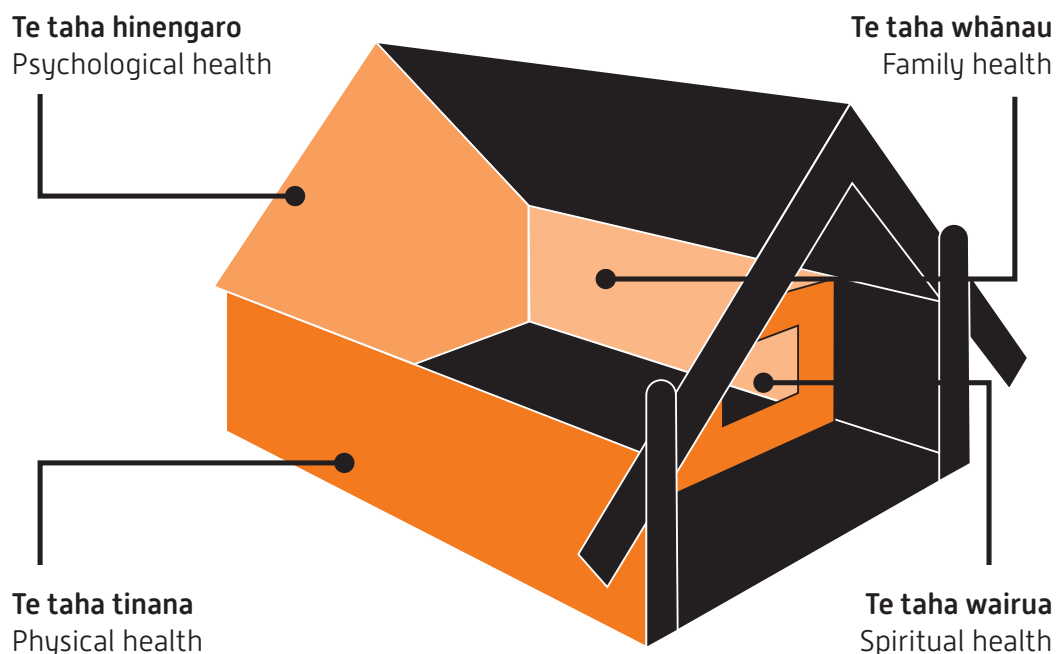


FACILITATION GUIDE

Module 2: Mental health and physical health

Research has found strong linkages between our physical health, mental health, social connectedness and 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 health¹ reinforces the importance of nurturing all four cornerstones of our health.



Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health

¹ Durie, Mason [1998]. *Whaiora: Māori health development*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, pp. 68–74.

Our health over time is shaped by complex interactions between our environment, our individual circumstances and experiences as well as our body's physiology, resilience levels and self-care. It is also important to recognise that health is not a stable dimension and 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 ourselves healthy and performing at the top of our game, and to help regain our health when we are not doing ok.

First, regular physical activity is good for every part of our body: heart, circulation, bones, respiratory system, skin, and brain. Physical activity has been found to help protect us against a range of health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer, and also benefits our brain by reducing tension, improving sleep and aiding concentration.

Second, a balanced, healthy diet is known to contribute to not only our physical health, but also our mental health. Studies show that people suffering from anxiety and depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and ADHD often lack essential nutrients. A notable feature of the diets of patients suffering from mental illnesses is the severe deficiency in nutrients, especially essential vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fatty acids.

Finally, sleep is important for healthy brain function and emotional wellbeing, physical health, energy and appetite, healing and repair, immune system function, productivity, work performance and safety. Not sleeping enough, or sleeping badly, can affect our 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 stroke².

VIDEO CLIPS

Below are useful video clips on how to discuss mental health issues in a positive way:

Mental Health at Work – Mental Health and Physical Health:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=41EG2BzetGo

What are our triggers:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Xb7RT1Bu14

The role of nutrition in mental health:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dqXHHcc5IA

How the food you eat affects your brain:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyQY8a-ng6g

EXERCISE 1: LET'S GET STARTED!

The mind and the body are intrinsically linked. When we improve our physical health, we can experience greater mental and emotional wellbeing. There are small steps we can take that have been proven to help keep us mentally healthy and happy. There are also things in our daily lives that may negatively affect our mental health and it is helpful to try and reduce or eliminate those habits that make us unwell.

AIM: Mental health plays a major role in our ability to maintain good physical health. Mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, affect our ability to participate in healthy behaviours. This can result in problems with physical health, such as chronic diseases, and can decrease a person's ability to participate in treatment and recovery. The aim of this exercise is to recognise the link between physical health and mental health in that physical health can affect our mental health and mental health can our affect physical health.

TASK:

In pairs:

- > List as many things as you can think of that keep us fit, healthy and rested.
- > List as many things as you can think of that stop us from being fit, healthy and rested.
- > Find another pair and together discuss how best to improve the good habits (and reduce the bad ones).

TIME: 5 minutes to write each list and 10 minutes for the discussion. 20-30 minutes in total.

² See for example, Banks, S. (2007). Behavioral and physiological consequences of sleep restriction. *Journal of clinical sleep medicine*, 3(05), 519-528; Editorial (2005). Waking up to the importance of sleep. *Nature*, 437(7063), 1207; and Killgore, W. D. (2010). Effects of sleep deprivation on cognition. In *Progress in brain research*, vol. 185, 105-129. Elsevier.



EXERCISE 2: GETTING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

We can all benefit from regular physical activity. Even a moderate amount of physical activity can improve our health. If we have been inactive for a while, we may want to start with less strenuous activities, such as walking at a gentle pace and gradually increase the levels of exercise until we reach a manageable level. For example, we can start to walk briskly for ten minutes a day, three days a week, and build up slowly from there. As we become fitter, slowly increase the pace, the length of time we are active, and how often we are active. It is a good idea to keep an activity log to track one's progress.

AIM: The aim of these two related tasks listed below is to demonstrate that physical activity improves our health for the following reasons:

- > It works on our heart and body function and increases blood flow.
- > It can help us sleep better.
- > It releases mood enhancing chemicals into our bloodstream.
- > It helps us feel better about ourselves. We feel more in control and it can help with controlling our weight.
- > It provides opportunities for us to have more social interactions.

TASK ONE:

1. Create a timeline along the room, dividing it into six sections based on the following times (as outlined below).
2. Everyone in the room stand up and position themselves at one of the time slots, based on how often they stand up and move around while at work.
3. Those who move about most frequently while at work pair up with those who move the least frequently and discuss some of the reasons why physical activity is difficult to do while at work (for example time pressure, etc) and what can be done about it.
4. Be prepared to share your ideas with the rest of the group.

TIME: 30 minutes.

TASK TWO:

There are a number of physical activities that can easily be integrated into one's daily life; for example, playing with children, walking or cycling to work.

1. In pairs, list the types of physical activities that you find:
 - > the most enjoyable
 - > the easiest to do
 - > the activity that you do most often (10 minutes).
2. Once that task has been completed find another pair and together share your best ideas for getting physically active (10 minutes).

TIME: 20 minutes.



EXERCISE 3: HEALTHY EATING

There are a large number of studies that point to the importance of diet in the prevention of poor mental health and the promotion of good mental health³. Paying attention to what, when, how often, and how much we eat can be the first step to helping us eat better and feeling better⁴. Also nutrients - like vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibre – provide critical nourishment for our bodies. The Ministry of Health⁵ has dietary guidelines that recommend what kinds of food to eat and what food to limit as well as what to drink and how much. More specifically, their guidelines advise adults to eat the following four categories of foods:

1. Plenty of fruits and vegetables.
2. Grain foods, mostly whole grain and naturally high in fibre, like whole-wheat biscuits, wholegrain bread, oat porridge and brown rice.
3. Some milk and milk substitute products that have a low fat content but are high in protein and calcium, such as trim milk, soya milk, low fat yoghurt, and low fat cheese.
4. Some legumes (chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils), nuts, seeds, seafood, red meat with the fat removed, meat alternatives, poultry, and eggs.

Some foods have many calories but few of the vitamins, minerals, or fibre that our bodies need. Added sugars and saturated fats pack a lot of calories into food, but do not add nutrients, and can be harmful to our health. The Ministry of Health’s dietary guidelines recommend that we limit such foods. We also want to choose food that are low in salt (sodium) and are mostly ‘whole’ and less processed.

AIM: The aim of this exercise is to bring attention to the fact that eating well can be beneficial to our physical health, and that being physically healthy is beneficial for our mental health.

TASK: In groups, write out as many dietary changes that we could do to improve our everyday diet and overall health with regard to:

1. What types of foods and drinks could we reduce on a daily basis?
2. What types of foods and drinks could we increase; and
3. What foods and drinks could we substitute with more nutritious foods and drinks?

TIME: 10 minutes to list the items and 10 minutes for discussion.

ANSWER: Below are some examples.

Reduce	Increase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Processed meat > Red meat (eat less than 500g cooked meat per week (equivalent to 700-750g when raw) > Drinks and foods with added sugar > Highly processed foods that are high in refined grains, saturated fat, sugar, and salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Vegetables and fruit > Legumes > Fish and other seafood > Nuts and seeds > Whole and less processed foods
Substitute:	For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Refined grains > Butter > Higher-fat milk products > Sugar sweetened beverages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Whole grains and high fibre > Unsaturated vegetable oils and oil based spreads > Low-fat milk products > Water, low-fat milk, diet drinks

³ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, (2013), www.healthdata.org/

⁴ Mental Health Foundation, New Zealand, (2006), www.mentalhealth.org.nz/

⁵ Ministry of Health (2015). Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults. www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/eating-activity-guidelines-for-new-zealand-adults-oct15_0.pdf



EXERCISE 4: HEALTHY EATING

The Ministry of Health’s *Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults*, encourages eating a variety of foods to get the nutrients we need and the right amount of calories for optimum health. The guidelines focus on the variety of food we eat, how we choose or prepare food, and the amount and types of liquids we drink on a daily and weekly basis.

AIM: The aim of this exercise is to highlight what we eat and the amount we eat. For example, we should eat more vegetables and fruit and less processed foods with high contents of sugar and fat in order to stay physically and mentally healthy.

TASK:

> Invite the participants to work in small groups to categorise the foods that each of them ate the previous day and complete the table below (10 minutes).

- > Instruct them that foods should be categorised on their nutritional value and take into account the additives, the fat and or sugar used. For example, deep fried foods are (like fried chicken or potatoes) are *not* categorised as meat or a vegetable but instead are categorised by the fat and the salt used in the cooking process. Another example is chewy fruit snacks. While there is some fruit in the product, fruit snacks also contain a great deal of sugar, so it can be categorised as a mainly sugar product.
- > The participants could then compare their own list with the Ministry of Health’s guidelines outlined below to see if they ate the appropriate number of servings of healthy food (10 minutes).
- > The participants are then asked to make recommendations for each category. For example, if a person only had one serving, the group could recommend that they need more servings in the vegetable group (10-15 minutes).

TIME: Approximately 30 minutes.

TABLE 2: MINISTRY OF HEALTH’S SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Food Groups	Servings	Recommended servings	Recommendations
Grain group (bread, etc.)		At least six servings of grain foods each day	
Vegetables		At least three servings of vegetables	
Fruit		At least two servings of fruit	
Protein		Two servings of legumes, nuts or seeds a day Or at least one serving of fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry or red meat a day	
Milk and milk products		Eat or drink at least two servings of milk and milk products each day	
Sugar, salt and fats		Where possible limit the use of saturated fats (butter, cream, lard, dripping, coconut oil) and instead use unsaturated fats/oils Limit the amount of sugar, salt and processed food If using salt, choose iodised salt	

EXERCISE 5: ENHANCING YOUR EMOTIONAL CHEMISTRY

Emotions can impact our lives and affect our attitudes and behaviour, directly and indirectly. Emotions are feelings that arise in response to events, objects or individuals. Experiencing extreme emotions can also change our psychological, physiological states and behaviours. For instance, when we are happy, our eyes tend to brighten, our smiles are bigger, and consequently, the way we treat others will be much better.

Our body produces neurochemicals, such as dopamine, oxytocin, endorphins and serotonin, and these can positively influence our emotions. For example, dopamine can increase our energy and mood, while serotonin can affect our critical-thinking skills. Oxytocin is a hormone that is released through any social connections and has the ability to boost serotonin, our 'happy' chemical. Norepinephrine (an endorphin), is a chemical that helps to regulate our brain's reaction to stress and is released when we exercise. Serotonin is a hormone and a neurotransmitter that is involved in the function of several different organ systems in the body. Serotonin is sometimes known as the "happy chemical", because it appears to play

an important role in regulating our moods and low levels of serotonin in the brain have been associated with depression.

However, when we experience low levels of a particular neurochemical, our judgement can become clouded, and as a consequence our social interactions and mental wellbeing can be affected. With this in mind, there are particular activities that we can do (or do more of) to naturally create a healthier level of neurochemicals in our body as outlined in the table below.

AIM: The aim of this exercise is to think about the healthy activities we can do that will positively boost the neurochemicals in our body.

TASK: Look at each of the four quadrants below⁶. Highlight some of the activities or actions you consider you are doing well, for example getting eight hours sleep, and other areas where you think that there is room for improvement.

TIME: This exercise can take about 5 minutes and can be done on a daily basis.

BALANCING YOUR EMOTIONAL CHEMISTRY

Dopamine	Oxytocin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sleep > Routines > Craft work > Listening to music > Competitive games > Achieving goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hugging > Massage or mirimiri > Laughing with others > Sharing a meal > Friends > Petting an animal > Talking or counselling > Hongi
DOSE	
Serotonin	Endorphins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Breathing exercises > Meditation > Yoga or pilates > Going to the beach > Remembering happy times > Waiata > Reading > Gardening > Clearing out clutter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Jogging > Playing sports > Kapa haka > Chopping wood > Going for a walk > Dancing

⁶ Mental Health Foundation, New Zealand, [2018], www.mentalhealth.org.nz/



EXERCISE 6: SLEEP AND RELAXATION

The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7–9 hours of good quality sleep a night for adults up to the age of 65 and 7–8 hours for those over 65. Some people naturally sleep slightly more or slightly less than these recommended hours. Trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep is a very common problem. The National Sleep Foundation's website⁷ provides useful tips on how to get a good night sleep, for example, stick to a sleep schedule, practice relaxing before bedtime, (e.g. reading a book), or do daily exercises.

Mindfulness techniques can be used to help people relax. Sometimes we find it difficult to sleep because our brain is still active. Mindfulness tools can help us to relax and encourage sleep, and are also useful for helping to maintain a sense of calm and control as we go about our daily lives. Mindfulness is the process of bringing attention to things occurring in the present moment. If we think of the mind as a room, mindfulness is like observing the room without judgement. When we are mindful, we can observe our thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad. This allows emotions to pass more quickly, enabling us to focus or dwell less on the negative thoughts and feelings. There are many different ways to practice mindfulness, however, below are a couple of examples.

EXAMPLE 1: MINDFULNESS AND BREATHING

The first exercise comes from the Mental Health Foundation⁸, which the group can collectively practice. It only takes 1-2 minutes and with practice it can help one to feel more centred, focused, and relaxed. By practicing this exercise regularly throughout the day, we can not only recognise stressful situations but also become better at managing that stress.

The mindfulness exercise can be introduced at the beginning of a meeting. Start the meeting with a karakia (prayer) or a short reflection (e.g. an inspiring quote) followed by a brief period of silence, allowing people to breathe mindfully and bring their full attention into the room. End in a similar way.

Below are the steps to a short three minute breathing exercise:

1. Pause, take a deep breath and place your feet flat on the floor. Really feel your feet in contact with the ground underneath you.
2. Now place your hands on your stomach and take two or three breaths, noticing your stomach rising and falling with each breath.
3. When you feel comfortable, close your eyes.
4. Keep breathing deeply into your stomach. Breathe in for a count of five, then hold your breath for a count of five, and breathe out slowly for a count of five.
5. For about one minute, keep breathing like this: in for five, hold for five, out for five.
6. If you notice your mind wandering, simply acknowledge the thought for a second or two then come back to focusing on your breath.
7. When you're ready, slowly bring attention back to the room, noticing the sounds around you, and open your eyes.
8. Take a moment to notice how you are feeling, then continue with your day.

⁷ National Sleep Foundation (2017). Healthy Sleep Tips. sleepfoundation.org/sleep-tools-tips/healthy-sleep-tips

⁸ Mental Health Foundation (2017). Introducing mindfulness. www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/5-ways-toolkit/FWW-introducing-mindfulness.pdf

EXAMPLE 2: MINDFULNESS AND BEING AWARE

The other example is an adapted exercise from the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice⁹, designed to apply mindfulness to everyday life. Participants are asked to choose one activity each day that they often do on “automatic pilot”. Activities, such as brushing your teeth, eating a meal, showering, preparing for bed, walking in the park, are suitable choices. It is probably best to stick with one activity for a week or longer, rather than changing the activity regularly.

- > It is important to pay attention to the activity itself, what is happening in that moment. With teeth brushing you might feel the touch of the brush on each tooth and the gum, note the noise it is making and the taste of the toothpaste. Just like in the breathing awareness exercise, if you find yourself thinking of other things, note it for a second or two and then return to the sensations associated with brushing the teeth.
- > If the activity is likely to be longer than a few minutes, such as eating a meal or walking in the park, then practice the first two minutes mindfully. Pay attention to what you see, the sounds you hear, the feeling of your clothes as you walk, and the smells around you.
- > As a general aim, stick to the sensations present at the time, touch, sight, sound, taste, smell. You may also note those emotions and bodily feelings you have when you are breathing faster or your muscles become tense.

⁹ Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/>