

Kia Ora

As we all get ready for our 'new normal' I thought I would share some fantastic advice regarding looking after our well being. The most important thing you can do is just let the dust settle for all of us over at least the next week or so, we are all anxious and busy so don't rush into thinking that you have to teach your children or expect individualised learning programmes from teachers. Remember the two-week school holidays now start on the 30th of April which gives us all time to gather our thoughts and hopefully enjoy the company of our families. Whatever happens, we will make sure your child has the tools to succeed in school when the time comes, in the meantime be a family.

- Eat at least one meal together
- Practice thankfulness
- Set a couple of goals each day as it makes you feel a sense of achievement.
- Don't sweat the small stuff
- Get good sleep, keep meals regular have some sort of normal routine without it being too strict or stressful
- Allow screen time especially if it gives children a chance to interact with their peers and other family members but make sure they have regular breaks.
- Practice Mindfulness

You may have seen many of these quotes and articles online already but just in case I will share a few..

If I can start with one thing, it's this:

At the end of this, your kids' mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those weeks is long gone. So keep that in mind every single day...

Below are some excellent strategies shared by Karen Nimmo who is a Wellington-based clinical psychologist and author

1. Show empathy

Everyone's different: even partners can differ hugely in the way they deal with uncertainty. So if you're made of tough stock, be gentle. Telling others to "get on with it" is not helpful. Try to be empathetic and reassuring to those who need it.

2. Talk about worries — but set limits

Let each person talk about their worries — but keep boundaries around it (e.g. 20 minutes at a time). Beware of letting pandemic conversations drip feed through your days because it will fuel angst and promote the idea that life, the world — everything — is out of control.

3. Teens, kids and older people

Tell kids the truth in an age-appropriate way but don't bombard them with information. Answer their questions, but, when you're done, distract them into another activity. A great question for teens is: *what do you know?* You can then use their answer to explore any

worries, correct any misinformation. Check in with older people to see if they need any practical help and/or just to see how they are. They need to know they (still) matter.

Karen Nimmo advises families to talk about their fears - but keep limits so it doesn't drip feed into every conversation.

4. Know anxiety is highly contagious

Your kids will pick up on your angst through your body language and behaviour as well as your words, so model the tone you want to set in your home. Turn the TV off, play music, watch a movie, cook food, slow down your movements, act calmly and try to lighten up — funny things will still happen. You're allowed to laugh at them.

5. Anchor yourself with normal "stuff"

Keep domestic structures in place: do what you would normally do at home. While coronavirus may have curtailed some — if not many — of our usual social and other activities, we can still maintain steady home routines. Routines anchor us, and help us feel safe — so they're even more important in uncertain times.

6. Get outside

Research shows a "walk in the wild" or even through the park, boosts mental health. It also helps to normalise life and help you feel connected to the bigger world than the one coronavirus would have us live in. Keep in mind the expected social distancing rules when outside.

7. Aim to live alongside it

Coronavirus or not, life will keep chugging forward. Other things (some of them difficult) will keep happening, even as we navigate a pandemic. So the goal is not to wish for the coronavirus to be over, even though that's what we want. It's to learn to live as well as we can alongside it, for however long it takes.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/120488108/how-to-take-care-of-your-kids-during-covid19?>

Noho ora mai- stay well

Clint Brandon