

Connections Count

Supporting Young Men



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Outline

- Why do connections count?
- Reaching out.
- Risk-taking behaviour.
- Recognising warning signs (depression, self-harm and suicide).
- Supporting young men.
- Promoting healthy coping skills.
- Developing resiliency.



Why Do Connections Count?

- Positive attachments and strong caring relationships are:
 - The foundation for identity (whakapapa).
 - Essential for communication.
 - Provide access to care, support and resources.
 - A protective factor, help people feel safe, secure and valued.
 - Linked to wellbeing.
 - The context in which we learn.



3 Questions

1. What has happened?
(not what is wrong
with you).
2. What are you going to
do about?
3. What will we work on
first?

Something Is Not Quite Right

- You can only tell if your son needs support if:
 - You know your son.
 - You know what is normal and not normal.
 - You are around to notice.
 - You encourage honesty.



Know What to Look For

- Learn about youth issues – seek information.
- Find out what support and services are available in your area.
- Be prepared.
- Don't wait until it becomes a crisis!
- Don't expect teens to always ask for help – reach out.



You worry more about what you don't know than what you do know.

Reaching Out and Help Seeking



Asking for help is difficult.
Accepting help is also difficult.

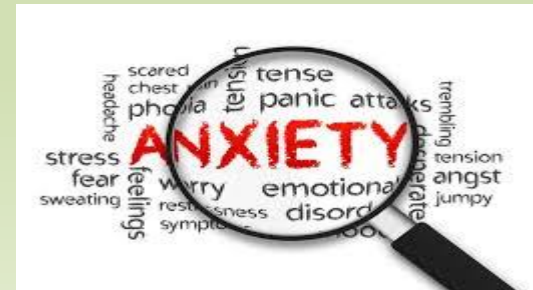
Risk-Taking Behaviour

- Is normal part of adolescence.
- Young people need to learn how to assess and manage risk.
- Discuss your concerns (serious health effects) with young people and focus on harm minimisation.
- Don't give mixed messages – do as I say not what I do.
- Show them they can trust you.
- Give them chances to act responsibly help them develop responsibility.



Anxiety: What to Look For

- Panicky crying, freezing tantrums, clingy behaviour.
- Worries constantly (e.g., asks “what if....” all the time) and not reassured by answers.
- Frequent absences from school.
- Spends a lot of time alone, has difficulty making friends.
- Refusal to join in social activities and events.
- Extremely quiet or shy.
- Sensitive to feedback from others.
- Fears new situations.
- Decline in grades.
- Unable to work to expectations.
- Perfectionism
- Fear of doing assignments, test anxiety, anxiety about time pressures.
- Specific fears and phobias.
- Has physical complaints (e.g., stomach aches, head aches) not associated with medical condition.



Depression: What to Look For

- Irritable mood.
- Persistent low, sad or depressed mood.
- Loss of interest and pleasure in usual activities.
- Change in sleeping patterns.
- Change in appetite.
- Decreased energy, tiredness and fatigue.
- Physical slowing or agitation.
- Thoughts of worthlessness or guilt.
- Thoughts of hopelessness and death.
- Difficulty in thinking clearly and concentrating.
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/14/depression-youth>

If you have concerns talk to your:

- School guidance counsellor
- Your doctor and talk about a referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Your Hauora Youth mental health worker.
- Some areas in New Zealand have services for Maori, Pasifika and Asian youth – ask your school counsellor.

Self-Harm: What to Look For

- Cutting, burning, scalding, banging or scratching one's own body, hair pulling, ingesting toxic substances or objects.
- Unexplained injuries, such as scratches or burn marks.
- Wearing clothes that cover up all the time, avoiding situations where they have to expose arms or legs, e.g. swimming.
- Dramatic changes in mood, eating and sleeping patterns.
- Losing interest in friends and social activities.
- Breakdown in regular communications and problems with relationships with family, whānau or friends.
- Low self-esteem
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/49/self-harm>



Suicide: What to Look For

- **Critical Signs**
- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves.
- Direct or indirect statements “I wish I was dead”, writing about death, posting videos about dying or suicide.
- Seeking access to things they could use to hurt themselves, like a rope, gun, pills.
- **Other Signs**
- Depression, hopelessness, no sense of purpose, no reason for living, whakama/shame.
- Helplessness, not coping, feeling trapped.
- Sudden changes in behaviour, disturbed sleep, eating habits, appearance, not taking medication.
- Self-harming behaviour including substance abuse, not taking medication.
- Isolating self or withdrawing from family, whānau and friends.
- Give away possessions, pay back debts or 'tie up loose ends'.
- Suddenly seem calm or happy after they have been depressed or suicidal.
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/48/suicide-worried-about-someone>

In an Emergency

- If someone has attempted suicide or you're worried about their immediate safety, do the following:
- Call your local [mental health crisis response service 0800 745 477](tel:0800745477) (operating 24/7) or go with them to the emergency department (ED) at your nearest hospital.
- If they are an immediate physical danger to themselves or others, call 111.
- Stay with them until support arrives.
- Remove any obvious means of suicide they might use (e.g. guns, medication, car keys, knives, rope).
- Try to stay calm and let them know you care.
- Keep them talking: listen and ask questions without judging.
- Make sure you are safe.

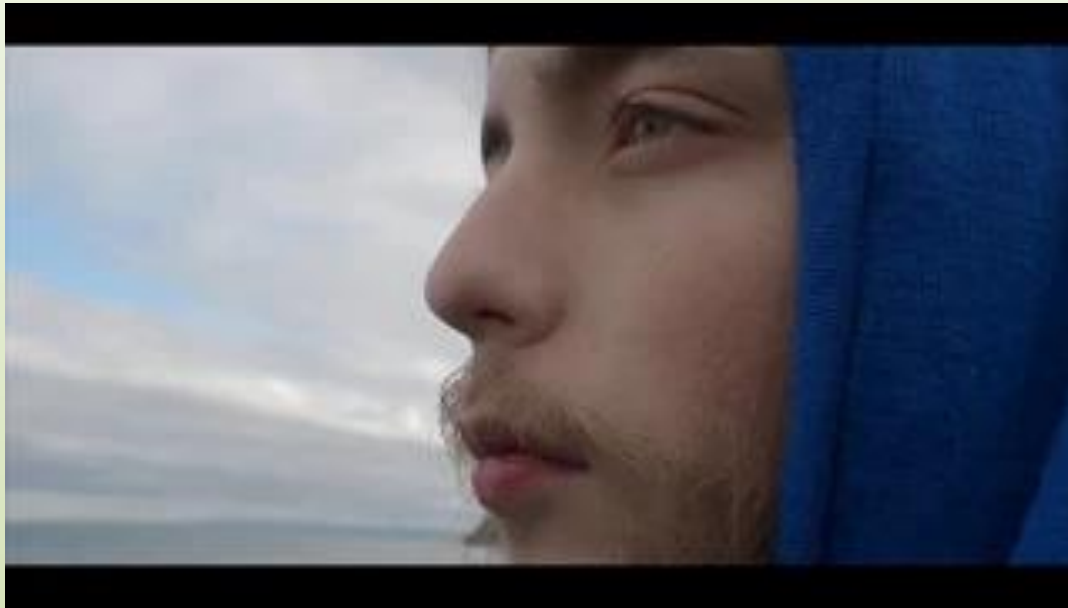
Be BRAVE - ASK



Be calm and breathe
Reassure them
Allow them to talk
Validate their feelings
Ensure their safety

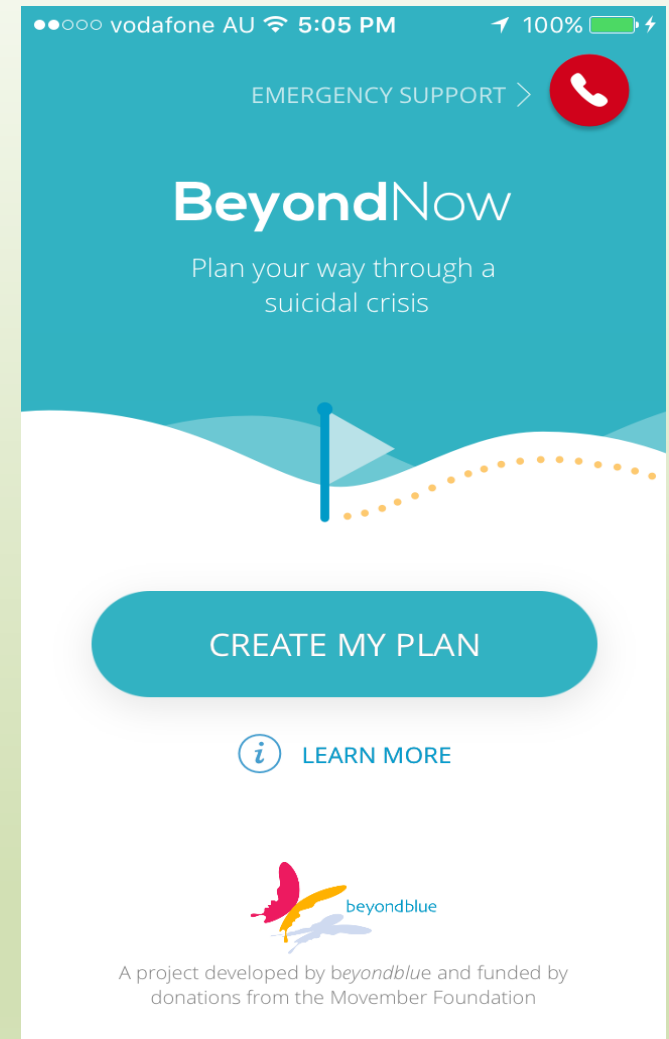
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eloUUm2IUMU&feature=youtu.be>

Safety Plans



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh3aIZby9BM&t=59s>

- <https://wellsouth.nz/community/about-us/health-and-wellbeing/suicide-prevention/suicide-safety-plan-video/>



<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/beyondnow-suicide-safety-planning/getting-started>

Before Reaching Out: Think...

1. **Consider** – Am I the best person to raise this issue? Is this the best time to raise my concerns?
2. **Choose** a time and place where you will both be safe/comfortable.
3. **Let your son know** you are concerned, say you are concerned and why, say and show you care.
4. **Be prepared** for (anger, denial, relief).
5. **Offer help** and encourage them to think of choices and options.
6. After you offer help, always **talk to** the school counsellor or another professional (no matter how uncertain you are of the seriousness).

1. Getting Started: Checking In

Checking in

- I'm really concerned about you.
- I get the feeling something is wrong.
- Please tell me what's going on for you?
- I want you to know you're not alone. I'm here for you.
- I want us to find a time to talk about what is going on, or is there someone else you would like talk to about it with (e.g., a counsellor)?



2. Listen

- **Listen more than you talk.**
- **Save the lecture and advice for later.**
- **Listen to understand and empathise.**
- **Listen without judgement – acknowledge and validate thoughts and feelings.**
 - I'm gutted you're feeling this bad.
 - I can hear that you're in a lot of pain at the moment.
 - Its OK to feel this way.
 - I hear what you are saying, but lets now focus on what we can do about it. Let's look at our options and choices.
- **Stay calm and grounded** – they need containment and reassurance you can handle what they are telling you.



3. Express Concern

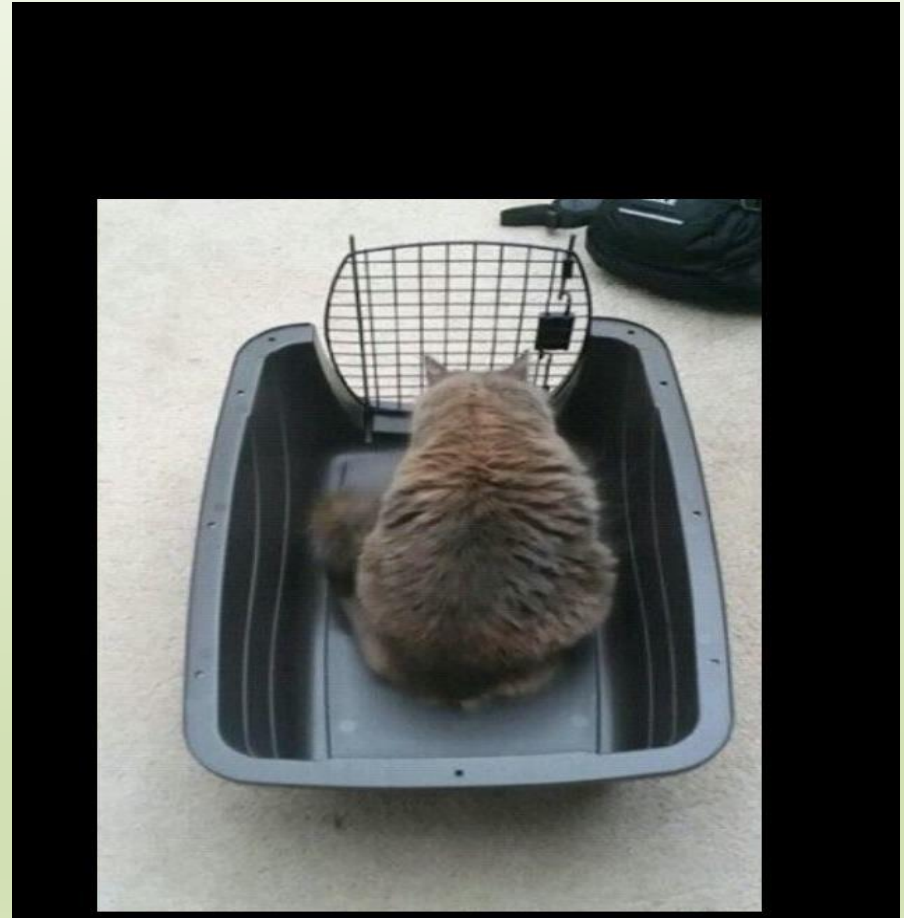
- **Provide evidence or observations to support your concern** (this will lead to less denial).
 - I'm a bit concerned because you do not seem to be talking to your friends much and are sleeping a lot more than usual.
 - What is going on for you?
- **Take them seriously – don't criticise, blame, trivialise or minimise.**
 - I am really concerned about you.
 - Everyone needs help at some time (even me).
 - Your wellbeing and safety are important to me.
 - I know that we need some help to deal with this and there are people who can help us.
- **Separate the person from the problem, they aren't the problem. They have a problem.**

4. Be Solutions Focused

- Ask them what they need from you.
 - “What can I do to help?”
- Ask them what might help.
 - ‘What could make this a little better?’
 - How do you plan to keep safe?
 - How can I and others help keep you safe?
- Ask them what has helped in the past.
 - What have you done to get through situations like this in the past?
 - Who or what has helped you before?

Less Problem Talk

- Focus on the solution/s not the problem (always talking about the problem is exhausting).
- Take another perspective.
- Do something that has helped before, don't repeat what has not worked in the past.
- Sometimes the solution is not right in front of us.



IRRATIONAL VS RATIONAL THOUGHTS

SwanWaters.com

HOW AWFUL

I CAN'T STAND IT

I'M STUPID!

HE STINKS!

THIS SHOULD NOT BE
HAPPENING

I AM TO BE BLAMED

THINGS ALWAYS
GO WRONG

THINGS NEVER
WORK OUT

I SHOULD HAVE
DONE BETTER

I AM A FAILURE

THIS IS
DISAPPOINTING

I DON'T LIKE IT,
BUT I'LL DEAL

WHAT I DID WAS
STUPID

HE IS NOT PERFECT
EITHER

THIS HAD TO
HAPPEN, SINCE IT DID

I AM AT FAULT, BUT
NOT TO BE BLAMED

SOMTIMES THINGS
GO WRONG

MORE OFTEN THAN
I'D LIKE, THINGS
DON'T WORK OUT

I WISH I DID BETTER,
BUT I TRIED MY BEST

I AM A PERSON WHO
SOMETIMES FAILS



Challenge Irrational Thinking

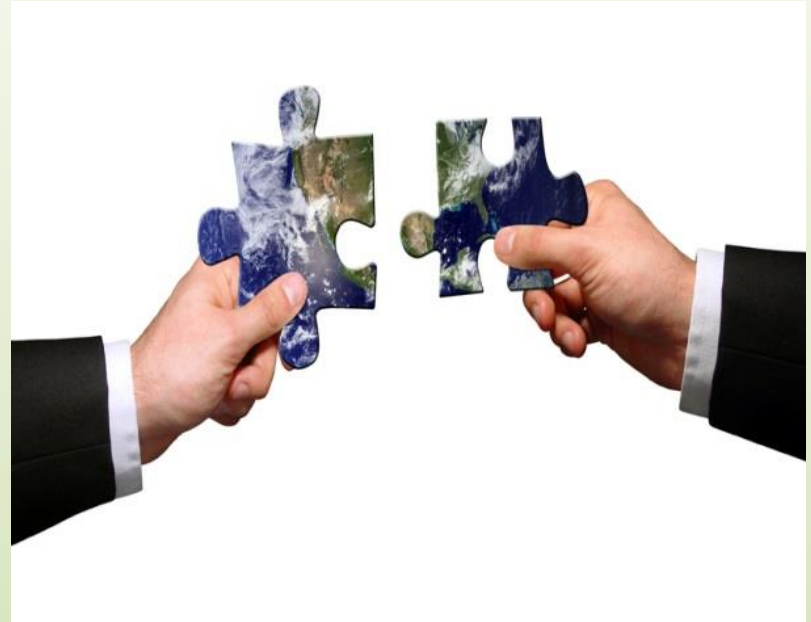
- Help your son develop positive self-talk.
- Reframe negative thinking.
 - Its not hopeless, I just need to find another strategy that works.
- Develop realistic beliefs and expectations.
 - I guess I can't expect to be great at this on my first go.
- See there are exceptions and hope.
 - It may have been a bad day, but it can't have been all bad.
- Develop a growth and mastery mindset.
 - I can't win every time, but I can try hard and get better each time.

Positive Problem Orientation

| Positive Problem Orientation | Negative Problem Orientation |
|---|---|
| See problems as challenges. | See problems as threats. |
| Are optimistic and believe problems are solvable. | Expect problems to be unsolvable. |
| Have a strong sense of self-efficacy and believe they can cope. | Have doubts about their ability to cope with problems successfully. |
| Understand successful problem-solving required time and effort. | Put in little time and effort into problem-solving. |
| See negative emotions as part of problem-solving process that can be helpful in coping with stressful situations. | Become frustrated and upset when faced with problems and negative emotions. |

Problem-Solve Together

- Problem-solve with others:
 - Identify the problem
 - Decide what's causing it
 - Generate solutions
 - Evaluate solutions
 - Choose solution
 - Make a plan
 - Act on it
- Avoid letting issues get bigger than they actually are.
- Encourage them to ask:
 - How might we fix this?
 - What might be a good first step?
 - Who can we ask for advice?



5. Persuade

- Help them understand there are people who can help.
 - “It will be ok, I will be here for you and we can find people who can help you”.
- Persuade them that **some problems are temporary**.
- Persuade them that some problems don't have to affect all aspects of our life.
- Help them understand the problem/situation is manageable.
- Help them feel understood and that people “get it”.
 - “In other words, you feel that....”
 - “So the problem is complicated...but there are different parts, perhaps we could tackle one bit at a time. What should we start with?”

6. Partnership

- Partner up – work together to identify solutions.
 - I'd like to help. You don't have to go through this alone.
We can figure out what to do together.
- Use phrases that support feelings of control, safety and respect.
 - Would that be OK?
 - Do I have that right? Are you saying that...
 - Lets develop a plan together
- Provide **presence support and disclosure support**. Be there for them.
- Widen their support net, help them develop a safety plan and self-care plan that involves others.

7. Refer

- Help them find reliable and useful information about their issue.
- Don't confuse them more or overload them.
- Do discuss with them different options.
 - Is there someone you trust that we can talk to?
 - If I make an appointment for you would you talk to a counsellor?
 - With your permission can I help you find some help? Who can we get some cultural advice and guidance from?
- Suggest they see a counsellor, health professional, GP, Maori and PI service, helplines, web-based services, self-care/help apps.
 1. Gain your son's consent to contact an external service on their behalf.
 2. Advocate on behalf of your son. Be in their corner!

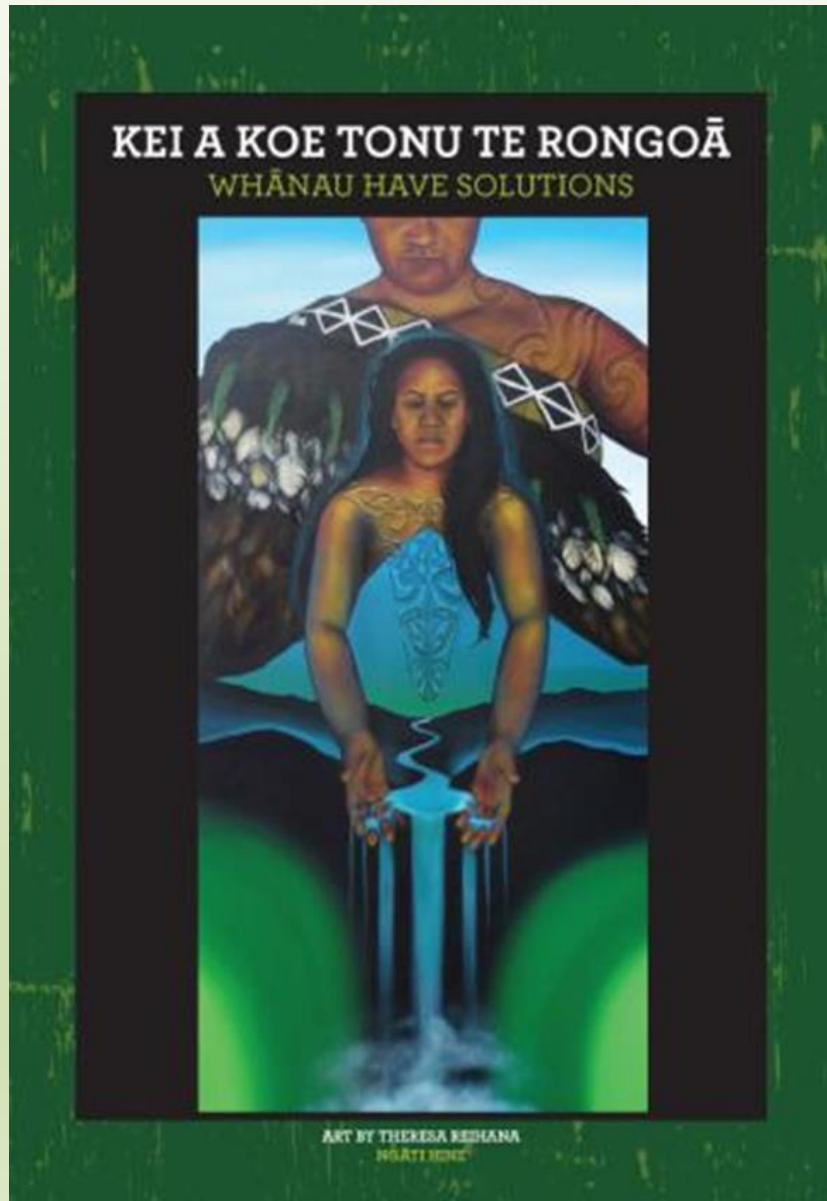
8. Promote Learning

- Help your son adopt a spirit of teach-ability and receptivity.
- Help him read, learn, develop an understanding of his issues, knowledge and skills:
 - this will empower him now and in the future – build resiliency.
 - build knowledge, mastery, competence and confidence.
- Help your son find safe and healthy ways to communicate and express himself (music, art, literature, dance, exercise).

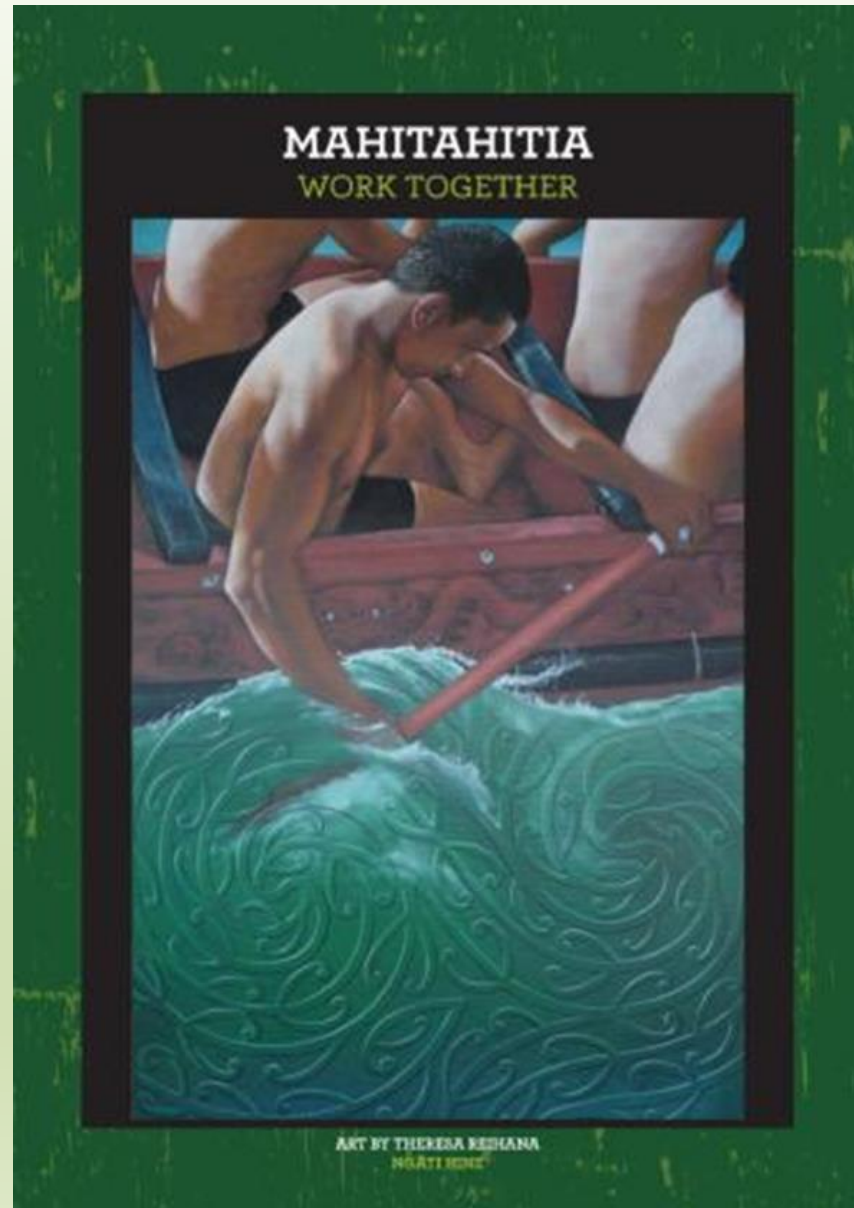
9. Praise Persistence

- Praise and reinforce your son's capacity for withstanding, overcoming, coping and doing his best.
- Try to remember **he is doing his best** – despite what he is going through.
- When he is ready, help him to set realistic goals and aim for improvement not an instant fix.
- Aim for smart choices and small changes.

Hope-Friendly Practice

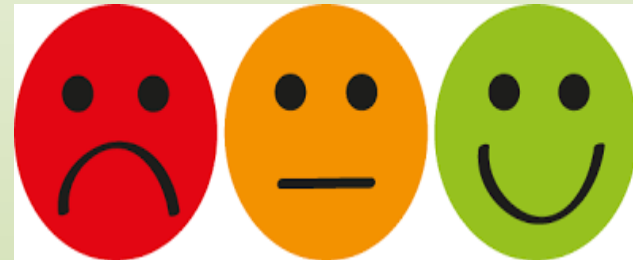


Work Together



10. Promote Emotional Regulation

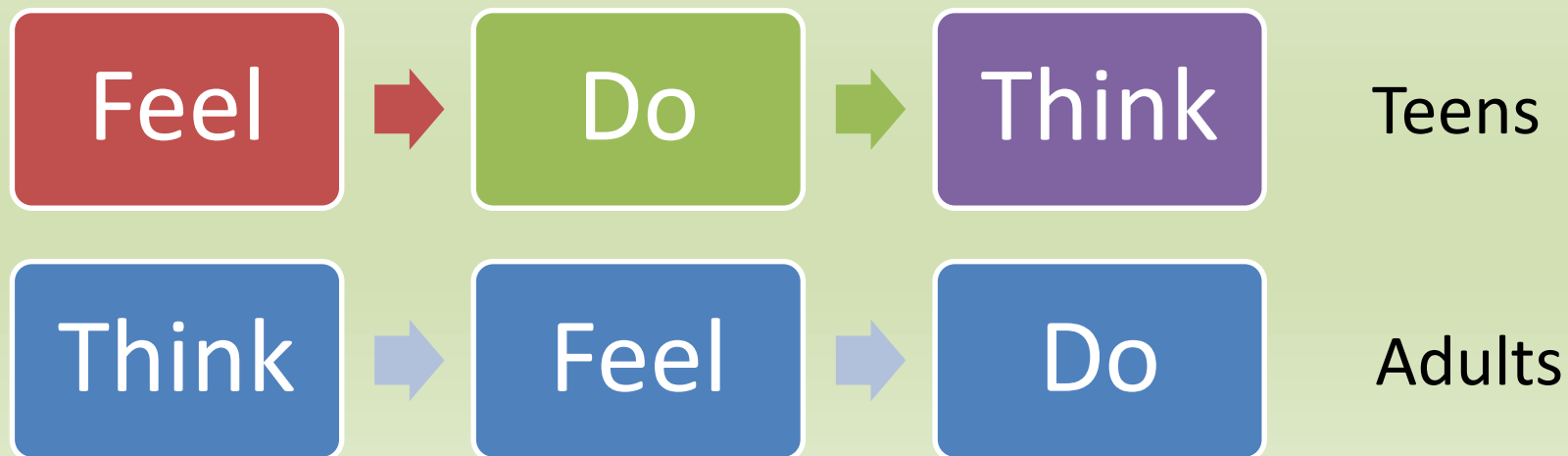
- It is difficult to make decisions and see choices when teens are stressed/distressed.
- Help your son develop strategies to regulate overwhelming emotions (e.g., model breathing, mindful self-awareness, distraction).
- Positive self-talk (you can do this!).
- Emotion-focused coping (doing things to feel better) can help in the short-term.



See Handout for Distress
Tolerance Strategies

Emotional Regulation

- The ability to control one's emotions.
- We can control our emotions or they can control us.
- When emotions control us we feel and act – then think about it after.



Emotional Awareness

- 1. Stop and catch your thoughts and feelings**
 - This is embarrassing, awful and all your fault!.
- 2. Take three deep breaths**
 - Wait a minute, this isn't helpful. I need to take some deep breaths so I can calm down and think.
- 3. Re-think the situation by asking yourself**
 - How else can I think about this?
 - I am tired, maybe I should get some air and take a break.



It Is What It Is

Mindfulness

- Acknowledge painful thoughts and feelings but don't over-identify or ruminate on them.
- Be aware of, accept and tolerate feelings and experience for what they are - "it is what it is" and "holding them lightly".

Self-compassion

- Be kind, gentle, patient and understanding towards oneself in times of pain or failure or when we fail to meet standards or need to change.
- Stop being judgmental and self-critical. Give up harmful behaviours that hinder our own wellbeing.
- Be honest with oneself and others.

11. Decision-making (GOFER)

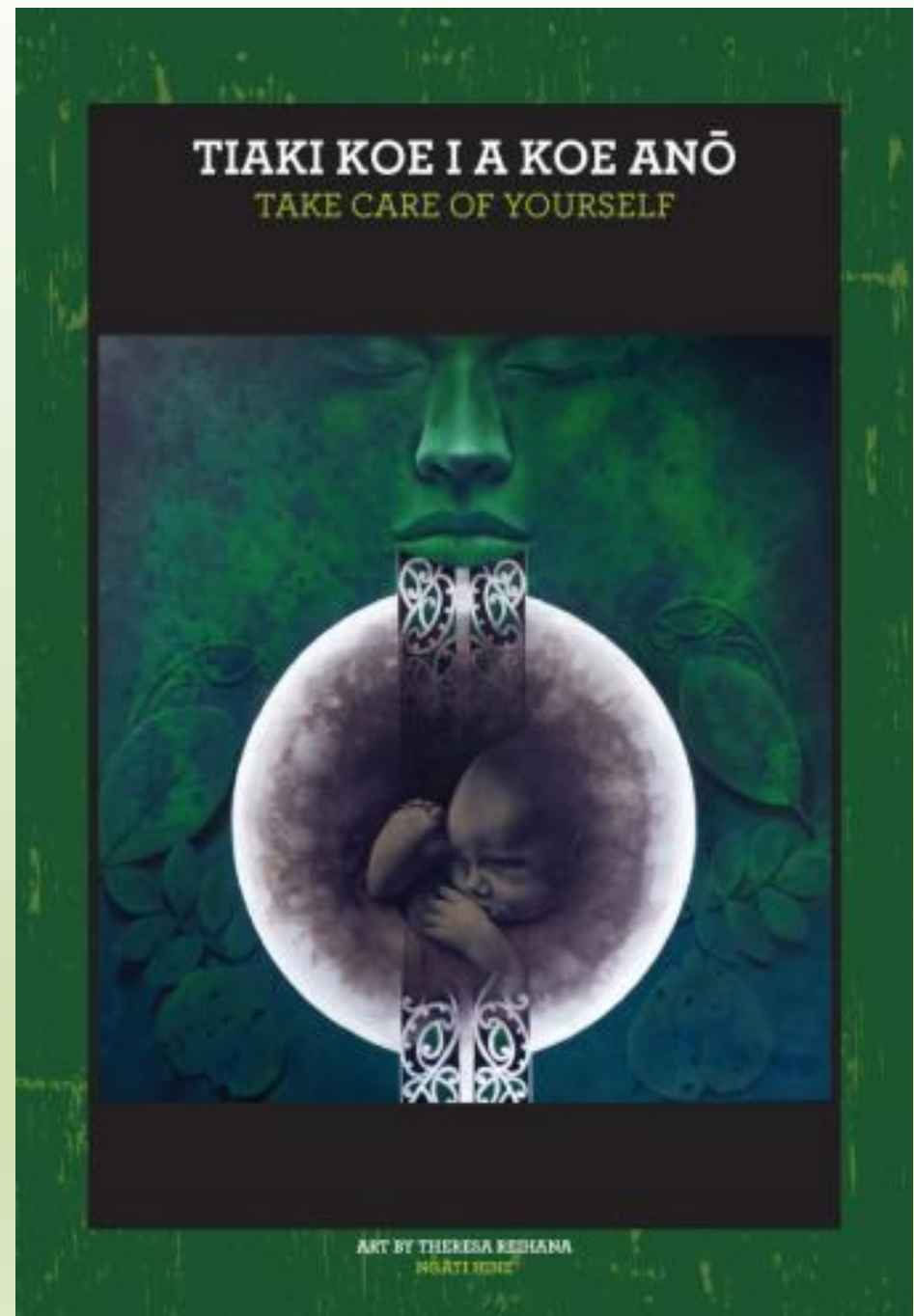
| Stage | Questions |
|----------------------|--|
| Goal Clarification | What are my goals? Needs? What are my three most important goals/needs? |
| Option Generation | What are my options? What are my choices? What options would my parents/friends think of? |
| Fact Finding Effects | What are the benefits/advantages of each option for me? What are the costs/disadvantages of each option for me? Who might be affected by my decision? What are the benefits and costs for others? |
| Review and Implement | What is the best option? Do I have all the information I need to make this decision? Who could I talk to about this decision? |

12. Promote Productive Coping Strategies

| Productive | Non-productive |
|--------------------------|--|
| Focus on the positive | Focus on the negative |
| Accept one's best effort | Self-blame |
| Spend time with friends | Withdraw, keep to one's self |
| Get some social support | Fail to talk about it and seek help |
| Seek professional help | Accept helplessness |
| Work harder | Don't do anything to solve the problem |
| Relax | Ignore the issue & how they feel |
| Keep fit – exercise | Act out, lash out |
| Keep a sense of humour | Worry |

Self-Care

- Help your son develop a safety plan and self-care plan.
- Working through problems is exhausting.
- Work on identifying strengths, resources, strategies and solutions together.
- Be realistic – one strategy might not be enough (e.g., go for a walk, have a cuppa with a friend, listen to music, talk to an adult).
- Celebrate small wins.



Build Internal and External Assets

Awareness of resources

I HAVE

- I have people around me I trust.
- I have people who set limits for me so I know when to stop.
- I have people who show me how to do things.
- I have people who want me to learn to do things on my own.
- I have people who help me when I am sick.

Self-concept, self- esteem

I AM

- I am a person people can like and love.
- I am glad to do nice things for others and show my concern.
- I am respectful of myself and others.
- I am willing to be responsible for what I do.
- I am sure things will be all right.

Self-efficacy

I CAN

- I can talk to others about things that scare me or both me.
- I can find ways to solve problems that I face.
- I can control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous.
- I can figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or take action.
- I can find someone to help me when I need it.

Promote 5 Ways to Wellbeing

WINNING WAYS TO WELLBEING



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



Your time,
your words,
your presence



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD

INTRODUCE THESE FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES INTO
YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL FEEL THE BENEFITS.



Mental Health Foundation
of New Zealand
www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Change Our Language

- Explore the possibility and potential for 'change'.
 - Reduce stigma – help seeking is about:
 - Having courage
 - Building skills
 - Doing something proactive
 - Problem-solving
- **Build assets** vs. getting help.
 - **Life coaching** vs. counselling/therapy.
 - **Stress management** vs. getting help with coping.
 - **Problem-solving** vs getting support.
 - **Maintain control** vs. help-seeking.

Supporting Young Men

- Turn down the volume – listen more, less talk more action (less hui and more doi).
- Encouragement not pushing or lecturing.
- Opportunities to vent or express themselves safely.
- Move forward together (side-by-side support; nothing about me, without me).
- Resiliency robbers - let them do it and learn from it.
- Information helps men consider, plan, predict, act, retain and regain control.
- Work from strengths. Be mana enhancing not shaming.
- Connections count ! Be a positive connection.

Thank You

