



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING GUIDE BOOK

Tips and tricks from the industry for looking after your wellbeing and mental health



TAKE A DEEP BREATH

How to take a step back when a decision or situation seems stressful:

Our brains are wired to be more reactionary when we are feeling stressed out. This can mean that in tough moments we can feel like we have less options than we actually do and go to the “all-or-nothing” extremes. When we are feeling under stress we tend to jump to premature conclusions and sometimes this can make the situation worse!



Here are some top tips from your MATES that may help you to step back and reassess the situation when you are feeling under pressure.

“If you take a breath and remove yourself from the issues you can look at the problem from the outside.” - David Hurn

1 Take a Breath - Make sure when it comes to a decision that you give yourself the space to think so that you’re not making important decisions on a whim. If you can feel yourself becoming upset or angry when you’re under stress, try counting down from ten and go for a walk if the situation allows. Sometimes not everything needs an answer on the spot.

2 Talk to someone neutral - Research has found that there is one piece of advice that comes up time and time again when feeling stressed out by a situation - get an outsider’s opinion. Talking to someone lessens the burden and can help you gain some perspective on the situation.

3 Change what you can and accept what you can’t - Sometimes there are certain aspects of a situation you can change, even if you cannot change the overall situation. Focusing on what you can control can help you feel more empowered and less helpless when you are handling a stressful situation.



David Hurn

Fulton Hogan - Project Supervisor

I’m fifty-six years old and I’ve been in the construction industry for almost 42 years. I lost my son to suicide eight years ago, so I know what it’s like to experience dark days. In my line of work, I find that people often want to take their work problems and offload them onto you. At some point I took a step back and realised that you can’t get too caught up with other people’s issues, it was causing me too much stress. My advice to anyone that is struggling is to take a step back from the situation and make sure you’re not jumping to conclusions, otherwise it’s just too easy to become overwhelmed.

GET OUT IN NATURE

Spending time in nature is linked to brain benefits and improvements in mood, mental health and emotional well-being. Feeling connected to nature can produce similar benefits to well-being, regardless of how much time you spend outside! Here are some tips, from industry, about how you can increase your time in nature.



Be an Outdoor Role Model



Get out and about and do your favourite activities outside. If you have children or other family members, this can help motivate them and get them involved too, which can work wonders for your wellbeing.



Prescribe a Daily Dose of Nature: “Do” is more powerful than “Don’t”. Some families put limits on screen time, but you could try make a rule that set’s a minimum of “green time” - time outdoors!



Start a Vintage Social Network: The original social networks didn’t exist on screens. Instead they were found in parks, playgrounds, vacant lots, fields and forests. Bring friendships and social life back into the natural world by organising a touch game with your mates, having a picnic at the park, cycling or going for a long walk.

Hayden Griffiths MATES - Field Officer

I'm one of the new Field Officers here at MATES in Construction in Wellington. For me, looking after yourself is really about finding what's grounding for you and doing that regularly. I also love being out in nature, going for walks in the bush, hiking, surfing, and exploring. I've had my own experiences with depression and keeping up with rituals and doing these things has been a big part of healing. It's so important to allow yourself time to disconnect and spend time doing the things that make you happy.



RECONNECTING

Life can get busy, but feeling connected to the people that are important to us can make a big difference to our mental health. Connection brings purpose and belonging to our lives and makes us feel happier and more secure. Reconnect - it could be someone close to you whom you've lost touch with or someone you wish you caught up with more often.



- 1 Reach out to someone you would like to reconnect with. Call your whānau, send a message to a mate or catch up kanohi ki te kanohi/face to face if you can.
- 2 At the end of the day ask a friend, your whānau or hoamahi what the best thing about their day was and listen with interest when they respond.
- 3 Have a think about whether there is someone in your life who may be going through a tough time. Reach out and ask them how they are, empathise and listen.
- 4 Organise a dinner or a lunch with your whānau, friends or hoamahi.

Nicole Stark MATES - Field Officer

What better time to reconnect with yourself, your loved ones and your friends - right?

Recently, I've been lucky enough to reconnect with my friends and family back home. Just this weekend, I virtually connected with one of my best friends as they married their sweetheart.

I'll be connecting with this strong wāhine on FaceTime. At 92 she's inspiring, strong and a little forgetful.

Pick up the phone, grab a cuppa with a mate or go hang out with yourself for some well deserved self care time.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Everything can feel more stressful when you are tired, hungry, and run down. When we don't look after ourselves properly we are more likely to react to stress rather than respond to it. Focus on taking care of your body, and you will have a greater ability to handle frustration and stress in your life overall.



We reached out to our industry over social media to ask for some of their best self-care tips.



Exercise - Exercise is one of those wonderful relievers that can build resilience by helping you to blow off steam. But exercise also has some direct wellbeing benefits because it can help bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins.



Get some high quality ZZZ's - A good night's sleep will mean you can tackle the day's tasks more easily. When you're tired, you're less patient and more easily agitated, which can increase mental fatigue. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Try putting down the devices at least one hour before you hit the hay to make sure you're getting the best quality sleep possible.



Meditation - Meditation can help you to remain centered in the face of maintaining your wellbeing and can help you to regain a sense of peace when you are feeling off-balance. Many meditation techniques work well, so try a few and stick with a favorite technique that feels right.

Finally, try to keep work at work and home at home - it's important that we're able to switch off after work and likewise it's important that we are focused on our work while we're at work! Being mindful of where you are and what you're doing is not only good for your wellbeing, it means your friends and family have your full attention when you're spending important time together!



Stephen Kearney NZDF - Chief Mental Health Officer

I'm Steve, I'm a clinical psychologist and I've been working in the Defence Force for twenty years. I look after my own mental health and wellbeing by making sure I'm getting enough exercise, eating well, only drinking in moderation and getting plenty of sleep. I also make sure I get time for the things I love to do, for me that's generally playing sports, going fishing spending time with my family, and catching up with my mates. One thing I've learnt is that it's healthy to be able to separate your work life from your home life. When I'm at work, I'm at work and when I'm at home I'm at home. I focus on what's in the here and now.

TAKE UP A HOBBY

Spending time on an activity that you enjoy can improve your mental health and wellbeing. Research shows that people with hobbies are less likely to suffer from stress, low mood, and depression. Activities that get you out and about can make you feel happier and more relaxed.



Here are some hobbies you could take up:



- Woodwork classes
- Learn a new language
- Take up a new sport
- Learn to fish
- Enter a fun run
- Take up hiking
- Learn to play chess
- Take a dance class
- Get out in the garden
- Get into podcasts

Toar Dotulong Reece - Store Manager

I'm Toar, I'm from Indonesia but I've been in New Zealand since I was ten years old – so twenty-eight years now! I look after my own wellbeing by making sure I always have a hobby. Mine have changed over the years, I used to love mountain biking. Now that we have kids that's changed a bit, now I enjoy going for walks and spending time in nature. It's all about finding a little escape that helps you switch off after work so that you can get out of work mode.



Gareth Samuels Safari Group - Senior Project Manager

I'm Gareth, and I've been working in the construction industry for 18 years. I like to take care of myself by getting plenty of sleep, running and going hunting. Hobbies are really important for my mental health. Sometimes it can get hard to make time for myself, especially with two kids! I try to rally as much support around me as I can – friends, family, my wife – I'm always keen to reach outside my bubble for help if I need it.

SPENDING TIME WITH ANIMALS

Spending time with pets can help support your mental health and wellbeing in more ways than you might think. Research has shown that spending time with dogs can:



- 1 Increase your activity levels: Dog owners are likely to take their pets for a walk or run every day. This can be a fun way to fit exercise into your routine
- 2 Providing companionship: Pets can give you a sense of security and someone to share the day with. Caring for them can help you feel wanted and needed.
- 3 Reduce anxiety: Research has shown that spending time with a furry friend can have a genuine impact on the effects of depression and anxiety
- 4 Help you meet new people: Dog owners often stop and chat with each other on walks. But other pets can be a way to meet people too: in pet shops, training classes or online groups, for example
- 5 Provide structure to your day: Getting out of bed early to walk the dog or making sure lights are out at a reasonable hour for you furry friend can help you keep a routine, which has been shown to impact on overall wellbeing.



Amanda Hunter

MATES - Research, Social Policy & Comms Manager

After a long day at work, the thing I most look forward to is spending time with my dog Bismarck (Busy). Walking the Busy helps me to get out of the house and get some fresh air. I've met so many dog owner friends since we got Busy – the dog park is super social, and everyone knows everyone down there. Sometimes in the summer we text some of our dog park friends and take a couple of beers and a

picnic blanket down and share a drink with the other dog owners while the dogs run around, it's a cool way to connect with people that you wouldn't otherwise talk to. We're really lucky to own a dog, but before we got Busy we used to dog sit through an app which meant we could spend time with other peoples dogs without having to commit.

PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Practicing gratitude can be a game-changer: it has far reaching effects, from improving our mental health to boosting our relationships with others. Living your life with gratitude helps you notice the little wins - like a stranger holding the door for you, an open parking slot during a busy day, or no traffic on the way to and from work.



Each of these small moments strung together create a web of well-being that, over time, strengthens your ability to notice the good.

Building your capacity for gratitude isn't difficult. It just takes practice. The more you can bring your attention to that which you feel grateful for the easier it will become.. Here's a good place to start:

- 1 Pick something every day - Try to pick one thing every day that you're grateful for. Acknowledging these moments and relationships can boost serotonin (feel-good chemicals in your brain) and make you feel lighter.
- 2 Share your joys - At dinnertime you could try sharing what you're grateful for every night with family or friends. Try going around the table and naming what you're grateful for that day. This will help your own wellbeing, and may also help those in your whānau to think about the good stuff that's happened to them that day.
- 3 Do something that someone else will be grateful for - if you're not feeling very grateful about anything, make someone else's day! You could buy your friend a coffee, compliment your partner's outfit or tell your children something that you love them. Your ability to make those in your life feel grateful is something to be grateful for.

Most of us know it's important to express thanks to the people who help us, or silently acknowledge the things we are grateful for in life. Research has linked gratitude with a wide range of benefits, including strengthening your immune system and improving sleep patterns, feeling optimistic and experiencing more joy and pleasure, being more helpful and generous, and feeling less lonely and isolated.

Olly Sundstrum

G.J. Gardner Homes - General Manager

For me it's about appreciating and reminding myself on a regular basis what I have and to be grateful, my wife and two children, wider family and friends, the team, and people I work with. Recognising what you have is far better than concentrating on what you don't. Exercising helps clear my head, going for a run or getting into the outdoors, eating well (most of the time!), quality sleep, and taking time out for myself, all help.



REACHING OUT AND TALKING TO SOMEONE



Sometimes things can seem overwhelming, and it can feel like you can't cope. You may simply just be having a bad day, or you may need to reach out for help with something that you've been carrying for a while. There is strength in vulnerability and it often helps to share what you're going through with someone you trust.

When you're struggling, it's not good to spend too much time alone, especially if you are feeling low and vulnerable. If you've got something on your mind, or you're not traveling well, consider following these steps:

Step 1 is to decide who to talk to. Figure out who the best person to give you advice is - it could be a parent or guardian, teacher, mentor, friend, or a professional, like a counsellor or therapist. You could also reach out to MATES, we're available 24/7 - 0800 111 315

Step 2 is to work out what to say. Think about what's been bothering you, . Sometimes it helps to write it down so it's clear in your mind when you have the conversation.

Step 3 is to time it right. Try to find a time when you can have the undivided attention - AKA don't do it while they're trying to cook dinner. It doesn't have to be face-to-face; it can be a phone call, message conversation, or video chat - whatever method makes you feel comfortable.

Step 4 is to have the conversation. Focus on using 'I' statements and be specific. Let the person know if you want advice, support, or if you just want someone to listen.

Step 5 is to not give up. If you're not getting the support you need, keep going until you find someone that can provide you with that support.



Francis Williams GAJV - Health and Safety Advisor

Kia ora, I'm Francis, I've been and HSE advisor for the past five years, but I've been in the industry for over ten. I'm guilty of being the kind of person who holds it all in sometimes and think I can sort it all out myself. But sometimes it get's to the point where you can't and I think it's really important to be able to reach out and talk to someone – for me that's usually a colleague or my wife. We are so fortunate to have a Connector and an ASIST trained worker on site, so I think it's good to know that there's always that available too. My best tip for wellbeing is just that there's help out there, there wasn't help before but now there is. In this day and age, the resources are all there, you've just got to reach out.

Do you or someone you know need help now? Reach out to MATES, we're available 24/7 - 0800 111 315

Additional Helplines

Alcohol & Drug Helpline	0800 787 797
Wellplace NZ	04 917 0060
HELP (Auckland)	09 623 1700
CADS (Alcohol & Drug Service)	09 845 1818
Women's Refuge Crisis Line	0800 733 843
Problem with Gambling Help Line Free Text	0800 654 655 8006
Healthline	0800 611 116
Family & Community Services	0800 211 211
Outline (LGBTIQ+ Support)	0800 688 5463
Auckland City Mission (Homelessness)	09 303 9200
Asian Family Services	0800 862 342
Suicide Helpline Tautako	0508 82 8865
Citizens Advice	0800 367 222



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