

HAPPY
New Year

2026

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 11 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.

December Highlights

December brings a multitude of opportunity, for growth, self development, breaking old patterns, creating new ones and so much more. Some of the highlights from December were the Whaiora Christmas Party, Journaling at Hope & Co, our Te Oranganui whanau joining us at Hope & Co. and of course the silly season. We know that this season isn't always viewed as a positive thing AND we know that we have the power to change that if we wish to.

✨ December was a time for growth, acknowledgement, understanding and deciding to set the tone for the incoming year. As we wave goodbye to the last sunset of 2025, we also wave goodbye to everything that took place in the past and open the opportunity of what may lie within tomorrow.

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How To Set Realistic New Year's Resolutions

- 1) What would make my life a little better or easier right now? What do I want? Get specific. How would I feel if my life looked like this? Write down and visualize what this would look like in your life.
- 2) What small steps can I take to make this goal achievable?
- 3) What has kept me from achieving this goal in the past? What can I do to make this New Year resolution more realistic, convenient and desirable? When something is convenient, it's more likely to happen. The easier it is for you, the better.



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.

GROUND & GATHER

HOW?

What it is:

When emotions feel overwhelming, it can help to pause and anchor yourself in the present. Ground + Gather is about using your senses to steady your body, then gathering your thoughts so you can respond with clarity.

Why it helps:

- Creates a quick reset when stress spikes
- Builds awareness of your body and surroundings
- Helps you shift from reaction to reflection

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.

Look around you

- 1 Find 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. This helps your body feel steady.

Take a breath

- 2 Pause for a moment and notice how you feel after grounding. Let your shoulders drop and give yourself a little space.

Write it down

- 3 Grab a notebook or your phone and jot down the main thought or feeling that's on your mind. This helps you gather your thoughts and decide what to do next.



Kaimahi Highlight

Rana

Rana has been with Balance for more years than we can count. She has been a peer support worker, group facilitator, manager, consumer advisor, and every role in between. Throughout her time at Balance Aotearoa, Rana has worked tirelessly in service of the Whanganui community.

We will deeply miss her laughs, guidance, direction, and unwavering support. We are both sad to see her go and excited for her as she heads overseas for her next big adventure - ready to serve a new community with all of her heart, mind, and soul.

Rana's last day with us is January 9th, 2026. We will miss you, Rana - thank you for everything, and all the best for your future adventures.

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: January 2026

Exploring Calm

On hiatus for January to revamp

Secret to Mondays

On hiatus for January to revamp

Resilience 101

7/1/26: Shift from Resolutions to Intentional living

14/1/26: Reflection Vs Rumination
(Reflection on 2025 & taking charge of 2026)

21/1/26: Staying Consistent to you

28/1/26: Cognitive Restructuring

Artistic Expression

BYO project to work on or start something new.

Materials and ideas provided.

Addiction Recovery

10-12pm Fridays

Salvation Army - 4 Indus Street

New time specific program in development - this will be released once it is finalized

Thursday Social

Thursdays 5:30pm @ Hope & co.

8/1/26 Bingo/Quiz night

15/1/26: Movie Night

22/1/26: Murder Mystery Night

29/1/26: Karaoke Night

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 9:30-1130am

Conversation Cafe - Tuesday 27th Jan @ 10am & 5pm

Members Hui
Tuesday 6/1/26 @ 11am
Hope & Co.

Date's to remember

Important things coming up in January

January 9th Our current GM Rana Te Huiā, will be moving on to new and exciting things and ending her role with Balance Aotearoa

January 7th - 17th Whanganui Opera Week

January 16th - 19th Whanganui Vintage Weekend

January 31st Gypsy Fair - Kowhai Park

All of January: Over this month we will be revamping our groups, anchoring them in the Balance Kaupapa, vision and values and ensuring we are bringing sound, consistent supports to our community.

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

AOD Support Group [The Posse]

When: Fridays 10am - 12pm

Where: Salvation Army
4 Indus Street

Recovery is stronger when we walk it together. The Posse is a welcoming group where people at any stage of recovery can connect, share, and encourage one another. Whether you're just beginning or have been on the journey for years, this space is about mutual support, honesty, and hope.

✨ What makes it special:

- Open to anyone, whatever the addiction or stage of recovery
- A safe, non-judgemental environment to share and listen
- Motivation and inspiration from peers who understand
- A supportive community that celebrates progress, big or small

The Posse is about finding strength in connection, building resilience together, and knowing you don't have to face recovery alone.

Looking for connection and encouragement on your recovery journey?

Come along to The Posse – a supportive space to share, listen, and find strength together. Open to anyone, at any stage of recovery, this group is about hope, honesty, and community.



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.

LESS | MORE

TALKING	LISTENING
PLANNING	DOING
SODA	TEA
JUNK FOOD	SALADS
COMPLAINING	ENCOURAGING
WORRYING	HOPING
DOUBTING	BELIEVING
LAZING AROUND	WORKING OUT
FROWNING	SMILING
INSECURITY	TRUST
WEAKNESS	CONFIDENCE
IGNORANCE	UNDERSTANDING
HATE	LOVE
UNGRATEFULNESS	GRATITUDE

You said:

The social group isn't working being on at the same time as Hope & Co.

We did:

Invited you all in for a kōrero about the group, what is and isn't working and made a plan together for the group moving forward

You said:

You'd like new and more groups available

We did:

We are revamping the groups and exploring what we can add. Over January, we'll be improving the supports we already offer and looking at ways to provide even more

Hope & Co.

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

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

Contact

Want to get in touch?

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Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

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

