



Coping with financial stress

Looking after yourself
and your family/whānau
during tough economic times



Our economy has been affected by the global economic recession, and this is making life more difficult for many of us. Some will be facing redundancy, a reduction in pay, a change of working hours, loss of invested money, the increased cost of living, or difficulty finding a job.

It's normal and understandable to feel stressed and anxious in difficult situations like these. It can be hard for everyone involved, especially people already stretched to meet the needs of their family/whānau.

It's really important to take care of yourself when things get tough - and don't feel bad about asking for help when you need it. It's also important to look out for your family/whānau and friends. We can make it through hard times by pulling together – using our strengths to do what we can for each other.

This pamphlet provides some practical advice on ways to cope with stress and where to go if you need extra support.

Coping with stress

Here are some things you can do to help you manage your stress and feel more in control of things again.

- Talk openly about what's going on for you, with people you trust. It can help you and the people around you to understand what is happening and work out how to deal with it.
- It's important to look after all aspects of your health. This includes physical health, mental health, spiritual health and the health of your family/whānau.
- Get physically active. It helps to reduce stress and improve your mood. Try walking, swimming, dancing, kapa haka, playing sport or gardening. Learning yoga, tai chi, meditation or breathing exercises can also be effective in reducing stress. Choose something you enjoy and make a plan to do some kind of activity every day.
- You might enjoy this more with a friend or get the whole family/whānau involved.
- Getting a good night's sleep is important. It's a good idea to avoid alcohol and recreational drugs, which not only make it harder to manage stress, but also cost money.
- Plan time to relax and stay in touch with people you care about.
- Make a plan for how you are going to spend each day.
- Take time to think through hard decisions. See the solving problems section for some advice for approaching problems.



Looking after your family/whānau

Financial problems can affect everyone close to you. It's important to talk to your family/whānau about your situation and how you are dealing with it. Some tips for supporting them during times of financial stress are:

- Work together to set goals and make a clear and realistic budget and plan to get through the situation. You may like to hold a family/whānau meeting to talk about how everyone can contribute.
- Get advice about money. Contact details for budget advice services are on the back of this pamphlet.
- You may like to explain your situation to your children. It's a good idea to do this in a calm and simple way. Explain that it's no one's fault – there are lots of families having difficulty at the moment.
- Talk to your children about money. Explain that a certain amount of money comes in regularly and talk about what you normally spend it on. This may help when they ask for things the family cannot afford.
- Think about letting your extended family/whānau know of your situation. They may be able to help with child care, finding a job, a loan or advice on managing money.
- Keep having fun and spending time with family/whānau and friends. There are lots of things you can do and places you can go that are free, or cost just a little.
- Make sure you and your children don't go without essentials. Spend your money on things like food, rent or mortgage payments, heating, clothes and school costs first.



- There may be support available within your community, such as at your local marae, church or youth centre.
- Check in with your family/whānau regularly to see how they are feeling. The most valuable thing you can give your loved ones is time.
- Remember, to be able to take care of your loved ones, you need to make sure you look after yourself.

Whānau Ora

This may be a good time to connect with your whānau, hapū, and iwi. Your kaumātua and mokopuna are a great source of strength in times like these. Try enhancing your reo or enjoying mirimiri, rōngoa, waka ama, weaving and other things that you identify with being Māori.

How to recognise the signs that you might need extra support

Everyone feels down from time to time and it's normal for people to get stressed when they are facing problems with money. However, if you are finding your thoughts and emotions overwhelming, you may need some extra support.

Have you experienced some of the following for longer than two weeks?

- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless often
- Feeling angry, frustrated or irritable more than usual
- Having little interest or pleasure in doing things you used to enjoy
- Feeling worried or anxious often. This anxiety can cause physical symptoms like pain, a pounding heart or stomach cramps
- Feeling restless
- Low self-esteem
- Loss of energy or feeling tired
- Finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions
- Feelings of emptiness or loneliness
- Thinking about death
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Loss of interest in sex
- A change in appetite or weight loss or gain

If you have noticed a number of these things in yourself or someone you know, then you or that person may be experiencing depression. It's important to talk to someone you trust and get support. You could:

- Call the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757 or text 5626. They can provide support, or help you to find services close to where you live if this is what you want.
- Talk to your doctor, Māori or Pacific health service or other health professional about how you are feeling. You may like to bring someone with you to do this. There are contact details for other support services on the back of this pamphlet.



Solving problems

When people are faced with problems, they often choose to ignore them (until they get worse) or avoid them (until they return).



Structured Problem Solving is a technique that can help you to tackle and resolve the challenges you face. You can use it for big challenges (like finding a job) or for smaller challenges (like how to get more sleep or exercise).

The key is to work through a problem one step at a time and be realistic about what you can achieve. It helps to write down each step.

Step 1 Define the problem

Start by writing down all the problems you currently face. Pick one you think you can tackle in the next couple of weeks. Detail the problem by thinking about: why, what, when, where, who? Sum up the problem in a sentence – this will help you focus on it during the next steps.

Step 2 Look for solutions to resolve the problem

Get creative and write all your ideas down, no matter how unusual they sound. Don't try and assess them until you've finished making your list. Then pick the solution you think would be most effective and weigh up the advantages and disadvantages to see how it would resolve the problem. If you have trouble choosing the best solution, try comparing a couple of possibilities.

Step 3 Make a plan to put the solution into practice

Your plan should have enough detail to tell you what you will need, who can help you and how and when you need to complete the tasks. Once you've got your plan it's time to make it happen!

Step 4 Review your progress

Think about what worked, what didn't, and why. If you didn't resolve the issue by your target date, think about how you could change your plan. If you did resolve it – well done. Now you can start on the next problem on your list.

You can download a workbook from www.depression.org.nz that will take you through the steps. For support working through it, you could also ring the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757.

You may also like to hold a family/whānau meeting to work through challenges together and talk about how each person can contribute to a solution.

Where you can go for extra support

If you think you may be depressed, talk to your doctor, Māori or Pacific health service, or other health professional.

Call the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757 or text 5626 to talk to a phone counsellor and if you need to, find a service you are comfortable with in your area. You can ask to talk to a Māori-speaking counsellor. There are numbers for various helplines on the back of this brochure. You can talk to someone anonymously and confidentially about what's going on.

Online help is also available at the Depression website www.depression.org.nz where you can find information about depression and ways to get through it.

The Lowdown www.thelowdown.co.nz is a website designed for young people who may be depressed. Skilled personal support is available via **free text (5626)** or you can email them in the Chat section.



Helplines

Depression helpline _____ 0800 111 757

Mensline _____ 0800 636 754

Lifeline _____ 0800 543 354

Chinese Lifeline _____ 0800 888 880

Samaritans _____ 0800 726 666

(North Island only)

Youthline _____ 0800 376 633

Kidline _____ 0800 543 754

Healthline _____ 0800 611 116

Family Violence _____ 0800 456 450

Information Line

Alcohol and Drug Helpline _____ 0800 787 797

Gambling Problem Helpline _____ 0800 654 655

Outline _____ 0800 688 5463

(gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender support)

Money and budget advice services

Budgeting services

(for help managing your money)

0508 283 438

www.familybudgeting.org.nz

Sorted (an independent money guide)

www.sorted.org.nz

Career Services

(for career and job hunting advice)

0800 222 733

www.careers.govt.nz

Citizens Advice Bureaux

(information and assistance service)

0800 367 222 www.cab.org.nz

ReStart (for people who have recently

been made redundant) 0800 559 000

Work and Income (for information about job search and income support)

0800 559 000 www.workandincome.govt.nz

Contact Work and Income for copies of their information booklets: 'Redundancy Services' and 'Managing your Money: What it means to have a budget'.

In an emergency

If you or someone you know has reached 'crisis point' and is thinking of harming themselves or others – call 111 and ask for an ambulance.

You can also contact your local hospital emergency department or district health board to reach your local crisis assessment team.

This team provides emergency care for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Below is a space for you to write notes or for your local health service to include information about services in your area.