

❖ What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing can be physical or emotional. It describes how we feel about our life at present.

It doesn't necessarily mean that everything is going well – for example, if you are injured physically or mentally and this is painful and reduces the normal activities you can undertake, this might reduce the overall feeling of wellbeing.

However, if you accept that things happen and have a plan to gradually getting back to normality, or that even in challenging circumstances, that you are growing and learning, then it's likely you'll maintain an inner sense of wellbeing. Your attitude or sense of meaning or purpose in life is likely to have a significant impact on your overall sense of wellbeing.

❖ What is depression?

Depression is a state of unhappiness or low mood that goes on for a while – more than a few days.

Normally, people who are depressed lose interest or pleasure in activities that they used to enjoy. Other symptoms include a feeling of hopelessness about life, irritability, loss of sleep (or sometimes increased need for sleep), struggling to concentrate, decreased energy, changes in appetite, feelings of worthlessness or guilt. When depression is significant, suicidal thinking is common. Some of these changes are normal in certain life circumstances – for example, if you lose someone close to you. Some of the experiences of grief are the same as depression, however the major difference is how long and how intense the experience of depression is.



❖ What is anxiety?

Anxiety is worry about some aspect of the future.

Stress or anxiety is a normal feature of life when there's some danger or risk of something bad or painful happening. For example, most people get anxious if they don't have enough money to pay their bills, or if they or someone they love becomes sick or unwell. If it becomes excessive, then you'll likely be feeling anxious most of the time, or that anxiety is out of proportion to the stress or risk you're facing.

Some of the physical symptoms of anxiety can include sweating, heavy and fast breathing, drymouth, shaking, fast heartbeat, dizziness and fainting, stomach aches and sickness, and tight and sore muscles.



❖ Can depression and anxiety happen together?

It is often the case that depression and anxiety occur together.

Sometimes symptoms of one will be stronger overall, or they might vary through the course of the day. Having a lower mood makes you more vulnerable to worrying about the future.

Feeling anxious is a painful mental state and is therefore likely to lower your mood. sore muscles.

❖ Who should I talk to if I need help?

You could call the FirstMate support line on 0800 ADRIFT (0800 237 438).

It is useful to check in with your GP on any physical or mental health difficulty. GPs are experts at briefly assessing what's going on and referring you to the help you'll need to resolve your issues in the long-term. GPs can also prescribe medication if this is needed or likely to be helpful.

If your difficulties are significant, you could contact Mental Health Services directly, but it's best to go via your GP. If you or someone else is at immediate risk for suicide, it's best to dial 111. If suicide risk is high, but not immediate, then Mental Health Services available at each hospital can assess you and work out a plan.

❖ If I have a problem, what sort of help is best?

The three things that are most associated with improving depression and anxiety in the short-term are: regular exercise (at least 30 minutes, most days); talking with a healthcare professional, such as a counsellor, psychotherapist or psychologist; and some people find it beneficial to take medication.

Also, the general things that support emotional wellbeing include getting enough sleep (ideally, 8 hours per night for adults), eating well (there's no one diet for everyone – eat a range of things and try to include vegetables), try to limit use of alcohol and other drugs if possible, and keep in regular contact with someone (or could be several people) you feel close to. In the long-term, you may need to make lifestyle changes or learn new methods of thinking and life skills.

❖ My life is a mess, how do I sort it out?

It might be too big a job to take on all of your life difficulties at once.

Get some help from a healthcare professional starting with your GP and work out what to start with. Focus on one thing at a time, or just something you can do right now.

❖ What is FirstMate New Zealand?

This is an industry run Charitable Trust to help connect fishers and aquaculture workers and their whanau to relevant services for wellbeing, financial, business, agency, compliance and innovation advice and support.

You can contact them on: 0800 ADRIFT (0800 237 438)

❖ How do I talk to my children to let them know Mum or Dad are having mental health concerns?

It could be useful to let them know in advance that you'd like to talk to them to let them know about something that's happening in the family.

Pick a time that they're likely to be relaxed, such as after dinner, or after a bath or shower. Use simple language that matches with their age. Check with them what they've understood, so that you can clarify anything. Invite them to ask any questions they have. Be as open and honest as you're able to, keeping in mind that as children age, they can know or understand more.

❖ How do I approach someone about their mental health if I'm worried about them?

Be curious and interested.

Try asking in a private setting, so that shame is less of an issue if other people are around. Be willing to spend some time – asking “how are you?” is likely to be met with “good” even if that's not the case. It might take several questions before a person is willing to open up. It can sometimes be beneficial if you let them know that you're concerned or worried about them. You could share with them the changes or differences in their behaviour or body language that has caused you to feel concerned.

Also, don't be put off if you're brushed off initially. New Zealanders, and especially men, aren't always good at talking about their feelings, or acknowledging that things are not well. Try again in a few days or let them know that you're available if they ever want or need to talk. Also, let them know about services that might be helpful for them to contact, such as the FirstMate support line **0800 ADRIFT (0800 237 438)**.

❖ Are there warning signs for suicide?

The research on suicide says that it's relatively easy to identify people that are at risk for suicide, but it's very difficult to predict when they might do it.

However, if you're aware that a person has suicidal thinking, that's the first level of risk. At the next level of risk, they are thinking about how they would go about doing it. When they have access to a means of completing suicide, this is the third level of risk. The highest level of risk occurs when a person has committed to a time and/or a place they would try to commit suicide.

Sometimes people might make comments like "I wonder if it's all worthwhile" this may indicate that they might be feeling suicidal. It can be useful to follow-up statements like this with a question about suicide. Men are far more likely to be successful at suicide than women (women try 3 times as often as men, but men use far more lethal methods and are 5 times as likely to complete suicide). Major adverse life events are typically a factor in suicide, such as a major change in relationships or livelihood.



RISK LEVELS ASSOCIATED WITH SUICIDE

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Suicidal Thoughts	How suicide could be achieved	Accessing the means to suicide	Committing to a time and/or place

❖ If I talk to my GP or a specialist about my mental health will they keep it confidential?

All health professionals are required to keep your information confidential, but there are some limits.

It's normal for healthcare professionals that are involved in your care to share some information with one another to help with a diagnoses or support plan – you don't have to agree to this and can let them know if this is your preference.

Another situation where information can be shared is where a person is at high risk of harming either themselves or someone else. In some cases, especially if the risk is very immediate, health care professionals are required to share information about risk with other services.