

BELONGING

Matters

Simple moments
Deeper connections
Better mental health

Kia ora e hoa,

Mental Health Awareness Week 2026 is all about the power of belonging – and for you and your community, that message matters every day.

We all deserve to feel like we belong. Research shows that experiences of exclusion can have a negative impact on wellbeing, including increased feelings of loneliness, stress, and emotional challenges.

Belonging builds trust, strengthens resilience and brings communities closer.

Everyday places such as shops, cafés, parks, and community spaces can help people feel more connected to those around them, strengthening a sense of belonging and supporting overall wellbeing.

Mental Health Awareness Week is a great chance to connect with your community and start meaningful conversations. This week, make a commitment to reach out, kōrero, and connect with someone new. Here are some questions you could ask:

- How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?
- Do you have any favourite local spots or hidden gems around here?
- What is your favourite thing about living in this area?
- Do you have any favourite walking routes around here?
- We are firing up the BBQ this weekend. Would you like to come over for a bite?
- If you ever need someone to grab your mail or watch your place while you are away, just let me know.

Neighbourhoods where people feel safe, trust one another, and are willing to help each other tend to support better wellbeing. These connections can become especially valuable during times of challenge or uncertainty.

When we create opportunities for people to belong, our communities and wellbeing grow stronger.



**Mental Health
Awareness Week** 12–18 | 20
OCT | 26

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

mhaw.nz


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

HOW TO BRING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK TO LIFE

There are lots of ways to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Week.

Spread the message

Over the coming weeks you'll see Mental Health Awareness Week on your social media feeds, in magazines and newspapers, on the radio and TV, and billboards.

It'll be hard to miss. And we'd love for you to [share the kaupapa](#) too.

You can order a free **Event Pack** or [download posters](#) from our website and display them in public spaces.

We also have free **social media stickers** you can download from our website. Add your own photo that celebrates belonging in your community and share it on your social channels. When you share content, be sure to tag us [@mhfnz](#), and use [#mhawnz](#).

Neighbourhood actions

Research shows that doing small, kind things for neighbours each week can help people feel less lonely and more connected. Here are some ideas to build a sense of belonging in your neighbourhood:

Start a community project:

- Collect and donate food, clothing, books, toys, school supplies, etc.
- Start a knitting group – knit scarves, hats, or blankets for people in shelters or hospitals.
- Write letters to seniors in care facilities.
- Host a bake sale with some neighbours to raise funds for a local community group or to donate to food pantries.

Offer free music, sport, language, driving, or computer lessons to community members.

Volunteer with a local charity, e.g. an animal shelter, community garden, or sports group.

Start a neighbourhood support group and have regular get-togethers with your neighbours.

Friendships across cultures help foster a sense of belonging. Many New Zealanders already have these connections at work, school, and in their neighbourhoods, and it is important to continue strengthening them.

Across Aotearoa, local community-led initiatives are helping build trust and belonging, especially for refugees and migrants.

Māori and Pasifika whānau- and community-led approaches also work well. The strongest approaches are local, culturally grounded and focused on relationships.

For other ideas on how to connect with your community head to:

www.neighbourhoodsupport.co.nz

Resources and activities

If you are organising a community event or activity, consider using our free downloadable resources to encourage connection and whakawhanaungatanga.

Bingo – get people moving around, finding people they share things in common with.

Kōrero cards – use the printed set in the 2026 Event Pack or download your own.

Mindful colouring – print and create space for people to pause, relax and get creative.

Gratitude poster – tear off a compliment strip and brighten someone's day.

Thank you for taking part in Mental Health Awareness Week 2026.

Ko au ko koe, ko koe ko au. I am you, and you are me.

Our whakataukī reminds us that when we see one another, value one another, and care for one another, we create an environment where everyone feels they belong.