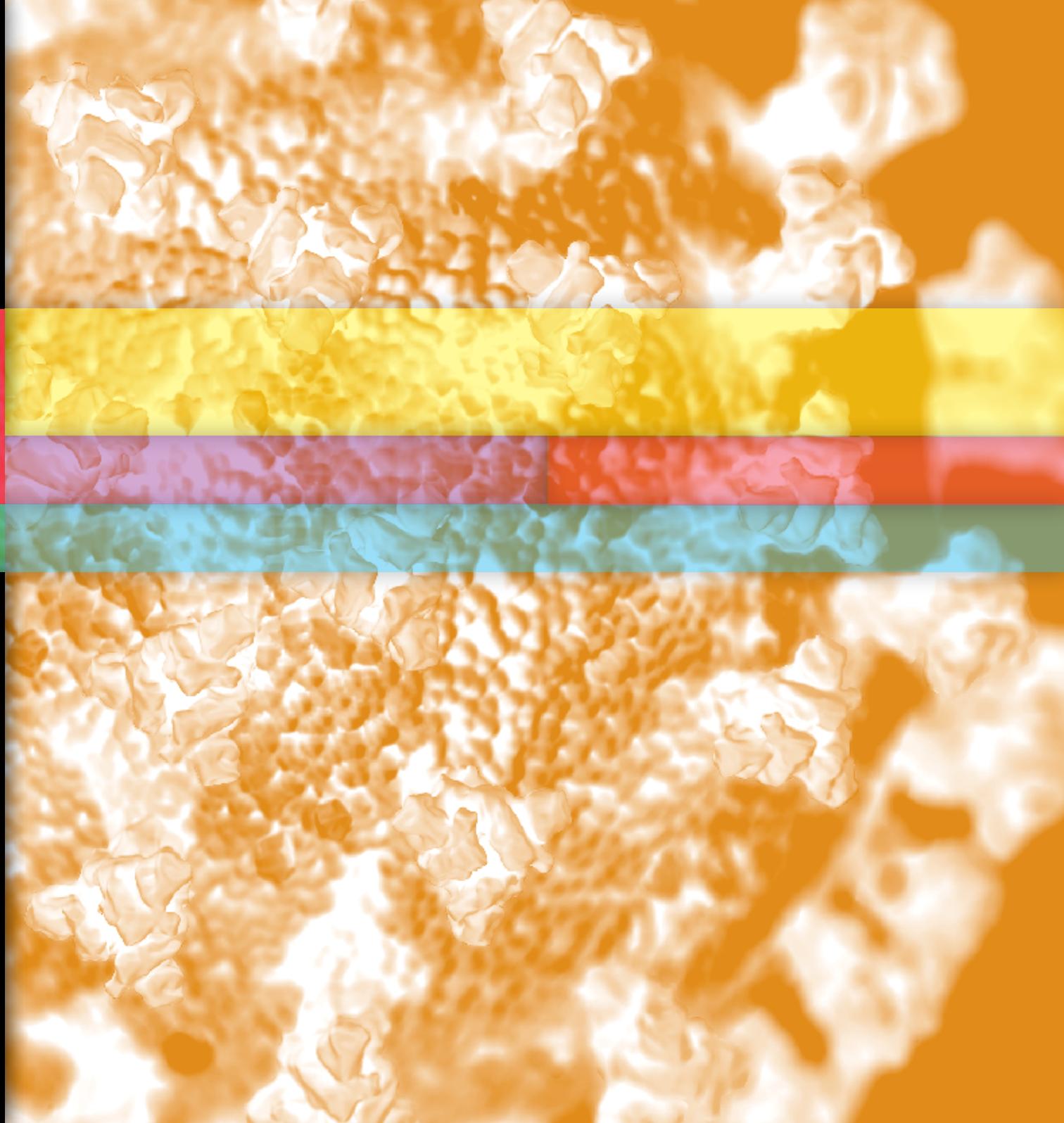


COVID-19

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

MODULE 2:

SCHOOL CLOSURES AND
LEARNING FROM HOME



THE COVID-19 WELLBEING GUIDE

MODULE 2: SCHOOL CLOSURES AND LEARNING FROM HOME

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. Julie McCormack, 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 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: 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.

Each guide can be used independently. However, we recommend that teachers begin by becoming familiar with **Module 1: Hauora/wellbeing in uncertain times** as it provides a useful foundation for the Wellbeing Guide as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would also like to thank the following organisations for the use of their information and resources in the development of the programme:

Ministry of Health Manatū Hauora

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand mauri tū, mauri ora

Ministry of Social Development Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

Sparklers

Unicef NZ

World Health Organization (WHO)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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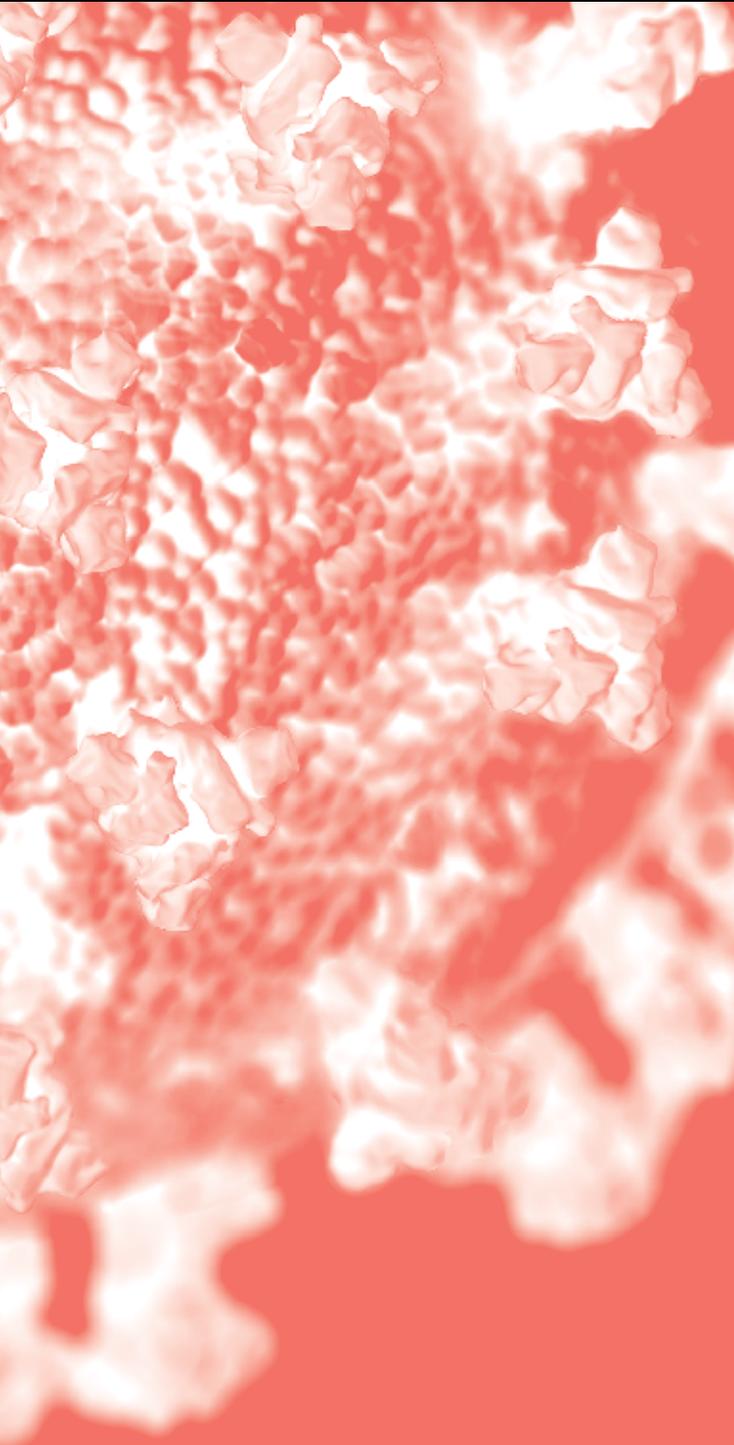
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COVID-19 MODULE 2: SCHOOL CLOSURES AND LEARNING FROM HOME

The focus of Module 2 of the COVID-19 wellbeing guide is on how to support student wellbeing while schools are closed. It includes:

- information on supporting your own wellbeing
- guidance for supporting the wellbeing of your students
- a wellbeing checklist to use with your students
- ways to use COVID-19 as a springboard for learning
- wellbeing-related resources that you can share with parents and/or students.

Although the primary focus of this module is supporting the wellbeing of your students, it's equally important to recognise and invest in your own wellbeing needs. While your students were on holiday in their 'bubbles', you would have had needed to find time to reflect and get your head around term 2, including getting ready for teaching your students remotely and online. Many teachers will have needed to balance this preparation with their personal responsibilities within their 'bubbles'.

Useful sources of support include:

- [PPTA advice for teachers working from home](#) - this webpage includes guidance on issues such as balancing the needs of your whānau with teaching, communicating with parents and students, and, for senior secondary students, alternative approaches to assessment.
- [NZEI COVID-19 webpage](#), which includes mental health information and contact details for Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) and other support networks.

STUDENT WELLBEING DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES

Understandably, your students' experiences of their 'bubble' will be influenced by the safety and stability of their home environments, and the extent to which their whānau have been impacted by the health or economic impacts of COVID-19. The dispositions of your students, along with previous experiences with uncertainty and change, will also play a significant role in their ability to adapt and respond to this unprecedented time. For many of your students, returning to school, albeit it remotely, will provide a welcome return to familiar routines, activities and interactions with the wider community that can contribute to their wellbeing. However, some may find the new routines and expectations of remote learning challenging. Others will be struggling with psychosocial stress, isolation, and subsequent anxiety. Wellbeing is a priority during school closures and beyond because students can't learn effectively when they feel stressed. Building on their existing social and emotional skills can help students to adapt to the demands of the new situation, as well as strengthening their ability to manage their emotions and stress levels. It can also support them to take informed action in response to the COVID-19 situation.

Regular communication with parent(s)/caregivers and your students can make a real difference while also providing opportunities to identify and minimise risks to wellbeing. To facilitate this process, the following tip sheets for parent(s)/caregivers and/or students have been included within this module:

- **Tip sheet 1: Tips for parent(s)/caregivers during school closures**
- **Tip sheet 2: Wellbeing and learning at home during school closures**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR WHĀNAU

[Getting through together – Whāia E Tātou Te Pae Tawhiti](#) is a national mental health and wellbeing campaign brought to you by the team at All Right? – Community and Public Health (a division of the Canterbury District Health Board) and the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand. The website provides guidance and advice on wellbeing, as well as practical tips on how to talk to young people about COVID-19. Keep your eye out

WE'VE GOT IT COVERED

Schools won't start until it is safe for you and your students to be back at school. Along with support from the Ministry of Education and your school, you will have prepared for student learning and wellbeing during school closure and will be ready with plans to help students return when the time comes for student to return to school.

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

for other useful government-funded resources that you can share with students and their whānau.

Meeting the subject based learning needs of your students is undeniably important, but of equal importance, and especially now, is encouraging and supporting key competencies such as relating to others, managing self, and participating and contributing. Some students will experience a noticeable decline in their psychosocial situation or mental health during school closure. Warning signs of mental health distress are outlined in Module 1. In these instances, follow the guidance in Module 1 and your school's existing pastoral care pathways. If there is concern about neglect or abuse, discuss the situation with Oranga Tamariki by calling 0508 326 459 and see this useful [Working Together Guide](#). If you are concerned about a mental health emergency, contact Healthline for details of the Crisis Team in your area by phoning 0800 611 116 or call 111.

SCREEN TIME

Physical distancing, school closures and the requirements of remote learning will increase the time many students and the wider whānau use devices for learning, working, connection and entertainment.

Device availability, digital expertise, beliefs and values about device use varies across Aotearoa New Zealand. While smart phone ownership is increasingly common, many households currently do not own devices appropriate for learning such as laptops/computers. Further, the experience and knowledge parents(s)/caregivers have about what is

quality, developmentally appropriate media is wide ranging. Each household will have different norms and expectations around how much time children and young people spend on devices, for example, some families adopt screen-free lifestyles. Understanding of, and accommodation of, different perspectives and needs will be required during school closures and when students return to school.

It is recommended that teachers and parent(s)/caregivers balance the risks and opportunities of digital technologies. During school closures, digital technologies enable communication with students and whānau, a variety of learning and creative opportunities and a platform for civic action. However, potential harms associated with overuse and specific types of device use include:

- **mental health** impacts such as anxiety, depression and negative body image
- **physical effects** including sleep disturbance, increased sedentary behaviour, postural issues and problems with eye health
- **social impacts** such as slowed language development, disengagement and conflict between whānau members, and exposure to cyberbullying and/or predatory behaviours.

Optimal device time for older students outside school requirements is unclear at this point, however, evidence indicates students will experience negative impacts from extremes of use, either too much time or, for adolescents, not having any social media contact at all. Research suggests that **type and quality of device use is a more important consideration**, for example, for older students well-managed and paced use of devices for learning, creativity, social connection and community engagement are likely to be beneficial up to a point. Careful management of solitary device use, as well as gaming (especially gaming that is addictive or promotes stereotypes and poor behaviour) is required because of the greater potential harms associated with these types of device use. For younger children, less device time and joint engagement is generally recommended in order to avoid displacement of the usual developmental activities and interactions.

The role of teachers and parent(s)/caregivers is to help children and young people embrace the opportunities of digital technologies whilst mitigating their potential harm. Children and young people should also be supported in

building skills and resilience to manage themselves in the digital world, both now and in the future.

How can this be achieved?

During school closures, it is recommended that teachers and parent(s)/caregivers balance device-dependent learning with more traditional hands-on formats, physical activity and offline creative pursuits.

Teachers play a role in the curation of high-quality media and learning tools to assist students and parents(s)/caregivers with selection at home. Teachers are critical to enhancing student engagement with digital learning through guidance, feedback, and interaction with them and parents(s)/caregivers. To reduce harm and promote engagement in the remote learning environment, teachers and parents(s)/caregivers can extend learning through discussion and elaboration both on and offline and through encouraging the use of critical literacy and prosocial skills. Moving between engaged time using the device for learning, with face-to-face discussion and physical movement is ideal.

Managed in a balanced and informed way, the use of digital technology during Covid-19 presents opportunities for teachers and parents(s)/caregivers to build upon and apply student skills in critical thinking, science literacy, social and emotional learning and digital citizenship. Teachers can also share key public health messages alongside key wellbeing messages such as kindness, gratitude, tolerance, and compassion.

Parents(s)/caregivers and the wider whānau hold a powerful position in helping children and young people maximise the benefits of digital technologies. This can be achieved through role modelling of digital habits, joint engagement (co-viewing, discussion, collaborative projects) in learning and entertainment, selection of media, and mitigation of online risks. Parents(s)/caregivers will benefit from age-specific advice tailored to the interests and needs of their child/ren in order to perform their role effectively, rather than simply been told to **“limit screen time”**. For younger children, a careful, moderated approach to the introduction and use of digital technologies is recommended. As they mature, an increased focus on building skills such as critical literacy and self-regulation alongside ongoing parents(s)/caregivers’ mediation and support is suggested. Even older students require help to regulate screen time and benefit from learning strategies and support from adults. When parents(s)/caregivers combine role modelling of positive digital behaviour alongside guidance, discussion and collaborative limit setting, children are more likely to use digital media safely and well.

USING THE PANDEMIC AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR LEARNING

COVID-19 presents opportunities to activate areas such as critical literacy and science, alongside the strengthening of social and emotional skills, which in turn will enhance student coping and wellbeing. At the start of term, the focus will be on reconnecting with students and their parent(s)/caregivers and establishing the processes and platforms students will use while learning from home. The start of term also provides opportunities for conversations and activities that link to student’s real world learning experiences around Covid-19 in their community. Teachers can use their own ideas, and/or current curriculum resources already available in Aotearoa New Zealand such as *Sparklers*. Wellbeing can be embedded in curriculum content by asking students to consider impact on feelings of self or others, perspective taking, problem solving, critical literacy and options for prosocial behaviours or collaborative actions. In addition, the following section provides two examples, organised by age level.

- Wellbeing check-in – discussions and activities that can help children and young people be aware of and manage their feelings.
- COVID-19 and the community – ways to support children and young people to be kind and socially conscious at this time.

SET ONE: WELLBEING CHECK-IN

Relationships provide the context of all wellbeing-related learning. For early learning, the key to wellbeing during Covid-19 is a sense of safety and routine alongside feeling loved, cared for and understood by whānau and the wider community (including teachers). As children progress to primary school, there is an increased focus around skill development, including perspective taking, prosocial skills, self-regulation and decision making. During secondary school, as new bio-psycho-social challenges emerge alongside ongoing social and emotional learning, there is a role for understanding mental health and help seeking and stigma, and for strengthening skills in critical literacy and self-management.

NB: The following wellbeing ‘check-ins’ can be adapted for use with a wide range of ages/levels.

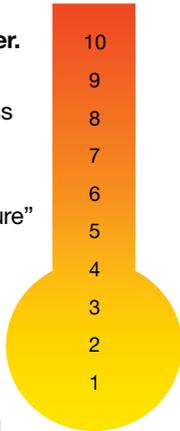
Keeping track of ourselves and others

The impact of COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand will be far reaching during the years ahead and keeping track of student wellbeing will be required for some time. The responses required from teachers, whānau, and schools will change over time.

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

Ask: *What feelings have you noticed so far during school closures?*

- Share an image of the **Feelings Thermometer**.
- Discuss how feelings can range in strength or intensity and that we use words to express this range, for example, irritated, annoyed, angry, furious, outraged.
- Explain that it's useful to track the "temperature" of our feelings to better understand them, including how they change, come and go.
- Discuss how tracking feelings may help students respond to, and cope with, feelings of different strength.
- Explain that feelings can be tracked by giving them numbers based on their intensity, using bigger numbers for strong or very intense feelings.
- Explain that if we track the intensity of our feelings and notice that we often experience some strong feelings more often than others, we might need extra support or coping skills to handle these feelings.



The Feelings Thermometer can be used to gauge how students are responding to different situations and as a tool to draw attention to feelings. This can provide a shortcut in communication between students and teachers/parents/caregivers. Teachers and parent(s)/caregivers can take their own "emotional temperature" and communicate this to students as a way of normalising and acknowledging emotions.

EXTRA: For older children, try this Sparklers *Continuing Continuums* activity and embed some COVID-19 themes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Feelings of less intensity can be recognised, accepted, and communicated, needing no further response, while stronger feelings may require more active strategies for coping and/or communication.

Understanding our feelings

Providing children and young people with concrete actions can help to reduce their anxiety and distress. It's useful for them to identify the links between their feelings, thoughts and actions. Highlighting actions students have taken or could take can promote a sense of efficacy. Being able to recognise and name their emotions can help children and young people to both master and channel their emotions in positive ways. This activity encourages reflection and sharing of experiences and extends emotional literacy.

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

Ask students to choose one feeling in response to Covid-19 or school closures (their own or imaginary) and consider: *What might someone who feels this way be thinking about Covid-19 or school closures? What might be happening in the body? What could be happening in the environment?*

Ask them to share their reflections with the class.

Discuss that reactions to information and events are connected to how we think about situations, what we do in response, and what context or situation we are in. Our human experience of emotions is made up of:

- our physical reactions
- the thoughts that we have about ourselves, other people and the situation
- action and motivations (such as the desire to run, hide, or fight)
- what we refer to or interpret as feelings.

EXTRA: For younger children, try the Sparklers *Body Scan* activity to show them how the body and feelings are connected

EXTRA: Review and discuss the YouTube video *Why do we lose control of our emotions?* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bKuoH8CkFc)

Taking action on coping

Emotional stress can be challenging even for adults to deal with, and a core aspect of growing up is developing tools to cope with a range of feelings.

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Ask: *What feelings have you noticed so far during your experience of COVID-19?*

KEY MESSAGES

*Feelings are made up of different parts.
Feelings show up in our body.
We can listen to our body for signals of how we are feeling.
Everyone has thoughts about the things that happen.
How people think influences how they feel and behave.*

- Ask students to take a few minutes to reflect and jot notes on how they currently cope with hard times and upsetting feelings, either in general, or in relation to COVID-19.
- Introduce them briefly to four areas of coping:
 - Self-talk (thinking)
 - Feelings
 - Action
 - Environment.

Working together, brainstorm coping strategies that relate to each domain.

EXTRA: Explore some or all of these Sparklers activities:

- *Wellbeing Walkabout*
- *Emotions in Motion*
- *Hikitia te Hā Mindful Breathing*
- *There for Me.*

DID YOU KNOW?

Identifying our feelings and talking them over with a trusted friend or adult can be enough: coping is not always about doing something.

Wellbeing and learning from home

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

Ask: *What has the lockdown been like for you so far? What have you found helpful to learning and coping?*

- Review Tip sheet 2 Learning from home during school closures (for older students only)
- Ask students to share one idea that stood out for them and how they might use it during the next week.
- Acknowledge student feelings and affirm students for positive coping actions

EXTRA: Keeping Active at Home. Review one or both of the following resources and discuss barriers and solutions to staying active at home:

- *Ministry of Health activities for children and young people*
- *Home Exercises by This Girl Can.*

SET TWO: COVID-19 AND THE COMMUNITY

Fear and isolation can increase anxiety and fuel stigma. Children and young people who show compassion and support to others during challenging times not only help others, but they also cope better with the situation themselves (*Bokszczanin 2011: Anxiety, Stress and Coping an International Journal*). A key factor in collectively addressing COVID-19 is developing and strengthening children and young people's sense of social responsibility. It is important for children to recognise the important role they are playing as we unite against the virus. For younger children, highlight that staying away from people and temporarily giving up some of our favourite activities is a way of showing our care for the community. For older children, extend this understanding by exploring the science of infectious disease control and discussions of stigma.

EARLY LEARNING

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Read *Helping at the Marae* by André Ngāpō (Ready to Read). You can find this and other [Ready to Read articles and stories on Literacy online](#).
- Ask: What do you think the story was about? (Helping others when they need it). Help children make connections with the story by discussing that, at the moment, everyone is staying at home to help each other not get sick.
- Discuss: How can we be kind to ourselves and each other when we are sick or when we have to stay home? How do other people show us kindness? How can we be kind to other people?

EXTRA: Choose your own stories and articles to read with your child on [Literacy online](#).

EARLY PRIMARY (YRS. 0–3)

Everyday Kindness

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Read a story about kindness and talk about it, for example, the Ministry of Education story of *Oat the Goat*, available on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX50BXNrMRU).

- Other examples can be found using the [National Library and Literacy online](#).
- Discuss: How can we be kind to ourselves when we are sick/in hibernation/lockdown? How do other people show us kindness? How can we be kind to other people?

Take ACTION: Explore with the children actions they would like to take to help others during the COVID-19 outbreak, for example, using chalk to write positive messages on the footpath and putting encouraging posters in their windows to cheer people up.

For more activities around kindness, explore these Sparklers activities:

- [Everyday Kindness](#)
- [Culture of Kindness](#)
- [The Empathy Effect](#)
- [We can only Shine!](#)

LATER PRIMARY (YRS. 4–8)

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Encourage student to listen to the story *Isobel's Garden* by Maria Hansen (*Ready to Read*). You can find this and other [Ready to Read articles and stories on Literacy online](#).
- Discuss: How is this story like what we're experiencing now? Answers could include "we're helping others who are unable to help themselves" and "our community is helping each other during difficult times".

Take ACTION: Explore with the children actions they would like to take to help others during the COVID-19 outbreak, for example, using chalk to write positive messages on the footpath and putting encouraging posters in their windows to cheer people up.

EXTRA: Check out the [Student Volunteer Army](#). They have launched a national volunteer response to support people impacted by COVID-19. They're doing this by supporting essential services across Aotearoa New Zealand through volunteering

EXTRA: Read the story *Pandemic: The Deadly Flu of 1918* by Renata Hopkins (School Journal, Level 4, June 2018). Please note that there are several references to sickness throughout the article. Read the article before sharing it with students to evaluate its appropriateness at this time.

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Fear and anxiety of a disease such as COVID-19 may increase stigma towards certain people or places, particularly if people associate a certain country or context with the disease. This stigma can also extend to people who have contracted the disease and recovered. This stigma may lead to avoidance or rejection of other people. In extreme cases, it can lead to bullying or violence. Teachers and parents can help children understand and avoid stigma by providing accurate facts about COVID-19 and discussing stigma.

Activity: What to do about stigma

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Ask: What is stigma? When have you experienced being stigmatised?
- Have students read and review the resource the UNICEF webpage on [social stigma associated with COVID-19](#). Discuss the key messages and relevance of the resource.
- Ask students to write down two sentences that express their perspective on stigma and how they as an individual will stand up to stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic. If they agree, ask them to share their Personal Stigma Prevention Mantra via a face-to-face platform or social media.

EXTRA Review and discuss the UNICEF webpage [Covid-19 your voices against stigma and discrimination](#). Have students make their own [Public Service Announcements](#) via social media, radio or even local TV broadcasting.

Activity: Flattening the curve, the why of social distancing

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Ask: *What is your understanding of the "why" of social distancing and school closures?*
- Encourage students to watch the Washington Post video *Understanding isolation, quarantine, and social distancing in the coronavirus era* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnLgxqtXNdc) and read the Spinoff article on [the three phases of COVID-19](#).
- Review each resource and discuss their main points.

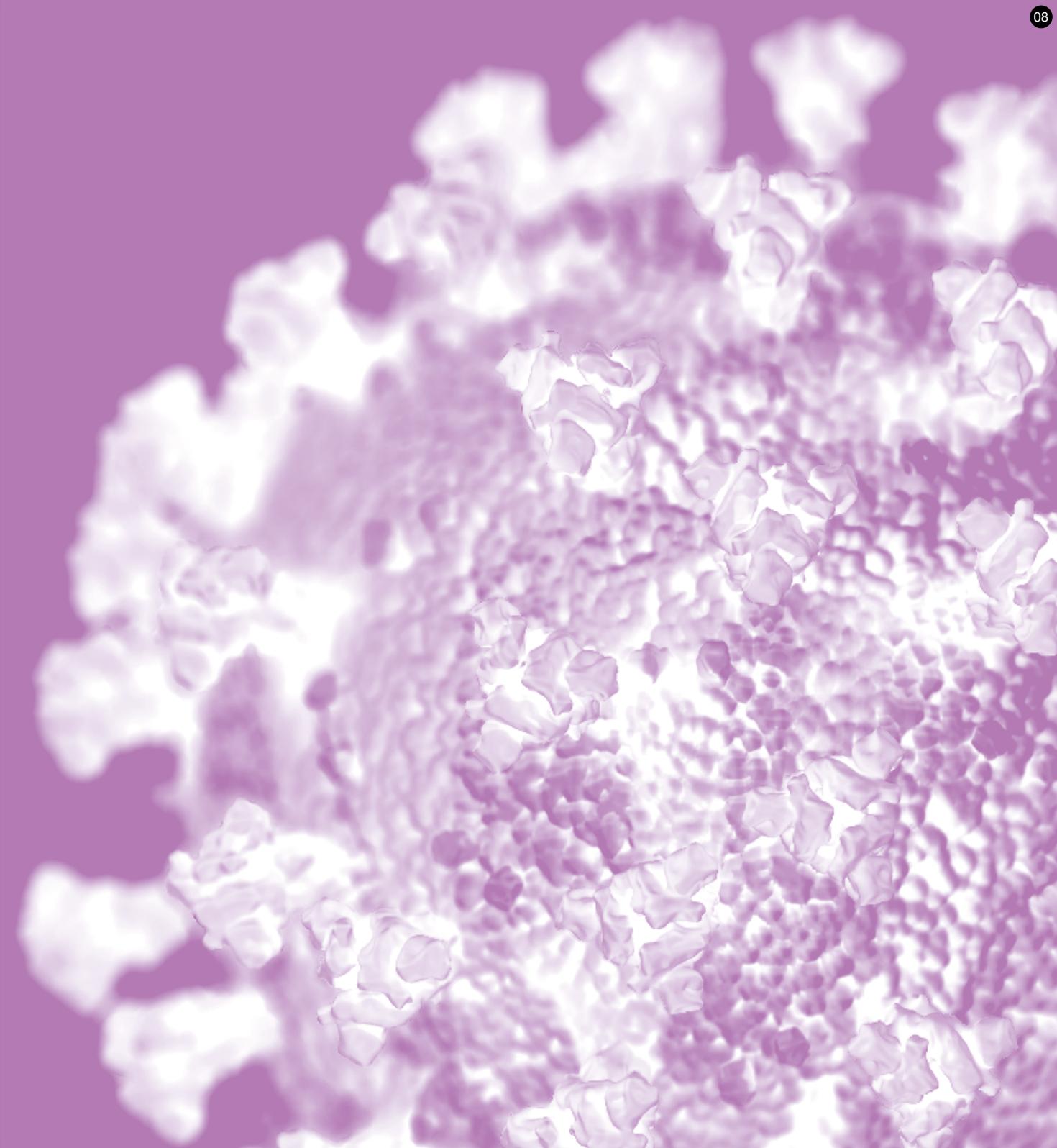
- Discuss student responses to social distancing and highlight key concepts such as collective action and social responsibility.

EXTRA: Discuss collective action in relationship to the science of COVID-19 and to the business community using resources such as the World Economic Forum (WEC) [COVID Action Platform](#).

Activity: Digital Citizens

Teachers (via a face-to-face platform) or parent(s)/caregivers can:

- Ask: *What is student understanding of the “why” of social distancing and school closures?*
- Ask students to read and review [Infodemic: Sifting through the coronavirus pandemic](#) or choose an age appropriate module to complete from [Common sense education: Essential digital citizenship lessons for the coronavirus pandemic](#). Ask students to share their responses and consider implications for media use during the lock down and afterwards.



TIPS FOR PARENTS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE

Term 2 creates a shift of focus for your child as they prepare for and engage with distance learning activities provided by their school. Depending on your home situation, this may be a welcome change or an additional source of stress as you juggle the competing demands of home, work, and wider whānau.

Whenever possible, be kind to yourself and try and not add additional pressure to an already challenging situation. Your wellbeing and that of your whānau is important as everyone adapts to this new situation. Do not try to become a teacher. Short-term school closures are not an academic crisis. There will be opportunities after the restrictions are lifted to catch up on any formal academic learning. COVID-19 and school closures present new and diverse learning opportunities in a home environment. Do not underestimate the fertile environment of your home and whānau for rich and important learning. Your child will remember this time in the bubble as a significant moment in history, personally, nationally and globally, a time where they contributed towards collective action in response to COVID-19 by staying home and observing physical distancing guidelines.

Many parents are feeling uncertain and under pressure dealing with the impacts of COVID-19. The wellbeing of parents is vital to the whole of the community and especially their children. Parents need to take time to look after their own mental health and to be a role model to children in this regard. Useful sources of support include:

- Ministry of Health webpage on [wellbeing at Alert Level 4](#).
- Getting through together – [Whāia E Tātou Te Pae Tawhiti](#) hosted by All Right? provides guidance and advice on wellbeing
- The World Health Organisation fact sheet: [Coping with Stress](#) during COVID-19
- This Maggie Dent article provides [guidance on managing your own worries](#).

If you're working from home, these blogs from [Aha Parenting](#) and [Allright](#) have useful suggestions about managing the pressures of this. If you have more than one child, this [blog from Aha Parenting has tips and advice for families in quarantine](#) that relates to helping siblings get on with one another.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S WELLBEING

All of us will be experiencing a level of worry during these uncertain times and it is normal for children to experience a range of feelings. Children often show signs of struggle through their behaviour and again this is normal and expected. The tip sheets within each module offer support to your child by providing information, understanding and positive coping strategies.

TURNING ANXIETY INTO ACTION FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Use metaphor to explain social distancing and staying at home. Children can be taught how to be **social butterflies**, keeping a distance of two wingspans from others when on walks in the neighbourhood.

Kindergarten and school closures can be likened to **hibernating** like a winter animal. If you have access to them, read hibernation stories, for example, *Frederick* by Leo Lionni.

Sing along with children to help them learn and carry out healthy behaviours. Here are some examples:

- [Hand Washing Song](#) (Music From Michal)
- [The Wiggles handwashing song](#) (UNICEF)
- [Every Little Cell](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE6jnezy1MU) (YouTube)

Build a routine for the day, with mealtimes, self-care, time outside, school work, chores, reading, learning, movement, music, pretend play, social connection and art.

Explore ideas being shared online for activities that involve sensory play, stories and crafts, for example, [Sparklers](#) and [Read Aloud Stories](#).

Create pictures of the day to remind children of protective actions (for example, handwashing) or to help children be involved with creating stay-at-home routines. Use a blackboard, white board or other visuals to create a picture of the day (using drawings rather than words with smaller children).

Be creative: Art, music, dance and sensory play can help everyone, not just young children, to be calmer and more hopeful.

Offer choices to include the children in decisions about activities or food choices.

Grow kindness and care for others by reading or listening to stories such as *Oat the Goat* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX50BXNrMRU) (Ministry of Education video, available on YouTube). Talk with children about how we can be kind and explore ways to give to others at home and in the community. Use ideas on the [Sparklers](#) website to extend on these conversations. Assign children age-appropriate tasks they can do to help at home.

Include your children in doing chores to build upon their pro-social skills and provide opportunities for practical learning.

Grow gratitude with a daily gratitude practice. Share together what you are grateful for or keep a diary of gratitude. Talk about people, places, and situations you each appreciate, supporting your child in expressing their thanks, for example, writing a letter to our essential workers or others in the community.

TURNING ANXIETY INTO ACTION FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Spot fake news by discussing where to get information about COVID-19, determine reliable sources of information and discuss critical thinking skills. Read and discuss the Newsroom article: [Critical thinking in an age of fake news](#). Help your child turn anxiety into action.

Develop limits together on exposure to media and conversations about COVID-19. Share your strategies with your child and explore together which COVID-19 conversations are helpful.

Learn together about how to wash hands effectively. Useful resources include *Nanogirl discussing how to teach handwashing* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eqhw6yZk-c) and the *UNICEF global handwashing dance* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=825gGELjB98). Involve children in developing plans for effective and fun hand hygiene at home.

Explore and act on ways children would like to take to support others at home or in the community. Learn the phrase: **He waka eke noa – we're all in this together**. Discuss ways that other people around the world are taking actions, for example, *Kindness Matters*.

Use the opportunity to develop your child's social conscience by reading about and discussing stigma, for example, this UNICEF webpage *on social stigma associated with COVID-19* and the UNICEF webpage *the UNICEF webpage Covid-19 your voices against stigma and discrimination*.

Build on their community mindedness by discussing economic, political, cultural and health impacts of COVID-19 and potential solutions to these.

Discuss online safety and screen use. The Netsafe website can provide you with guidance on keeping your children safe online, including this *list of top 10 online safety tips*. Feel empowered to set limits on device use even for older children because extremes of device use (either too little or too much) have been associated with negative impacts. Evidence suggests that **type and quality of device use is an important consideration** for parent(s)/caregivers. For older children, well-managed and paced use of devices for learning, creativity, social connection and community engagement is likely to be beneficial up to a point. Careful management of solitary device use, as well as gaming (especially gaming that is addictive or promotes stereotypes and poor behaviour) is required because of the greater potential harms associated with these types of device use. Keeping an eye on game quality and content, along with parent mediation and support, can help students access potential benefits of gaming, including skill development and social interaction, whilst minimising harm. For further information see *Netsafe (Gaming)*. Even for older students, be mindful that they require help with their management of devices, and be aware of the activities your child is doing online and keep your eye on the quality of content. Provide guidance to your child/ren through a mixture of role-modelling positive digital habits, monitoring, discussion and joint engagement around media. Discuss with your child/ren what they are learning and help them grow the skills they need to be safe and effective in the digital world. Talk and listen about safety and responsibility and openly discuss cyberbullying, sexting and other risks. Help your child select good content and use media creatively. Encourage community engagement and civic action through online means.

Create space by discussing with your child how different spaces in the house can be used, how everyone can have some alone time, and what individuals can do on their own.

Consider your family culture and discuss with your older children how your family can live with meaning, purpose and connection. Hold a family meeting each week to check in with individuals. Discuss individual strengths, as well as expectations, concerns and hopes.

Check in with your child to find out how they are feeling and coping. Read and discuss together this *Spinoff article on how teenagers are responding to lockdown*.

Encourage positivity and resilience by highlighting strengths they have already displayed when managing other challenges and explore how these skills could be used now.

Keep the future in mind by engaging in conversations about personal growth and community change, for example, read and discuss this Stuff.co.nz article *A test of national values*.

Know where to find help when you need it by talking with your child about support options and exploring them together. For more information, see Module 1: Tip Sheet 1.

For more information on supporting the wellbeing of your child, see **Module 1: Hauora/wellbeing in uncertain times**.

ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING RESOURCES

If your child is experiencing significant anxiety or distress during school closures, see these resources for additional guidance and support.

- This Sparklers resource provides *information about how to help kids manage worries*.
- The GoZen website provides a *series of videos on helping kids manage anxiety*.
- This UNICEF webpage provides *tips for teenagers protecting their mental health*.
- For children with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), the International Foundation of OCD provides information on *talking to children about COVID-19*.

For more information about Help for Wellbeing see Module 1: Tip Sheet 1.

If you are concerned about a marked change in your child's mood or behaviour such as extreme withdrawal it is important to contact your usual health providers or contact Need to talk? 1737 or text 1737 for information about support options. For Mental health emergencies call Healthline for details of the Crisis Team in your area: 0800 611 116 or call 111.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING DURING TERM TIME

Your school and the [Ministry of Education](#) will provide you with regular information and advice about learning during school closures. Curriculum-based learning opportunities and materials will be made available by the Ministry of Education in digital and hardcopy packs. For those who don't have access to internet and/or devices, the Ministry of Education is also available to work with you and your child's school to determine individual needs.

The Ministry of Education has set up two online platforms to support teachers, parent(s)/caregivers and whānau with home learning:

- [Learning from Home](#)
- [Ki te Ao Mārama](#)

Other useful resources for younger children include [Sparklers](#), [Read Aloud Stories](#), and [RNZ guide to online learning resources for kids](#). While school closures are different from home schooling, many parent(s)/caregivers are drawing on the experience and knowledge of people who do teach their children at home, for example, see this [Spinoff article](#) on what all parents can learn from NZ homeschoolers.

Here are some general tips you can use to support your child's learning while schools are closed.

Safety first: Create a calm and happy space for your child to learn in, one that provides a sense of security and stability. A positive relationship with your child is the most important foundation for learning and wellbeing.

Create a routine: Together with your child, create a routine for the day, with regular downtime, times for physical exercise, and mealtimes. Allow room for flexibility.

Reduce expectations: Everyone is working out how to live in these unprecedented times. Try to be easy on yourself and your child, letting go of outcomes with a focus on process, connection and fun. During this time, mental health is more important than academic progress.

Your child is the learner: Think of yourself as facilitator, support crew, coach or cheerleader.

Educate yourself: Be aware of school requirements and familiarise yourself with any curriculum or digital platforms being used. For younger children, find out what your child is interested in and match any learning tasks to their curiosity

and interests. For older children, explore together what they are hoping to achieve during the period of school closure.

Atmosphere is critical: Create an environment where children can share, ask questions, play, be active and solve problems.

Create space for learning: If possible, create a specific space that is different from their usual activities.

Mix it up: Alternate sedentary activities with active movement and academic learning with creative pursuits. If possible, alternate screen time with other learning mediums such as books and pen and paper.

Keep in touch: Encourage your child to keep in touch with friends using phone calls and/or video chats. Face-to-face interactive formats provide benefits over and above more passive social media and texting.

Allow boredom: Creativity and initiative can emerge from boredom.

Be and play: For younger children, time with family and child-directed play provides the best learning context. This can include household chores and projects, arts and craft, and other creative pursuits.

Step back: If things become tense, take a moment to observe how you are all feeling, take a break and return to the issue later.

Turn off tech: A significant amount of learning and socialising during this time of school closure requires the use of devices. Together with your child, identify times away from the device, perhaps outside, in nature, connecting with your 'bubble', engaged in movement, reading or creative pursuits. Aim to reduce additional screen use where-ever possible. If device use is new in your family or you have concerns about safety, the [Netsafe website](#) can provide you with guidance on keeping your children safe online, including this [list of top 10 online safety tips](#).

Set and review goals: Have regular conversations with your child about their interests, goals and learning, providing them with encouraging feedback and affirmation.

A wellbeing agenda: korero with your child about their feelings and experiences. This can strengthen their emotional literacy, coping skills and critical thinking skills. Learn from your child, and look for opportunities for your child to share their learning with you or to teach you something.

Keep moving: Exercise is great for body and mind. Useful online resources that encourage physical activity include:

- [Home Exercises by This Girl Can](#)
- The New York Times [Scientific 7-minute Workout](#)



WELLBEING AND LEARNING AT HOME DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES

This tip sheet provides some ideas and strategies to support your wellbeing during the learning from home stage of our country's response to managing and eliminating COVID-19.

The need to stay in a bubble is an unusual experience for everyone and right now your part of a global event in which over a billion people are in some form of lockdown. By staying at home, you're helping to address the COVID-19 situation, keeping yourself and other people in your community safe. But spending time away from your friends, from school and your support networks may be a challenge.

The length of the school closures, and the possibility that your school may need to stay in or return to the staying at home stage for longer than just the first 4 weeks can be frustrating. It's important to keep in mind that this stage of managing or eliminating the virus is not forever. Don't be surprised if you go through a whole range of emotions at this time – you won't be alone in this and it's completely normal.

Boredom Relief Fear Novelty Frustration Fed Up
Lonely Pleased Excitement Sluggish Energised Worried
Rested Anticipation Hopeful Conflict

With school starting, it's time to set up some new routines shifting your focus onto the work and activities your school has set up for you. Your teacher is there to help you with your learning, and there may also be another adult you can look to for support. There are lots of things you can do within your own bubble to help you make the most of this new way of learning from home.

YOUR MIND, YOUR FRIEND

When you are in your bubble, your mind can be your best ally when it comes to keeping your spirits up. Here are some tips to keep your mind and thinking healthy.

- If you are feeling confused, seek information from reliable sources or talk to a trusted adult.
- Think about other challenges you have faced and how you managed them. Remind yourself that you can deal with this too.
- Take a look at now from the future and see yourself as part of history. What will you be thinking about this in one year's time? What stories will you be telling?
- Remind your mind that this is temporary: like a season, it too will pass.
- Think about your sources of strength and support and the people who are working hard to make a difference. Be grateful for the good things in the world.
- Keep critiquing your world – question, investigate, consider and examine the information, viewpoints, values and your own thoughts.

Feelings are made up of different parts.

Feelings show up in our body.

We can listen to our body for signals of how we are feeling.

Everyone has thoughts about the things that happen.

How people think influences how they feel and behave.

Being at home can be really stressful if life at home is hard and you don't have the support networks that you usually rely on. If things are really tough, there are some places you can contact at the end of this tip sheet – hang in there and remember you're not alone.

ADD RHYTHM TO YOUR DAY

As a new term dawns, it's a good time to firm up a daily routine for yourself. This will help you stay on track with schoolwork. More importantly, regular routines and rhythms are really good for your wellbeing. Create a schedule that includes a bit of everything - school learning, physical exercise, relaxation time, and times to help out around the house. Try to get up at the same time each day, even if this is a bit later than when you're heading off to school, and think about getting out of those PJs when you're doing school work.

SET GOALS

Create a list of things you need each day and a list of things you want (and are able!) to do. Break down your day and tasks into smaller chunks and do one thing at a time. Tick them off your list. Be kind to yourself if you don't get everything on your list done. There is always tomorrow.

KEEP MOVING

Exercise is great for body and mind. Think about ways to maintain or increase your fitness. You could try some online yoga or set up your own backyard or inside for circuit training – you don't need much in or outdoor space or equipment for push ups, squats, lunges or crunches. And then there is just good old dancing and letting yourself go.

For more information, see:

[Ministry of Health Being Active](#)
and [Home Exercises by This Girl Can](#)

FIND WAYS TO BE CREATIVE

Don't forget to set aside time for things you enjoy doing. Consider developing a new skill or hobby or to finish off a creative project that you've had sitting around. Practise your drawing skills or think about entering a *short story competition*. Take a look at what other young people are doing through art during the COVID-19 experience **#KeepMakingArt**

SCREEN TIME

Keep your use of technology in balance. Arrange with your 'bubble' times that you will be device-free to give your eyes, body and mind rest. When you're not using your phone as your device for lessons, consider turning it off. Alternate time using devices with movement and other activities. Consider what content you are "feeding" your mind. Use self-control, perspective taking and empathy for others to stay safe and be safe online. Take the opportunity to use your digital skills, for example, Facebook's *Get Digital resources for Youth*, and discuss your ideas with others. Make your screen time social with video chats with people outside your bubble or movies nights or other shared media use inside your bubble. Talk about what you are doing and learning online and share any concerns with those you trust and respect.

MAKING TIME FOR MUSIC

Music can be an incredible source of strength and comfort. If you're into music, work out which songs are useful for different situations such as studying, calming you down, releasing tension or stress, or lifting your mood.

FAMILY TIMES

Staying in the bubble means much more time with the whānau and for some this may mean increased stress. Where possible, find ways to get some space from each other, alongside time together. Talking together about hopes and struggles is ideal, but if talking with the people at home is hard, then find someone outside your bubble to get some support from.

LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE

There are likely to be many silver linings in your bubble experience. Take time to consider your experience and reflect on your life. What will you tell your own children about this experience? The opportunity to slow down and live simply

may only occur this once in your lifetime. Take time to learn about yourself, how you respond to spending so much time at home and/or being less busy. Observe your values and priorities. Notice any reflections you have about your life and future and talk about the experience with others.

Reflect on the wider community and the opportunity for societal change. There are likely to be silver linings for our communities and wider society. Share your hope with others. For more information, read this Stuff article: *A test of national values*.

GET HELP

Check out the **Help for Mental Health Tip Sheet 3 in Module 1** for services to support you.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE NEWS

Spending too much time watching or reading news can have a negative effect on your thinking. A regular daily update to keep informed about what's happening in Aotearoa New Zealand and the rest of the world is probably enough. Remember to use your

Reliable sources of information 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*

critical thinking skills to evaluate whether information you read online is reliable and accurate, for example, checking the URL and the source, critiquing the quality and emotional tone of the article and checking the facts before you pass it on.

Learn more about the coronavirus using resources such as:

- *Nanogirl coronavirus resources for children and parents*
- *Talking COVID with the Prime Minister* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKNys5i8yIk).

KEEP CONNECTED

Connecting with others is vital to wellbeing. Keep in touch with friends and neighbours and find a way to be there for each other. Be kind and reach out to others who may need help at home or in the community. Find ways to give to others, for example, by providing a compliment, a kind word or a helping hand.

NEED EXTRA HELP?

Contact Need to Talk 1737 or What's Up 0800 942 8787 to talk and find out what supports are available.

