

Puku Health, its impact on Identity and Wellbeing

By Ruku I'Anson, 17 December 2025

Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984) has been used with great success within health, human resource management and education.

The four Pou's continue to be relevant Taha Tinana (Physical Health) – as the Ground or Papa; Taha Wairua (Spiritual Health) - as the Compass; Taha Whānau (Family Health) - as Support and, Taha Hinengaro (Mental Health) - as Navigator.

As previously mentioned, areas for extension that can be supported by Te Poutama o te Ora would be in:

- Digital Wellbeing, always on technology, instant expectation to be able to contact others irrespective of the time of day or the other person's priorities. Possible isolation caused by remoteness where meeting konohi-ki-konohi has been replaced with on-line meetings, online contact, and messaging. Further the exposure of our tamariki at early ages for some while they are still in highchairs where their learning at least when my children were growing was sitting well, eating different foods and sometimes making a big mess. All replaced now by a tablet or iPhone or television, the new digital substitute parents and baby-sitters.
- Financial Wellbeing, there is an interesting trend with this challenge and that is literacy and resilience around money, budgeting and debt support. There are many others however I want to focus on these in relations to changes in trends under our fast-paced society. A generation ago (25 years) having an Eft-Pos card was something of a novelty to

where we now cannot survive at least easily, without some form of digital Pūtea. The easy access to credit cards has increased the debt exposure people face, this is also an outcome of ‘always on technology’ where you can buy anything from anywhere in the world. For New Zealand, the incidence of online ordering increased exponentially during Lock-down in 2020, I recall our rural mailperson saying they were so busy delivering orders it was exhausting.

- Lastly, Puku Wellbeing. Te Haere Whakanoa (Te Momo and I’Anson, 2023) is a wellness model that was developed around better eating for better health. The incidence of fast-and-instant-food at any time of the day, has meant less thought or care to what and when we eat. There is more; as the diet culture increases our senses for natural hunger and fullness becomes ruled by external voices and not body wisdom. The stomach becomes seen as something to control rather than respecting its biological functions. What habits have we learnt from our ancestors, what is the impact of food scarcity and food abundance.

In all this where does our Identity (Tuakiri) sit? Our belief in self-worth, the ability to overcome obstacles and be successful no matter the circumstances. How does taking back control manifest in our whakapapa, tinana, hinengaro and wairua. How can we use the Maramataka (Māori lunar cycles) and intentional reclamation of rhythms that remain encoded in our bodies despite technological acceleration.

Mental Health Crisis Practitioner Work

I have mentioned this before but still feel the wider pull of people struggling to make connections, exhausted by medical intervention or lack of, unable to turn

to others for support and in the end just wanting someone at the end of a phone to listen. This problem is not unique or isolated and have a direct impact on Mental Health (Hinengaro). They affect relationships, physical health, spiritual connection, family support, identity coherence, and wellness choices.

Utilising the stages of Te Poutama o te Ora being:

1. Te Whāriki o te Ora (reality assessment, desired goal state).
2. Relevance of Goals to:
 - a. Whakapapa.
 - b. Tinana.
 - c. Tuakiri.
 - d. Wairua.
 - e. Hinengaro.
3. Understanding wants and needs and their impact on goal achievement.
4. Te Whakatakato tō Mahere (strategy and activity creation and planning).
5. Te Whakatūria tō Mana (activity action, daily rituals and ceremonies).
6. Tū Pūmau (consistency of action).
7. Me Heke ki Mua (what to do when you are stuck).
8. Whai Hua (productivity success from actions).
9. Tū Māia (grounded stability).

It is **possible** to treat our ailments as a ‘process’, to take away the ‘emotional hook’ they have, and methodically plan, analyse, act, adjust/or let go and then continue to act. A cyclical pattern, evolving, learning, improving. Your hinengaro takes over, clinically managing and orchestrating each activity, your wairua brings balance, spiritual routine and nourishment so these activities do not become exhaustive and thereby self-defeating. The tinana responds to the need for actions but then the enjoyment of rest or stillness. Your Tuakiri

becomes ‘tau’ as you move through the challenges with confidence and the knowing that things are in hand. Lastly your family (whakapapa) sees those changes, the energy and time you have created to share with them.

When I am ‘tau’ my family is ‘tau’.