Hoake Tātou
Walk With Me

Working with male survivors of sexual abuse

Tautoko Tāne
Male Survivors Aotearoa

Ko te hā ora
O te iwi tāngata
Ko te wai ora
Nō tuawhakarere
Ko te kawa ora
Ka ngiha ki te ao
Pupuhi e te kōmuri
Hau aroha
E ua e te ua
He pihinga kākano
Kāpunipunitia
Te tupuora e, hai

May the air that we breathe
Remind us of our common humanity
May the water that sustains our being
Remind us of the gift of life we enjoy
May the sun that shines upon our face
Remind us of the relationships that warm our hearts
May the wind that fills our sails
Remind us to focus on navigating the journey ahead
May the rains that nourish the land
Remind us of the seeds of our beginnings
And may the fires that renew the earth
Remind us that new growth is always possible

Cover
The epic journey of the kuaka (bar-tailed godwit) between Aotearoa and Alaska symbolises endurance and perseverance. Reliant on each other for survival, these manu remind us of the importance of whānau and community, and the value of sharing wisdom and learning from one another.

The New Zealand Context

A male survivor is any person identifying as male who has experienced physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, family/whānau, or cyber-digital violence or abuse.

Tautoko Tāne support services are focussed on male survivors of sexual abuse, but the pathway to our door is often framed with other forms of trauma.

Appreciating the prevalence of male sexual abuse:

- New Zealand-specific research, international studies, and global meta-analyses support the view that 1 in 6 males have experienced childhood sexual abuse in their lifetime.
- A global meta-analysis that reviewed data from over 200 countries over the last 30 years noted that New Zealand has one of the highest rates of childhood sexual violence against young males, estimated at 22% – more than 1 in 5.
- The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey found that 1 in 4 victims of sexual abuse in New Zealand identify as male. The survey also found that 35% of male victims of sexual abuse are experiencing high levels of psychological distress.
- These studies suggest that at least 412,000 New Zealand males are victims of sexual abuse, and 142,000 are experiencing high levels of psychological distress.
- Rates of sexual abuse are higher for both gender-diverse people and gay and bisexual males.
- It takes 18 years on average before male victims of sexual abuse contact Police or an agency, and only 31% report in the first three years.
- Homophobia and false beliefs about male victims of sexual abuse prevent many men and boys from admitting to having been abused; they fear not being believed or being judged harshly.
- The Youth19 survey of 7,083 NZ secondary school students found sexual harm was the strongest single predictor for serious mental health distress, including suicidal ideation and attempted death by suicide, for all genders.
- Health New Zealand data shows rates of death by suicide are more than two times higher for males than for females in New Zealand. While victims of sexual abuse of any gender are at increased risk of death by suicide, by international standards New Zealand's very high rates of both childhood sexual abuse of males and male death by suicide suggest there may be an under-researched connection here.

Note: This publication is presented as a high-level, abbreviated and hopefully useful summary of a more detailed live presentation, "Hoake Tātou | Walk With Me", by Tautoko Tāne Aotearoa about working with male survivors of sexual abuse.

The whole community is affected when victims of sexual abuse are unable to fully participate in society, and we all bear the economic cost of dealing with the impacts of sexual abuse.

Barriers to help-seeking

Myths, societal norms, and some contextual influences create barriers for male survivors seeking support by making it harder for males to:

- Talk about an experience of sexual abuse
- Find support
- Report an offence to Police
- Prosecute someone who commits sexual abuse.

Myths as barriers

There are many pervasive and untrue myths about the male survivor experience. To remove the barriers that these myths create, we must spread awareness that:

- Females are not the only victims of sexual abuse
- Males can be raped or sexually abused
- People of all sexualities and identities can be sexually abused
- Males can be sexually abused by females
- Males are not always willing participants
- Males who have been sexually abused do not automatically go on to perpetrate sexual abuse
- Males who are raped are not scarred for life.

Societal Norms as barriers

Societal norms can also create barriers for all types of survivors. Here are a few that we know have a particular impact on male survivors seeking help:

The stigma of masculinity
Society often portrays males as strong, dominant and invulnerable, which leads to the belief that males cannot be victims of sexual abuse and perpetuates the myth that sexual abuse is a "female issue."

Sexuality and gender identity
Male survivors, especially those abused by other males, may fear being labelled as gay, having their sexual orientation questioned, or being outed. This fear stems from the myth that male sexual abuse is related to sexual orientation, rather than power and control. Many support services are not designed or resourced to address the specific needs of LGBTQIA+ survivors, who often face additional stigma and discrimination related to sexual orientation or gender identity. This can make it more difficult to seek help, due to fear of judgment, rejection, or further victimisation.

Judgement & social isolation
Male survivors often fear that disclosure could result in being judged and socially isolated. There is a concern that this could translate into lost relationships with friends, family or partners, and/or judgment or ridicule from peers, especially in male-dominated environments where vulnerability is stigmatised. This perpetuates the myth that men should remain silent about their experiences.

Cultural taboos & religious constraints
In many cultures, male sexual abuse is a taboo subject, and male survivors (and, in some cases, their families) may face reputational damage or disbelief if they disclose their experiences. Likewise, in some religious communities, sexual matters, including sexual abuse, are considered inappropriate for public discussion. These religious and cultural taboos can prevent male survivors from disclosing their experiences, as they may fear judgment, shame or ostracism from their community.

Context as a barrier

Male survivors also struggle with a number of contextual barriers, including:

Lack of male-specific resources
While there are numerous resources across New Zealand for female survivors, male-specific support services are less prevalent, and some support services may not be tailored to address the needs of male survivors. This makes it harder to connect with others who have had similar experiences and reinforces the myth that male sexual abuse is rare.

Support service environments
It is our experience that, while some male survivors are happy to work with female support workers, the majority prefer to work with males and within a male-specific support service. Female-focused support services and environments can be off-putting for many male survivors. Also, service environments where providers are working with both perpetrators and victims are unsettling for most survivors, especially where there is no effective physical separation between perpetrators and victim-clients.

Agency, engagement and therapies
Tautoko Tāne holds the view that support workers with lived experience of sexual abuse – known as peer support workers – are able to quickly develop the necessary trust and rapport to work effectively with male survivors. Peer support workers come with a particular understanding and empathy that can help to develop a strong sense of agency and self-determination in the peer-to-peer relationship. This is not to suggest that other support services don't engage in relational support activities, but rather to recognise that the shared lived experience offered within peer support can be a pivotal connection point for male survivors seeking help. In an ideal world, we would prefer to see these two distinct service approaches – peer support and other therapeutic services – as complementary and operating within a respectful, survivor-focussed service partnership.

Complex trauma
The research tells us that the complex nature of trauma arising from sexual abuse often hinders help-seeking – that the multi-factored and multi-layered nature of the trauma often gets in the way of the male survivor knowing how or where to seek support. At Tautoko Tāne we like to keep the door open for male survivors who have experienced multiple sources of trauma in the knowledge that the underlying trauma, while not necessarily presenting immediately, is very often related to sexual abuse. Hence, our definition of a male survivor recognises trauma arising from physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, domestic (family/whānau or relationship), or cyber-digital violence, abuse or harm.

Education and awareness
Despite recent publicity about male survivors related to the public enquiry into abuse in state- and faith-based care, and some recent high-profile documentaries, male survivors continue to be underrepresented in media and public discussions about sexual abuse. Public narratives about sexual abuse often focus on female victims, which can overshadow the experiences of male survivors and reinforce the myth that sexual abuse exclusively affects women, contributing to the invisibility of male survivors as victims.

Building Connection

It can be very challenging for male survivors to come forward and let anyone know what they have been through, let alone ask for help. When they do, Tautoko Tāne uses a seasonal metaphor for understanding the stages of engagement, inspired by the Maramataka (the traditional Māori calendar). We keep a focus on wellbeing through each stage or season of engagement. For many survivors of any kind of trauma, the feeling of being misunderstood, alone, and out in the cold is an all-too-familiar experience in our relationships.

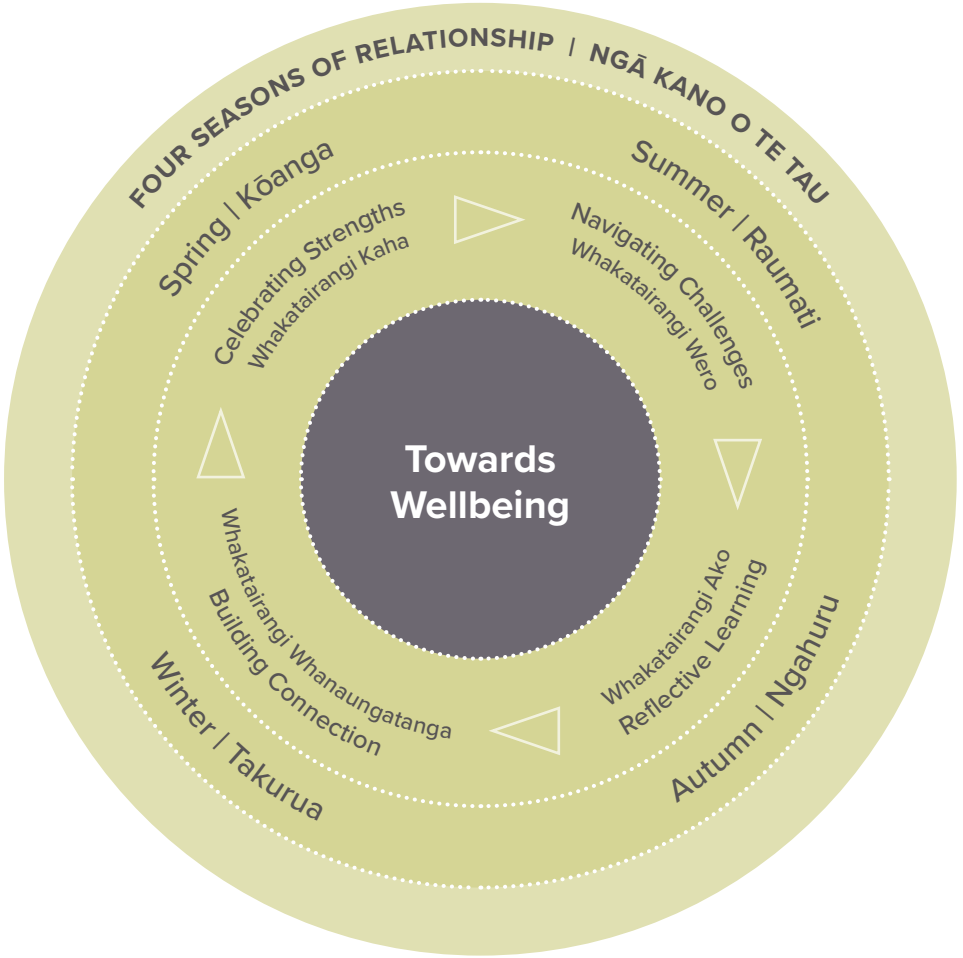
Four Seasons of Relationships

Like the Maramataka, our support model begins in winter.

Winter – Building Connection
The Purposeful Peer Support relationship begins when a survivor reaches out for connection and support, and we respond with warmth. There's an emphasis on whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, getting to know each other – taha whānau and social wellbeing. We take time to understand where the person is and where they have come from. Together, we begin to look forward and plan for what is possible for the future.

Spring – Celebrating Strengths
As we progress on this journey of service with each other, we pay attention to and celebrate the existing resources someone brings. Each of us comes with qualities, skills and supports that have grown and are developing throughout our lives. Sometimes it takes a fresh set of eyes to help us identify the strengths and resources that can support us towards wellbeing. For example, the very act of reaching out for help speaks to our resourcefulness and a belief that perhaps things can be better. By taking time to identify a survivor's strengths, we can work out what we need to focus on developing further. It also reminds us of what we can draw on when we're under stress.

Four Seasons Relationship Model
Te Tauira o ngā Kaupeka e Whā o te Whakawhanaunga



Summer – Navigating Challenges
In the Maramataka model, the summer season acknowledges that, while the benefits from our work together may be growing, we may also encounter challenges and become discouraged or tired. Over time, survivors can start to expect things to go wrong because they have done so before. This attitude can have a number of impacts on connections and relationships with others, including those providing services. The focus in our summer season is on getting through the tough times together in a way that sustains the relationship. We have the opportunity to draw on our strengths and remember what we value about what connects us. It's a chance to explore and practise what else might be possible for us in our relationships with others.

Autumn – Reflective Learning
The autumn season can be a chance to take stock of relationships – perhaps the peer connection still has room to grow, or maybe it has run its course. Survivors are encouraged to draw on strengths and resources, to prune what no longer serves them, and to prepare for new growth. In Purposeful Peer Support Aotearoa, we use these understandings to reflect together and celebrate opportunities for growth. We examine new and emerging strengths and resources, as well as opportunities to apply these learnings and grow within wider connections: friends, family, whānau, workmates and communities. As autumn concludes, survivors are ready to move into the next round of the seasons armed with a new appreciation of strengths and renewed energy for relationships.

Purposeful Peer Support

This seasonal metaphor for engagement sits within our overall Purposeful Peer Support Aotearoa (PPSA) framework. In addition to the four seasons of engagement and relationships, Purposeful Peer Support is practised through five skills:

- Practising Self-Awareness
- Working with Trauma
- Reflective Listening
- Appreciating Difference and Diversity, and
- Remaining Curious.

And it is guided by six principles.

Taken together, the six principles act as a set of guardrails or guidance for ethical peer support practice. They also connect the PPSA framework to the wider community of lived experience kaimahi (workers) in mental health and addictions roles.

The PPSA principles are based on the six peer values in the CPSLE competencies and the descriptions of what those values look like in practice. The peer values and competencies are a set of guidelines for the Consumer, Peer Support, and Lived Experience workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand, published by mental health and addictions workforce development agency, Te Pou, in 2021.

Six Principles
Ngā Kura Ono

Walking Alongside

While many of the PPSA principles and practices may seem similar to those of other professional and support services (e.g. Equity, Fairness & Inclusion or Working with Trauma), the detailed practice statements that support each PPSA principle provide some important differentiation from other services, in terms of the particular practice of a peer worker.

In contrast to other forms of help or support provided in health, disability and/or social services, peer support has an explicit focus on the connections between people, and encourages authentic two-way relationships that allow for mutual learning and shared responsibility. This represents our relational focus, and requires paying attention to power dynamics.

Another key aspect of peer support is exploring how we make sense of our experiences – transforming our raw lived experience into experiential knowledge, which acknowledges our strengths and the ways in which experiences have impacted us in relationships.

In peer support:

- Purposeful self-disclosure of direct lived experiences occurs in the context of a reciprocal relationship
- Boundaries can be more flexible than in other professions, partly because of the need for purposeful self-disclosure, and because dual/multiple roles are more common
- Risk is primarily managed through relationships, not by either party assuming power and/or sole responsibility for outcomes; our duty of care is not just to an individual but to the relationships involved
- We develop an ability to hold multiple truths, to both support and challenge our own worldview and a peer's worldview
- New and shared understandings are co-created within the peer support relationship, which can have a powerful impact on supporting holistic wellbeing.

The power of the peer approach lies in developing a trusting enough connection over time to support survivors in looking at things differently. This enables us to stretch into new ways of managing threats, discomfort, and tough times – ways that not only reduce distress but also support wellbeing in all domains of our lives and relationships.

It's a journey, and we're here every step of the way.

Reference: Purposeful Peer Support Framework, https://ppsa.nz/resources/

Towards Wellbeing

At Tautoko Tāne, our Theory of Change model guides everything we do, focusing on holistic wellbeing and creating meaningful outcomes for survivors – outcomes that also benefit the wider New Zealand community.

Tautoko Tāne Aotearoa
Theory of Change – Intervention Logic Map

If we are connected within our communities

Individuals — Families/whānau — Iwi — Organisations — Govt. agencies

We can engage with male survivors of sexual abuse

Peer Support — Social Work — Counselling — Other healing services

To build meaningful trust-based relationships

Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn
Listening to survivor stories	Uncovering survivor strengths	Navigating survivor life challenges	Reflecting on growth and progress
To acknowledge survivor trauma	To appreciate the potential for change	To find new ways to make a difference	To celebrate survivor achievements

THE PEER SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

That enable and support survivors to move towards wellbeing

Purpose + Identity	Mental + Emotional	Social	Occupational	Physical
Knowing who they are and believing in themselves	Overcoming mental and emotional roadblocks	Restoring family/whānau relationships & community connections	Increasing productive engagement within our communities	Improving physical, economic & environmental conditions

And contribute progressively to the following outcomes

Becoming more self assured, purposeful and independent members of our communities	Reducing engagement with and/or dependency on mental health services	Contributing to the integration, safety & resilience of family/whānau & communities	Lessening the need for health & justice interventions & accommodation support	Reducing dependence on community welfare & income support systems

We start by building connections in our communities, so survivors feel safe to reach out. From there, we use our Purposeful Peer Support Framework to develop trust-based relationships that anchor our peer support services and connect with other support services as required.

As the relationship develops, we will see the opportunities for taking real steps towards wellbeing, and as we achieve some of our shared wellbeing objectives, we can help male survivors to generate wellbeing outcomes that also benefit their family/whānau and community. We know the recovery journey can be long and challenging, so we're not in a hurry. Instead, we take it step by step, focusing on what's achievable in both the short and long term.

Why Holistic Wellbeing Matters

Research tells us that many male survivors experience complex trauma, especially if the abuse occurred during childhood or involved multiple forms of harm. This trauma affects every aspect of wellbeing: mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual.

The impact of sexual abuse is not just a mental health issue, but a whole-person experience that affects multiple aspects of a survivor's life. Survivors often struggle with PTSD, depression, anxiety, shame, and self-blame, as well as social isolation, substance abuse, and chronic health issues.

For Māori, Pasifika, and LGBTQIA+ survivors, the challenges are even greater due to cultural stigma, systemic inequities, and discrimination. That's why we take a holistic approach to healing, addressing the whole person rather than just the trauma.

Our objective is to help survivors build confidence and capacity to move forward by addressing key areas of wellbeing:

- **Spiritual Wellbeing** – helping survivors to find the meaning, purpose and connections that create a deeper understanding of their identity and place in the world, even in the face of adversity
- **Social Wellbeing** – helping survivors to feel valued and accepted by others by building healthy, meaningful relationships that enhance their sense of connection, belonging and support within their community and social networks
- **Mental/Emotional Wellbeing** – helping survivors to regulate their emotions by learning to process feelings like shame, guilt and anger; manage stress, cope with challenges, and maintain a positive sense of self; and navigate complex psychological impacts such as managing PTSD, depression and anxiety

Our Wellbeing Framework
Tō Mātou Anga Whaiora

- **Occupational Wellbeing** – helping survivors to recognise their potential to be an active participant in, and make a meaningful contribution to, their community; reconnecting with their skills and passions, navigating workplace challenges, and creating a sense of stability and purpose through meaningful engagement in work or other productive activities
- **Situational Wellbeing** – helping survivors to navigate and adapt to the specific circumstances, environments and challenges they encounter in their daily life. This involves feeling healthy, safe, supported, and in control within their immediate context, whether that's at home, in the community, or in other settings.

The five interconnected pillars of our wellbeing framework align with two well-known Māori models of health – Te Whare Tapa Whā and Te Wheke – both of which affirm our holistic focus on the spiritual, social, mental, occupational, and situational (physical) aspects of wellbeing. The framework also encompasses three well-known models – the WHO 'quality of life' framework, Seligman's 'wellbeing construct' and the Myers-Sweeney model of 'wellness'. Our approach to enhancing wellbeing is also consistent with the NZ Mental Health Foundation's 'five ways to wellbeing'.

When we achieve these wellbeing objectives, we see tangible benefits not just for survivors but for society as a whole. Survivors become more self-assured, purposeful and independent, reducing their reliance on mental health services and contributing to the resilience of their families and communities. But we can't do this alone—our survivors need access to wraparound support, including counselling, cultural healing, and more.

Reference: Our Wellbeing Framework
https://ppsa.nz/resources/

Engagement Threads

Increasing Visibility

Encouraging and supporting male survivors to access and engage with appropriate support services requires, first of all, that we acknowledge the scope and prevalence of male sexual abuse within the New Zealand community. Together, we need to make male sexual abuse more visible within the sexual and family violence sector and within our communities at large. Greater visibility will help to promote awareness and understanding, and encourage help-seeking by breaking the silence that denies the existence of this abuse in many cultural contexts.

Being an active advocate for the elimination of sexual abuse for all victims, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, is a very positive way of breaking this silence. It also promotes collaborative unity across the sexual violence services sector that will benefit all abuse victims seeking support.

Aotearoa	has one of the highest rates of childhood male sexual abuse in the world
1 in 6	males are victims of childhood sexual abuse
1 in 4	NZ victims of sexual abuse identify as male
412,000	NZ males are victims of childhood sexual abuse
112,000	NZ male survivors are suffering high levels of distress

Challenging Barriers

Making effective support connections with male survivors requires an understanding of the engagement barriers they must overcome – challenges presented by popular myths that are untrue, commonly held societal norms that stigmatise many male survivors, and other service-related factors that can discourage help-seeking.

We can all help to overcome these barriers within our own communities by challenging these myths and norms.

By being prepared to believe, empathise, and listen without judgment, we encourage male survivors to seek help. And if we appreciate the preference of many male survivors for male-specific services, we can also help these survivors to access support services by ensuring they are male-survivor-friendly, are distinct from any perpetrator services, and/or by collaborating with other organisations that offer male-specific services.

Wraparound Services

It is our goal to encourage and enable male survivors to connect with the wraparound services they need to support their wellbeing journey. By promoting and participating in appropriate collaborations, including partnerships and referral arrangements, we can increase access to the range of specialist services that will enhance the opportunities for male survivors to overcome complex trauma through the progressive restoration of their spiritual, mental, social, occupational and physical wellbeing.

Collaborating to provide comprehensive wraparound services will also help us, together, to navigate barriers created by societal norms, support survivors regardless of sexuality and gender identity, reduce the impacts of cultural and religious taboos, and acknowledge the potential contribution of culturally specific healing services.

Co-Creating Connection

We value lived experience as an important connection point for male survivors and potentially all survivors of sexual abuse. It is our experience that embracing a peer support model that is wellbeing-focussed presents an opportunity to engage lived experience in a way that enables and supports a long-term and holistic focus in co-creating a recovery journey towards wellbeing. We believe that Purposeful Peer Support offers the potential for an authentic connection that is preloaded with the necessary understanding and empathy to build an effective support relationship.

The peer-to-peer relationship can provide a pivotal anchor point or safe haven in the male survivor's healing journey. Peer support can provide the long-term, flexible connection that enables and welcomes other specialist support services to interact as required to address the complexities of the trauma resulting from both childhood and adult sexual abuse.

Looking Forward

Tautoko Tāne is fortunate to participate in a social services sector that remains committed to the elimination of sexual and family violence, despite the many challenges involved. We recognise that effective support services that increase the awareness and understanding of sexual abuse and demonstrate the potential for abuse survivors to heal also make an important contribution to the prevention of this abuse.
This view recognises the multilayered impacts of abuse and the potential, by helping abuse victims to heal, to contribute to rebuilding families/whānau and communities and also supporting the co-creation of a more just and equitable society.

Our focus on male survivors of sexual abuse, who represent one in four New Zealand sexual abuse victims, can make a similar contribution, but we cannot do this alone. We look forward to collaborating more closely as part of a sexual and family violence sector in which a holistic view of the many needs of our male survivor community can be better addressed by increasing access to the cultural, gender-specific and specialist services they need to move towards wellbeing.

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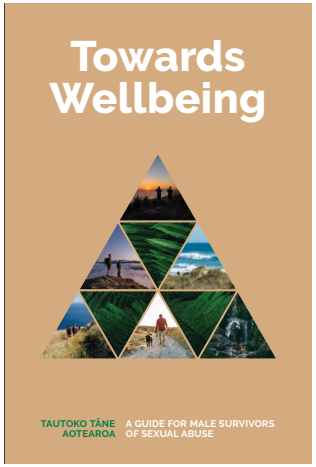

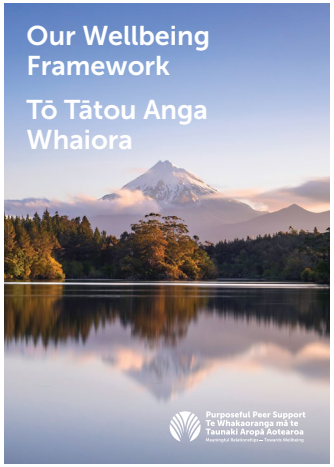

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Tū te tikanga	Let us be together on purpose
Whakaora	So that we nourish and strengthen each other
Whakaata	Let us together see who we are
Tirohia te tikanga	So that we may know what is possible for our people
Piki tū, Piki ora	Let us help each other to be who we are
Piki māramatanga	So that we may help others to see who they can be
Kia piki tūranga	Let us be proud of who we are
Taku whatumanawa	So that we become beacons of a hopeful future together
Ramaroa nei te ara e, hai	

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