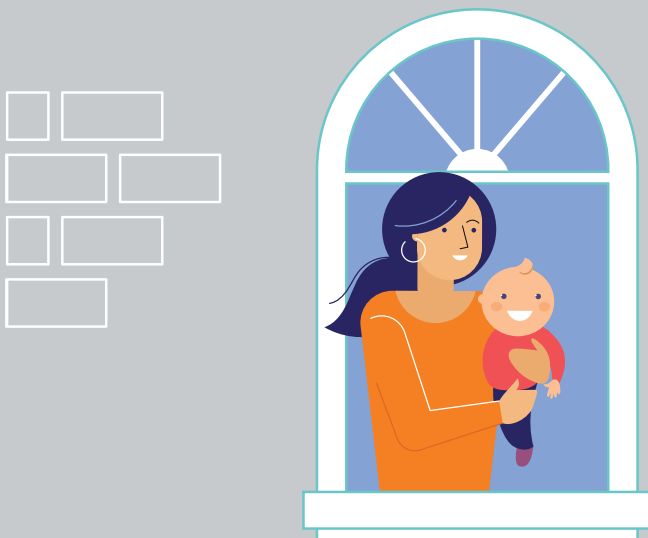
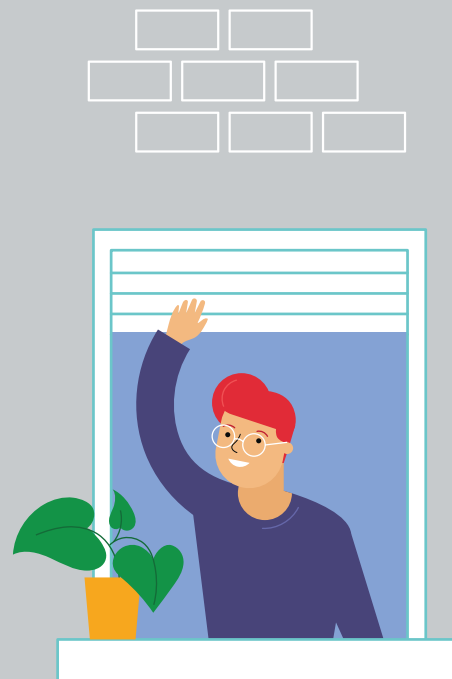
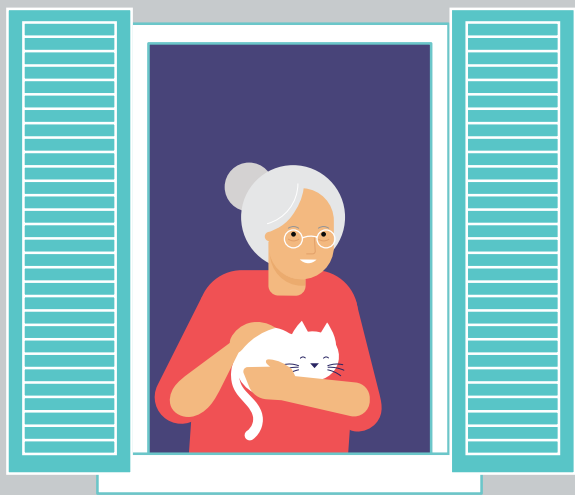
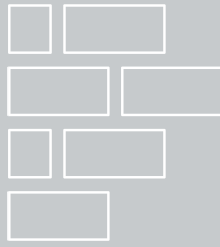


Tips and Tools for Getting through another LOCKDOWN DAY

On a good day, being a family carer can get stressful. During a crisis, like this unprecedented pandemic lockdown, things can definitely get even more stressful! Some of us are finding it pretty overwhelming. Let's face it, there's a lot happening that's totally out of our control. So, how can we make this situation easier? What can we control that can help us get through these lockdown days? **By Tricia Hendry**





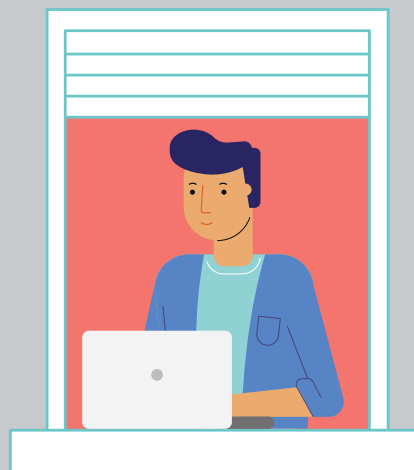
1 Make sure you've got the basics sorted, such as key supplies

From essential shopping to medications, you will have some things to sort out. When you have done this, it can decrease your stress. So, if it's proving a challenge, register with wecare.kiwi. This online support hub has been developed for anyone living alone, supporting others - anyone feeling alone or vulnerable. A Police vetted volunteer can provide day to day advice, check-ins, or help with practical concerns. Phone 0800 777 797 or visit <https://wecare.kiwi/>



2 Keep up a routine as much as possible – however simple

Routines support our mental health, even when lockdown has caused a lot of unwanted change. Do your normal things as much as possible. Add in some new things. Take it slow. Don't expect too much of yourself, or others.

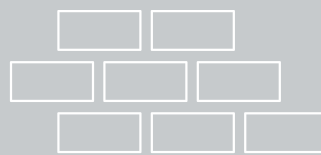


3 Make a simple plan for your day

Each day doesn't have to be exactly the same. We can take one day – or any part of the day – at a time. Why not slow things down and do things differently right now? What could be a bit different today? Even simple things like what you choose to wear or eat or do, where to walk, or what to watch, read, or listen to.

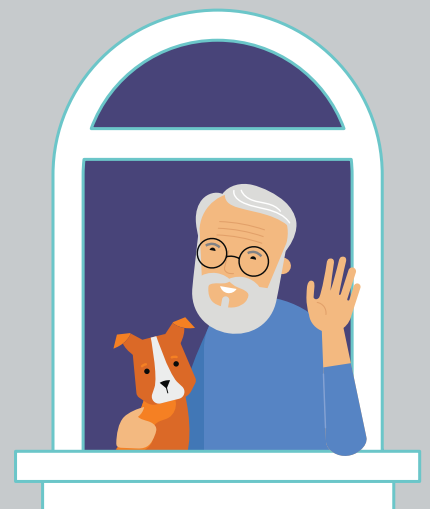
4 Consider saying yes to offers of help

Now's a good time to accept others' goodwill, such as doing shopping or collecting medications for you in a contactless way, or checking in with you regularly. WeCare can link you up to help providers in your area if you need a hand. Phone 0800 777 797 or visit <https://wecare.kiwi/>



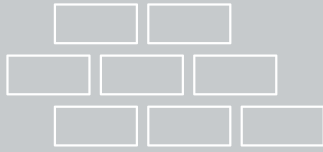
5 Stay informed but don't overdo it

Too much news can add stress. Limit your intake each day. Distract yourself with other things.



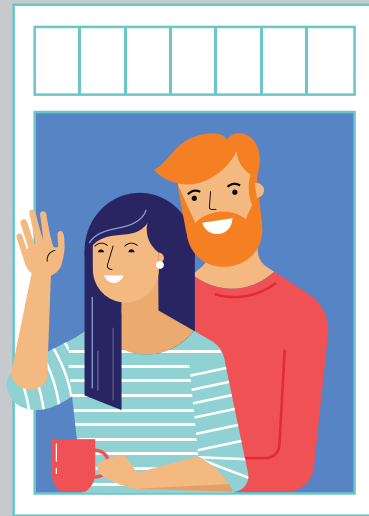
“KITES RIDE HIGHEST AGAINST THE WIND, NOT WITH IT.”

Winston Churchill



6 Give attention to the COVID-19 facts, not rumours

Avoid worry, anxiety, misinformation and untruths that do harm. Tune into only reliable sources of information. For example, Radio New Zealand, Television One, or visit the government COVID-19 information website at <https://covid19.govt.nz/>



7 To keep safe, act how you'd like others to

To avoid being exposed to this infectious virus, keep following all the key requirements – respect the rules of whatever level we're on, social distance, wear a mask, do plenty of handwashing, get vaccinated, and enable others in your household to do these things too. We're all in this together.



8 Make your own self-care a TOP daily priority

Self-care isn't selfish or indulgent. Looking after your own wellbeing will help you get through this demanding time and also care for those whose wellbeing you support. Take some time for yourself to do things you enjoy. Try some of our *Mood Boosters* (opposite).

9 Be kind

When we're very stressed we can take our frustrations out on others. An encouraging word, patience, and a smile can go a long way in helping us and others cope. Don't underestimate the power of everyday kindness.

10 Choose to use positive ways to boost your mood throughout each day

The *Mood Boosters* that follow are all based on research and carers' real experiences. Some of them you might already be doing. Maybe try something new. Which work best for you? A good mood helps us cope with things.



**“WHAT DAY IS IT?” ASKED POOH. “IT’S TODAY,” SQUEAKED PIGLET.
“MY FAVOURITE DAY,” SAID POOH.**

MOOD BOOSTERS *give them a try*

MOVE IT

Physical activity – whatever it is – increases our level of the feel-good chemical dopamine. This then boosts our overall sense of wellbeing, increases energy levels, improves memory, and even helps us sleep better. We feel more relaxed and positive about things. So, find ways to be regularly active – walks, cycling, runs, exercise routines, dancing, gardening. What works for you? Do that.



EAT FOOD FOR MOOD

Healthy food and drinking water regularly helps our body to perform at its best and our brain to keep up a positive mood. Make sure you have plenty of different vegetables and fruit daily.

See more here: <https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/f/food-and-mood/>

USE MUSIC

Music can make us feel so much better. It can lift mood, lower stress, and calm us. Why not put on music that lifts your spirits or calms you? Maybe make a music playlist you love?

GET INTO NATURE

Being near nature can lift our mood fast. Even looking out a window can help! Having nature around us reduces stress hormones, boosts our immune system, improves sleep, and can help to lower blood pressure. Sit outside on the doorstep and look around. Look up into the trees. Lie on the grass. Watch the birds or small creatures. Notice the wind's

effects. Smell the fresh air. Walk in green areas if that's possible.

MAKE THE MOST OF SUNLIGHT

Sunlight helps produce mood-stabilising chemicals like serotonin and can boost our vitamin D levels. Low vitamin D levels lead to fatigue, low mood, and even depression. Get outside daily if you can, even briefly. Use sunscreen!

STAY CONNECTED WITH OTHERS

Relationships are vital for our wellbeing. Our mood can lift when we spend time with others. Catch up with others regularly – in your home or by using the phone, messaging, texting, or face to face conversations via technology. It helps when we keep our relationships as positive as possible. Maybe sometimes give someone you love a hug.

PLAY WITH A PET

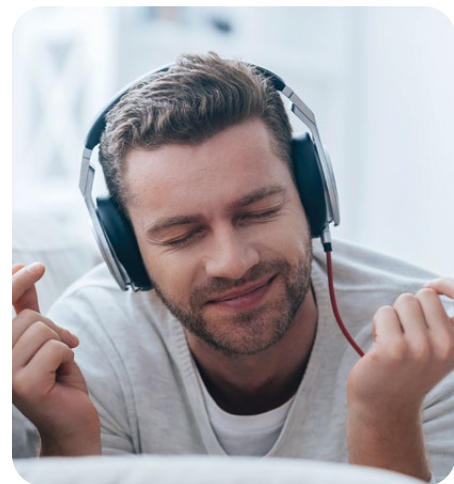
Enjoy time with a pet. Play with them. Often they can delight us – and calm us.

GET CREATIVE

Do whatever gets your creative juices flowing – plan a project, make something, continue something you've been working on, learn something new, cook or bake, sing, play an instrument, dance, write, paint, invent! Using your creativity can be enjoyable and satisfying too.

LAUGH OFTEN

Laughter is one of the fastest ways to lift mood. Look for ways to have more fun in your day. Get more laughter in your day. See the funny side of things. Watch



a comedy. Enjoy a cartoon. Read a funny book. Play games. Wear something crazy. Spend time with those who can make you laugh – even via technology!

DECLUTTER FOR 2 MINUTES ONLY

It can help if our home environment feels good to be in, especially during lockdown. Start and briefly pick up or straighten up a few things. That's it! Do more another time. Even 2 minute bursts of effort feel good!

HAVE A SNOOZE

We all feel better after a good night's sleep. However, sleep doesn't come easily for all of us – especially in stressful times. The good news is that there are things you can do to improve your sleep, such as keeping to a regular routine, winding down first, or avoiding screens and coffee at night. Sleep stories to fall asleep listening to are increasingly available because many find they help. See them on apps like Calm or Spotify. For more sleep tips visit <https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/s/sleep-tips/>

For Carers NZ's helpful sleep links go to <https://carers.net.nz/information/sleep-better/>

WATCH OR READ SOMETHING UPLIFTING

What sorts of things or people inspire you? Do more of these things which can be motivating and encouraging, especially when so much feels uncertain.

Carers NZ

www.carers.net.nz
centre@carers.net.nz

Keeping well 'in yourself'

For the next few ideas, this video from the Mental Health Foundation may be helpful.
<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/videos/m/mindfulness-videos/>



Breathe

Slow, deep belly breathing is calming. It's a game changer for many. Get comfortable. Breathe in slowly through your nose, hold it for a few moments, then breathe out through your nose, or mouth. As you breathe in, feel your belly rise, then lower again when you breathe out. Take 12-25 deep breaths several times a day. Perhaps try this breathing exercise which helps slow your breathing down: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLCIdtKnXsk>



Do a body scan

This helps release tension you might not even realise your body is holding. Sit or lie down comfortably. Breathe in and out slowly. Staring at your toes, slowly squeeze and tense each part of your body, one section at a time. As you do, tense each section tightly for a few moments, then relax it and feel the tension go. Move on to the next part of your body. Do it slowly. Tense ... hold ... release. This helps you relax and also reveals where your body is most tense.



Be mindful

Stop and pay attention to what's happening around you in the present moment. Notice what you can see, hear, taste, touch, or

hear. Such mindfulness helps reduce stress, increase calmness, and improve wellbeing. Try being mindful while doing simple tasks, like washing the dishes, eating, or sitting outside. Perhaps try a mindfulness App - there are heaps!



Try Meditation

Meditation decreases stress and increases calm. If your mind wanders, just let your thoughts go and refocus on your breathing. As mentioned above, there are lots of meditation apps or You Tube videos you could try out. The respected mental health organisation Very Well Mind (USA) recommends these guided meditations links for 2021: <https://www.verywellmind.com/best-guided-meditations-4843806>



Be grateful each day

Appreciating the good things we have in our life can distract us from only focusing on what we don't have. Counting our blessings can have a powerfully positive effect. What are you grateful for today?



Choose the positive

Decide you're going to be more positive. Research shows that by choosing to be positive and happier, people can feel a lighter

spirit and have a more hopeful, optimistic outlook. Look out for what's positive. Reduce time spent thinking negatively. Changing your perspective means you will start to see challenges differently.



If your efforts to lift your mood aren't working

If your mood's been low for more than two weeks, or it's starting to take a toll on your relationships and daily life, get some professional help. See the Ministry of Health's list of recommended options for how to do this and ways to look after your mental health during the pandemic. <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>

"THERE ARE DARK SHADOWS UPON THE EARTH, BUT ITS LIGHTS ARE STRONGER IN THE CONTRAST."

Charles Dickens

IF IT'S ALL GETTING A BIT MUCH ...YOU ARE NOT ALONE :)

Support is available in this demanding time. Use it.

- Talk to our friendly team at Carers NZ on freephone 0800 777 797 or email us at centre@carers.net.nz or visit our website www.carers.net.nz or join our Facebook community at:
Carers NZ Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/CarersNZ>
- Young Carers NZ on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/youngcarersnz>
- Register with wecare.kiwi, set up to provide day to day advice, check-ins, or help to deal with practical concerns during this pandemic. Phone 0800 777 797 or visit [https://wecare.kiwi](http://wecare.kiwi)
- For health support, contact your GP or for a COVID-19 query call Healthline, 0800 358 5453
- If your mental health is suffering, use the 1737 helpline (24/7) for support. For other helplines, or to find a counsellor or doctor near you, see <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines>