



# The essential power of gratitude

## Why focusing on what's good is vital for our resilience in the battle against Covid-19

This time a year ago, the whole of Aotearoa (and indeed the wider world) stepped up for the first big Covid lockdown. Together our nation united to face the largest health challenge facing the country since the First World War.

Everyone has their own memories of getting through that first Level 4 Lockdown and for so many it marked a period of terrible change, even an end of an era.

While we never want to belittle the myriad challenges people around the globe have faced since, we are forever aware of the large body of scientific research demonstrating the psychological benefits of gratitude. Tuning into what's still good in our world (cognitive reappraisal) is a foundational skill for resilience. Multiple studies have demonstrated the psychological benefits of noticing positive events, gratitude, mindful awareness, positive reappraisal, the use of personal strengths and acts of kindness during times of significant stress and suggested the importance of these strategies for supporting people through the ongoing challenges of the pandemic (Waters et al, 2021).

Gratitude is just one positive emotion that serves to buffer and bolster mental health in times of adversity and stress, aiding recovery from loss and trauma via widening perceptual field and allowing people to see the big picture (Vernon et al., 2009).



Kim Tay, Director of Online Training from the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience says: "There's no doubt the past year has been tough, and we don't want to diminish that, but wherever you are on the spectrum of how the pandemic has impacted you, taking a moment to notice what's still good in your world, and particularly who you are grateful for, is such a powerful way of broadening our perspective and enabling us to cope in the face of uncertainty, challenge and change."

"The benefits of a grateful mindset and grateful orientation toward life would appear to be especially valuable in the midst of uncontrollable stress, such as that engendered by the coronavirus crisis", reports Professor Lea Waters and colleagues from around the world in their recently published paper on psychological strategies for 'buffering, bolstering and building' psychological health.

And so, we encourage you, your colleagues, your teams, families, whānau and communities to make an intentional effort to tune into the good at this time. To pause



and reflect, for a moment, on the magnificent job done by all the people involved with delivering essential services, on the extraordinary ways families coped with home-schooling, and the businesses and organisations of all shapes and sizes doing their utmost to keep going.

Consider all those behind-the-scenes legends who keep New Zealand moving through adversity, never seeking the limelight or praise, and the massive contribution they make *every day* of the year.

We encourage you to take a moment to ponder, who is essential to you and your way of life? It could be anyone involved in keeping your whānau safe and healthy, the food flowing, the power on, the rubbish collected. Or simply someone you can't imagine facing the tough times without.

Let's call it, Essential Day, making it a chance to acknowledge everyone connected to those essential services who kept calm and carried on. And to all those in Aotearoa who keep working day in, day out for a better New Zealand.

#essentialdaynz #essentialaotearoa #ngāmihi

Questions you can ask yourself and your teams:

- Who are you grateful for?
- Who wouldn't you want to live without?
- Who stood up for you last year – at work or home?
- Who are you most proud of?
- Have you ever thought of thanking the people behind the essential services in some way?



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