



# Guide to Sustaining Team Resilience During Covid-19

---

Situations of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity pose unique challenges for leaders. More than ever, your team will be looking to you for guidance. This practical guide, based on collected research, is aimed at reinforcing good practices to sustain your team's resilience and wellbeing.

The current worldwide health crisis is unprecedented. It makes sense that people may be experiencing worry and anxiety. Your team may be concerned about what Covid-19 means for them and their families, longer-term. People’s concerns are likely to be further compounded by the extended social isolation and pressures associated with working from home for long periods. It is vital that you are focusing on modelling good practices and engaging with your team on their mental and physical wellbeing. Evidence-based research has identified strategies for managers to keep in mind while leading a team in these challenging times.

## Practices to model and promote

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Maintain structure &amp; routine</b></p> <p>Continue to plan daily tasks, activities and priorities. Make room for inevitable distractions, breaks and household demands. Allow space for personal, social and family time; focusing on social connections is paramount to maintaining mental wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Schedule time for self-care and share your calendar to lead by example.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Manage information consumption</b></p> <p>News cycles are 24/7, and with most of the world on lockdown, the focus is on the health crisis. There are a lot of conflicting opinions being shared in social and traditional media. Constant exposure/reminders can contribute to stress and feelings of anxiety.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Schedule a regular time to engage with the latest updates. Outside this, focus on matters within your control.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Eat well</b></p> <p>What you eat and drink makes a difference to your ability to work well. Plan meals and snacks in advance. Keep a water bottle where you work and stock up on healthy fresh food that sustains rather than drains.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> With fewer visits to the supermarket, ensure fresh, healthy food is still on your shopping list.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Practise mindfulness</b></p> <p>Mindfulness is about being aware of your thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. It can help you to manage your mind when you feel overwhelmed. Studies show that those who practise mindfulness are less impacted by negative emotions.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Check out apps (e.g. Headspace; Calm; Stop Breathe Think; Palouse Mindfulness) to assist you with breathing and guided relaxation exercises.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Show appreciation</b></p> <p>Research has shown gratitude not only reduces stress; it can help overcome anxiety. Appreciate how you and your team have adapted in this difficult environment.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Reflect daily on three things you are grateful for.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Sleep well</b></p> <p>Lack of sleep affects relationships, productivity and decision-making. COVID-19 and anxiety surrounding it can have an impact on an individual's sleep patterns. Constant use of social media can disturb sleep patterns, affecting our resilience.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Disconnect from digital devices 90 prior to sleep. Commit to a good sleep routine.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Pace yourself</b></p> <p>Ensure self-expectations are reasonable and sustainable. Understand things may take longer in a remote environment, as you may not have all the normal resources at hand. Household distractions may mean that you are task switching, reducing your efficiency.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Give yourself permission to not attend every meeting or follow up on non-critical emails.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Move more</b></p> <p>Working remotely may mean that you are in more video conference meetings and not moving between tasks. Under current restrictions, gyms, group classes and some other exercise outlets can no longer be part of your daily routine. Studies show a lack of regular exercise, even short-term, can impact energy levels, appetite, sleep and our ability to cope with stress.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Assess if you are exercising as much as you would normally. Adjust your schedule to rectify any imbalance.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Relax and unwind</b></p> <p>Set aside time for yourself. Just a few minutes of quiet time can help us calm and reorder our thinking. Walks and fresh air – even looking out a window – can help us disengage and reset. With work being home and home being work, set boundaries to allow yourself to disengage.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Plan ‘me time’ – something that re-energises or relaxes you.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>What else can I do/plan?</p>

# Engaging with your team's wellbeing

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Put people first</b></p> <p>Regularly ask about people's work-from-home environment. This won't be static, nor will everyone feel comfortable sharing. To build trust, show you care and understand; try talking about your own vulnerabilities. People appreciate their leader acknowledging things can be tough. When people do open up, be ready with ways to support.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Make time in your 1–1s to ask about your team member's wellbeing and challenges and how you can best help. 80% listening and 20% responding works best.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Be transparent</b></p> <p>Ambiguity contributes to stress. To avoid this, communicate regularly, openly, and honestly to reduce uncertainty for your team. 'Share before you need to' is a remote leadership mantra. Provide an opportunity for your team to ask questions or make comments whenever you share communications with them.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Review communications you have received from others to see if there is any information that your team is not aware of but may benefit from.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Connect socially</b></p> <p>Social support builds resilience and buffers the effects of stress and anxiety. People can feel disconnected when working from home and sometimes wonder why others aren't reaching out to them. Giving our presence and time to others increases our resilience.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Organise a virtual social event for your team. Encourage your team to connect socially via the virtual channels available.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Help people reframe</b></p> <p>Reactions to stressors are about perception. When stressful situations are seen as a challenge to overcome, people can respond with improved motivation and performance. Help your team to focus on what they have achieved in this difficult time rather than what has not happened.</p> <p><b>Do Now:</b> Highlight how the contribution of your team and team members personally have made a difference.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Empower people</b></p> <p>Research shows helping others feel more powerful and in control translates to improved feelings of wellbeing and engagement. How could you provide more discretion and decision-making authority to increase feelings of control?</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Ask your team for ideas on how you could make it easier for them to get the mahi (work) done. Remember if suggestions can't be implemented, follow up with the why.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Amplify the positive</b></p> <p>Collect and amplify positive messages —successes, acts of kindness, obstacles that have been overcome, etc. Whatever your purpose, celebrate your daily heroes. Simply staying productive in these times is heroic.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Ensure this is part of every team interaction.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>What else can I do/plan?</p>

## Additional resources

Working from home – [www.ldc.govt.nz/link/RES-001](http://www.ldc.govt.nz/link/RES-001)

CERNO How to stay focused and resilient – [www.ldc.govt.nz/link/RES-002](http://www.ldc.govt.nz/link/RES-002)

MHFNZ Getting-through-together – [www.ldc.govt.nz/link/RES-003](http://www.ldc.govt.nz/link/RES-003)

