



Kia Manawanui

Pānui #04 / 19th March 2020

Te Rā Waldorf School, Te Rawhiti Kindergarten, Nursery and Playgroups
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**Ngā mihi mahana, ngā mihi mahaaki
kia a koutou e ngā whānau,
dear parents, whānau, and friends**

We hope you are all well and happy in these strange and uncertain times.

Like everyone, the staff here at Te Rā and Te Rāwhiti are feeling the impact of the covid-19 situation. This is a time where nobody has any real idea of how things will evolve; we are taking all necessary steps to keep people safe while also attending to the practicalities of keeping the school running, and have really appreciated your support and understanding over the past few weeks.

We have put in place some new measures to look after the health of our community. Classes are no longer greeting their teachers with a handshake, so we are starting the day with new and creative solutions to greetings. Elbow bumps and namaste are two innovative solutions tried already- watch this space!

As adults, we have to do our jobs and take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of those who depend on our decisions. In particular, we have an obligation towards vulnerable members of our society. However, our children will not benefit from us sharing our stress or anxiety.

Pene Johnstone, principal of Dunedin Rudolf Steiner School, offered a few reflections in their most recent newsletter.

Pene pointed out that it is interesting to ponder a global epidemic when we live in such a global world in terms of communication, transport, economy and technology. Over 100 years ago Rudolf Steiner spoke of the importance of working inwardly to overcome

our fear (including of germs and pandemics). Fear has the power to immobilise us, which does not serve our health either! He also talked of going into sleep with something other than fear in our thoughts as being helpful to building our immunity or resistance.

Pene goes on to say that the healthy social life, which we strive to cultivate in our schools, is one in which we care for and uphold each other as we encounter one another. Not as potential spreaders of germs, but as fellow human beings with whom we fulfil our destinies.

Pene's words resonated with us here at Te Rāwhiti and Te Rā. May the call for 'social distancing' between people only ever refer to a physical distance between us, one that can be measured in centimetres and metres. Regardless of the complex scenarios that we all currently find ourselves in, at home, at work and at school, there is nothing that beats the power of kotahitanga when it comes to making it through challenging times!
Kerstin and David

Message from the Ministry of Education:

Reminder – schools remain open

At this stage, we are not expecting widespread school closures. We are planning for temporary closures, like what is happening at Logan Park School but as the World Health Organisation has confirmed, the risk to children remains low and parents should continue to send their kids to schools and early learning centres.

Consequently, any decisions about school closures will be made on a case by case basis. In the meantime, unless students are unwell themselves, then parents should keep sending them to schools and early learning centres as these environments continue to be safe and the best place for them to continue their learning.

From the Secretary for Education, Iona Holsted

Summary of Known Postponements/ Cancellations

*Thursday 19 th March	Toymaking Postponed
*Friday 20 th March	The Big Swap Postponed
*Saturday 21 st March	Working Bee Postponed
*Saturday 21 st March	Toy Making Postponed
*Thursday 26 th March	Toymaking Postponed
*Saturday 28 th March	Toymaking Postponed
*Thursday 2 nd April	Interschool Swimming Festival Cancelled
*Sunday 5 th April	Harvest Fair Postponed
*Tuesday 26 th May	Traditional Maori Games–Otaki Postponed
*Hockey Season start has been delayed-see Sports section	
*Netball Season start has been delayed-see Sports section	
*Adult handwork workshop at Taikura – Postponed	

COVID-19 Coronavirus Information from Public Health

Regional Public Health
HAUORA Ā IWI KI TE ŪPOKO • O TE IKA A MĀUI
Better health for the greater Wellington region



Remember the key ways to protect yourself and others are simple;

- Wash and dry hands regularly. Wash hands using water and soap for 20 seconds. Then dry hands for 20 seconds
- Cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing. Then wash hands.
- Avoid close contact with people with cold or flu-like illnesses
- Stay away from work, school or large gatherings if you are sick

We are encouraging everyone to **stay informed**, this is really important as the situation changes frequently. The best way to do this is to regularly check the Ministry of Health website which is updated regularly [health.govt.nz/coronavirus](https://www.health.govt.nz/coronavirus). And if you have any questions you can call the Coronavirus helpline 0800 358 5453.

Enviroschools

This Friday, Paul Fletcher will attend a meeting about the enviroschool program. This is a first step towards our kura becoming an enviroschool. Thanks Paul for getting this underway! More news soon.

Kahui Ako

On Tuesday, Thereza and I attended the Kahui Ako/Community of Learning Hui in Wellington. The Community of Learning is a Government funded initiative that brings schools together to grow and develop their teaching practice. We can grow so much more quickly when we learn from others, and it was a useful day! The learning from this is feeding into our maths and literacy professional development plans for the year.

Class 2 Long Term Reliever

Our wonderful Class 2 teacher is on maternity leave from the start of Term 2. Here is the [C2 Advertisement from Education Gazette](#).

SENCO Position

We are also looking to fill this position until the end of the year. Here is the [SENCO Ad from Education Gazette](#)

Te Rāwhiti ECE News / Pānui

We warmly encourage you to join us in embracing our kindergarten statement of 'protecting the wonder of childhood', more important than ever in these unsettling times. Please shield our younger tamariki (under 9-10 years) from all the current adult talk about updates on the ever-changing situation. Naturally, they will have questions and you need to listen to their concerns or fears, but always respond in simple terms to their questions, validate their feelings, and then move on to engaging them in practical activities. Many of you have attended talks by Mary Willow from 'Plum Parenting' and we fully endorse her advice on how to talk (or rather minimise talking) to your children about the virus (see Appendix). She brings the picture of the parents as the Captain of the 'family boat' and some discussion only belong to the bridge amongst those in charge (the parents). The older children (over 10) become part of the crew, getting more information and more conversation but still with a clear message of who will make decisions – the Captain!

Staffing update

We are pleased to inform you that we have appointed Tina Regtien as the kindergarten assistant reliever in Paekakariki for Tuesday and Wednesday, until Vanessa returns from her maternity leave (term 4).

For the playgroup in Paekakariki, we have appointed Ellen Mackay as our new facilitator.

We are looking forward to welcoming Tina and Ellen to our ECE team!

Doris Zuur, acting Kindergarten Kaiarahi/Co-ordinator

Property News

Specific Property Task Force For Our Kindergarten

We are looking for ten people to create warmth in our kindergartens.

We are calling for a specific task force of ten volunteers for **Saturday 29th March, 9.00am – 1.00p.m.** Emile and Nico Borren will lead it, and I committed to bring in a cooked lunch with homemade bread by 1.00, to celebrate!!

It has been a wish for many years from our Raumati kindergartens to have effective floor insulation. It has been delayed as it is one of those jobs that seems really big and messy! It'll be achievable with a keen team, but tough on your own. The tasks consist of:

- Taking out existing ineffective insulation and piling it onto trailers for the landfill.
- Cutting the new insulation (polystyrene, not hazardous)
- Crawling under the building, forming a 'people train' underneath the building passing it on, fitting the pieces and nailing them with small brackets to hold them.

We really hope to get this done before winter. While we cancelled all non-essential events, we consider this essential for the children's wellbeing. We will keep at a small size, and trust you follow the guidelines of not attending if you are not feeling well and keeping to the hygiene recommendations. Please register with emilev@tera.school.nz or 021 234 7965 if you are able to help. No specific skills required except not shying away from a tough and uncomfortable job. Who is up for this challenge to get it done AND to make it fun!

Thank you!!!

Doris Zuur, for the kindergartens and for the Kapiti Waldorf Trust

An update from the Board, College and Kapiti Waldorf Trust

At the beginning of the year the Board advised the community that a transitional management arrangement would be put in place whilst the principal recruitment process ran. Late last week the board concluded the recruitment process and no appointment has been made.

As a result, the current arrangement with Kerstin and David working as co-principals will continue while the Board, along with the College, work together to look at next steps regarding the principal role at Te Rā.

In a very similar manner Te Rāwhiti kindergarten is also operating with transitional management in place, and will continue to do so for another period. Nicola Bell, our Kaiārahi, who is currently on parental leave, has advised she will not return to her substantive role. Therefore, in the kindergarten an investigation into next steps will also be completed.

The Trust wishes to pass on its warmest thanks to Nicola for her hard work last year before going on parental leave. We wish her the very best for her time at home with her whānau. Her excellent administration, licencing, funding system, management and compliance skills are very much missed! Nicola has been around of late helping pass on her knowledge and we are enormously grateful to her for this.

We are aware this is a lot of change in our leadership structures at Te Rā and Te Rāwhiti. Having said that, as the collective of groups holding responsibility for our school, we feel hugely confident that Te Rā and Te Rāwhiti can hold these transitional structures well. Our school, kindergarten and administration teams are an enormously committed, skilled and talented group of people. Our tamariki are well held.

We will keep you up to date over the coming weeks. Please keep reading the newsletter to keep yourself up to date with whom to talk to on various practical matters.

Ngā mihi nui,

The Board, College and Kapiti Waldorf Trust

Te Rā School Board of Trustees

Casual vacancy for an elected trustee

A casual vacancy has occurred on the board of trustees for an elected parent representative.

The board has resolved under section 105 of the Education Act 1989 to fill the vacancy by selection.

If ten per cent or more of eligible voters on the school roll ask the board, within 28 days of this notice being published, to hold a by-election to fill the vacancy, then a by-election will be held.

Any eligible voter who wishes to ask the board to hold a by-election should write to:

Chairperson
Board of Trustees
Te Rā School
89 Poplar Avenue
Raumati South

By: 2nd April 2020

Fundraising News – Raffle Is Still Going Ahead!!!!

With the Harvest Fair postponed it is even more important we focus our fundraising efforts on the **Harvest Raffle**, please bring back all raffle books and money by the **27th of March 2020**. Raffle will be drawn on the original date and time stated and the winners will be contacted immediately. They are fantastic prizes !!!

In past years the money raised from the Harvest fair has contributed towards

- *Children's camps
- *Zoo and Kapiti Island trips
- *Strings programme
- *Recorders
- *Fountain pens.
- *Other projects that benefit the children.

We hope to confirm a date for the fair in the coming weeks but in the meantime this will be our main effort to support our commitment to those items. So please do your best and make a big effort to sell your tickets!

Raffle Tickets



TE RĀ WALDORF SCHOOL

Harvest Fair Raffle Ticket 1661

\$2 per ticket or 3 for \$5

Total prizes valued at over \$1,000

1st Prize: Nature Trail incl Family Passes for Kāpiti Island Nature Tours, Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre, Ngā Manu and Staglands.

2nd Prize: Waikanae Beach Escape incl Accommodation at The Sand Pit, Evening Dining and Café Breakfast.

3rd Prize: Air Chathams Two Open Return Flights to Auckland.

Winners drawn at Te Rā Harvest Fair 3pm, 5 April 2020, 89 Poplar Ave, Raumati South.

Thanks for your support!

They are fantastic prizes!!!

From the Finance Team

KINDO KINDO KINDO

If you are not yet registered for Kindo, please click [here](#).

If you are registered with Kindo, please check your available balances and apply your payments [here](#).

If you need any help with Kindo, please see Rhonda in the office between 9.00 am and 9.30 am Monday to Friday, or email executiveofficer@tera.school.nz to make a time to pop in. She can have you up and running very quickly and Rhonda is happy to provide tutorials to those that need it.

From the Office

Save Our Wednesday Hot Lunches!

The Wednesday school lunch team love cooking for the whole school every week. It's a fun, social way to get involved at school. We cook, serve and clean up the yummy hot lunch. Unfortunately, due to losing 3 dedicated core members this year as well as unexpected circumstances popping up for those of us left, we are often really short of the help needed to keep the lunch running smoothly. If you are at all able to spare a few hours on a Wednesday either as a permanent or back up volunteer please see or email Bonnie (Bonnieandcosmo@gmail.com) 02102778765. Save our hot lunch! It's an institution at Te Ra!

Also - Ice-cream containers are always needed in the kitchen. Thank you for dropping any in.

Rippa Rugby Registration Reminder

Ryan Shelford from NZ Rugby will visit Te Rā on the 7th and 8th of April to run some fun sports games related to Rippa Rugby for our children in Classes 2-7. Each class will have two 40 minutes fun filled sessions with him.

Prior to him coming we need parents/caregivers to give their consent up by selecting the link below.

<https://www.sporty.co.nz/viewform/102244>

Cash Found Onsite

If you have misplaced some cash in the schoolgrounds we have had an amount handed into the school office. Please contact the office.

School Hockey and Netball

Netball – Time to Register Your Interest To Play

Netball is open to both boys and girls and you don't need any prior experience – it's a wonderful way for the children to learn some great life skills like teamwork, resilience, determination and most of all, fun!!

The season starts in term 2, the exact date is still to be confirmed as we have been notified there will be a delay to the season, as per the other sports. If you know your child/ren definitely want to play you can put your name down on the list in the school office. Official registrations will be available at a later date. Thank you so much to Aaron for offering to hold the overall co-ordination for the teams.

Hockey– Registrations are Open but Season Start is Delayed

Thank you to those who have already returned their hockey registration forms, also to the adults who have put their names forward to help. It's looking like we have another fun hockey season ahead of us, but we will have to be patient as the season start looks like it has been delayed, at this point until 2 May. Once player registrations are all in we will set up an email group to keep you all fully informed with any further news.

If you still want to join in its not too late! Please complete and return the registration form asap to the school office. We have extra copies on the school office reception desk should you need one. Any queries please contact Maxine.

Update from the Community Carvers Project

The carvers project is continuing: A carved wahara (entrance way) at our gate will express the story of the land, its people and the story of our kindergarten and school. We are so lucky! This project is led by tohunga whakairo Chris Gerretzen (master carver) and his graduate, Kaiako Maori Rongo Ngata. For the last two terms, Chris has been in our workshop every Wednesday evening, sharing his wealth of knowledge while teaching carving skills to a group of enthusiastic community members (from our kindergarten/school and beyond). Design and upskilling community members is our phase 1. We have begun exploring sources of funding for our phase 2, for which we will need about \$30,000 for the purchasing of the timber, for the remuneration of skilled carvers, and for construction, design, engineering and consents. Enclosed pictures give you a sense of it, including John's model in process. Thank you Rongo, for photo collage, and thank you to all involved, Paul, Rongo, John and to Chris, our wonder master carver from Otaki who so willingly and generously shares his huge kete of knowledge, skills and aroha.

Doris Zuur , one of the enthusiastic community members



Movin' March

Park and Stride

Our school is asking parents to use a "Park and Stride" location over March to encourage families to walk the last 500m or so to school. This helps ease congestion and get kids active before the school day AND we'll stamp your passports!

Photo Competition

Look out for Jack's Favourite Friday competition every Friday where we'll be giving away this adult scooter courtesy of [Micro Scooters](#) worth \$359.95! Simply snap a photo of your family's journey to school during Movin'March and win! It might highlight a small adventure or wonder discovered along the way, or capture a moment. To enter, post your photo publicly on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) with [#movinmarch](#). T&C's are [here](#)

Share Your Story

Whānau can also take part in our [Share your Story](#) and be in to win weekly Wellington destination prizes as well as a Bluebridge Family + vehicle pass on a return Cook Straight sailing.

The Big Swap – Postponed

Due to the current guidelines we have postponed the big swap. We will let you know when we have a new date for it. Thank you so much to Perrine for all the wonderful work she does in organising it.

Community Notices and Advertising

These notices do not reflect the opinions of the editors.

Help Wanted with after Kindy Care

Kia ora whanau,

I am wondering if any wonderful parents have set days they are hanging around the school area from 2pm till 3pm and could have Solomon (in Shelly's kindy) with them?

I study in Porirua until 2:30pm, any days would be so deeply appreciated.

Thank you!

Larissa Rainbow, 027 5874320

Dog, Cat and House Sitter Wanted

We are away from the 18th to the 27th of April and are looking for someone to look after our dog and cat. If you fancy a little holiday in Paekakariki in a warm house, close to the beach and with lovely sea

views, and the company of our very friendly and easy going dog and cat, please phone us, Lotti and Brendan: 027 337 1418

Handwork Workshop Postponed at Taikura

Regretfully I am having to postpone the Handwork workshop. Hopefully we will be able to have it later in the year. Thank you
Vonda Christensen

ECE Vacancy at Fossil Bay School and Kindergarten, Waiheke Island

Iris Richter, iris@fossilbay.co.nz Applications close: 1 april 2020
Registered ECE teacher in a natural setting,

Firewood for Sale

Now is the time to get your firewood for Winter. BYO trailer to 10b Leinster Ave (cnr of Poplar Ave and Leinster Ave) to load your own firewood, or let me know and I`ll get someone to help you load it. Cost is \$80 per cubic meter, fundraiser for class 6. Call Dave 0274786003 to arrange.

Honey available again

Early season Valley Road Produce honey available, liquid or creamed. \$25 for 1 kg glass jar, \$14 for 500g glass jar. Contact Christian or Hana or 0221342628.

Diary of Dates

Friday 20th March	The Big Swap from 1:30pm Postponed
Saturday 21st March	Working Bee 9:00am - 4:00pm Postponed
Tuesday 24 th March	Ngahuru Festival at Paekak Kindy
Postponed	
Thursday 26 th March	Class 6 Parent Evening 6:30-7:30pm
Saturday 29 th March	Specific task force, Kindergarten Raumati, please register prior (see above) 9.00am - 1.00pm.
Thursday 2nd April	Kapiti Interschool Swimming Festival (Years 4-8) Cancelled
Thursday 2 nd April	Board of Trustees Meeting 7:00-9:00pm
Sunday 5th April	Harvest Fair Postponed
Monday 6th April	Teacher Development Day (No school/kindy/nursery/playgroup)
Tuesday 7 th April	C2-7 Rippa Rugby experience at school
Wednesday 8 th April	C2-7 Rippa Rugby experience at school
Thursday 9 th April	Last Day Term 1

HOLS

Tuesday 28 th April	First Day Term 2
Monday 4 th May	Class 2 Whānau Hui, 5:00-7:00pm
Monday 4 th May	Information Session 2:30pm
Mon 4 – Fri 8 May	Te Wiki o Te Mahi Tahī – School Only
Monday 18 th May	Raphael House Upper School Information Evening at Te Rā School, 7:00pm-8:00pm
Tuesday 26th May	Traditional Maori Games Ōtaki Postponed
Monday 1st June	Queen's Birthday Holiday
Tuesday 2nd June	Teacher Development Day (No school/kindy/nursery/playgroup)
Wednesday 10 th June	Interschool Cross Country – Waikanae Park (Years 4-8) ? In Question
Thursday 11 th June	<i>PP Date - Interschool Cross Country</i>
Saturday 20 th June	Working Bee 9:00am-4:00pm
Thursday 25 th June	St John Lantern Festival for School 5:30-7:00pm
Tuesday 30 th June	Regional Cross Country (for those who qualify) – Upper Hutt
Thursday 2 nd July	<i>PP Date - Regional Cross Country</i>
Friday 3 July	Last Day Term 2
	HOLS
Monday 20 July	First Day Term 3
Sun 5 th July	Matariki Celebration at School, 6am
Monday 27 th July	Class 2 Whānau Hui, 7:00-9:00pm
Wednesday 12 th August	Junior Winter Tournament (Yr 5/6)
Friday 14 th August	<i>PP Date Junior Winter Tournament</i>
Monday 24th August	Teacher Development Day (No school/kindy/nursery/playgroup)
Saturday 29 th August	Working Bee 9:00am-4:00pm
Wed. 16 th September	Senior Winter Tournament
Fri. 18 th September	<i>PP Date Senior Winter Tournament</i>
Friday 25 th Sept.	Games Day for School
Friday 25 th Sept.	Last Day Term 3
	HOLS
Monday 12 th October	First Day Term 4
Wednesday 14 th October	School & Kindergarten Photo Day
Saturday 17 th October	Working Bee 9:00am-4:00pm
Tuesday 20 th October	Class 2 Whānau Hui 5:00-7:00pm
Tuesday 20 th October	Interschool Mountain Biking (Yr 5-8)
Thursday 22 nd October	<i>PP Date Interschool Mountain Biking</i>
Monday 26th October	Labour Day Holiday
Friday 30th October	Early 1pm Finish (School & Kindergartens)
Saturday 31 st October	Open Day 11:00am-2:00pm
Mon. 16 th – Fri. 20 th Nov.	Class 5 Olympic Camp - Ngaruawahia
Friday 20 th Nov.	Kapa Haka Fundraiser Evening

Monday 23rd Nov.	Teacher Development Day (No school/kindy/nursery/playgroup)
Saturday 28 th November	Advent Wreath Making – School Hall
Friday 4 th December	Kāpiti Kapa Haka Festival
Tuesday 15 th Dec.	Last Day for Kindergarten for 2020
Wednesday 16 th Dec.	Last Day for School for 2020 (early Finish)

Waldorf Education on the Kapiti Coast

- ❖ How can we help young people develop a lifelong enthusiasm for learning and work?
- ❖ How can the way in which children are educated foster a healthy self-awareness?
- ❖ How can education help them understand the needs of people of all cultures and the needs of the environment?

All prospective school and kindergarten parents
are warmly invited to our next

Information Afternoon
2:30pm
Monday 4th May

If you like to attend, please email our Enrolment Officer Tash Robertson at
enrolments@tera.school.nz prior to the day

at Te Rā Waldorf School, 89 Poplar Ave, Raumati South
There will be plenty of opportunity for questions.
You can also contact the office for an information pack.

04 299-0812 or email office@tera.school.nz
www.tera.school.nz [Find us on Facebook](#)

Helpful Information From Mary Willow

APPENDIX: Parenting and Covid-19

How to talk to your children about the virus

From Mary Willow

When we understand where the children are at developmentally, we can be better equipped to know what to say and do.

Young children, from toddlers through to 9-10, are living in a more dreamlike existence. While their bodies are busy becoming orientated and competent in the physical world, their minds are still mixing snippets of reality with dollops of fantasy to form imaginative, placeholder pictures of the world.

During this delicate period they are easily startled and shocked out of this dreamy state. Their fight/flight/freeze/fold centre is always at the ready to secure their safety.

I call this the Guard Dog mode (Guard Dog in the Driver's Seat!) - which gives you a picture of the PURPOSE of those ensuing tantrums, meltdowns, avoidance or freak-outs. Guard Dog mode sees the child springing into action to protect ME and ME ONLY, MY WAY and RIGHT NOW! Guard Dog mode is always about self-protection, whether reasonable and needed or not!

Teachers and Parents of older children know that the storms of the early years really do diminish, especially with the right guidance, and that on the way, around 9 or 10 and older, the children begin to open a brand new 'critical eye', as if seeing the realities of life for the first time. Every year their ability to become a little more objective grows, although the way they experience this will have a lot to do with their temperament so, just like teething, it may not necessarily be smooth sailing.

Although they are gaining perspective, their Guard Dog or Littler Self is still present, strong and watching out for the safety of Me. It can still hit out, blame everyone else, run for cover or try to control everything, but when the adults around them are both kind and firm, the children are carried securely through. The storms pass more quickly, happen less often and in a Waldorf/Steiner setting are helped by the curriculum with all its age-appropriate stories of the growing human consciousness.

Covid -19 is bound to set our own adult Guard Dogs into a myriad of individual responses as well. Our Guard Dogs can respond fiercely to calamity, stress, fear and loss just as the children's. This is neurologically normal and even essential in real emergencies. However as adults we are able to CHOOSE HOW to respond, whether and when to act or not. This is the time for us to be careful and wise.

My advice about how to manage thinking about and talking about Covid -19 with the children is very simple and based on this natural law of child development:

'It is not what happens to and around our children...it's what we, the adults, do with it that counts.'

We can succumb to fear and activate the children's guard dog brains (which will harm and regress them) or we can 'up our game' and increase our self-mastery by moving on into the practical here and now.

I once watched a group of parents picking up their children from school immediately after an earthquake. The children of the calm parents were unfazed. The children of the panicky parents were all crying, fearful and even hysterical. It was so clear.

So what to do about Covid? Here's my advice.

Be the Captains of the ship. Get clear about what discussions belong only up on the bridge with those in charge (the parents), or what can be shared with the more senior officers (the older children).

Children under 9-10 are too young to be exposed to the news of the world (the possible storms ahead). Their bodies, emotions and minds are simply asking: what is the world around me here and what are we doing now?

From 10-14 they are the crew. They may need to be given certain information at some point about the lie of the land (the science), the passage ahead (the bigger picture) and the Captain decisions, but it should all be delivered matter-of-factly with the Captain hand firmly at the helm. We can explain in more detail as they grow older, but it is not yet time for them to make the decisions on the running of the family ship. 'Yes it's a challenge, yes we are entering stormy waters, but everyone 'to your posts!' and follow commands'.

On deck keep the crew (the kids) in the practical here and now. In simple terms if they have heard something that makes them fearful, listen and let them offload (don't over- or under- listen), say kindly that you hear them, validate their feelings as understandable, a quiet hug, a wee chat, but then MOVE ON. Keep your eye contact low at these times or you will mutually panic each other. Much better than trying to reason with their fears or talk them out of it, let them bubble up and blow away, then move them on into practical activities.

Fear can be expressed in children not just as anxiety but also as avoidance, hyperactivity or a greater urge to angrily control others.

Fearful children cannot easily control the overwhelm. The Parents and Captains need to be the boss of the child's fear. YOU decide when the fear doggies are allowed out for a run around (the barking mad offload) and YOU decide when the fear is firmly put away (I like to think 'tied up but with a juicy bone of calm and judicious parent empathy') till the next set time for offload. This way you are repeatedly leading their experiential brains from reactive to responsive behaviour. It is this repetition of positive action that processes fear and builds the neural pathways of RESILIENCE. It is the body brain that ultimately writes the story. The kids that got out and helped the adults dig the liquefied silt in Christchurch did better than those bogged down in exposure to fearful, emotional adult talk.

The children are simply asking themselves: how do the adults deal with this or that? They are imitating us, both our outer actions and inner courage, our moral response and calm in the face of a storm. The ideal parent response is 'we will always find a way.' Repeatedly move it on into the practical...at ALL ages. The children are learning by doing. The underlying philosophy needs to be that challenges wake us up, make us more adaptable, bring us together (even if quarantined!). How do we help?

The younger children don't even need to know that there is a world-wide pandemic. They need to know what today is. But what if they know already? What if they ask 'will we die?' The truthful answer is that you don't know and the helpful answer is (firmly) that 'we will take one day at a time: we will work on the problems and look for the good in every moment and every day'. This is our greatest parenting task: that no matter what, we will show them how to look for the good in every person, place and situation. And when 'sh**t happens'...we will deal with it with calm captaining, holding the ship steady, navigating the way step by step, with courage and love.

It's not what happens to and around our children: it's what we, the adults, do with it that counts.

Will we take this opportunity to hardwire our kids for calm, practical, positive response?...or will we hardwire them for fear? (which by the way is the foundation of hate) Our children have come to complete OUR OWN growing up. They are saying to us: 'transform yourself for the sake of me'. Will we panic or will we allow this situation to grow clarity in our thinking, courage in our hearts and calm in our response to humanity?

Mary Willow, Plum Parenting, March 2020
www.plumparenting.com