**Yellow Brick Road**

# Thriving through later life

## Mental health services for older people

# Concerned about an older person's mental wellbeing?

**Old age can be accompanied by problems that older people have to adjust to and manage each day. It can be a challenging time that leaves older people feeling isolated and unsupported.**

**But it doesn't have to be that way.**

**We're here to help you and your older whānau members get the mental health support they need.**

**Whether you're concerned about a loved one experiencing anxiety or depression, or showing other signs of mental distress, we can support you.**

**By working together we can help your older loved ones thrive.**

## We all respond differently to stress. That's okay

As the number of older people in our population is increasing, traditional support systems are eroding and stress levels are rising.

Our youth-oriented society seems to have left older people behind; with a lack of meaningful community or family roles to fulfil.

Added to that, economic stressors have threatened the financial security of older people.

All of which leave older people feeling vulnerable, isolated, stressed and overwhelmed; making them more likely to suffer from mental health issues.

While there is a strong focus on younger people's mental health, it is equally important for older people to get mental health treatment and support.

This is especially true for depression, which can complicate the treatment of a number of medical conditions including stroke, diabetes, heart disease, and more.
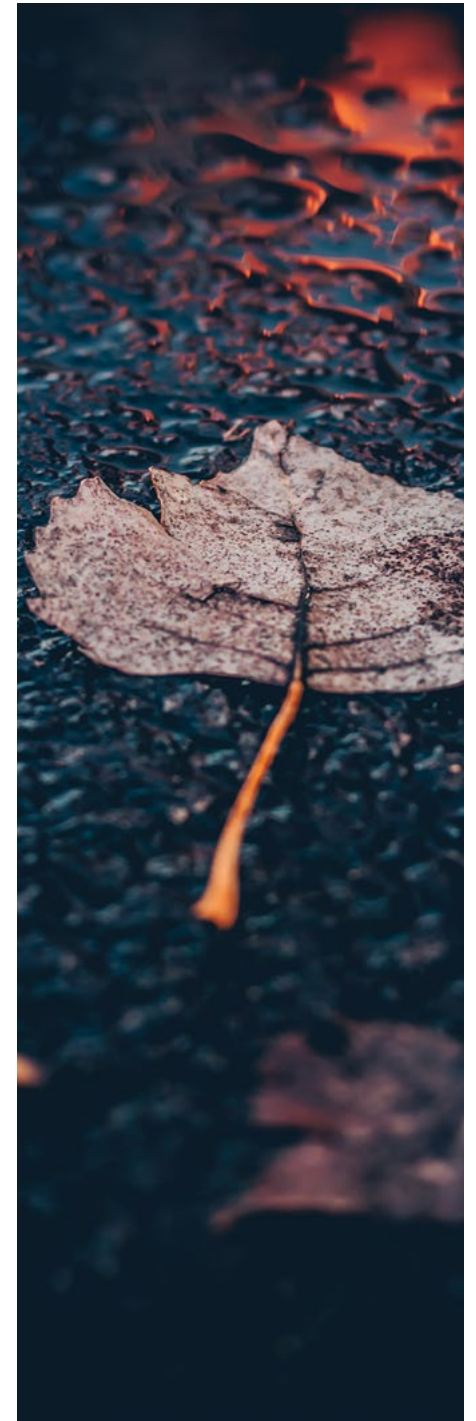
## What stops older people from seeking mental health support?

Older individuals are more likely to report physical issues than they are mental health concerns. It is also common for older people not to seek help when they feel stressed and anxious.

There are many factors that stop older people from seeking support. Knowing these factors can help you understand your older loved ones better when talking to them about getting help.

Common barriers to seeking mental health support include:

→ Not realising they have a mental health issue.

→ Concerns about the social costs of stigma and isolation.

→ Not understanding or recognising their symptoms.

→ Already having beliefs about what will, or will not, help.

→ Concerns about how receiving help will impact their daily lives.

## How do you recognise mental health issues in older people?

Older people may attribute their difficulties to ageing or medical illness rather than mental health issues. This can make it challenging to identify mental health issues, but there are common symptoms to look out for.

Common symptoms of mental health distress include:

- Fear and worry about their own health and the health of their loved ones.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of existing mental health conditions.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

## How can mental health support improve wellbeing?

Well-informed support people can provide proactive handholding for older people experiencing a mental health issue. They can be someone to lean on and someone who listens without passing judgement.

This can help older people feel less isolated and help them manage their negative feelings more easily.

Having support through any illness is important and a well-informed support person can make a big difference; ensuring the rights of older people are upheld and that they are given respectful consultation about treatment.

## How Yellow Brick Road can help you

Every day we set out to ensure families feel listened to, supported, equipped and ultimately confident to overcome the challenges they face.

If you are concerned about an older whānau member's mental wellbeing, our whānau support workers can help you by providing support, information, education and advocacy services, such as:

- Listening to your concerns and questions
- Creating an action plan to help your loved one throughout their recovery journey
- Providing books, articles and information about locally available services
- Support groups

Our services are free and confidential. Contact us today to find out more.
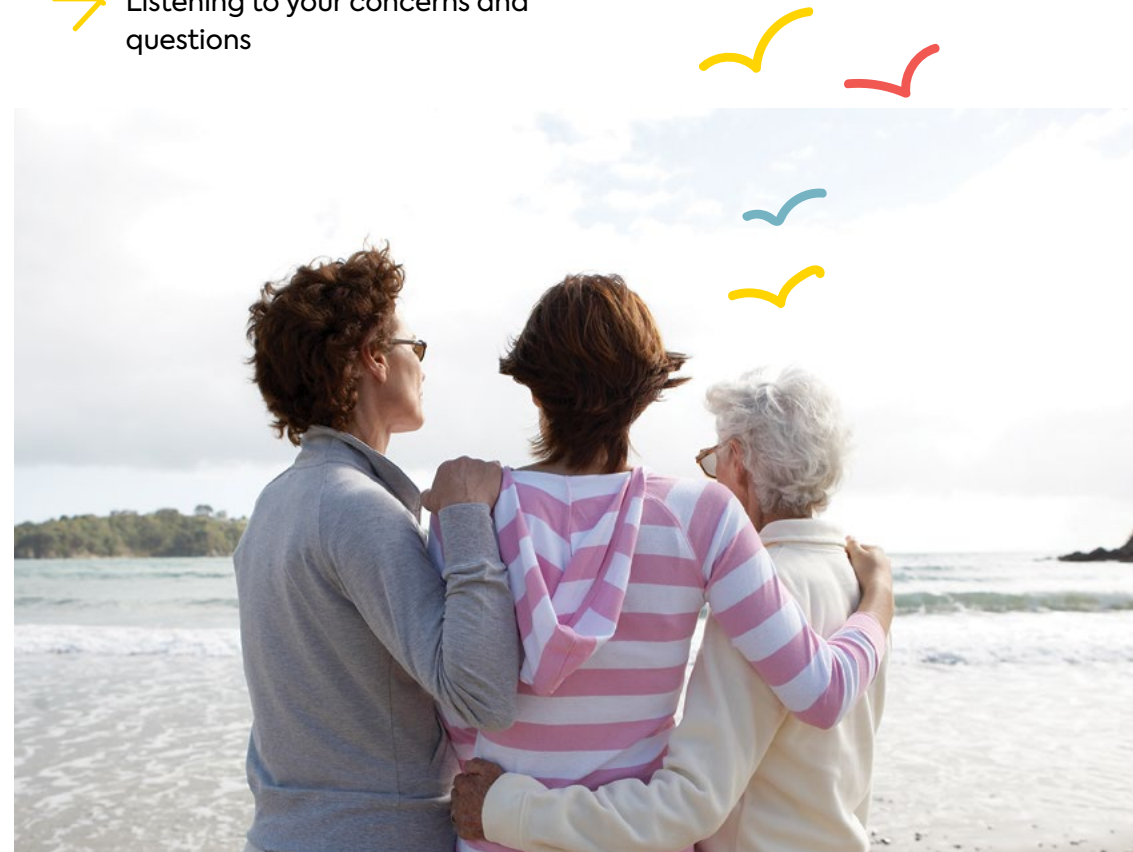
**It takes each of us to make a difference for all of us.**

**It's whānau ora, and it is the foundation that inspires every aspect of our work.**

Yellow Brick Road is a national organisation that specialises in providing support for whānau who have a loved one experiencing mental health challenges.

After 40 years of experience working with people around New Zealand, we know that if the family of a loved one experiencing mental distress are correctly supported and empowered, the path they walk leads to increased wellbeing for the whole whānau.

Positive change is our singular focus. By working together, we can help you thrive.

**Yellow Brick Road**

Supporting families towards mental wellbeing

Northern Region
0800 732 825

Central North Island
0800 555 434

South Island
0800 876 682

**yellowbrickroad.org.nz**