

Press Release
May 20 2008
For Immediate Release

New Zealand Youth Embrace Text & Email Support to Beat Depression

The Lowdown.co.nz website has been established as the most recent part of the Ministry of Health's National Depression Initiative, following a mounting body of international evidence showing that young people are most receptive to communication via the internet and phone texting.

The interactive site was developed and designed in consultation with youth and aims to help young people recognise and understand depression. It encourages and enables them to seek appropriate help, using self-help techniques or puts them in touch with trained professionals.

A key feature of the site is the online support facility where visitors can get expert advice from qualified counsellors. After sending a message by email or text to a counsellor they will receive a personalised response as quickly as possible.

The average duration of the text support sessions at the Lowdown is an hour and a half with 13 texts sent. The average email session is an hour and a half with two emails being sent.

These statistics show that New Zealand youth are comfortable getting help via email and text. The site has helped to make counseling support more accessible to young people through the use of technology they are familiar with.

The site also features a forum where visitors can join Lowdown.co.nz community and talk to each other about how they are feeling. People can share their experiences and offer support to their peers, but to check that young people are kept safe, an online moderator keeps an eye on communications.

Feed back about the site and support team has been very positive with one comment from a visitor to the site saying, "It is one of the most accessible and interactive sites I have used, it felt real. Like it was applicable to me and the issues I have. Cheers for your support and advice it's been great, you do very good work."

Since its launch in December last year, the Lowdown.co.nz website has been exceeding expectations in providing essential support for young people experiencing depression.

ENDS

www.thelowdown.co.nz

For further information or an interview with a Lowdown spokesperson please contact:
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Notes for Editors: What's at the Lowdown?

Navigators

When visitors arrive at the Lowdown they can choose their own online navigator who will show them round the site. The navigators are cool New Zealand band members, actors and presenters that young people relate to.

Stories

The site features video stories from people who have experienced depression themselves (or who know someone close to them who has). Visitors can check out the stories from band members, musicians, actors, sportspeople, presenters, and everyday people too. Their stories tell how they got through their experience with depression and give encouragement and support to the person watching.

Information and Advice

There is lots of other useful stuff on the Lowdown to help visitors understand what they (or someone they know) are going through. They can try the "Self-Test" to see if they might be depressed and to encourage them to take action. Or they can read the "Did You Know?" fact sheets and Frequently Asked Questions that give useful information about depression and tips to help them feel better.

Someone to Talk To

Sometimes it helps people to talk to someone else about how they are feeling. Another key feature of the site is the online support facility where visitors can get expert advice from qualified counsellors. After sending a message by email or text to a counsellor they will receive a personalised response as quickly as possible, and within 12 hours.

There is also a forum where visitors can join the Lowdown community and talk to each other about how they are feeling. People can share their experiences and offer support to their peers, but to check that young people are kept safe, an online moderator keeps an eye on communications.

A Place to Hang Out

Visitors can hang out at the Lowdown and listen to some music from the bands that are featured on the site or they can check out the online polls on different topics to find out how other people think and feel. They can also listen to clips from radio interviews and hear bands, actors, presenters and sports stars talking about what helped them through tough times.

Help Services

It is important for people who are experiencing depression to get help as early as possible. It is also important for them to find a treatment that works for them, and the Lowdown Team is skilled at helping them with this. The Lowdown team offers counseling support via email or text and they have a database of services around the country and can put young people in touch with professional services in their areas.

Celebrities contributing to the Lowdown

P Money/ Scribe/ Brooke Fraser/ Dave Gibson - Elemeno P/ Brad Carter - Steriogram/ Angelo Munro - The Bleeders/ Jason Kerrison - Op Shop/ / Tau Manukia - Spacifix/ Young Sid/ Awa- Nesian Mystik/ Junior - Nesian Mystik/ Paul Roper - Mint Chicks/ Joel Little - Goodnight Nurse/ Tim Arnold - Pluto/ PNC/ Francis Kora - Kora/ Jon Austin - 48 May/ Victoria Girling-Butcher - Lucid 3/ Ben Read - 8 Foot Sativa/ Savage - Dkonz/ Aidee Walker - Outrageous Fortune Actress/ Antonia Prebble - Outrageous Fortune Actress/ Nisha Madhan - Shortland Street/ Lee Donaghue - Shortland Street/ Kimberley Crossman - Shortland Street/ Jaquie Brown - TV Presenter/ Sonia Gray - TV Presenter/ Jane Yee - C4 Presenter/ Phil Bostwick - C4 Presenter/ Tamati Coffey - Breakfast Presenter/ Mike Puru - The Edge DJ/ To'ofiga Fepulea'i - The Laughing Samoans Comedian/ Ma'a Nonu - Ex All Black/ Lisa Li - Miss Chinese NZ