

climate change

PREPARE TODAY, LIVE WELL TOMORROW



WELLBEING GUIDE





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Climate change is already impacting on and concerning New Zealand students. In a recent survey participants rated climate change behind only racism in their top pressing concerns.

Students are aware of obvious changes to the environment and many are exposed to frequent, often alarming, media coverage. Whilst anxiety is an appropriate response to the issue of climate change, students require accurate information and support in order for their anxiety to generate constructive responses, and/or actions, rather than leading to despair, frustration and powerlessness. In schools, the delivery of any climate change science-based programme is ideally accompanied by consideration of student wellbeing/hauora.

A positive school culture provides the foundation of wellbeing/hauora, both for students and staff. Social and emotional learning is usefully embedded within the overall school wellbeing approach. Within an overarching wellbeing framework, challenging educational topics such as climate change can be safely delivered, and the mental health of children can thrive.

The '**Climate Change Wellbeing Guide**' has been developed to provide teachers with background information and tailored resources to help them navigate the delivery of climate change scientific content, whilst maintaining the wellbeing/hauora of students.

It links into, and is intended to be used alongside, the 'Climate Change: Prepare today, live well tomorrow' learning programme.

The resource will support teachers with practical activities and tip sheets. The activities are designed to be gentle, and to provide fun conversation starters that can build upon existing social and emotional curriculum and mental health content, at school, and in the community. There are extension activities and related activities in the learning programme '*Climate change: Prepare today, live well tomorrow*'.

Guidance is provided to teachers on mental wellbeing in the classroom, dealing with challenging conversations and behaviours, and the identification and referral of children at risk. In this resource there is information about the various services and supports that are available if referral is required. Links to resources that assist teachers to support students when climate change disasters occur are also included.

Finally, the resource contains brief explanatory notes for parents/caregivers, in the form of information sheets that can be shared at home.

1: WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS

A whole school approach promoting wellbeing/hauora & mental health is considered optimal for learning, and for the development of children. Jack Pranksky, psychologist and author of *Prevention, the Critical Need* (1991), was not referring to the weather when he used the term “school climate” to refer to “those qualities of the school and the people in the school which affect how people feel when they are there.”

Used in this context, schools with positive *climates* are places where people care, respect, and trust one another, and where the school organisation cares for, respects, and trusts people. The task of ensuring wellbeing in a classroom sits within the wider creation of a healthy and positive school climate, and includes the entire social, teaching and learning activities that occur within the school community. This complements the Maori model of health and wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Whā, which includes taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing), taha whanāu (social wellbeing), taha tinana (physical wellbeing), and taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) - (Durie, 1994).

There are numerous resources and supports available for teachers and schools in New Zealand, that seek to improve the wellbeing of their communities.

The guidance and activities in this tailored climate change wellbeing guide go alongside this overarching approach.

2: STUDENT RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The confronting realities of climate change will, in future, impact today’s students in ways that are difficult to conceive of now. As a greater awareness of climate change develops for students, an accompanying sense of threat or uncertainty is to be expected.

Children may respond to the climate change scientific material in a number of ways. They may experience a whole host of difficult emotions, including fear, helplessness, frustration, anger, guilt, grief, and confusion. When discussing the material, teachers may encounter students who cope through avoidance, denial, diversionary tactics, wishful thinking and a range of other coping mechanisms. Children may need help with understanding, communicating, and coping with, the difficult feelings that arise in relation to the material. Addressing wellbeing throughout the sessions will protect student wellbeing and enhance their capacity to take positive action.

3: TEACHING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

In addition to the wellbeing information and activities, teachers can approach the topic of climate change in a similar way to other challenging topics. The following suggestions aim to help teachers explore difficult topics in an effective and safe manner, within the classroom setting:

- Foster a classroom climate of community, belonging, respect and tolerance. Get to know your students and encourage students to share interests, be curious, express their ideas, and welcome difference and diversity.
- Model the tone you expect for conversations by showing respect, being open-minded, listening, asking questions, and not interrupting.
- Be prepared: Give consideration ahead of time to the personal challenges or difficult conversations that might arise.
- Create some ground rules for conversation - ideally in a participatory manner with the class - that establish the rules for discussions, e.g. confidentiality, perspective taking, and respect.
- Identify some strategies to cope with challenging moments as they arise. For example,

give everyone time to write down their thoughts, or break into smaller groups to discuss the challenging ideas.

- Keep a track - Take notice of your own feelings in any difficult or heated conversation, as being aware can help you manage your responses. Track the “emotional temperature” of the classroom to monitor students’ responses.
- Acknowledge difficulty of topic, conversations and emotions. Normalise, and communicate acceptance of, a range of responses.
- Provide methods of communication and expression other than dialogue, including ways to contribute or communicate anonymously.
- Break into smaller groups or pairs for discussion before coming back into large group.
- Acknowledge and discuss avoidance and the bystander effect, as they relate to climate change.
- With angry or obstructive students (depending on your understanding of them), consider seating plan, offer choices for ways to proceed, or share authority by delegating a student co-leader for different topics.
- Keep the conversation positive by remembering to focus on the helpers and heroes, and on local and relatable success stories.
- Bring in humour and lightness of tone wherever possible.
- Tune in to any signs of active coping and positive action.
- When necessary, talk with students outside of class and follow up issues. It may be that a student needs some time to think through a personal challenge or express their feelings, or perhaps needs encouragement to take action. For overly distressed students, a referral may be appropriate.

The Sparklers project provides some additional ideas for creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

Keep in mind developmental stage. The climate change material for schools is designed for children aged 10 and above. For younger children, the conversation and activities need to focus on: learning to love and care for the environment and animals; spending time in nature; helping animals; practical activities such as growing plants and preserving local environments.

*A great activity for younger children is the **Sparklers Wellbeing Walkabout**.*

Resources to help New Zealand teachers with wellbeing and mental health

1. ERO: *Wellbeing for success: a resource for schools*
2. Mental Health Foundation: *Mental Health Matters* and *Ways to Wellbeing*
3. Rangatahi Tu Rangatira: *Whare tapa whā*
4. *Sparklers*: Sparklers was developed in response to requests from the education sector for tools to help them support and promote the wellbeing of young Cantabrians.
5. The Pause, Breathe, Smile Mindfulness Program for Schools *Mindful Aotearoa*
6. Ministry of Education: *Guidelines for the provision of pastoral care, guidance and counselling*
7. Ministry of Education: *Wellbeing in Schools*
8. Ministry of Education: *Preventing and Responding to Suicide: A Resource Kit for Schools*
9. Ministry of Education: *Wellbeing @ School*



It is expected that learning and thinking about climate change will evoke a range of emotions, some of them difficult to cope with for some children. Activities are included throughout the learning programme that will assist children to develop emotional literacy and apply this to their experience of climate change.

1: UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Emotional distress is a normal and everyday part of human life. Learning about and understanding feelings is a lifelong journey that starts when a baby cries and an adult responds. Teachers and parents play a crucial role in helping children develop emotional skills, through everyday life experiences and conversations. These skills enable children to recognize, understand, describe, express, and cope with, their feelings.

Teachers, parents and the wider whanāu help children through role modeling, direct interactions, teaching of skills and coaching. The first step is becoming open to, and accepting of, the range of emotions that we all experience, and through learning an “emotional vocabulary” to describe and communicate our feelings. Like other language, emotional literacy begins from birth, and schools can develop and extend the development of vocabulary and comprehension over time.

Learning programme link: Activity 4: The Feelings Splash: How does this make us feel?

With any of the wellbeing tools, spend a few minutes with students reflecting on their reactions about the climate change sessions so far. This can be done individually or in small groups.

Next, ask if any students would like to share their reflections with the wider group. When the children are talking about their responses, listen, show empathy, and reinforce the key messages.

Remember that developing emotional literacy is the same as any other key skill, in that everyone is different, and support and practice is important. The presence of supportive trusting relationships is central to this type of learning. Communication of acceptance towards, and awareness of, the range of emotional experiences is more important than the words themselves. When adults show interest in feelings and offer words to acknowledge them, students gradually learn to identify and describe their own experiences. Feelings can be normalised with statements such as, “Everyone feels sad sometimes”.

Extension Ideas

1. Try one of these ideas from Sparklers:
 - ***Sparklers Faces Game***
 - ***Sparklers Frozen Emotions Game***
2. Create a feelings wall for the classroom using words or pictures to represent different feelings. Use a card to write down each feeling and Velcro to the wall so that the card can be moved. Add to the wall throughout the climate change sessions and use the wall as a check-in for how students are feeling. Students could move their name or photo towards different feelings. Or, create your own version as this teacher did: ***Teacher Mental Health White Board***
3. Create a collage of feeling words and images from magazines and other cut outs.
4. Play a game of Feeling Charades, the same as normal charades except using “feeling words” for the children to act out.

2: THE FEELINGS MAP

Our reactions to information and events are connected to how we think about situations, what we do in response, and what context or situation we are in. Our human experience of emotions is made up of our physical reactions and sensations (including heart rate, body tension, tiredness), thoughts about ourselves, other people and the situation, action signals or motivations (such as the desire to run, hide, or fight) as well as what we notice as feelings, e.g. sadness, joy and anger.

As children develop, thinking increasingly influences emotional experience, and drives our actions. This occurs within the family, social and cultural environment that shapes the values and skills children develop in relation to emotions. These environments also influence a child's ability to express, or act upon, their emotions.

Learning programme link: Lesson 4 - Activity 4: Understanding our feelings about climate change'

3: TRACKING EMOTIONS

Emotions occur on a continuum from low to higher intensity. As children grow and develop, their emotional experiences become more nuanced, requiring different responses. Many feelings can be recognized, accepted, and communicated, needing no further response, whilst stronger feelings may require more active strategies for coping and/or communication. Some children may go from zero (not noticing any feelings) to ten (overwhelmed by strong and powerful emotions) and be unsure how they got there. Other children may be flooded by intense feelings and miss the opportunity to respond to the emotion when it's still at a manageable stage. Other children may be in the habit of tuning out any emotion and thereby find it difficult to utilise coping strategies and support.

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Helping children to track their emotional responses can assist them to get to know themselves better, learn what triggers different emotions and take a different perspective on situations. Distinguishing between different levels or strengths of emotions and tracking emotions over time are key emotional regulation skills. Tracking individual and classroom feelings also gives teachers a tool for monitoring students' responses to the climate change teaching material and for recognizing opportunities for reflection and support.

Learning programme link: Lesson 3 - Activity 3: The Feelings Thermometer

After it has been introduced, the idea of a **Feelings Thermometer** can be used in classroom discussions and individual conversations to gauge how people are reacting to different material. Like a thermometer measures changes in body temperature, the Feelings Thermometer can be used as a tool to draw children's attention to the range of feelings, and how feelings change in intensity over time and in different situations. Students can be shown how to track changes in feeling states with both words and numbers indicating different levels or strength of feeling with stronger feelings being given larger numbers or rated as "bigger". This can also provide a short cut in communication between students and teachers/parents, with higher numbers/feelings rated highly on the thermometer, indicating greater student distress. Teachers can take their own "emotional temperature" and communicate this to students as a way of normalizing and acknowledging emotions and thereby encouraging students to do the same. When conversations get heated or tense, students can be encouraged to check in with their "temperature". This can provide a moment of student self-reflection



and enable communication with others about personal responses to the learning materials. Over time and through tracking their emotions in this way, students will learn how diverse coping strategies may be relevant for different feeling intensities.

Extension Ideas

1. Use the Feelings Thermometer on a classroom white board to keep a track of overall classroom wellbeing or for individual discussions.
2. Ask students to keep a temperature diary over the course of a day/week/month for one emotion, or a range of emotions.
3. Try this **Sparklers Continuums** activity and embed some climate change reaction themes.
4. Read aloud, or assign the book **Rising Tide**, and then discuss how feelings can vary by tracking feelings in relation to the book, and to climate change.

4: COPING WITH EMOTIONS

Emotional stress can be challenging for adults to deal with, and a core aspect of growing up is learning the tools to cope with a range of feelings. Everyone feels stress from time to time. The gamut of feelings associated with climate change is normal. However, whilst it may be a difficult and challenging topic, avoiding thinking about it does not resolve the problem or the feelings.

Learning and using healthy coping skills builds on the identification and expression of feelings, and is crucial to healthy emotional development. Many times, identifying the feeling and talking it over with a trusted friend or adult is enough: coping is not always about doing something. Other times, a student may need to use active coping strategies, either on their own, or with support from others.

Learning programme link: Activity 4: Introducing 'Psychological adaptation': Wellbeing Action: What Can I do?

The world is always changing, bringing new challenges and tough times, alongside everyday life and fun times. Learning about climate change and taking climate change action is like any other challenge: it brings up many different feelings. Sometimes these feelings may grow and become difficult to manage. There are lots of different ways to cope with distressing feelings.

How we feel is connected to how we think about situations, and also affects how we choose to respond.



There are a number of ways to look after your wellbeing/hauora as you learn about, and take action for climate change.

THINKING

First, there is Taha hinengaro (our thinking and emotional side).

1. Change your Self-Talk



Self Talk is the way you talk to yourself, or the thinking inside your head. Self Talk can be a powerful influence on how we feel, and on what we do. When we use Self Talk for wellbeing we identify ways of talking to ourselves that are kind, encouraging, helpful and optimistic. First of all, learn to listen to your inside voices, or thoughts. Ask yourself: "Is my Self Talk encouraging me, and is it helping me?"

If you find yourself making critical judgements, giving yourself a hard time, or getting stuck with negative thinking about yourself or the world, you can change your self talk. Ask yourself how would you talk to a friend – and then talk to yourself in the same way, with encouragement and support. When you get stuck, try asking: "What is a more helpful way to think about this?"

2. Take a Thought Break

If you find yourself dwelling on climate change, give yourself a Thought Break. Change it up, by moving from where you are, spending some time thinking about something else fascinating, or turning your mind to something simple like picking flowers, or watching your pet play. Or, just do anything different for a while. Taking time out is not the same as avoiding the issue.

3. Be in the Now

Being in the now (in mind and body) is called **mindfulness** and can help us cope with the stress of climate change. Each day, take time to notice what you are seeing, feeling and experiencing right now. Let go of thoughts of the past or the future, and just observe what is happening right now. Go on a mindful walk and notice your surroundings. Eat some delicious kai/food being aware of every bite. Observe your thoughts from a distance, without judgement, as if the thoughts were clouds in the sky, or leaves floating down a stream. If you are feeling worried or angry, or have other difficult emotions, try noticing the feeling without judging it, or wanting to make it go away. What does it feel like in your body – where does it sit? Is it in your stomach, your neck, your arms...? Be curious about it. This can help to get the thoughts or feelings "out of your head" and into your body. Labelling the sensations in a gentle, friendly way can also help. For example: "Oh, here is worry again, and I can feel my tummy butterflies".

4. Check in with your Values / grow your wairua

If you find yourself confused or uncertain, take some time to remind yourself what your values are, and what is important to you. What is it about taking action on climate change that is important to you, and why? Take some time to reflect on the situation: thinking, writing or talking can help clarify what is most important to you right now.

5. Take One Step at a Time

If you find yourself overwhelmed, use your Self Talk to speak to yourself in a kind and patient voice. Take a moment to break down what you are trying to do into small, achievable steps.

6. Focus

Pick one or two climate change strategies to work on at any one time. Keep it simple, write down what you want to do, and celebrate achievements.

7. Be Grateful

Take some time each day to think about what you appreciate and value about your life, your friends and family, and the planet. Stop and really notice what is awesome and cool. Start with the little things. Be thankful for what you have in your life and express this thanks to others. Notice what others are doing to help the climate and the environment. Express your thanks and give compliments. You might even want to start a "gratitude diary" or share what you are grateful for with someone each day.

Remember the simple things that give you joy / Me aro tonu ki ngā mea māmā noa i ngākau.

FEELINGS

1. Get to know your Feelings

Listen out for how you feel. Ask yourself what you are feeling about climate change (and other situations) and give your feelings names. Write about or draw your feelings about climate change.

2. Accept Your Feelings

Remember that all feelings are okay, no matter how big or small. Remind yourself that other people feel the same way at times and that all feelings are important.

3. Ride Your Feelings

Remember that feelings are like waves: they come and go and will pass. Imagine yourself surfing the waves of your feelings, riding them as they grow and fade.

4. Express Your Feelings

Let yourself cry or hit a pillow. Express your feelings through words, pictures, movement, music, or whatever ways suit your personality and the particular feelings.

5. Listen to how your Body Feels

Take notice of how your body feels, and give it some attention. Maybe your body wants to move, dance, rest, hide, get warm, be in nature, or seek some comfort. Care for your body and make sure you enjoy some good kai, sleep and rest, and frequent physical exercise.

6. Make music

Create a climate change playlist with your favourite tunes for motivation, calm and peace, or for feelings of happiness.

ACTION

There are lot of different things you can DO to help cope with stress in life and challenges like climate change.

1. Take Action on the Problem

Doing something to reduce your carbon footprint, either as an individual, or with your friends and family, is an important way to feel empowered, and to contribute.

2. Have Fun

Have fun in your life - every day, if possible. Do some things that you enjoy, and try out new things that you might enjoy. Play. Laugh.

3. Learn More

Find out more about climate change. Learn about the problems or issues that you are trying to solve. Get in touch with other people who are experts, or who are doing something useful.

4. Look after your Taha tinana / physical well-being

- **Care for your Body:** Your body goes with you wherever you are, from birth to death. Take care of it, speak kindly about it, and listen closely to what it needs.

- **Be Active / me kori tonu:** Get your body moving with exercise or sport, or any activity that you enjoy. It might be a walk, a run, a swim, yoga, kicking a ball, or a kanikani (dance).
- **Get Resting:** Rest your body (and your brain). Rest allows your mind and body to recover, so take time for resting and doing nothing.

5. Be Creative

Paint, draw or write about climate change, or be creative in a way that suits you, to give yourself a break.

THE WORLD AROUND YOU

Give time and energy to Taha whanāu (social wellbeing) and Taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing).

1. Connect

Spend time with other people engaged with climate change, and share ideas and experiences. Take action together with others, whenever possible. Make sure your social time is not always focused on climate change - get together with other people to enjoy their company, have fun, talk, hang out, and do things together that you're interested in. Unplug and hang out. Join a group or a team. Make a phone call or send a message.

2. Help and Be Helped

Ask for help. That could mean emotional support to help you cope, or practical help with your climate mission. Be honest when you are struggling and need support. Be kind to others wherever possible, and help other people with what they need.

3. Give

Give compliments. Share what you have. Volunteer your time or skills. Recycle your old toys for other children. Speak up for others. Share your climate change ideas.

4. Belong

Learn about your background and culture to understand more about why you think, act and feel certain ways. Tune into your whakapapa (ancestors) and spend time with your whanau (family) to find out more about your whenua (land and place). Consider your family and cultural values for guidance about how to look after the environment you live in, and for shaping your future climate change missions. Explore the art, stories, and music from your culture, and from other cultures around you, for inspiration and guidance.

Whatungarongaro te tangata toitū te whenua / As man disappears from sight, the land remains.

5. Let Nature In

Spend time in nature and your local community. Aotearoa is full of wonderful places. Discover the awe inspiring, peaceful, and special places that you want to protect within your neighbourhood. Climb your maunga (mountain). Swim in your awa (river). Notice the seasons. Visit and care for the land and places of your ancestors (whenua). Plant a tree or grow a pot plant. Spend time with animals. Listen to the birds. Catch a wave. Look at the stars. Watch the clouds. Enjoy the sunrise. Forage for food.

Extension Ideas

1. **Class Dojo Mindfulness**
2. Try out the following ideas from Sparklers:
 - **Sparklers Wellbeing Walkabout**
 - **Emotions Motion Picture**
 - **Sparklers Hikitia te hā Mindful Breathing**
 - **Sparklers Got your Back** (or any others that suit your classroom needs)
3. Have the class make a homemade stress ball out of balloons and rice.
4. Have the class design or make a self-care kit which contains five things a person can do to nurture themselves or have fun, for example: a bath bomb, a joke, scented candle, a physical challenge card (e.g. a trick on your scooter) a personal message or affirmation, a stress ball, phone number of a mate to call, fidget spinner, essential oil, silly putty, favourite toy or book, colouring page, bubbles. Ask the class to consider how the self-care kit could be used.
Another alternative is the **Sparklers Sensory Kete Box**.

5: CHILDREN AT RISK

It is normal for children and adults to feel a range of emotions. They may feel worried, angry, frustrated and scared when learning about the issues around climate change. This wellbeing guide encourages teachers, parents and students to acknowledge and accept their may be a range of emotional impacts that awareness of climate change can bring. Teaching students about climate change and discussing with them ways we all can make a difference helps. Some students may take action, some may think they have no role and some may feel there is nothing they can do. Every student will respond differently, and their responses will change over time. There is evidence that in general, children cope better with challenges when they have been prepared for the situation, and can be actively involved in the solutions, in a developmentally appropriate way.

Whilst this wellbeing guide provides some tailored activities and guidance, the development of resilience and the preservation of student wellbeing during climate change learning relies on a positive school culture and a whole school approach to student wellbeing/hauora and mental health and on knowing that there are things we can all do that make a difference.

In the first instance responses to distressed students need to be grounded in the usual school policies and procedures around student wellbeing. Supporting a student whose distress is triggered or heightened by the climate change learning materials is no different to any other instance of pastoral care and guidance. The resources on Page 4 provide schools with guidance and tools to reflect upon and develop their policies and procedures in responding to student wellbeing.

A small number of children may have pre-disposing vulnerabilities such as an anxious temperament, previous or ongoing experiences of trauma, or reduced social support, and may require additional support or treatment. If you notice changes and are worried about a student, talking with them is an important first step. So too is helping them stay involved. Support from people who care about them, and connection with their own sense of culture, identity and purpose, can help them to find a way through.

The Mental Health Foundations provide resources to help you if you are concerned about a student and signs to look for if you are worried about changes in student behaviour. See here: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/48/suicide-worried-about-someone

A key role for teachers is to recognise and observe any changes of function in the classroom setting, and to put into place any additional supports or strategies that are needed to maintain wellbeing - for individual children, and/or the classroom as a whole. Additionally, teachers can play an important role in identification and referral of children who may require further help. Your school should have well established policies and practices to enable you to get help for students, including how to contact and talk with family/whanau about your worries. All teachers and school personnel who have contact with students need to be aware of concerning behaviour and how to provide support and get help.

The school leadership team, including the principal, hold responsibility for ensuring the development and implementation of policies and procedures relating to wellbeing, including the management of at-risk students. This leadership group, along with the oversight by the Board for Trustees, are aware that all staff have a role to play in the promotion of wellbeing, and ensure personnel have access to the resources and skills required for recognition of and response to at-risk students. The leadership team ensure prompt access to guidance staff, who are seen as resource for students, staff and the leadership team, and not solely responsible for matters of wellbeing.

GETTING HELP EARLY

Children and young people may respond better to treatment if they access support and treatment early. Watching out for wellbeing and signs of mental health distress is a key role for all school personnel and parents, so that action can be taken early if a problem arises. Many adults find talking about mental health issues daunting, however, the keys skills of acceptance of emotions, listening, and acknowledging, are important. Picking a time, and communicating an openness and willingness to listen and help, is vital. **Supporting Young People** provides further information to help students navigate avenues for seeking help.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- **How are you feeling about (insert situation)?**
- **Are you okay? I am here if you would like to talk.**
- **You seem a bit down (or other). Would you like to talk?**
- **I have noticed that you are spending a lot of time at the library on you own. Is there something going on?**
- **Feeling sad is something we all experience. Can you tell me what is happening?**

If you're worried that someone might be thinking about suicide, don't be afraid to ask them directly. If someone has thoughts or feelings about suicide, it's important to take them seriously. It can be really hard for a student to tell someone they are feeling suicidal. If someone tells you they are thinking about suicide, thank them for telling you, and invite them to keep talking with you. Let them know there is help available to them. Encourage them to get help and make sure you follow school processes and practices to ensure they get the help they need. Ensuring you maintain contact. The mental health foundation provides a range of suicide prevention resources including how to support someone who is suicidal see here: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/48/suicide-worried-about-someone

Practice

Coping skills and wellbeing actions are like any other skill: Learning occurs with repeated practice, and through trying new things. Not everything works for everybody. Students can be encouraged to practice these skills throughout the school and classroom setting. Setting goals and making a commitment for practice at home is also helpful. The Wellbeing Action Wallet Cards are designed to help the students make small goals and take small steps.

SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM

Some children with mental health concerns will access health interventions outside the school environment and some children may benefit from additional supports in the school setting. Each school and health district will have a pathway for mental health identification, referral and school-based support. School personnel are encouraged to be familiar with and follow the policies and procedures available within their setting and provide additional classroom support, with guidance and support from pastoral care staff or the mental health team.

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

- **YOUTHLINE**
www.youthline.co.nz or 0800 376 633 or text 234 (free)
- **KIDSLINE**
0800 543 754 (0800 KIDSLINE)
- **THE LOWDOWN**
thelowdown.co.nz or text 5626
- **WHAT'S UP?**
whatsup.co.nz or 0800 942 8787
- **SPARX**
www.sparx.org.nz

RESOURCES FOR WHANĀU & FRIENDS

- **SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND MENTAL ILLNESS**
0800 732 825 or supportingfamilies.org.nz
- **COMMON GROUND**
commonground.org.nz
- **SKYLIGHT**
0800 299 100 or www.skylight.org.nz
- **AFTER A SUICIDE**
afterasuicide.nz
- **LE VA**
leva.co.nz for health and wellbeing of Pasifika families
- **PARENT HELP LINE**
0800 568 856 or www.parenthelp.org.nz/helpline

HELPLINES & RESOURCES FOR EVERYONE

- **NEED TO TALK?**
1737 or text 1737 for counselling and support
- **DEPRESSION HELPLINE**
0800 111 757 or free text 4202 or depression.org.nz
- **ANXIETY LINE**
0800 2694 389 or www.anxiety.org.nz
- **LIFELINE**
0800 543 354 or free text 4357
or www.lifeline.org.nz for counselling and support
- **SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE**
0508 828 865 - for specialist suicide prevention support and counselling
- **SAMARITANS**
0800 726 666 or www.samaritans.org.nz for general support

DID YOU KNOW?

You are not alone
All feelings are OK
Talking about feelings is OK
Help is available

6: WELLBEING AFTER CLIMATE DISASTERS

As the impacts of climate change occur, it is likely we will experience a greater number of climate-related disasters, such as fires and flooding. New Zealand already has significant expertise in helping schools and students respond to traumatic events. It is recognized that teachers provide a major source of guidance and support for children affected by trauma and disasters.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE EVENT

There is increasing evidence that preparing ahead of time for disasters can help everyone in the community cope better, including children. Emerging Minds has provided an excellent guide to assist community members with preparing for, and coping with, disasters, both during and after an event.

Community Trauma Toolkit.

AFTER AN EVENT

There is a range of resources to guide teachers (although it is recommended that they familiarize themselves with these prior to any events).

- *Tips for parents-and-educators-supporting-children-and-young-people* and *Tips and Tools* from the Ministry of Education
- *Supporting people after trauma* and *Talking with children* from Skylight
- *Helping kids Manage worries* from Alright?
- *Helping Children and Families* from Psychology New Zealand

Key Messages

Be aware of your own reactions and needs, use self-care and seek help as needed

Take time to talk and listen with children

Keep school routines as normal as possible

Highlight the compassion, humanity and heroes

Acknowledge distress

Provide accurate (but developmentally appropriate) information, in response to questions

Teach coping skills (from wellbeing curriculum)

Use creative arts to communicate and express distress

Be calm and connected

Help the children do something positive / take action

Show children the power and importance of community

Focus on competencies and resilience of individuals and community

Limit media exposure and reduce unnecessary reminders of the event

LOOKING AFTER YOUR OWN WELLBEING

People who look after others following a disaster event are likely to have been impacted themselves. The stress of the event, combined with the stress of supporting others, can take a toll. Recognising your own needs and looking after your own wellbeing is vital. The following resource can be helpful to schools and teachers: *Wellbeing Toolkit for Teachers* FROM CORE EDUCATION

IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN AT RISK

All children will be distressed by a major disaster, however, most are able to cope well with the support of family and community. Some children are more vulnerable to developing more concerning emotional and behavioral problems, immediately or further down the track. Children at risk include: those with a greater degree of exposure/proximity to the trauma; those already experiencing social or economic disadvantage; those with fewer protective factors (parental or peer support); those with prior vulnerabilities (previous anxiety, loss, trauma or other mental health issues). It is helpful for teachers to understand that children and adolescents may have different reactions depending on their ages. Whilst all children are different, younger children may exhibit more regressive behaviors, such as separation anxiety, eating and sleeping disturbance, thumb-sucking, bedwetting, or somatic complaints such as stomach pain and headaches. Older children may show greater irritability, social withdrawal, reduced concentration and performance, or the development of risk taking behaviors. It is important for teachers to track children over time, and to alert parents and other supports if concerned (as above).

TEACHERS SUPPORTING PARENTS AND WHĀNAU

Teachers and schools can also play a role in supporting parents and directing them to resources. The following resources provide useful information to help parents support their children following disasters:

- *How to talk about trauma* from the Parenting Place
- *Disasters, the media and children* from Emerging Minds

Schools can also support parents by sharing information and maintaining contact. Providing an informal space where parents can gather to talk, over a coffee, or bringing agencies and disaster experts to parent and whānau forums at the school are practical ways to help, and can enable access to these resources for parents.

7: ENGAGING PARENTS & FAMILY / WHĀNAU

Parents and the wider whānau provide a child's first and most important learning environment. The attitudes of these significant adults will shape a child's perspective and experiences, in relation to climate change, wellbeing/hauora, and their ability to cope with climate related disaster and trauma. Good school and parent partnerships enhance learning, wellbeing and teacher satisfaction. See: *Involving Parents*, for further information on how teachers can engage parents in schools.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE WHĀNAU

Children live in whānau and communities where there is a large range of attitudes towards, and understanding of, climate change issues. Children and young people are playing a significant role in bringing climate change concerns to the attention of adults and the wider community.

Some children may experience distress and difficulty during the climate change learning programme and require additional support from parents and whānau. Providing whānau with information and resources will assist them to support their child(ren). Included are a number of printable/emailable tip sheets that can be provided directly to parents as part of regular updates from teachers, or be embedded in school newsletters.

As part of the sustainability and science curriculum, your child's class is learning about climate change. Climate change is an important scientific topic.

The learning programme will cover:

- ***The basics of climate and weather.***
- ***The greenhouse gas effect and the cause of the enhanced greenhouse effect.***
- ***Impacts and reactions to climate change.***
- ***Adaption and mitigation.***
- ***Actions that individuals and communities can take, including activism, communication and coping.***

Most students engage positively with this learning programme. However, children will have different reactions when learning about climate change. Some may have strong emotions and struggle to cope. Therefore, reflective and wellbeing activities are embedded throughout the sessions.

To help ensure your child feels hopeful and engaged with action on climate change, we focus on the scientific information. This includes local knowledge, initiatives, and success stories - especially those that highlight actions taken by young people of a similar age, whom the children can relate to.

You can support your child's learning in several ways. Conversations about climate change - at home and in the wider community - can extend your child's knowledge. The science of climate change can be confusing to unpick from the politics. Because this is important, the '*Climate Change: Prepare today, live well tomorrow*' can also help you equip yourself with the most up-to-date and evidence-based knowledge.

If you would like to increase your understanding of climate change or find out more about the climate change learning programme, ask your child and/or the teacher to share their knowledge and resources.

For those families with younger children (up to eight years old), the recommended approach is to focus their learning on enjoyment of nature and animals and on taking small steps to care for the world. Children of this age are unlikely to benefit from climate science education, and with their concrete developmental level, they may be at risk of excessive anxiety.

Your child may want to engage with a variety of different actions to reduce their personal carbon footprint, or to involve themselves in advocacy and activism. The sessions include guidance around positive communication and community engagement. Finding out what your child is interested in doing, and how you can support them, will provide them with practical support and empowerment. Your child may have ideas for what your family and community can do, and it will be important to explore with them what is possible within your family environment.

Some children may be angry and frustrated with close adults or the government, if they perceive a lack of response to climate change. Some of this frustration may be expressed towards family practices around transport, waste and recycling.

Wellbeing information and activities are embedded throughout the climate change learning programme. The wellbeing information and activities your child experiences as part of the programme are designed to help your child understand, track, and cope with, their emotional reactions to the material, in the most helpful ways. Your school can also provide you with some wellbeing information and resources to help you support your child alongside the school.

Due to the impacts of climate change, there is increased likelihood of climate related disasters such as fires and flooding. Resources are available for parents and teachers that cover preparing for, and responding to, climate change traumatic events. It is recommended that you equip yourself with this knowledge and have plans in place for these types of events. Preparation, at the developmentally appropriate level, has been shown to have a positive impact on children's coping after such events.

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET: CLIMATE CHANGE WELLBEING TIPS FOR PARENTS & WHĀNAU

Parents and the wider whānau provide a child's first and most important ongoing social and emotional learning environment. Parents and whānau can build upon the wellbeing information and activities delivered in the climate change lessons. The following information and resources are available to support you to help your child.

REMINDER

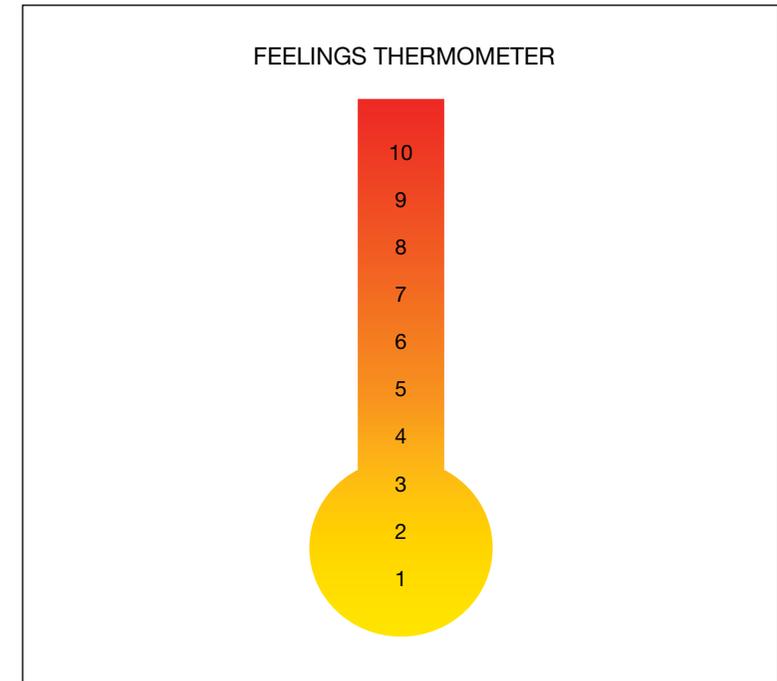
It can be difficult to see your child struggling, unhappy and anxious. You might even feel guilty or responsible. Your child may be frustrated with you and other adults about the current climate change situation. With any unpleasant feeling your child has, it is tempting to want to "fix it". However, the most important response is acceptance and acknowledgement of feelings, within a caring relationship. Being with your child, whilst they come up with their own solutions and ways of dealing with things, is harder - and more important - than it seems.

The climate change wellbeing activities focus on helping students to understand, name, express, and cope with, the feelings that come up around climate change. It is common for young people to experience a range of emotions including fear, helplessness, frustration, anger, guilt, grief and confusion. Children's day-to-day life experiences and interactions can provide them with opportunities to discuss emotions, and develop their "emotional vocabulary". Parents can help by providing a relationship that allows children to describe their experiences and feel supported. During conversations, parents can show interest, ask questions, communicate acceptance, and normalize emotions, for example, by saying: "Everyone feels sad sometimes". Parents can also help by role modeling emotional language, and by using "feeling words" to describe their own experiences. For example: "I feel frustrated and sad that the waterways are so polluted we can't swim at the moment".

This tip sheet provides extra information:

- **Sparklers Managing Worries**
sparklers.org.nz/media/documents/Sparklerworksheets_ManagingWorries.pdf

As well as identifying and describing feelings, students are encouraged to see emotions on a continuum and the metaphor of a "Feeling Thermometer" is used to help students learn to track the intensity of different emotions. Children learn that feelings come and go, change, and vary in intensity, and that different coping strategies may be useful for different levels of feeling. Students are encouraged to track their own emotions for a period of time and this can assist your child to know themselves better, learn what triggers different emotions or changes in emotional intensity for them, and get perspective on situations. Parents can use this tool at home in their communication about their child's reactions to climate change, and other topics.



A Feelings Map activity shows how reactions to events are connected with how we think about situations, what we do in response, and what environment or situation we are in. The children learn how the human experience of emotions is made up of our physical reactions and sensations (including heart rate, body tension, tiredness), thoughts about ourselves, other people, and the situation, and action signals or motivations (such as the desire to run, hide, fight) as well as what we describe as feelings, e.g. sadness, joy and anger. Babies primarily have physical and sensory experiences that they gradually learn to recognize, name and organize over time. As children develop, thinking increasingly influences emotional experience, and drives motivation and action.

The children discuss coping skills, with a focus on the potential to influence emotional states through helpful thinking and actions. Ask your child to share with you the **Student Tip Sheet: Climate Change - Wellbeing Action** and discuss the coping actions that you use in your family, and/or new ones you could try out.

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET: CLIMATE CHANGE WELLBEING RESOURCES FOR PARENTS & WHĀNAU

Supporting the social and emotional development of children as they grow towards adulthood is a demanding task for parents and teachers alike. Climate change can be a challenge for parents - both understanding the science and practical implications, and supporting the wellbeing of children as they learn about climate change, and, potentially, take action.

Children often think, feel, and know, more than we realize. Conversations about climate change can highlight this as children may be thinking deeply about the issues, with strong emotional reactions.

A range of resources is available to help and guide parents who want further wellbeing information and support.

WELLBEING

Parents generally want their children to be happy and healthy. Wellbeing is a complex concept: there are many different ways to think about it, and to take actions towards improving it.

The following websites discuss a range of perspectives and tools that parents may find useful:

- What is Wellbeing?
www.occ.org.nz/wellbeing/what-have-we-learnt-about-wellbeing/
- Sparklers Parenting
sparklers.org.nz/parenting/
- The Whānau Effect
allright.org.nz/articles/whānau-effect/
- Allright Parenting
allright.org.nz/tools/parents/
- Common Ground
www.commonground.org.nz
- Ways to Wellbeing
www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing/

SELF CARE

Parenting is a demanding role, and may be stressful and tiring at times. Parents and whānau members may neglect their own needs because they are busy, and/or taking care of others. Looking after your own wellbeing is vital to your own health, and also provides an important example to your child, encouraging them to engage in self-care too. A renowned parenting advisor shares some useful tips:

- Maggie Dent Self Care for Parents
www.maggiedent.com/common-concerns/self-care-parents/

PARENTING

Parenting courses can provide parents with a wealth of information about strategies to improve and support their child's wellbeing. A large amount of useful information, spanning a range of approaches, is available. If you are seeking further information or support for parenting, the following links can point you in the right direction:

- The Parenting Place
www.theparentingplace.com
- Raising Children
www.raisingchildren.org.nz
- Positive Parenting Programme
www.triplep-parenting.net.nz/nz-uken/triple-p/?cidsid=5feuncpg9274qs0n9je3db4o35
- Tuning into kids
www.tuningintokids.org.au
- Circle of security international
www.circleofsecurityinternational.com

RELATIONSHIP COUNSELLING AND FAMILY THERAPY

Relationships are vital to the wellbeing of children. Relationship and family therapies can be useful when there is concern about the wellbeing of any member of the whānau, or if aspects of family life, such as communication or conflict resolution, need to be addressed.

- Find a Relationship Counsellor or Family Therapist
www.govt.nz/browse/family-and-whanau/separating-or-getting-divorced/relationship-counselling/

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET: IS MY CHILD AT RISK?

It is normal for children and adults to feel worried, frustrated, angry and sad when learning about the issues around climate change. Parents and whānau can help when they acknowledge and accept the range of emotional impacts that awareness of climate change brings.

Most children who experience some distress will communicate and cope with this well, as they would with other challenges. Every student responds differently, and responses change over time. There is evidence that, in general, children cope better with challenges when they have been prepared for the situation, and can be actively involved in the solutions (in a developmentally appropriate way).

Some children, who may have pre-disposing vulnerabilities - such as an anxious temperament, previous experiences of trauma, or reduced social support - may require additional support at school and at home.

Parents and whānau can watch out for:

- Worsening anxiety or behaviors over time
- Withdrawal or avoidance
- Excessive reassurance seeking or limit testing
- Changes in sleep, appetite and weight
- Somatic symptoms such as tummy aches and headaches
- Anxiety or behaviors that are interfering with functioning or causing distress
- Any other change in your child that causes distress or interferes with their functioning

GETTING HELP EARLY

Children and young people may respond better to treatment if they access support and treatment early. Watching out for signs of mental health distress is a key role for teachers and parents, so that action can be taken early if a problem arises. Many adults find talking about mental health issues daunting, however the key skills of acceptance of feelings, listening, and acknowledgement, are important. Picking a time with your child and communicating an openness and willingness to listen and help is vital.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- *How are you feeling about (insert situation)?*
- *Are you okay? I am here if you would like to talk.*
- *You seem a bit down (or other). Would you like to talk?*
- *I have noticed that you are spending a lot of time in your room on your own. Is there something going on?*
- *Feeling sad is something we all experience. Can you tell me what is happening?*

ACCESSING HELP

Let your child know that you will be there for them, and that professional help is also available. Help them access support and treatment. Get involved in treatment, and find out what you can do to help at home. Your school can provide you with information on services for mental health.

IF A CHILD IS SELF-HARMING, OR THINKING OF SUICIDE, GET HELP IMMEDIATELY

- Contact the local **Mental Health Crisis Team: 0800 611 116 or call 111**. Alternatively, take the child or young person to the nearest hospital emergency department.
- Stay with your child and ensure safety (remove any means for the person to hurt themselves).
- Stay calm and listen (without judgement) to anything they may want to talk about.

EMOTIONAL FIRST AID

There are many things parents and whānau can do to help children who are struggling with their mental health.

For some useful tips, see: allright.org.nz/media/documents/how_to_help_kids_manage_worries.pdf

PARENT MENTAL HEALTH

If you are worried about your own mental health, the following may be useful:

healthcentral.nz/toolkit-tips-to-support-parents-with-mental-health-or-addiction-issues-now-online/