WELLELDER

Ph 04 380 2440 | www.wellelder.nz | administrator@wellelder.nz

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

Taming Anxiety

At times we all worry about some things in our lives, but when this become a continuous state of anxiety, and when we experience tension and discomfort it can be very disabling.

Although anxiety is a healthy response to danger and threat, at times our anxiety response can become overactivated. Even when there is no actual imminent danger, our bodies can begin to pump adrenaline into the blood stream, in preparation for "fight or flight". We can become hyper-aware of any potential problems, and feel tense and anxious.

Sometimes we begin to avoid particular situations, places, or activities in an effort to avoid uncomfortable feelings, and consequently find our lives becoming more and more restricted.

Panic attacks, episodes of high anxiety which often start and finish quite suddenly, are relatively common. About 1 in 10 people will have experienced an attack at some point, and whilst they are unpleasant, they are not life-threatening.

We often feel shame about our anxiety, and don't want others to know or notice.
However, talking to trusted friends or family, or to a WellElder counsellor, can often be the first step in accepting and managing anxiety.

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.*

Many things can be helpful, and WellElder clients often find that practising slow, calm breathing, marks the start of a new way of coping. Meditation, mindfulness, Tai Chi, Yoga, and Pilates can all be helpful, as can the deep breathing that comes with exercise such as swimming, walking and gardening. It helps to make slow, deep breathing part of your daily routine, so that it comes more naturally when anxiety levels mount.

'Can you think of anything you want more than you fear?'

When we are anxious we often exaggerate possible negative outcomes, or ruminate on problems without effective problem solving. A counsellor can help you to identify worrying thoughts and reframe these, putting them into perspective again. Worry and indecision often go hand-in-hand – getting on with life again, rather than procrastinating, allows you to keep moving forwards.

When we notice anxiety levels creeping up, it is often a cue for re-evaluating whether our lives have become unbalanced. Perhaps diet or exercise have been neglected, or there is too little time for refreshment and connecting with others. Even if we are busy carers, it is important to have down-time as well as stimulation, in order to keep ourselves well.

Dr Alice Boyes' useful book, "The Anxiety Toolkit "is in the Wellington City library system. The author poses the questions:
- 'Can you think of anything you want more than you fear?'
- And 'What is a meaningful life from your perspective?'

Your goals, she explains, are the compass to guide you towards meaning, even if some emotional vulnerability and anxiety bubble up from time to time.

Anxiety can feel very uncomfortable but does not have to limit your life – if you would like to talk to a WellElder counsellor about this, call 380 2440. We are open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and are available to people over 60 in Wellington, Porirua and Kapiti.

- -

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