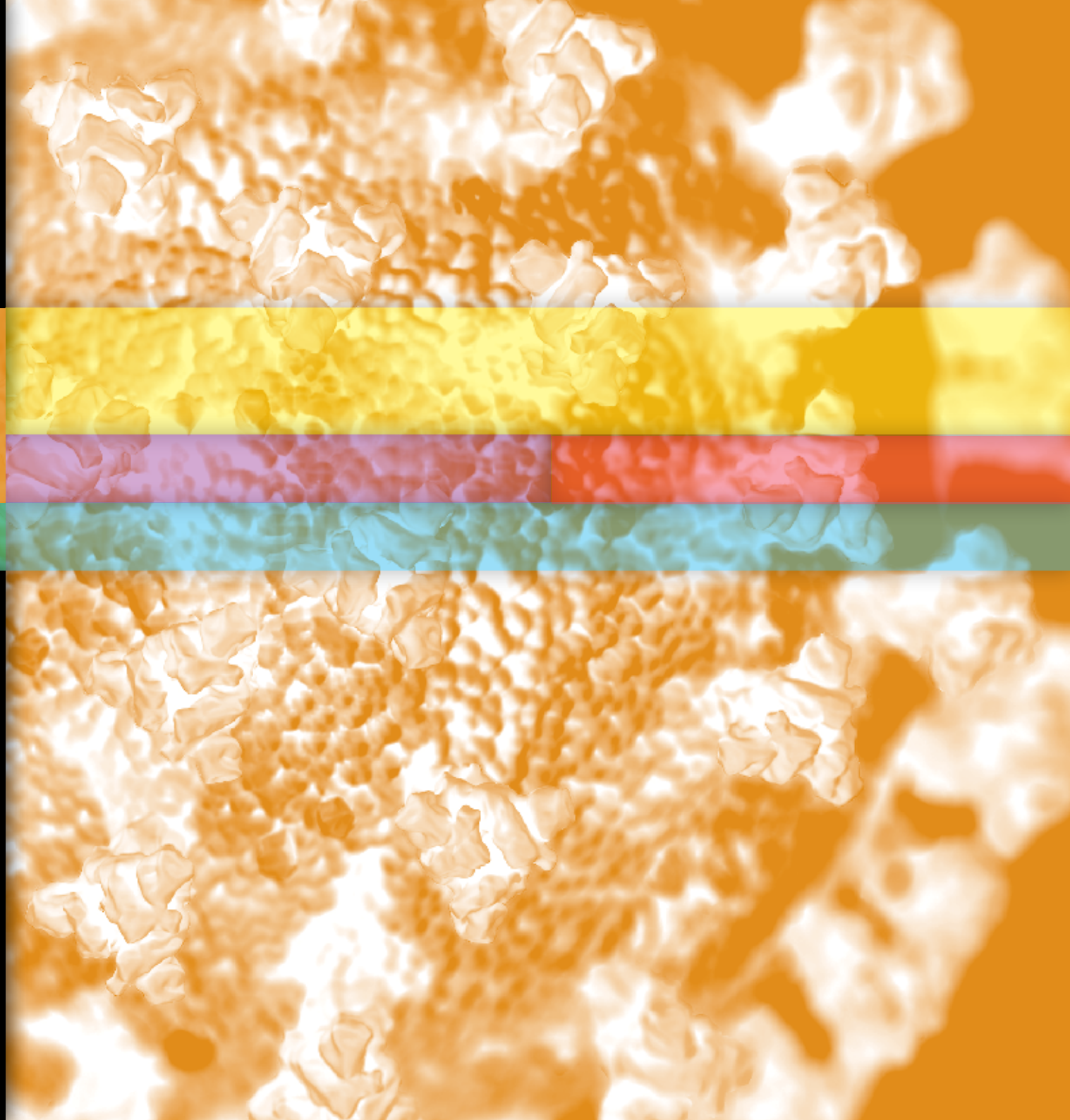


COVID-19

A GUIDE FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING
IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

MODULE 1:

HAUORA/WELLBEING
IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



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Sparklers

Unicef NZ

World Health Organization (WHO)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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THE COVID-19 WELLBEING GUIDE

The COVID-19 Wellbeing Guide has been developed by Julie McCormack (Clinical Psychologist) and Future Curious Limited to provide teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand with information and resources that can help them to navigate discussions about COVID-19 with their students and the wider community and support the hauora/wellbeing of their students. The lead writer of the resource is Julie McCormack, who is a clinical psychologist with over 20 years of experience working in public health in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

Children and young people across Aotearoa New Zealand are experiencing stress and disruption due to COVID-19. This guide will support teachers and parents to provide students with support and information that can help them to develop coping skills, critical literacy, pro-social skills and a sense of agency. This will contribute to their wellbeing and resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each module provides information and links to resources related to COVID-19, health practices, and social and emotional wellbeing. There are also tip sheets that can be shared with parent/caregivers and older students.

The guide is intended to be used alongside health information provided by the Ministry of Health COVID-19 and any guidance and updates from the Ministry of Education. Additional information can be obtained from reputable sources such as [Unite against COVID-19](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#) webpages.

The COVID-19 Wellbeing Guide comprises three modules.

MODULE 1: HAUORA/WELLBEING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

General wellbeing guidance; responding to challenging conversations and behaviours; identifying and referring children at risk; services, support networks, and resources for supporting children and young people's wellbeing; tip sheets for teachers, parents, and young people.

MODULE 2: COVID-19: SCHOOL CLOSURES AND LEARNING FROM HOME

Background information and support; tip sheets and activities that teachers and parents at home can use to support children and young people's understanding and responses to Covid-19 while building their skills in wellbeing; ideas for young people to make the most of their time at home.

MODULE 3: PREPARING FOR AND RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Background information and support; tip sheets and activities that teachers and parents at home can use to support children and young people as they return to school and integrate back into the school community.

Although each guide can be used independently, **Module 1: Hauora/wellbeing in uncertain times** provides a useful foundation for the Wellbeing Guide as a whole and we recommend that all teachers begin by reading this guide.

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COVID-19 MODULE 1: HAUORA/WELLBEING DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

The focus of this COVID-19 module is on supporting children and young people's hauora/wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's important to note that most children and young people are adaptable and resilient in the face of uncertainty. Others will need additional support as they navigate a time of unprecedented change and community challenge.

Regardless of whether you directly experience the respiratory illness caused by COVID-19, the broader impacts of the virus are creating widespread uncertainty and disruption. Children and young people are soaking up information from the media, family, peers and other adults and their lives have changed in significant ways. It is therefore normal and legitimate to experience a range of feelings at this time.

Children and young people often take their cues from adults on how to respond to unusual or stressful circumstances. Schools, parents, caregivers, whānau, peers and the wider community have an important role to play in enhancing children and young people's wellbeing at this time. This includes providing developmentally-appropriate and accurate information that contributes to both their understanding and wellbeing and identifying ways for children and young people to take constructive action in response to the pandemic.

Factual information about COVID-19 from reputable sources:

- [Unite against COVID-19 – New Zealand government information on COVID-19](#)
- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 updates and latest information](#)
- [World Health Organization Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)
- [World Health Organization Health Alert, available on WhatsApp](#)

WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS

The guidance and activities in the COVID-19 wellbeing modules align with approaches to wellbeing common in most schools. Existing wellbeing frameworks are the most effective way to provide the necessary support and strategies children and young people need during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. This guide aims to complement existing policy and practice and support teachers and parents with information and activities tailored to specific issues arising from COVID-19. It also draws from the Māori model of health and wellbeing that describes Te Whare Tapa Whā, which encompasses taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing), taha whānau (social wellbeing), taha tinana (physical wellbeing), and taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) (Durie, M. Whaiora, Māori Health Development. Oxford University Press, 1994).

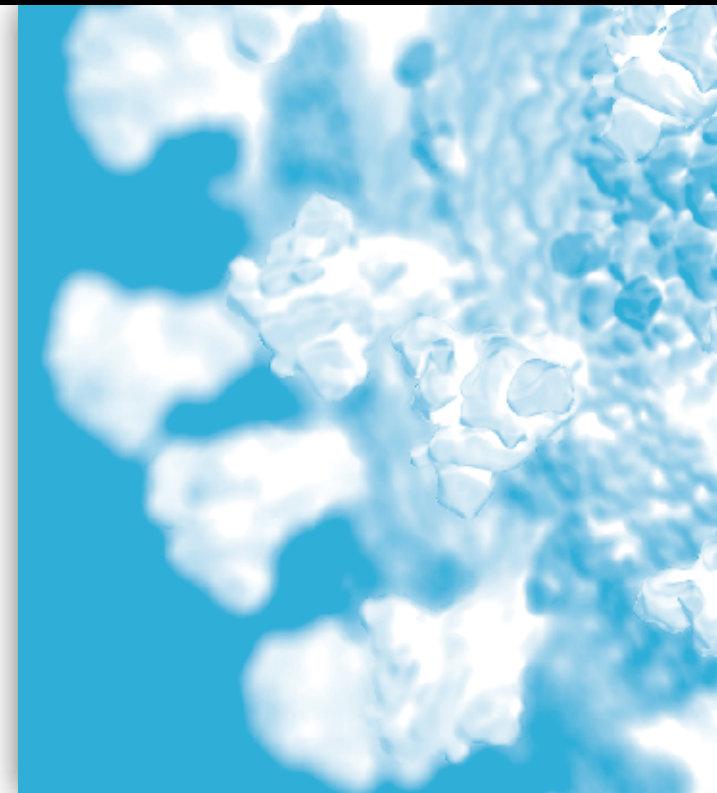
Resources to support teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand enhance wellbeing and mental health in their school communities include:

- [Education Resource Office: Wellbeing for success: a resource for schools](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation: Mental Health Matters and Ways to Wellbeing](#) (a health education resource for junior secondary school)
- [Sparklers](#): Sparklers was developed in response to requests from the education sector for tools to help them support and promote the wellbeing of young Cantabrians after the 2011 earthquake.
- [Mindfulness Education Group: The Pause, Breathe, Smile Mindfulness Program for Schools](#)
- [Ministry of Education: Wellbeing in Schools](#)
- [Wellbeing @ School](#)

Wellbeing through understanding and talking about COVID-19

Developing and applying critical and emotional literacy to their experiences of COVID-19 will support children and young people's wellbeing as Aotearoa New Zealand progresses through the various stages of managing and eliminating the virus. This can be achieved by:

- talking with children and young people about their concerns
- encouraging them to question, investigate, consider, and examine developmentally-appropriate information, empowering them with knowledge and understanding
- developing efficacy through exploring concrete achievable actions
- equipping children and young people with skills to communicate, cope, and contribute.



1: RESPONSES TO COVID-19

COVID-19 presents a range of individual, whānau, community, national, and global challenges, including physical and mental health issues and economic and societal impacts. Digesting information about these complex issues can be challenging for adults, and even more so for children and young people. Grappling with complex issues can also create a sense of uncertainty.

It is important to remember that the **majority of children and young people will adapt to and manage the challenges of COVID-19 in positive ways and that COVID-19 may create opportunities for developing prosocial behaviours, resilience and community unity.**

Children and young people will respond to COVID-19 in different ways and their responses will depend on a variety of factors including:

- the current status of the pandemic at a local, national, and global level
- individual and social factors such as age, personality, stage of development and social context
- whether they have any pre-existing mental, emotional, or physical challenges.

Children and young people may experience a host of emotions including concern, irritability, confusion or even indifference. They may worry about their own health or that of loved ones, especially grandparents and older whānau members. Although the spread of the virus is being well-managed in Aotearoa New Zealand, children with whānau and friends in other countries may be experiencing additional concern or worry. Through the COVID-19 experience, some children and young people will develop their resilience, critical thinking, pro-social skills such as empathy and even find ways to contribute to their communities.

KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

When worried, younger children may return to behaviours they had outgrown such as sleeping issues, tantrums or separation anxiety. Headaches and tummy pains are common responses to stress, as are hyperactivity and irritation. Children may feel a need to repeatedly seek reassurance. In addition, older primary school-aged children may have difficulty concentrating, including displaying a loss of interest and/or general withdrawal, anxiety or avoidance

towards schoolwork. However, they can also exhibit positive signs of competency and growth, including developing new coping skills and taking care of others.

INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Some older children may respond to uncertainty and disruption with behaviours such as alcohol and drug use and other forms of risk taking. Difficulties with schoolwork and friends are common responses to stress. Adolescents experience emotions intensely and may be overwhelmed by frustration. They may find it difficult to share their feelings and instead express them through negative behaviours or arguments. Increased withdrawal into social media and other device use, especially when there is a public need for physical distancing, is also common. Signs of competency and resilience for older students include critical engagement with different sources of information, altruistic actions, spiritual growth, and engaging in new possibilities for personal or societal change.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Children who have specific health issues such as respiratory illnesses may have a stronger level of concern about COVID-19. Children who have previously experienced serious illness or losses may also be particularly vulnerable. Those with existing mental health concerns, especially Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder or other anxiety disorders, can experience an escalation in symptoms. Children with psychosocial stresses are especially vulnerable, especially around social distancing strategies, and those with physical or cognitive challenges may require additional support to cope effectively. However, they too can exhibit positive signs of competency and growth.

CHILDREN AT RISK

Whilst many children will cope well and adapt, a small number of children may have pre-disposing vulnerabilities such as an existing medical condition, an anxious temperament, previous experiences of trauma, or reduced social support. These children may require additional support or treatment. Things to watch out for include:

- worsening anxiety or behaviours over time

CONVERSATION STARTERS

How are you feeling about (insert situation)?

Are you okay? I am here if you would like to talk.

You seem a bit down (or other). Would you like to talk?

I have noticed that you are spending a lot of time on your own. Is there something going on?

- withdrawal from or avoidance of everyday activities or social relationships including those online
- declines or changes in school performance or attendance
- an excessive need for reassurance
- testing of behavioural limits
- changes in sleep, appetite and weight or somatic symptoms such as tummy aches and headaches
- anxiety or behaviours that interfere with functioning or cause distress
- high risk behaviours including alcohol and drug misuse.

Supporting children and young people with concerns related to COVID-19 is no different to any other form of pastoral care and guidance. Each school and district health board will have existing pathways for mental health identification, referral and support. The leadership team within a school holds responsibility for the development and implementation of wellbeing policies and procedures, including the management of at-risk students. During school closures, with support from the Ministry of Education and/or Ministry of Health, schools will develop procedures to support students and their parents/caregivers. Alongside parents/caregivers, teachers are in a position to observe changes to student wellbeing and, in conjunction with education and/or mental health personnel, should put in place any additional support that may be needed to maintain wellbeing.

EXCESSIVE HANDWASHING AND CLEANING

Children and young people with existing health anxieties or obsessive-compulsive disorders that involve cleaning or handwashing as a symptom may react to protective health information in extreme ways. Teachers and parents should observe for marked skin changes or chaffed hands.

GETTING HELP EARLY

Positive social and emotional learning alongside critical thinking equips children and young people with the skills they need to create positive outcomes in life, including how they experience challenges such as COVID-19. In addition, proactive recognition of those at risk is vital. Children and young people often respond better to treatment if they access support early. Some adults find talking about mental health issues daunting. However, core skills of acceptance of emotions, listening, and acknowledging concerns are valuable. For more information, see the Ministry of Social development resource on [supporting young people with stress, anxiety, and/or depression](#). There are a variety of services available, including online supports and resources that can be accessed, even during school closures.

If a child or young person is self-harming or thinking of suicide, ensure supervision and get help immediately. Refer to the school policies and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child and other students.

For further information see: [Ministry of Education advice on suicide prevention](#) and [Talking with Students about Suicide](#).

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Please note: MODULE 2 COVID-19: School closures and learning from home provides information and guidance to support children and young people and their parents during school closure and/or COVID-19 alert levels that require physical distancing.

Levels three and four of Aotearoa New Zealand's [COVID-19 four alert system](#) include school closures and/or general community shutdown and isolation. During school closures and shutdowns, students and adults will manage different ways. Many children will cope well and enjoy the opportunity for closer connection with family, the slower pace of life and the challenge of learning with different methods. However, some will find it difficult being away from their friends and activities they enjoy. Others are more vulnerable, especially where school provides a safe alternative to a family environment where neglect, illness or other issues are present. Students for whom performance anxiety and perfectionism are issues may also find school closure stressful, without validation and classroom support. Many teachers will be aware of students who will require closer monitoring and support during school closures.

For additional information regarding the protection of children during infectious disease outbreaks, please refer to the [Alliance for Child Protection](#).

Factual information about COVID-19 from reputable sources:

- [Unite against COVID-19 – New Zealand government information on COVID-19](#)
- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 updates and latest information](#)
- [World Health Organization Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)
- [World Health Organization Health Alert, available on WhatsApp](#)

2. ATMOSPHERE: CREATING A SAFE PLACE FOR SAFE CONVERSATIONS

The following suggestions can assist effective and safe conversations:

- Foster an atmosphere of community, belonging, respect and tolerance, welcoming diversity.
- Model the tone you expect for conversations, showing respect, being open-minded, listening.
- Give consideration ahead of time to the personal challenges or difficult conversations that might arise.
- Create a 'treaty' for conversations that establish the 'rules' for discussions.
- Identify strategies to cope when challenging moments arise, for example, give everyone time to write down their thoughts, or break into smaller groups to discuss challenging ideas.
- Take notice of your feelings in difficult conversations; being aware can help you manage your responses. Track the "emotional temperature" to monitor responses.
- Provide methods of communication and expression other than dialogue, including anonymity.
- Consider sharing authority by delegating a co-leader for different topics.
- Alongside acknowledgement of any distress, keep the conversation positive by focussing on the helpers and heroes, and on stories and information about positive actions.
- Bring in humour and lightness of tone where possible.
- When necessary, follow up on any concerns. Children and young people may need time to think about and discuss a personal situation, express feelings, or require encouragement to act. If overly distressed, additional support may be appropriate.

[Sparklers](#) provides some additional ideas for creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

WE'VE GOT IT COVERED

Schools close when the New Zealand government and experts determine it is safer to be at home. Schools won't start until it is safe again to be at school. The Ministry of Education will support schools to prepare student learning and wellbeing during school closure. This will include plans to help students return when the time comes for schools to re-open.

For more information refer to ['Unite Against COVID-19'](#)

TALKING ABOUT COVID-19 WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Conversations about COVID-19 need to be managed with care and insight. Children and young people may require support with understanding information and managing their feelings. However, the importance of talking with students cannot be overstated. A positive environment in which they are encouraged to ask questions and express feelings does help. Here are some suggestions you may find helpful:

A. UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN ANXIETY FIRST

Before any conversations about COVID-19, take a moment to reflect on your own wellbeing and ensure you are feeling calm. Children and young people listen out for the emotional tone of the conversation, not just the content, and look to adults to determine how worried they should be. You may not have all the answers about COVID-19, but remaining calm and confident helps. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone. If you're feeling anxious or upset, reach out to others and take time for self-care. The World Health Organization provides a [fact sheet on coping with stress](#). You can also call [1737 Need to talk?](#) to talk with a trained counsellor.

B. KEEPING PERSPECTIVE

Try to maintain normal conversations and/or learning and include playful, fun and child/young person-led topics and activities. Where possible, maintain school and/or home routines.

C. SHIELDING VERSUS COMMUNICATING

For young children, shielding them from worrying information is preferable. However, it is always important to listen, asking them what they have heard (see section F of this Tipsheet for more information). While adults and older children may cope by learning about the virus, for younger children their primary needs are emotional support and feeling safe. Emphasising that children are safe and that adults oversee keeping people well and looking after people who are sick can help. For older children, communication is key to reducing concern, including providing scientific and general information about COVID-19 and what actions they can take.

D. EXPRESS HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

Be aware that most children and young people will manage with the uncertainty around COVID-19 well. Express confidence in their resilience and in our community and nation's capacity to respond to this challenge.

E. FEELINGS ARE NORMAL

Listen for feelings and remember that all feelings are normal and helpful. Acknowledge and validate feelings. Let children and young people know that you think their feelings make sense and that their questions are valid and important.

F. WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

Younger children obtain information from conversations and media. They are more emotive than cognitive, and therefore the aim of conversations and education is foremost to enhance children's feelings of safety and agency. Take your cues from them and invite them to tell you what they have heard. You may ask "Have you heard anything about a new sickness?" For older students, you could ask "What are your friends/whānau saying about the coronavirus?" This will give you an opportunity to find out what they know, answer questions, provide reassurance and correct misinformation without oversharing. If younger children do have some awareness, it is important they don't rely solely on peers or media for information.

G. FACTS NOT FEAR

Acknowledge concerns and provide facts about COVID-19 and what they can do to reduce fear and enhance their coping skills. Be mindful of language, avoiding emotive words such as plague.

H. EMPOWERMENT

To channel worries into empowerment, encourage conversations around what can be done and what is already happening. Reassure children that their job is not to worry about the virus. Their role is to become knowledgeable and active, to be healthy, stay safe and be kind to others. Older children can be provided with information and encouraged to take protective measures and help others. Generally, like adults, children are more confident and cooperative when there is an opportunity for choice. Explore how they have coped with challenging situations or helped others in the past to draw out their strengths and coping skills.

I. BE KIND AND AVOID STIGMA

When talking about COVID-19, be mindful of language. Avoid stereotyping, assumptions about who might be sick, and focusing on specific locations or ethnicities. Use words such as "acquiring" or "contracting" COVID-19 rather than describing the process as "people infecting others" or "spreading the virus". (See the UNICEF webpage on [social stigma associated with COVID-19](#) for more information). Emphasise solutions rather than assigning blame. Remind students that it is possible to be kind to others, even when we are uncertain or scared.

Be aware of any children who may be experiencing or contributing to stigma or bullying either directly or via social media. Any expression of virus-related prejudices, negative comments and bullying needs to be quickly addressed using relevant policies and procedures.

J. EXPERTS OF CRITICAL THINKING

Find out what children have already heard and where they got the information. Build on their critical thinking skills, encouraging them to question, investigate, consider and/ or examine their information sources. This provides an opportunity to compare and contrast misinformation and rumours and discuss media literacy and understanding.

K. PANNING FOR GOLD

Highlight silver linings within the COVID-19 situation. For example, as was the case during the 1918 flu pandemic, national and global challenges can provide an opportunity to come together as a country and as communities, connecting to and supporting each other with sharing, empathy and kindness. For younger children, you could discuss that school being closed provides opportunities to spend time with pets and family. For older children, discuss the opportunity to review how humanity is living, what contributed to these ways of living, and what can be learnt from this.

L. USE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORKS

Tap into existing knowledge. Even very young children understand sickness and can be told that this new sickness is a bit like a cold or flu. Most children can comprehend healthy habits. Protective and preventative actions are best discussed alongside other health behaviours such as getting quality sleep, eating well and spending time outside and in nature. Look for ways to build on the understanding older children have of stigma and discrimination.

M. HIGHLIGHT THE HELPERS (INCLUDING THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES)

Explore age-appropriate examples of helpfulness and kindness. With older children, you could discuss how hard everyone is working to respond to COVID-19, referring to ways that the government, communities, scientists and health systems are responding to the situation, for example, by developing a vaccine, helping people in quarantine and preparing hospitals. Remind older children that we are “all in this together”, highlighting ways in which they can help through behaviours such as linking their physical distancing to protecting the community or taking supplies to people who need help or are in quarantine. When they feel disappointed about missing an event or social visit, acknowledge their feelings and remind them of their social responsibility and that physical distancing protects others.

N. KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Conversations about COVID-19 and wellbeing are not one-offs. Return to the topic and check in with the students about their feelings and questions.

Resources to support conversations with children and young people about COVID-19

- *Ministry of Education: Talking to children about COVID-19*
- *Ministry of Education: Tips and tools.* Note that these factsheets were developed in response to the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, but the advice they contain is useful when responding to any major traumatic event.
- *Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Tips for caregivers, parents and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks.*



ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT COVID-19

This tip sheet suggests activities that contribute to peace of mind and positive action at different developmental stages.

1. EARLY CHILDHOOD AND EARLY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Direct teaching about COVID-19 is not appropriate for children in kindergarten who have not been exposed to media or community conversations about COVID-19. For children at this level, the focus is role modelling and learning about important practical actions such as hand hygiene. (See Module 3 for more information on this). For early primary children and those who already have some awareness of COVID-19, some of the information and activities below may be relevant.

2. MIDDLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

For children with an existing knowledge and understanding of COVID-19, a useful approach is using a range of resources to support and extend their knowledge and develop their **critical literacy skills**. To do this in a way that is not overwhelming and continues to allow children to focus on things they enjoy and want to learn about, embed learning within everyday learning and activities. It is important that COVID-19 learning does not displace usual activities and learning.

Discussion

Ask *'What do you think a 'virus' is? Can you share an example of a virus?'*

- Write children's answers on a piece of paper where they can see them.
- Share your understanding of what a virus is using the **'Did you know: Bacteria and viruses'** textbox as a guide.
- If they shared 'Coronavirus' or 'COVID-19' as one of their examples, circle it.
- If not, write it on the piece of paper and ask: *What have you heard about Coronavirus/COVID-19?*
- Write all their thoughts and ideas on the piece of paper, inwardly noting those that are accurate and those that are incorrect.

Use the following critical thinking skills – *'examine, question, evaluate, and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about issues and practices'*. Discussion prompts include:

- Share there is a lot of misinformation and rumour about COVID-19.
- Ask *'From the thoughts and ideas we have shared, can you identify any information that might not be true?'* (Circle) Note: if students are unsure, identify one for them, reassuring those who shared it that they are not wrong but it is important that we know what is true and what isn't so together we can slow the spread.
- Taking one of the 'untrue' ideas identified, ask some or all the following questions: *Why might that be the case? What are the 'hidden' messages? What's missing from this information? What are my beliefs about this? Why do I believe this? Whose interests are being served /who is advantaged? Whose interests are not served/who is disadvantaged? What needs to change and how can I contribute to this change?*

Emphasise that COVID-19 is about everyone and everyone needs to work together to support each other.

- Emphasise the actions we can all take to be safe and help. Discuss that together we can slow the spread.
- Reinforce that although this virus can make some people very sick, the vast majority of people recover well.

BEING DIVERSE

Some children may respond better to visual demonstration or prompts over words for handwashing. Material targeted at a younger audience may also be suitable. Some children may respond to teaching via social stories.

Search: Supporting Neuro Diverse Children

BACTERIA AND VIRUSES

BY SIOUXSIE WILES

Bacteria and viruses are teeny tiny life forms – also called microbes and you usually need a microscope to see them properly. Just like we can't live without bees, we can't live without bacteria and viruses – they do lots of really important stuff for the planet.

Some microbes can make us sick – like the viruses that give us colds and upset tummies.

Bacteria and viruses are very different and a good way to think about them is to think about phones and apps.

- *Bacteria are like phones – you turn them on, and they work. They do stuff.*
- *Apps don't work unless they are loaded on to your phone. They need the phone to work. In the same way, viruses need our cells to be able to grow and make more copies of themselves. They can turn our cells into virus-producing factories.*

SOURCE: SIOUXSIE WILES (*Contributing Writer, The Spinoff*)

- Reassure them that children seldom get sick from the COVID-19 virus or, if they do, they usually only experience mild symptoms.
- Explain that scientists and doctors are still trying to understand COVID-19, but they already know that it spreads like a cold.
- Share one or more of these resources with the class:
 - [Nanogirl coronavirus resources for children and parents](#)
 - [Mindheart: Coronavirus picture book](#)
 - [NPR: Coronavirus comic for kids](#)
- Ask students what they learned from the resource(s) and, again, listen out for the feelings being expressed and provide validation and reassurance.

3. INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Most intermediate and secondary school students will have had considerable exposure to conversations and media about COVID-19. Their knowledge can be extended using a range of resources. Open communication and direction towards reliable sources are important, rather than shielding them from information.

Complete the activities for primary school students above and then follow up with the activities below.

Activity: Finding Out What I Need to Know

What you need

- Paper and pens
- Access to a Smart TV/laptop and Wi-Fi

Discussion

Ask *‘What questions do you have about Coronavirus?’*

- Write their answers on the board/piece of paper where they can see them.

Provide them with the following links or offline print resources from the following sites for groups.

- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Information](#)
- [World Health Organization Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information.](#)

Have students work in groups to find out the answers to the questions using these reliable sources.

EXTRA: Search *You Tube: Q & A with Dr Michelle Dickinson and Dr Juliet Gerrard*

(SOURCE: PM JACINDA ARDERN, FACEBOOK WATCH).

What’s real?

Credible sources of information provided by medical and science professionals include:

- [Unite against COVID-19 – New Zealand government information on COVID-19](#)
- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 updates and latest information](#)
- [World Health Organization Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)
- [World Health Organization Health Alert, available on WhatsApp](#)

There are ways to explore whether online information is legitimate including looking the url and the source, looking at the quality of information, and checking facts. Be wary of spreading false information and causing distress to others.

EXTRA: Review and discuss *WHO Myth Busters* (SOURCE: WHO)

Activity: Fear, fake news and facts

What you need

- Paper and pens
- Access to a Smart TV/laptop and Wi-Fi

Discussion

Refer to the Newsroom article: *Critical thinking in an age of fake news*. In a post-truth era of alternative facts, the ability to discern what is true is an increasingly important skill.

Read the article to/with them. Ask them how the article links to what is unfolding around COVID-19, how information is being shared and what information is being shared.

Ask: *Where have you been getting your information about Coronavirus? What have you noticed about the different styles of information?*

- Write their answers on the board/piece of paper where they can see them.

Using the critical literacy skills (*examine, question, evaluate, and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about issues and practices*), ask students to source two articles or other media sources, one to illustrate facts and science and one to illustrate fear mongering read the articles.

- Have students compare and contrast their responses.
- After reviewing the resources, ask: *What stood out from each article? How would you determine reliable sources of information about Coronavirus? What have you noticed about the different styles of information? How did you feel in response to each type of information?*
- Write their answers on the board/piece of paper where they can see them.

Explain that:

- fake news relies on strong emotional reactions such as fear and anger for people to share it
- it is important to make health and wellbeing decisions based on reliable and scientifically accurate information. This will help us, as a country and as communities, slow the spread.

Wellbeing Check Up for everyone: How do we feel?

The provision of COVID-19 information is ideally followed by acknowledgement and reflection of the students’ emotional states. Emotional distress is normal, and adults play an important role in supporting children and young people to recognise, understand, describe, express and cope with feelings.

Discussion:

- Explain that we all respond to information and situations differently.
- Create a poster with people’s faces expressing a variety of emotions (younger children) or words (as many as possible) with the names of emotions (older students).
- Ask them to spend a few minutes reflecting on their reactions to the learning material and then offer them the opportunity to share feelings.

*Key Messages:
Everyone has feelings.
Feelings are Important.
All feelings are OK.*

Communicate acceptance of emotional experiences by showing interest in them and offer words to acknowledge student feelings, for example: “Everyone feels overwhelmed sometimes”.

EXTRA: For younger children try the *Sparklers Faces* game or the *Sparklers Frozen Emotions* game.

EXTRA: Create a classroom worry box where children can write out or draw a picture of their worries. Make time to acknowledge and problem solve these worries.

EXTRA: Create a feelings wall for using words or pictures to represent different feelings. Use a card to write down each feeling and use Velcro to attach them to the wall so that the card can be moved. Use the wall as a check-in for how they are feeling during COVID-19.

EXTRA: Introduce mindfulness and ask them how they would like to utilise it during the COVID-19 experience. See *Class Dojo Mindfulness* for more information.

Note: Unless they have demonstrated prior COVID-19 knowledge, kindergarten and early-primary children can do these tasks without focusing on COVID-19. Use any daily classroom scenario to discuss feelings using expressions and words.

WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

This tip sheet suggests ways to support your child during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regardless of whether you have been directly affected by the respiratory illness caused by COVID-19, the broader impacts of the virus are creating widespread uncertainty. Children and young people are soaking up information from the media, family, peers and other adults. It is therefore normal and legitimate for them to have a degree of worry.

It's important to note that most children and young people are adaptable and resilient in the face of uncertainty and even more so with your support. There can even be benefits for the development of prosocial behaviours, personal resilience and community unity. As an example of youth inspiration and contribution, refer to the **Student Volunteer Army**, which was established in response to the Ōtautahi Christchurch earthquakes.

Children and young people often take their cues from adults on how to respond to unusual or stressful circumstances. Parents and caregivers have an important role to play in enhancing children and young people's wellbeing at this time. This includes providing developmentally-appropriate and accurate information that contributes to both their understanding and wellbeing and identifying ways for children and young people to take constructive action in response to the pandemic.

Like you, we want to protect your child's hauora/wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Credible sources of information provided by medical and science professionals include:

- *Unite against COVID-19 – New Zealand government information on COVID-19*
- *Ministry of Health COVID-19 updates and latest information*
- *World Health Organization Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic*
- *World Health Organization Health Alert, available on WhatsApp*
- *UNICEF Social stigma associated with COVID-19*
- *Newsroom: Critical thinking in an age of fake news*
- *Stuff article: A test of national values.*

WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?

The COVID-19 Wellbeing Guide has been developed to provide teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand with information and resources that can help them to navigate discussions about COVID-19 with their students and the wider community and support the hauora/wellbeing of their students. The lead author of the resource is Julie McCormack who is a clinical psychologist with over 20 years of experience working with children and families in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

The COVID-19 Wellbeing Guide comprises **three independent modules**.

MODULE 1: HAUORA/WELLBEING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

General wellbeing guidance; responding to challenging conversations and behaviours; identifying and referring children at risk; services, support networks, and resources for supporting children and young people's wellbeing; tip sheets for teachers, parents, and young people.

MODULE 2: COVID-19: SCHOOL CLOSURES AND LEARNING FROM HOME

Background information and support; tip sheets and activities that teachers and parents at home can use to support children and young people's understanding and responses to Covid-19 while building their skills in wellbeing; ideas for young people to make the most of their time in staying at home.

MODULE 3: PREPARING FOR AND RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Background information and support; tip sheets and activities that teachers and parents at home can use to support children and young people prepare to return to school and integrate back into the school community.

An important way for you to support your child is to keep up to date with relevant, reputable COVID-19 information.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Children and young people may experience a range of emotions including fear, frustration and confusion around events such as COVID-19. **Using and building on existing cognitive, social and emotional skills is the focus of supporting student wellbeing.** You can help by providing a relationship that allows your child or children to describe their experiences and feel supported. During conversations, show interest, ask questions, communicate acceptance, and normalise emotions, for example, by saying: "Everyone feels worried sometimes". Help your children to see emotions as a continuum using the metaphor of an "Feeling Thermometer" to help track the intensity of different emotions. Feelings come and go, change, and vary in intensity, and different coping strategies may be useful for different levels of feeling. Our reactions to events relate to how we think about situations, what we can do in response, and what environment or situation we are in. Our experience of emotions is made up of:

- our physical reactions and sensations (including heart rate, body tension, tiredness)
- the thoughts we have about ourselves, other people, and the situation
- action signals or motivations (such as the desire to run, hide, fight)
- what we describe as feelings, for example, sadness, joy and anger.

Together, look for opportunities to provide support, and encourage taking part in collective action, looking after whānau and contributing to the community.

Ministry of Education resources to support conversations about COVID-19

- *Ministry of Education: Talking to children about COVID-19*
- *Ministry of Education: Tips and tools.* Note that these factsheets were developed in response to the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, but the advice they contain is useful when responding to any major traumatic event.

NO ONE SAID IT WOULD BE EASY

It can be difficult to see your child struggling. With any unpleasant feeling your child has, it is tempting to want to “fix it”. However, the most important response is acceptance and acknowledgement of feelings within a caring relationship. Being with your child while they come up with their own solutions and ways of dealing with things is harder – and more important – than it seems.

LEVEL 4: STAYING AT HOME

MODULE 2 COVID-19: School closures and learning from home provides information and guidance to support you and your children during school closure and/or isolation. For more information see the Ministry of Education webpage [Learning from Home](#) and for wellbeing tips to help you feel good and get through [Ministry of Health Wellbeing Alert 4](#). For some children and families, self-isolation may be required and advice is available [Ministry of Health Self-Isolation Advice](#). Remember, while most children and young people will cope well, some children and young people with pre-disposing vulnerabilities will be more susceptible to the impacts of school closure, including those who experience anxiety, perfectionism or psychosocial stress.

IS MY CHILD AT RISK?

It is normal for children and adults to feel worried about COVID-19. Children who have pre-disposing vulnerabilities such as an anxious temperament, previous experiences of trauma, or reduced social support, may require additional support at school and at home.

Parents and whānau can watch out for:

- worsening anxiety or behaviours over time
- withdrawal from or avoidance of usual activities or social relationships
- excessive reassurance seeking or limit testing
- changes in sleep, appetite and weight or physical complaints such as headaches and tummy aches
- anxiety or behaviours that are interfering with functioning.

GETTING HELP EARLY

Children and young people can respond better if they access support early. Being aware of the signs of mental health distress is a key so action can be taken early if a problem arises. Picking a mutual time to talk with your child, communicating openness, acceptance and a willingness to listen and help is vital. Let your child know that you will be there for them, and that professional help is available by helping them access support if needed. During COVID-19 there may be a need to access services online. Useful Mental Health apps include [Mindshift CBT Anxiety Canada](#) and [Moodgym](#).

HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Resources for children and young people

- [Youthline](#) 0800 376 633 or text 234 (free)
- [Kidslines](#) 0800 543 754 (0800 KIDSLINE)
- [The Lowdown](#) text 5626
- [Barnardo's 'What's Up?'](#) or 0800 942 8787
- [Aunty Dee](#)

Resources for whānau and friends

- [Supporting Families New Zealand](#)
- [Common Ground](#)
- [Skylight](#): 0800 299 100
- [Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand](#)
Looking after health and wellbeing during COVID-19
- [Health and wellbeing of Pasifika: Le Va](#)
- [Parent Help Line](#) 0800 568 856

Helplines and resources for everyone

- [Need to Talk? 1737](#) or text 1737 for counselling and support
- Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757 or free text 4202
- Anxiety Line: 0800 2694 389 or [www.anxiety.org.nz](#)
- Lifeline: 0800 543 354 or free text 4357 or [www.lifeline.org.nz](#) for counselling and support
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0508 828 865 - for specialist suicide prevention support and counselling
- Samaritans: 0800 726 666 or [www.samaritans.org.nz](#) for general support

Self-help resources for improving mental health

[Just a Thought](#) (free online learning to improve mental health)

[Beating the Blues](#) (evidence-based online cognitive behavioural therapy for anxiety and depression)

[Sparx](#) (online e-therapy tool provided by the University of Auckland)

[This way up](#): online self-help courses focused on wellbeing.

If a child is self-harming, or thinking of suicide, get help immediately: Contact Healthline for details of the local Mental Health Crisis Team 0800 611 116 or call 111 or take the child or young person to the nearest hospital emergency department. Stay with your child and ensure safety (remove any means for the person to hurt themselves). Stay calm and listen (without judgement) to anything they may want to talk about.

SELF-CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH FOR PARENTS

Parenting is a demanding role, and even more so during a community crisis. Parents and whānau members may neglect their own needs because they are busy, and/or taking care of others. Looking after your own wellbeing is vital to your own health and also provides an important example to your child, encouraging them to engage in self-care too. Parenting advisor Maggie Dent has some useful tips on [self-care for parents](#). If you are worried about your own mental health, call [Need to Talk? 1737](#) to discuss your needs and options.

COVID-19 resources for coping with stress

World Health Organisation fact sheet: [Coping with Stress](#)

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand: [Coping With COVID-19](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Stress and coping](#)

Ministry of Health: [Wellbeing at Alert Level 4](#)

Supporting Neuro Diverse Children:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXPtqmHKNoE&feature=youtu.be](#)

WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE; COPING WITH COVID-19

The world is always changing, bringing new challenges alongside everyday life and fun times. COVID-19 is like any challenge: it brings up different feelings and opportunities. How you feel is connected to how you think about situations, influencing what actions you take within your social and cultural context.



Thinking ↔



↔ Actions



ACTION: THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP COPE WITH LIFE'S CHALLENGES

ACT ON THE PROBLEM = BE EMPOWERED

On your own or with others, DO something to improve your health or to help others.

HAVE FUN

Have fun in your life - every day, if possible.
DO things that you enjoy and try out new things.

LEARN MORE

Find out more about the **facts** of COVID-19.
Use your critical thinking and fact checking to make sure you are accessing reliable information.
Use this information to decide what to do.

LOOK AFTER YOUR TAHA TINANA / PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Care for your body: Your body goes with you wherever you are, from birth to death. Take care of it, speak kindly about it, and listen closely to what it needs.

Be active/me kori tonu: Get your body moving with any activity that you enjoy. It might be a walk, a run, yoga, kicking a ball, or having a kanikani (dance). Use the **Just Dance** app to release your inner dancer.

Get rest: Rest your body allowing your mind and body to recover.
Look after your sleep cycle getting plenty of sleep.

BE CREATIVE

Paint, draw or write about COVID-19, or be creative in a way that suits you, to give yourself a break.

Watch the YouTube video *Why do we lose control of our emotions?*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bKuoH8CkFc

GROW YOUR TAHA WAIRUA (spiritual wellbeing)

If you find yourself confused or uncertain, take time out and ask yourself, what is important to me and why? Reflect on the situation: writing or talking can help clarify what is most important. Think about your whakapapa and consider what hope and guidance it offers.

Learn about your background and culture to understand more about why you think, act and feel certain ways. Explore the art, stories, and music from your culture, and from other cultures around you, for inspiration and guidance.

Take a look at [Aunty Dee's Tips for Celebrating Culture](#)

FEELINGS: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

LISTEN TO HOW YOU FEEL

What you are feeling about COVID-19?

Give your feelings names.

Write about or draw your feelings.

ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS

All feelings are okay, no matter how big or small.

Remind yourself that other people feel the same way at times and that all feelings are important.

RIDE YOUR FEELINGS

Remember that feelings are like waves, they come and go and will pass.

Imagine yourself surfing the waves of your feelings, riding them as they grow and fade.

EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Express your feelings through words, pictures, movement, music, or whatever ways suit your personality and the particular feelings.

LISTEN TO HOW YOUR BODY FEELS

Take notice of how your body feels and give it some attention.

Maybe your body wants to move, dance, rest, hide, get warm, be in nature, or seek some comfort.

Care for your body and make sure you enjoy eat well, sleep and rest, and get frequent physical exercise.

MAKE MUSIC

Create a playlist with your favourite tunes for calm and peace, or for feelings of happiness.

SOCIAL WELLBEING

Taha whānau

CONNECT

Make a phone call, connect via video, send a message, work together on a project.

HELP AND BE HELPED

Ask for help. That could mean emotional support to help you cope, or practical help. Be honest when you are struggling and need support. Be kind to others wherever possible, recognising and helping them with what they need.

GIVE

Give compliments. Share what you have. If social distancing is not required, volunteer your time or skills. Donate your old toys or clothes.

BELONG

Learn about your background and culture to understand more about why you think, act and feel certain ways. Tune into your whakapapa and spend time with your whānau to find out more about your tūrangawaewae. Talk to elders about their lives in person or online. Consider your family and cultural values for guidance about how to cope and live with purpose.

LET YOUR VALUES BE VISIBLE

Advocate for someone, stand up to stigma or bullying, join a cause. Speak up and share your thoughts in person and online.

THINKING AND EMOTIONS Taha hinengaro

CHANGE YOUR SELF-TALK Self-talk is the way you talk to yourself, the thinking inside your head. It can be a powerful influence on how we feel, and on what we do. Identify ways of talking to yourself that are kind, encouraging, helpful and optimistic. Learn to listen to your inside voices, or thoughts. Ask yourself: “Is my Self Talk encouraging and helping me?” If you find yourself making critical judgements, giving yourself a hard time, or getting stuck with negative thinking about yourself or the world, you can change your self-talk. Ask yourself ‘What is a more helpful way to think about this? How would you talk to a friend during hard times?’

TAKE A THOUGHT BREAK If you find yourself dwelling on COVID-19, give yourself a Thought Break. Change it Up – move from where you are, spending time thinking about something else, or turn your mind to something simple like picking flowers or watching your pet play. Taking time out is not the same as avoiding the issue.

CRITIQUE YOUR WORLD Question, investigate, consider and examine the information coming your way and the views being expressed by others. Watch out for rumours, misinformation and stigma. Consider what you believe and ask yourself ‘*why do I think this way?*’

BE IN THE NOW Being in the *now* (mind and body) is called **mindfulness** and can help us cope with the stress of COVID-19. Each day, take time to notice what you are seeing, feeling and experiencing *right now*. Let go of thoughts of the past or the future, and just observe what is happening at that moment: Go on a mindful walk and notice your surroundings; eat some

delicious kai being aware of every bite. Observe your thoughts from a distance, without judgement, as if the thoughts were clouds in the sky. If you are feeling worried, try just noticing the feeling without judging it or wanting to make it go away. What does it feel like in your body? “Oh, here is worry again, and I can feel my tummy butterflies”.

TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME If you find yourself overwhelmed, use your Self Talk to speak to yourself in a kind and patient voice. Break down what you are trying to do into small, achievable steps.

FOCUS Pick one or two actions you can focus on during the COVID-19 outbreak. Keep it simple, write down what you want to do, and acknowledge what you are doing.

BE GRATEFUL Take some time each day to think about what you value about your life, your friends and family, and the planet. Stop and really notice what is good. Start with the little things. Notice what others are doing to help the community during this crisis. Express your thanks and give compliments. You might even want to start a “gratitude diary” or share what you are grateful for with someone each day.

Remember the simple things that give you joy / Me aro tonu ki ngā mea māmā noa i ngākau.

THE WORLD AROUND YOU: CONNECT WITH NATURE

When not in self-isolation and practicing social distancing, spend time in nature and your local community. Aotearoa New Zealand is full of wonderful places. Discover the awe inspiring, peaceful and special places in your neighbourhood. Climb your maunga. Plant a tree or grow a pot of flowers or herbs. Spend time with animals. Listen to the birds. Catch a wave. Look at the stars. Watch the clouds. Enjoy the sunrise. Forage for food. Swim in your awa. Notice the seasons. Visit and care for the land and places of your ancestors. When in isolation, discover the nature in your back yard or online [Department of Conservation virtual field trips](#)