

Kōwhai Programme

Support for whānau & carers

Finding Meaning

‘Ko te kaha kei te Tinana Ko te mana kei te wairua’

‘The strength is in the body but the power is in the spirit’

Being aware of our wairuatanga, our spirituality, or connecting with what matters most to us has been shown to give carers strength, purpose and meaning, while caring for others. Here we share some tips on how these connections might be found.

Within Māori culture, the terms ‘wairuatanga’ or ‘wairua’ are used to speak of the spiritual side of our being. Wai refers to water and Rua refers to the number two.

Wairua can be seen as two streams coming together, one stream symbolising our physical being and the other stream our spiritual being.

Wairua is essential to the hauora of Māori as it brings together connections to whakapapa, whenua and whānau.

Caring for someone can be an emotional, mental, physical and spiritually challenging time. Each of us copes with this role differently but there are some ways to care for yourself so these challenges do not overwhelm you.

Spending time with your whānau and friends, sharing stories, creating memories, being out in nature can be ways to find meaning and purpose in our lives.

Ensuring we make time and space for what adds value to life can help create cherished moments, which in turn can help you through difficult times.

Think about your whānau, friends, cherished places, books, pictures, photos, gardens, nature or places for inspiration. If there was always a place or activity that brought you comfort can you go there to rest and restore yourself? Can you take your loved one with you?

- **What gives you hope and strength?**

Spending time with whānau, sharing stories or going for a walk each day may give you time to build your strength. Sharing time with younger relatives might bring you joy.

If you are religious connecting with church leaders/prayer, reading Holy books or spending time with others from your faith may give you strength.

- **What is it that keeps you going?**

This is different for everyone, some like to be organised and in control, others find taking each day as it comes makes adjusting to change easier. Paying attention to what builds your resilience - it may be through listening to music, seeing a task completed, having people visit or spending time in nature such as the bush or at the beach.

Spending time at the Marae, caring for whānau, watching and teaching your mokopuna may bring you strength.

- **Who are the people most important to you and how can you keep them close or nearby?**

There will be days when you may feel overwhelmed or sad. Others days can be filled with great joy. Balancing these days out can be hard but spending time with the people most important to you can help with this. Sharing a meal, some family stories, or the family history can bring a sense of connection for everyone.

Acknowledging ancestors and how they shape your beliefs, whānau and the different places or whenua you are part of can become more important when facing a loss.

Identifying signs of spiritual distress

Over time you will notice changes in the person you are caring for and this may make you question what is important. This is normal but there can be times when these feelings become overwhelming. Consider if you are experiencing:

- Recurrent questioning of yourself why this suffering, pain or distress is happening
- Questioning your faith, belief system or withdrawing from your cultural connections
- Thoughts of rejection and/or abandonment- thinking you are alone and no one can help you

- Feeling guilty, or that you or the person you are caring for is being punished
- Feelings of depression and/or anxiety
- Experiencing hopelessness and/or despair.

If you find these feelings are present in yourself, your whānau or the person you are caring for, please reach out for help. Talk to your care coordinator or the Kōwhai Coordinator. They may refer you to the Kaitakawaenga Wairua - Spiritual Care Co-ordinators or the Kaimanaaki here at Otago Community Hospice.



'The Wairua or Spirituality stays with us in the stories, in our beings, reinventing and reinterpreting new actions and ideas. The spirit energy never ages. Only our tinana can become fragile and weak. You can see the spirit in the deep wells of a kaumatua's eyes. They lose their speech but the Wairua will speak for us.'

THE SELWYN FOUNDATION NZ

ENDING LIFE WELL

A podcast series for carers

<https://otagohospice.co.nz/patient-services/kowhai-programme/carers-podcast/>

Above is a link to 'Ending Life Well' podcast for more spiritual guidance. Episode 10 may be particularly useful.

