

KAUMĀTUA AND KUIA

Tikanga Māori for Health Care Workers

This tikanga guide aims to help the aged care health care worker to provide culturally responsive care to Māori. This guide is underpinned by Māori values, protocols, concepts and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Tikanga Māori refers to the customary practices, principles, values and spirituality that guide Māori behaviour and social interactions. It encompasses a wide range of aspects, from protocols and etiquette to cultural beliefs and spiritual practices. Essentially, Tikanga Māori is the "right way" to do things, ensuring respectful and harmonious relationships within Māori communities and with the natural world.

Tikanga includes Māori beliefs that are inherited values and concepts practised from generation to generation. Values include the importance of te reo (language), whenua (land) and in particular whānau (family and extended family group).

Māori views on health are framed by a holistic approach that encompasses four key elements - wairua (spiritual), hinengaro (psychological), tinana (physical) and whānau (extended family). Karakia (blessing or prayer) are an essential part in protecting and maintaining these four key elements of health care.

In some instances, behaviour and practices that are not consistent with Māori beliefs and values can cause distress and result in a lack of confidence and participation in health care services by Māori.

Where possible it is best to involve a Māori clinician in the care of whānau Māori. Kaimahi providing mana enhancing support and whānau centred approach ensure that kuia are supported by female carers (HCA's) and kaumātua by male carers (HCA's).

Tapu, Noa and Mana

Tapu refers to prohibitions or restrictions

Noa means ordinary, unrestricted or free of tapu.

Tapu and Noa are opposing or balancing concepts.

They must remain separated and balanced.


Tapu and Noa exist in a delicate balance. They are essential for understanding Māori culture and tikanga (customs).

Tapu protects the sacredness of places, certain objects and people. Personal tapu is a person's most important spiritual attribute.

Mana refers to prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power and charisma. Mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object.

Whakamā – shy, sense of shame, embarrassed, maybe include Whakamana – to empower, to give authority

- There may be instances where things go wrong and a breach of tapu and or dignity occurs, or mana is not upheld. This may result in whakamā.
- May occur when there is a sense of loss of rangatiratanga (independence, autonomy and self-sufficiency), such as when their mobility, continence (loss of control of urine/stool) or cognition (memory, thinking and understanding) changes.
- When kaumātua experience whakamā, they may respond with withdrawal behaviours, and impact on their holistic wellbeing will be evident.



To uphold mana and tapu consider the following actions:

- the head and the sexual organs are most tapu. A person's head and body are considered tapu
- items that make physical contact with a person. A person's hei tiki, pounamu, whakakai, taonga tuku iho (heirlooms) are considered sacred and can be important for the mana of spiritual connection to their ancestors. Consent to touch, or remove must be sought from the kaumātua first. Storing of taonga needs to be considered, as you just can't put it anywhere!

Examples of how to avoid breaching tapu

- Always introduce yourself, say what you need / want to do, and ask for permission before any physical interactions.
- Do not pass anything especially food over a person's head.
- Do not put items that have touched the head or body or have been used to clean, on surfaces meant for food, drink or medications.
- Do not place bedpans, urinals etc on areas where food is placed and kept.
- Do not put items that have touched the head (eg, pillows, hats, hairbrushes) on chairs or anywhere other than the head of the bed. These items should be kept off surfaces and equipment used for the rest of the body.
- Do not take food into the room of a tūpāpaku (deceased person's body). Have a whānau room for whānau to access where they can wait, rotate sitting with tūpāpaku and eat and drink.

It is common practice after the burial of tūpāpaku to lift the tapu from the room where the deceased was lying, as well as from their home and possessions, through a ceremony called 'takahi whare'.

Glossary of terms

Aroha

translated as love but it encompasses compassion, kindness, empathy, caring and affection.

Wairua

providing care that recognises the importance of wairua, the spirit / soul of the person. Understanding the healing extends beyond the physical body. Healthy wairua must be in balance with hinengaro (mind), tinana (body) and whānau (family)

Whakamana

ensuring the residents autonomy and tino rangatiranga / self-determination is maintained. Empowering residents and whānau to be involved in care.

Manaakitanga

providing care in a mana enhancing way. Residents, whānau and staff are welcomed, names are pronounced correctly, people are treated without prejudice and with kindness, dignity and respect

Whanaungatanga

care that builds relationships / connections with residents and whānau. Understanding that the resident is part of a larger group, that we are all interdependent.

Kaitiakitanga

providing care that acknowledges our role as healers and guardian of the wellbeing of those we care for. Providing care that recognises we are part of the natural world in healing and wellbeing. Respecting the need to care for Papatuanuku (the earth), and Ranginui (the sky).

Āta Whakarongo

To listen and reflective deliberation. This requires patience, tolerance, giving time to listen and communicate to the heart, mind and soul of the person. It requires the conscious participation of all the senses, trust, integrity and respectfulness

Āta Haere

To be intentional. To approach reflectively, moving with respect and integrity. It signals the act of awareness of relationships, their significance and requirements