

Fact sheet

Understanding mental health and wellbeing (Taha hinengaro)

The time has come to think about mental health as a positive resource that can lead to individual and whānau resilience and improved social relationships, allowing us to respond effectively to the challenges before us.

- There are many different understandings of health and mental health. Using more than one definition is possible.
- Mental health is related and connected to our physical, spiritual, family and environmental health.
- The foundations of mental health are to be found as much outside the mind and body as within.

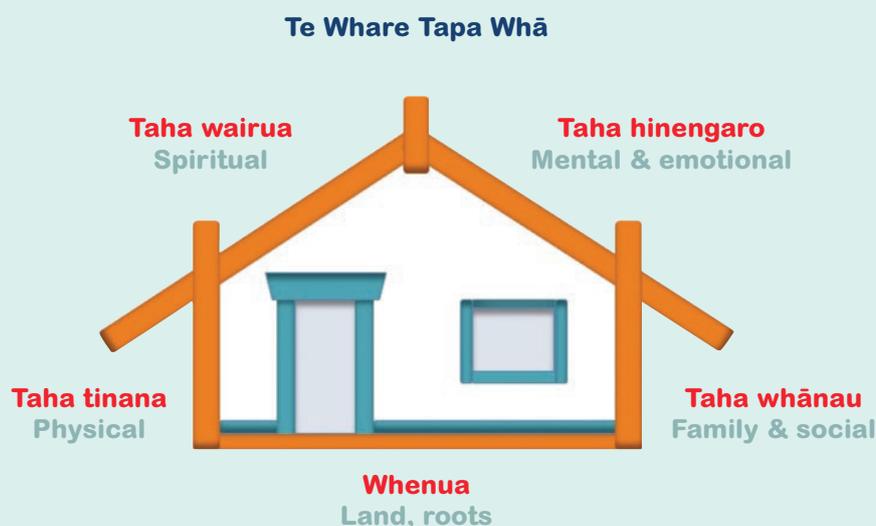
The Mental Health Foundation (2001) defines mental health as the capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual wellbeing that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice and personal dignity.

Mental health is ultimately a resource that exists in all people. Just like physical health, it needs to be taken care of in order to reduce risk of injury, illness and suffering, but also to increase potential in individuals and communities.

For Māori, taha hinengaro describes the expression of thoughts and feelings of our mind, heart and conscience. These expressions can be communicated through gestures, eye movements, facial expressions and verbally (Mason Durie 1998).

The Māori health model, Te Whare Tapa Whā

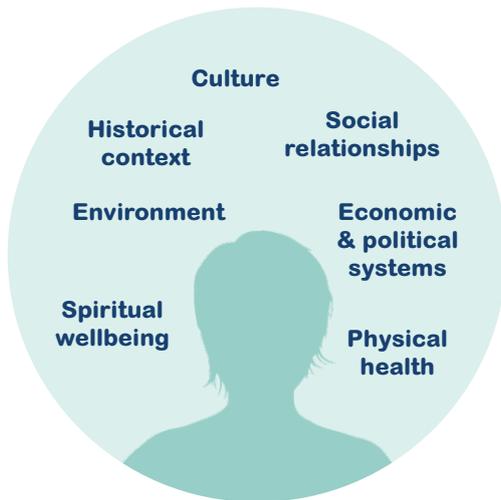
(Durie, 1982, 1994), takes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. This model recognises the importance of the balance of multiple dimensions of wellbeing. Each of these interconnects and contributes to the balance and strength of the whole.



What works to create mental wellbeing

Life has its ups and downs and we will all experience challenges and struggles. What helps us have the resilience to bounce back is:

- Developing individual skills.
- Building supportive environments.
- Activities and actions that help people and communities to feel good, function well and have strong social relationships.



While there is much evidence regarding ways in which people can develop their personal lives to support positive mental health, there are also external impacts that need to be addressed in order to support mental wellbeing for everybody.

These things affect individuals (micro), groups/communities (meso) and societies/whole populations (macro).

A flourishing society is one where everybody has the right to participate and be free from discrimination. It is a diverse society that values every member for their uniqueness and individual strengths.

What works to create mental wellbeing in individuals and communities? A range of activities and actions, cultivated over time, that focus on:



Feeling good

Oranga

Increasing positive feelings & ways to manage negative experiences



Functioning well

Mātauranga

Increasing our ability to do the things that give us meaning and purpose



Supportive relationships

Whanaungatanga

Increasing opportunities to connect so we feel valued and have a sense of belonging