

Coronavirus: The lockdown is not the time to be setting goals, therapists say

Maxine Jacobs - 16:15, Apr 19 2020



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Lockdown may be wearing on New Zealanders more than they realise, therapists say.

Lockdown is not the time to be setting high goals for yourself, therapists say.

The end of the level four lockdown may be in the sights of New Zealanders as they await the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday, but for many their time in isolation has worn down their resilience more than they expected.

The four week stretch at first may have brought with it a buzz of excitement to create the body you had always sought or to learn new skills, but Palmerston North counsellor Mayan Schraders said now is not the time to be setting yourself goals.

"The biggest thing we are all dealing with is Covid-19 and how it all affects us personally," Schraders said.

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"When we're not sure about things we're going to be emotionally really activated, whether we notice it or not, but subconsciously a whole lot of stuff is happening that some of us are more aware of than others.



SUPPLIED

Palmerston North therapist Mayan Schraders says it's OK to be messy because lockdown is a messy time.

"But we have to deal with that and that's exhausting, so if you feel exhausted that's just normal."

For those working at home, the change in environment can be difficult to adjust to and putting higher expectations on yourself can be unhelpful, especially if you're facing job and financial insecurity, Schraders said.

"We're all in different routines. When you're out of your normal routine you might do a great job, but it takes more effort because you have to reinvent the wheel in a way.

"So we're going to be more tired and we're going to need more time, and it's OK to be more tired and ask for a bit more time."



SUPPLIED

We need to acknowledge the world is different, but try to keep things as normal as possible, therapist Timothy McMichael says.

Timothy McMichael, who practises in Palmerston North and Auckland, said there's been a huge movement towards company-paid counselling since lockdown began.

"In the first week there was the newness of it, there was a lot of sharing of stories that we're OK, we're resilient, we can get through it.

"We've had the atrocities of Christchurch, we had White Island and this is the third - we can get through it.

"But what I've certainly seen in conversations with my patients and clients as things have gone on is their resilience has waned quite quickly."



SUPPLIED

Keeping positive in lockdown is essential, says counsellor Karlyn Sullivan-Jones.

Using lockdown to make goals for yourself or add too much to your plate can lead to disappointment, so it's important to focus on what you want to do differently in the future, not necessarily right now, McMichael said.

"The most that we can do when we're living by ourselves or with kids is to keep things as normal as possible because there's so much to process at an emotional perspective that we don't want to be adding too much stuff to do now."

Counsellor Karlyn Sullivan-Jones agreed, suggesting people engage in creative activities that bring them happiness such as drawing and painting that won't add more pressure to an already stressful time.

"There are going to be times where you're not feeling motivated but doing something for yourself, some form of self care is really important. If you get to the end of the day and you haven't had anytime for yourself, just go and have a long hot shower.

"It's important to try and use this as an opportunity to do something that you enjoy and be mindful of what it is that you need."

Stuff