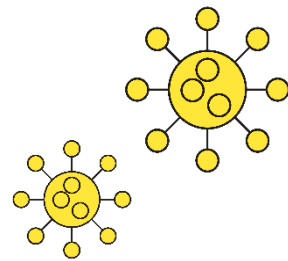


# NZDF COVID-19 WELLBEING GUIDE FOR KIWIS OVERSEAS ON NZDF NON- OPERATIONAL SERVICE



Our team of 5 million spreads far, we are thinking of you all wherever you are in the world – he waka eke noa. Being away from New Zealand can be hard at the best of times, but particularly during a Global pandemic. This guide has been prepared for those working and living offshore. It acknowledges issues that many of you are living with daily and may have been doing so for some time. Circumstances of course vary widely and the information below is only a guide. Please contact the Integrated Wellness team for further information or support, regardless of whether you are a service person or an accompanying family member [integrated.wellness@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:integrated.wellness@nzdf.mil.nz).

Living overseas during the COVID-19 pandemic is understandably a difficult time, no matter what your circumstance. For most of you this pandemic wasn't in the brief when you left NZ. The pandemic has been ongoing for 6+ months now, and with no indication of easing in many locations. The positive attitude that sustained everyone during the early days can start to wane and after a while resilience levels can get depleted. Some of the sorts of concerns and challenges people may be experiencing are:

**Concern for others** - It's natural to be worried when away from friends and loved ones, and particularly so during difficult times; loved ones back home will likely be worried about those offshore and vice versa, and this is particularly a concern for the very young, elderly or those who are health compromised, or where there is a prevalence of COVID-19 community spread.

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Knowing that everyone is practicing safe habits, respecting prescribed bubbles and physical distancing wherever they are, is an assuring factor for others. Staying connected virtually with those close to you will also help with managing these concerns.

**Health Risks** - The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has created real health risks for many overseas NZDF members and their families. Complying with health practice guidelines has required significant adjustments for everyone but is key to keeping everyone safe.

**Control and Uncertainty** - A lack of control over the current situation and a lack of certainty about what lies ahead is difficult. This is particularly hard when we are used to having control and certainty to make decisions and guide practice, for those with family, and those trying to plan ahead. Focussing on what is within your control and accepting the need to remain flexible for the moment will help.

**Restrictions** - Restrictions in what people can do, can create frustration and boredom. The inability to practice usual routines such as sport and exercise is hard. Living in close quarters with others for extended periods without respite or being isolated from others for long periods can also be difficult. For military members, roles may have changed significantly, and new restrictions. For family members, again there are likely to be restrictions in activities, and in many areas, schools have been closed. This requires a rethink about the best way of living in this environment. Reviewing family and work routines, planning and adapting family events and activities will help.

**Cancellation of Plans** - Planned visits home, regional leave and holidays have likely had to be postponed or cancelled, and much anticipated visits from friends and family have also had to be delayed or cancelled. This is naturally disappointing for everyone, but it is wise to avoid the **unnecessary risks associated with travel** for the moment.

**Children and Education** - Parents and children may be struggling with home schooling, and the natural frustrations amongst children with ongoing restrictions in what they can do ( 'this time here isn't what you told me it would be like', 'I am bored', 'I want to see my friends', 'I'm sick of this', 'I'm sick of you'). There may also be concern about children's education falling behind, the impact of a lack of social contact, or concerns about behaviour or health.

This is a difficult time for everyone – it's important to share and talk about the situation and how everyone is feeling, and agree your plan for getting through this together.

**Isolation** - Some may be feeling isolated and lonely. This is particularly likely for those without family, in regions where there are no other New Zealanders working or living, or without a good network of virtual connection and communications. Some people may be feeling ignored or forgotten about by those back in NZ, and there may be a sense there is a lack of appreciation and recognition of the difficult circumstances many Kiwis living and working overseas are having to manage.

Let others know how often you would like to connect with them and how you would like to connect e.g. phone, video call.

**Depleting Resilience** - Dealing with many of these challenges can be difficult, particularly when they are enduring over time. The lack of respite from these challenges is draining. Frustrations may begin to emerge, and can result in increased tensions, stress and anxiety. It is important to recognise the causes and put strategies in place to manage these.

Maintaining balance in your life and making time to do things that you know help you and others to stay resilient is important (such as exercise, taking some time out for you, utilising resilience tools, and talking about what is happening and how everyone is feeling).

## What can help?

Below are some suggestions that may help. There are also some more specific guidelines, tools and resources on the Force4Families website, some of these links are provided below. While much of this content has been developed for the NZ context lots of it is equally as relevant for our community across the globe.

Keep up to date with and follow local and NZDF advice. The NZDF health advice can be found [here](#) on the Defence Health ILP site and on the [Force4Families website](#).

The [Force4Families website](#) is being used to circulate both NZDF COVID-19 health and wellness advice from the NZDF for the wider NZDF community. There are also links to a range of tools and resources on this page and we continue to update these over time.

- ✓ Guides for remote working for [teams](#) and [leaders](#)
- ✓ Tips for maintaining healthy habits ([healthy habits](#) and [sleep](#))
- ✓ Guides for healthy relationships ([team](#), [partners](#) and [families / children](#))
- ✓ [Resources](#) (websites, videos, activities and podcasts) and [contacts](#) pages
- ✓ The [Force Financial Hub](#) page contains finance information including budgeting tools, insurance and Kiwisaver.

Messages are also being circulated using the [NZDF Community Facebook Group](#) and regional community Facebook pages.

### Need Support?

[NZDF4U Wellbeing Support services](#) are accessible 24/7 if you need them. The number to call from overseas is: +64 9 414 9914. This service comprises a helpline and virtual telehealth counselling service from NZ. Local support can also be arranged through the NZDF4U EAP service using local providers, and through International SOS. Please contact [integrated.wellness@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:integrated.wellness@nzdf.mil.nz) if you need assistance.