



## **Advice for Principals and Teachers**

### **1. Look after yourselves and each other**

- You are not super-human. While your personal losses might not seem as extreme as other disasters that face the world, you might have lost your ideas of safety and security as well as some of your freedoms or regular activities. You or someone close to you might have been injured or become ill or even died as a result of the event. You are allowed to take time to process what has happened and to reflect or grieve, as necessary.
- Traumatic events can cause immediate and long term stress. Sooner or later, you will need to stop and take stock of the emotional and physical toll. Some of you will bury yourselves in your work; others will find that the strain of managing multiple expectations is too much. Everyone will have different strengths and limits. Don't be quick to judge. Each of you will need to find your own coping strategies and support mechanisms.
- Don't be too hard on yourself or others. Reach out for help and be compassionate towards your colleagues. You might not be aware of all the issues in someone else's life. These events might bring up issues from the past that mean that some people are struggling in ways that you might not always know about.
- During crises, we all tune into news broadcasts to catch up with the latest figures or find ourselves reading endless Facebook posts. This is not always helpful. Try to limit your viewing to essential information or accurate websites. Check the facts and sources before you re-post or tell others. During Covid-19 there has been confusion spread by well-meaning people who have not taken the time to check the credibility of the claims or sources.
- Make use of your peak bodies, associations and unions to work collectively to share advice and information as well as to share your needs or experiences through to the relevant ministries or agencies. Leadership share sites can also have useful advice for coping with traumatic events.



There is no magic bullet for getting us all through a crisis. Social, emotional, educational and economic recovery will be a long journey but here are things that principals and teachers in on-going and post-disaster zones found helpful:

- Checking in with each other so that you can share experiences, give appropriate support and organise help if needed.
- Taking stock of the school's students and whānau so that principals and teachers have a sense of what is happening with individual students, wide whanau. And the community. This can be done using a variety of means, including using the technology we have become so familiar with during Covid-19.
- Having regular staff planning catch-ups so that everyone can discuss the issues that arise and ways forward, such as the messages that you are giving students and parents, including what is realistic about what children can manage and how parents can support their learning.
- Discussing how to activate further support when it is needed – counselling, financial support, resource materials, IT help, leave, employment matters, requirements from the Ministry or other official agencies.
- Building in times during the days, weeks, and months ahead to keep checking in on each other, creating support buddies or groups to debrief with like-minded people, for example, principals getting together face-to-face or over Zoom to talk about leadership issues, or teachers connecting with each other to share their concerns and solutions. Try a wellbeing survey or regular one-to-one conversations to get an insight into staff needs.