

Impact Evaluation for the Pause Breathe Smile Programme

October 2022

FOREWORD

Congratulations to Pause Breathe Smile on the positive impact that this programme is having in our schools around Aotearoa New Zealand and our deepest gratitude to Southern Cross for funding this work and enabling it to reach so many young people in primary and intermediate schools throughout our country.

Our mission at the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience is to increase population wellbeing. We advocate for preventative approaches and whole-school wellbeing so we stand firmly behind the work of Pause Breathe Smile which is contributing to changing young lives for the better.

At the heart of wellbeing is knowing who we are and being able to interact with others to form supportive relationships. In age appropriate ways, this is exactly what Pause Breathe Smile supports students to learn. By helping develop student self-awareness, our young people are better able to manage their emotions, the choices they need to make, and to develop and sustain healthy relationships. Of particular importance to us is that Pause Breathe Smile has been developed for our local context, by people who know and understand our children. It draws on local models of wellbeing, in particular Te Whare Tapa Whā, and so aligns with the New Zealand Curriculum and respects the commitment to Te Tiriti of our schools.

As researchers we are excited to see that the positive impact of Pause Breathe Smile on student wellbeing has been

who are languishing. Flourishing is a psychological term to describe people experiencing high wellbeing, frequent positive emotions, and who overall, feel satisfied with their relationships and their lives. That more of our tamariki are finding life worthwhile and enjoyable is truly something to celebrate.

The number of students whom teachers believe are languishing has fallen over the year since they learned the skills of Pause Breathe Smile. Languishing is a psychological term used to describe people who, although they do not meet the criteria for a diagnosis of any mental illness, nonetheless, do not enjoy positive mental health. Often described as feeling 'blah' or 'meh' about life, people who are languishing go through the motions of life without excitement or enjoyment. They can feel numbed to what's going on around them, often pulling back from learning, challenge, or relationships. It is therefore very reassuring and encouraging to see the numbers of students who are languishing continue to reduce in the schools where Pause Breathe Smile has been introduced to students.

That these results have been achieved through challenging pandemic years is particularly impressive and speaks to the commitment of our teachers to supporting the wellbeing of our tamariki. We owe a debt of gratitude to New Zealand's teachers for continuing to prioritise the wellbeing on their ākonga through such demanding times.

maintained at the one-year follow up. This strongly suggests students have embedded the learning of Pause Breathe Smile and are making it part of their everyday behaviour, using the tools and techniques to navigate the challenges of their lives. The impact of this change is shown in the increase in the number of students who are flourishing and fall in the number

These results inspire confidence for a future where Pause Breathe Smile is embraced by more schools.

Dr Denise Quinlan and Dr Lucy Hone

Founders, New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Pause Breathe Smile (PBS) is an initiative governed and delivered by the Pause Breathe Smile Trust, teaching mindfulness practices in primary and intermediate schools across Aotearoa.

The programme is taught to teachers through the PBS educator training pathway involving an online introduction to mindfulness practices, professional learning and development, and resources including student learning journals for tamariki and rangatahi to record their mindfulness journey.

Originally created at the Mental Health Foundation, PBS is aligned to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and incorporates Professor Mason Durie's model of Te Whare Tapa Whā. This model presents a holistic overview of principles essential for hauora (holistic health and wellbeing) and includes four key pou or realms: taha tinana (highlighting physical dimensions), taha hinengaro (highlighting emotional dimensions), taha whānau (highlighting social dimensions) and taha wairua (highlighting spiritual dimensions).

Through PBS, children and their teachers learn different mindful practices. These include mindful breathing exercises, mindful eating, mindful movements, a body scan, mindful walking, a happy heart practice (for developing kindness) and practices for recognising the connection between oneself and the wider environment.

Pause Breathe Smile is available free of charge to primary and intermediate schools throughout Aotearoa thanks to the initiative being fully funded by Southern Cross Healthcare. Southern Cross has supported PBS since September 2020, and while the roll out has been affected by the pandemic, by the end of the year approximately 100,000 children will have been through the programme, along with 6,500 + teachers who deliver PBS to their students. Pause Breathe Smile is available in more than 320 schools throughout Aotearoa and there are more schools joining the initiative over the coming months.

METHODOLOGY

In a 15-minute online survey, Mindquip asked teachers enrolled in the programme to describe the wellbeing, characteristics, and behaviours of children at their school. The survey had three parts - before training, after programme implementation and one year later.

Fieldwork was conducted by Mindquip between 9 February 2021 and 29 August 2022. Within that period, a total of 1,086 staff from 210 different schools responded to the 3-month follow-up, and 266 staff from 95 schools responded to the 1-year follow-up.

This report shows how teachers have noticed and experienced changes one year on from the launch of Pause Breathe Smile in their schools.

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Southern Cross has commissioned an independent evaluation to understand the effects of PBS on school communities. This design was led by the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience, and implemented by Dr Reuben Rusk at MindQuip.

The research has been focused on understanding the impacts for students and their teachers, and to understand any ongoing effects of the programme's implementation in schools.



Dr Reuben Rusk, PhD
Founding Director, Mindquip



RESULTS

Teachers were asked to reflect on general student wellbeing, and to indicate if they have seen positive or negative changes since rolling out Pause Breathe Smile in their classrooms. Improvements were seen in measures for student wellbeing.

+16.6% (+8.3%)

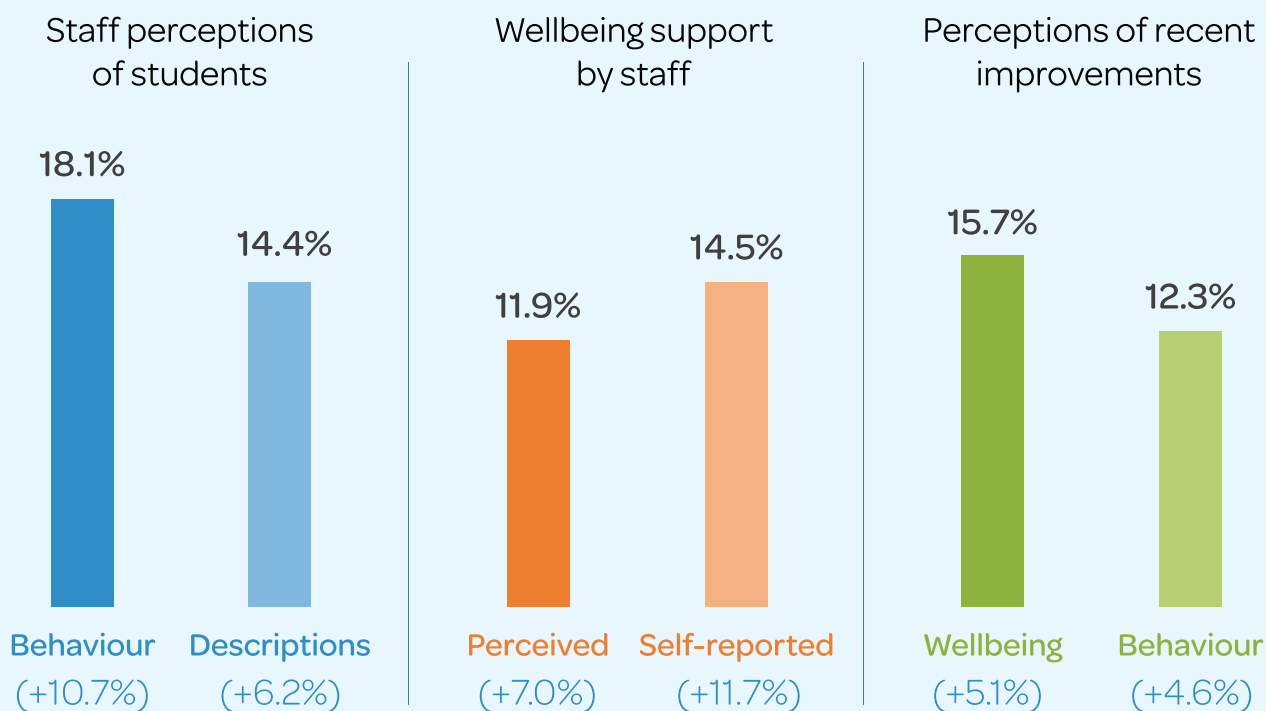
Aggregate student wellbeing score

+7.0% (+4.5%)

Perceived student wellbeing score

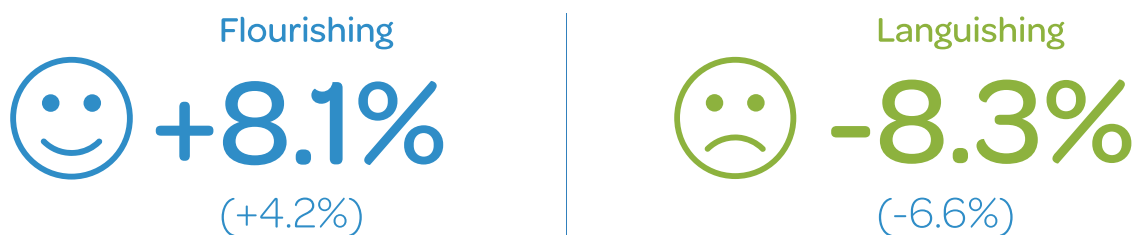
Numbers indicate the percentage of scores that shifted above (+) or below (-) the average baseline score one year (or three months) after launch.

In a key result, staff described increases in desirable behaviours and characteristics and decreases in undesirable behaviours and characteristics. Perceived and self-reported support for student wellbeing by staff increased significantly.



Teachers were asked how many students they perceived to be flourishing or languishing in terms of wellbeing. The results clearly indicate an improvement. Teachers reported more students as flourishing and fewer students as languishing.

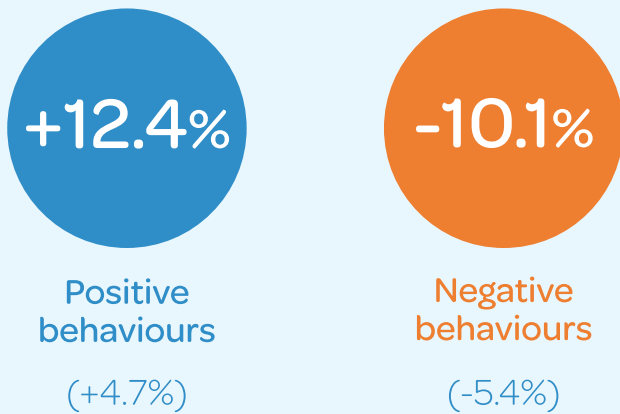
Proportion flourishing / languishing



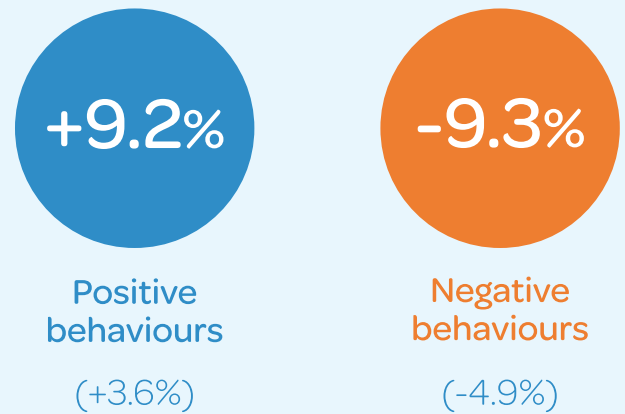
Teachers reported seeing positive changes in students' sense of wellbeing, alongside reductions in students' disruptive behaviour or negativity. Teachers described children as more cheerful, self-motivated, focused, and supportive. They reported more perseverance, enthusiasm, contentment, and hope among children. The children were also seen as more lively and helpful.

Following implementation of PBS, teachers indicated that children were less apprehensive, disinterested, anxious and pessimistic.

Frequency of behaviours



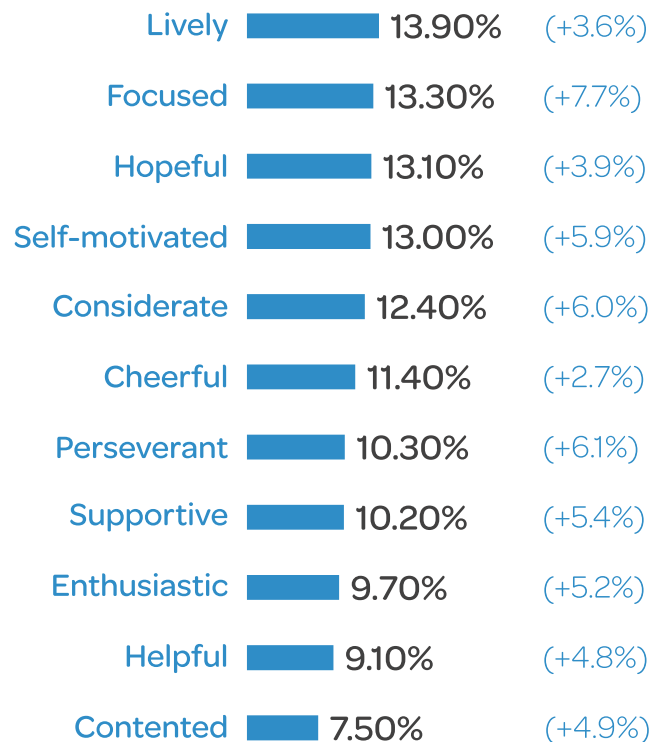
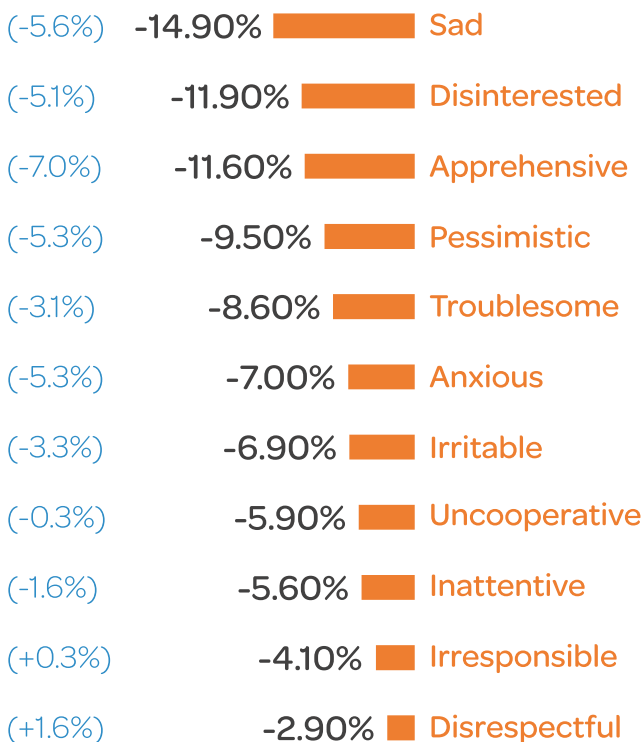
Proportion showing behaviours



Negative descriptions

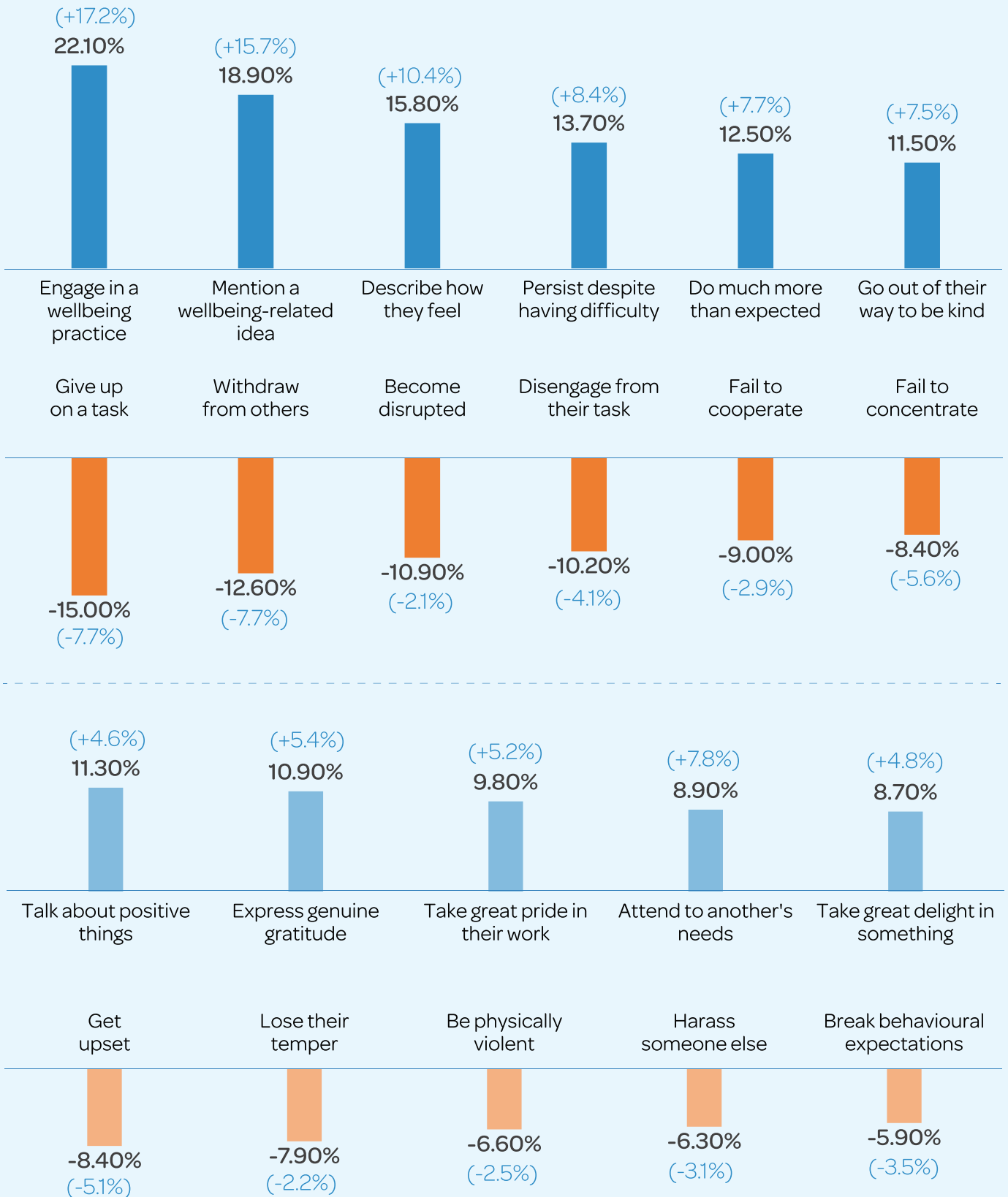
Positive descriptions

Students were...





Positive / negative behaviours



Given the opportunity to use any words to describe the children and their behaviours, teachers used more positive descriptions in the follow-up. These open text responses were consistent with the other responses in the survey, and are visualised below.

Open-text student descriptions -
Baseline 65.1% positive



Open-text student descriptions -
At 3 month follow-up 75.2% positive



Open-text student behaviours -
Baseline 47.3% positive



Open-text student behaviours -
At 3 month follow-up 63.2% positive





Teacher feedback about Pause Breathe Smile has been positive. Comments below indicate PBS has made a difference in their classrooms. What's more, some parents have commented to teachers that their children use the mindfulness techniques they have learned at home too. Some teachers also reported using the techniques themselves.

Selected comments from staff

"This programme is fantastic, very practical and has a lot of activities and ideas that can be revisited. Not just a one off programme for 8 weeks."

"This is a very valuable, practical programme that can make a real difference in some children's lives."

"One hundred percent worth doing. Would love to be able to extend training for staff year 9-13. Staff that attended were able to use for students, but personally benefited themselves."

"Please maintain the funding - it is so, so important for our children to have the knowledge and (power) of knowing about their emotions and inner voice."

"Our youngest learners have benefited from learning these important life skills at a young age."

"The course really has had an impact on me personally in a very positive way reminding me of actions to use daily."



“So many of our children need this - more and more anxious kids and the programme helps all of us to try and be more positive and take more control.”

“Learners enjoyed the programme and were seen practicing the skills with their peers. The programme is making a difference in schools.”



“We have loved implementing this programme and we have seen an increase in children’s wellbeing.”

“I have had good feedback from parents to say their children are using PBS at home.”

“It is a brilliant programme. A brilliant innovation to improve our present and for the future.

“Fantastic programme! I have even been able to incorporate it at home with my family. I wish more schools would run this programme.”

“This is a great programme that I can see will continue to make a positive impact on the overall well-being of our staff and students.

“Have seen changes in staff using PBS strategies, and this has been noted by outside facilitators in other PLD working with our staff.”

“Fantastic course - it’s not only improving wellbeing for my students, but also myself.”

“We really appreciated having the Pause Breathe Smile programme funded in our school, thank you.”

SUMMARY

Overall evaluation results indicate Pause Breathe Smile is having a positive effect in schools where it has been implemented. Feedback from teachers also reveals the initiative's impact extends to teachers and whānau. School leaders advise teachers are using the same techniques in their own lives and enjoying the benefit of mindful practises.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mindquip

In the last 20 years, cutting-edge scientific research in the field of wellbeing science has shed light on how individuals and organisations function best. Much of this information is not accessible, though. Mindquip was founded in April 2015 by Reuben Rusk, PhD to provide individuals and organisations with insight and tools based on this research so that they can benefit.

Mindquip.co.nz

NZ Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience

NZIWR brings together New Zealand's most experienced and qualified wellbeing and resilience 'pracademics' to support individuals, teams, communities and whole organisations to cope with disruption, challenge, uncertainty and change.

NZIWR.co.nz

Pause Breathe Smile Trust

The Pause Breathe Smile Trust has a vision of achieving Half a Million Healthy Minds. Half a million being the approximate number of kiwi kids in primary and intermediate schools.

Pausebreathesmile.nz

Southern Cross Healthcare

Southern Cross Healthcare is proud to partner with the Pause Breathe Smile Trust and the Mental Health Foundation to make the locally designed and internationally recognised schools' mindfulness programme freely available to all school children aged five to 12. Pause Breathe Smile equips tamariki with tools to manage the ups and downs of life and set them up for a healthy future.

<https://healthcare.southerncross.co.nz/about-us>

