



TE OPE KĀTUA O AOTEAROA
DEFENCE FORCE

Health

Ko te Toi Ora: Staying at the Top of Your Game

A Guide for Maintaining Health
for the Defence Community

Version 03



HEI MANA MŌ AOTEAROA
A FORCE FOR NEW ZEALAND

A GUIDE FOR MAINTAINING HEALTH FOR THE DEFENCE COMMUNITY

Sometimes we need a helping hand. Where to go for help:

PHONE LINES

For any crisis, including medical emergencies, call 111.

Who	Number to call	About
Regular Forces, Civilians, Reserve Forces, families and Veterans	0800NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 693 348) Text 8881 Overseas: +64 9 414 9914 Email: wellbeing.support@nzdf4u.co.nz	24/7 confidential support from a health professional (outside of the NZDF) spanning both virtual and face-to-face support for mental health and wellbeing
Veterans	0800 VETERANS	Confidential nation-wide support service for eligible the members of serving and ex-serving community
Lifeline	0800 54 33 54	Confidential counselling service
Healthline	0800 611 116	Free health advice from trained registered nurses 24/7
1737	Call or text 1737	Free mental health and addiction support 24/7

Page 116 has a comprehensive list of other internal and external support options.

This document has been produced by the Defence Health Directorate.
This document will be updated regularly. For the most recent version see
<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>

We value your feedback. Email your suggestions about how it can be improved to
integrated.wellness@nzdf.mil.nz

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INTRODUCTION

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

– Mahatma Gandhi

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

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

This booklet is divided into four sections spanning the four domains of our hauora. There is also an additional section focused on common life challenges and some tips for managing these. The appendices provide more tips and self-management tools and where you can go for additional information and support.

TE WHARE TAPA WHĀ MODEL OF HEALTH

TE TAHA HINENGARO

Mental and emotional wellbeing

TE TAHA WHĀNAU

Social wellbeing

TE TAHA TINANA

Physical wellbeing

TE TAHA WAIRUA

Spiritual wellbeing

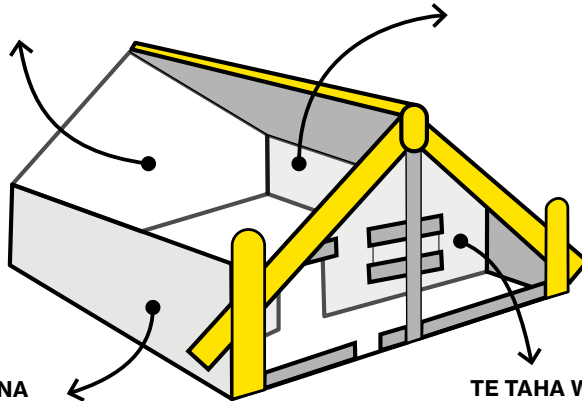


Figure 1: Te Whare Tapa Whā Model of Health¹

The Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health, initially proposed in 1984 by Sir Mason Durie a prominent Māori psychiatrist, suggests that a person's wellbeing is a function of their wellbeing across four areas of their life, all of which are connected, like the walls of a Whārenui (meeting house). The Whārenui's connection with the whenua (land) forms the foundation for the other four dimensions.

The model reinforces the importance of nurturing all four cornerstones of our hauora (health) [Hinengaro, Tinana, Wairua and Whānau] for overall wellbeing. All four walls are interconnected and must work harmoniously together to bring balance for holistic wellness. Each of the walls are dependent on the others standing strong to maintain a solid whare which is why nurturing all four domains is essential for maintaining our overall hauora.

¹ Mason Durie 1984 <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models/maori-health-models-te-whare-tapa-wha>

TAHA TINANA

Physical Wellbeing

Is about how our body grows, feels and moves, how we care for it, and what we put into it. Nourishing and strengthening our physical wellbeing enables us to cope with the ups and downs of life. Changes in our physical health can have a direct impact on other aspects of our health, such as our mental and emotional health.

TAHA HINENGARO

Mental Wellbeing

Taha hinengaro is a person's thoughts, feelings, mind, conscience, and heart. It's about how we feel, as well as how we communicate and think. Taking care of taha hinengaro is important for everyone, regardless of whether or not we've experienced mental illness or distress. When taha hinengaro is strong, people are able to gain perspective on their thoughts and feelings, remain hopeful in the face of distress, and make choices that reflect what matters to them.

TAHA WAIRUA

Spiritual Wellbeing

Our spiritual essence is our life force, or mauri. This is the essence of who and what matters to you. Different people have different perspectives of wairua. For some, wairua is linked to religion or faith, and for others it is about a connection to something divine in each of us. For others, it encompasses the values, ethical & moral standards and the passions that drive the things in life that matter to each of us. It also links to identity, such as our cultural identity or our professional identity, including our identity as a member of the NZDF, service, trade and unit.

TAHA WHĀNAU

Family or Social Wellbeing

Taha whānau is about where and who we feel we belong, who matters to us in our life, who we spend our time with, and who we choose to love. Whānau is not just our immediate family, and includes the networks, extended relationships, and groups we belong to, as well as our friends, hoamahi (colleagues), and community. Everyone has a place and a role to fulfil within their whānau, and whānau contributes to our individual wellbeing and identity. Connection and belonging are fundamental to human wellbeing.



TINANA **BODY**



TINANA BODY

Your physical health is likely the area of your health you are most aware of, and that which you are most likely to seek help for if you notice you aren't quite at the top of your game. Maintaining good physical health decreases your risk of developing certain health conditions, like heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. Being physically healthy also helps you to manage life's challenges and stay healthy across the other domains of health, helping you to stay fit for your job, and protecting against fatigue, injury and illness.

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

Staying physically healthy can sometimes get harder as we get busy, and often as we get older, however prioritising your health is important at any age and there is a lot we can do to help ourselves. You are probably doing many of these already. The basic things are diet, exercise and sleep, but there are many other lifestyle factors that are important too.

OPTIMISING PHYSICAL HEALTH

Exercise

*“When the body is tired,
exercise the mind ...
when the mind is tired,
exercise the body.”*

Get Regular exercise

Exercise is good for almost every part of your body—heart, circulation, bones, respiratory system, skin, and brain. It has been found to help prevent a range of health conditions and also benefits your brain by reducing tension, improving sleep and aiding concentration.

How much physical activity is needed?

Recommended exercise type and amount varies by age. The Ministry of Health Guidelines are:

Adults – Do at least 2½ hours of moderate or 1¼ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week. Moderate intensity activity causes a slight, but noticeable, increase in breath and heart rate. You can still carry on a conversation. Vigorous intensity activity makes you out of breath—you can't do these activities and chat at the same time. For extra health benefits, aim for 5 hours of moderate or 2½ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week. Do some muscle-strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.

Older adults – Do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on 5 days or more per week. Try to add 3 sessions of flexibility and balance activities, and 2 sessions of muscle-strengthening activities per week. (Some of this can be combined, e.g., hill walking may count towards aerobic and muscle-strengthening.)

Children and teenagers (5 to 17 years) – Do lots of physical activity. Do at least 1 hour of moderate or vigorous physical activity spread over each day. Also do a variety of light physical activities for several hours a day. Include vigorous physical activity and activities that strengthen muscles and bone at least 3 days a week. Don't spend much time sitting. Spend no more than 2 hours a day on recreational screen time. Sit less, move more. Break up sitting time.

Remember, any amount of exercise is better than none, and build up over time, especially if you have not done any exercise for a while. And if you have any health conditions talk to your doctor about your planned exercise programme before you start.



Read more about tips for getting and staying active in **Appendix 4 on page 132** and at <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/physical-health-and-fitness/>

Nutrition

Nine simple steps to achieve healthy and sustainable nutrition

Whether you are a new recruit, a seasoned professional, or special forces, the foundations of a good diet are the same.

Minimally processed foods contain the nutrients to support metabolism, performance, mood, energy and recovery, with protein sources being a key dietary factor to supply these nutrients. The amount you will need, particularly carbohydrates and fat, will depend on your physical activity level and your body composition goals. Follow these nine easy steps to achieve healthy and sustainable nutrition.

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/nutrition-and-supplements/fuelling-the-force/#e1401>

1. Prioritise natural or minimally processed foods

Natural or minimally processed foods are the basis of diets that provide the nutrients we need. Variety means foods of all types – nuts, milk, eggs, meat, fish, legumes, roots, tubers, vegetables, fruits - and diversity within each type, e.g. beef and lamb, spinach and kumara, beans and lentils, corn, potato and taro, tomatoes and squash, oranges and bananas, chicken and fish.

Shop around the outside of the supermarket (where most of the fresh food is) and in fruit and vegetable shops, or buy directly from producers or other places that sell varieties of natural or minimally processed foods. Choose vegetables and fruits that are locally grown in season, for both their nutrition and your wallet.

When eating in the galley/mess, go for the least processed protein option (the steak, the un-coated chicken or fish etc) and then load your plate with veggies.

2. Limit processed Foods

Processed foods such as vegetables in brine, fruits in syrup, processed cheeses and breads, have a lower nutritional quality of the food. Try to use only small amounts of these in dishes.

3. Avoid ultra-processed foods

Ultra-processed foods make up 60% of foods found in the supermarket and consist of three main ingredients (starch, sugar and processed oils). A bunch of additives and preservatives make them taste like foods that we might find in nature, but they contain none of the nutrients. Salty, fatty packaged snacks, soft drinks, sweetened breakfast cereals, and instant noodles, are low in the nutrients we need and provide an excess of calories that can lead to overeating.

4. Use natural oils, natural fats and salt in small amounts

When used in dishes that are predominantly whole foods (such as vegetables, eggs, meat etc), cooking with natural oils, fats and salt (in small amounts) improves flavour and contributes to a diverse and delicious diet.

They also help improve the absorption of nutrients from vegetables. Natural oils include coconut oil, olive oil and avocado oil. Natural fats includes fat from dairy and from tallow and lard.

5. Eat mindfully, and with others

Whenever possible, eat in company with family, friends, or colleagues; this increases the enjoyment of food and encourages eating regularly, attentively, and in an appropriate environment.

Try to eat your meals at regular times each day and avoid snacking between meals. Eat slowly and enjoy what you are eating, without engaging in another activity. Eat in clean, comfortable and quiet places, where there is no pressure to consume unlimited amounts of food.

6. Develop and share cooking skills

If you have cooking skills, develop them and share them, especially with children. If you do not have these skills, find ways to acquire them. Learn from and talk to people who know how to cook. Ask family, friends, and colleagues for recipes, read books, check the internet, or maybe take a course.

7. Plan your meals in advance

Decide on meals up to a week in advance so that you can check what you've got and what you need, and shop accordingly. Share the planning and cooking with those you live with and make time and effort to enjoy the meal.

8. Choose freshly made meals when away from home

When you're away from home, try to eat in places that serve fresh meals. Choose the protein base first (fish, chicken, steak, etc) and ask for sauces on the side. Try to minimise the amount of processed sauces or starch that are added to the meal. Self-service restaurants and canteens that serve food buffet-style, charged by weight, are good choices. When on base or in camp, make use of the mess or galley, and avoid the fast food chains.

9. Plan your time to make food and eating important in your life

The purpose of advertising is to increase product sales, not to inform or educate people. The marketing of any food product is on the front; the nutrition information is on the back. Be critical and teach those around you to be critical of all forms of food advertising and marketing. For example, while some common breakfast food brands are marketed as a 'high protein' cereal, the protein source is from added wheat protein, a source that contains little other nutrients and doesn't provide the satiety of food sources naturally high in protein (such as eggs). In addition, the serving size, 40g, might provide 2 tsp of sugar, however most people eat at least double the suggested serving size so this can quickly add up. Sugar is also hidden in food labels under many different names, for example cereal has four different possible sources of sugar (sugar, maltodextrin, molasses and barley malt extract).

Resources:

Read more about nutrition and supplements here:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/nutrition-and-supplements/>

Nutrition and Mental Health

Mental resilience and the ability to cope under pressure are influenced by a number of factors. Nutrition and hydration are two key areas that can significantly impact our state of mind.

There have been many links made between what we consume nutritionally and the direct influence it has on mental health. The macronutrients present in food provide energy and support to the body's structures and systems. Additionally the micronutrients for producing hormones, such as serotonin, dopamine, glutamate and GABA, all of which dictate our mood, motivation, state of calm and how happy we feel.

Hydration

Hydration is key to good physical and mental energy across the day. When we are dehydrated, our body has to work harder to pump blood around the body and this makes us more tired than we would otherwise be. In terms of physical energy, we will tire more quickly, during both PT and general activity. We are also more likely to experience brain fog, have trouble concentrating, experience mood problems, and feel lethargic and sleepy, when we don't have enough fluid on board. How much you need to drink each day varies depending on gender, age, activity levels and environmental conditions.

Make plain water your first choice. Plain milk is also good and provides protein and calcium.

Sugar sweetened beverages include fizzy drinks, energy drinks, flavoured waters, fruit juices, cordials, sports drinks, flavoured milks and breakfast drinks. They are very high in calories, have limited nutritional value and in particular, they contain large amounts of sugar. They increase risk of tooth decay and are linked to obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Am I Hydrated? Urine Colour Chart	
1	
2	If your urine matches the colors 1, 2, or 3 you are properly hydrated.
3	Continue to consume fluids at the recommended amounts.
<hr style="border: 2px solid red;"/>	
4	If your urine color is below the RED line, you are.
5	DEHYDRATED and at risk for cramping and/or a heat illness!
6	You need to drink more water!
7	
8	

Sugar

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends adults and children reduce their daily intake of free sugars to less than 5% of their total energy intake to gain health benefits and reduce the risk of overweight, obesity and tooth decay. This equates to approximately six teaspoons of sugar for the average adult. A 600mL bottle of Coke contains almost 13 teaspoons of sugar.

Free sugars are those added to foods or beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer. They also include sugars naturally present in honey syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates. Most of these sugars are 'hidden' in processed foods that are not typically considered sweets, such as sauces and breakfast cereals.

Sugars that naturally occur in fresh fruit, vegetables, plain milk and plain yoghurt do not have the same effect as free sugars and people are encouraged to include them as part of a healthy eating pattern.

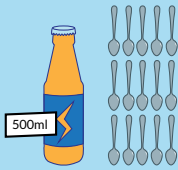
Free sugars may be called many different names, such as agave nectar, coconut sugar, deionised fruit juice, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice, glucose, honey, maple syrup, raw sugar, rice malt syrup, sucrose, sugar or treacle.

The 3pm slump – Many people feel an energy slump around 2–3pm and have a craving for sugar. The cause is often related to a combination of (stress) hormones, lack of sleep, poor nutrition and dehydration. Rather than reaching for a chocolate bar, go for a walk, have a break from what you are concentrating on and switch to finishing off short uncompleted tasks (sending an email, paying a bill etc.) and increase your fluid intake.

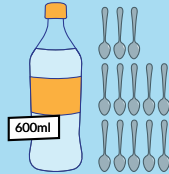


Read more about
Nutrition at Appendix 5
on page 136.

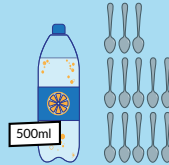
How much sugar is in your drink?



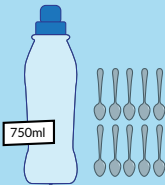
energy drink
15 teaspoons of sugar



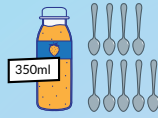
soft drink
13 teaspoons of sugar



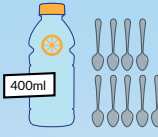
sparkling fruit drink
13 teaspoons of sugar



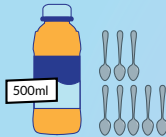
sports drink
10 teaspoons of sugar



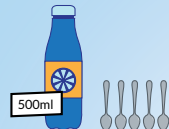
smoothie
9 teaspoons of sugar



fruit juice
9 teaspoons of sugar



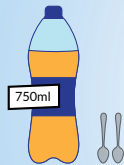
iced coffee
8 teaspoons of sugar



iced tea
5 teaspoons of sugar



flavoured instant coffee sachets
2 teaspoons of sugar



flavoured water
2 teaspoons of sugar



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The figures are indicative only and are based on popular sugary drinks available at October 2021

order.hpa.org.nz/collections/tasting-activity

Caffeine

Caffeine is found in many commonly consumed drinks, foods, dietary and sports supplements. Caffeine-containing products typically contain 30–120mg of caffeine, but this varies widely between products and brands and some sports supplements may be higher.

Caffeine is considered safe at a low to medium dose (less than 400mg per day) and health authorities warn against daily consumption of a high dose (greater than 500mg per day).

As well as total caffeine consumption, you also need to be aware of caffeine accumulation during the day. Caffeine breaks down slowly in the body and has a half life of approximately six hours. This means that after consuming caffeine, half of the caffeine will still be active in your system six hours later. For example, if you consume a 500ml V energy drink at 1000hrs containing 160mg caffeine you will still have 80mg in your system at 1600hrs and 40mg at 2200hrs.

Benefits of Caffeine	Negative Effects of Caffeine
Increased cognitive performance	Increased heart rate and blood pressure
Heightened sense of alertness and concentration	Disturbed sleep and/or difficulty falling asleep
Decreased fatigue	Increased anxiety
Decreased perceptions of effort	Impaired co-ordination, especially fine motor skills
Increased fatty acid oxidation	Interference with recovery from exercise
Improves muscular and aerobic endurance	
Improves muscular and anaerobic strength	
Reduces rate of perceived exertion (RPE)	
Increases ability to increase training volume	

Supplements

There are many supplements that people can take to help enhance performance or optimise health. What is worth taking and what is best left on the pharmacy shelf?

Most supplements marketed to improve health or exercise performance are based on theory but haven't necessarily been rigorously tested in practice.

Read more about supplements and caffeine here:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/nutrition-and-supplements/supplements-and-caffeine/>

Sleep

People vary in the amount of sleep they need. Adolescents need more sleep 8.5–9.5 hours compared to adults who may need between 7–9 hours. Your body will tell you what's right for you; pay attention to how you feel in the morning after more or less sleep and then make an effort to get the amount of sleep that's right for you. Lack of sleep is strongly associated with increased risk of weight gain, and decreased metabolic health. A good sign of adequate sleep is that you are waking up naturally and feel refreshed. If you are constantly waking up to an alarm you will not be getting adequate sleep. Also, as a rough guideline when you get into bed at the end of the day it should take you 10–20 minutes to fall asleep. Any shorter and you may not be getting enough sleep. Any longer and you may need to look at changing your sleep habits to help you nod off quicker.

The effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation on performance in the battlefield are well known. Lowered judgement and initiative, diminished situational awareness and loss of emotional control have been linked to operational failures and preventable injuries. Sleep deprivation also compromises attention, new learning and memory off the battlefield. When you are deprived of deep sleep your immune system also tends to be suppressed.

Traditionally we may think of sleep deprivation as the consequence of pulling an all-nighter but there is a much more common behaviour that results in a very similar impairment on our performance. Sleep restriction occurs when we our sleep is limited to less than the recommended 7–9 hours that we require. This may be the result of staying up late to finish some work or getting woken up early by the kids. When sleep restriction occurs on an occasional basis (i.e. getting up early to go on a trip) the impairments are not so significant. But if our lifestyle makes sleep restriction a common occurrence our ability to function will certainly begin to suffer. After just two nights of only 6-hours sleep our performance on cognitive tasks will decline. Interestingly, although this performance decline continues to grow with every extra night our perception of how impaired we are does not. After the first few days we feel as though we have adjusted to a state of sleep deprivation and believe that each passing night has little effect. Restricted sleep, and its all too apparent effects on our ability to function, is particularly alarming given the 24-hour society we now live in and the culture that disparages the need for sleep.

Performance also suffers when we have fragmented sleep. This is the result of frequent waking or reduced quality of sleep that prevents us from getting all the benefits out of the time we spend in bed. Sleep fragmentation may be a result of an underlying medical condition, a sleep condition or simply a result of our environment, sleep habits or mental state.

There are many different stages of sleep that each have slightly different functions. During the night we cycle through the stages every 90-minutes. The ratio of time spent in each stage changes between sleep cycles early in the night and those later in the night. This means that if we wake up after only 6 hours of sleep we will miss out on time spent in the stages known as NREM2 and REM. It is these stages that are attributed to many of the benefits of sleep on memory.



**Read more about
Sleep at Appendix 6
on page 140.**

Sleep Tips

These are tried and true ways of maximising your sleep efficiency. Start small. Make one or two changes, stick with them and see if you notice improvements in your sleep and daytime functioning. Remember it takes time to establish new habits but over time the changes you make will become second nature. If you've tried introducing healthy sleep habits into your life and you are still struggling to get enough sleep you may have a sleep condition such as: insomnia, obstructive pulmonary apnea or restless legs syndrome. If you suspect this might be the case it is definitely worth seeking professional advice to find out what's going on and get treatment.

1. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. Pick a time that you can maintain during the week and on weekends, then adjust your bedtime to target 7–8 hours of sleep. This allows your circadian rhythm to align with your sleep patterns and help you fall asleep when you jump into bed. Even in the weekend try and keep your sleeping patterns constant to avoid disrupting your circadian rhythm. Social jet lag is the result of staying up late and sleeping in over the weekend or on your days off. It makes it difficult to readjust come Monday morning. Looking forward to a weekend sleep-in may be a sign that you are not getting enough sleep.
2. Make your sleeping environment quiet, cool and dark—like a cave. Some noise will be out of your control. If it bothers you, use earplugs or a source of white noise such as a fan. Adjust your room temperature, bedding and clothing
- so that you will be comfortable and less likely to wake up sweating or shivering. A temperature that you find slightly cool will help your body achieve its lower overnight temperature. Wearing socks or keeping a hot water bottle near your feet can also help induce and maintain sleep. Darkness stimulates our body to secrete melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep so close the curtains or block out light by covering your eyes with a mask or clothing.
3. Plan the next day's activities early in the evening, well before you get into bed. If you think of something you need to remember, get up and write it down. This will help to postpone thinking or worrying about it until the next day.

- 4.** Establish a pre-bed routine.
This may be one thing, or a series of tasks that you do every night before jumping into bed. The routine should take about 30–60-minutes and should be enjoyable—so that you want to do it. Think of things that relax you such as taking a shower, taking the dog outside, stretching, meditating, reading or listening to quiet music. Take time to figure out what works for you: you may need time to contemplate and process events from the day or you may want to forget the day and distract yourself with a methodical, attention-consuming task to help you unwind.
- 5.** Reduce your intake of caffeine.
Coffee, tea, energy drinks and some soft drinks that contain caffeine tend to disrupt your sleep. Instead try herbal teas that contain natural ingredients to help you fall asleep and have a restful night.
- 6.** Avoid large quantities of fluid at night and avoid alcohol for 5 hours before bedtime. Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it will disrupt and reduce the quality of your sleep.
- 7.** Avoid bright light at least a few hours before going to sleep. Don't work on the computer late in the evening. If you have to, use a blue light filter to reduce the impact of blue light emissions.
- 8.** Don't go to bed hungry but avoid eating a heavy meal too late at night. A light, healthy snack may be the best option.
- 9.** Associate your bed with sleep.
Using the bedroom only for sleep and intimacy will train your mind to sleep when you get into bed. Keep electronic distractions like the TV, laptop, and your phone out of your bedroom. Do not eat or drink in bed. Keep discussions or arguments out of the bedroom.
- 10.** Use relaxation techniques to help you to fall asleep, and to go back to sleep if you wake during the night. Many mindfulness apps have guided sessions designed to help you sleep better but there are also simple techniques that you can try on your own.

11. If you can't sleep, get out of bed and go to another room and do something soothing until you feel sleepy again. Don't try too hard to go to sleep, try telling yourself statements like "If I don't get a good night's sleep tonight I will tomorrow night."
12. Try not to check the time during the night. This may cause you to stress or start calculating the hours, minutes and seconds until you have to get up. If you have a clock that you can see from bed just cover it up or take it out of the room.
13. Exercise regularly. Exercise three to six hours before going to bed. Getting your heart pumping during the day increases your need for sleep and will allow you to sleep more restfully. Exercising less than three hours before bed may raise your body temperature and make sleep more difficult to attain.
14. Consider magnesium and unsweetened tart cherry juice as dietary supplements that have benefits for your sleep.

Learn more about sleep:
<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/sleeping-well/>

Screening – Whole body health

Visit your doctor for regular checkups, particularly as you get older. Preventive care can detect disease or prevent illnesses before they start. Tell your doctor if you have a family history of a significant medical condition. Keep an eye out for signs that you are not tracking OK. It's important you contact your GP or local health treatment centre if you have experienced any of the following over the last 4 weeks. Remember, early recognition and action will prevent issues becoming more chronic and debilitating.

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

Women's and Men's Health

Breast cancer and prostate cancer are leading causes of death for women and men. Breast cancer affects 3,400 NZ women each year and 3,900 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year. Talk to your doctor about when you should start getting mammograms or prostate checks. You may need to start screening early if you have risk factors, such as family history. One way to detect breast cancer is to do a monthly self-exam. Women aged 21–65 should also get routine cervical smears every 3 years. Adults should get screened for bowel cancer starting at age 60, and your doctor may want to check for other types of cancer depending on risk factors and family history.

Resources:

You can find out more about women's and men's health at <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/>

Read more about New Zealand's health screening programmes at timetoscreen.nz

HEALTH RISKS & LIFESTYLE FACTORS

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

Chronic Pain

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

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

Weight

If you're overweight, losing weight is one of the best things you can do for your health. Carrying too much weight increases your risk for several health conditions including:

- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- type 2 diabetes
- heart disease
- stroke
- some cancers
- gallbladder disease

Being overweight can also lead to weight-related injuries. A common problem is arthritis in the weight-bearing joints, such as your spine, hips and knees. If you are storing weight around your midriff that is proving difficult to move, also consider whether stress may be a factor. Our midriff is where we store fat when cortisol levels (produced in times of stress) are activated. If you are craving sugar, try eating more protein and fat (eg. cheese, eggs, chicken, fish) at your previous meal (and go cold turkey on sugary treats for a while to break your addiction).

There are several things you can try to help you lose weight and keep it off. Refer to the healthy eating, physical activity, sleep and stress management guidelines above, seek advice from your doctor or dietician, and check out the additional sources of information in Appendix 2.

Alcohol Use

Alcohol consumption can be pleasurable for many people. However, too much alcohol can damage your liver and it has also been linked to some cancers. One standard drink is equal to 330ml of beer (4%), 100ml of wine (12.5%), or 30ml of straight spirits (42%).

Even if you don't drink frequently or don't have many drinks in one go you may be putting yourself at risk.

Alcohol.org.nz have the following guidelines:

To reduce your long-term risks:

- **Men** – drink no more than 3 standard drinks a day. And no more than 15 per week.
- **Women** – drink no more than 2 per day. And no more than 10 per week.
- **And have at least two alcohol free days per week.**

To reduce risk of injury:

- **Men** – no more than 5 on any single occasion.
- **Pregnant Women** – no alcohol, there is no known safe level of alcohol use at any stage of pregnancy.

Think about why you're drinking and the possible impacts your drinking behaviour may be having on your overall health. Some of the physical effects of alcohol are well known but consider how you're drinking behaviour impacts your psychological, social and spiritual health and whether it is helping or hindering you from achieving your goals. Also consider how your drinking impacts your friends and family.



Check out how you are going using the AUDIT checklist in the self-assessment tools in Appendix 3.

Resources:

Read more about Alcohol at <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/substance-use/drinking-too-much/>

Tobacco Use

Smoking and tobacco use have been linked to a range of health issues and the sooner you quit the better. You'll also notice a big impact on your budget – someone who smokes half a pack a day can save about \$120 a week by giving up. Quitting isn't always easy, but help is available. If you are a member of the NZDF you can contact your Defence Health Centre or Occupational Health Nurse. Alternatively, you can:

- Contact Quitline through www.quit.org.nz, a website that also gives you heaps of other reasons to quit, or by phoning 0800 778 778 for a Quit pack and support over the phone, online and by text
- Find information and local help in your region to stop smoking with Smokefree www.smokefree.org.nz/help-advice/stop-smoking-services

Practicing safe sex

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

Protecting your skin

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

Oral Hygiene

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



HINENGARO **MIND**



HINENGARO MIND

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

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

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

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

New Zealand Health research suggests that almost 50% of people in New Zealand will experience psychological distress or a mental health issue at some point in their life.



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

Common markers of mental health status are grouped into six themes – Mood, Performance, Sleep Patterns, Physical Health, Social Interaction and Activities.

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

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

The role of stress on mental health and performance

Stress is one of the key influencers on our mental health and can affect where we sit on the mental health continuum at any time. Some stress in our lives can be a good thing – it helps energise us and helps us to navigate challenges. But when events begin to feel more than we can handle or challenges persist over time this can impact our mood, the way we think and what we do. Stress can trigger or exacerbate the development of more serious episodes of mental illness, or reduce our coping and resilience levels. While it is fairly obvious that life events, such as threat to life, divorce, bankruptcy or the death of a loved one, may negatively impact on physical and mental health, daily stressors can exert an even greater influence in the long term. The tipping point between healthy coping and a negative impact on our health starts when our perceived ability to cope is eroded. The cumulative impact of stress can shift your tipping point. Therefore, you should understand how to identify the unique tipping points of yourself and others.

THE STRESS CYCLE

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

When we perceive situations as dangerous or threatening this activates the 'fight or flight' response. So how we interpret life events has a huge bearing on how much stress or anxiety we experience; our body doesn't tell the difference between real and imagined events so if we imagine (perceive) a bad outcome, our body reacts to the thought as though it were actually happening.

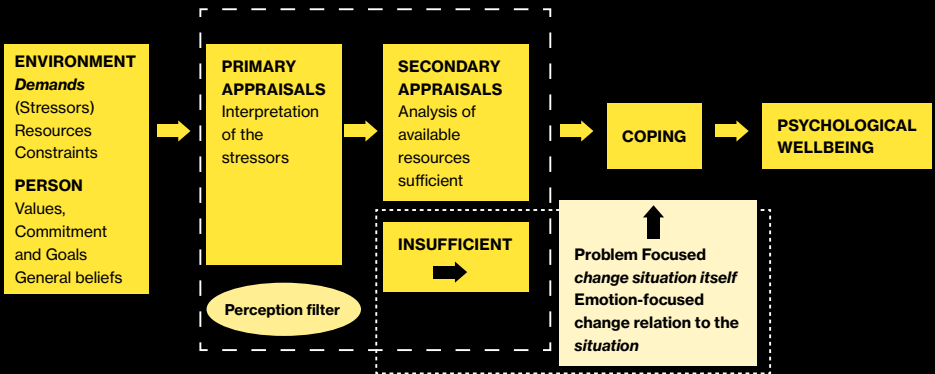


Figure 3: Based on Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1987)

One of the most popular models describing stress pathways has been proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, 1987). Their Transactional Model emphasizes the person-environment relationship and that a stress response is highly influenced by our appraisal processes. When confronted with stressors, we will conduct a primary assessment about the significance of the stressors (primary appraisal) and our own resources to overcome this stress (secondary appraisal). These assessments then shape the coping strategies we respond with. Coping affects the immediate stress response and the longer term impacts on our health and wellbeing.

OPTIMISING MENTAL HEALTH

Resilience

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

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

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

Resilience is about taking action to manage whatever life throws at us.

Surprisingly it is often small actions that can produce a big upturn in our quality of life. This booklet will guide you through some simple, practical actions that you can take to improve your resilience and performance.

Follow the Mental Health Foundation (NZ) recommendations for 5 Ways To Wellbeing and the tips and tools on the following pages.

Connect	With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Research has shown that building strong relationships is one of the best ways to support and enrich your life.
Be active	Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.
Take notice	Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.
Keep learning	Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.
Give	Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

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

Bucket Model of Resilience

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

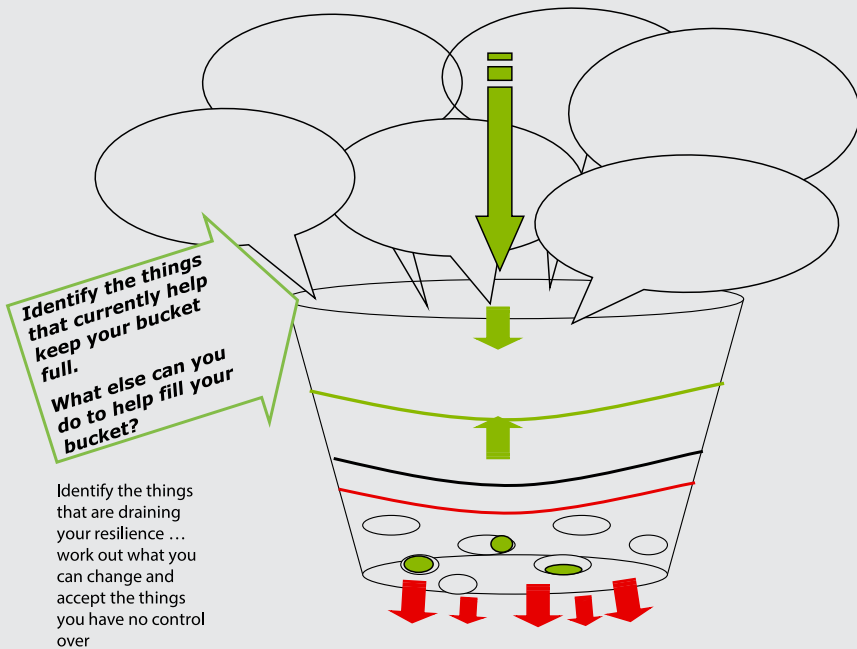
Fortunately, the bucket of resilience can also be topped up by things that help you to cope. Identify the things that increase your resilience, leveraging what you already know can help and drawing on the tools in this section. Things that top up your bucket include the things that you enjoy, the things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



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

ACTIVITY

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



My Actions

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What's draining your bucket?

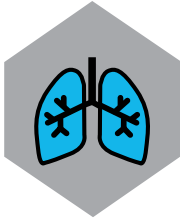
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RESILIENCE TOOLS

THE BIG FOUR

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

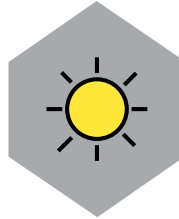
Tactical Breathing



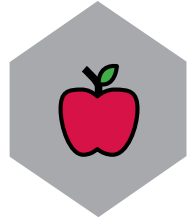
Flexible Thinking



Optimism



Healthy Habits



The Big Four NZDF Resilience Tools

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

Like any other skill these skills must be learned and practiced regularly. It is important that there is regular opportunity to reinforce and apply these skills during unit activities.



1. Tactical Breathing

Tactical breathing is one of the most effective skills to manage stress and keep you in the optimal zone for performance. Aside from the obvious, breathing is useful for reducing nerves or anxiety at any time, but particularly during a stressful situation when nerves may impact your performance or during/after exercise. Tactical breathing can decrease your physiological arousal, help you return to baseline and even assist with the removal of by-products formed during exercise. Snipers and professional athletes have been using this information to improve their performance for many years. This skill is very effective, but it needs to be practiced. This is particularly important because when we are stressed our natural physiological reaction is to breathe rapidly and shallowly. This actually increases your stress levels. With practice you can be more successful in quickly calming this natural physiological reaction down.

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

Not surprisingly, breathing is exceptionally easy, and just like the other Mental Skills you can practice this skill anywhere, at any time. There are many guided breathing apps available to download. Look for one that focuses on long, slow breathing.

Otherwise you can try the following:

How To... Tactical Breathing

- Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4
- Hold for a brief second
- Breathe out through your mouth or nose for a count of 6 (long, slow breath out)
- Hold for a brief second
- Repeat

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

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

If you practice this daily for 4 minutes, for one to two weeks, you will be able to use this skill during stressful situations when your anxiety goes up; you won't have to sit or lie down, or place your hand on your abdomen. You will simply need to take a few deep tactical breaths, and this will reduce your arousal level. Again, this skill will only be effective at these times if you practice it beforehand.

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



2. Flexible Thinking – Problem Solving and Goal Setting

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

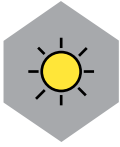
Goal Setting – Goal setting has also been proven to reduce arousal levels, help control stress, improve performance and help to manage setbacks and obstacles. When something seems overwhelming it is useful to break it down into achievable objectives and develop a plan for achieving these; this will help build resilience and a feeling of control. Goals need to clearly define what you want to accomplish. Using **SMART (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound)** criteria ensures that the goals you set will be achievable and improve your performance. Once you have set your goals work out your plan for achieving these by prioritising and problem solving.

Accept that some events are beyond your control

– invest time in things you can control, and accept the areas that you can't.

Structured Problem Solving

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



3. Optimism and Self Talk

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

A simple exercise that you can do is called "3 good things." A couple of times a week pay some attention to three things that are going well or that you are grateful for. This could be as simple as work finishing early one day, or winning a prize, or getting some good feedback on your performance.

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

"How could I do such a foolish thing!"

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

"I'm an idiot!"

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

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

Then, challenge these thoughts:

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

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

“This is not a threat or danger to me”

“I can deal with this”

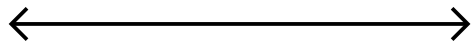
“I’m learning from what happened”

... the ‘fight or flight’ response is turned off.

Life Events and Cycle of Stress

Opportunity/
Open Mindset

Threat/Closed Mindset



	Opportunity/ Open Mindset	Threat/Closed Mindset
Thoughts	“I can do this” “I can’t do this yet” “I can become better at this”	“I can’t do this” “I’m no good at this”
Mood/Feeling	Excitement, Anticipation	Anxiety, Fear, Discomfort
Physical Sensations	Alert, muscles primed	Jitters, sweating
Behaviours	Engage, problem solve, action	Get angry Avoid problem
Outcome	More likely to succeed and feel optimistic about future	Situation not resolved, negative thoughts strengthen

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

When you're more aware of the way you think, you can take action to use positive situations to your advantage, and re-shape the negative ones. The goal is to think in a balanced way, regardless of the situation, and make a conscious effort to see opportunities instead of obstacles.



**Read more about
attitude and other
mental skills in
Appendix 7.**

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

Learn to recognise and modify your thoughts

First, identify thoughts that contribute to stress.

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

Then, consider...

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

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



4. Healthy Habits

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

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

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

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

OTHER RESILIENCE TOOLS

Relaxation and Arousal Reduction

You can't be stressed and relaxed at the same time. The relaxation response uses breathing and relaxation to counter the negative effects of stress. Arousal reduction allows our rational brain to remain in control, without letting emotions hijack our behaviours and impact upon our performance. This strategy is taught to Special Forces, especially Snipers, as a way to assist them in remaining in control in unpredictable, dangerous and often isolated, situations. As a mental skill arousal reduction is simple and effective. No one around you will even know that you are doing it.

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

How To... Arousal Reduction

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

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

Progressive Relaxation

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

1. Tensing muscle groups (one at a time) to become aware of the feeling of tension.
2. Relaxing the muscles and feeling the tension in them subside—as if flowing out of the body.



**Read more about
Relaxation techniques
at Appendix 7 on
page 146.**

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

Sit in a comfortable straight-backed chair, with your feet flat on the floor.

Close your eyes and use the controlled breathing technique for about 5 minutes.

Tense each of the following muscle groups for 5 seconds, then relax them completely for 15–20 seconds (pay particular attention to the different sensations of tension and relaxation):

Curl both your fists and tighten your biceps and forearms (as if lifting weights). Relax.

Wrinkle up your forehead; tighten the muscles in your face causing your face to wrinkle; purse your lips and press your tongue against the roof of your mouth; hunch your shoulders. Relax.

Arch your back as you take a deep breath into your chest. Relax.

Taking a deep breath, gently push out your stomach. Relax.

Pull your feet and toes backwards, tightening your shins. Relax.

Curl your toes at the same time as tightening your calves, thighs and buttocks. Relax.

Now resume normal activities in a calm and peaceful manner.

Imagery

Imagery can boost your confidence and help you visualise positive outcomes. Imagery can be used on its own as a mental skill, but becomes especially powerful when used in conjunction with other techniques such as Arousal Reduction and Goal Setting. It's essentially Arousal Reduction for a task we have not yet completed—it involves imagining ourselves performing perfectly in an upcoming situation. Imagining ourselves successfully achieving goals makes us much more likely to actually achieve them. Imagery can also be helpful for imagining successfully overcoming challenges we may be facing.

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

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

Talking/Support

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

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

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

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

Resources:

NZDF Health Website: <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/mind/>

Mental Health Foundation: www.mentalhealth.org.nz

First Steps – access to tools, resources and support to prioritise wellbeing: <https://firststeps.nz/resources/community-resources/>

Take a break

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

Humour

Humour and laughter are natural and healthy ways to release tension, and put aside serious thoughts for a while. Several physiological changes occur with humour—in the cardiovascular system, the immune system, and musculature. Cognitive function is improved, cortisol levels are reduced, and the immune system is boosted. The vitality of thoughts and emotions is boosted, enhancing self-esteem and the ability to deal with stress, anxiety and depression.

Smile!

Believe it or not, involuntary emotions and the corresponding muscle movements triggered by our environment send signals to our brain, which create physiological changes in our bodies. For example, a red traffic light that makes us frown causes our body to tense, whereas the sight of a friend that causes us to smile results in the release of results in a little feel-good party in your brain. For starters, smiling activates the release of brain chemicals (endorphins and serotonin) that work toward fighting off stress. These chemicals relax your body and can also lower your heart rate and blood pressure. Many of today’s pharmaceutical anti-depressants also influence levels of serotonin in your brain, but smiles are free!

The Power of a hug

Appropriate physical touch releases oxytocin which is a resilience hormone. This has been shown to reduce cardiovascular activity, blood pressure, cortisol level, cholesterol, vulnerability to catching a cold, depression, anxiety, cognitive decline, and improve sleep and immunity.

Try this....

Close your eyes. Pay attention to what is happening inside your body. Notice your mood and emotions.

Now, force your face into a frown. Bring your eyebrows together, and pull down the corners of your mouth. Now, think about your mood and emotions. Any change? Leave your face in a frown, and now try forcing yourself to feel happy when your muscles are tense, your face is frowned, and your brow furrowed. Feeling happy?

Let's try again. This time, smile. Pull your cheeks up and allow the lines around your eyes to crinkle. Pull up the corners of your mouth. Let your face fall into a smile. Now have a think about how you feel and what emotions you are experiencing.

What emotional changes did you notice this time?

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

Mindset

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

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

Growth vs Fixed Mind-sets

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

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

Mindsets can be changed. Focus on the process and not the outcome. Embrace challenges and think about what you get out of difficult experiences rather than just the outcome. When you master something new reflect back to a time when you couldn't do it. This will help you realise that you too have the potential for growth. Through the repetition of growth mindset statements and activities, we can create new connections in our brains which promote a growth mindset, which then influence how we think and how we take on challenges. **Realising our potential** is an important aspect of maintaining positive mental health. A growth mindset is fundamental to this as our potential is always much greater than what we can do currently.

Check out this short Ted Talk on The power of belief – mindset and success at this link: <https://youtu.be/pN34FNbOKXc>

Check out another useful Youtube video: How to change your mindset – Change the way you think: <https://youtu.be/v8po9902UYE>

Mindfulness

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

Read more about mindfulness including mindfulness apps and videos here:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/mind/mind-toolkit/practicing-mindfulness/>

During concentration meditation, an individual focuses attention on a single object, and continues to return their focus back to that object when their mind wanders. Focusing on a specific object creates a neutral point upon which to centre your energy and attention. People often use a mantra (a simple word or phrase repeated over and over), a visual object, or even the breath. This type of meditation has been found to be useful for achieving relaxation, which in turn can reduce stress.

Mindfulness practice focuses your attention on the present moment, and can take a number of forms including prayer and contemplative practices. When we allow ourselves to be truly aware of the moment, we pay attention to physical sensations, sounds, thoughts, and feelings without attaching judgment to them. As is the case with concentration meditation, a person's mind will tend to wander. When that happens, the goal is to recognise it and bring the mind back to the present. Contemplation often describes the state of utter stillness when our mind no longer wanders, and when we are no longer concentrating on the focal point of the mindfulness exercise. It is the deepest point we can reach. Mindfulness meditation and contemplation have been associated with reduced stress, increased quality of life, reduced pain, and faster recovery from injury or illness.



**Read more about
mindfulness in Appendix 7.**



WAIKUA **SPIRITUALITY**

WAIKUA
SPIRITUALITY



WAIKUA SPIRITUALITY

*“Hurihia to aroaro ki te ra tukana to
atarangi kia taka ki muri i a koe”*

*Turn your face to the sun and
the shadows fall behind you*

What is wairua? He aha tēnei mea te wairua?

Taha Wairua describes our spiritual health. Spirituality is a broad concept, but in general it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves – hence our opening whakatauki here: as we look to something bigger, like the sun, the things that have burdened us become more manageable, the shadows fall behind us.

Wairua can be different things to different people, and you don't need to identify with a religion to find meaning in life. For some people, wairua is about having a faith or religious practices, to others it's an internal connection to the universe or the sacred. Some people experience this in their commitment to a set of core values, or in a sense of shared community and humanity.

People may describe a spiritual experience as sacred, transcendent, or simply a deep sense of being and interconnectedness. Our spiritual self is where we find our sense of belonging, our connections with people, groups and places.

What does spirituality have to do with my health?

Māori have always recognised the significance of wairua for wellbeing and good health.

There may be times in life when you feel like you've lost your way, which can leave you feeling unsettled within yourself or like you don't belong anywhere. When we're “feeling out of sorts” and experiencing inner confusion, it's usually a sign all is not well with our wairua.

These feelings can start to affect other areas of life, such as your relationships with family or work colleagues. People turn to lots of distractions to try and fill that void or emptiness, such as unhealthy relationships, alcohol and too much partying. But often these distractions from our problems just make things worse.

How can I nurture my wairua?

If you are interested in developing your own sense of spirituality, you might consider some of the ideas that follow.

Additional resources:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/spirituality/>

Things to help you develop a healthier wairua

Many people feel spiritual health underpins life satisfaction and happiness, just as much as physical health does. But you can't get spiritually healthy by joining a gym.

Identifying what brings meaning to your life and finding your why, or purpose, is essential to resilience. The good news is that even if you feel like you've lost or haven't quite found your spiritual way, you can get there. You might need a little help from others to re-establish your connections with those people and places that are important to you. You may find it helpful to take time to reflect on where those lost feelings are coming from. You may find it helpful to pray or mediate.

Sometimes talking to an elder, a kaumātua, minita, chaplain or priest can help you make sense of what is going on for you. The NZDF has three marae, one each for the Navy, Army, and Air Force, and each Camp and Base has care there if you need to talk. To get in touch with a chaplain, you can ring and make an appointment or drop by their office. The NZDF Chaplains are always happy to put you in contact with someone who you feel more culturally or spiritually comfortable with, if they can't help you themselves.

Or here are some more suggestions to tune in to and foster your wairua.

Identity – Sometimes we feel like we've lost our direction in life and we're not sure what to do about it. Re-setting a foundation for your life starts with finding your own individual purpose or belief, which takes honest self-reflection. Once you have a better sense of your purpose you're likely to see life with more clarity, have more confidence in yourself, and it will help you connect with your identity and place in this world.



Read more about Finding your Why at Appendix 9 on page 159.

The values and ethos you chose to live your life by, and have chosen to hold at the centre of your actions and behaviours, play an important role in determining who you are. They are a representation of what holds significance to you. The connection and role you play with whānau/family, iwi, friends, your job and community also influence and shape your identity and, in turn, how you relate and communicate with others.

Our identity shifts and develops over our lifetime, as we learn and grow. It's shaped by not only where we've come from, but also what's important to us now. Sometimes early experiences or later significant events in our lives can suppress or confuse our identity, especially where our attempts at self-expression and learning were discouraged or punished. The good news is you have significant influence over your identity and the values that underpin it.

Here are some signs that you may benefit from spending time further developing your sense of identity:

- Do you feel flat or unfulfilled?
- Do you feel disconnected from people or communities that matter to you?
- Are you unsure what helps you relax and enjoy yourself?
- Are you unsure what makes life meaningful for you?
- Do you find yourself saying yes to things that make others happy, when those things are not consistent with your values?
- Do you make choices when you're with others, that are different to the choices you'd make if you were alone?
- Are you unsure what your strengths are and how you can use these to achieve your goals?
- Do you lack a clear picture of what values you hold dear (such as honesty, trustworthiness, kindness, and so on), and that guide what's important for you and what you expect in others?

Tips for building your identity

Try these tips to help you build a stronger sense of your personal identity.

Define your values. Your belief system shapes what matters most to you, and where you stand on important issues. For example, if you value honesty you might make it clear you can't maintain a relationship with someone who lies to you.

Make choices for wellbeing. You should make decisions that benefit health and wellbeing, in ways that are consistent with your values. While people will vary in the actual decisions they make, these decisions should for the most part benefit your health and wellbeing, and other important people in your life. The choices you make shouldn't involve neglecting yourself.

Spend time alone. When you want to get to know someone, you spend time with them, right? SO it makes sense that getting to know yourself better will involve spending some quality time alone. It might feel strange at first, but it's healthy to take some time apart from others - even your family or partner. Use this time however you want. If you'd really like to maximize self-exploration, try experimenting with new hobbies, volunteering, reading more books, meditating, or keeping a journal.

Spend time with people that matter. Another core part of your identity is your presence in connection with others. Spend some quality time with people who matter to you and who enhance your wellbeing, such as whānau/family or friends. Humans are relational creatures, and few of us thrive alone. We learn a lot about ourselves when we mindfully relate to others.

Consider how to achieve your ideals. Once you have a more firmly defined sense of self, consider what you can do to better align the various parts of your life with your identity. For example, you might ask yourself what changes you can make in your professional life or interactions with others.



Meaning and Purpose – Meaning gives us a way to interpret situations in our life. It can give us a reason to carry on when things are tough, and provide direction to help us navigate through hardships to a more balanced and happy future.

We may lose meaning, purpose or direction during different life stages, when we are grieving, or when something disappointing has happened. At times like this people can feel adrift, sad, distressed, dissatisfied, a lack of motivation or lack of interest in maintaining social connections. The ongoing stress that can come from losing your meaning in life can contribute to physical health symptoms.

Meaning in life can be found by identifying what's important to you. Our values are pivotal in deciding what matters to us, and choosing to live your life through your values can be a key part of what gives life meaning and purpose. This may include many things: the important people in your life; your dreams, aspirations, and the milestones you want to achieve; whether you're aligning your lifestyle with your personal values; and ultimately – what would make you proud of yourself.

It's important you are able to live life in a way that aligns with your values and beliefs. Our values are forged as we develop, they are formed in relationships and community, and they are often shared with the people that matter to us. That said, our values remain unique to each of us. They help to shape our goals, which then influence our actions. Therefore, our values can be found by reflecting on our lives. The good thing about values is that we can alter them, move closer towards them, or change them completely. By changing what you focus on, your actions will also change.

Focus less on making others feel happy, as this is temporary and out of our control. Instead focus more on things that you know matter, and that leave you satisfied with the choices you've made.

To help you understand your why, Chaplain Russell Bone adapted Simon Sinek's teaching in the book, 'Find Your Why'. By reflecting on your past, assessing your present, and looking to the future, this tool will help you to see the common themes that boil down to, your why. You can learn more about understanding your values and finding your 'Why' in Appendix 9.

Mindfulness & Meditation – For centuries, people of many beliefs have practiced meditation as a strategy for connecting with their own sense of spirituality, and disconnecting from the demands of everyday life. Research shows meditation can be helpful in reducing stress, speeding recovery, increasing quality of life, and in some instances reducing pain.

Spend quiet time in nature – Connect with the natural world by going on hikes and walks. Turn your phone off so you can quiet your mind. Don't check your messages or take pictures. Instead, find quiet places to just sit, be, and observe the plants, animals, and clouds.

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

Prayer is simply kōrero. You are both talking to – and listening to – the divine, te Atua. An easy guide to prayer for total beginners can be found in the app U Version – it comes from a Christian source, but the basic guide to prayer can be applied widely. Many religions have their own prayer traditions, such as the use of a rosary for Catholics. Some religions provide the words for prayers that you can adopt as your own, while others encourage people to use their own words.

There is a strong association between music and prayer – music can draw us into a place where we feel wairua strongly, and into a space that is conducive or prayer and meditation.

Connect with your culture – When we move we can potentially become disconnected from our culture. Major life events such as joining the Defence Force or being a refugee in a new country – can separate us from familiar things and places. We can lose support for maintaining healthy behaviours, and can feel separated from the things that have previously given us a sense of stability and belonging. At such times, it is easy to feel lost.

It is important to see reconnecting to your cultural roots as a journey to travel, not just a single task you need to complete. Like many journeys, there may be important milestones along the way, such as reconnecting with relatives or to a place of origin, taking on a role in a community, or pursuing greater knowledge or mastery of cultural practices. These can certainly all be highly valuable and fulfilling. But like any stopping points along a journey, they may initially feel far off. What is more important is setting off on the journey and, if possible, travelling alongside people you value who are looking out for you.

If you have never been connected with your culture, or have become disconnected from it, and would like to learn more about your whakapapa and where you have come from, reach out to whānau or local points of contact (including the marae on our camps and bases) who can help you.

Community – Many people find comfort, strength and guidance on their spiritual path by sharing with others. The most familiar examples of spiritual community are religious organisations, or congregations, which share a specific set of beliefs. Think about your beliefs and what you are hoping to gain from the experience, and look into the beliefs and practices of nearby groups.

Many people tend to make these decisions based on the religion or spiritual practice they experienced while growing up. It's important to remember that, as an adult, your views may have changed and you might want to explore a broader range of options.

Reflect on your beliefs – Maintain the principles of your faith by writing down the things you hold to be true. If something is troubling you, don't hide it from yourself. Share it with someone you trust, and discuss your concerns together.

Foster empathy for others – Develop empathy towards all people by paying close attention to the people who surround you. If you find yourself feeling contempt, disgust, or hatred towards others, take a deep breath and try to see things from their perspective. Think of what they may have suffered, of what they fear, and of the things that bring them feelings of joy and safety.

Forgive yourself, and others – Longstanding conflict and bitterness in relationships wears people down. There are ongoing costs for you if you have historical grievances you haven't been able to let go of. Much experience and research has shown that whether you hold a deep faith, or no religious beliefs at all, finding a way to forgive those who have wronged you has great benefit for the person doing the forgiving.

This isn't necessarily easy. The first step is often deciding you're willing to start the process of trying to forgive someone – even when you don't feel like you want to, and you don't feel they deserve it. There will also be times when you will need to forgive yourself. Working through either of these things may be a time when you need some support from someone you trust, perhaps an elder, a kaumātua, chaplain or a priest.

Express yourself creatively – Creative exploration will strengthen your spiritual understanding. For example, you could try singing, dancing, baking, decorating, painting, writing, or gardening.

Volunteer – Focusing on others will help you develop yourself. Find a cause you care about and donate your spare time to it. Look at local organizations that could use volunteers, start a fundraiser, or begin your own volunteer group.

Find Balance in your Life – Balance is spending the right amount of time to meet your responsibilities while also taking care of your needs. There are many common causes of imbalance in life including: a lack of focus and not planning ahead, never saying “no” to requests, mixing work and personal time, difficulties in relationships or personal issues, or neglecting self-care.

It’s important you know your limits and set boundaries. Consider what you can reasonably accomplish, set priorities, work out your schedule, and practice self-care – looking after your own health and wellbeing.

If you feel you have too much going on in your life or that what you are doing is not fulfilling, try the **STOP, KEEP, START** activity. Take a piece of paper and draw three columns.

Ask yourself the following questions:

What am I going to stop doing?

What am I going to keep doing?

What am I going to start doing?

	Tinana (Body)	Hinengaro (Mind)	Whānau (Heart)	Wairua (Spirituality)
Pupuri (Keep)				
Kati (Stop)				
Timata (Start)				

When to get help

It might feel pretty overwhelming to begin defining your sense of self, especially if you've never given your identity, values or purpose much thought. Likewise, sometimes when we have a life crisis or when our thinking about an important aspect of life changes, it can feel like the foundation of our identity itself has unexpectedly been eroded.

If you feel stuck, or if you feel like things are at risk of coming crashing down, consider reaching out to an NZDF chaplain, respected community member or health professional for guidance.

**Read more about nurturing your
Wairua:** [https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/
your-health/spirituality/](https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/spirituality/)



WHĀNAU CONNECTION



WHĀNAU CONNECTION

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

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

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

The nature of service life can sometimes place additional strain on daily living and relationships—separations (training, deployments), postings and relocations, absence of usual social support networks. Sometimes we may need additional support to manage difficult times (e.g. relationship issues, health problems, financial issues and bereavements). NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U) is now available to both serving personnel and their families. You can also contact community resources, chaplains, social workers and health services for support.

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

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

Keeping Families and Relationships Strong

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

Service life and living and working so closely together can sometimes test relationships. Family relationships can also be tested due to the time away from home associated with training, exercises and deployments. When relationships break down, it can be difficult to see a path forward. The separation process can often be lengthy and emotionally draining, particularly where children are involved. Try out these tips for keep your relationship strong:

- ✓ Make time for family. Life can be very hectic and it's all too easy to take those closest to us for granted. It's important to prioritise your family even when it's hard to find the time.
- ✓ Keep communication lines open. Whether it's tackling big issues or just dealing with the day-to-day stuff, keep talking. Sharing thoughts, feelings and problems with those close to you helps to keep relationships strong and shows your support for each other.
- ✓ Plan healthy and rewarding activities together. Sharing important and meaningful activities can help families stick together. Those activities can easily fall by the wayside when families are under the pump. If your family is going through a stressful period, plan some rewarding activities together—they don't have to be fun, just important for your family.

- ✓ Stay connected to friends. It might seem odd but a great way of improving your relationships within your family is to make sure that your outside relationships are healthy as well. In the same way that friends are an important source of support for individuals, communities are important supports for families. Get your family involved in school, sporting or other community groups.
- ✓ Work out what's important. If you're stressed and overwhelmed, re-evaluating what's really important to you in the short term might allow you to take some pressure off your family. Talking through what's important and what can wait gives you breathing room and a sense that you're working together.

Social Fitness

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

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

Relationships

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

The qualities of significant relationships:

Good	Opportunity to Improve
A feeling of trust	A lack of trust
Give and Take	Feelings things are one sided
Warmth and Caring	A sense of distance, uncaring
Feeling physically safe	Unsure of physical safety
Loyalty	Not reliable or faithful
Feeling relaxed & comfortable	Anxiety, uncertainty
Truthfulness	Dishonesty
Enjoyment	Feeling unhappy
Understanding	Confrontation
Good will	Resentment
You can express yourself	Guarded in what you say & do

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

Before getting into a new relationship:

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

Sexual Relationships

- For many a healthy and pleasurable sex life is an important part of having an intimate relationship with others. Whether that's a long-term partner, casual relationship, or mutually agreed brief encounter, it's vital for us to make sure we're on the same page. The benchmark for this is clearly expressed, mutual enthusiastic consent. This means being honest and open to conversations with each other around consent and boundaries of others and ourselves. Even when we are in long-term relationships, consent remains a critical part of intimacy.
- It's important that all sexual activities are agreed upon every time, even if you've tried and enjoyed them before. All partners in a sexual relationship should feel safe to express their wants, desires, limits and concerns, and have these continued to be respected, no matter the context. You can read more about consent and other guidance on how to have a healthy sexual relationship on our website <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/social-and-whanau/sex-consent-and-relationships/>

Read more about social and family health and relationships

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/social-and-whanau/>

Find about advice, support and benefits for NZDF families and whanau here: <https://force4families.mil.nz/>

Relationship Support: www.govt.nz/browse/family-and-whanau/separating-or-getting-divorced/

Support for Families: <https://familyworks.org.nz/>

Supporting families through tough times: www.skylight.org.nz/

Maintaining Healthy Relationships

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

Good communication requires (all) people to be open with each other, and be involved in improving the relationships. Useful communication strategies include:

- Being open and honest
- Sharing with your partner
- Using “I” statements
- Avoiding magical thinking (trying to guess what others are thinking or assume they know what you are)
- Having reasonable expectations
- Showing appreciation
- Taking the time to listen
- Not ignoring your feelings
- Fitting your communication style to the relationship and situation
- Do not make assumptions

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

- Phone call, emails, instant messaging
 - Ahead of time make notes about what you want to talk about, list at least 2 specific things you want to share, list at least 2 things to ask about
- During your call watch your time so you cover important items and listen carefully and show interest in what is said to you
- Send electronic or printed photos
- Video and text postings on social media and personal website
- Letters



Read more about Staying connected, building sense of belonging and overcoming loneliness at Appendix 10 on page 164.



**TAKING
CONTROL
OF LIFE
CHALLENGES**



TAKING CONTROL OF LIFE CHALLENGES

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

A list of useful contacts and resources are provided in Appendices 1–3. If you need help, you can call NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U) or in an emergency call 111. You can also talk to one of our Chaplains, Defence Community Facilitators and Social Workers, who are available to support NZDF members, families and whānau. There's also further information on the Force 4 Families website.

Workload

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

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

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

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

Create a “Stop Doing” List	We all have “To Do Lists”, but what can you eliminate to make room for what energises you and brings you closer to achieving your goals?
Focus on your strengths	Focus on your core business—that which you do best.
Avoid fighting battles you don’t need to win	Pick your battles wisely. In the heat of the moment, stop for a second and think: is this truly worth fighting for? Can you be content to know that you are right without having to prove someone else wrong?
Focus on your priorities	Minimising stress means looking at life through a holistic lens—physical, psychological/emotional, spiritual, and whānau/social. What are some daily practices that you can introduce to create reserves in each of these important areas of your life? (e.g. spending more time with family and friends, focusing on a healthy diet).

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

Take a break. Our bodies and minds need breaks from work and stressful activities. Setting up intervals of 25–60 minutes of devoted work focus and taking 5–10 minute breaks in between will help make you more productive. When you feel tension rising and energy falling, take a break (go for a walk, make a cuppa, chat with colleagues, climb some stairs). Make time every few hours for a “human moment”- a face-to-face exchange with a person you like.

Make time for hobbies and other activities that energize you to help you maintain balance and keep you energized and motivated throughout the workday. Also be mindful that it's easy to bring work outside the office and constantly stay connected. Turn off the notifications, the email, and the laptop when you are engaging in the other aspects of your life. Setting some sort of on/off switch will help to conserve your energy and allow you to rest and refuel for the times when you're switched on. And ensure you schedule longer breaks over extended weekends and taking leave periods.

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

Read more about managing workload: <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/health-at-work/managing-workload/>

Managing Change

Change often feels disruptive and, at times, even a bit traumatic. A new role, a reorganisation at work, a new relationship, a new beginning... these can all feel a little scary. Because of this, many people try to avoid it. Nevertheless, change is a part of life and essential for progress. Imagine getting up at the same time each day, doing the same thing... day after day, it would get boring right? Embracing change puts you in the drivers seat and helps you to turn threats into opportunities. Approaching change with an open mind and focusing on the positive elements will help you to navigate change successfully.

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

- Feel mentally drained by the end of a typical day?
- Feel rushed, even when you are running on time?
- Have trouble doing things at a slower pace, even when you have the time?
- Tend to think about what is coming up in your day rather than being in the here and now?
- Often want to be left alone when you get home?
- Find yourself sighing a lot during the day?
- Forget to take breaks because of pressure you feel under?
- Find it difficult to relax even when you have free time?
- When you have free time, prefer activities that help you to zone out?
- Have trouble motivating yourself to do things that are healthy for you?
- Feel exhausted by the end of the day much of the time?
- Feel like you are multi-tasking even at home?
- Tend to bring your stress home with you?
- Often wake up at night and think about things that are stressing you out?
- Notice that you get impatient and irritable about little things?
- Often do tasks (like household tasks) without even thinking about them?
- Feel like taking time to relax means you'll fall behind on some duty or responsibility?

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

Training and performance pressures

Whether you are a new recruit on basic training, an experienced member on a development or promotion course, or going about your daily civilian life, a fear of non-performance or failing can create anxiety and concern for you. If you are new to the organisation, you might also be feeling isolated from your usual support networks which makes things seem harder to deal with. And if you have aspirations for promotion and long term career prospects, or just like to do well and work hard at everything you do, you can be particularly impacted by a disappointing performance or report.

Remember, your current situation is a point in time and it does not define who you are or what you will achieve in the future. Seek feedback about what you could do to improve or do differently. Find someone to help coach you if you are not sure how to achieve this.

Disciplinary action

For those undergoing disciplinary action this can be a particularly difficult time. The implications of disciplinary action can be significant for military personnel, sometimes resulting in correctional detention, a reduction in rank, fines, ridicule and loss of peer support, and in some cases, discharge. Personnel can feel concerned about their future and a sense of shame for their behaviour having let themselves, their mates or loved ones down. It is important to recognise that this time will pass and that one incident does not define who you are, or your future. Help is available to work through your concerns if needed. Talk to someone you trust (buddy, boss, or chaplain etc) or you can ring NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U) for a confidential chat.

Transition

The prospect of making the transition to civilian life can also be difficult for many people, especially if you have been in the organisation for many years or when the decision to leave has been sudden or involuntary. It is important that you get support through this transition in a way that acknowledges both opportunities and challenges ahead, and the apprehension that can sometimes be associated with this. It is also important to feel recognised for your service and contributions, and to access additional support if transition is feeling difficult, to reduce the likelihood of a difficult transition and/or issues down track.

NZDF Career Transition Coaches

Help you prepare and navigate the move from Military to Civilian life. Contact details are available on <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>

Deployments and Time Away from home

Any time away from home can be difficult. Deployments can be both an exciting time and a source of anxiety, for example worrying about performance, deployment experiences, or separation from loved ones. The transition back home can also sometimes be difficult, and some people may need professional support to help them get back on an even keel.

There are a range of guides available that provide information and support during and post deployment for serving personnel and their families. A good place to start are the Force4Families and Defence Health websites or talk to a health provider or chaplain on camps and bases. You can also ring NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U) or 0800VETERANS for confidential advice.

More information about deployments can be found:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/health-at-work/deployment/>

For more information about support for during deployment for your whānau check out: <https://force4families.mil.nz/homebase>

Financial Pressures

Financial pressures can affect everyone. Many young people over-commit financially by taking on loans or hire purchase agreements without thinking through whether they can afford them or allowing for unforeseen financial demands. Sometimes it might be an unexpected bill that causes financial pressure, a partner losing a job, dropping to one income to raise a family, or a relationship split.

Check out <https://force4families.mil.nz/force-financial-hub> to learn more about NZDF's financial benefits and financial resources and tools.

For information on social support services and entitlements check out: www.workandincome.govt.nz/

Addictive Behaviours

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

Addictions can take many forms; some of the most common ones that service personnel and their families experience are:

Tobacco

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

Alcohol

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



If you are not sure whether your drinking habits could be a problem for you, or how to cut down, take the self-assessment and find out more information about alcohol use at the back of this guide (Appendix 3).

Other Drug Use and Misuse

Many people also use other drugs (e.g., cannabis or prescription medications) to excess. People use substances (such as drugs) for a range of reasons, including for pleasure, to facilitate social occasions, as a coping mechanism, for health reasons, and for body enhancement. All substance use brings a risk of harm. This harm can range from individual physical and mental effects such as mental illness or heart disease, to those impacting on friends, family and colleagues including relationship breakdown and financial issues. Ensure that any drugs you take have been prescribed for you and make sure that you take them in accordance with prescription guidelines. If they are not helping you go back to your doctor.

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

Drug use and serving members – For many areas of society, especially where the use of recreational drugs is seen as acceptable, there is a difference between drug use and drug abuse. However, drug use has much more immediate and serious consequences for serving members than for the general public. Defence has very strict rules about drug use, and even though help and support for drug problems is available within the military, the consequences of admitting to drug use might be discouraging you from seeking help.

If you're a serving member and using drugs, the most important thing is to consider your safety and the safety of those around you. Don't take drugs in situations that could put you or someone else in danger. If you need help but worry about seeking help internally, community based services are available, including GPs. You can also call NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U).

Gambling

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

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

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

Parenting

When we become parents there's no universal "how to" manual and mostly we learn as we go along, because everyone's situation is different. All parents will come up against challenges at some point with their kids. It's ok to feel that you don't know what to do or how to do the best thing for your children – this is really normal. Remember kids are resilient and flexible. So long as you are all safe you can try different things that work for your family to improve the parent child relationship.

Parenting problems can arise because of a complex set of causes. These include if there is conflict between the adults, if there are other social issues in the home (finances, physical health, mental health, addictions, workload, frequent moves, parent being away, lack of support available from family and friends, or little community connection). It could be a mix of dynamics between the parent and child that cause conflict. It could be social or peer groups that influence your child. It could be that you don't have access to strong cultural support.

There are a lot of people you can go to for help with parenting including parenting and family service providers and support helplines. Find more information about parenting and local resources and support <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/social-and-whanau/positive-parenting/>.

You can find out more information about parenting on:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz> including tips, support services and resources.

Dealing with family violence

Preventing and responding to family violence

Family violence can take many forms and a person can be experiencing several forms of violence at the same time. It is more than just physical violence, it also includes behaviours that use power and control over someone else. Abuse is usually personalised to most effectively target the things or people a particular person holds dear.

Violence includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Violence can be a single event or a pattern of behaviours that is coercive and controlling or causes, or has the potential to cause, cumulative harm. Some questions you might ask yourself to see if you or your family has a problem with violence include:

Have any of these things ever happened to you with anyone that you are in a close personal relationship with?

- Has anyone scared you, or threatened you, or made you or someone you care about feel afraid?
- Has anyone tried to control you, or make you feel bad about yourself?
- Have you been hit, pushed, or shoved, slapped, kicked, choked or otherwise physically hurt?
- Has anyone forced you to have sex, or do anything sexual, in a way you did not want to?
- Has anyone threatened to release information or images of you to others?
- Have your children heard arguments or seen fights between their family members?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you or your family may need help. People can change angry, aggressive and violent behaviours with support; a good place to start is contacting your NZDF social worker or health provider or other mental health professional. If someone is making you feel unsafe or afraid, call 111 and ask for NZ Police, or if you need information about where to get help phone Shine on 0800 456 450. You can also call NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U) or the Family Violence Info line on 0800 456 450. Remember that the safety of children comes first, so contact the NZ Police or Oranga Tamariki (0508 326 459) if you are in a situation that is risky for your children or yourself. If you are using family violence, there is support available for you to change.

Read more about this important topic on the Shine website: www.2shine.org.nz

Problems with Anger

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion. However, it can be a problem if you find it difficult to keep anger under control. If you want to try and control your anger, try the 4 “R’S”:

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

Retreat from the situation and spend a bit of time alone

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

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

Check out Defence Health website for more information on Anger

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>.

Troubled by Memories

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

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

While PTS is sometimes associated with military personnel who have undertaken active service, the disorder is common—about two thirds of New Zealanders will experience at least one traumatic event in their lives (such as car accidents, assault, difficult childhood experiences) that has the potential to cause PTS.

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

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

If you have been directly affected by an incident of harmful sexual behaviour or are aware of some form of harmful sexual behaviour that may have occurred, it is important to remember that support is available within NZDF.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Advisors (SAPRA) can assist you by providing you with individualised support. SAPRA are people who:

- you can talk to about what has happened, and how you are doing.
(This can remain confidential via the option to make a Restricted Disclosure.)
- can support you to make a formal report, if you want to.
- can provide information, resources, support and advice, across the NZDF.
- can put you in touch with local support services.

In an emergency, call 111. To speak to the duty SAPRA please call 0800 693 324 or +64 4 496 0410. If you want to talk to someone outside of NZDF, please call Safe to Talk on 0800 044 334

Discrimination, Bullying or Harassment

The most effective way to prevent the continuation of discrimination, bullying or harassment is for you to state clearly to the respondent that the behaviour is unwanted and request that the behaviour ceases. NZDF Anti-Harassment Advisors (AHA's) can provide you with further information and support. They are located in all camps and bases. For more information check out the HR Toolkit.

If other options are not successful or appropriate, you may choose to have your discrimination, harassment or bullying problem mediated or investigated. AHAs can provide more information on the mediation and investigation process and provide you with additional support.

Too much time online?

The internet has definitely changed the scene of how we live and work. It's now one of the most widely utilised and accessible tools for all ages, across resources and information, connecting with our loved ones, entertainment, buying and selling and more.

Online platforms have enabled us to overcome barriers across location and time to stay connected and reconnected with those around us, create and share new ideas and interact with a diverse range of people and develop and tune new hobbies. This has helped us to strengthen and support our inter-personal networks and there is much research to support this. However, our pervasive engagement online is not wholly a positive.

Can we have too much of a good thing? The evidence suggests we can. Those who use online platforms for 'light use', roughly between 30mins and two hours a day, for uses which foster social connectedness tend to show higher levels of overall wellbeing compared to those who don't use online platforms at all or who spend much of their time on them.

Moderate to heavy levels of online use and where people are limiting or cutting themselves off from social supports can erode levels of overall wellbeing. If you feel as though the amount of time you spend online is making you feel down or you notice it's starting to have a negative impact on other parts of your hauora/wellbeing, then it might be a sign to look at some ways of cutting back.

If you find this difficult learn more <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/social-and-whanau/too-much-time->

Grief and Loss

When we lose someone or something that matters to us, there can be a difficult adjustment period as we go through the process of accepting the loss. Grief is usually associated with the death of loved one, but it can also result from the loss of a relationship, career or pet. The bigger the loss, the harder it can be to get over. Nevertheless, with time we are usually able to make this adjustment while finding ways to stay connected to the memory of what we lost.

The grieving process helps us to adjust to our new reality. So how can we help ourselves in times of grief?

- Give yourself permission to grieve and feel the emotions that show up.
- Grieve in your own way.
- Accept that there will be emotional pain, and this is a reminder of your connection and aroha for what you have lost.
- Expect moments of insensitivity from people.
- Remember you are not alone. Try to spend time with friends and family - people you care about.
- Talk to others, including your whānau and colleagues, about what you are experiencing.
- Create times and spaces to talk about the loss, such as memorials and rituals of connection.
- Be honest with yourself and others about what you need.
- Be gentle on yourself.
- Allow yourself to enjoy life, and plan for chances to do that, even in small ways.
- Keep decision making to a minimum for a good while
- Seek to understand grief, such as reading about or listening to podcasts on grief.
- Consider seeing a grief counsellor. Defence chaplains and social workers can help you identify providers that might be a good fit.

Managing feelings of feeling guilt, shame or betrayal

Sometimes in life we can do things, or fail to do things, that leave us with a sense of guilt or shame. Or we can be exposed either directly or indirectly to someone else committing an act which we consider to be a betrayal of our own moral code. Such events can sometimes have a lasting impact on our moral compass and have the potential to negatively impact our self-image and world view.

Although we cannot always avoid an event which results in a moral injury, there are ways we can manage and recover. If you've experienced a moral injury, a core part of making progress is making sense of what has happened to you. If this is relating to something you may have said or done, recognise that your behaviour at a point in time does not define who you are. Confide in someone you trust to help you work through this. Reach out to your local social support network.

Loneliness

Contrary to what many people believe, loneliness isn't just a result of being alone or an absence of friends. Loneliness is the feeling of not having meaningful connections with other people in your life that you'd like. It's possible to feel lonely in a crowd, or at work and feel that you don't belong. Loneliness is a common experience for many people at some point in their lives.

Here's some tips for conquering loneliness:

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

Concerns about Mental Health (including low mood and anxiety)

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



You can read more about **Common Mental Health issues** at **Appendix 8** on **page 156**.

Self-Harm and Suicide

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

Self-harm

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

Common ways of self-harming include:

- Cutting skin on wrists, arms or legs
- Taking overdoses of drugs or medication
- Biting and scratching at skin
- Taking poisonous substances
- Head banging and punching self
- Inhalation of a harmful substance
- Burning of skin
- Hair or eyelash pulling

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

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

Self-harm does not necessarily mean you are suicidal, most people who are self-harming are not considering taking their own lives. However, for some people the thoughts and feelings behind the harming behaviour can evolve to suicidal thoughts. Self-harming behaviours can become addictive and hard to stop. Seek help from someone you trust or the list of resources provided in this guide.

Suicide

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

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

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

Some of the major risk factors for suicide are:

- Social isolation
- Unresolved interpersonal conflict
- Mental health conditions
- Alcohol or other drug use problems
- Severe physical conditions, including chronic pain
- Access to firearms or other lethal means

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

Having Suicidal Thoughts or Feelings?

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

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

Tell someone what you are thinking if you are having thoughts about taking your life, it's important to tell someone you trust so that you can get the help you need to feel better. If you can't immediately find someone you know to talk to, there are always people who are contactable by phone and who are willing, able and available 24 hours to help you. If you are in a serious crisis or you need urgent help, do the following:

- If you are in immediate danger, call 111.
- Call your local mental health crisis assessment team or go to local hospital emergency department.
- Contact a helpline
 - Lifeline 0800 543 354,
 - Suicide Crisis Helpline 0508 828 865,
 - 0800 NZDF4U (0800 693 348),
 - Call or text 1737 or
 - Men's Line 0800 636 754.

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

Suicide Survivor NZDF

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

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

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

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

Read more stories from our people at <https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>

Are you worried someone is thinking of killing themselves?

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

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

What to look out for:

- Access things they could use to hurt themselves, like a rope or gun
- Read or write about suicide online, or post photos or videos about suicide
- Become obsessed with death
- Become isolated or withdrawn from family, whānau and friends
- Don't seem to be coping with any problems they may be having
- Tell you they want to die or kill themselves
- Have changes in mood – becoming depressed, angry or enraged
- Hurt themselves – for example, cutting skin or taking an overdose
- Feel worthless, guilty, whakamā or ashamed
- Have no hope for the future
- Use drugs or alcohol to cope with difficult feelings or thoughts
- Sleep a lot more than usual, or stop getting enough sleep
- Seem to have lost interest in life, or things they used to enjoy
- Give away possessions, pay back debts or 'tie up loose ends'
- Stop taking their medication
- Suddenly seem calm or happy after they have been depressed or suicidal

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

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

What to do:

SALT – See, Ask, Listen, Tell/Take

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

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

Reassure them that help is available, and that you will help them find this (TAKE, TELL).

Knowing you are there to support them can help them feel better. But sometimes they need additional help too. Don't try and go it alone, help them get the help they need. It's important you have support too, helping someone through a difficult time can be scary and confidential advice and support is available to help you too. Speak to someone you trust or call NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U).

Taking Action

The fact is, things don't usually fix themselves, but taking active steps to make your situation better is probably the most important thing you can do. The journey may be long or it may be short, but it has to start somewhere—the good news is that if you are here, then your journey has started.

Often with better awareness and a more deliberate focus on self-care we can get back on top of our game ourselves. There are some of the immediate things you can do if you are worried about your health or aspects of everyday life. You can draw on some tips and tools for helping yourself (or others) or consider options for a helping hand.

You may have a clear idea of areas where you want to make change, or you may be unsure. It may be helpful to learn more about your health using the self-assessment tools in this guide or available on the NZDF health website Pūtahi Hauora.

Getting Started

Many of the habits and strategies below are basic common sense, but that doesn't mean they're not important. Getting the basics right will go a long way to helping you cope. Don't try to do everything at once. Consider these questions:

- Which of these issues sound particularly relevant for you?
- Which strategies are you prepared to try?

Select only one or two to begin with. Come up with a plan to work on them, one at a time, and set yourself some realistic goals for the next week. At the end of the week, review your progress. Modify your goals if necessary and/or try some additional strategies for the following week. Over time, you will gradually develop a range of coping strategies and changes to your lifestyle that will help you to feel more in control of your health, and get more out of life.

Setting Goals and Action Planning

Sometimes, even though we know where we want to make change in our lives, coming up with a plan for getting there and sticking to it can be hard. If you have identified an area you want to focus on there are a range of tools that can help you.



Check out the further guidelines for Setting goals and Action planning on Page 146 Appendix 7.

Self Help

Practicing healthy habits and focusing on self-help is an important part of recovery for anyone who has concerns about their health and wellbeing. Most of us will through difficult times at some stages in our lives and all of us will likely identify some areas of our health we want to improve. The NZDF health website Pūtahi Hauora has a range of tips and simple strategies that can go a long way to helping you stay at the top of your game and navigating things that life can throw at us.

Helping Hand

Remember though, sometimes we can't go it alone. When you haven't been able to get on top of things, the earlier you reach out for help the better. Sometimes it is hard to ask for help. We may worry about what might happen, or the career impacts of seeking NZDF support. We may feel embarrassed, or not want to burden others. However usually things don't fix themselves on their own and hoping they will go away is not helpful and asking for help earlier speeds recovery.

If you are not sure about reaching out, mates and family (or someone else you trust) are often a good first step. They will know you well and may notice things you haven't so are a good place to bounce things around to help you take some next steps to recovery. They can also help to connect you to support available.



A list of internal NZDF providers can be found in Appendix 1 and a list of additional support services in Appendix 2.

Getting Help

Reaching Out

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

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

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

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

What happens when I ask for help?

All NZDF personnel and their families can access NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U) where they can seek confidential advice and follow up support. If you are a uniformed member of the NZDF you can also contact an internal health professional (psychologist, social worker, chaplain, doctor) who may refer you for additional assessment or support from an external health professional. Civilian staff and family members are encouraged to contact their GP or seek assistance from NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U). There is also a range of information and access to useful contacts and tools at the back of this resource.

The majority of people with health issues will make a full recovery. For most the recovery process and return to work will be rapid. For some this may be a longer journey requiring a range of specialist support and time off work. You may be prescribed medication (for example to assist with sleep, anxiety, depression or pain issues) and sometimes time off work is recommended. Employment limitations may be placed on you in the short term (for your own wellbeing and recovery, and sometimes also for the safety of the wider team), and in some cases for military personnel this will result in a change to medical grading. Medical grade changes may limit your employment in the short term, including your ability to deploy, and this can be frustrating, but in the longer term this will speed your rehabilitation and recovery.

Occasionally the seriousness of health conditions may result in a recommendation for discharge by a Medical Officer. Earlier help seeking will reduce this likelihood, and recommendations for release are rare. In such cases individuals will be provided with appropriate support and assistance to find alternative career pathways and ongoing health support as part of the transition process.

Keeping an eye out for our buddies

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

Henri J. M. Nouwen, In Memoriam.

The philosophy behind recognising stress reactions in other people, in some respects, is very simple. Any sort of change in behaviour, that can't be explained, is cause for concern. It will likely be reflected in the yellow and orange columns in the Mental Health Continuum (page 34). However, everyone is different, and the impact of events on people and their reactions will be different. Changes in behaviour to watch for may include:

Temperament: A usually easy-going person may become difficult to be with. Laughing, joking and fun disappear and people can seem lifeless, dull and apathetic.

Standards: Someone who usually takes pride in their appearance may let things slip. Or someone who usually likes to perform tasks to their best ability may produce sloppy work.

Interests: Some people who had a range of interests may be completely disinterested in prior interests. In addition, their range of interests may narrow to include only those things that are causing them stress. Often, lack of interest is evident in appearance, health, or diet and these things often can create further problems.

Decision making ability: Some people may make uncharacteristically rash decisions. Others may be very rigid, in that they stick to a decision even if it needs to be adapted to changing circumstances. Others may vacillate between alternatives and some people may have so much trouble with simple decisions that they want other people to make decisions for them.

Pace: Some people become extremely active, trying to do lots of things—they become almost “hyper”. Others slow down, and even though they may think they are productive, may achieve very little. There is an obvious slowing down, mentally and physically.

Control: Some people exhibit less control over their behaviour and emotions when they are under stress. They tend to play hard (perhaps even getting into trouble) and/or be more expressive and emotional. Others are over controlled, and try to keep their emotions and feelings in check.

Memory: Some people have problems with their memory when they are under stress. They are often absent-minded and forgetful, especially of those things that are outside their narrowed field of focus.

Susceptibility to illness: Someone who is usually very healthy may seem to be sick all of the time, or complain of minor illnesses.

Personality: Some usually sociable people withdraw, and spend less time with other people than they normally do. Other people go the other way and become more socially oriented, wasting no excuse to go out. People who may not usually get angry very easily can become angry for trivial reasons. Others may be irritable much of the time.

Mates are there for each other in the good times, and the bad times. Being there for a mate in the good times is usually easy and enjoyable. But when a mate goes through a rough patch, it can be hard to know what to do or say. This can be particularly challenging if your mate is not just having a bad day, but experiencing a mental health difficulty. The good news is there are some simple steps you can take to look after your mates, regardless of what challenges they may be facing. These steps are sometimes called 'Mental Health First Aid', and can be remembered using the simple acronym: **REACT**.

RECOGNISE symptoms of health difficulties	One of the easiest ways to do this is to know your mates well—any change in their usual behaviour is often the first sign of a health problem. Other symptoms of difficulties can include physical reactions like nausea, sweating or shaking; thinking reactions like poor concentration or negativity; behavioural changes like disrupted sleep, excessive drinking/smoking or increased aggression; and emotional reactions like sadness, anger or anxiety.
ENGAGE the person	After you've recognised any of the symptoms, engage with your mate. Talk to them – for example, you might say “I've noticed X, Y and Z, are you ok?” Have this conversation in a private environment if possible, just be yourself and listen to them.
ACTIVELY listen	Once you have engaged with your mate, you need to actively listen. Active listening involves both hearing and accurately understanding what the speaker has said. Your job during this step is to listen to your mate, reflect back what you are hearing and clarify any differences (“so it sounds like you're feeling angry because of XYZ, am I right?”). Allow your mate time to vent if need be, and don't be afraid to allow some silence in your conversation—sometimes people need silence in order to think. This is not the time to argue with them, tell them you know how they feel, or try to solve their problems. Simply listen, reflect and clarify.

CHECK suicide risk and risk of harm to others

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

TAKE action

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

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

Talk to a mental health professional or call the NZDF confidential help line (0800 693348) for advice if you are concerned about someone.

Knowing you are there to support them can help them feel better. But sometimes they need additional help too. If you are concerned about someone, contact a health professional (medical officer, nurse, psychologist, social worker, chaplain) for advice. Do not try and manage it alone. It's important you have support too, helping someone through a difficult time can be scary. Confidential advice and support is available to help you too. Speak to someone you trust or call NZDF4U Wellbeing Support (0800 NZDF4U).



A list of where to go for help and additional resources is provided at Appendix 1 and 2 on pages 116–123.

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Appendix 1: Where to go for help

DIAL 111 IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY

NZDF4U Wellbeing Support

NZDF4U is 24/7 confidential support spanning both telephone/text and face-to-face and virtual counselling support. *(Counselling also available for Reserve Force, NZDF Family members, Veterans and Ex-NZDF if NZDF related).*

Call: 0800 NZDF4U (0800 693 348)

Text: 8881

Overseas: +64 9 414 9914

Email: wellbeingsupport@nzdf4u.co.nz



NZDF Health Centres

Professionals can provide health and wellness advice and refer to specialist services for Regular Force – Also Reserve Force if related to service. *(Civilians, NZDF Family members, Veterans and Ex-NZDF go to civilian GP).*

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>



NZDF Social Worker

Can support with a range of issues, including relationships, work/financial, family violence, health concerns, and cultural support.

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>



Key

- Regular Force ● Civilians ● Reserve Force ● NZDF Family Member ● Veteran / Ex-NZDF

SAPRA

Support for harmful sexual behaviour.

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>



Chaplain

Can provide spiritual and pastoral support for you and your family for any issue.

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>



Physical Training Instructor

Can provide guidance on physical exercise and training.

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>



Defence Community Facilitator

DCFs can assist with signposting to support services for the Defence Community.

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>



Veterans' Affairs

Support for those with Qualifying Service and families.

Call: 0800 483 8372



Phone lines




For any crisis, including medical emergencies, call 111





WHO	NUMBER TO CALL	ABOUT
Useful for all (including Reserve Forces and Families)		
Lifeline	0800 54 33 54	Confidential counselling service
Healthline	0800 611116	Free health advice from trained registered nurses 24/7
SHINE	0508 744633	Domestic abuse helpline 9am–11pm 7 days
Depression helpline	0800 111757	24/7 telephone counselling support for those experiencing depression
Womens Refuge	0800 REFUGE or 0800 733843	24 hour crisis line for women dealing with violence in their life
Mensline	0800 636754	Helpline for men
Alcohol drug helpline	0800 787797	27/7 confidential non-judgmental help and advice
Youthline	0800 376 633 or email talk@youthline.co.nz	24/7 helpline
Citizens Advice Bureau	0800 367222	Free independent service to help people understand their rights and obligations' and to provide the confidence and support to take action
Parent Helpline	0800 568856	Support, practical advice and strategies for all parenting issues

Appendix 2: Useful websites, tools and apps

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

Free downloadable phone apps:

	Calm	Tools to meditate, sleep and relax.
	CBT-I Coach	Improving sleep habits and dealing with insomnia.
	Clearhead	Mobile app and website with chatbot focussed on depression, anxiety and issues affecting general wellbeing.
	Force Fit	Building your fitness (Note this is currently only available on iOS).
	Groov	NZ created tool offering coping tools, problem solving and wellbeing resources.
	Headspace	Mindfulness app providing short exercises, resources and more.
	High Res	Tools for managing daily stress and building resilience.
	HomePort	RNZN Royal New Zealand Navy Official app.
	Insight Timer	Mindfulness tracks and courses for improved sleep, stress and anxiety.
	Living Well	Practical resources and support and suggestions to support living a healthier lifestyle.
	Mindshift CBT	Aims to help teens and young adults cope with stress and anxiety.
	Nike Run Club	Running and motivation related tips and tools.

	Nike Training	Workouts and fitness plans.
	Operation Life (AUS)	Self-help tools for dealing with suicidal thoughts.
	PTSD Coach	Designed for Veterans and military Service Members who have, or may have, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
	ResCo	NZDF resilience coach app based on the Canadian Defence Force Road to Mental Readiness app. Contains a self-assessment tool and tools for tactical breathing, Self Talk, Goal Setting, Visualisation, Attention Control and Memory.
	Sesame Street for Military Families (US)	Resources for children managing challenges of military life (including moving houses and deployments).
	Smiling Mind	Enables young people and families to practise daily meditation and mindfulness exercises.
	ThinkLadder	A CBT-based self-help tool that helps you to challenge negative thoughts.
	Virtual Hopebox	Resilience tools.

Useful Websites

NZDF

Internal	External
Defence Health Intranet Site http://orgs/sites/nzdf-health/index.html	Force 4 Families Website https://force4families.mil.nz



Pūtahi Hauora | Defence Health Hub

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz>

Pūtahi Hauora is the NZDF's external health website that aims to provide a 'one-stop-shop' with a wide-range of health information for NZDF personnel, their families and veterans.

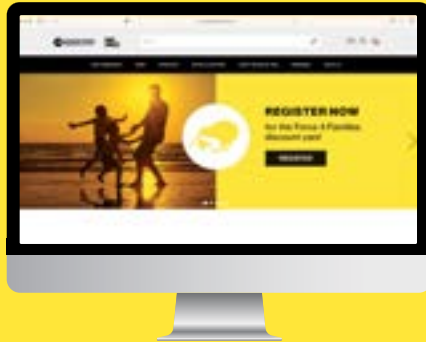
Alongside tools, self-checks, resources and information on facilities and services relevant for all, there's also information on fitness standards, medical gradings, and how the NZDF health system works for serving members and wider community.

Scan the QR code to visit the website:



Visit Pūtahi Hauora for information on:

- Physical, mental, spiritual, and social/whānau health
- Health at work including: workload and burnout, fitness standards, transition, deployments, injury rehabilitation to peak performance, nutrition
- Men's and Women's health
- Relationship tips, parenting, finances, mental wellbeing
- Self-assessment tools
- Resources and tips for self-management, goal setting and action planning
- Where to go to get help and support
- NZDF facilities and providers by region
- Finding your local RSA, Gym and library
- Videos, webinars, shared stories and links to additional resources



Force4Families website

<https://force4families.mil.nz>

F4F website hosts a variety of information for both NZDF members and NZDF community including the Force Financial Hub and the NZDF discount scheme (available to all NZDF personnel as well as their immediate family members).

Scan the QR code to visit the website:



General Health information, stories and tools

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living>

– Information about health issues and healthy living

www.hpa.org.nz/

– Health Promotion Agency – Health information for New Zealanders

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz>

– Information about healthcare providers, services and common treatments

<https://firststeps.nz/resources/community-resources/>

– First Steps – access to tools, resources and support to prioritise wellbeing

Veterans

www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz

– Site for veterans (NZ)

rsa.org.nz/support

– RSA offers a range of support services to current and former service personnel of all ages, and their dependents. RSA support and advocacy is free and you do not need to be a member of the RSA to request assistance. You can find more about the services they provide on their website or call them (04 384 7994) to find out the location of your nearest RSA

www.weserved.nz

– Service Directory for NZ Veterans and Service Personnel

Appendix 3: Self-Assessment tools

Mental Health Continuum Self-Assessment Tool

Rate where you think you are on each of the six dimensions based on the last 2–4 weeks. Remember where we sit changes depending on what is going on in our lives so don't worry if you're not tracking so well at the moment. Be honest as this will help you to understand what you can do to shift back into the green.

What should I do?

Green

Healthy adaptive coping

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

Yellow

Mild, common and reversible distress or impairment

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

Orange

Severe, persistent injury or impairment

Make self-care a priority, maintain social contacts; don't withdraw.

Use self-management tools and support strategies to build mental health. Talk to someone and seek professional help if you are worried.

Red

Clinical illnesses and disorders requiring more concentrated medical care

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

Resilience Self-Assessment Tool

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

Score each resilience statement as follows:

0 = Strongly Disagree

1 = Somewhat Disagree

2 = Somewhat Agree

3 = Strongly Agree

Ser	Resilience Statement	Score
1	I approach new situations with enthusiasm.	
2	I enjoy achieving the goals I have set.	
3	I can apply the organisations values in my work.	
4	I express my feelings appropriately.	
5	I enjoy learning new things.	
6	I take responsibility for my results.	
7	I ask for support when I need it.	
8	I recognise when I am stressed.	
9	I believe I can influence the direction I take in life.	
10	I actively maintain contact with others.	
11	I eat a well balanced diet.	
12	I take time out for myself when needed.	
13	I think challenges offer me some lessons.	
14	I know my own strengths & weaknesses.	
15	I know how to relax under pressure.	
16	I have a positive view of my future.	
17	I have a plan for my work tasks.	
18	I keep myself physically fit.	
19	I am able to retain a positive outlook during change.	
20	I know what the purpose of my job is.	
21	I build strong networks.	
22	I am realistic about what is possible.	
23	I show empathy to others' difficulties and concerns.	
24	I have a strong set of beliefs that I follow.	
25	I am generally optimistic.	
26	I bounce back from difficulties.	
27	I act when opportunities arise.	
28	I act decisively when things are not working.	
29	I undertake activities outside work for my own enjoyment.	
30	I organise my time and prioritise tasks.	
	Total Resilience Score:	
	Match your score against the table on the next page	

How well am I doing with my resilience?

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

The checklists below are designed to help you reflect on and plan to build your resilience.⁵ Research suggests that focusing on these areas will help build your resilience.

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

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

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)

The questions below ask about your alcohol use. When answering the following questions use the guidelines below regarding the size of a standard drink. A standard drink measures the amount of alcohol, not the amount of liquid you are drinking.

1	How often do you have a drink containing alcohol? If you never drink please answer 'never' then skip to the next section.	Never	1 per month or less	2–4 times per month	2–3 times per week	4 or more time per week
2	How many standard drinks do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 to 9	10+

Thinking of your alcohol consumption:					
Scoring	0	1	2	3	4
	Never	Occasionally	Monthly	Weekly	Twice a week or more
3	How often do you have six or more standard drinks on one occasion?				
4	How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?				
5	How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of drinking?				
6	How often during the last year have you needed a first drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?				
7	How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?				

8	How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?					
9	Have you or someone else been injured because of your drinking?					
10	Has a relative, friend, doctor, or other health care worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?					
<p>To assess your current levels of alcohol risk add up the scores from items 3–10. The score of each item is equal to the number in the circle that you selected (e.g., for items 3–8, never = 0, twice a week or more = 4).</p> <p>See how you rate on the next page.</p>						<p>Score =</p>

AUDIT Alcohol Use

Score	Risk	Action
0–7	Low risk	This is the healthiest level of drinking, but check the additional risks below to make sure you are not at elevated levels of risk taking.
8–15	Medium	Your drinking has the potential to cause harm, consider low risk drinking, and try the tips below for change.
16 and above	High risk	This level of risk indicates that you are likely damaging your health and wellbeing with your drinking. Seriously consider changing these behaviours. Talk to your doctor or health professional for additional advice.

Low risk guidelines

Low-risk drinking to reduce the lifetime risk of harm from disease or injury for healthy men and women is:

- on any day no more than 2 standard drinks.

Low risk drinking to reduce the harm of injury or death on any one occasion of drinking is:

- no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day (on a special occasion, not regular drinking) – these drinks should be spread out over several hours;
- having regular alcohol-free days.

For women who are planning to become pregnant, or who are pregnant or breastfeeding, no alcohol is the safest option.

Additional risks

Caution:

- Do you have a health condition made worse by alcohol e.g. diabetes, hepatitis, pancreatitis etc.?
- Do you have heart disease, high blood pressure or are gaining weight?
- Are you on medication?
- Do you suffer from depression, anxiety, or PTSD?
- Do you experience mood swings or irritability?
- Do you have trouble sleeping?
- Are you over 65?

Even if you are in the low risk category you may need to drink less if you are in one of the above groups that are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol. Talk to your doctor or other health professional.

Appendix 4: Tips for Getting and Staying Active

Tips to help you get active

- Diary exercise like you would any other important meeting.
- Make sure you've got comfortable shoes/clothes and shower gear if you need it.
- Build physical activity into your daily life.
- Plan to do more jobs around the garden and house.
- Walk/cycle to work or park further away and walk the last bit of your commute.
- Take the stairs.
- Walk to see a colleague rather than calling or emailing.
- Have walking meetings.
- 'Play' more—with the kids, with the dog, or on your own.
- Create a buddy system with friends, family or colleagues to encourage you to exercise more.
- Set a goal—it might be to walk 3 times next week, or to run the New York Marathon next year!

Tips to help you stay active

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

- **Minimise the likelihood of Injury.** If you have a health condition or have been injured, talk to your doctor about an appropriate fitness programme for you. Injuries can occur during fitness training, but there are a few easy steps we can take to lower our risk of getting hurt:
- **Listen to Your Body.** Increasing physical activity levels suddenly (in volume and/or intensity), extending duration and not allowing sufficient time for recovery can all lead to overtraining and injury. Listen to the warning signs your body gives you. If your body is tired or too sore from a previous workout, take a day off, cross-train, or work out at a much lower intensity.
- **Warm Up and Cool Down.** Every workout should begin with a warm up, which is necessary to prepare the body for exercise by increasing heart rate and blood flow to working muscles. Every workout should end with a cool down. Time spent performing five to 10 minutes of low-intensity cardio activity followed by stretching immediately after the workout will decrease muscle soreness and aid in recovery, both helping to prepare the body for the next workout.

Read more about stretching at <https://fitness.mercola.com/sites/fitness/archive/2015/04/24/injury-preventing-exercises.aspx>

- **Stay hydrated.** This means drinking enough water/fluids before, during and after exercising. Experts generally recommend drinking about 6–8 cups (1.5–2L) of water throughout the day. However, if it is hot or you are exercising or playing sport you may need more. A good indicator of your hydration is the colour of your urine. It should be pale yellow; if it is dark yellow you are dehydrated.



See page 17 for more tips about hydration.

What if you haven't got time?

First ask yourself “have you really not got time”, or is something else getting in the way? If work, a dislike of exercise, poor organisation, or family commitments putting you off, take a step back and look for solutions. Sometimes exercise itself can improve your efficiency at work or home. Exercise that clears your head may help you focus so that the time taken to exercise is actually earned back due to greater productivity.

If time is still an issue, exercise while you work or are doing other jobs. Do squats while you brush your teeth, calf raises while you wash up, or prone holds while you watch TV. Any exercise is better than none so do bite size chunks when you can and they'll soon add up.

If time is still an issue, low-volume **High Intensity Interval training or HIIT** is an efficient way to train. Alternating intense bursts of activity with low intensity recovery periods can improve cardio-respiratory fitness and help control blood sugar levels and blood pressure. HIIT has also been shown to reduce injury risk and improve mental health. All camps and bases have Physical Training Instructors and they are a great resource. They can advise if HIIT is right for you and provide you with sessions to suit your fitness and your goals.

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

What is your “fitness age”?

A recent study of fitness and lifespan suggests that a person's so-called fitness age is a better predictor of longevity than chronological age. And the good news is that unlike your actual age, your fitness age can decrease. Fitness age is determined primarily by your VO₂max, which is a measure of your body's ability to take in and utilize oxygen. VO₂max indicates your current cardiovascular endurance.

Getting your VO₂max accurately assessed can be expensive and time consuming but this online tool estimates your VO₂max based on factors such as your age, gender, waist circumference and exercise habits. It's not perfect but it will give you an idea. <https://www.worldfitnesslevel.org/#/>

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



Appendix 5: Fueling your body

Portion size information

The amount of each macronutrient you need (carbohydrate, protein, fat) is determined by a few factors – your age, activity level, and body composition.

Protein

Protein-based foods provide the building blocks of our musculoskeletal and physiological systems. Most experts agree that we should be consuming at least 1.2g per kilogram body weight of protein a day, and for more active people, around 1.6g per kilogram body weight. A good rule of thumb is to incorporate between 1–2 palm sized portions of foods high in protein at each meal.

Muscle mass and bone density diminish as we age, so focusing on larger amounts of protein can help preserve and protect the musculoskeletal system for people aged 40 years and older.



SALMON
20G PROTEIN - RAW



CHICKEN BREAST
23G PROTEIN - RAW



TENDERLOIN STEAK
20G PROTEIN - RAW



TUNA STEAK
22 G PROTEIN - RAW



GREEK YOGURT
10G PROTEIN



COTTAGE CHEESE
11G PROTEIN



MOZZARELLA
28G PROTEIN



EGGS
13G PROTEIN



KIDNEY BEANS
9G PROTEIN - BOILED



GREEN PEAS
5G PROTEIN - BOILED



LENTILS
9G PROTEIN - BOILED



CHICKPEAS
9G PROTEIN - BOILED

Carbohydrate

Carbohydrate-based foods fuel higher intensity activity, and help replenish our body's stores of carbohydrate that can become depleted due to being active. They also calm the central nervous system, helping the body to produce serotonin, the calming, feel good hormone.

The amount of carbohydrate you need is dependent on your activity level and your body composition goals. If your role is physically demanding, incorporate two serves of carbohydrate at each meal, or just one if you are looking to improve your body composition. Examples of good choices are: A large piece of fruit, kumara or potato (equivalent to the size of your fist) or ½ cup cooked legumes (such as red kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas).

If you do regular PT but otherwise have a role that is lightly active, incorporate one serve of carbohydrate at each meal, or just one in the meal after your training. Keep the other meals low in carbohydrate if you are wanting to improve your body composition.



Fat

Fat-based foods are great for hormone health, satiety (fullness) and flavour. The amount of fat you should aim for is dependent on your activity levels (and subsequent energy/calorie requirements). If you have body fat to lose, keep it to 1–2 serves of fat per meal. If you are very active, 3–4 serves of fat per meal is appropriate (not including the fat that is already naturally present in some foods, such as eggs or salmon).

Good options include nuts, seeds, coconut oil, coconut cream, cheese, avocado, and olive oil.

Vegetables

Non-starchy vegetables are a good source of fibre, helping to maintain a healthy gut microbiome, and phytochemicals, which aid our body's natural anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant defence systems.

Non-starchy vegetables, including salad greens, capsicum, eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, cucumber, cauliflower, spinach and kale are low energy, nutrient-dense options that add bulk and volume to meals. Add a minimum of 2–3 serves at each meal to maximise their benefits.

For more information check out the nutrition section on health website:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/body/nutrition-and-supplements/>

Appendix 6: More Sleep Tips

Falling Asleep

Unfortunately getting to sleep is one of those cases where 'the harder you try, the harder it is.' We all know that concentrating on or worrying about falling asleep makes the achievement even more elusive. Checking the clock only to realise you've been in bed for 45-minutes without nodding off can be frustrating and only serves to make you more alert. Similarly, for many, lying in bed is the first time all day that they have time to think. It can be hard to relax with the barrage of important, but non-urgent thoughts competing for your attention. Worries, responsibilities and to-do lists can all start ruminating in our brain and preventing sleep. It can be hard to stop counterproductive thoughts entering our minds, so instead of simply trying to block them, we can replace them with calming, sleep-inducing alternatives. Thought exercises that occupy sufficient cognitive space to hold off unwanted thoughts may be effective tools. This is where the age-old advice of counting sheep comes in but there are some (arguably more effective) alternatives you can try. Before doing any of these techniques get into the position in which you will fall asleep. Don't worry if your mind wanders just gently bring it back to the activity and pick up where you left off.

- **Imagine a place where you feel relaxed.** What does it feel, look, sound and smell like? It could be your favourite beach, a waterfall in the bush or anywhere you feel calm. It can be real or imagined but try to go into so much detail that you feel as though you really are there.
- **Imagine a process.** It may be a walk you take regularly, a task you do often that has many small steps or a routine you go through. Picture the process in detail, paying attention to minute details and imagine that you are actually going through the motions.

- **Try progressive relaxation.** Imagine your body relaxing one part at a time from your toes to your head. Go slowly and remember to relax even your jaw, eyes and the muscles around your skull. You may find it easiest to contract a muscle as tight as you can and then let go or simply will the muscle to relax. As you let go of tension you may feel as though your body is becoming heavier, this is a sign that it's working. Imagine yourself slowly sinking deeper into your mattress.
- **Try counting backwards.** Start at 1000 and count backwards in 7's. For a slightly easier version try starting at 300 and subtracting in 3's. Along with distracting you the exercise may give you an outlet for your stress.
- **What are you grateful for?** Taking the time to consider three things that you are thankful for—be they big or small—can put you into a positive state of mind. If done regularly, this exercise can help you approach sleep with a more positive mindset.
- Focus on your breath with this technique⁶:

Rhythmic Circular Breathing for Sleep.

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

⁶ Livingston-Booth (1985).

Tips for waking up

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

Sleep for Ops⁷

Operational environments present unique challenges to personal trying get enough sleep. Lack of a safe environment, worry about distant family, anticipation, fear, loud noises, inability to switch-off, and requirement to be ready to move at all times make achieving a good night's sleep difficult even when time allows it. Additionally, the nature of ops accelerates the development of fatigue making the need for sleep even greater than normal. Three of the main causes of fatigue:

1. Cognitive – emotional strain and mental demands
2. Physical – strenuous or prolonged physical activity
3. Diet – inadequate nutrition and dehydration

⁷ Murphy, P. J. (2002).

During operations the consequences of inadequate sleep impair one's ability to perform in a potentially life-threatening environment. This has potentially devastating consequences for individuals and the organisation. For example, one study found that 34% of US soldiers serving in Iraq and Kuwait during 2003 reported having fallen asleep at least once while they were supposed to be awake. Other dangers are micro-sleeps (attentional lapses), low vigilance, poor decision making and ethical judgement.

While you are deployed you may have limited or no control over when and where you sleep but there are things that you can do before deployment to prepare. Developing healthy sleep habits, understanding your own sleep needs, recognising signs that you are sleep deprived and being well-rested prior to deployment is important. Exercises are a good way to practice healthy sleep in an operational environment and develop strategies to help you cope.

Try to:

- Get at least 8 hours sleep a night for 7 days before an operation.
- Develop relaxation techniques to help you put stressful thoughts out of your mind at the end of the day.
- Use down time to sleep rather than engaging in time-filling tasks such as playing video games.
- Put the effort in to make your sleeping space as conducive to sleep as possible. This may mean spending an extra few minutes before going to sleep but the quality of your sleep will benefit.

Sleep & Shift Work

Behavioural strategies for the management of shift work in the military:

- Maintain healthy sleep habits and keep track of how much sleep you are getting.
- Try to minimise the frequency of shift changes to less than once per month.
- On days off keep to a consistent sleep schedule that, if feasible, allows your sleep times to overlap on both workdays and non-workdays.
- Take a nap before your shift, use bright light at the start of the shift, avoid bright light in the later part of the shift and wear sunglasses if driving home during bright morning hours to trick your body into preparing for sleep.

- After your shift find a quiet place to sleep or wear earplugs so that you do not get disrupted.
- Due to the difficulty of sleeping outside of your circadian rhythm it will take longer to get adequate sleep so allocate 9–10 hours in bed to get the recommended 7–9 hours of sleep.

Sleep Deprivation and Executive Function⁸

Sleep deprivation impairs our higher order thinking such as decision making, planning and execution. These functions occur in the brain's pre-frontal cortex. Because of its importance in our daily lives and the role of sleep in recovery from and preparation for wake, this region is thought to be particularly susceptible to sleep deprivation. In a military setting this is particularly dangerous given the nature of our work. Sleep deprivation can lead to:

- Impaired ability to communicate effectively – poor detection of social cues and lower inhibition of inappropriate behaviour.
- Lack of innovation.
- Inflexibility of thought processes.
- Getting side-tracked by distraction.
- Over-reliance on previous strategies – sticking with something that has worked before.
- Unwillingness to try out novel strategies.
- Unreliable memory for when events occurred – better at remembering what happened than when it happened.
- Change in mood (loss of empathy with colleagues).
- Inability to deal with surprise.
- Poorer appreciation of one's own strengths and weaknesses - may get in over your head.
- Impaired risk assessment – underestimation of risk.
- Failure to revise strategies following new information – ignoring the significance of new Intel and sticking with plan A.

⁸ Harrison, Y., & Horne, J. A. (2000).

Countermeasures to Sleep Deprivation⁹

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



Did you know?

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

Williamson, A. M., & Feyer, A. M. (2000).

⁹ Hilditch, C. J., Dorrian, J., & Banks, S. (2016)

Appendix 7:

More Mental skills and Resilience Tips

Overcoming Fear of Failure

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

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

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

Mindfulness Exercises¹⁰

Being in the moment

Sit back and feel the weight of the book in your hands, feel the texture of the cover. As you breathe in and out deeply, feel the temperature in the room on your skin. Random thoughts might come to mind. Simply observe and accept them as they pass by, as if they are cars going slowly by. You don't have to stop any of the 'cars' to examine them, just let them pass by. By practicing this type of observing and acceptance, you can detach from your worries and concerns, they can simply drift by, not sticking around long enough to take root. By detaching from your thoughts they become less present in your mind. By being in the moment you can cleanse yourself of the nuisance worries and anxiety about what to do about something in the future that might not even happen. Being present in the moment allows your brain to experience the vibrancy and richness of the now. Maintaining an observing perspective helps you develop a non-judgemental attitude. You delay reacting to the situation until all of the information is put into perspective.

Engaging the half knowing smile

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

Power pose

Stand with your feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart, with your hands on your hips. Then inhale slowly and deeply for four to five seconds. Don't rush it. You want to get your lungs full without holding your breath. Then exhale slowly, for about six seconds, emptying your lungs completely. Continue breathing in this way, as you remain in the pose for 2 minutes (browse the internet for "power poses", to see other options, if this one doesn't work for you). Doing non-verbal power poses for even just 2 minutes can result in huge reductions in the stress hormone cortisol, with associated increases in testosterone, a hormone associated with confident, assertive behaviours. People who practiced power poses briefly prior to an evaluation interview were rated as more confident and assertive (Carney, Cuddy and Yap 2010). Useful during your workday. When you feel stress increasing, lean back in your chair. Open your chest, by moving your hands back and rolling your shoulders back.

10. <http://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>
<http://www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/mindfulness-exercises.html>

One Minute Breathing

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

The Ten Second Count

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

“One... two... three... do I have to buy milk today or did John say he'd do it? Oh, oops, I'm thinking!”

“One... two... three... four... this isn't so hard after all... Oh no... that's a thought! Start again.”

“One... two... three... now I've got it. I'm really concentrating now...”

Drop Anchor

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

Plant your feet into the floor.

Push them down. Notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.

Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.

Notice your entire body and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.

Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.

Notice Five Things

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

Pause for a moment.

Look around and notice five things that you can see.

Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.

Notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body (for example, your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air on your face, your feet upon the floor, your back against the chair).

Finally, do all of the above simultaneously.

Making Change and Forming Healthy Habits

Sometimes, even though we know where we want to make change in our lives, coming up with a plan for getting there and sticking to it can be hard.

Check out the guidelines below for problem solving, setting goals and action planning.

Problem Solving

Over the next week take the time to solve a problem you are facing.

- ✓ Identifying the problem – Write it down. Brainstorm your options. How can you deal with this problem? Write down all possibilities – good and not so good.
- ✓ Write down the ADVANTAGES and DISADVANTAGES of each option.
- ✓ Identify the BEST option(s) to deal with the problem.
- ✓ List the STEPS needed to carry out a solution. Consider the resources required and potential setbacks.

If it is a problem you are facing with someone else – a parenting problem, or a work project problem – then try and work through this process with the other people involved. Together you may think of greater range of options and you will be able to share this skill.

Review your progress in carrying out your chosen solution.
What have you achieved? What still needs to be done?

Set some goals

Setting goals allows us to really consider what we want to achieve. When something seems overwhelming it is useful to break it down into smaller chunks and develop a plan for achieving these. You may have heard of the term SMART goals – these are goals that are ***Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound***.

Once you have set your goals work out your plan for achieving these by prioritising and problem solving.

Planning for change

We can have the best intentions to change our behaviour but without careful planning, we know that people often don't tend to actually make changes, or at least don't maintain changes for very long. This is why New Year's resolutions so often don't stick, even though we are motivated and set SMART goals.

Effective planning for behaviour change can be broken into two steps:

✓ **Action Planning**

Deciding when, where, and how you will make a change.

✓ **Coping Planning**

Anticipating what barriers will stop you from making and sustaining that change. Then putting in place strategies to get over those barriers.

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

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

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

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

At first, a plan will help you stick to your intended behaviour change. Implementation or coping plans are if-then rules that force you to prepare for certain situations. E.g. if X happens I will do Y because I want to achieve Z. Coping plans help us turn intentions into action, and if followed over time, form habits. However, until the habit is formed the action will still be dependent on motivation so it is important that you continue to remind yourself why you are undergoing the behaviour change. Coping plans can make it easier to stick to your intended behaviour. If you have prepared for the situation of smelling your favourite, indulgent food by telling yourself you will do 5 press-ups or eat an apple it will be much easier to avoid falling into old ways by default as you will have a preferred alternative.

A plan may be easier to stick to with some external reminders. Posting notes around your house in certain contexts (e.g. in the fridge to remind yourself to choose milk rather than juice, next to your bed to remind yourself to read a book instead of looking at a screen before bed) can be helpful. Or consider asking a

friend to text you with reminders of the habit you are trying to form or the goal you are trying to achieve. Habit formation does not require extrinsic rewards if you are intrinsically motivated however having someone support your intrinsic motivation with praise and acknowledgement can be beneficial.

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

Steps to form a new habit:

Activity

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

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

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

Other strategies to improve habits

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



Appendix 8: Common Mental Health Issues

What is a mental health condition?

A mental health condition occurs when a set of distressing symptoms (thoughts, feelings and behaviours) has a severe impact on our psychological, social (including relationships) and vocational

functioning. It is not always easy to recognise or diagnose a mental health condition, because the nature and severity of symptoms can vary from one person to the next. Our personal characteristics, and the environment in which we are living, influence how we will experience a mental health condition. For example, high-stress environments can trigger symptoms.

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

You can read more about common mental health conditions here:

<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/mind/common-mental-health-conditions/>

Feeling Down

Depression is common in New Zealand, and at least 1 in 5 of us will experience a period of depression in our lifetime. It's also common in veterans and serving members. Depression is a very distressing and disabling condition. Left untreated, periods of depression tend to last longer and happen more often, so it's important to get help.

Being depressed in mood for short periods of time is a normal human reaction to an event or some bad news. This is not depression, which is a mental health condition associated with an almost constant state of low mood, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities that used to be enjoyable. Life becomes flat and grey, and nothing seems fun, exciting, or enjoyable anymore. In more

severe cases, the person may believe that life is no longer worth living. Common symptoms of depression are:

- Feeling low, down in the dumps, miserable
- Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and hopelessness
- Lack of energy, easily tired
- Lack of enthusiasm, difficulties with motivation
- Loss of interest and pleasure in normal activities
- Feeling angry and irritable
- Lack of appetite and weight loss
- Loss of interest in sex
- Difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much
- Poor concentration, memory, and decision making
- Thoughts of suicide and/or death.

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

Anxiety

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

Physical sensations – When people with social anxiety find themselves in a situation where they are worried they will be judged, their fight-flight-freeze response is triggered, and they might have some or all of these sensations - Racing heart; Blushing; Dizziness or feeling faint; Sweating or hot flushes; Trembling or shaking; Mind going 'blank'; Nausea or butterflies in the stomach.

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

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

Generalised Anxiety is very common. People with (generalised) anxiety tend to worry excessively about lots of things – family, finances, health and issues at work. These feelings last for several months or longer. Other symptoms can be: Feeling constantly on edge; Muscle tension; Difficulty sleeping; Feeling tired or easily exhausted; Trouble concentrating on a task; Feeling angry and irritable.

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

Panic

Approximately one in thirty Kiwis will suffer from panic disorder at some point in their lives, and one in forty will experience agoraphobia. When we are exposed to a physical threat, our bodies automatically gear up for the fight-flight-freeze response. We become more alert, our heart starts racing, our muscles tense up, we sweat more, and breathe more rapidly. These changes are designed to protect us from danger, but sometimes our fight-flight-freeze response is triggered out of the blue when there's no real or immediate danger; this is what's known as a panic attack.

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

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

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

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

Appendix 9: Understanding Your Values and Finding Your Why

How to find your values

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What does a well-lived life look like for you?
- What do you want your life to stand for?
- What matters to you?
- What kind of person do you want to be?
- Consider the consequences of living with your current values- how does this make you feel? Does this align with the type of person you want to be?

When deciding which values are important, make sure you find them attractive and life-giving to you and, if appropriate, to your whānau – rather than choosing what you feel you “should” value. If our values are rewarding then we become drawn towards actions that align with them, so consider how your values makes you feel. Do they inspire actions and behaviours that make you proud?

Common values

Write down 5 that you find particularly important, and feel free to add your own!

accepting	courageous	forgiving	loving
attentive	curious	generous	loyal
benevolent	dependable	grateful	peaceful
brave	decisive	happy	perseverance
calm	empathic	honest	positive
careful	energetic	humble	thoughtful
caring	ethical	integrity	truthful
compassionate	fair	just	visionary
consistent	fearless	kind	wise



Finding Your Why*

PAST

“When you shoot an arrow, you have to pull back before you go forward.”

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

Goal	Why?	Why?	Why?
<i>E.g. Traveling Seas</i>	<i>Saw different places</i>	<i>Learned about other cultures</i>	<i>Gained confidence to help others</i>
1.			
2.			
3.			

FUTURE

“Your passions and desires come from your goals and dreams.”

**What are Dreams/Goals for your life? Would like to be remembered by?
What are you striving to accomplish? And Why?**

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

*Thank you to Chaplain Russel Bone for the material in Appendix 9.

PRESENT

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

Why do you work where you work? What is the real reason or the root cause? Ask yourself the 5 whys. Each answer to why forms the basis of the next why question. Try to make your answers more precise as you go deeper and deeper without jumping to any conclusions.

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

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

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

YOUR WHY STATEMENT

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

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

TO _____ **SO THAT** _____
(Contribution) (Impact)

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

Appendix 10:

Maintaining Support Networks, Building Sense of Belonging and Overcoming Loneliness

Feeling Lonely?

Researchers at the University of Chicago have found that extreme loneliness increases a person's chances of premature death by 14%¹¹. The researchers found that feeling isolated from others can disrupt sleep, elevate blood pressure, increase morning rises in the stress hormone cortisol, alter gene expression in immune cells, increase depression, and lower overall subjective wellbeing. The researchers identified three core dimensions of connectedness linked to healthy relationships that people of all ages can focus on to improve social connectivity and negate feelings of loneliness:

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

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

Support Networks

Social contact and support systems have been proven beneficial for maintaining physical and mental health. Scientists believe these benefits stem from a combination of increased mental activity, physical challenge and reduction in stress. Social support can help you work out problems and relieve stress. Regardless of what you're experiencing, chances are others are dealing with similar issues or have in the past, and may be able to provide you with useful strategies. Even if you're not looking to a supportive network to help you resolve specific issues, interacting with others helps you stay mentally sharp.

¹¹ "Rewarding Social Connections Promote Successful Aging" at a seminar on "The Science of Resilient Ageing" February 16, 2014 – American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Chicago.

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

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

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

Sense of Belonging

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

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

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



Practical Tips:

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

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



