

TE HAUORA Ā-ROTO

CARING FOR YOUR HAUORA Ā-ROTO – EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING AFTER CANCER



Caring for your Hauora Ā-Roto - Emotional Health and Wellbeing

'Going through an experience like this isn't easy. You need to have a massive support system around you to be able to get through it. However, the memories will always be there, and while it may feel like it haunts you, understanding helps make it a little better.'

Young person

Surviving cancer can bring up a range of emotions, and finishing treatment might be the first opportunity you have had to explore them.

There is no right or wrong way to process what you have been through, but having some self-care tools, talking things through with people who care, and having a good relationship with your healthcare team can make a big difference to how you feel.

How do I explain to others how I am feeling?

'Talking about your experience with loved ones and letting them know how you feel is a great way of dealing with your feelings.'

Young person

Some people in your whānau and community might expect you to be happy, grateful or relieved when you finish treatment, not realising you might have other emotions going on too. If you are not telling people how you feel, sometimes things can build up and leave you feeling isolated or overwhelmed. Kia pono - Be honest. Talk with your whānau or friends, a counsellor or youth-worker. If you are stuck on what to say when people ask you how you are, just be honest, or try some of the phrases below:

- Actually - I'm still just coming to terms with things - it might take me a while to work out what it all means.

- Yep, I'm pleased to finish treatment, but I'm still pretty nervous about the future and what it might hold for me.
- I feel like I'm only just catching up with myself.
- I have a lot to think about now; life is different to how it was before.
- I'm still just processing it all.
- I have to be monitored for some time, which makes me feel nervous.
- I'm excited to finish treatment but I still struggle with my energy levels.



Young people have told us that feeling heard and accepted helps. Hang out with the people who you can be real with and access more support if you need to.

**Kia pono -
Be honest.**
Talk with your
whānau or friends,
a counsellor or
youth-worker.

Stress and emotions

‘Sometimes I get quite stressed when I have health-related issues. I worry that my cancer is reoccurring and it’s constantly on my mind.’

Young person

I definitely feel more emotional when stressed. Any tips?

Pay attention to your stress levels. Are you rushing back into life and trying to do everything you did before cancer? Try a gradual approach so you are not loading yourself up with too many commitments straight away. Energy levels can have a big impact on emotions too, so if you wear yourself out physically by doing too much, it is likely you will feel the impact emotionally too.

Whakangā - Relax. Relaxation can help your central nervous system unwind. Try yoga or basic stretches, mindfulness, meditation or prayer. Listen to relaxing music or take a hot bath or shower. All of these activities have been proven to help relax the central nervous system and reduce tension in your body, which can also reduce anxiety. Focusing on breathing can also help reduce feelings of panic or stress. Try some of the following exercises, listed on the right, and see if you feel any different.

WEBSITES

Hikitia te hā

A simple breathing exercise you can do by yourself or with others. Hikitia te Hā breathing exercises take you on a journey using sacred phrases you can follow to direct and move with your breath. <https://www.allright.org.nz/tools/hikitia-te-ha>



See our useful Websites and Apps section on page 10 for more info.

RELAXATION EXERCISES

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, try some breathing exercises on your phone through apps or YouTube. Regulating your breathing can help overcome stress and reduce panic. Try these clips on YouTube. Just enter the headings into the search:

4-7-8 Calm Breathing Exercise

Relaxing Breath Technique. Following the guided instructions in this breathing exercise can help calm your breath and relax you. There are a few versions and most go for 5 minutes. See how you feel afterwards.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

This is a great activity to help you refocus your senses. It is the same as the Five Senses Activity on page 4.

Box Breathing

This type of breathing encourages you to breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, breathe out for 4 counts and hold for 4 counts. Draw a square box in the air with your finger. Each side of the box will be 4 counts. Learn about it by watching the clip.

Relax and Breathe

Do nothing for 10 minutes. This is a good visual one for if you’re feeling panicky or overwhelmed. Just watch and breath with the lotus flower on screen as it opens and closes.

Mānawa Maiea te Atawhai |

Mindfulness Tools for Rangatahi

A short episode series of mindfulness tools taught by young people through a Māori worldview. Includes mauri tau (mindfulness), yoga, taonga puoro (instrument sound healing) mindful hiko (walking) and connection to nature. Put Manawa Maiea te Atawhai into the search engine in YouTube.

FIVE SENSES ACTIVITY

To ground yourself quickly into the present moment, try this exercise to help you refocus. Pay attention to:

- 5 things you notice in the room
- 4 things you can feel (such as your shirt on your skin, the chair you are sitting on, the breeze from a fan, your feet on the floor, etc.)
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you like the smell of
- 1 thing you like the taste of OR 1 good feeling you have about yourself.

Ngā mahi ka taea me mahi, ngā mahi tē taea me tuku. Focus on what you can control and let go of what you can't.

A great way to reduce stress is to focus on what you **can** control. This can stop you from feeling powerless and help you focus your energy on improving your wellbeing. Check out the circle of control:

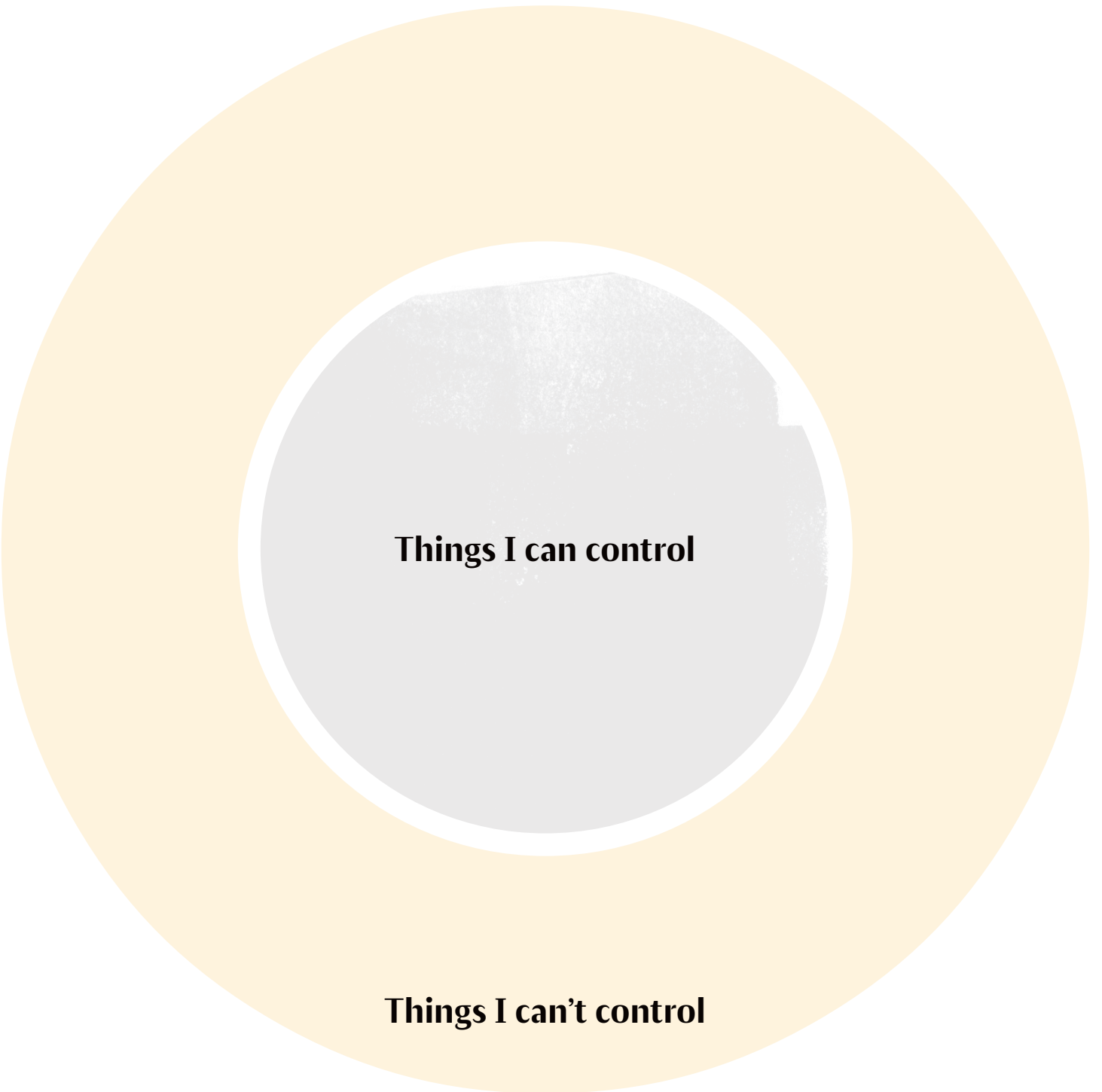
THE CIRCLE OF CONTROL



ACTIVITY

THE CIRCLE OF CONTROL

Fill in the model with the things that are relevant in your life. What **CAN** you control? What are the things that you can't control?



Tear or cut out to pop on the fridge



What can I do when worry takes over?

'There was a period of time where it was like I'd panic over anything that would possibly link to cancer.'

Young person

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY - WHEN TO SEEK HELP

You might find yourself overwhelmed by fear or anxiety even after your best efforts to cope with it.

The following feelings may indicate serious anxiety or depression (tick any that you feel relate to you).

- Worry or anxiety that gets in the way of your relationships and daily activities or prevents you from going to your follow-up care appointments
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Having trouble sleeping or eating well
- Not participating in activities you used to enjoy
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Feeling that you have nothing to look forward to
- Being unusually forgetful

A good place to start is to talk to your health care team or GP if you notice or experience any of the above. They can refer you to counselling services for help.

I'm having flashbacks and nightmares. What does this mean?

It is normal to have occasional feelings of anxiety such as worry, fear or dread. But if these feelings don't go away over time, continue to get worse, or affect your daily life, they could be a sign of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Other symptoms include:

- Nightmares and flashbacks
- Avoiding places, events, people, or things that bring back hard memories
- Strong feelings of guilt, hopelessness, or shame
- Continuous feelings of fear or anger
- Self-destructive behaviour such as drug or alcohol abuse
- Frightening or unwanted thoughts
- Difficulty feeling emotions
- Being on alert all the time or easily startled.

PTSD symptoms are different for everyone and can come and go. They normally develop within 3 months of a traumatic event, but they can also occur several months or even years later. PTSD does require a medical diagnosis, so make sure you speak to your healthcare team if you have symptoms, especially if they last more than a month.

Tip

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is nothing to feel whakama (ashamed) of. Accessing support can help you learn to cope so you carry on with your follow-up care with as little distress as possible.

*E kore koe e tū
mokemoke ahakoa
te whakaaro.*

*You are not alone,
even if you may
feel that way.*



Counselling and psychological support

'I think all cancer patients should have therapy or counselling when completing treatment. I didn't think I needed it, but I actually really did.'

Young person

What is counselling and what does it involve?

Counselling is a confidential, safe and non-judgmental space where you can talk with a trained professional about any challenges you may be experiencing from your cancer diagnosis. It can also help with:

- Adjusting to life after cancer treatment
- Fear, anxiety and depression
- Whānau or relationship issues
- Communication strategies for talking about your diagnosis
- Worry or fears about the future
- Returning to school, work or study
- Setting personal goals.

Counsellors begin by establishing an open and trusting relationship so you can share your thoughts and feelings and discuss any difficult emotions you may be grappling with. Through the counselling sessions, you and the counsellor will explore ideas and tools you can apply to help you cope. The counsellor will also help you with strategies to address

any fears or worries you might be having. Finding the right counsellor can take time. If you don't click with the first one you see, don't let this put you off. Ask around for a recommendation or utilise youth-friendly counselling services. It's important you feel comfortable with the person you are seeing.

Kia maumahara, he rawe kia kōrero. Remember, it's cool to talk about things.

How can I access counselling?

There is free support available across Aotearoa through psychologists employed with the cancer services or through non-governments organisations like CanTeen and the Cancer Society. Check out the resources box at the end of this section or ask your AYA Key Worker.

CanTeen provide free counselling via phone or online and is available to any young person with cancer or their sibling aged 13 to 24. Speak to a staff member from CanTeen for info on how to access this or go on their website www.canteen.org.nz

Cancer and taha wairua (spirituality)

'Throughout my experience of cancer, I had many different enlightening and transformational breakthrough experiences that changed the way I see, experience and care for my te whare tapa wha (wellbeing).'

Young person

After having cancer, many young people have gone on to feel a sense of purpose, deepening of faith or a strengthening in their whanaungatanga (relationships) with others. Wairua means different things to different people. For some, it encompasses faith or religious

beliefs and for others it could be belief in a higher power or feeling an internal connection to their ancestors, the universe, or the sacred. Connecting with your spirituality through practices such as prayer, meditation, or spending time in nature have been proven to help people feel more calm and grounded and can form an important part of your hauora (wellbeing).

How do I care for my spiritual and emotional wellbeing?

The key is to integrate wellbeing strategies into your daily life. Try some of the following and when you find ones that work, make them a regular thing.

TIPS FOR SELF CARE

Distraction. If you find yourself overthinking things, watch a movie, read a book, or get creative.

Connect with nature. Appreciate Papatūānuku (mother earth, the land) and spend time in beautiful surroundings such as the beach or bush. Pay attention to your surroundings and share them with others.

Use relaxation techniques. Try yoga or stretching, or try some mindfulness or meditation. See the recommended apps and websites on page 10 to help you get started.

Pay attention to your body. What are your energy levels telling you? Are you working with your body or against it? Are you getting enough sleep or battling with fatigue? Are you managing to stay active?

Make healthy choices. Cut down on sugary foods and reduce any excessive alcohol intake as this will only make you feel worse.

Spend time doing things that bring you joy. See mates you can be yourself with and/or take part in activities or hobbies that you enjoy. Seek out opportunities to laugh with others.

Set goals. Goals can help you focus on moving forward and achieving them can help bring a positive mindset. Start with short-term goals. Plan an outing, visit a place you haven't been before, make a plan for a holiday, or update your CV.

Focus on the positive. Think about the things you are proud of, challenges you have overcome, people who are important to you, or keep a gratitude journal and write down things you're grateful for. If you are feeling low, pull it out and remind yourself.

Stay connected. Access the support available to you. This could be friends or whānau, church, team sports, hobby groups or support from some of the organisations mentioned in this resource.

Access spiritual support. Attend a place of worship or connect to a spiritual healer or leader. If you're unsure where to go, ask friends or family for recommendations. Read spiritual writings or have them read to you, listen to podcasts, or read stories of hope.

Listen to uplifting music. Listen to music that makes you feel good/fills your soul, sing waiata (songs) or dance, share your playlists with others.

Reflect. Write down your reflections by recording your thoughts in a journal or electronically. If you enjoy social media, consider a blog or share your journey with others online.

Give service/support to others. Young people have told us that helping others gives them a sense of purpose. Consider some ways you can support other people who are having a difficult time such as volunteer for a charity you are passionate about.

Peer support - Te tautoko a-hoa

'I lost good friends through treatment and coming out of it, I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to. Coming to CanTeen, going back to school, meeting new people and reconnecting with friends again was a bizarre experience - but also really good. You realise there are people out there who will stick by you.'

Young person

Peer support can help provide a sense of belonging as well as a safe space to share your worries or get help from people in the same situation as you. Organisations such as the ones below have peer support and survivorship programmes available either in person or online.



WHERE CAN I GO FOR SUPPORT?

Talk to your GP or healthcare team. You may be able to access counselling services in your local community. The following organisations also offer support:

CanTeen. A youth led organisation offering a range of support services for young people aged 13 - 24. CanTeen Connect has free online counselling available 24/7 and peer support activities you can attend locally and regionally. www.canteen.org.nz or phone 0800 2268 336.

Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand. Provides emotional and practical support, survivorship programmes and education forums for people with leukaemia and blood cancers. www.leukaemia.org.nz or phone 0800 151 015.

Shocking Pink. A peer support organisation for women with breast cancer. You can join the Facebook page from anywhere in NZ or attend regional peer support catch-ups. www.shockingpink.org.nz.

Breast Cancer Foundation. Offer a range of emotional support services including MYBC - an online peer support community. They also provide free counselling for up to a year. Phone 0800 902 732 or www.breastcancerfoundation.org.nz.

Cancer Society. Provide a range of emotional well-being resources nationally to anyone aged over 18. Resources include free one-on-one psychology sessions, free webinars and online talks, and online support groups. www.cancer.org.nz or phone 0800 226 237.

Youthline. Support youth aged 12-24 years. Free Helpline service (text, phone, webchat & email), face-to-face counselling, mentoring, and programmes in schools and communities. www.youthline.co.nz or 0800 376 633 or text 234 for 24/7 counselling support.

RESOURCES

The following resources have been reviewed and recommended by rangatahi (young people). You don't have to love them all, but having a couple of meditation/relaxation tools on your phone can be super handy.

WELLBEING APPS

Smiling Minds. An Australian mindfulness app with guided exercises for young people.

Headspace. A UK mindfulness app with a range of guided relaxation exercises you can try.

Melon Health. Free meditation, sleep and mindfulness activities.

MyLife Meditation. An American app designed for under 25s which has a range of breathing activities, meditations and mood check in tools.

Declutter Your Mind. Short, simple, guided meditations for sleep, anxious thoughts, or overwhelming feelings. Aimed at adults.

WEBSITES

www.mentalwealth.nz Designed for young people in Aotearoa by Le Va. Provides online resources to help young people look after their mental health and includes free online counselling.

www.thelowdown.org.nz A website providing videos and articles about anxiety and depression. Also includes support through a free 24/7 helpline, text and webchat.

www.sparx.org.nz A computerised kiwi self-help tool for 12 to 19 year-olds who might be feeling low.

www.melonhealth.com Provides online tools and resources to help people manage stressful times. Has an app available for download.

www.auntydee.co.nz Aimed at Māori and Pacific youth, the website has a library of tips and tricks for some common problems such as trouble sleeping or problems with relationships, friends, health, and school.

www.smallsteps.org.nz A website to help you take small steps to manage stress, calm your mind and lift your mood. Has breathing activities you can try along with short clips to watch.

*Hongihongi te wheiwheia.
Face with courage those
unseen things that can create
worry, anxiety and fear.*

Emotional Wellbeing Checklist		Yes / No
I have the details for local counselling support services that I can access		
I talk to others regularly about how I am feeling		
I have downloaded some relaxation apps and given them a go		
I have read the section on when to seek help and know where to go if I am worried about myself		
3 organisations I can go to for support are:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		
Notes		