



Connecting through Kōrero

KŌREROHIA NGĀ MAHI WHAKAMOMORI
KI TE HUNGA TAIOHI

TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Karakia

Ko Ranginui ki runga

Sky Father as above

Ko Papatūānuku ki raro

Earth Mother as below

Whakawātea ngā taumaha
hārukiruki

Protection pushing away
the heaviness

Ngā taumaha mānuka

For the pathway of clarity

Kia puta mai te mauri tau

To settle in the realm of
peace for all

Te wairua anga

Let the rite of success
be present

Kia puta mai

Ki te whai ao

The life force

Ki te ao marama

The life energy

Tūturu whakamaua

Will prevail

Kia tina,

Haumi e, hui e

Tāiki e

Mā te whakapono

BY BELIEVING AND TRUSTING

Mā te tumanako

BY HAVING FAITH AND HOPE

Mā te titiro

BY LOOKING AND SEARCHING

Mā te whakarongo

BY LISTENING AND HEARING

Mā te mahitahi

BY WORKING AND STRIVING TOGETHER

Mā te manawanui

BY PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Mā te aroha

BY ALL BEING DONE WITH LOVE

Ka taea e tātou

WE WILL SUCCEED



Āwhinatia | HELPING OR ASSISTING
& Manaakitia | SHOWING COMPASSION
are important qualities for
Kōrero tahitia | LISTENING & TALKING TOGETHER



Whakamomori is the word that's used for suicide on the cover of this resource. We acknowledge that each hapū/iwi have their own kupu or word that means suicide.

Why should we kōrero about suicide with taiohi?

Taiohi/young people know suicide is a big issue in Aotearoa, and they know that it affects all of us in some way. They may come across it through the media; they may know someone who has died by suicide or be supporting a friend who is feeling suicidal. They may have had thoughts of suicide themselves.

Although it can feel hard to kōrero/talk about the tough stuff, it's important that we can all have safe, open, honest and compassionate kōrero about suicide so our taiohi feel heard, supported and understood.

This resource is for parents, caregivers, teachers, counsellors, aunties, uncles, friends and other whānau. It's for anyone who cares about taiohi and needs tautoko/support and guidance to kōrero with them about suicide.



If you are concerned that taiohi in your life may be having thoughts of suicide right now, this resource will not be useful to you. For more useful information please turn to the resources listed on page 27.

For more information and support free call or text 1737 anytime to talk to a trained counsellor, talk to your local doctor, medical centre, hauora, community mental health team, school counsellor or counselling service.

Begin your kōrero journey

1 Before the kōrero Page 7

2 You can have the kōrero – here's how Page 11

3 Connecting through kōrero Page 15

4 Kōrero to avoid Page 19

5 Responding to pātai/questions Page 23

6 Where to turn for help Page 26



1

Before the kōrero



SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

If a younger taiohi hears about suicide or is feeling upset, it's important to kōrero with them too. Here are some tips to help you recognise when a younger taiohi may need extra aroha and support. There are simple things you can do to reassure and comfort them:

- Ask them how their tinana/body feels. Distress in younger taiohi can often present in ways such as a sore puku/tummy.
- If you notice changes in their mood or behaviour, let them know it's alright to not feel happy all the time.
- Spend time playing their favourite games, reading their favourite books or enjoying their favourite food.
- Suggest they take a special toy to bed with them for comfort.



Before the kōrero

When should I kōrero with taiohi about suicide?

Anytime is a good time to connect through kōrero manaaki/supportive conversations.

- When someone they know or someone in their hapū, school or community has died by suicide.
- When they're supporting a friend through a difficult time.
- When someone they admire (e.g. a celebrity or YouTuber) has died by suicide.
- When they're watching a TV show or movie or reading a book that features suicide.
- When they ask questions about suicide, such as "why do people kill themselves?".
- When you're worried a taiohi may be suicidal.

Let them know you're there to kōrero whenever they're ready. They might not be ready right now – that's OK. Keep checking in, and make sure they know of a number of different people and places they can turn to.

If you're worried that a taiohi may be considering their own suicide, then you need to act urgently. Call 1737 to talk to a trained counsellor. If you or the taiohi are in immediate danger call 111.



Before the kōrero

Am I the right person to kōrero with taiohi about suicide?

If you have a trusting relationship with the taiohi/young person and are in a good headspace to kōrero/talk about suicide, then you might be the right person.

Ask yourself:

- Am I in the right headspace to kōrero calmly?
- What personal experiences, values, cultural or religious beliefs do I hold around suicide? How may they influence this kōrero?
- Am I ready to truly listen without judgment?
- Can I accept they may not want to kōrero with me about this?
- Do I have the time and energy to have a kōrero that might be difficult and emotional?
- Do I know where I can find more information about suicide and suicide prevention?

If you feel someone else, like a kaumātua, cousin or counsellor may be a better person to have the kōrero, you can see if they're comfortable to reach out to the taiohi.

Where to have the kōrero

It's important to find a place that's comfortable for you and the taiohi you're having the kōrero with.

Try to have the kōrero kanohi ki te kanohi/in person whenever possible. Somewhere like a car, where you're next to each other, or when you're on a walk can feel like a less intimidating place to kōrero.

Sometimes you may not be able to choose where to kōrero, especially if the taiohi initiates it or the subject comes up in a classroom situation. Use your judgment to decide whether it's OK to address the discussion right then, or if it would be better to suggest another time.

Looking after yourself

Whatever the kōrero/conversation about suicide might be, it can be difficult. You may find it distressing, so it's important to look after your own wellbeing.

It's always OK for you to get tautoko/support and guidance, advice or just chat with a friend if you need to. You won't be letting anyone down. Be kind to yourself and take time out when you need to. If you need some support for yourself see the **helpline section** on page 27.



If you need some support for yourself, see the **helpline section** on page 27.



Somewhere like a car, where you're next to each other, or when you're on a walk can feel like a less intimidating place to kōrero.



2

**You can have
the kōrero—
here's how**



2

You can have the kōrero – here's how

Manaaki/listening with compassion

It's important to kōrero/talk about suicide in safe, supportive ways, no matter how challenging and emotional it may be.

Compassionate kōrero creates feelings of safety and allows us to be open and understanding with each other. Some people may find having kōrero about suicide in a compassionate way difficult, depending on your experiences or beliefs. It's important to take some time to think about how you can have an open mind and listen.

Show compassion by:

- Listening carefully, without judgment. Try repeating key things back to the person to be sure you've understood, e.g., "since your friend died, you've been feeling angry and keep wondering what went wrong, eh?".
- Not making assumptions. You might think you know how a taiohi/young person feels about a situation, but let them tell you in their own words. Prompt them by asking "what are your thoughts about this?".
- Being mindful of your body language. Give the taiohi your full attention.

Two guiding elements

1. Kia tika
Being direct

2. Kia pono
Being open

Kia tika/being direct

- You might be fearful that having a kōrero/conversation about suicide may plant the idea in someone's head, but this won't happen.
- It's OK not to use the word 'suicide' if you don't want to. You can use different terms, such as 'wanting to end their life' or talking about someone feeling 'deep sadness'. It can be helpful to mirror the words that the taiohi/young person chooses to use.
- Tell the taiohi why you're having the kōrero (e.g. "I know that the singer you like died by suicide, do you want to talk about it?").
- Be direct, honest and up-front. Don't be afraid of using the word 'suicide' but be aware explicit details can be overly distressing and unnecessary to the kōrero. Try to think about what the taiohi will be able to cope with and what they might not wish to discuss or learn about. We know some kōrero about suicide can pose a risk to some people. See '**kōrero to avoid**' section on page 19 for more information.



You can have the kōrero – here's how

Kia pono/being open

Show the taiohi/young person that you're willing to have an open, honest kōrero/conversation.

- Let them know you understand this is a tricky topic, and that it can be hard for you to understand too.
- Listen to their thoughts and feelings and let them know it's OK to feel that way (even if you can't relate to their experiences and feelings).
- Try not to judge or shame the taiohi for how they think or feel.
- Thank and acknowledge them for being willing to kōrero.
- Be honest when they ask questions you don't have the answers to, and work together to find them.



3

Connecting through through kōrero

CONVERSATION STARTERS





3

Connecting through kōrero

Seeing or hearing about suicide in the media or a book/film or television

Taiohi/young people can be affected by reading about or seeing suicide on screen, online, in books or in the media.

Sometimes the messages about suicide can be confusing and suicide scenes can be extremely disturbing. Taiohi can find it difficult to make sense of thoughts and feelings about what they've seen or heard. Having open and direct kōrero/ conversations can help taiohi challenge the messages and understand how we can all help prevent suicide.

Being direct: Kia tika

▶ “Are you OK after watching/hearing/seeing that?”

▶ “It’s important you kōrero with me or someone else if you’re feeling upset about what you’ve seen/read/heard. It can really help.”

Being open: Kia pono

▶ “I’ve heard that lots of people are watching this TV series. Apparently it deals with some big issues and has some really graphic scenes. Have you seen it?”

▶ “I noticed the book you were reading had a suicide in it. Do you want to chat about it?”

Taiohi supporting taiohi

Taiohi/young people are most likely to turn to a friend if they're going through a difficult time, are suicidal or have made a suicide attempt. This can place enormous stress on taiohi, especially if the friend they're supporting has told them not to tell anyone.

Help taiohi understand they can't fix this or solve it alone. Kōrero about ways in which their friend can be supported by others, like a school counsellor or trusted adult. Acknowledge it's a hard position for them to be in, but explain that getting support for their friend is the important and caring thing to do.

Being direct: Kia tika

› “You are a wonderful friend, but you can't handle this on your own. We can go and kōrero with the school counsellor about them together.”

› “I know they didn't want you to tell anyone. But getting help for them is the best way we can help.”

Being open: Kia pono

› “I see that you've been spending a lot of time with your friend. Are they doing OK?”

› “You seem worried about your mate at the moment. What's worrying you?”



3

Connecting through kōrero

Dealing with flippant comments about suicide

Just like anyone, taiohi/young people can use careless language about suicide that might be hurtful to someone who is going through a difficult time. 'KYS' and 'KMS' are slang expressions that stand for 'kill yourself' or 'kill myself'. When a taiohi uses such phrases, they may not be thinking about what they're saying, or they may be using dark humour as a way to cope with tough things in their life.

Being direct: Kia tika

- ▶ "Instead of saying 'KYS', what else could you have said?"
- ▶ "It seems like you're going through a tough time. How can I help?"

Being open: Kia pono

- ▶ "It's not OK to make jokes about suicide. I know you didn't mean to be hurtful, but words can really hurt. What else could you have said in that situation?"
- ▶ "I've heard you make quite a few jokes about killing yourself lately, and I'm worried. Can we kōrero/talk?"



4

Kōrero to avoid





4

Kōrero to avoid

Whānau and friends are often concerned about some of the risks involved with having kōrero/conversations about suicide. To help increase your confidence, here are some things to know.

Avoid kōrero that makes suicide seem like a reasonable choice

Sometimes, after someone has ended their life, people might comment that the person is “at peace”, “no longer in pain” or it being “their time”. Other times people may talk about suicide in a way that suggests it’s a logical response to tough situations, e.g., “the kids at school were mean to him; what choice did he have?”.

Why:

- When taiohi/young people hear these things, they may feel that suicide will bring peace from pain and is a natural response to challenging times. It’s important not to suggest that suicide is an appropriate way to deal with difficult situations.

Avoid speculating about why someone tried to take their life

It's common to try to understand the 'reason' someone died by suicide and to look for a single cause, such as bullying or a relationship ending. Suicide is complex and a combination of different things such as; feelings, actions, circumstances and unwellness. It's never anyone's fault.

Why:

- ▶ There's no one single 'reason' for someone's suicide. Whānau and friends of people who die by suicide may find speculation painful. It may feel like they're being blamed. Understanding and tautoko/support and guidance, not judgement, is what's needed.

Avoid kōrero about methods of suicide

As much as possible avoid kōrero/talking about the way a person took their life or where they died. If taiohi/young people are already having kōrero about the method, be honest but avoid any unnecessary details. Instead, focus on tautoko/support for each other, and enable access to support.

Why:

- ▶ When people are already thinking about suicide, hearing about a method can get them thinking, "this would be a good way for me to kill myself. I know it works".

4

Kōrero to avoid

Avoid kōrero about suicide as a selfish act or the way that it has harmed those left behind

Although anger and shame are understandable reactions to a suicide, it's important to remember that emphasising these feelings increases the stigma, or sense of disgrace, about suicide. This can, in turn, make it difficult for whānau who have lost someone to suicide to share their feelings, and can be harmful for people who have had, or are having suicidal thoughts.

Why:

- Stigma around suicide often causes people to hide suicidal feelings and avoid seeking support. Also, whānau who've been bereaved may be less likely to talk about their feelings and get the tautoko/support they need. This is important because those who've recently been bereaved are at a higher risk of suicide themselves.

Avoid presenting suicide as criminal or sinful

Some religions and cultures consider suicide to be sinful or criminal. When you're having kōrero about suicide with taiohi/young people, think about the impact such views could have on them.

Why:

- Presenting suicide as sinful or criminal can make people less likely to reach out for help when they're going through difficulties because they think they'll be judged. Suicide is not a crime.



5

Responding to pātai

QUESTIONS



5

Responding to pātai/questions

If you're worried about answering tricky questions, remember it's best to be open and honest. You don't need to know all the answers, and it's OK to say you're unsure. Here are some suggested ways to respond to some tricky questions.

What is suicide?

› “Suicide is when somebody ends their life.”

› “Suicide is when someone makes their tinana/body stop working.”

Why do people kill themselves?

› “There isn't an easy answer to that question. Suicide is complicated. There's no one reason why a person may take their life. It's really hard to understand because there are so many factors.”

› “People who feel suicidal may experience a lot of pain. They believe that dying is the only way to end their pain, and this can also stop them connecting with support and other things that can help.”

How do people kill themselves?

› “Different people try to end their lives in different ways, it doesn’t matter how they died. The important thing is to try and help so that people no longer feel suicidal.”

› “The way people die isn’t as important as supporting people to see a different way out of their pain.”

Whose fault is it?

› “It’s nobody’s fault. However, there are things we can all do to take care of each other, and make sure anyone else we know who is feeling sad knows that there’s help available.”

› “It’s not your fault. You didn’t cause this. It’s no one’s fault.”



6

Where to turn for help



If someone you care about is in crisis:

- Call your local mental health crisis assessment team (numbers can be found at www.mentalhealth.org.nz/help), or go with the person to the emergency department (ED) at your nearest hospital.
- If they're in immediate physical danger to themselves or others, **call 111** and stay with them until support arrives.
- Remove any obvious means of suicide they might use, e.g., guns, medication, car keys, knives, rope.
- Try to stay calm and let the person know you care.
- Keep them talking: listen and ask questions without judging.
- Make sure you are safe.

If someone needs extra support to help them through a tough time, or if you are seeking support because you are supporting someone else:

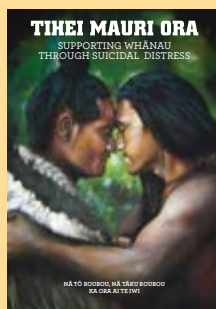
- Need to talk? Free call or text 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor.
- Lifeline 0800 543 354 or free text HELP to 4357.
- Youthline 0800 376 633, free text 234, or webchat at youthline.co.nz.
- Samaritans 0800 726 666.
- Tautoko 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO).
- 0800 WHAT'S UP? (0800 942 8787) or webchat at whatsup.co.nz, for kids and teens.
- You may like to connect with your local iwi health service.

For more useful suicide prevention resources visit www.mentalhealth.org.nz/suicide-prevention



Are you worried someone is thinking of suicide?

Advice for families, whānau and friends who are worried about the suicide risk of someone close to them.



Tihei Mauri Ora

Advice for supporting whānau through suicidal distress.

You can order free copies of these and other resources at shop.mentalhealth.org.nz or call 09 623 4810



We've produced a series of videos to help you keep the kōrero going. Visit mentalhealth.org.nz/korero to find out more.



ISBN: 978-1-877318-64-1 (PRINT)
JUNE 2021