

Social media can improve lives post-disaster, according to research

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UC Associate Professor of Marketing Ekant Veer (pictured right), of the College of Business and Law, says the All Right? campaign's approach to social media ticked all the right boxes. All Right? manager Sue Turner says Facebook has helped to open up and normalise conversations about health and wellbeing. Credit: University of Canterbury

Newly published research has shown the important role social media can play supporting health and wellbeing following a disaster.

The All Right? [wellbeing](#) campaign was created in 2013 to support people's mental health and wellbeing following the devastating Canterbury earthquakes in 2010 and 2011. Research on the impact of the campaign's social media activity was recently published in the journal Health Promotion International.

Paper co-author, University of Canterbury Associate Professor of Marketing Ekant Veer, of the College of Business and Law, says the All Right? campaign's approach to social media ticked all the right boxes.

"While social media provides a great platform to have a conversation with a community, a lot of the time it can fall flat or feel preachy," says Assoc Prof Veer.

"What All Right? has shown is that by getting the tone right, tapping into people's everyday experiences, and alternating between engaging and specialised content, social media can be a force for good."

According to the research, 85 percent of respondents to an [online survey](#) had taken action as a result of what they had seen on the All Right? Facebook page.

Almost all respondents agreed that the All Right? Facebook posts:

- were helpful (98 percent)
- made respondents think about how they are feeling (97 percent)
- gave respondents ideas of things they can do to help themselves (96 percent)
- regularly made them think about their wellbeing (93 percent).

"The Facebook page goes far beyond simply telling people what's good for them. It's led to actual behaviour change that is improving the wellbeing of people in Canterbury," he says. "The level of behaviour change that All Right? has achieved is phenomenal."

All Right? manager Sue Turner says Facebook has helped to open up and normalise conversations about health and wellbeing.

"Everyone is an expert in their own wellbeing, and Facebook enables us to gather people's own ideas on what makes them happy, and amplify these wide and far. It's created a community of people who feel more connected, more accepted and more informed.

The research demonstrates the importance of mental health promotion, Ms Turner says.

"Facebook is one of many tools All Right? uses to grow understanding of how people can look after their wellbeing. Growing emotional literacy can encourage you to do more of the things that make you feel good, improve your quality of life, and help to reduce the need for service-level care.

"Social marketing can never replace specialist mental health services, but it can play a much bigger role in building resilience and promoting mental health and wellbeing across a population.

"As the evaluation shows, when done properly, [social media](#) can make a really positive difference in people's lives," says Ms Turner.

More information: Kristi Calder et al. Evaluation of the All Right? Campaign's Facebook intervention post-disaster in Canterbury, New Zealand, *Health Promotion International* (2018). [DOI: 10.1093/heapro/day106](https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/day106)

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