

TIHEI MAURI ORA

SUPPORTING WHĀNAU
THROUGH SUICIDAL DISTRESS



NĀ TŌ ROUROU, NĀ TĀKU ROUROU
KA ORA TE IWI

HE TAPU

KIA TIKA, KIA PONO, KIA MĀRAMA

Tapu is the fundamental principle of life and natural law guided by boundaries of respect and safety protected by tikanga Māori and Māori law.

From tapu comes tikanga and from tikanga expresses the idea of kia tika, kia pono, kia mārama. Tika means to be upright, honest and correct. Pono is to believe in the sanctity of life, and Mārama is the importance of knowledge, understanding and enlightenment.

And it is through the application of these principles integrated into the practice and protection of tapu that we are able to make headway through difficult periods and enjoy and uphold the principles of life. Therefore whānau have a responsibility of maintaining the boundaries of tapu that protect life.

Tuia i runga

Tuia i raro

Tuia i waho

Tuia i roto

Tuia te here tangata

That it be woven above

As it is below

Woven without

As it is within

Interwoven within the threads of humanity



Dr Te Huirangi Waikerepuru

HEI TĪMATANGA

OVERVIEW

This resource is developed with whānau in mind. It is aimed at helping whānau and friends to support someone who is in crisis or distress. This resource gives you information about what to look for and how to help someone who may be feeling suicidal.

A person who is distressed might not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. Most people who attempt suicide don't want to die – they just want to stop hurting. Support and connection with whānau, friends and culture can help them to find a way through.

To support someone who is in crisis or distress, it is important to identify the supports or tokotoko they need, and also the support that you need to be a source of strength for them. You might need to be prepared to have difficult conversations and talk about mamae (hurt, pain).

This resource is based on a framework of He Tapu: kia tika, kia pono, kia mārama developed by Dr Te Huirangi Waikerepuru. The framework identifies six key poutoko or principles that emphasise the importance of te tapu o te tangata (the value of human life) and the individual and collective responsibility to protect tapu.

Nō reira, e hoa mā, kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui. Keep strong, have courage, commitment and determination to support whānau and friends through difficult times.

MIHI – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The compilation of this resource has been a collaborative effort involving many people working within the area of Māori suicide prevention. We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who gave their time, effort and support to the development of this resource.

We would like to particularly acknowledge the contribution of project lead **Pania Lee**, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngā Rauru, Ngā Ruahinerangi.

TITIRO, WHAKARONGO

PAY ATTENTION



ART BY THERESA REIHANA
NGĀTI HINE

Titiro and **whakarongo** express the need to take notice, pay attention and be aware of what is going on. A person who is distressed is in a vulnerable state of mind and health. Do what you can to protect and support them.

HE AHA NGĀ TOHU?

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

If someone in your whānau shows one or more of these signs, they need your support. Pay attention to changes in their behaviour and trust your instincts. Some signs may not be obvious.

Ngā tino tohu Critical Signs	Ētahi atu tohu Other Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trying to kill themselves • hurting themselves e.g. cutting skin, taking an overdose • telling you they want to die or kill themselves • accessing things they could use to hurt themselves e.g. rope, gun • obsession with death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • isolating themselves from whānau, family and friends • anger or rage • feeling worthless, guilty or ashamed • having no hope for the future • abusing drugs or alcohol • giving away possessions • not taking their medication

ME MĀHARAHARA KI A WAI?

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Someone in your whānau may be at higher risk if they have:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempted suicide before • been diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder or another mental illness • lost a friend or relative to suicide • been a victim of violence, bullying or sexual abuse • a court case coming up • been judged or shamed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no connection with whānau, friends or community • no sense of identity • been through a major life change • broken up with their partner • friends or whānau members who don't support their sexuality or identity
--	--

I felt like there was no hope, no point in trying and no one cared. I felt hopeless, useless and no-one loved me. And the easiest way was to end it to stop all that pain and hurt.

26 year-old wāhine Māori

ĀWHINATIA, MANAAKITIA, KŌRERO TAHITIA

TALK & LISTEN WITH COMPASSION



ART BY THERESA REIHANA
NGĀTI HINE

Āwhinatia (helping or assisting) and **manaakitia** (showing compassion) are important qualities for **kōrero tahitia** (listening and talking together). Give your time, words, presence and patience.

ME AHA KOE?

WHAT DO YOU DO?

In a crisis:

- Stay with them and keep calm
- Let them know you care
- Keep them talking: listen and ask questions without judging
- Remove items that may harm them: medication, razor blades, knives, ropes, guns
- Support them to access professional help (see the inside back cover for a list of people who can support you)
- **In an emergency call 111**

If you think someone is at risk	Other things to know
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite them to talk with you• Listen, and don't judge• Take them seriously• Ask them directly about their thoughts of suicide (asking will not put the thought in their head)• Ask them what they are planning – if they have a specific plan, they need help right away• Help them to find and access the support they need• Stay with them until they get help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be gentle and compassionate with them• Help them feel that there is hope of things getting better – identify things that are positive in their life• Seek support from others, including whānau• Do not agree to keep secrets• Let them talk about their thoughts of suicide – avoiding the topic does not help

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 111

“...if we are more open about suicide, we've got a better chance of dealing with it. If it's masked and hidden, it's very hard to deal with”.

(Mason Durie, 2012)

MAHI TAHI

WORK TOGETHER



ART BY THERESA REIHANA
NGĀTI HINE

Mahi tahi expresses the value of working together to do things that promote wellness. If you're supporting someone who is recovering after a crisis, be prepared to be there, offer support and stay involved.

KŌRERO COMMUNICATE

- Create opportunities to talk or discuss things
- Don't avoid talking about suicide or the hard things in their life
- Find out what comforts them e.g: karakia, a safe environment, a pet
- If they don't want to talk with you, ask other people you both trust to support them – friends, family/whānau members, youth workers or others

WHAKANGAHAU KEEP OCCUPIED

- Encourage and support them to do what they enjoy
- Be active together (go for a walk, go and see friends, neighbours, family)
- Help them to connect with others and get involved in the community
- Go with them to access support services

WHAKARANGATIRA VALUE THEM

- Accept them for who they are, and let them know you care
- Tell them they are important
- Support them to make plans, solve problems and achieve their dreams
- Help them access their cultural identity (te reo Māori, marae, whakapapa)

TE ARA HAUORA WORK TOWARDS WELLNESS

- Support them to seek treatment for any health problems
- Look at what needs to be strengthened in the person's life to restore balance. Te Whare Tapa Whā is a way of thinking about this: each side of the wharenuī needs to be strong in order to support the others. The four sides are te taha tinana (physical), te taha wairua (spiritual), te taha whānau (family) and te taha hinengaro (mental and emotional).

TIAKI I A KOE ANŌ

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF



ART BY THERESA REIHANA
NGĀTI HINE

Tiaki i a koe anō highlights the need to take care of yourself when you are caring for others and the importance of connection – to yourself and with others who can support you.

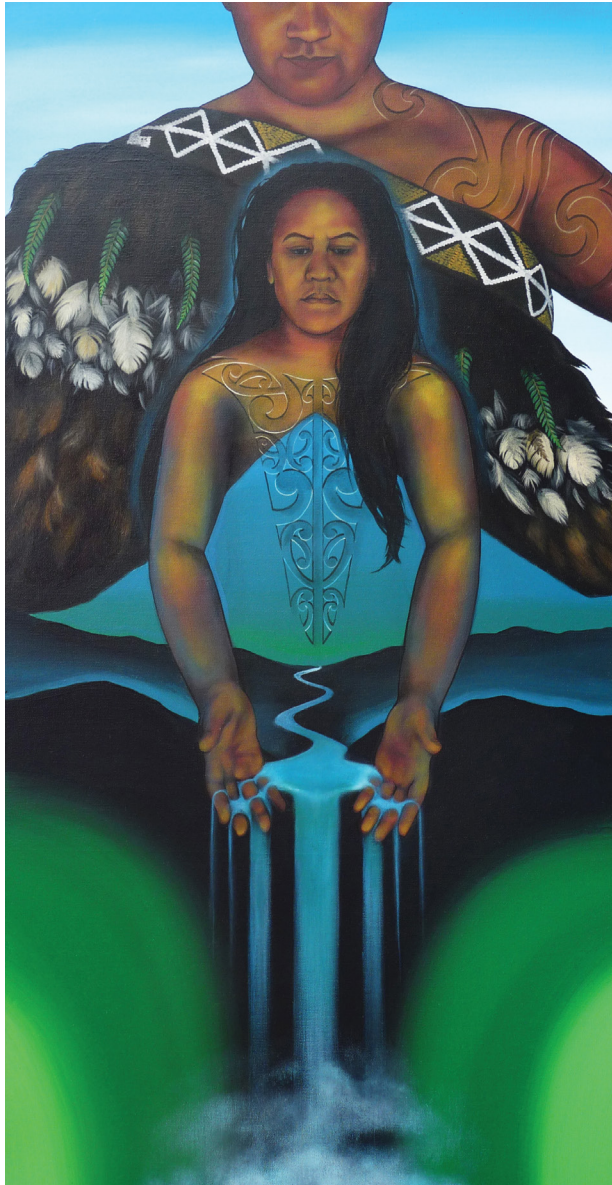
TE TIAKI TŪRORO E ORA MAI AI IA SUPPORTING SOMEONE TO WELLNESS?

- It's important for you to look after yourself
- Make sure you're getting enough sleep, eating properly and relaxing
- By looking after yourself you will be able to help the other person
- Take time for yourself and do the things you enjoy
- Know that you can't do everything and it's okay to ask for help
- It's important to involve whānau and friends to support each other – don't try to do everything yourself

TE MĀHARAHARA KI NGĀ RĀ O ANAMATA FEELING HOPELESS ABOUT THE FUTURE?

- It's important for you to talk to someone
- Surround yourself with people you trust
- It's okay to ask for help – you don't have to cope alone
- Be gentle on yourself

KEI A KOE TONU TE RONGOĀ WHĀNAU HAVE SOLUTIONS



ART BY THERESA REIHANA
NGĀTI HINE

Kei a koe tonu te rongoa highlights that there are solutions within every whānau. Learning together and strengthening whānau connections is central to healing, growing and developing the ability of whānau to look after each other.

E TAEA E TE WHĀNAU TE MAHI TAHI KI TE ĀWHINA I TE TŪRORO WHĀNAU CAN WORK TOGETHER TO HELP SOMEONE IN DISTRESS:

- Talk to whānau leaders and bring the whānau together
- Have a whānau hui in a safe space
- Ask the whānau member at risk to tell you what they need and what works for them
- Talk openly and honestly about the situation
- Develop a whānau plan to work together to support the person at risk

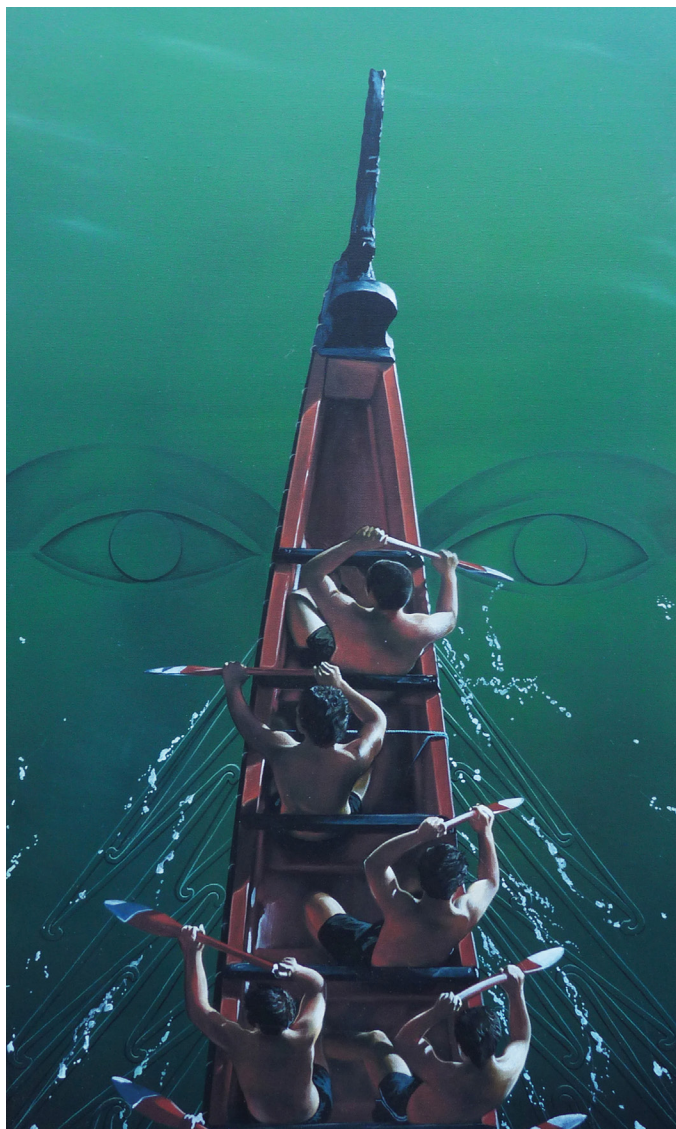
MĒNĀ KO KOE E ĀWHINA ANA I TŌ WHĀNAU IF YOU'RE SUPPORTING YOUR WHĀNAU:

- Identify whānau strengths, look at the issues and think about solutions
- Look for wisdom and skills within your whānau – everyone has something to offer
- Identify services to support the whānau
- Set goals together, create a whānau plan, keep it fresh
- Every day is different, take one day at a time

“...we all have a role to play in whakapapa preservation and protection, to ensuring the continuity of our people. [...] The revolution really does begin at home”. (Keri Lawson-Te Aho, 2013)

KI TE ĀWHINA, KI TE TAUTOKO

ASSISTANCE & SUPPORT
IS AVAILABLE FOR WHĀNAU



ART BY THERESA REIHANA
NGĀTI HINE

Talk to your: partner, parent, friend, whānau or family, kaumātua, teacher, school counsellor, family doctor, community leader or church leader.

Find information or support from your: local Māori health provider, Whānau Ora provider, Kia Piki te Ora coordinator, marae, hapū, iwi, kaumātua council, church, police or mental health crisis team.

NATIONAL HELP SERVICES	CONTACT
Need to talk? 1737	Free text or call 1737
Lifeline	0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or free text 4357
Samaritans	0800 726 666
Depression helpline	depression.org.nz 0800 111 757 or free text 4202
Tautoko Suicide Crisis Helpline	0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)
Youthline	0800 376 633, free text 234 or webchat at youthline.co.nz
The Lowdown – information and support for youth	thelowdown.co.nz
Headstrong – wellbeing app for rangatahi	headstrong.org.nz
Rainbow Youth – sexuality & gender support for young people	ry.org.nz
Alcohol and drug helpline	0800 787 798 for advice & referral to kaupapa Māori services
OUTLine – sexuality & gender	0800 688 5463 (0800 OUTLINE)
Women's Refuge	womensrefuge.org.nz 0800 733 843 (0800 REFUGE)
Kaupapa Māori health and wellbeing services	Find a directory of services at www.wellbeingsupport.health.nz

TITIRO, WHAKARONGO

Pay attention

ĀWHINATIA, MANAAKITIA, KŌRERO TAHITIA

Talk & listen with compassion

MAHI TAHI

Work together

TIAKI I A KOE ANŌ

Take care of yourself

KEI A KOE TONU TE RONGOĀ

Whānau have solutions

KI TE ĀWHINA, KI TE TAUTOKO

Assistance & support is available for whānau

Nā tō rourou, nā tāku rourou
ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket
the people will thrive



MINISTRY OF HEALTH



Updated: Jan 2026

Code: **HE2424**

ISBN: 978-1-98-855404-4 (print)

ISBN: 978-1-98-855405-1 (PDF)



978-1-98-855404-4