

Te Poutama o te Ora: An Exploration into the Spirituality of Number Nine in Wellness

(by Ruku I'Anson, 2 December 2025)

Introduction

For some years now (as a crisis counsellor) I have been looking at the importance of connection to a person's roots as a protection factor for mental wellness.

When we are connected with our origins, we approach life from a position of strength.

This blog looks at one such concept and how ancient knowledge around the number nine (the Power of Iwa) might clarify that connection and how it can be harnessed in our daily lives.

Throughout human history, nine has held reverence in numerological, religious, and philosophical systems. In numerology, nine is considered the number of completions, being the final single digit before returning to one in the cycle of ten. It represents the culmination of experience, the harvest of wisdom, and the threshold of transformation.

In Buddhist tradition, there are nine levels of consciousness. In Norse mythology, Odin hung from Yggdrasil for nine days and nights to gain wisdom. Chinese culture venerates nine as the number of celestial power and eternity. The human gestation period approximates nine months, representing the complete cycle from conception to birth. These diverse traditions converge on a singular insight: nine embodies wholeness, the integration of all that has come before, and the preparatory state for new beginnings.

Mathematically, nine possesses unique properties that reinforce its symbolic significance. Any number multiplied by nine reduces back to nine when its digits are added together (e.g., $9 \times 7 = 63$; $6 + 3 = 9$). This mathematical "returning to itself" mirrors the spiritual concept of completion and the eternal nature of transformation. Nine contains within it all previous numbers (1 through 8) while simultaneously preparing the way for the new cycle beginning with ten ($1 + 0 = 1$).

A question is posed: Can this ancient knowledge be harnessed to provide a conceptualised framework for wellness?

Being of Māori descent connection for me is based on these origins. Dr Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā holds significant meaning for Māori and New Zealand. This traditional Māori wellness model, Te Whare Tapa Whā (the four-sided house), which identifies four dimensions of health: taha Tinana (physical health), taha Wairua (spiritual health), taha whānau (family health), and taha Hinengaro (mental health), provides a stable platform for mental health.

Question: Can this model be integrated with the spiritual rhythms of the universe to create an all-encompassing wellness pathway?

Te Poutama o te Ora – The Wisdom of Nine

What role does Tuakiri (identity) play in this model?

Such a framework would need to recognise that human beings exist within multiple overlapping cycles—biological, psychological, social, and spiritual. By attuning wellness practice to nine-day, nine-phase, and nine-cycle patterns can individuals work in harmony with natural rhythms of completion and renewal.

The concept of the nine-day pattern break exemplifies this approach. While popular culture often cites 21 or 30 days for habit change, a nine-day cycle offers a spiritually aligned and neurologically manageable timeframe. For example - is nine days sufficient to create neurological shifts while remaining achievable enough to maintain motivation. More importantly, is it possible to honour the spiritual principle of nine as a complete micro-cycle—a full experience contained within a manageable timeframe.

Then there is the concept of a 3×9 habit forming pattern, creating 27-day transformation cycles. An approach that recognises that three represents another spiritually significant number present across cultures (the trinity, the three-part nature of existence, the integration of beginning-middle-end). By combining three cycles of nine, can a framework be created that offers a more comprehensive transformation period and allow for initial breakthrough (days 1-9), integration and testing (days 10-18), and consolidation and mastery (days 19-27).

How would this sit with natural rhythms such as lunar cycles: that of the Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar).

These and many other questions are the source of research into this fascinating philosophy of going back to our beginnings “Te Haere Whakanoa” to examine how we can harness this energy for wellness in today’s environments (“Te Poutama o te Ora”) and “Life Realignment using the Power of Iwa”.