

Look after yourself

Mental health problems are common. But no matter what mental health issue you may be struggling with, caring for the body and mind can really help.

Get back to basics

Taking care of the basics can go a long way to helping you feel better. Try to make sure that you:

- **Get enough sleep.** Better sleep can improve energy, behaviour, attention and mood. Establish a regular time for bed and calming bedtime rituals to help you into a quality sleep. Keep computers, TV's, cell phones and electronic games out of the bedroom.
- **Eat healthy meals and snacks.** Make sure you incorporate plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- **Set reasonable limits on the time spent watching TV, using social media or playing electronic games.** Don't 'escape' by spending more time online or in front of the TV; it reduces time for physical activity or time with family and friends, and it interferes with sleep.
- **Be physically active.** Studies show that exercise can have positive effects on mood and energy levels.

Manage stress

Take notice if you are experiencing stress or overload. If you find you are stressed, try to problem solve, prioritise and ask for help to get things done. This can mean facing the stress and making a plan to deal with it. The website www.problemsolvingtherapy.ac.nz has useful resources to work through, including the 7 Steps process.

There are many ways to handle stress in a positive way:

- Distraction, by moving attention away from the stress for a little while.
- Taking a walk or exercising.
- Listening to music or doing something enjoyable.
- Relaxation and mindfulness; consciously relaxing muscles and focusing on breathing deeply.
- Calming the mind by trying to let go of thoughts and focusing on the moment.
- Yoga practice, focusing on body postures and breathing.
- Pacing yourself with what needs doing, setting small, achievable goals.

Ask for help and support

It's much easier to cope if you have support from others. Friends and family might be able to give you a break by helping with work to be done, childcare, errands or household tasks. Or they could just be there for you; listening when you need to talk. Often people want to be supportive; they just don't know how. Help them to understand, and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

There are organisations that can help if friends or family are not available.

Contact Lifeline Aotearoa phone **0800 543 354** - they may be able to offer support via their phone service.

For support in farming areas, contact the Rural Support Trust – phone 0800 787 254 www.rural-support.org.nz

Check out www.futuredirections.org.nz, your local Citizen's Advice Bureau or Community Worker for other services like:

- Marae-based or Kaupapa Maori Community support services.
- Cultural group-based community support services such as Multi-Nations or Newcomer Networks.
- The guidance counsellor or public health nurse at school.
- Youth services (for those under 25 in most instances).

Encourage your support people to seek help if you realise they are getting stressed or beginning to feel helpless. Supporting Families in Mental Illness and Addiction have services across Otago and Southland - phone 0800 494262 www.supportingfamilies.org.nz. They are also known as Able Southern Family Support www.able.org.nz.

Become informed

One of the identified ways to wellbeing is to keep learning, so take the time to learn something new. Update yourself about mental health issues and available services to help you to better understand, be better informed and know what questions to ask when you talk to a mental health practitioner.



There are many informative books and videos available, and excellent websites that can assist you as well. Be cautious though – only look at reputable sites, and avoid chat lines. Check out information from:

- The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand www.mentalhealth.org.nz
- "Books on Prescription," hosted by your local library www.books onprescription.co.nz
- Mental Health Education and Resource Centre, where help books can be ordered online www.mherc.org.nz
- Sparx, an online game especially designed to help with mood for young people www.sparx.org.nz
- Beating the Blues, an online treatment for depression and anxiety, available via GP referral only.

These services also provide assistance that may be useful:

Lifeline	www.lifeline.org.nz	0800 543 354
Gambling Health Line	www.gamblinghelpline.co.nz	0800 654 655
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org.nz	0800 726 666
Alcoholics Anonymous	www.aa.org.nz	0800 229 6757
The Depression Helpline	www.depression.org.nz	0800 111 757

There are services specifically set up to help youth in New Zealand:

The Lowdown	www.thelowdown.co.nz	(youth up to 24yrs, with online, texting & webcam support)
Rainbow Youth	www.rainbowyouth.org.nz	(09) 376 4155
Youthline	www.youthline.co.nz	0800 376 633
What's Up	www.whatsup.co.nz	0800 942 8787 (Call free daily from 1-11pm)

Prepare for the first appointment

Consider keeping a journal. The Journal, presented by John Kirwan at www.depression.org.nz can guide you. It can be challenging to remember everything - it's easy to forget, or to only focus on what's happened recently if you don't write them down. Write about events, situations, behaviours and worries that you want to share. This is a good way to prepare for your first appointment; it's important that your service provider sees a progression of how things have been going. Make notes of what you want to discuss and questions to ask.



Amendments and updates to support the annual review of this resource would be appreciated.

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