

ANTIFRAGILITY – the art of getting stronger in adversity

Reflections on the experiences of the students and families supported by the Intensive Wraparound Service / Te Kahu Tōi, during Covid-19

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1

Te Kahu Tōi / Intensive Wraparound Service – Application Criteria

- Panel simply looks for evidence that criteria has been met
- *Yr 3 to 10 (although has discretion to consider younger children)
- Young person has **complex and challenging needs across home, school, community** (panel will look for evidence of ongoing assessment and intervention)
- All local resources, supports and services have been fully utilised** (panel will look for evidence that all supports for which the child is eligible have been fully explored and accessed)



2

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Intensive Wraparound Service – Te Kahu Tōi

Te Kahu Tōi



- **Te Kahu Tōi** = The Mountain Cabbage Tree Cloak
- **Kahu** = A cloak that provides protection, shelter and warmth
- **Tōi (the plant)** = the leaves can be very difficult to work with, and requires special skills to weave
- **Tōi (the cloak)** = known for its strength, durability and protection

3

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Te Kahu Tōi / IWS Service

"... a philosophy of care that includes a definable planning process involving the child and family that results in a unique set of community services and natural supports individualised for that child and family to achieve a positive set of outcomes" ...
Dr. Eric Bruns



4

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Timeline of key events during Covid-19 in NZ

28 February 2020

- First COVID-19 case reported in New Zealand.

19 March 2020

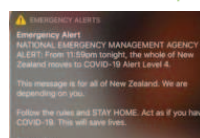
- Borders close to all but New Zealand citizens and permanent residents.

25 March 2020

- At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 4, and the entire nation goes into self-isolation. A State of National Emergency is declared at 12:21pm.

29 March 2020

- New Zealand reports its first COVID-19-related death.



5

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8 June 2020

- The Ministry of Health reports that there are no more active cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand. At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 1.

12 August 2020

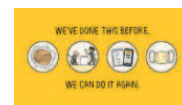
- At 12 noon, Auckland region moves back into Alert Level 3. The rest of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2.

7 October 2020

- Auckland moves to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm. All of New Zealand is now at Alert Level 1.

2 February 2021

- New Zealand remains at Alert Level 1



6

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Context – Te Kahu Tōi / IWS during Covid-19

- When reflecting on our experiences of 2020, we were a little surprised, and in some instances even puzzled by the manner in which some of our 'vulnerable families' (fragile families) responded to the challenges of COVID-19
- Some families *struggled*, some *got by* BUT then some seemed to really **GROW** and get **STRONGER** as a result of lockdown
- We tried to develop theories/hypothesis as to the reasons for the respective responses and then we bumped into the concept of **ANTIFRAGILITY** when looking into research about failure and learning from difficulties, mistakes, crisis...



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7

Meaning of ANTIFRAGILITY

- Antifragility is something introduced by **Nassim Nicholas Taleb**, a Lebanese-American, scholar, mathematical statistician, and former option trader and risk analyst, whose work concerns problems of randomness, probability, and uncertainty
- His 2007 book *The Black Swan* has been described by *The Sunday Times* as one of the twelve most influential books since World War II. Antifragility, however, was introduced in his book, *Antifragile: Things that Gain From Disorder*
- In a nutshell, antifragility means to **get stronger in the face of stressors**



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8

Disorder can be beneficial

- Taleb** explains:

"Some things benefit from shocks; they thrive and grow when exposed to randomness, disorder, and stressors and love adventure, risk, and uncertainty. Yet, in spite of the ubiquity of the phenomenon, there is no word for the exact opposite of fragile. Let us call it antifragile."

- Antifragility goes beyond resilience or robustness.** The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better."



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9

Collective systems & personal routines disrupted

- Right now**, the pandemic is wreaking havoc around the world - **collective systems and personal routines are undergoing major shocks**
- Many of us have experienced personal and collective anxiety, as well as an increase in stress, depression, feelings of hopelessness, panic, and grief. **These feelings are normal responses to trauma of this magnitude**
- It is important to recognise that we don't have to give in to such feelings. **We have a choice.** At this crucial moment of systemic stress, **we can choose to develop an antifragile mindset and grow stronger**
- The global pandemic is an opportunity for each of us to challenge ourselves in new ways.**



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10

Expect the unexpected

- In this world of unprecedented disruption and turbulence it seems that **the only thing we can reasonably expect is the unexpected.**
- We need to perform in a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and **the traditional tools of observing, orienting, deciding and acting are no longer enough** to be successful in this disorder.
- In this chaotic existence, while agility is still essential to adapt, **antifragility is necessary to thrive.**



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11

Beyond Robust and Resilient



Alhir S, 2017

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12

Innovation comes from disruption

- The most powerful and important aspect of human growth is our **ability to overcome adversity**
- In our recent and current experience, **change is a constant**. Our worlds are highly interactive and highly engaging. But **interactions create conflict and disruption**
- Healthy engagements and interactions allow for innovation to come from disruption**. In fact, Neuroscience would go as far as to suggest that **these interactions potentially extend our respective lifespans**. Conversely, when we become isolated and fail to engage we potentially shorten our projected lifespans
- Human beings need each other to grow**. Shared 'growth challenges' activate systems that develop new strengths, allowing us to step into rather than refrain from those challenges



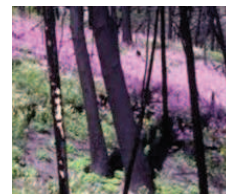
13

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Survive or Thrive

- It is suggested that 'nature / whenua' provides us with a good analogy for the mechanisms required for growth and evolution, emphasizing that:
 - 1) Nature is not safe but rather aggressive** in destroying and replacing, selecting and reshuffling
 - 2) Nature is opportunistic, ruthless and selfish**
 - 3) Nature regenerates itself** by using rather than suffering from random events, unrepresented shocks, stressors and /or volatility.

ADAPT and SURVIVEOR EVOLVE and THRIVE



14

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Reflecting on the IWS 'lockdown' experience

- We are sure you can all relate
- Next we present 6 key case studies from our wider IWS Team, that we consider to have demonstrated **antifragility** during lockdown and beyond and our learnings/reflections



15

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Case Study 1 – John

- 10 year old boy
- ADHD diagnosis
- Fire lighting, sexualised behaviour, non-compliance, physical and verbal aggression, extreme difficulty in emotional regulation
- Intelligent, curious, thinks of himself as smart, recently has started to enjoy drawing, interest in Science and Maths, tenacious
- Sense of humour
- Likes animals, nature and learning about the world
- Loves music, singing and running
- Peer relationships are poor, isolated**



16

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Case Study 1 – John

- John would never talk to any of the other students in his class**, but in lockdown with the shift to virtual classrooms and the ability to message other students in his class, the student was able to start forming social connections with peers for the first time.
- These **virtual connections developed into genuine friendships** when the student returned to school post-lockdown.
- Had the lockdown not occurred, it is unlikely this student would have had the skills or confidence to initiate these friendships.
- 4 of his classmates have come to the last IWS meeting** and this was thought off and encouraged by the school team
- Lockdown provided the opportunity to strengthen John's social relationships (a perceived weakness) and allowed for the school to become much more innovative when they returned to school re: peers relationships*

17

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Case Study 2 – Sam

- 14 year old boy
- Diagnosis of ASD, ADHD
- Enjoys Music (DJ'ing), cars, Police, Airforce
- School refusal, emotional volatility, high anxiety, defiance, non-compliance behaviour, verbal aggression, threats of self-harm
- Wishes to return to mainstream education - wants to be in the Airforce (air security) and dreams of living independently one day
- In residential schooling at present and historically has had challenging relationships with his parents and sibling**



18

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Case study 2 – Sam

- On lockdown, Sam returned home from Residential Special School (RSS) unexpectedly, for an extended period of time. His parents had seen significant positive changes in their sons behaviour, self-management and in their relationship with him but they were anxious that things may revert back to how they were before RSS.
- Psychologist initiated **daily coaching phone calls** to help guide the parents through his return home and their challenges. Sessions also included **coaching with Sam** about the progress towards his goals. We had been previously unable to engage these parents in this type of **intensive parenting support** – largely due to busy schedules.
- The **opportunity to be flexible** and use the availability imposed by lockdown allowed for an innovative approach to parenting support.
- While his parents are still anxious about how school will go they have a **lot more confidence** in their own capacity to manage things at home. We do not think that they would have the same level of confidence in themselves if they had not been through the challenges together that COVID-19 and the lockdowns brought.

19

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19

Case Study 3 - Tom

- 10 year old boy
- History of trauma
- He likes animals and is interested in sport
- He is good with his hands (he has been fixing motorbikes as a project at school)
- He is good at drawing and art and shows a real interest in Maori culture, stories, and Te Reo.
- He can be quite caring and compassionate and wants to connect with others
- Currently residing with his grandmother as his mother did not feel she had the skills to care for him**



20

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20

Case Study 3 – Tom

- The grandmother brought together several of her children and mokopuna to live together in one bubble supporting each other. The **family responded by coming together, pooling their resources, focusing on themselves and essentially closing themselves off from unnecessary contact with outsiders.**
- While there were initial concerns about the lack of contact with the family, what became apparent is that a family perceived to have poorly developed coping strategies (and overly reliant on external supports), **were able to resource their needs from within.**
- As such, the family have emerged from lockdown **more connected, collaborative and confident in their ability to cope**, having had some successes during the identified period of 'crisis'. All children also returned home following lockdown to live with the mother.

21

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21

Case study 4 - Charlie

- 14 years old boy
- Recent diagnoses of ASD, ADHD and ODD
- Passionate about planes and the airport, science, cooking, Rubik's and softball
- Very knowledgeable about public transport (Can tell you how to get ANYWHERE in Auckland)
- Quite withdrawn, lacks confidence to take next steps**
- Takes some time to warm up to activities and people



22

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22

Case study 4 - Charlie

- Charlie's participation in the IWS meetings during lockdown changed significantly, from a very introverted stance to a **very participatory presence and decision making**
- Charlie was able to **lead own reflection on de-escalation strategies** that are helpful to him
- Body language** both for mum and student was much more relaxed
- Charlie was **present for the whole meeting** on zoom and fully engaged. Previously would only attend 15-20 minutes of meeting time
- Charlie has become more confident **about future goals and has recently sought and followed through registration into a recent Rubik's cube competition to get a grading**
- Lockdown provided an opportunity for improved engagement from Charlie – removing the anxieties of formal meetings (finding it easier to engage with computer screens). His success with this forum has allowed for him to understand how important his contributions are – and he has continued to engage in the process and be more proactive in planning and confident in making decisions*

23

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23

Case study 5 – Andy

- 16 year old transgender male
- Diagnosis of ASD, GAD, and depression
- A poet, creative, very articulate and passionate
- Not living at home, in care
- Breakdown in family relationships (mum and sister)
- Loves baking, and swearing
- Will tell you if he doesn't like something!
- Distant relationship with dad
- Tendency to catastrophise in meetings and not be clear about future goals
- Really supportive school
- Lack of routine becomes a significant stressor for Andy**



24

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24

Case study 5 - Andy

- Student **drove planning and intervention** during lockdown, with an active voice in meetings
- **Relationship between student and mum and dad grew significantly stronger** during this period
- Student has kept very **motivated in getting through his school work** and is **clear about future goals** throughout lockdown
- Student is **well connected with his hobbies and has become more active in the community** since lockdown
- Andy **created structure for himself** during lockdown, **managing a multitude of projects**
- *The opportunity for family to spend and nurture quality time together (virtually) has grown the family relationships that previously were too tense or almost non-existent. During this time Andy grew strategies to remain focused on his school work/ future goals and coping strategies in dealing with lockdown anxiety and perceived lack of routine*

25

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25

Reflections from whānau

- Quote from Andy's mum:

"Overall Andy has had a really good break. He is **very focused** on the year and the things he wants to achieve and how".

"I would have to say it is **the most relaxed and positive break in years**. He needed one skype call to Therapist X to talk through a few things but other than that he seems to be able to get through things with the help of staff on occasion".



26

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26

Reflections from rangatahi

- Email message from us to Andy touching base:
- *"Hi Andy, Happy New Year! How are you and how has the break been so far? Let us know if you would like to catch up at some stage over the phone or in person", IWS Team*
- Andy's response: *"Maybe, get in touch with X for my schedule as I am VERY busy"*
- *The strengths that were developed as a result of the lockdown experience not only allowed Andy to receive recognition in his local school but also saw him appear on TV, on the radio and win a Prime Minister award.*



27

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27

What have we learned from whānau we supported?

- **The crisis was experienced universally**, this created more **empathy and compassion for all**. Power dynamics usually associated within some contexts were removed (eg. Boardroom table at a school was no longer a barrier)

Families' Learnings:

- **Family (and child) voices were strengthened**: Families and students had more confidence to contribute to their own plans
- Family and Team **relationships were strengthened**
- Families were **more involved** in the school work, **connected and grateful** for the school team's work

IWS Teams' Learnings:

- IWS teams and especially school teams became **more flexible, creative and innovative**
- IWS teams looked for **potential rather than deficits** in problem solving and creating plans
- IWS teams developed behaviours which allowed them to **learn from** rather than **judge** situations

- *Common across cases – families approached lockdown and saw opportunity rather than threat and children/families used strategies to strengthen weaknesses and make use of comparative strengths to address the disruptions lockdown imposed*

28

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28

So what next?

We have tried to take some of the learnings from these families and apply them to what we might want to consider going forward for:

- **The IWS model and individual casework**
- **Broader Service Delivery Considerations**

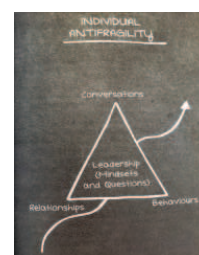


29

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29

Developing Individual ANTIFRAGILITY



Alhir S, 2017

30

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30

MINDSETS:

- **FIXED MINDSET:** limits an individual's openness to themselves and their options
- **GROWTH MINDSET:** expands a person's openness to themselves and their options

QUESTIONS

- **JUDGER MINDSET:** limits an individual's openness to reality and experiments
- **LEARNER MINDSET:** expands an individual's openness to reality and experiments

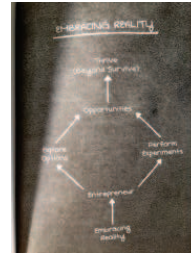
LEADERSHIP

- Using a range of leadership styles expands an individual's awareness of themselves and the reality in which they exist, and allows for an openness to explore options to problem solve for success



* An individual's mindset, questions and leadership qualities while engaging, relating and behaving within their reality overtime allows for that person to achieve greater ANTIFRAGILITY

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Embracing Reality

Alhir S, 2017

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31

32

Developing ANTIFRAGILE behaviour

$$B = M \times A \times P$$

BEHAVIOUR = Motivation x Ability x Prompt

Motivation = mindsets / attitudes
Ability = strengths / weaknesses
Prompt = an opportunity / threat



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33

The ANTIFRAGILE identity

- **Identity:** Who do I want to be?
- **Motivation:** Why do I want to be that person?
- **Outcomes:** What do I want to achieve?
- **Process:** How am I going to do it?
- **Support:** What else will I need to succeed?

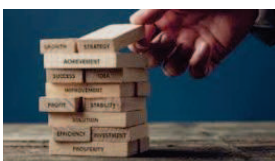


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34

Service Growth - Covid-19 and beyond

So what does this mean for IWS Service delivery?



35

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35

Crisis is the mother of innovation – NZ Herald

Russell Craig, National Technology Officer, Microsoft NZ, examines how the pandemic has inspired Kiwi businesses to innovate.

- At the start of 2020, the world was forced to re-think the way it did business as Covid-19 swept around the world.
- Businesses had to close their doors, arm workforces with new technology so they could continue trading from home – and some were even forced to tear business plans up and re-imagine the services they offered.
- We estimate two years' worth of digital transformation took place in just two months, showing that crisis and disruption can also be an opportunity.
- **Traditionalist** (anti-quated with no innovation), **novice** (small signs of incremental innovation), **adopter** (consistent signs of innovation across the four pillars) and **innovation leader** (strong culture of innovation, reaping the rewards).
- It showed the nation is maturing in its approach to innovation. In six months, New Zealand businesses classified as 'innovation leaders' increased by almost 40 per cent from pre-to post-Co vid-19.

36

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36

Service Growth - Covid-19 and beyond

As a **Service**, we need to:

- Ensure the **sustainability of the evolutionary change** created by Covid-19?
- Ensure the **innovation created in such a short amount of time becomes the norm** in how we operate, independently of a crisis?
- Ensure we **continue to support each other**, showing compassion and empathy for one another: The team of 5 million, different but all the same?



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37

Service Growth - Covid-19 and beyond

It is **important** that we:

- Continue to challenge our **perceptions**
- Intentionally think about how to develop **Family Assets (during the crisis and beyond)**, ensuring sustainability
- Intentionally work to **increase families and students confidence** to grow confidence and develop ownership of their plans
- Consider how we **think, lead, talk, interact and behave** and teach our families to be similarly reflective
- Learn to be **intentional in preparing them for tomorrow!** We need to continue to seek out opportunities to be **innovative and grow**



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38

Service Considerations?

The **IWS Service** is well set to learn from the 2020 COVID-19 experience, and has some fundamentals in place to apply these learnings, including:

- A model and **Theory of Change** that supports and promotes evolution
- A structure that allows for collaboration and **Participatory Decision Making**
- An outcome measurement tool that promotes and tracks changes in domains, including **Attitudes, Perceptions and Values**



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39

Reflections

Book - *"The Good Ancestor"* - Roman Krznaric (described as a "public intellectual, philosopher")

The general thrust challenges the reader on "**how to think long-term in a short-term world**" with a specific challenge to the education fraternity to explore "**how we can design an evolutionary learning capability into our political, economic, and social systems so that they are not crippled by rigidity in the face of changing circumstances or external shocks?**"



Iona Holsted
Secretary for Education

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40

"Wind extinguishes a candle and energizes fire. Likewise, with randomness, uncertainty and chaos: you want to use them, not hide from them. You want to be the fire and wish for the wind"

Taleb, 2012

41

41

References

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42

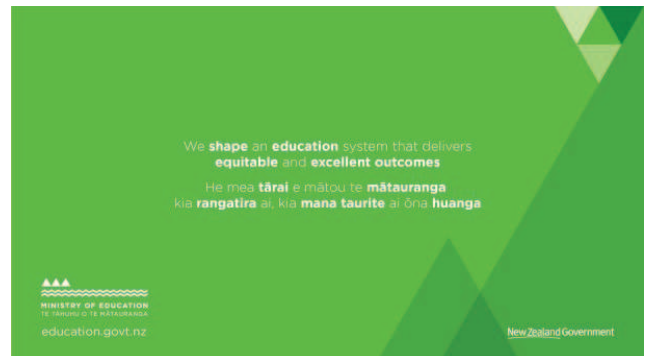
Thank you for listening! Any questions?

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43



44