



COVID-19: Key learnings and tips for moving forward

In a mere few days, NZers went from being able to meet in groups to strict self isolation and social distancing restrictions. These changes, implemented to stop the spread of COVID-19, have had a major impact on many businesses and not-for-profits, and the exercise sector has been particularly hard hit. Group exercise is all about bringing people together, so overnight many activity providers were faced with a mountain of new challenges. Namely, how to adapt and deliver classes in this new environment!



At the time of writing, we are in Alert Level 3, and it will be at least several more months before things start to resemble anything close to normality. So read on to answer...

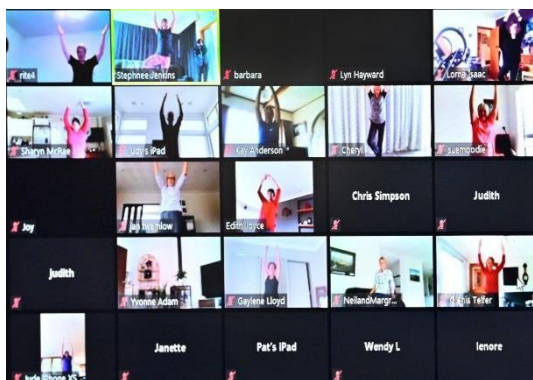
- **what can activity providers do in the meantime to prepare for a return** to normal classes and activities?
- **what are some of the key learnings and insights** that have been made along the way so far?

COVID-19: Key Learnings and Insights

Over the past month, activity providers and exercise professionals have shown extraordinary resilience. [Around 80% of trainers and clubs shifted online to provide exercise from home options within a matter of weeks](#) according to the NZ Exercise Association – in spite of the very challenging circumstances. This rapid transition highlights a number of key learnings. Here are 3 key ones that have emerged:

Adaptability is key

Being adaptable means working without boundaries, and being open to finding diverse and unexpected solutions to problems and challenges. This ability to 'think outside the square' is an important skill as it means you can embrace challenges better. It has been inspiring to see so many activity providers adapt to the 'lockdown environment' and deliver their classes and activities in a new or different way. Don't be afraid to trial different tools, strategies and techniques – you will likely discover new ways of working which may well open up new possibilities going forward.



Technology has a role to play

Right now it's hard to imagine a world without Facebook, Zoom, YouTube and other online streaming platforms. Around 10 million people used Zoom a day at the end of December – by the end of April this number had exploded to 200 million! These platforms have been vital for the exercise sector during lockdown, enabling many activity providers to continue to deliver their classes and activities online. For many it's has been a steep learning curve, however this effort will be worth it. Demand for online exercise will very likely continue beyond COVID-19, resulting in exciting new opportunities for activity providers.

Relationships matter

While technology is important, at the heart of group and community based exercise are relationships. In these uncertain times, the connections that have been built over time with class participants, clients and customers are gold. These are the loyal people who will return when classes and activities can safely resume again. Keep in touch with your 'regulars' and continue to invest in these relationships during lockdown. If you are offering online classes (that are open to anybody), think about how you could build a connection with new people.



What can activity providers do to prepare?

Here are 3 practical things you can do while waiting to move down Alert Levels.

1. Communicate regularly

Communication is key for retention. Make time to keep in touch with your regular attendees. Some ideas you could try include sending out a weekly newsletter, posting on Facebook regularly, writing a blog on your website (if you have one) or sending out emails. Make sure you use a communication method that fits with your audience (such as older adults may not use Facebook). The main message you want to communicate is "I'm still here and looking forward to seeing you again when things are back up and running".

2. Understand the health and safety requirements for each Alert Level

The government is using a 4 Level Alert System for Covid-19. At each level a range of specific measures are implemented.

[You can find a summary on the alert levels on the official COVID-19 website.](#) Take the time now to review the different levels and develop a plan that can be implemented when recreation activities are allowed again. Success relies on being able to reassure your regular participants that you are able to provide your activities in a safe manner.

3. Upskill yourself

If you have time on your hands, now could be a great time to invest in some professional development. There are many different online courses and training opportunities available including:

- [short courses like those being offered by Exercise As Medicine](#); or
- diplomas and certificates from [TANZ e-campus](#) or [Skills Active](#).

[Check out a list of Continuing Professional Development Providers](#) on NZ Register of Exercise Professionals website.



Exercise Association of New Zealand

Representing the Exercise & Fitness Industry

[The Exercise Association of New Zealand website has a comprehensive section of resources and tools](#) related to supporting exercise providers and providing business advice related to COVID-19. They recently added two excellent presentations: **Considerations for reopening at L2 Guide** and **Using Zoom as an exercise provider**. There are many other helpful resources too. Visit their website for more information or to sign up as a member.

Education, Training and Development

FitEX LITE Virtual

Date: Saturday 9th May 2020.

Time: 9am to 5.30pm.

FitEX LITE is going ahead online! This is a fantastic opportunity to upskill with over 20 sessions on offer and 17 world-class speakers coming together for this one day event.

[Get more information on the topics at FitEx LITE Virtual](#) and to book your place.

Functional Training for Group Fitness

Date: Saturday 7th June 2020.

Time: 11am to 4pm.

Cost: \$97 per person. You will receive an invitation upon confirmation of enrolment.

Join this virtual online session on Zoom with Marietta Mehanni!

The functional movement craze has opened up a whole new space in training methods that are predominately gym and small group training. This session demonstrates how to take elements of functional training into a group exercise session that is both achievable and safe for the general population.

Autumn Activity Providers Workshop (Active Canterbury)

Date and Time: Saturday 27th June 2020, from 12.30 to 4.30pm.

Location: Pioneer Recreation Centre, Christchurch

We are in the process of establishing how to safely deliver this workshop at Alert Level 2 in collaboration with CCC – following all MoH safety guidelines. This may mean some slight changes to the planned topics but most will remain as for the March workshop: Do's and Don'ts when working with older adults.

Those activity providers who registered for March will be given first option to attend. Numbers will be limited to meet physical distancing requirements, and it will be on a first in first served basis. Any places not taken up will be made available to other interested activity providers. Contact Kris Tynan on 021 262 8886 for more information.

Community Exercise Foundation Course (Active Canterbury)

Date: New date to be announced.

Location: North New Brighton Community Centre, Christchurch

This course has been postponed due to COVID-19. A new date will be set once we move to Alert Level 2. The course will most likely to be held on a Saturday in August but this will depend on the public health and social measures in place at the time.

You can still register your interest and we will contact you once a date has been finalised.

[Get more information on the Community Exercise Foundation Course](#), or speak to Kris or Nadine.

Are you REP's registered and offering online services?

[Make sure you check or update your online profile on the REPs website](#) with any new services you are providing. You can also contact the REPs team for further assistance.



[Healthy for Life is a new TV show on TVNZ 1 to help keep those over 65 active](#) during bubble life.



[The Maanaki20 website is all about keeping whānau connected and informed](#), and sharing inspiring stories of what others are doing to keep

Healthy For Life is hosted by Bernice Mene, and designed to help older people work on their strength and balance through an exercise programme called the Super7. The show also provides tips for staying safe and keeping your brain active, and advice about healthy eating, social links and sleep. It screens at 9am on 2nd May on TVNZ 1, and repeats Saturdays thereafter. It will also be available at TVNZ OnDemand.

[Sport Canterbury is continuing to support people to be steady on their feet](#) with approved, local online strength and balance exercise classes.

[Have Your Say: Accessible Streets Reform](#)

The Associate Minister of Transport is proposing a collection of rule changes known as the Accessible Streets Regulatory Package. These rules are designed to improve safety for footpath users, encourage active modes of transport, and support the creation of more liveable and vibrant towns and cities.

Everyone who uses the transport network will be affected by these proposed changes. Share your opinion on these proposed rule changes to our footpaths, which include allowing e-scooters and bicycles on footpaths if travelling within set speed limits.

Submissions close 20th May 2020.

each other healthy, well and connected.

[There is a specific Tinana section](#) with links to videos and activities.

[Te Puni Kōkiri is another great place to go for COVID-19 Information for Māori.](#) You will find latest updates and helpful resources such as free posters to download.

[Hauora at Home is a 28-day wellbeing initiative](#) currently being offered by the Green Prescription team at Sport Canterbury. **It is based on the five winning ways to wellbeing** (Connect – me whakawhanaunga, Give – tukua, Take notice – me aro tonu, Keep learning – me ako tonu, and Be active – me kori tonu).



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We welcome your feedback and comments.