

LOVING YOURSELF STARTS FROM WITHIN YOU

WELCOME TO THE CLUB!

What we do

Balance Aotearoa is a lived experience-led organisation committed to transforming mental health and addiction systems through peer support, advocacy, and co-design. Rooted in the values of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and equity, We champion community-led solutions that honour diverse voices and lived realities. Our mahi spans 1:1 peer support, Conversation Cafe's, peer support at Hope & co. advocacy, group support and facilitation and inclusive events - all designed to foster connection, reduce stigma, and uphold the mana of those navigating mental distress.

We believe in the power of storytelling, tactile design, and playful engagement to create spaces where people feel seen, heard, and valued. Whether through peer-led workshops, national submissions, or sensory-rich community events,

Balance Aotearoa continues to lead with heart, strategy, and lived wisdom.

November Highlights

November was a month of growth and connection.

We hosted a Conversation Café on meaningful engagement and extended the Kōrero online for wider interaction. Our kaimahi strengthened their skills at Keeping It Real training in Palmerston North. At Hope & Co., we introduced a new weekly journaling night every Wednesday, giving people a creative space to reflect and share.

✨ November reminded us that engagement is about listening, learning, and creating spaces where voices and creativity thrive.

ROSE, THORN & BUD CHECK-IN

ROSE
What's something you're grateful for, or that is positive in your life right now?

THORN
What's something challenging or stressful, that you could use some more support with right now?

BUD
What's something you look forward to, or that gives you hope, motivation, and inspiration right now?



Skill to work on this month

Each month, we'll spotlight a practical skill, tool, or technique to support emotional wellbeing, self-advocacy, and connection. These are small, doable practices you can explore at your own pace - whether you're building a personal toolkit, supporting others, or simply curious.

Feel free to jot the skill down in your journal or create your own log of self-help strategies. Over time, this collection can become a powerful resource - a reminder of what works for you, what grounds you, and what helps you navigate life's ups and downs.

Distraction Circle

What it is:

The Distraction Circle is a simple tool to help put space between harmful urges and actions.

It's a personalised list of healthy distractions that you know can occupy your mind and body for a while.

Why it helps:

- Creates a practical plan you can turn to in tough moments.
- Reinforces positive coping skills.
- Keeps your mind and body engaged until the urge passes.



Kaimahi Highlight

Elena

Elena has been with Balance for 8 months now, as the Lived Experience Consumer Advisor and Peer worker with Hāpai Mauri Tangata

Elena's Why: I do this mahi to bring meaning to the difficult times I faced in my acute phases, and to help shape services that better support people through their unwellness. I also know that unwell Elena would have benefited from a well Elena walking alongside her - now I get to be that person for others, turning the hard experiences into purpose.

Elena's favourite colour - Orange

Place - By the ocean

Food - chocolate

Elena's go to coping skill is: using my distraction circle, it's a list of things that I can use to put time between an urge and acting on the urge and when I get to the end of the list, I just loop back around and start again, making it a never ending circle.

How?

1

Write down a list of activities that help you shift focus, do this when you are feeling okay, not when already distressed

2

When an urge comes up, start at the top of your list and work through each activity one by one.

3

If you reach the end of the list and still need support, loop back to the beginning and keep going.

Main Goal

The goal is to buy yourself time, ease the intensity of the urge, and remind yourself you have safe strategies to lean on.

Balance Groups

Balance Aotearoa offers a variety of Peer-led groups over the week in a range of places across the Whanganui area.

ALL of our groups are FREE and open to anyone!

Our groups are co-designed based of consumer feedback through feedback forms, kōrero and our monthly members hui's. Any and all feedback is both welcomed and actively encouraged. These groups are meant to benefit as many of our community as possible, so share the news around and give something new a try.

If you're feeling a bit anxious about turning up on your own, you are more than welcome to bring a support person, kaimahi, friend, whānau member along with you, or alternatively reach out to our peer team and ask for some peer support to come along.

We hope to see you around

Monday	9:30am - 11am	Hope & Co. Warm Cafe 63A Ridgway Street	Exploring Calm: A relaxed group where we explore different ways of finding calm. This can involve meditation, mindfulness, mindful movement, breath-work, herbal tea, and anything else that might help us experience calm in our lives and overcome the effects of stress and anxiety.
	1pm - 3pm	Hope & Co. Warm Cafe 63A Ridgway Street	Secret to mondays: Different topics are explored, including wellness plans, goal setting, confidence, empowerment and independence.
Tuesday	NO GROUPS		Closed
Wednesday	1-2:30pm	Whanganui Learning Centre - 232 Wicksteed St	Resiliency 101: An open course exploring our values, beliefs, goals, wellness tools, communication skills, resilience, self-confidence, relationships, and much more. New topics are covered each week.
Thursday	9:30am - 11:30am	Splash Centre	Splash Centre: Your chance to have a swim, gym, sauna, spa. An I.D card is necessary for free entry, contact Ana on 021 08443852.
	10am - 3pm	Level 2, 76 Guyton Street Whanganui Creative Space	Artistic Expression: Join our art tutor and our crafty, arty staff. Start something new, bring your own project, get artistic guidance, or simply make some artistic friends.
Friday	10am - 12pm	Salvation Army 4 Indus Street	The Posse - Addiction Support: A motivating and inspiring recovery group where we support each other in our recovery from addiction. This group is open to any addiction at any level. Held at The Salvation Army, 4 Indus Street.
	1:30pm - 2:30pm	Hope & Co. Warm Cafe 63A Ridgway Street	Sharing Circle: A relaxed group where we share what's on top for us in our mental health journey and life in general.

Group Content

Month: December 2025

Exploring Calm

8/12 - Cultivating Presence in Busy Times

15/12 - Gratitude and Reflection

Secret to Mondays

8/12 - Reset & Refocus: Mapping What Matters

15/12 - Confidence in Action: Practicing Assertiveness

Resilience 101

03/12 - Creative expression and joyful pursuits

10/12 - Boundaries for a safe festive season

17/12 - Sober traditions - staying healthy through the holiday break

Artistic Expression

BYO project to work on or start something new. Materials and ideas

provided.

Thursday Social

Thursdays 5:30pm @ Hope & co.

4/12 - Movie Night

11/12 - Games Night

18/12 - Bingo

Addiction Recovery

10-12pm Fridays

Salvation Army - 4 Indus Street

5/12 - Grounding & Reset: Building Safe Anchors

12/12 - Strengths in Recovery: Naming What's Working

19/12 - Navigating Triggers: Gentle Planning & Choice

Sharing Circle

Listen and share with peers
Fridays
1:30-2:30pm
Hope & Co. Warm Cafe
63A Ridgway Street

Other

Splash Group - Thursday mornings, you need your Balance ID to get in 9:30-11:30am

Conversation Cafe - NO Conversation Cafe this month!

Members Hui
Tuesday 2/11/25 @ 11am

You're invited to Balance Aotearoa's members

Christmas Potluck

All Balance Aotearoa Members are invited to come down to Hope & Co. on Tuesday 23rd December for a Christmas Party to end off the year in style.

There will be kai, games, karaoke & an ECO Secret Santa - Bring along a 2nd hand, regifted or something from your home that you're ready to let go of, wrapped up to gift to another attendee. Please remember to bring something you would appreciate being gifted!

We ask that everyone bring some kind of food to share, if you can't or don't know what to bring, please let us know!

12:30PM
23 DECEMBER

HOPE & CO.
63A RIDGWAY STREET

Hope & Co.

A PEER RUN. SAFE SPACE TO GET SUPPORT. HAVE A KŌRERO. OR JUST BE.

OPEN THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS EXCEPT FOR STAT DAYS

63A RIDGWAY STREET | WEDS - SUN 3-9PM

Closed: 25th December

26th December

1st January

2nd January



WE'VE REACHED THE FESTIVE SEASON

The festive season means different things to each of us. For some, it's a time of joy and celebration; for others, it can stir up emotions and situations that aren't always easy to navigate.

This year, let's remember to look out for one another. A little kindness can go a long way in making the season feel magical. Whether it's writing a heartfelt card, sharing candy canes, offering a helping hand, or simply showing up as your best self—every small gesture adds to the spirit of the season.

Together, we can make this “silly season” a little brighter, one act of kindness at a time. ✨

BALANCE HOURS

Balance Aotearoa will be open throughout the holiday season, closing only on the statutory days listed below. Please note that groups will pause from December 25th to January 5th.

During this time, you're warmly invited to pop into Hope & Co. between 10am–2pm on weekdays, December 22nd to January 5th. Come in for a kōrero, enjoy a coffee, join in some festive activities—or simply spend time in a space where you're accepted just as you are.

Christmas Day 25th December - CLOSED
Boxing Day 26th December - CLOSED
New Years Day 1st January - CLOSED
Day after New Years Day 2nd January -CLOSED

Date's to remember



Important things coming up in December

December 4th - War Memorial Centre Operatunity - It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas

December 6th - Virginia Lake 7pm
Carols by Candlelight

December 6th - Whanganui Arts at the Centre 6-7pm

How to really Relax - Know your mind

December 7th - Victoria Ave 2-3pm
Mainstreet Christmas Parade

December 14th - Whanganui Racecourse 2-8pm
Christmas Market

December 22nd - Lads Brewery 6-10pm
Christmas Crack-ups @ Lads

December 25th - Everywhere
Christmas

Have anything coming up in a specific month that you would like added to this section of the newsletter?

Get in touch to have it added.

Group of the month

SPLASH CENTRE

When: Thursdays 9-11am

Where: Splash Centre

220 London Street, Springvale Park

Splash Centre is more than a workout - it's a chance to move, connect, and enjoy yourself in a supportive space. Balance members get free entry to the pool and gym facilities at the Splash Centre in Whanganui.

Our facilitator is on hand with exercise ideas if you'd like guidance, but the focus is on doing what feels right for you - whether that's swimming, using the gym, or simply enjoying the company of friendly faces.

★ What makes it special:

- Free access to pool and gym facilities
- Flexibility to choose your own exercise pace
- Supportive facilitator with tips and encouragement
- A welcoming environment where wellbeing and connection come first

Splash Centre is about moving your body in ways that feel good, surrounded by community, and without the pressure - just freedom, fun, and support.

Reframe the what ifs

what if i fail?

what if i excel?

what if i go and have a terrible time?

what if i'll have the time of my life?

what if none of this is worth it?

what if i can create my own purpose?

what if they'll hate me?

what if they'll be my new friends?

what if i'll never be good enough?

what if i already am?

what if i never achieve this goal?

what if trying my best is good enough?

@crazyheadcomics

Want to move your body and lift your spirits?

Come along to Splash Centre – a space for swimming, exercising, and connecting with friendly faces, all for free.



You said | We did

Your voices shape everything we do. Every kōrero, suggestion, and piece of feedback helps us grow stronger as a community. In this new section, we're sharing how your insights have guided real changes - from group topics and space setups to signage, support systems, and beyond.

Self-Care Today

Something responsible & adult-y.	Yoga, meditation something zen.	Physical activity or intentional movement.	Resting & catching up on sleep.
Pausing & taking a break.	Catching up on chores & housework.	Unplugging from social media.	Something warm and comforting.
Meeting your needs.	Connecting with your support system.	Taking your meds or vitamins.	Great, big, belly laughs.
Time to yourself.	Cuddling a soft furry creature.	Tea, books, or writing.	Creative time for hobbies.

BlessingManifesting

You said:

The feedback forms were too confusing and complicated

We did: We created a more straight forward version of each of the feedback forms. These will be displayed alongside the other ones as some people like the current format.

You said:

You'd like to know what comes of the information you give at the conversation cafe's

We did: Moving forward we are asking our partners and community organisations to provide feedback on the conversation cafe info sheets sent to them and what they have implemented in their organisations as a result of these

You said:

You would like another info session about Hope & co

We did: We are in the process of organising another information session for organisations and community members

You said:

You'd like some solid information about the reasons behind the conversation cafe, what it is and what comes from it for members and the community to boost attendance.

We did: Made a conversation cafe info sheet that has been published online, is available in the cafe and around the community in different spaces.

Contact

Want to get in touch?

Email: info@balance.org.nz

Phone: 06 345 44 88

Free Phone: 0800 10 25 55

Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

<https://www.balance.org.nz/>



Peer Support and Advocacy