovery from, and preparation for, waking, this region is thought to be particularly susceptible to sleep deprivation.

Sleep deprivation can lead to:

- > impaired ability to communicate effectively – poor detection of social cues and lower inhibition of inappropriate behaviour
- > lack of innovation
- > inflexibility of thought processes
- > getting side-tracked by distraction
- > over-reliance on previous strategies – sticking with something that has worked before
- > unwillingness to try out novel strategies
- > unreliable memory for when events occurred – better at remembering what happened than when it happened
- > change in mood (loss of empathy with colleagues)
- > inability to deal with surprise
- > poor appreciation of one's own strengths and weaknesses – may get in over your head
- > impaired risk assessment – underestimation of risk
- > failure to revise strategies following new information – ignoring the significance of new intel and sticking with plan A.

COUNTERMEASURES TO SLEEP DEPRIVATION¹¹

The number one remedy for sleepiness is, without a doubt, sleep. However, this is not always feasible, so it is important to know what you can do to effectively improve your ability to function until you can catch up on sleep. There are a number of commonly accepted countermeasures that, despite what we are led to believe, range from briefly or mildly effective to completely ineffective and even counterproductive. In contrast, napping and caffeine intake are effective countermeasures. Napping has been shown to boost alertness, productivity and mood in sleep deprived individuals.

DID YOU KNOW?

17-19 hours of total sleep deprivation has the same impact on reaction time, coordination, vigilance, memory, divided attention as a Blood Alcohol Content of 0.05% – the legal limit for driving in New Zealand.¹²

10 Harrison, y., & Horne, J. A. [2000].

11 Hilditch, C. J., Dorrian, J., & Banks, S. [2016]

12 Williamson, A. M., & Feyer, A. M. [2000].

OVERCOMING FEAR OF FAILURE

Most of us will stumble and fall in life. Doors will get slammed in our faces, and we might make some bad decisions. Failure can teach us things about ourselves that we would never have learned otherwise.

For instance, failure can help you discover how strong a person you are, help you discover your truest friends, or find unexpected motivation to succeed. Often, valuable insights come only after a failure and help us build our resilience in the face of future challenges. Accepting and learning from those insights is key to succeeding in life.

The fear of failing can be immobilizing – it can cause us to do nothing, and therefore resist moving forward. Fear of failure is when we allow that fear to stop us doing the things that can move us forward to achieve our goals. It's almost impossible to go through life without experiencing some kind of failure. The wonderful thing about failure is that it's entirely up to us to decide how to look at it. We can choose to see failure as 'the end of the world,' or as proof of just how inadequate we are. Or, we can look at failure as the incredible learning experience that it often is. Every time we fail at something, we can choose to look for the lesson we're meant to learn. These lessons are very important; they're how we grow, and how we keep from making that same mistake again. Failures stop us only if we let them.

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES¹³

Being in the moment

Sit back and feel the weight of the book in your hands, feel the texture of the cover. As you breathe in and out deeply, feel the temperature in the room on your skin. Random thoughts might come to mind. Simply observe and accept them as they pass by, as if they are cars going slowly by. You don't have to stop any of the 'cars' to examine them, just let them pass by. By practising this type of observing and acceptance, you can detach from your worries and concerns, they can simply drift by, not sticking around long enough to take root. By detaching from your thoughts they become less present in your mind. By being in the moment you can cleanse yourself of the nuisance worries and anxiety about what to do about something in the future that might not even happen.

Being present in the moment allows your brain to experience the vibrancy and richness of the now. Maintaining an observing perspective helps you develop a non-judgemental attitude; you delay reacting to the situation until all of the information is put into perspective.

13 www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today
www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/mindfulness-exercise.html

Engaging the half knowing smile

Smile ever so slightly, just enough to lift the outside edges of your lips up. If you like you can think of something mildly funny or someone or something that makes you feel happy. The simple behaviour of smiling ever so quietly cultivates a quiet mind.

Power pose

Stand with your feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart, with your hands on your hips. Then inhale slowly and deeply for four to five seconds. Don't rush it - you want to get your lungs full without holding your breath. Then exhale slowly, for about six seconds, emptying your lungs completely. Continue breathing in this way, as you remain in the pose for two minutes (browse the internet for 'power poses' to see other options, if this one doesn't work for you).

Doing non-verbal power poses for even just two minutes can result in huge reductions in the stress hormone cortisol, with associated increases in testosterone, a hormone associated with confident, assertive behaviours. People who practised power poses briefly prior to an evaluation interview were rated as more confident and assertive.¹⁴ At work, when you feel stress increasing, lean back in your chair and open your chest by moving your hands back and rolling your shoulders back.

One minute breathing

This exercise can be done anywhere at any time, standing up or sitting down. All you have to do is focus on your breath for just one minute. Start by breathing in and out slowly, holding your breath for a count of six seconds once you've inhaled. Then breathe out slowly, letting the breath flow effortlessly out. Leave your eyes open and breathe normally. Be ready to catch your mind from wandering off (because it will) and return your attention to your breath. Use this exercise many times throughout the day to restore your mind to the present moment and to restore your mind to clarity and peace. Over time, you can gradually extend the duration of this exercise into longer and longer periods.

The ten second count

In this exercise, rather than focussing on your breath, you just close your eyes and focus your attention on slowly counting to ten. If your concentration wanders off, start back at number one! For most people, it goes something like this...

"one...two...three...do I have to buy milk today or did John say he'd do it? oh, oops, I'm thinking!"

"one...two...three...four...this isn't so hard after all... oh no...that's a thought! Start again."

"one...two...three... now I've got it. I'm really concentrating now..."

Drop anchor

This is a simple exercise to centre yourself and connect with the world around you. Practise it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

- > Plant your feet on the floor.
- > Push them down – notice the floor beneath you, supporting you. Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
- > Notice your entire body – and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.
- > Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.

Notice five things

This exercise will help you centre yourself and engage with your environment. Practise it when you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

- > Pause for a moment.
- > Look around and notice five things that you can see. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.
- > Notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body (for example, your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air on your face, your feet upon the floor, your back against the chair).
- > Finally, do all of the above simultaneously.

FORMING HEALTHY HABITS

Goals give us a direction in which we want to head, but in order to get there we may need to change our behaviour. Maintaining a change in behaviour consistently and over time can be difficult, which is why many a New Year's resolution fails by mid-January. Instead, if we make the new behaviour a habit, it can come almost naturally. A habit is an automatic behavioural response to a certain environmental cue that is developed through repetition over time. Essentially, it's what you do without even thinking about it.

Certain habits can have either positive or negative impacts on overall health and performance. Understanding how habits are formed and how they can be broken is an important factor for self-improvement and goal achievement.

Habits can be formed when a behaviour is continually associated with a specific situation. When you pair an action with a context the two will become associated in your brain. Consistently and repeatedly pairing the action with the context will strengthen this neural connection. Eventually, this will lead to automaticity, the ability to do something without thinking about it, and a habit is formed.

Habits are especially important in achieving long-term goals. Outcomes such as losing weight require a long-term commitment to eating healthily and exercising frequently. Without forming healthy habits your ability to stick to your goals for healthy diet and regular exercise depend on memory and your state of motivation.

At first, a plan will help you stick to your intended behaviour change. Implementation or coping plans are if-then rules that force you to prepare for certain situations. E.g. if X happens I will do Y because I want to achieve Z. Coping plans help us turn intentions into action, and if followed over time, form habits. However, until the habit is formed the action will still be dependent on motivation, so it is important that you continue to remind yourself why you are undergoing the behaviour change. Coping plans can make it easier to stick to your intended behaviour. If you have prepared for the situation of smelling your favourite, indulgent food by telling

yourself you will do five press-ups or eat an apple, it will be much easier to avoid falling into old ways by default as you will have a preferred alternative.

A plan may be easier to stick to with some external reminders. Posting notes around your house in certain contexts [e.g. in the fridge to remind yourself to choose milk rather than juice, next to your bed to remind yourself to read a book instead of looking at a screen before bed] can be helpful. Or consider asking a friend to text you with reminders of the habit you are trying to form or the goal you are trying to achieve.

ACTIVITY

If you want to introduce a new habit into your life try this activity. It will help you prepare for unexpected barriers so that you will be able to stay on track to achieving your goal.

<p>ACTION PLAN</p> <p>What new habit do you want to develop?</p>	I will..	
<p>COPING PLAN</p> <p>What barriers might you face? If they occur, what will you do about them?</p>	If...	I will..
	If...	I will..
	If...	I will..

Habit formation does not require extrinsic rewards if you are intrinsically motivated, however, having someone support your intrinsic motivation with praise and acknowledgement can be beneficial.

The time it takes to form a habit varies with individual factors but a general idea is to expect it to take on average 66 days (between 18–254 days). Contexts in which to perform the new behaviour should be event-based rather than time-based. It is easier to associate a new behaviour with an event such as arriving at work, or going to bed as you will be unlikely to ‘miss’ these cues. In contrast time-based contexts require you to monitor the clock and offer less unique cues with which to associate the new behaviour.

Introduce a new habit

1. Take note of how your current habits may be impairing your ability to reach your goals.
2. Consider opportunities for improvement. You know best what cues and behaviours would work for you.
3. Decide to make a change. This must be self-driven because you are the one who has to do the mahi. Internalising and accepting the need to change creates intrinsic motivation which is much more beneficial than extrinsic motivation, which is formed when external forces support or demand the change.
4. Close the gap between intention and behaviour. Plan how you will do what you want to do.
5. Initiate the new behaviour. Choose a behaviour that will make you feel good. If you reap rewards immediately your initial decision to change will be seen as the right call.
6. Repeat the behaviour in a consistent context. E.g. eat fruit at the same time in the same place each day. If you fail to perform the behaviour in response to the cue all is not lost, the behaviour must be performed consistently but not rigidly (missing one opportunity has negligible effects), so if you forget once don't give up.

Other strategies to improve habits

- > Make small and sustainable changes to begin with – these are more likely to stick in the long term.
- > Focus on improving your average over a week rather than focusing on just one day (e.g. aim to improve average kilometres run per week or number of vegetables eaten).
- > Identify what triggers you to perform a bad habit and replace it with a better alternative.
- > Make the habit rewarding (e.g. listen to music you like while running).
- > Make the desired behaviour easier to do (e.g. packing gym bag the night before, having only healthy food in the house).

WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

A mental health condition occurs when a set of distressing symptoms (thoughts, feelings and behaviours) have a severe impact on our psychological, social (including relationships) and vocational functioning. It is not always easy to recognise or diagnose a mental health condition, because the nature and severity of symptoms can vary from one person to the next. Our personal characteristics and the environment in which we are living, influence how we will experience a mental health condition. For example, high-stress environments can trigger symptoms.

None of us are immune to mental health issues. Anxiety is extremely common, often as a result of the pace of life spanning relationship challenges, work pressures, financial stress, poor diet etc. Depression is also extremely common. According to the Ministry of Health, one in five New Zealanders will experience mental illness or addiction in any one year, and one in six will report a diagnosis of anxiety or depression in their lifetime. Nearly 10% of adults are reported to be on medication for anxiety or depression. So that probably means that you or someone you know isn't on the top of their game right now.

FEELING DOWN

Depression is common in New Zealand, and at least one in five of us will experience a period of depression in our lifetime. Depression is a very distressing and disabling condition. Left untreated, periods of depression tend to last longer and happen more often, so it's important to get help.

Being depressed in mood for short periods of time is a normal human reaction to an event or some bad news. This is not depression, which is a mental health condition associated with an almost constant state of low mood, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities that used to be enjoyable. Life becomes flat and grey, and nothing seems fun, exciting, or enjoyable anymore. In more severe cases, the person may believe that life is no longer worth living.

Common symptoms of depression are:

- > feeling low, down in the dumps, miserable
- > feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and hopelessness
- > lack of energy, feeling easily tired
- > lack of enthusiasm, having difficulties with motivation
- > loss of interest and pleasure in normal activities
- > feeling angry and irritable
- > lack of appetite and weight loss
- > loss of interest in sex
- > difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much
- > poor concentration, memory, and decision making
- > thoughts of suicide and/or death.

Why do I have depression?

There are many situations that can trigger depression, including loss of a loved one, loss of a job, a traumatic event, and relationship difficulties. However, most of the time depression isn't caused by just one thing. A history of depression in the family can make it more likely that someone might develop depression, but it doesn't mean they definitely will.

ANXIETY

Social anxiety is very common, so don't feel like you are alone here. It's actually the third biggest mental health condition. It is commonly the fear of social situations that involve interaction with other people. You could say social anxiety is the fear and anxiety of being negatively judged and evaluated by other people. There are three parts to social anxiety: physical sensations, actions and avoidance, thoughts and beliefs. Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

Physical sensations

When people with social anxiety find themselves in a situation where they are worried they will be judged, their fight-flight-freeze response is triggered, and they might have some or all of these sensations: racing heart, blushing, dizziness or feeling faint, sweating or hot flushes, trembling or shaking, mind going 'blank', nausea or butterflies in the stomach.

Actions and avoidance

A person with social anxiety might start making up excuses or reasons to avoid situations that make them feel anxious.

Thoughts and beliefs

People with social anxiety often have unhelpful thoughts about their own behaviour or how they are being judged by others.

Generalised anxiety is very common. People with generalised anxiety tend to worry excessively about lots of things – family, finances, health and issues at work. These feelings last for several months or longer. Other symptoms can be: feeling constantly on edge, experiencing muscle tension, having difficulty sleeping, feeling tired or easily exhausted, having trouble concentrating on a task, feeling angry and irritable.

Anxiety can be triggered by a stressful event such as losing your job, breaking up with your partner, or it can be brought about by periods of prolonged stress or, most likely, by a combination of things. Sometimes the reasons can be obvious and dealing with the reasons behind it can be of help. Other times the reasons or triggers are not so obvious or may seem relatively minor.

PANIC

Approximately one in thirty Kiwis will suffer from panic disorder at some point in their lives, and one in forty will experience agoraphobia.

When we are exposed to a physical threat, our bodies automatically gear up for the fight-flight-freeze response. We become more alert, our heart starts racing, our muscles tense up, we sweat more, and breathe more rapidly.

These changes are designed to protect us from danger, but sometimes our fight-flight-freeze response is triggered out of the blue when there's no real or immediate danger; this is what's known as a panic attack.

Some people only get panic attacks occasionally, and they can be brought on by stress. Panic disorder is when you have panic attacks quite often, say a couple of times a month or more, and you worry after each panic attack that you might have another one. You may even start having panic attacks about having a panic attack.

It starts when the fight-flight-freeze response is too sensitive, like an overly sensitive car alarm that goes off at the wrong time. You can see there is no outside danger, so you start to assume that your physical symptoms are something more dangerous, a sign that your body isn't working properly. You might start thinking things like, "I'm going crazy", "I'm having a heart attack", or "I'm going to die". This type of thinking leads you to be even more anxious.

Sometimes people get so worried about having a panic attack that they start avoiding certain places or situations, or they can only go into those situations with someone they trust.

If you've found yourself avoiding crowds, being home alone, or not using public transport because it might be difficult to escape, you might have agoraphobia.

FURTHER RESOURCES FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Mental Health foundation has published the following resources:

Are you worried someone is thinking of suicide?

This is a resource containing advice for families, whānau and friends. Its content covers: warning signs for suicide, who is most at risk of suicide, how to help, how to take care of yourself when helping others and how to build a support network.

Suicide: after a suicide attempt

This is a resource containing advice for staying safe after a suicide attempt or self-harm.

Having suicidal thoughts and finding a way back

This is a resource put together by people who have lived through suicidal thoughts and experiments. It contains advice for getting through tough times, what professional help looks like, coping right now, and recovering fully.

You can find these resources on the Mental Health Foundation's website.

APPENDIX 8

FINDING YOUR WHY

PAST

What are the proudest/most stellar moments of your life so far? And why?

Goal	Why?	Why?	Why?
E.g. Traveling overseas	Saw different places	Learned about other cultures	Gained confidence to help others
1.			
2.			
3.			

FUTURE

What are dreams/goals for your life? Would like to be remembered by?
What are you striving to accomplish? Why?

Goal	Why?	Why?	Why?
E.g. Masters Degree	Increase knowledge	Attain greater teaching ability	To help others learn
1.			
2.			
3.			

Thank you to Chaplain Russel Bone from the NZDF for the material in Appendix 8.

PRESENT

Take some time in this stage to really think, to reflect, on your current situation. What do you do? What are some 'verbs' that describe what you currently do?

Why do you work where you work? What is the real reason or the root cause? Ask yourself the 'five whys'. The answer to each 'why' forms the basis of the next why question. Try to make your answers more precise as you go deeper and deeper without jumping to any conclusions.

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

What do you love to do? If there are a lot of things that come up for you when you ask yourself this question, try to narrow it down by asking yourself this question: What do I feel qualified to teach other people? Try to narrow it down to one or two words.

Please be aware the process of diving deep into your past, your present, and your future, could be an emotional journey for some. Take your time reflecting and do not rush the process.

YOUR WHY STATEMENT

Once you boil down your PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE, themes for your “WHY will come through.

Take your time, this is a process. Think about the meaning behind the words themselves. If you feel emotional about your WHY statement, you are in the right place and you have discovered your cause, your belief, your purpose.

Your unique WHY statement will guide you as you seek to make an impactful contribution. Your impact reflects the difference you want to make in the world and your contribution is the primary action you take.

TO _____ SO THAT _____
CONTRIBUTION IMPACT

APPENDIX 9

MAINTAINING SUPPORT NETWORKS, BUILDING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND OVERCOMING LONELINESS

FEELING LONELY?

Researchers at the University of Chicago have found that extreme loneliness increases a person's chances of premature death by 14%.¹⁵ The researchers found that feeling isolated from others can disrupt sleep, elevate blood pressure, increase morning rises in the stress hormone cortisol, alter gene expression in immune cells, increase depression, and lower overall subjective wellbeing. The researchers identified three core dimensions of connectedness linked to healthy relationships, that people of all ages can focus on to improve social connectivity and negate feelings of loneliness.

- > **Intimate Connectedness:** having someone in your life you feel affirms who you are.
- > **Relational Connectedness:** having face-to-face contacts that are mutually rewarding.
- > **Collective Connectedness:** feeling that you're part of a group or collective beyond individual existence.

You can reduce feelings of loneliness by staying socially engaged, consciously tapping into the three dimensions of social connectedness, and making a daily effort to nurture healthy relationships.

15 "Rewarding Social Connections Promote Successful Aging" at a seminar on "The Science of Resilient Ageing" February 16, 2014 – American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Chicago.

SUPPORT NETWORKS

Social contact and support systems have been proven beneficial for maintaining physical and mental health. Scientists believe these benefits stem from a combination of increased mental activity, physical challenge and reduction in stress.

Social support can help you work out problems and relieve stress. Regardless of what you're experiencing, chances are others are dealing with similar issues or have in the past, and may be able to provide you with useful strategies. Even if you're not looking to a supportive network to help you resolve specific issues, interacting with others helps you stay mentally sharp.

In thinking about your support network, consider who you want to include. Include people who are trustworthy and non-judgemental vs overly critical people or people who may make you feel anxious.

If you don't currently have a strong social network, it's never too late to start. Look for opportunities to stay engaged in the lives of others, and to include others in your life. Consider joining or increasing your involvement in recreational, leisure or faith-based groups formed around activities you enjoy. Volunteering or taking a class are other ways to get out there and interact; from these things friendships and relationships are likely to grow.

You may also want to explore networking opportunities on the internet. There are hundreds of social networking sites that cater to virtually every need, interest and age group. While socialising via computer is one option to consider, this type of communication should be balanced with face-to-face connections.

SENSE OF BELONGING

People have a need to feel as though they are valued by others and that they 'fit in' with people around them. When you don't feel a sense of belonging this can contribute to feeling badly about yourself, questioning your abilities, feeling alone or isolated, feeling different from others, feeling lonely, or feeling sad or anxious. Sometimes we can feel a sense of belonging with some people or groups and not others (for example, family, friends, co-workers, community and at home or at work).

When people feel out of place they may isolate themselves from others (closing off opportunities to increase belonging) or act out on negative ways (because they feel different), which only increases the differences. Other feelings and behaviours may arise as well, for example, blaming yourself, questioning your value and worth, and feeling lonely. You may also begin to feel hopeless about being able to fit in or start questioning your skills and likeability.

You are not always able to control your surroundings or who is around you, but you can choose how you react in these situations. You can actively work to increase your sense of belonging. This will help you to feel better about yourself, increase your motivation and energy and lift your mood. New environments are often a bit scary because you don't know what to expect, but new starts can be exciting and fulfilling. To increase your feeling of belonging, you must think it is important and devote energy to connecting with others.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Learn about others or the situation to help you belong in new environments. Remember everyone has personal skills, experiences and characteristics that can be used to help build belonging. Ask yourself:

- > What past experiences do I have that can help you to belong?
- > What are my strengths?
- > How can I use these to create a sense of being valued and fitting in?





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