

Fact sheet: Let nature into your workplace (Tukua te uho taiao ki roto nā papa mahi)

Workplace tips and activities to engage your people and teams.

There are many ways you can inspire and motivate your people and teams to *Let nature in* during Mental Health Awareness Week. *Connect* with Ranginui/Sky Father and Papatūānuku/Earth Mother, *Keep Learning* about Māori ancestral knowledge and our New Zealand history and *Take Notice* of how it can strengthen our wellbeing, at home and at work. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, so take some inspiration from the following tips and activities, get creative and get cracking!!

Tips

Make it fun and interactive

- Link with existing workplace activities, such as social groups, exercise sessions, volunteering days, shared meals or staff awards or recognition.
- Activities should be inclusive and suit a range of ages, cultures and abilities and encourage people to only do what they feel comfortable with.
- Remember that even small changes can have a big impact and grow mental health and wellbeing in your workplace.

Get input and feedback from your people

- Ask your workplace whanau/family what they'd like to do to *Let nature in*. You could do this through a survey, discussion at a team meeting or inviting feedback on ideas.

Look for champions in your workplace whānau/family

- Anyone can be a leader for workplace wellbeing. Look for champions who can help create a collective workplace whānau/family environment and culture. Think of people and teams that could help communicate *Let nature in* using the Five Ways. Could they lead by example by introducing some of the Five Ways in nature into their own lives, and then share their journey through a regular blog, newsletter column or updates at team meetings?

Focus on teams (if that is appropriate/relevant)

- If you can, focus on teams, especially in larger organisations, as employee participation is critical to success and strengthening connections, including with your co-workers, is critical to boosting wellbeing.

Help people and teams understand mental health and wellbeing

- Some people will be unfamiliar with mental health and wellbeing concepts – or will have a different understanding to others. The good news is the Five Ways are straightforward and will help people to understand these concepts too. These fact sheets will help you too – [Mental health and wellbeing definitions](#), [Understanding mental health and wellbeing](#), [About the Five Ways](#).

Take some inspiration from the below activities or come up with your own!



**8-14 MENTAL HEALTH
OCTOBER AWARENESS WEEK**

 **Mental Health Foundation**
mauri tū, mauri era OF NEW ZEALAND

#MHAWNZ



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



ME KŌRERO, ME WHAKARONGO,
ME WHAKAWĀTEA I A KOE, ME RONGO I TE
WHANAUNGATANGA

Focus on connecting with your people, teams and nature to uplift your wairua/spirit and those around you.

- Take some chairs or a bench outside so teams can relax together and get some fresh air and sunshine during meetings or on breaks.
- Invite everyone to bring in a plant from home and use them to create a welcoming space to share a meal.
- Encourage your people to bring in a photo of a place that uplifts their wairua/spirit and have it near them at work.
- Take the opportunity during workplace hui/meetings to ask everyone how they are and really listen to the answers.
- Organise a work gathering in your local park.
- Invite your people to bring in an array of natural materials (think seaweed, shell, sand and flowers) and have a 'lunch and art' session and display the creations afterwards.



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EMBRACE NEW EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



AWHITIA TE WHEAKO HOU,
KIMIHIHIA NGĀ ARA HOU, ME
OHORERE KOE I A KOE ANŌ

Today is a great day to Keep Learning. There's always something new to learn and discover when you *Let nature in*:

- Support and encourage your people to learn (or share with others) where they are from, and the names of their mountains and rivers.
- Learn about the [Māori Gods](#) such as Tāwhirimātea/God of the winds, Tangaroa/God of the sea. Can you see, hear and feel them around you?
- Share fun and interesting facts about native plants and animals each day.
- Learn a karakia, whakataukī/Māori proverb or waiata/song with birds, plants, nature in it. For example, we like this karakia:

Korihi te manu
Tākiri mai i te ata
Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea
Tihei mauri ora

The bird sings
The morning has dawned
The day has broken
Behold there is life

- Get to know your teammates - develop a photo board and invite everyone to bring in pictures of what the Five Ways in nature mean to them.
- Visit the observatory or learn about the constellations.
- Help your team members learn new things about each other and have a laugh with our ['Did you know?' team game](#).



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



ME ARO TONU KI NGĀ
MEA MĀMĀ NOA, I
NGĀKAU HARIKOĀ AI KOE

See nature through a different lens and take some time to Take Notice and be mindful of what's happening around you.

- If your people work outside, encourage them to Take Notice of what's happening around them in the natural environment.
- If your people are shift workers, encourage them to Take Notice of the night sky.
- Invite your people to collect resources (such as kōhatu/stones) from a special place they connect with and bring them into their workplace.
- Take Notice of the actions and activities happening in the team that support wellbeing with the ['Taking Notice of Wellbeing' team game](#). It's also a great way to acknowledge team members for the things they do to *Let nature in*.
- Go for a walk and see how many native plants you notice. Can you spot any harakeke/flax, a pūriri, tōtara, rengarenga?
- Take your team cloud/star gazing – what shapes can you see? Notice how quickly the sky moves around you and how beautiful our fresh air is.
- Introduce mindful awareness through a breathing exercise at the start of meetings, while listening to the sound of a waterfall or beautiful native manu (bird). See ['Introducing mindfulness'](#) for a step by step guide to a short breathing exercise.
- Kick off the meeting or day with some inspiring words, e.g. 'bathe in the mauri ora/life spirit of our natural environment that gives us its own wonderful orange/health, welfare, 'connect with Papatūānuku/Earth Mother and touch, smell and eat the bounty she provides'.



**BE
ACTIVE**

**DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD**

**ME KORI
TONU**

**WHĀIA TE MEA KA
TAEA E KOE, KIA
PĀREKAREKA TĀU I
WHAI AI, KIA PAI AKE
Ō PIROPIRO**

Getting outside and exercising is good for your overall health and wellbeing and strengthens your connection with nature. Remember to encourage people to be as physically active as their fitness and mobility allow. You don't have to run a marathon to Be Active.

- Bring nature into the working environment by creating a shared garden or green space where people can grow small plants, or introduce some pot plants into the workplace. Knowing the whakapapa/geneology of your plant will help you understand how to care for it.
- Start or join a kapa haka/cultural group.
- Get a group together and walk up your local mountain or swim in your local river or ocean.
- Set up a game of netball, touch, volley ball or other sporting activity between work teams.
- Promote people and/or teams taking walks in a nearby park during breaks – encouraging them to notice the environment around them. Or promote a team walk at lunch time in a local park.
- Plant a native tree and have a tree planting ceremony to celebrate.
- Encourage people to use [public transport](#) (or walk or bike to work).

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Your time,
your words,
your presence



TE WĀ KI A KOE, Ō
KUPU, KO KOE TONU

Nature provides for us - it gives us everything we need to not only survive, but thrive. We, in turn, have a kaitiaki/guardianship role to give back to nature for future generations.

- Encourage your people to bring in kai/food to share with others, perhaps from your own garden or fishing trip, or prepare and share the kai together. What are some traditional cultural foods that you can share?
- Challenge yourself and your team to produce less waste. It's amazing to see how much we use each day that isn't necessary! Click [here](#) for ideas on how to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Compost your team's food scraps.
- Volunteer at an organised beach or river clean-up or create your own. It's a great way to spend quality time together outside and keep Aotearoa beautiful! Find out how to go about organising one [here](#).
- Plant trees – there are heaps of opportunities to join tree planting days across New Zealand. A simple Google search will reveal one closest to you. Trees also protect our water quality, so by planting along rivers and coastlines you'll be improving our living environment and giving to nature!



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