

Māori values help to protect whānau

INTRODUCTION

Whānau violence is not traditional for Māori

In the past tikanga and traditional values protected the well-being of the whānau and survival of the collective. These values – such as aroha, whakapapa, whanaungatanga, kōrero awhi, mana manaaki and tikanga – continue to make whānau strong today. They have the potential to enhance whānau wellbeing, to transform behaviours and provide alternatives to violence.

Factors that strengthen and protect families

International research has identified some of the factors that strengthen and protect families:

Family stability – *healthy, loving whānau*

Social support – *being supported by whānau and friends in good and bad times*

Social capital – *feeling part of the community*

Parents' knowledge about their child's development – *growing healthy, happy children*

Family traits and practices – *close-knit whānau who talk to each other and know they belong*

Cultural identity – *feeling confident and proud of who you are; strong culture / strong whānau!*

Community cohesion – *supporting and looking out for each other*

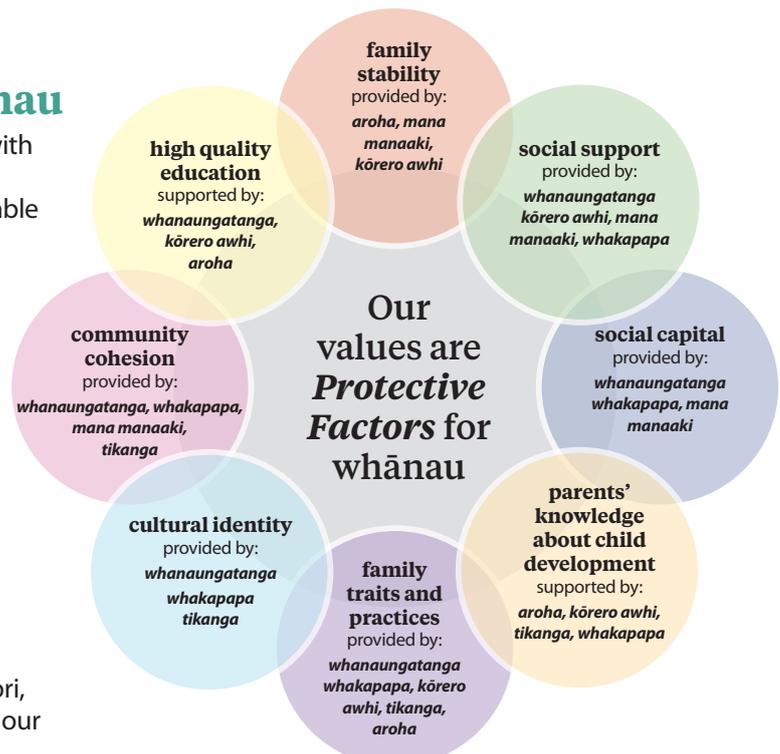
High quality early childhood and school education – *education builds strong tamariki!*

Our traditional values are protective factors for whānau

The E Tū Whānau values are strongly aligned with these protective factors. They both tell us that people are more resistant to harm and better able to bounce back from adversity when they:

- feel like they belong
- are comfortable in their cultural identity
- feel like they have value as individuals
- feel they understand their place and role in the world
- feel supported by whānau and friends in bad times
- are part of a wider group that values and accepts them.

There are many things that whānau do, as Māori, to express and honour these values that make our families strong and resilient.



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FAMILY STABILITY

Healthy, loving whānau

Family stability plays an important role in fostering healthy whānau.

Families are more likely to see positive outcomes for children when:

- there is a high level of marital/relationship satisfaction between partners
- children are close to their caregivers
- there are regular, predictable routines.

Family stability also protects children's development in the midst of other difficulties and disadvantages. For example where a parent suffers from depression, family stability significantly reduces any negative impacts on children's behaviour.

E Tū Whānau values that support family stability:

- **Aroha**
- **Mana / manaaki**
- **Kōrero awahi**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- *We understand and respect the roles each whānau member plays in the home*
- *We show our tamariki our love and support for one another as a couple, by the way that we treat and respect each other*
- *We make each other feel special*
- *We encourage whānau kōrero at the dinner table – asking our tamariki “what went well for you today, what didn't go so well?”*
- *We keep our houses clean – each whānau member contributes to this and knows their role*
- *We give each other enough time to complete necessary tasks*
- *We abide by tikanga through karakia, mihi mihi*
- *We enjoy helping other whānau members*
- *We read to our young tamariki and mokopuna and we tell them stories about their whakapapa*
- *We do our best to be financially stable and independent.*

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SOCIAL SUPPORT

Being supported by whānau and friends

Social support plays an important role in:

- the prevention of illness
- better physical and mental health.

Social support improves the resilience of those who have experienced stress or trauma.

In families with children with serious emotional problems, social support is a protective mechanism that impacts positively on family wellbeing, the quality of parenting and child resilience.

E Tū Whānau values that help to provide social support:

- **Whanaungatanga**
- **Whakapapa**
- **Kōrero awahi**
- **Mana / manaaki**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- *We draw on the connections (whakapapa) we have to strengthen our bonds*
- *We think and act in a whānau / hapū context to draw on the strengths of the collective*
- *We operate through wairua in areas of vulnerability to ensure we uphold the mana of the whānau*
- *We enjoy regular get-togethers with our wider whānau to have fun and celebrate special occasions*
- *We enjoy doing spontaneous things together as whānau*
- *We strive to uplift and build the mana of others in all that we say and do*
- *We know when members of our whānau need support and we rally around to provide it*
- *We have trusted people and places where we can go for guidance and support*
- *We take our tamariki to the doctor when they are not well*
- *We pack healthy lunches for our tamariki*
- *We welcome those who come to our door in need*
- *We talk openly about issues that are affecting our whānau and then we support members to get any help that they need*
- *We respect each other's point of view*
- *We give generously of our time and effort.*

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SOCIAL CAPITAL

Feeling a part of the community

Social capital is associated with positive child and whānau wellbeing, and is characterised by:

- community participation
- feelings of trust
- tolerance of diversity
- a sense of connectedness to other community members.

The stronger the social ties that people have to others in their community, the more likely it is that the community will have a baseline of shared standards, as well as sanctions for violating them.

Even when other risk factors are present, living in a community with strong social cohesion has a protective effect and reduces the risk of violence.

E Tū Whānau values that help to provide social capital:

- **Whanaungatanga**
- **Whakapapa**
- **Mana/manaaki**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- *We hold the role as Tangata whenua and we perform duties to keep whānau and the wider community safe*
- *We play an advisory / education role in areas of significance and cultural matters*
- *We belong to sports clubs and we enjoy regular get-togethers with other whānau and club members*
- *We participate in community events like school fundraisers*
- *We support our tamariki at school, sports and cultural events*
- *We belong to a whānau, hapū, marae or iwi trust, or some other community organisation*
- *We share our culture and tikanga to all through marae, our knowledge and partnerships*
- *We carry out our responsibilities to our whānau, hapū, iwi and wider community, with honour and pride*
- *We accept others without judgement and support them in times of need.*

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PARENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Growing healthy children

Where parents have accurate knowledge about child development, this fosters healthy child development.

Parents with a greater knowledge of infant and child development show higher levels of parenting skills, which in turn leads to children with:

- higher cognitive skills
- fewer behaviour problems
- more adaptive and effective coping behaviours.

Where parents hold inaccurate beliefs about, or overestimate, their children's cognitive functioning, this can undermine their development.

E Tū Whānau values that help us to understand and support the development of our tamariki:

- **Aroha**
- **Kōrero awahi**
- **Tikanga**
- **Whakapapa**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- We share in the raising of the tamariki / mokopuna
- We listen to and learn from the wisdom of our kuia and kaumatua about ways to raise happy, healthy tamariki
- We attend parent support groups and find out about child development and how to deal with stress and behavioural problems
- It is not unusual to have many nannies and aunts
- We support our own children to raise their mokopuna – we share our knowledge with them and provide a helping hand when they need it
- Our home has clear rules about behaviour and we teach our tamariki about these with love and patience
- Our home is filled with knowledge and learning
- We support our tamariki at school – we help with their homework, we talk to their teachers and we make sure they have books to read or a library card
- We seek professional help when we are not coping with our children.

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FAMILY TRAITS AND PRACTICES

Close-knit whānau who talk to each other

Family cohesion

Emotional connections between family members are crucial to the functioning of a family. Cohesive families have higher levels of family satisfaction and lower levels of stress.

Family belief systems

Families that show persistence and perseverance and maintain hope, optimism and confidence that they can overcome the odds are more resilient when facing problems.

Family coping strategies

Confronting a problem and seeking solutions (problem-focused coping) and seeking support and planning actions (active coping) works.

Focusing on dealing with the emotional distress generated by the problem (emotion-focused) and denying, avoiding, or resorting to alcohol and drugs (disengagement coping) doesn't work.

Family communication

Effective communication is critical at times of crisis or stress.

Resilient families communicate effectively through times of crisis and stress, and ensure that the messages they send affirm rather than undermine family relationships.

E Tū Whānau values that help build positive family traits and practices

- **Whakapapa**
- **Tikanga**
- **Whanaungatanga**
- **Aroha**
- **Kōrero awahi**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- We celebrate whānau achievement and milestones
- We honour kuia and kaumatua
- We share in the highs and lows that life brings
- We pass on our stories and whakapapa to our tamariki and mokopuna so they know who they are and where they belong
- We participate in our whānau, hapū iwi and community, and we involve our tamariki
- We do things daily that keep our whānau safe, happy and healthy
- We eat together often
- We have identified our whānau values and we do our best to consciously 'live' these
- We speak up when something bad is happening in our whānau – and we deal with it 'head on'
- We support whānau members who transgress to make positive change
- We forgive each other
- We seek support from whānau, friends and professionals when bad things are happening in our whānau so that we are not alone.

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CULTURAL IDENTITY

Strong culture, strong whānau!

Cultural identity is critical to wellbeing. Identifying with culture conveys a sense of belonging and security, and helps to build trust and social capital.

A strong sense of cultural identity has been found to:

- improve well-being and resilience in young people
- reduce rates of suicide and improve mental health outcomes
- improve educational outcomes
- improve overall health outcomes.

Groups with strong cultural identities can, however, feel excluded from society if others obstruct, or are intolerant of, their cultural practices.

E Tū Whānau values that help support strong cultural identity

- **Tikanga**
- **Whakapapa**
- **Whanaungatanga**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- *We feel a strong connection with our whānau*
- *We stay connected to our whānau and together we enjoy the unique Māori culture that we share*
- *We laugh a lot together*
- *We encourage our tamariki to join waka ama, kapa haka and other cultural groups and we support their performances and talents*
- *We are proud of Māori strengths and success and we share this with others*
- *We use te reo in our household whenever we can*
- *We feel a strong connection to our whānau and kainga*
- *We seek out and pass on information about our culture and traditions to other whānau members*
- *Observing family rituals and customs is important to us*
- *We enjoy learning about our whānau history.*

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COMMUNITY COHESION

Supporting and looking out for each other

Living in communities with strong social cohesion has a protective effect and can reduce the risk of violence, even when other family risk factors are present.

Cohesive communities can:

- refuse to tolerate violence or abuse
- hold transgressing community members to account for their actions
- take a stand on issues such as alcohol and drugs
- look out (and stand up) for other community members
- provide informal support structures within their community.

E Tū Whānau values that support community cohesion

- **Tikanga**
- **Mana / Manaaki**
- **Whanaungatanga**
- **Whakapapa**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- *We operate within tikanga to keep whānau well when dealing with sensitive topics that require open kōrero and hard decisions*
- *We stand together to provide strength and support*
- *Our tamariki are very clear about behaviour that is tika in our whānau and the wider community*
- *We utilise our marae to facilitate kōrero and debate*
- *There are clear roles and responsibilities within our whānau*
- *We are not afraid to stand up and speak out when whānau members transgress*
- *There are sanctions for those who transgress; we also support them to make positive change*
- *We give tamariki positive messages about themselves and how to feel good without drugs and alcohol*
- *We try our best to be good role models at home*
- *We grow the strength of our whānau members and help build leaders*
- *We feel connected with nature and the world around us and we respect this connection*
- *We connect regularly with whānau - we know one another and when things are going wrong or right.*

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HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) AND SCHOOLS

Education builds strong tamariki

Early childcare, education and whānau support programmes can act as buffers, providing stability and stimulation to children and strengthening the ability of whānau to meet a child's developmental needs at home.

Quality ECE and schools provide protective supports for tamariki, as key places to access targeted and intensive support.

Participation in high-quality early childhood has long-term health benefits, reduces risky behaviour, depression and substance abuse.

E Tū Whānau values that support quality early education and school experiences

- **Kōrero awahi**
- **Aroha**
- **Whanaungatanga**

Some of the things we do to build these values in our homes and communities:

- *Our tamariki are surrounded by love from the minute they are born – their first experiences are positive, nurturing and loving*
- *We choose early childhood experiences for our tamariki that best suit our whānau – maybe they are with nannies as well as a local kohanga reo or childcare service*
- *We see the education centres as an extension of the home*
- *We invite other tamariki and their whānau to our house*
- *We are confident about talking to teachers and other carers about our tamariki's progress – we go along to parent teacher conferences and we ask questions when we are not sure about anything or if we have concerns*
- *Every day we take the time to ask our tamariki about their day – the highs and the lows*
- *We actively participate in activities and events at our tamariki's school or early childhood education place*
- *We play together and have fun.*

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