

Ngā wāhi hei āwhina i a koe

Places to get help

If you are unsure who to contact

You can call the Health Funding Authority (HFA) which has offices in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. You can find the HFA's phone number in the blue pages of the telephone book under 'Health'. Also look in your phone book for any of the people or organisations listed below.

For support, information and referral

Youth workers in your community (church, local authorities, marae)
Iwi and Māori health services
Whānau support services
Youthline – freephone 0800 376 633
Lifeline
Samaritans
Your doctor or local medical practice
A local church minister
Sexual abuse services
Drug and alcohol services
Poisons Information (for urgent information only phone 03-474 7000)
Youth health services
Mental health service of your local hospital and health services
Migrant refugee services
Specialist Education Services
School counsellor
Family counselling services
Citizens Advice Bureaux

In an emergency

Ambulance (dial 111)
Police (dial 111)
Fire (dial 111)
Hospital emergency department
Your doctor

Produced by



YOUTH AFFAIRS
TE TARI TAIOHI

PO Box 10-300
Wellington

Ph: 04-471 2158
Fax: 04-471 2233

Email: info@youthaffairs.govt.nz
<http://www.youthaffairs.govt.nz>

Te Āwhina i Ngā Rangatahi e Raru nei

Helping Troubled Young People

A Guide for Parents



YOUTH AFFAIRS
TE TARI TAIOHI

TE ĀWHINA I NGĀ RANGATAHI E RARU NEI

Helping troubled young people

Mā te whakatau ka mohio
Mā te mohio ka mārama
Mā te mārama ka mātau
Mā te mātau ka ora

By diagnosis comes understanding
By understanding comes light
By light comes knowledge
By knowledge comes life

Parenting isn't easy! These days, too many whānau are under a lot of pressure. Often, it can be difficult talking about problems. It's important for you to listen, support, encourage and talk to your rangatahi. They need to know that they can always turn to you for help.

Rangatahi need your love and attention. Spending time with them regularly will help you both. You could all:

- watch television, a video, or a movie
- do sport together (eg, waka ama, touch, indoor netball)
- join a kapa haka group
- talk about school or studies while having kai.

You could share your knowledge of te reo me ōna tikanga Māori or guide your rangatahi to a kuia or koroua who can help. If they show little interest in things Māori try not to pressure them. In today's world their cultural identity can be confusing for them.

Remember, rangatahi aren't children or adults. Their teenage years can be a time of change and uncertainty. They are developing their own identity, seeking new experiences, becoming increasingly independent.

These things can lead to conflict with whānau, parents, and caregivers. You may feel cornered. You may not know what to do all the time. You are not alone.

Te kite moata i ngā pōreareatanga

Recognising when help might be needed

We all have mood changes and feel down sometimes. If these feelings persist life may seem hopeless. Rangatahi can become depressed. Depression is a common illness. It can affect the whole person:

- te taha tinana - physically
- te taha hinengaro - mentally
- te taha wairua - spiritually.

Whānau are often the first to notice changes in the behaviour, personality, relationships, thoughts and feelings of their rangatahi. These changes may be the first signs of problems.

If depression isn't treated it can, in some cases, lead rangatahi to self harm and even suicide.

Depression might be the cause if rangatahi in your whānau:

- are sad, anxious, or bored a lot of the time
- are restless, irritable, or tearful
- are preoccupied with music, stories and games that have a death theme
- don't seem to be enjoying life or getting any pleasure out of it
- don't seem to be eating or sleeping properly
- have low energy, feel tired a lot of the time
- have trouble paying attention
- say they feel worthless
- say life isn't worth living, or indicate thoughts of suicide
- show long periods of grieving
- show outbursts of violence or severe mood swings
- show increased use of alcohol, drugs or substance abuse
- withdraw from whānau and friends, and social activities.

There are a variety of reasons why depression occurs. It's more likely to occur if there's a history of depression or other psychiatric illness in your whānau. It may also occur if your rangatahi is experiencing:

- alcohol and substance abuse
- chemical imbalances in the brain that upset behaviour, feelings, thoughts
- chronic illness
- low self esteem and confidence
- loss and grief
- stress.

A range of specific events and experiences may also add to rangatahi feeling depressed. These could include:

- Loss
- by moving to a new city or country
 - of a loved one, close friend, or pet
 - through relationship break up
 - through unresolved grief from a death

- Abuse
- emotional
 - physical
 - racial
 - sexual
 - spiritual

¹Rangatahi are young people, also referred to as taitamariki or taiohi.

- Relationships
 - difficulty making friends
 - parental conflict
 - peer pressure
 - relationship break ups
 - teasing, discrimination, or bullying
 - tension within the whānau

- Sexuality
 - body image
 - confused sexual feelings
 - coping with responses by others to being gay or lesbian
 - possible attraction to the same sex
 - sexual abuse

- Being Māori
 - a feeling of inferiority
 - conflict between whānau cultural values and peer group
 - confusion over identity
 - difficulty with handling both the Māori and Pakehā world
 - exposure to cultural misunderstandings ('being a minority in your own country')
 - guilt from a lack of confidence with things Māori, and lack of access to Māori culture (such as marae, extended Māori whānau)
 - identifying with negative stereotypes ('Jake' in *Once Were Warriors*)
 - racism

- General
 - bullying, constant put-downs and criticism
 - chronic physical illness
 - dependence on alcohol
 - employment and unemployment concerns
 - fear of failure
 - poverty
 - school or study pressures
 - sense of identity and place in the world
 - substance abuse

He rārangi whakapuaki kōrero

Conversation pointers

You can awahi - help your rangatahi in many ways. It isn't always easy to show your rangatahi you want to help them.

Some helpful conversation pointers are:

- 'Can you tell me what you're afraid of?'
- 'Have faith in yourself. I'll support you and help you work through the good and bad times.'
- 'I know I get grumpy sometimes, but I do care.'

- 'It's obvious things aren't okay at the moment, how do you think we can make them better?'
- 'I'll stay here with you. We'll work it out.'
- 'I can find someone for you to talk to.'
- 'Would it help if I came with you to the doctor or health worker?'
- 'What's troubling you? I'm listening.'

Te āwhina o te matua mohio mō ngā take e pai ana ki te pehitanga

Professional help for depression

You don't have to handle these problems by yourself. Other whānau, friends, schools, and health groups can help you and your rangatahi. You can get extra help from counsellors, doctors and other health workers.

Depression can be treated by counselling (psychotherapy) and/or with medicine.

Counselling

There are health workers in the community who can help your rangatahi. A doctor or community health worker can suggest people to talk to. You can ask to be referred to a Māori counsellor or health provider. If there isn't a Māori health provider available locally, there may be one within your region.

Counselling for your rangatahi may focus on:

- better listening and talking skills amongst whānau
- coping with stress
- dealing with unpleasant events
- improving their self-esteem and social skills
- understanding their problems and concerns.

Medicines

Different medicines are used to treat depression. Medicines may improve mood, sleep and eating problems. They won't improve social skills.

Counselling and medication used together is helpful.

Lifestyle changes

A healthy lifestyle can improve well-being. It helps if your rangatahi:

- drinks plenty of water
- eats and sleeps well
- exercises every day
- reduces alcohol and drug use.

Te hunga rangatahi me te whakamomori

Young people and suicide

Some rangatahi may feel so down that life isn't worth living. Some may attempt suicide.

Most rangatahi who attempt or complete suicide have been depressed. Not all rangatahi who are depressed will attempt suicide. Some rangatahi who attempt suicide may feel:

- angry or violent beforehand
- responsible for the accidental death of someone else
- suicide is a solution for their guilt.

Your rangatahi may not show any signs at all.

The risk of suicide can be lowered if you know what to look for and act on the signs. Signals from your rangatahi may include:

- giving their things away
- mood changes
- not eating, sleeping, looking after themselves
- not hanging out with whānau and friends (wanting to be by themselves)
- poor effort at school or work
- previous suicide attempts
- reckless behaviour (eg, taking drugs, dangerous driving)
- saying life isn't worth living and thoughts about wanting to die
- saying they're helpless, hopeless, or worthless
- sudden lift of spirits after feeling depressed
- threats of suicide
- urgency of action, wanting to do things straight away.

If your rangatahi has been through a recent loss or stressful event, watch them more closely.

Ngā mahi āwhina hei mahinga māu

Action you can take

Remember you don't have to handle these problems on your own. Other whānau, friends, schools, and health groups can help you support your rangatahi. It's important for you to talk to someone who understands and can help you.

If you think your rangatahi is thinking about suicide, or may hurt themselves, you can:

- ask them if they've thought about hurting themselves
- call someone on the back page of this booklet
- check if your gut feeling is right by talking to a close friend or relative
- check out your gut feelings with whānau, friends, teachers and other community, marae, church, sports or cultural group members
- encourage them to see or talk to a doctor, counsellor or health worker
- get help straight away if you are worried
- get them to think about their choices
- listen, support and encourage them to talk to you.

It's important that you don't make the situation worse for your rangatahi. Sometimes it doesn't help them if you say suicide is the easy way out.

If they are thinking about suicide, they may not want to hear what you're saying. Don't give up!

Kia mahi te rangatahi i ngā mahi e whai ake nei, kua ia e tukuma kia noho i tōna kotahi noa.

If a young person exhibits the following, they should not be left alone:

- has just made a suicide attempt
- has left a final note
- has set a time and plan for attempting suicide
- thinks they, or you, would be better off if they were dead.

You need to:

- call the doctor, hospital, police, health worker and let them know it's urgent
- get help and support for yourself and your rangatahi
- lock away alcohol, drugs, car keys, guns and other dangerous things
- make sure someone stays with them.