

Farm Strong 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Comments from Ian Greaves



1. Connect

It is said that history is a great teacher and helps us negotiate our way forward.

Looking back 10 years if PSA in kiwifruit taught us anything it was that we can get through a crisis, we may not like it but, we can get through.

For most of us we got through easier and in a better state of mind by being part of a community that shared its learning and experiences. Sharing scientific knowledge, research, operational, financial, and wellbeing skills as well as some local meetings or social gatherings even if they were rather sombre at times.

CONNECT comes in many forms, levels, and intensities.

This is a time to utilise all the tools at our disposal for our own wellbeing (and hopefully the wellbeing of those who we CONNECT with)

Email, Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Zoom, texting or even a voice call.

If you don't know how to use some of these and want to do so, then Google it or ring a younger member of the family.

There's also CONNECT with neighbours over the fence. Amazing how many of my neighbours are happy for me to drop a bag of feijoas on their driveway or front lawn and to call out a greeting or have a brief chat. It does bring a sense of refreshment.

There's the standard natter on the phone and talking about the weather or the state of the industry but CONNECT doesn't have to be just a surface chat, if you're struggling then 'a problem shared is a problem halved', be honest like John Kirwin or Sam Whitelock.

Remember you are not alone, we're all in this together, the whole country, in fact the whole world.

Tips to Connect:

- Talk to someone – and really listen
- Organise a shared lunch
- Reconnect with an old friend
- Eat lunch with colleagues
- Find ways to collaborate
- Plan a social event at work
- Play with your kids
- Talk or phone instead of emailing
- Join a team or club

2. Give

Now for one of my favourite subjects and one that I practice continually.

What can we do to take us outside of ourselves and our own situation?

To focus on others, care for others, to recognise how fortunate we are.

One of the best ways and the 3rd element in mental well-being is to GIVE

There are just so many ways to GIVE

Time, food, flowers, things from the garden, kitchen or workshop, money, even to GIVE a helping hand or lending an ear. Be as creative as you like in practicing GIVING

There are already many people who need a helping hand.

Kiwifruit, Primary produce, and food producers are likely to be relatively well off as long as supply chains to market and consumers remain open.

This is a tremendous time to recognise the benefits to all GIVING. Benefits to the donor and the recipient.

It's like a law of the universe, a spiritual law/transaction, when we give, we gain as well as those who we are giving to.

Be outrageously generous.

GIVING to the Foodbank, volunteering, grocery shopping for elderly or sick, giving cash – or groceries, offering accommodation, supplying warm clothes to RSE workers – or kids from low decile schools. How about GIVING something to the courier drivers, nurses, Supermarket workers.

Find your own ideas, try anything, test the concept.

I've been taking bags of feijoas up our street which have been happily accepted and hastily eaten.

None of what I am saying, or writing is new, basically it's common humanity – once you think about it – the skill is to put it into practice.

Have fun improving your well-being while blessing others

GIVING is a great way to stay CONNECTED.



Tips to Give:

- Compliment someone
- Help a colleague with their work
- Share your ideas or feedback
- Get involved with a charity
- Express gratitude - thank someone
- Make someone a cup of tea
- Support a friend or whānau member
- Do the dishes for someone
- Perform a random act of kindness for a colleague, friend or even a stranger

3. Take Notice

One important skill to learn is to turn off and lower our anxiety levels

One way to do this is TAKE NOTICE

Now it's time to Take Notice.

Wow it really is so neat to have time to TAKE NOTICE

Mindfulness, meditation, or prayer, these are all times when we slow down and 'stop to smell the roses.'

There's something totally refreshing about taking pleasure in the small things of life, things that we so often take for granted.

Mindfulness has gained a lot of press over the last 5-10 years and for good reason.

It helps to refresh and revive us & to lower our anxiety levels.

Time for a cuppa. Actually stop and enjoy the process of making a cup of tea, smell it, sip it, just get lost in the moment.

It's good for us, it allows our mind/brain to recharge and refresh.

Breathing; this sounds bizarre to some but slowing down and taking some deep breaths also allows our body and mind to recharge and refresh.

It's like stepping out of the world for a while, getting back to a safe place in our mind, withdrawing from the turmoil in the world and focussing on one thing – TAKE NOTICE

Generally New Zealanders spend a lot of time looking after their physical health and it is of major concern to them. However, it has now become more accepted to focus time and energy on our mental health and wellbeing as well. By using the tools of CONNECT & TAKE NOTICE we can exercise our mental health.

It's not rocket science, it just takes some time and focus

All the best, enjoy the ride.



Tips on how to Take Notice:

- Keep a beautiful object near your desk
- Plan to look up at the night sky
- Notice signs of the season changing
- Practise gratitude
- Try mindfulness meditation
- Sit quietly in a garden or park
- Listen to your favourite music
- Take a break from digital devices
- Single-task – do one thing at a time

4.Keep Learning

Keep LEARNING is the 4th element of good mental health well-being

Academic learning has never really enthused me, I did it, but it was more dogged perseverance than a blissful experience, fortunately it is only one type of learning.

LEARNING can be any topic or pursuit that is relatively new to you or going deeper in something you know about. It's about stretching yourself and looking at skills and life from a different angle beyond what you already know.

During lockdown I have built a garden shed. Many years ago, I visited Stuart when he was framing up a room within his garage and I asked him how he knew what to do, he seemed to think it was just straight forward, while I was at a loss as to where to start. So tucked in the back of my mind was the challenge to build something one day. I've been planning a shed for ages and been collecting demolition timber and gear. One of the window frames took 3 goes, and some of the walls are a bit wonky but hey how fulfilling it was to get the rubber pond liner up onto the roof to make it waterproof – I need the DIY store to reopen now for the final burst. I have certainly learnt lots and it has given me a great sense of satisfaction. I feel good about myself and know where I can improve. I took my mind off the crisis outside of my control and got on with something I could do.

What do you want to LEARN, a new style of cooking, a language, types of architecture, botanical names of native NZ plants? Chase a topic that has previously eluded you – the internet and Google are marvellous tools.

If you want to understand where we fit as a civilisation into the world but from the view of the East rather than the West, then read 'The Silk Roads – A new history of the world' by Peter Frankopan. A real solid slog of a read

Or for something a bit easier try 'Sapiens – A brief history of Humankind' by Harari. Maybe this book will help you understand man's place in the world better and the influences that are exerted on us or that we exert.

If history doesn't intrigue you, then how about an intense look at life in a Mumbai slum "Behind the Beautiful Forever's' by Katherine Boo – fascinating and eye opening.

Have fun opening your world to new ideas, experiences, or other people's perspectives.



Tips to Keep Learning:

- Take a course
- Learn an instrument or language
- Visit a public art space
- Add to your work knowledge
- Organise lunchtime workshops
- Set a goal and work towards achieving it
- Take on a new task or help someone
- Get to know your colleagues more
- Join a book club
- Listen to a podcast or read a journal article



5. Exercise (Be Active)

Are you practicing Staying CONNECTED, Taking NOTICE, GIVING and Keeping on LEARNING?

A healthy body leads to a healthy mind.

Eating well (sensible diet, lots of greens, not much sugar, limit the alcohol, drink some water)

Sleeping well (limit stimulation before bed, cut out the Facebook & texting after a certain time, keep a pad and pencil beside the bed write down a thought in the night then forget about it until morning. Remind yourself 'Night is for sleeping')

EXERCISE well. Walk, run, swim, palates, yoga, ride.

Yep EXERCISE – it's got to be my least favourite because it conjures up thoughts of the gym, treadmills, repetitive effort. I'd much rather be outside.

I try to convince my physio that I stretch extra far and deep under the feijoa trees and ask him if that counts!

EXERCISE is not just physical, we need mental, spiritual, and emotional exercise as well to obtain a healthy overall well-being. But let's just go for the simple common definition for now and make it the physical part.

It really is just so important that we get up and get moving, get the blood flowing and get oxygen to the brain. Leave the heavy weightlifting to the young guys, for most of us a decent walk, jog, or maybe even some gardening is enough to get us functioning better. Try it or keep it up, whichever one fits you.

Tips to Be Active:

- Go for a gentle stroll at lunchtime
- Join a sports team
- Break up long periods of sitting
- Have walking meetings
- Take a yoga, Pilates, or Tai Chi class
- Use the stairs instead of the lift
- Do some gardening
- Try some stretches