

# "NEEDS VS WANTS"



**\$orted** Community

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## Action in good intentions

In 2017 Mike and Katie O'Connor and their newborn son Finn were living with Mike's parents while they saved for a house, but didn't feel like they were making headway.

**"We didn't really know how to go about it. We'd put money aside but then dip into it for car repairs or to pay an unexpected bill."**

One day, walking through their home suburb of Panmure in Auckland, Mike spotted a poster for a Sorted course that was geared toward home ownership. Taking the seven-week course helped them improve their situation to such an extent they are now hopeful of being in their own home by early 2019.

**"In 18 months we've managed to double our savings."**

Katie and Mike are both 33. Mike's a firefighter; Katie, formerly a professional dancer, is now a pilates instructor.

The course gave the couple the opportunity to look at their finances through a microscope. What they found was not terrible, but they realised that if they structured their outgoings better, and made more conscious choices in their spending, they would have more control of their savings.

They paid off what debt they had, and set up separate accounts to put money aside for various bills, so that when they fell due the money was already there for payment. They thought hard about "needs vs wants", deciding not to buy a new car but instead sell one and downgrade the other to a model that was more family-friendly.

It wasn't all about denial. The couple learned that to sustain better money habits, they had to still enjoy life. Mike's squash club membership stayed, as did Katie's occasional coffee with friends.

**"It's a bit like maintaining a diet," says Katie. "You need to be allowed the odd piece of cake – we just had to decide which cake we wanted each month."**

The course helped Katie and Mike to prioritise what was important to them, which was family – travelling to see Katie's family in Britain every couple of years, and saving to buy their own family home.

**"For us it's less about things, and more about lifestyle," says Katie. "We now prioritise differently and with better intentions. We make choices every day because we're focused on saving for our next trip to England for a family wedding, and for our house."**

The couple found the course enjoyable – it was reassuring learning with people of all ages and backgrounds, and in all kinds of financial situations. They learned the importance and benefits of talking openly about money. Participants felt empowered to set goals and make plans of how to reach them.

Mike says they left each workshop with new knowledge, and changes to make to improve how they managed their finances.

**"When we look back at how far we've come in 18 months, we realise the journey we've been on has been spectacular. The big changes were actually in the little things."**

Their goal of home ownership is almost within their grasp.

**"We're just keeping the faith and adding to our savings bit by bit. Being able to buy a house in Auckland, close to family, is like the golden ticket."**

They recommend the Sorted courses to anyone.

**"It can be isolating thinking you're struggling on your own, but you're not. Sometimes starting is the hardest step. But doing a Sorted course will help you get your ducks in a row, so that when the opportunity to achieve your goal comes along, you'll be ready."**

To watch the full interview go to [cffc.org.nz/success-stories](https://cffc.org.nz/success-stories)

