

the southerly

brought to you by CONNECTED EASTERN SOUTHLAND

Exercise

Challenging times. The world has been changing fast lately. We have been in our bubbles for over three weeks now and many of us are starting to show signs of bubble fever. While for some of us, life has never been busier, for others it seems like every day is a repeat of the last one. For a lot of us, we're feeling stressed, maybe anxious or worried about what is happening around us, or feeling down and depressed. All of that is understandable; a lot is out of our personal control right now. Fortunately there *is* something we can do.



Keep that bubble moving. We all know how important it is to stay in our bubbles while we're in lockdown, but that doesn't mean your bubble has to be frozen in place. In fact, there are great reasons to keep your bubble moving. Most of us have heard the message that exercise is important for physical health. It's much less understood though just how powerful the effects of movement are on our stress and mental wellbeing. In fact, research shows that even going for a gentle walk for half an hour, three times a week, can have as much effect on your mood as an antidepressant.

A lot of us have changed our daily activity patterns, and it's easy to underestimate how much that has made a difference. But there's never been a more important time to be active than during lockdown... in a stressful time, we need this movement the most.



Ugh. You know that getting moving can make you feel better, but what can you do when the motivation just isn't taking you? Often the hardest part is getting started. Don't wait until you feel like it. Instead, sneak up on yourself. If you need to get changed, put on the clothes you'll need. Next, head out the door 'for just a few minutes'. Instead of thinking 'exercise', think of it like escaping. ☺ More often than not once you're out in the fresh air, it becomes easier to decide to walk to the end of the block, or add a few more minutes... You will likely feel the positive effect surprisingly quickly, particularly when you're stressed, worried or down.



Some options

Go 'round the block—Get out of the house and walk. Try for 30 minutes but its fine to telling yourself at the start you'll only do 5. Either way, keep it enjoyable.



Take it out on the weeds—if you’ve got a backyard, there’s a whole gym out there. When there’s a break in the weather, whether it’s mowing the lawn, pruning trees or a hedge, or taking out some weeds, its good exercise.

Balance

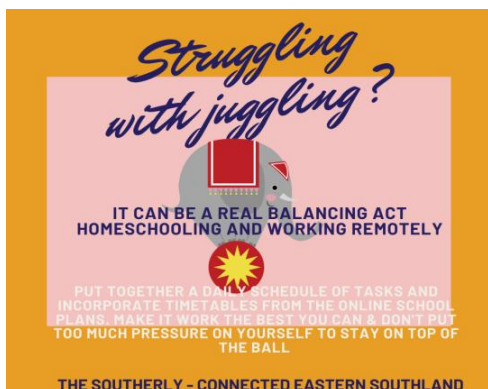
We're not in Kansas anymore...

Times are a-changing, and we have all had to step outside of the normal and into a strange and unfamiliar place. For many of us, it is an uncomfortable place where we are struggling to balance competing demands. These might include spending an unprecedented amount of time with our partner, children, or flatmates, struggling with strong emotions, and finding ourselves overworked and wired to technology. A place called lock-down.

Your happy place: Finding a balance

When it comes to balance, there is no easy place to start. Every aspect of our ‘new normal’ is important to our wellbeing and deserves our attention. So, in no particular order, here are a few issues you may be experiencing right now, and some strategies to help find your happy place.

Juggling kids and work?



Planning is your new best friend. Try putting together a daily schedule of tasks and activities so that every member of the family knows what they should and shouldn’t be doing throughout the day. Find a template online, or draw one up on a piece of paper, a whiteboard, or whatever you have handy. Mix in the timetables from the online school plans. Then work to this as best you can—while recognising these are challenging times, and we all need to give ourselves more than a bit of slack. This will help keep you as productive as you can be (and sane), while giving your children the consistency they

need.

Frustrated or angry?

Of course you are, and that’s ok. We all have a lot to deal with right now: being cooped up with family or housemates, supermarket madness, cancelled plans, and confusion over when this will all end to name a few. But anger left bottled up can become unhelpful and cause us to lash out at others. This is the moment to take a deep breath and pay attention to what’s going on inside you. Work with what you *can* control. ***That’s you! (And your response.)***



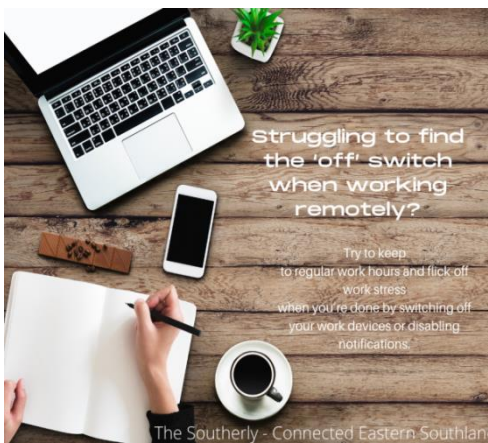
Take time out: Amidst the stress, you may notice your dog staring longingly at you for a walk. Seize the chance and leave the house for a walk. You can also claim some 'me' time by escaping to a spare room in the house. This will give you time to relax, find your centre and maybe even some possible solutions.



Talk it out: Share your feelings with your partner, a trusted friend or co-worker. They may be able to help you identify some other feelings behind the anger and helpful 'next steps'.



Take control (of what you can): If you are worried about finances, get some financial advice or do a budget. Feeling lethargic? Schedule some exercise into your day. Disconnected? Set up a video call with friends or family. Lacking purpose? Take up a new hobby or start an online course. Do what you can control and forget the rest.



Can't switch off from work?

When work and home worlds collide, we may find ourselves working longer than usual or checking emails over dinner. While this can be tempting, our minds need to rest (and de-stress) as much as our bodies. Remember to keep to regular work hours and switch off from work at the end of the day by turning off your computer or disabling notifications. Supercharge your down-time by doing something fun in your bubble, learning a new skill or practising a hobby.

Links for more

- [Moneytalks](#) – free-to-call financial advice helpline.
- [Just a thought](#) - advice and strategies for coping with Covid-19.
- [1737](#) - Free call or text **1737** at any time to talk to this confidential helpline service.



Solitude

Humming a lonesome song?

For many of us who live alone or in a small bubble, being able to go out and socialise is usually an important part of wellbeing. Being asked to stay at home to prevent the virus spread can bring feelings of isolation into sharp focus. Separation from friends and family can mean loneliness quickly becomes a repetitive soundtrack in our lives. This may be compounded with worry about getting the virus and uncertainty around how long this will go on. We are all too aware of the links between loneliness and troublesome mental states like depression or anxiety. That's why it's more important than ever to look after our mental health during times of physical distancing.

Change your tune.

What can help in these times of self-isolation is realizing that there is a lot we *do* choose, including the things we think and tell ourselves. A big part of this is understanding that we are not alone and there are many ways we can stay connected and purposeful. With this in mind, we can draw on various helpful strategies—while exercising self-compassion and accepting any difficult feelings as they arise. There are three main ways we can avoid feelings of loneliness and even come to enjoy our temporary solitude:

Connect daily

The comfort of social connection is the single-best remedy for combatting feelings of loneliness and isolation—and the more you connect, the better you will feel.



Make someone's day. Having a natter with people whose company you enjoy will brighten their day and yours. Don't tell yourself that other people will be too busy for your call, even if they have people in their bubble. Connect meaningfully: express your own feelings and needs and offer others your support and advice in return.

Leverage technology. With a little help from technology, we can chat, message, and post our way out of loneliness. If you haven't already, try video chatting on Facebook, Skype or Zoom.

Find communities online. Participate in Facebook groups (such as the Connected Eastern Southland page 😊). Look for groups around you (clubs, community groups, sports groups, churches) that are currently holding meetings online



Cultivate purpose

During uncertain times, having a purpose can give us a renewed sense of hope and motivation.

- **Do something meaningful.** Feeling productive is a great antidote to loneliness. Re-direct your focus into a productive outlet such as a home project or online course—or do something creative. Whatever you choose to invest this time in, make sure that it brings you joy or fulfilment.



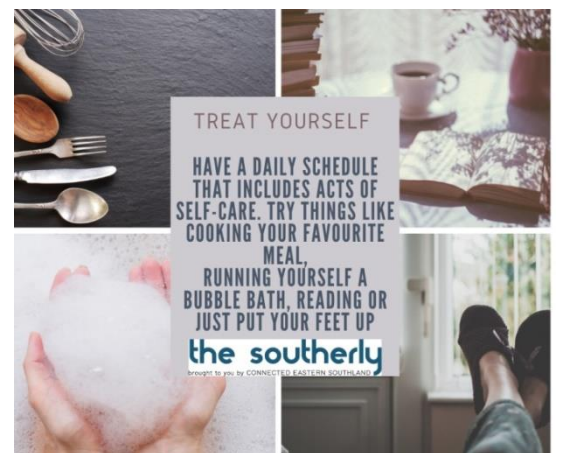
- **Do something for someone.** If you can't currently see that friend or family member, you could schedule a part of your day preparing something for them. Keep them in your mind while you spend your morning making a gift for them, thinking back to good times you've had together, and looking forward



Schedule self-care

When we are apart from others, it becomes even more important to look after ourselves.

- **Treat yourself.** Have a daily schedule that includes acts of self-care. Try things like cooking your favourite meal, running yourself a bubble bath, reading or listening to something uplifting or getting up early to watch the sunrise. You could also write down your feelings in a journal then list all the things you are grateful for. Become your own best friend and treat yourself.



Links for more

- [Grateful](#) – gratitude [journal](#) App for counting your blessings.
- If it's all getting a bit much: <https://depression.org.nz>

Great expectations...

As our country continues to wrangle new cases down into the single digits, there is a sense of relief in the air and a hope for better days coming soon. But as we all continue to do our part, a few of us are starting to notice a growing sense of unease. It's that creeping feeling that we are not doing enough during this time. It's the woeful realization that our neighbours have just finished landscaping their garden, while so far our idea of success has been making sure everyone in the house has clean underwear. All the while we are compiling a mental list of things we *should* be doing, but just... aren't.

New strategy: eliminating “shoulds”

As we work together to eliminate the virus, let's also free ourselves of any unreasonable expectations. Much of our mental energy is being used up processing what's going on around us, and that's totally normal. Everyone is in a different state of mind and dealing with different issues. Whether working from home, supervising and supporting children or teenagers at home, applying for jobs from home, or setting self-improvement goals, we need to be kind to ourselves. Here are a few things we can do to replace unreasonable “shoulds” with reasonable expectations:

Links for more

- www.justathought.co.nz/covid19 – Free online course guide to support wellbeing during Covid-19.
- www.mentemia.com - Mental health app includes worry mapping and other tools for wellbeing.



Stop comparing bubbles

As we are now spending more time on social media, it's tempting to play the comparison game—checking in on what others are doing or achieving during this time. While social media is a great tool for staying connected, it's important to use it mindfully. Don't compare your “rock bottom” moments during lockdown with someone else's highlights reel. Use social media for meaningful connection and avoid anything that triggers bubble envy.



Accept where you are

Rather than resisting the situation on account of its limitations, make peace with it. Understand that this is not the end of the movie. Where you are right now doesn't define your future. Life will soon return to its normal pace, so make the most of what's in front of you today.

LIFE WILL SOON RETURN TO ITS NORMAL PACE, SO MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT'S IN FRONT OF YOU TODAY

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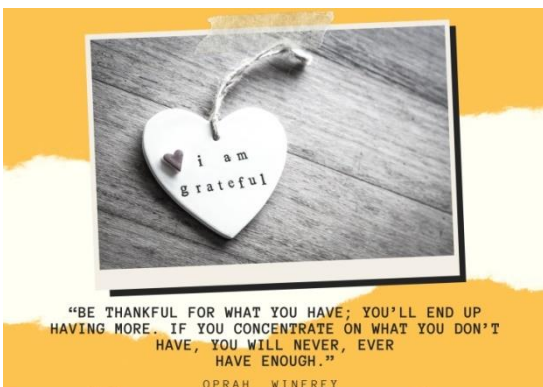
Tailor your expectations

Other people's expectations are not your expectations, and nobody is perfect. Choose your own expectations—things that improve your 'new normal' in ways that matter to you. Whatever you choose, go at a pace you can manage and celebrate any and all progress along the way.



Tell yourself a kind story

Listen to the story your inner voice is telling you. Catch any self-critical thoughts and turn them into reminders of the challenges you have already overcome, your strengths and how much you have to offer.



Be grateful for what you've got

Free yourself of pressure to *do more* by reminding yourself of the things in your life you are deeply grateful for. Once you start, you'll find there is so much. Oprah said "Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

Mindful Reconnecting

Go gentle through your 'new normal'

As we enter Level 2, a big positive for many of us is going to be reconnecting with the people we have missed and giving our friends and family members a long-awaited hug. As we dust off our 'outside shoes' and step tentatively back into our social lives, bear in mind that everybody's lockdown experience has been different. Outside of our familiar work and whanau bubbles, we are likely to notice striking differences when sharing bubble stories. While some of us have felt relatively safe and blessed over this time, others have faced difficult and frightening situations. Some of us have been financially stressed, lost our jobs (or in danger of losing them) or struggled to put food on the table. Others have experienced the intense pain of loneliness and disconnection. And some of us may have become so comfortable in our bubbles that we are reluctant to leave.

Overcoming FOGO (Fear of Going Out)

In the time before COVID-19, a common anxiety was FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)—the persistent worry that other people might be having more rewarding experiences than we are. After weeks of warnings about the risks of leaving the house—asking ourselves if it's safe to sit on a park bench or questioning whether we really *need* to go to the supermarket—some of us have developed a new anxiety: FOGO (Fear of Going Out). But the message from the government is clear: go out and reconnect with each other (in groups of ten or fewer), have a haircut, eat at a restaurant... but do so *mindfully*. As we move into this newest normal, here are some things we can do to reconnect mindfully.



Own your lockdown journey

This shared struggle has helped us to become more open and authentic, bravely sharing some of our deepest fears and insecurities with those we trust

Remember that being vulnerable is not a weakness, but a measure of courage. It's ok if you've had more bad days than good in lockdown

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Own your lockdown journey

This shared struggle has caused us all to face our humanness. Hopefully we have accepted it and learned to be vulnerable, bravely sharing some of our deepest fears and insecurities with those we trust. Remember that being authentic and vulnerable is a strength, not a weakness. It's ok if you've had more bad days than good in lockdown. Start by calmly acknowledging within yourself how the experience has been for you. Once you have fully accepted your feelings, you might decide to share your experience with close friends or a trusted colleague. Prepare to be surprised by their response, as you discover it's not just you.



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LEVEL TWO

GO AT YOUR OWN PACE

allow yourself time to readjust

Go at your own pace

After being inside for so long, the outside world may seem unnatural and overwhelming. If lockdown has felt like a safe haven, going back to face-to-face meetings and social events might seem daunting. You might be frightened of infection and worried about interacting with others safely. As you start to leave home more, be gentle with yourself—and go slowly. Take a progressive approach, allowing yourself time to readjust to each new situation and sensation, while making progress. There's no 'right way' to reconnect, so do it *your way*.



Walk gently in the lives of others

Now is a great time to be reconnecting with people, gently. Find out how they are doing by asking open-ended questions, without assumptions. If you're in a position to, see what you can do to support them in the ways they appreciate. The way we are going to come through this best is by pulling together as a community.



Choose your people wisely

Lockdown has created space for us to consider who we want to be in contact with, and how we want to connect with them. As you start to see more friends and acquaintances, take a moment to reflect on their role in your life. Ask yourself: Does this person support my goals? Challenge me? Inspire me? (And be honest!) Surround yourself with people who lift you up, and kindly move away from those who don't.

Links for more:

- Free call or text [1737](tel:1737) at any time to talk to this confidential helpline service.
- www.calm.com – free app for dealing with stress and anxiety
- If it's all getting a bit much: depression.org.nz

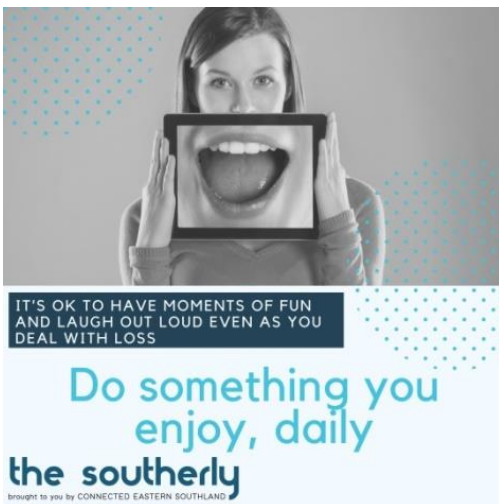
Facing Changes and Challenges

Hello challenge, my old friend...

The government's decision to "go hard and go early" has landed New Zealand in the enviable position of having minimal new cases. But fighting COVID-19 comes at a price. Over lockdown, many of us have lost our jobs, or been forced to take pay cuts. Many businesses have been in free fall for several weeks and are struggling to recover. Others have cancelled weddings, lost hard-earned money on cancelled trips that may never be refunded. Still others have lost opportunities, of planned travel, an OE, or a relocation that no longer seems possible. Some have lost their sense of security or certainty about the world and their future. Finally, some have said goodbye to loved ones, at a time we could not hold funerals/ tangihanga as we usually would. For those of us affected in any of these ways, the move to Level 2 may have reinforced strong feelings of frustration and sadness as we move from our immediate focus and start to consider the reality of life-after-lockdown.

Moving through loss

If you have experienced loss during this time, economic or personal, you are probably all-too familiar with its closest companion: grief. Grief of course is associated with the loss of loved ones. But it can also be experienced after losses of other kinds as well. Dealing with loss and grieving take time, but there are things you can do.



Your prescription: do something you enjoy, daily, while symptoms persist

Amidst all of the difficulties, you can always reclaim your inner vitality by changing the topic, telling a joke, or doing something silly. It's ok to have moments of fun and laugh out loud even as you deal with loss. Watch a funny video, dress up for a dinner date, or a fabulous dinner for one, or dance around your living room—whatever brings a smile to your face. These moments of lightness will start to help free you from the weight of grief and remind you that better days are around the corner.



The healthy way out is *through*

While it can be tempting to cope with job loss by avoidance, or drowning your sorrows, a practical approach is your best bet for picking up the pieces and feeling more optimistic. Start by getting your finances in order to the extent you can. Create a budget—there are services to help you with this. Apply for the unemployment benefit if needed. Invest time into preparing a resume/fine tuning it. Develop new skills. It's worth remembering that people have been through tough times before—and even in the Great Depression *did* make it through. Kia kaha! Our team

of 5 million is going to keep working on this together.



Keep the positives in sight

Adopt a positive and proactive mindset and make a mental list of the positives you still have in sight, despite the situation. Even better, grab a pen and write them down. Ask yourself: “What can I learn from this? Is there a new direction I could take? How about a career change? What new skills can I develop to come back from this stronger?” Since you can’t change reality, try changing the lens through which you see reality—zooming in on all possible avenues for positive change and growth.

Practise self-kindness

If a job or personal loss has left you feeling shell-shocked, allow yourself all the time you need to feel whatever you feel. As soon as you are able, reach for some healthy coping skills. These could include talking things through with people who support you, getting out for a daily dose of exercise and fresh air, practising yoga or meditation, doing an activity you enjoy or something that brings you purpose. Caring for yourself through acts of self-kindness is an important step towards healing.

Links for more

- [Moneytalks](#) – Free-to-call financial advice helpline.
- [1737](#) - Free call or text **1737** at any time to talk to this confidential helpline service.
- If it’s all getting a bit much: <https://depression.org.nz>

Reflecting Gratitude and Purpose

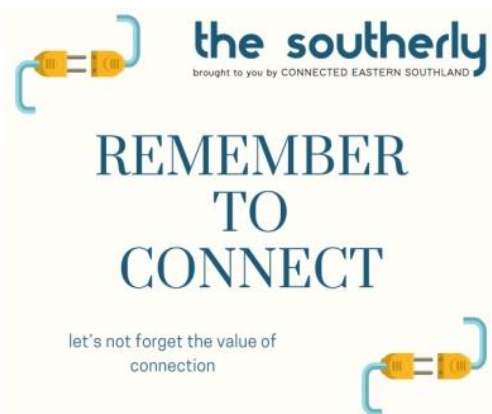
Lessons from lockdown

Lockdown is not something we will soon forget. Whether or not we have been directly affected by the virus, it has affected our lives in ways great and small—whether it's been changing our daily habits, figuring out new ways of working or learning to manage and communicate our fears and uncertainties. We have all had to change and—dare we say it—grow. It's safe to say not one of us had scheduled “weeks of isolation and self-reflection” into our diaries for 2020, but that is 2020's spectacular gift to us. The pandemic continues to be many things (confusing, overwhelming and trying spring to mind!) but it is also a unique opportunity for change. While life as we know it stands still, we get to make a choice for the future. We can reflect on what we missed (and didn't miss) during lockdown, what we learned during this time and what we want to incorporate into our new normal.

A changing world

It shouldn't take a pandemic for the world to realize what is important, but it's ok that it has. Kiwi-born poet Tomos Robertson (aka Tom Foolery) said it best in his now viral [bedtime story video about how the world changed after COVID-19](#): *We'll now call it the great realization... and yes, since then there have been many. But that's the story of how it started, and why hindsight's 2020.* (If you've not seen it, we highly recommend you watch that beautiful piece of work.) With that in mind, here's some ways we can take advantage of some opportunities from the pandemic to make our corner of the world a little better.

Remember to connect

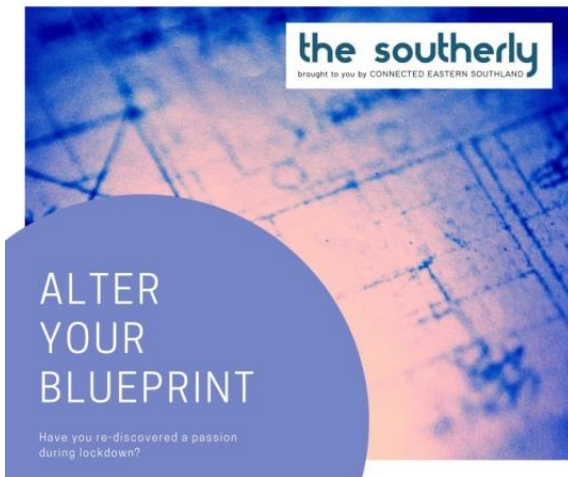


This one is simple, but we often forget. *He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.* (What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.) The COVID-19 lockdown has brought us back to our bubbles, to those closest to us. Many of us have gotten to know the people in our bubbles—including our extended virtual bubbles—better than we have in years. So, let's not forget the value of connection and continue to put people at the centre where they belong.



Rethink your ways

Free from the buzz of normal life, we have each had time to reflect and rethink our ways of living. Some important questions to ask yourself right now are: How has my life changed during lockdown? My thoughts, my relationships, my work? What have I missed? What have I gained? These are your own ‘great realizations’. Take note, and make sure to carry any worthwhile lessons into your ‘new normal’.



Alter your blueprint

With your lockdown lessons in mind, now is a good time to look ahead. Have you re-discovered a passion during lockdown? A new career path? An important relationship? The wonders of nature? Great! Now be courageous by stepping outside of your comfort zone and including them into your future's blueprint.



Let go of things

The past couple of months has taught us all a lesson in stoicism. That is, the art of accepting what you can't change and focusing entirely on what you can. As life picks up pace, practise letting go of the things you can't control anyway. By removing the pressure of attempting to change the unchangeable, you can reduce unnecessary stress and worry from your *new* life.



But first, kindness

If there is one thing we have learned during COVID-19, it is the importance of kindness. There have been so many heart-warming examples of this in our community and all around the world. When it comes to kindness, start small. Whether it's sending a friend a motivational message, reaching out to someone living alone or complimenting a co-worker, the littlest act of kindness can make a big difference in someone's life.

Links for more

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw5KQMXDiM4> – A bedtime story about 2020's great realization

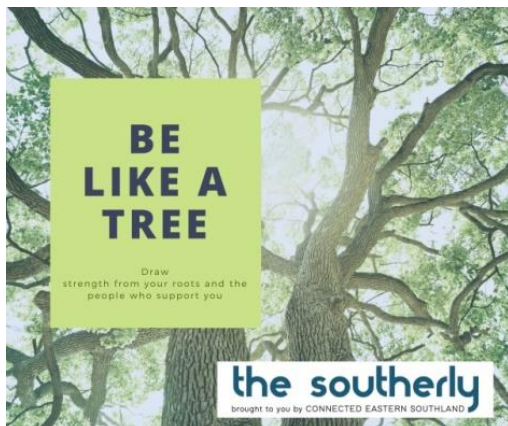
Building Resiliency

2020: One for the books

There are no two ways about it, this year will go down in the history of extraordinary events—and *when it rains, it pours*. The February flood was the worst Southland has seen in decades, and it was only a few weeks later that COVID-19 made its way across New Zealand. Many of us are still dealing with the aftermath of one or both disasters, bravely navigating ongoing challenges around our jobs, our finances, our relationships, and our mental health. Although the virus is not yet eliminated, many of us are feeling emotionally drained and more than ready to call ‘time’ on this remarkable and humbling era.

Getting through this together

As we continue to make the best of our not-so-new normal, it is a good idea to put things into context. Our history is full of moments just like the one we’re in now. From World War One to the 1918 influenza pandemic to the 1984 Southland floods, New Zealanders have overcome months and years of adversity and come out the other side with lessons learned and stories to tell. In a recent interview, Psychologist and expert in resilience Angela Duckworth highlighted the importance of turning our shared adversity into an opportunity to develop and demonstrate character, saying “If you didn’t learn something through this crisis, then you weren’t paying attention.” And so it goes: the best lessons in life are often learned at the worst of times. Here are some things we can do to build resilience and come out of this experience stronger, together.



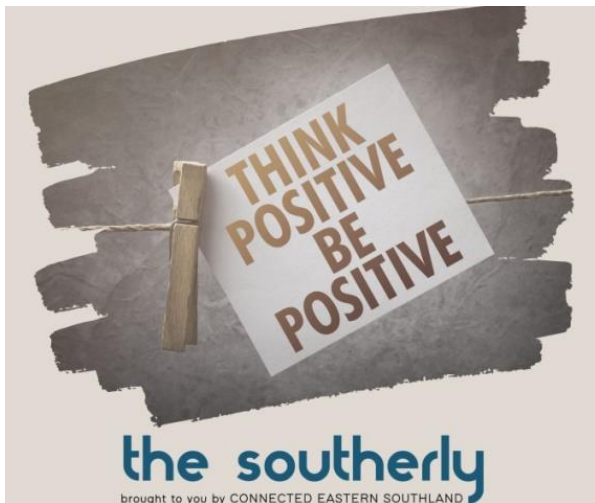
Be like a tree

When it comes to weathering life’s storms there are few living things more resilient than trees. This is because trees do not resist change, but move with it—all the while seeking out opportunities for positive growth. In psychology this is about accepting what you can’t change and doing what you can with what’s available to you. Your advice from a tree: Take care of yourself first with plenty of good food, water, sleep and exercise. Draw strength from your roots and the people who support you. Allow challenge to shape you and make you stronger by adapting in creative ways. Be patient and know that good things can take time. And always be grateful for the present moment and what you have today.



There is always a way

If you find yourself in a situation where you can’t do your normal work or activities, have a think about what your real goal is (hint: it’s probably quite abstract), and see how you can still achieve it. Even if many doors are currently closed to you, there is almost always a way through if you’re prepared to think creatively. If your goal is to help others, consider donating some of your time to a local volunteering organization. There’s some exciting work going on in the community to make volunteering easier to get involved with... watch this space!



Seek out the positives

When circumstances seem to be conspiring against us, it's easy to focus on the negatives—psychologists call this our negativity bias. But the more we focus on something, the more space it takes up in our lives. Cultivate optimism by steering your thoughts towards the positives waiting to be found. Think back to times in your life when good things came out of a seemingly bad situation. Did you anticipate any of them? Look for unique opportunities for positive change and growth at this time—they are often found in the most unexpected places.



Invest in the lives of others

Building a strong connected community is like investing a portion of our happiness in the lives of others, and reaping the rewards as we get to watch them grow and flourish. By helping others, we also create our own supportive network for when times get tough. The Community Connections Centre and Hokonui Huanui are just two of the amazing organizations giving back to our community by providing social services and support. See how you can get involved by contacting us on our [website](#) or through our Facebook page.

Links for more

- <https://www.cnt.org.nz/Home/> - Community Networking Trust website
- <https://www.facebook.com/ConnectedEasternSouthland/> - Connected Eastern Southland Facebook page

Please feel free to share this content with your channels, colleagues and friends. For more information or extra copies please contact the Community Connections Centre 1 Charlton Lane Gore 032088480 or cccgore@cnt.org.nz or check out our website and Facebook page as above.

