

TRAVELLERS

× PROGRAMME

NAVIGATING LIFE'S JOURNEY

A group programme for young
people that builds resilience and helps
them face life and its challenges



PARENT BROCHURE

WHAT IS TRAVELLERS?

Travellers is a school-based wellbeing programme primarily for Year 9 students. It supports young people to understand their feelings, build practical coping skills, and navigate change, stress, and everyday challenges.

The programme is delivered in small groups at school by trained staff, in a safe and supportive environment.

- Small-group, relationship-based programme
- Practical and skills-focused
- Creative and interactive activities
- Delivered in schools across Aotearoa since 2001
- Facilitated by trained school staff

It has been developed in association with Health New Zealand and Victoria University of Wellington.

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA



WHY SCHOOLS OFFER TRAVELLERS

Starting secondary school is a big transition. Alongside new friendships and independence, many young people are also navigating personal and family changes, pressure, uncertainty, and questions about who they are.

Travellers provides early, practical support so young people can build skills before problems become overwhelming.

Travellers helps young people to:

- Make sense of their feelings
- Learn healthy ways to cope with stress
- Understand how thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are connected
- Build confidence and self-belief
- Feel more connected to school and staff

"It has honestly made me the better person today and I would like to thank my facilitator for all the support. I feel like now I can be very open to talk about my feelings and what's happening in my life. Also doing it with a bunch of others is even better cause they were in the same shoes as me at the beginning and now we've all become really good mates."

Student (anonymous)



QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE DO IN TRAVELLERS?

Across the programme, students take part in structured, age-appropriate activities such as:

- Creating a “life map” to reflect on their own journey
- Learning about thoughts and feelings, and how they’re connected
- Practising ways to calm and regulate their nervous system
- Exploring healthy ways to express emotions
- Identifying strengths, supports, and coping strategies

HOW ARE STUDENTS SELECTED?

Schools use a combination of professional judgement and a confidential student wellbeing survey to help identify students who may benefit from extra support.

DO STUDENTS HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation is voluntary. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school counsellor.

WHEN DOES TRAVELLERS TAKE PLACE?

Travellers runs during school time, with consideration given to students’ learning programmes.

IS THERE A COST?

There is no cost to whānau.



SCHOOL STAFF REPORT THAT TRAVELLERS...

BUILDS PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS THAT TRANSFER INTO LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR

"The skills that Travellers teaches are Life Skills that assist the student to keep safe, stay focused and improve in their behaviour. There is a marked and noticeable improvement in the classroom learning of students once they've done the Travellers Programme and integrated the life skills into their academic performance."

EQUIPS STUDENTS TO COPE WITH TODAY'S PRESSURES

"Resiliency skills are vital to this new generation of youth who are so affected by social media. During this year the school has had to deal with some major mental health issues so this programme has been extremely useful it giving the young people tools to weather these situations."

STRENGTHENS PROACTIVE SUPPORT

"We see Travellers as a very valuable addition to the work that we do and that early identification is really valuable. We see it as very effective. It allows counsellors to engage with the young people in a more positive way to begin with and then if they need to unpack some of their concerns, they've already got the relationship."



YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT THAT TRAVELLERS...

ENHANCED THEIR CONNECTIONS WITH PEERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, STAFF, AND FACILITATORS

"I get on with teachers now. I didn't get on with them before Travellers. I talk to my form teacher about stuff now. In Travellers, we try to open our hearts to each other and solve common problems together. I could share my feelings and it was kept personal. It's great."

REDUCED EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND IMPROVED ABILITY TO COPE

"This program has helped me with many things, but most importantly, it helped me with dealing with certain situations that I'd often have a hard time dealing with. It taught me how to calm down when I was stressed/upset and how to react when certain situations arise. It made me feel safe to share any problems I had because everyone else was very comfortable with themselves, and that made my issues feel much more secure and valid when sharing them."

INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND SELF-BELIEF

"Overall, I feel Travellers has made me more confident in sharing my emotions and voicing them too, I also feel that Travellers has helped me to realize that having emotions are good and how to deal with them in a healthy way. It also helped me with being a more positive person and reflecting that positivity on others by helping them as well."

LED TO GREATER WILLINGNESS TO TALK AND SEEK HELP

"Travellers helped me understand that if I'm going through a difficult time that I have friends and family there and it's good to talk about cause you're expressing your feelings."

HELPED THEM FEEL LESS ALONE AND MORE UNDERSTOOD

"It's helped me realise I'm not alone and that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover because loads of people go through horrible things and you wouldn't be able to tell from looking at them. Basically it's helped me be more open minded."

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLORE IN TRAVELLERS

Travellers follows a clear, structured curriculum designed to gently build skills over time. Sessions are practical, age-appropriate, and focused on helping young people better understand themselves, their feelings, and how to cope with everyday challenges.

We believe that a young person's immediate support people should be aware of what they are learning, so they can be there for them. The following pages offer an overview of the themes your child will explore across the programme.

You don't need to teach this content at home – simply being curious, listening, and encouraging your child to practise what they're learning can make a big difference.



THEME
WHAKATAUKĪ
CONCEPT
SLOGAN

SESSION 1	Welcome		
SESSION 2	Connecting	<i>He waka eke noa</i> We are all in this together	We have more in common than we think Life is a journey
SESSION 3	Life maps	<i>Titiro whakamuri, kōkiri whakamua</i> We look back and reflect so that we can move forward	Everyone's journey has ups and downs, and that's normal Your story can change
SESSION 4	Feeling	<i>Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō te katoa</i> Pursue learning for the sake of everyone's wellbeing	I can trust my feelings to tell me what I need Feelings are clues
SESSION 5	Expressing	<i>Hurihia tō aro ki te rā, tukuna tō ātārangi kia taka ki muri i a koe</i> Turn your face to the sun and the shadows will fall behind you	I feel better when I express my feelings in safe and healthy ways Express yourself
SESSION 6	Thinking	<i>Ko au te waiora o aku whakaaro</i> I am the wellbeing of my thoughts	I can't always change the situation, but I can choose how I respond Thoughts can be challenged
SESSION 7	Self-esteem	<i>He aroha whakatō, he aroha puta mai</i> If kindness is sown, then kindness you shall receive	The way I talk to myself affects my confidence and mood Be your own best friend
SESSION 8	Wellbeing	<i>He oranga ngākau he pikinga waiora</i> Positive feelings in your heart will enhance your self-worth and overall wellbeing	The little things I do each day matter Travel with care
SESSION 9	Relationships	<i>Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou ka ora ai te iwi</i> With your offering and my offering the people will thrive	Support can come from people, places, and activities – not just one person Build your support team
SESSION 10	Celebration	<i>Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tīnā</i> Strive to overcome challenges and celebrate successes	I decide what my next step is from here You've got this!

SESSION 1 WELCOME

(WHAKAWHANAUNGATANGA)

Young people are welcomed into the group and begin getting to know each other through games, shared kai, and simple activities. Facilitators explain what Travellers is, why students have been invited, and what they can expect over the next 10 weeks. The group co-creates expectations around respect and confidentiality, and students have an opportunity to anonymously share hopes, worries, or questions about the programme. The focus is on helping everyone feel safe, included, and comfortable taking part.

Things you could speak
about with your young
person during this week

A thin, curved orange arrow pointing from the text above towards the 'CONVERSATION IDEAS' box.

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Belonging
- New groups / new people
- What makes a space feel okay or not okay

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Young people are highly sensitive to where they fit and whether they feel accepted. New groups can feel exciting and intimidating at the same time. Feeling a sense of belonging is one of the strongest protective factors for mental health.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Keep routines steady, show warmth in small everyday ways, and let your child know you're available without pressure.



SESSION 2 CONNECTING

Students explore the idea that life includes ups and downs, changes, and challenges, and that no one travels alone. As a group, they create shared safety guidelines (kawa) about how they want to treat each other. They also begin using personal “travel diaries” for reflection. A creative group activity introduces the metaphor of life as a journey, helping students see that difficult moments are part of a bigger picture and do not define who they are.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Young people are learning that struggles and setbacks are part of being human. Normalising ups and downs reduces shame.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Share small, age-appropriate stories of your own challenges. Create space for their experiences to be heard and valued.

KEY CONCEPT

We have more in common than we think

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Ups and downs being part of life
- Everyone having hard days
- What helps on rough days



SESSION 3 LIFE MAPS

Students create their own life maps – visual representations of important experiences, challenges, and milestones in their lives. Facilitators model safe sharing first, then students work creatively using drawing, collage, or symbols. The emphasis is on meaning-making: while young people cannot control everything that happens to them, they can choose how they understand and respond to their experiences.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Young people are beginning to form their personal identity and story. How adults talk about young people's experiences shapes how they see themselves.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Focus on personal growth, learning, and effort rather than labels.

KEY CONCEPT

Everyone's journey has ups and downs, and that's normal.

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- How people change over time
- Learning from mistakes
- Things they're proud of



SESSION 4 FEELING

This session builds emotional literacy. Students learn a wider vocabulary for feelings, explore where emotions show up in their bodies, and practise recognising different emotional states. Activities help students understand that feelings are normal and useful signals, rather than problems to get rid of. They begin connecting feelings with underlying needs, such as safety, rest, connection, or support.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Emotions can feel intense and confusing due to brain and body changes. Feelings are information, not problems.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

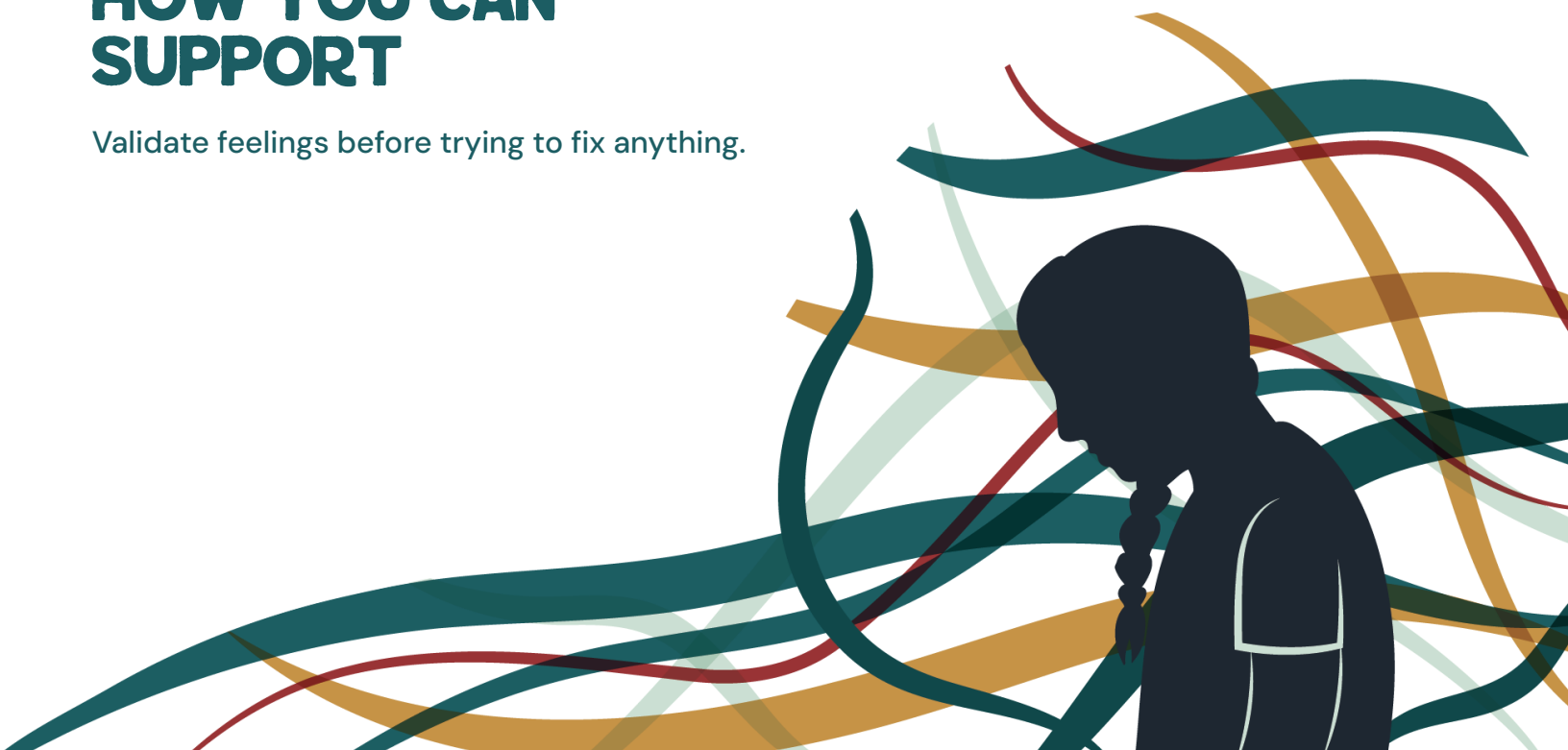
Validate feelings before trying to fix anything.

KEY CONCEPT

I can trust my feelings
to tell me what I need

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Different types of feelings
- How stress shows up (tired, snappy, quiet)
- What feelings might be pointing to



SESSION 5 EXPRESSING

Students explore healthy ways to express emotions instead of bottling them up. They learn the difference between validating and invalidating responses and practise what supportive listening sounds like. The group also experiments with physical, creative, and calming ways of releasing strong feelings (such as movement, breathing, talking, or art). The focus is on learning safe, respectful ways to let feelings out.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Young people are learning safe ways to let emotions out. Expression looks different for everyone.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

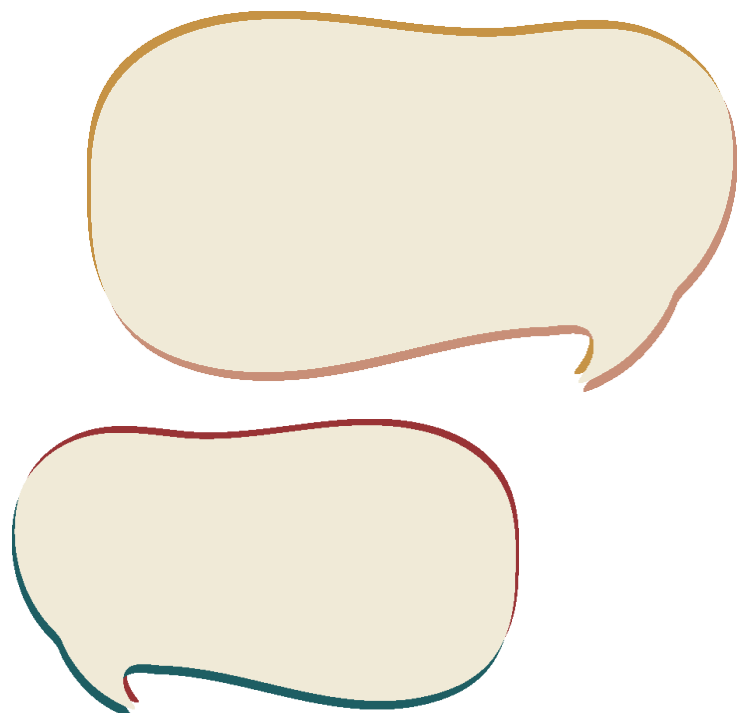
Offer options (talking, writing, music, movement) without pressure.

KEY CONCEPT

I feel better when I express my feelings in safe and healthy ways

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Different ways people express themselves
- Music, art, movement, humour, silence
- What helps get things out



SESSION 6 THINKING

This session introduces the idea that thoughts are not always facts. Students explore how thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and behaviours are connected. Through games and simple worksheets, they practise spotting unhelpful thoughts and replacing them with more balanced ones. They learn a basic process of “catch it, challenge it, change it” to build flexible and realistic thinking.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Many young people develop harsh inner critics. Thoughts are not always facts.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Model balanced self-talk.

KEY CONCEPT

I can't always change the situation, but I can choose how I respond

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Inner voice / self-talk
- Being harsh vs being fair to yourself
- Perspective-taking



SESSION 7 SELF-ESTEEM

Young people explore what self-esteem is and where it comes from. Activities focus on identifying internal qualities (such as kindness, courage, persistence) rather than only external achievements or appearance. Students reflect on how social media, comparisons, and self-talk affect how they feel about themselves. The aim is to encourage a kinder inner voice and a more realistic view of their worth.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Comparison and self-judgement increase in early adolescence. Self-esteem grows through being treated with kindness.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Notice effort and strengths.

KEY CONCEPT

The way I talk to myself affects my confidence and mood

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Strengths that aren't about achievement
- Effort and persistence
- Being human, not perfect



SESSION 8 WELLBEING

Students learn about wellbeing as something they can actively look after. Using models such as Te Whare Tapa Whā, they explore different areas of wellbeing (physical, emotional, social, and sense of meaning). They identify personal strategies that help them feel more balanced, such as sleep, movement, creative outlets, time with others, or quiet time. The emphasis is on noticing what helps them feel better and building small, achievable habits.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Young people are starting to see how habits affect mood. Small changes can have big impact.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Support regular sleep, meals, movement, and downtime.

KEY CONCEPT

The little things I do
each day matter

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Sleep, screens, food, movement
- What helps them feel better after a hard day
- Balance



SESSION 9 RELATIONSHIPS

This session focuses on connection and support. Students explore what healthy relationships look like, how to communicate needs, and who they can turn to for help. They identify people in their support networks and practise thinking about when and how to reach out. The message is that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Peers matter more, but adults still matter too. Young people need multiple safe adults.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Help identify trusted people.

KEY CONCEPT

Support can come from people, places, and activities – not just one person

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Who they enjoy being around
- What feels supportive vs draining
- Having more than one safe adult



SESSION 10 CELEBRATION

The final session looks back on the journey and celebrates progress. Students reflect on what they have learned, the skills they have developed, and changes they have noticed in themselves. The group acknowledges each other's efforts and ends with a shared celebration. The focus is on recognising growth and encouraging young people to keep using the tools they have learned.

HELPFUL FOR WHANAU TO KNOW

Young people are encouraged to reflect on their growth and future direction. Being noticed builds confidence.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Acknowledge progress and effort.

KEY CONCEPT

I decide what my next step is from here

CONVERSATION IDEAS

- Looking back on the term
- Noticing personal growth
- What they want more of next





SKYLIGHT TRUST

Skylight Trust started in 1996 to support children and young people through grief, loss, and trauma. After a local bereavement service closed, a group of professionals created a trust to fill the gap—starting small in Wellington with donated space and community backing.

We quickly grew into a national organisation, offering counselling, resources, and training. Programmes like Travellers brought support into schools, and we responded to major events like the Christchurch earthquakes with practical tools and immediate care.

Today, we continue helping people of all ages navigate tough times, with a focus on community partnerships, cultural respect, and making support accessible to anyone who needs it.

24K+ HOURS OF THERAPY EACH YEAR

400+ FAMILIES SUPPORTED PER MONTH

130+ SCHOOLS RUNNING
OUR PROGRAMME

Visit www.skylight.org.nz to
learn more



"It's different now. Before I went to Travellers, I didn't get along with my friends. I just felt invisible; no-one was listening to me or cared about me. Well, now I speak up to them and finally they cared about me"

**I'M NOT INVISIBLE
ANYMORE.**



www.travellers.org.nz