



# WELLELDER

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*A community trust providing specialist counselling for older people from Wellington through to Kāpiti*

## Combating loneliness

Research tells us what we often know from our counselling – old age can be lonely. And loneliness can be crippling, and lead to many other challenges and problems. Everyone experiences loneliness sometimes, but it can be particularly difficult for older people.

There are many reasons for loneliness as people age. Losing partners and friends, often lifelong relationships, is major stress, and people experience being alone in a new and frightening way. Increasing numbers of older people are living in their own, and face worries about how to manage in emergencies, or getting assistance with things they can no longer manage. Families are often living far away, and busy with their own lives. Hopefully they are available for special occasions and when needed, but often not part of every-day living.

Moving home – to downsize or into a retirement village /rest home means leaving known neighbourhoods with familiar people and places. Having to start relationships with new people is tiring and demanding. It takes time, and without shared history feels very uncertain.



Decreased mobility and poor health makes getting out more difficult and tiring. Limited income and concerns about costs limits opportunities and causes stress and worry about what to do. Losing a driver's license or voluntarily ceasing driving makes it harder to get around, compounding many of these factors.

These are all very real challenges, and we need to develop specific strategies to combat loneliness as we age and are increasingly on our own.

### *WellElder provides low cost counselling for older people*

*In 2017 we held 989 individual counselling sessions and ran 36 group sessions for 290 clients.*

- *We rely on a DHB contract to help fund our counselling services.*
- *We ask clients to contribute towards the cost of counselling as they can, from \$10.*
- *Donations and additional funding are necessary to cover the full cost.*

What is it you enjoy doing? How can you do more of it? This is the key to developing ways through loneliness. There is no one answer - everyone is different and will find their own ways to make connections with others.

Knowing your neighbours – wherever you live – is a good start. Neighbours are our first port of call in an emergency – and may never be our best friends – but New Zealanders are mostly naturally friendly and willing to meet the people they live closest to.

Using computers and the internet to maintain email and skype contact with friends and family can be an important part of every-day living. The internet also opens up a huge world of information and networks for people interested in giving it a go.

Getting out for a walk or drive and enjoying nature and the environment can lift one's spirits and give one strength to consider what else to do.

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Be curious about the world around you – read articles and notices in local papers and shopping centres to find out more about what is on offer. There is range of activities such as choirs, walking groups, senior net, community centres, University of Third Age, Bridge and bowling clubs, Probus and other service clubs providing different activities for people who can get to them.

Transport can be available to help – Total Mobility card provides discounted taxi and driving services for people unable to drive, and occasional use of taxis and services such as Driving Miss Daisy are available in addition to public transport services. The cost seems high – but maintaining a car can also be very a high cost.

Talk to people. It sounds trite, and can be difficult at times, but the more we do it the more practice we get. Talking to a counsellor can certainly help, and WellElder is here for anyone who seeks counselling.

Combating loneliness takes a range of strategies – and different ones for everyone. But it's always worth the effort.

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**Become part of the WellElder community in Wellington....**

Signup for information and invitations to events to support WellElder

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Donate to us at 94 Riddiford Street Newtown, or by direct debit to bank account 06-0574-0223422-00 (ANZ Kilbirnie)

*We are a registered charity (CC31682) – Your donations are tax deductible*

