



Calm is an app that has a range of features including: Relaxing music, meditation, stories and activities to help with sleeping. Although users can pay to upgrade to access more meditation and other features, the free trial version offers one meditation session per day, it lasts from 2 to 30 minutes in length and has music tracks set to scenic photos.

Sparky (work in progress) is a mental health casual video games that is currently being designed with the help of young people and a team of researchers at Victoria University of Wellington. The game is designed to utilize the popular and simplistic mechanisms of causal video games while also learning about different mental health concepts.

Sparky uses concepts similar to those in the computerized game SPARX. For instance players are required to swipe away Gnats (gloomy negative automatic thoughts) and collect Sparx (smart positive x factor thoughts) by tapping them on the screen. Sparky is still under construction so stay tuned for more!



Digital Mental Health Tools

Numerous digital mental health tools exist for adolescents and can be played across platforms such as smartphones, computers and iPads. In this short summary, some of the most relevant digital mental health tools for adolescents in New Zealand have been discussed. It is important to note that these tools are not designed to replace face-to-face therapy. Rather, they are tools that may be helpful to teach specific skills and could be experimented with especially, during this current time of isolation.

Russell is a psychologist who is currently completing his PhD focused on the development of Sparky. For any comments or questions you can email him at Russell.pine@vuw.ac.nz



Digital Mental Health Tools for Young People



Mental Health Tools



SPARX is a computerized cognitive behavioural therapy (cCBT) self-help program for the treatment of depressive symptoms in adolescents aged 12 to 19 years old. The game is set in a fantasy world where the user plays as an avatar who is faced with many challenges to destroy the virtual world of gloom and negativity. The seven modules (or levels) last approximately 30 minutes with each level incorporating a direct teaching component. SPARX was originally co-designed with a range of adolescents in New Zealand and has helped many young people around the world.



Aunty Dee is also a free online tool that aims to help young people work through a problem or problems. Aunty Dee, the chatbot, asks reflective questions in a structure way that enables young people to explore their problems and self-generate solutions. Aunty Dee is accessible on smartphones, tablets and on computers. Although anyone can use Aunty Dee, it is aimed for Pacific and Maori young people aged 14-25 years.



Headspace is an app for all ages including young people to help practice mindfulness meditation in a fun and simple way. Once downloaded, users are able to complete the first 10 sessions for free. These sessions consist of simplified guided meditations to help those who may not have meditated before. Research has showed promising effects of using the Headspace with some studies indicating regular use of the app can lead to improving concentration and reducing anxiety.



Mental Health Tools

SPARX	cCBT game www.sparx.org.nz	Free
Aunty Dee	Chatbot www.auntydee.co.nz	Free
Headspace	Mindfulness app www.headspace.com	First 10 sessions are free.
Calm	Mindfulness/sleep app. www.calm.com	Free daily sessions available