



Support after a Suicide

Supporting Your Child's or Teen's Mental Health and Resilience

For Parents and Caregivers

Having good mental health is essential for our wellbeing and our enjoyment of life, whatever our age and stage. It involves the emotional, psychological, and social parts of us and affects how we think, feel, and act. It influences how we get on with others and make our choices. Resilience plays a role in it too as it's having the ability to cope with tough times. Supporting your child or teen to keep mentally healthy and develop resilience will equip them with knowledge and skills to handle the unexpected and deal with whatever life brings. For example, when they learn about managing difficult emotions and stressful thoughts, they'll be learning skills for life. Resilient young people grow into resilient adults. Use these key principles to guide you:

Help them to...

Get the basics right so they can keep physically healthy, eat a healthy diet, drink enough water, have good hygiene habits, get exercise, get enough sleep, and see a doctor if they're not well.

Feel safe and cared for. Care well for their everyday needs. Support their routines. Let them know about any coming changes. What helps them feel safe and secure? Who do they trust? Find out.

Feel loved and valued. Tell them they are loved. Tell them they matter and are important to you. Demonstrate this by regularly giving them your attention and time and showing them affection.

Feel they belong and are connected to others.

Help them feel included in things. Help them build up good relationships - with you, their family, whānau, friends, team-mates, workmates, neighbours, cultural and/or faith community, and caring adults such as their teacher, nurse, GP, school counsellor or youth worker. Chat about who's in their support circle. Encourage them be involved in local community activities.

Grow a sense of self-worth and self-respect.

Let them know they're accepted, loved, valued and respected for who they are. Praise their good qualities and the things they're good at. Provide opportunities for them to use these and succeed. Remind them no one's perfect, we all have challenges and make mistakes sometimes. Look to consistently encourage and build them up.

Have a positive outlook and hope for the future.

Encourage them to be optimistic and expect to get through difficult challenges okay and enjoy better times. Role model this yourself. Build a positive environment at home. Help them have things to look forward to. Talk about their future positively.

Make time to play, relax and enjoy what they're interested in. This helps release tension, lift their spirit, laugh and feel good.

Get outside into nature. This is great for mental health. It can calm stress and lift low moods.

Adjust to change and be flexible. Teach them change can happen. Encourage them to adapt and try new ways of doing things. Praise them for efforts made. Help them look for the positives in change.

Persevere. Teach them setbacks can happen but keeping on trying will help them reach their goal, bit by bit. Praise them when they persevere. Chat about encouraging examples of others who have.

See things differently. Encourage them to think creatively and look at things from different directions. This will help them to find useful solutions to future tricky problems.

Have a good sense of humour. Encourage them to laugh at things in stressful times because laughter helps us feel better. It helps us have good times with others too. Help them learn when humour's not appropriate, such as using it to hurt others or in formal times.

Know it's good to ask for help and how to do that. Don't assume they know. Teach them. Role model using help and support yourself. Chat about why asking others for help can make tough times better. Encourage them to help others when needed and be the one who can make a difference.

Learn other skills that will help them cope with life's demands. Such as, how to...

- make and keep friends
- manage strong emotions and difficult thoughts
- resolve conflicts, apologise and set things right when needed
- talk with others and listen well
- help others
- understand and accept difference
- solve a problem and make good choices
- set and reach goals
- look after money well
- keep safe from harm
- manage alcohol/drug and other risk situations.

**Waiho i te toipoto,
kaau i te toiroa.**

Let us keep close together,
not wide apart.

**They may forget what you
said, but they will never forget
how you made them feel.**

Maya Angelou

Care well for their everyday needs.

Give them kindness, affection and patience. They're still just learning.

Check in with them regularly. How are they doing? As they grow, they'll be changing and facing lots of new challenges.

Get to know them - their interests, favourite things, friends, opinions, dreams, plans, challenges, worries, and what they enjoy.

When they talk, listen well. Show them you're listening. Listen more than you talk.

Be there for them. Encourage them. Reassure them. Be reliable.

Spend time with them. Have fun together. Laugh, relax and enjoy some good times.

Role model good mental health and resiliency skills yourself. They are watching you and learning from you.

Got concerns? Deal with issues honestly when they come up. Don't let them build up. Reach out for extra help and support for your child or teen when it's needed.

**If you're struggling yourself,
or even overwhelmed at times, reach
out for some personal support.
Phone or text 1737 (available 24/7).**