

Stories from the conference

This year the NZAP conference met in Napier. It was called “Weaving our living stories.” The Editorial group brings you a flavour of those stories in the following section. (ED)

Tūrangawaewae: A place to stand

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Abstract

There are three case stories lifted from my own experience, a descriptive analogy of how my model was generated and an overview of the practice model. I will also explain how the model could possibly work for you and your client.

This is a personal account of how I connect the process of healing from a Māori world view and from a therapeutic approach. Unfortunately, Māori are over-represented in prison by a multiple of five times their number in the general population. In my work, I have observed that there is a need for the clinician to 'earn the right', from a cultural perspective, to quickly build a strong foundation upon which a successful therapeutic relationship can stand. It is therefore of great benefit for the clinician to indicate to the client that they understand the dynamics and values of Māori culture because they run parallel to the dynamics and values of clinical practice.



Introduction

In my presentation, the opening pays my respect to Māori tikanga. I recite a chant to acknowledge the different deities from the world of Māori who have taken the time to share their presence with us and to guide us in this journey.

Following the chant, I recite my Pepeha, my Boast. It refers to:

My Mountain, the first thing that is seen on the landscape.

My River, the next thing that is seen, flowing down the mountain.

The Waka, the canoe that carries me toward the mountain and river.

The Iwi, the name of the tribe or people, who are populating the Waka.

The Marae the Meeting House, inclusive of the piece of land in front of it.

And last, as if it is of no consequence, I recite my name. I say this because I am not speaking for myself or from myself. I have brought my ancestors amongst this gathering. They stand behind me. I give this time over to them. They put out to you what you need to hear from them. I am nothing at this time. I am of no consequence. It is their time to speak.

Then I welcome you, the listener, and the reader. Kia ora ra tatou! Greetings to you all!

This paper comprises four basic dimensions, three case stories lifted from my own experience, a descriptive analogy of how my model was generated, an overview of the practice model and an explanation of how the model might work for you and your clients.

Three stories

I begin with the three brief stories. To preserve anonymity, I have simply titled them Tahi, Rua and Toru... One, two and three.

I am Tahi. I am Māori. I am a thirty two year old man and I have killed a man. My father, I have great plans about how I am going to kill him when I finish my life sentence. It's funny really, my sentence began long before I came to jail. I can't remember my age when the drunken beatings began. Have you any idea how that feels for a kid? I thought that being Māori meant whanau, family aroha, love, kai, food and fun. For me it was an electric jug cord, a lump of wood, being beaten and kicked and watching mum get hers when she tried to stop it.

After a really hard bash one day, when I was fourteen, I took my twelve-year-old brother and ran away again. My father caught us two days later and took us home. He bashed my kid brother and kicked him around the kitchen and then he threw him into his room. He belted my mum when she tried to stop him. He looked at me and said, "I warned you". He grabbed me and tied up my hands and legs with a couple of his belts. I thought, "He's going to do it. I don't believe it, he can't do this to me". I kept thinking this as he threw me onto my stomach on the kitchen table. I struggled, but he was a tough man. He leaned all over me and held me down. I watched the cruel bastard select the bread knife from the rack. It was a 1970's type with the sort of pointed serrated edge. He grabbed my foot and started sawing through my leg, just above the heel. I found out later that the big 'bang' I felt in my whole leg was my Achilles tendon being cut through. When he finished, he picked me up and threw me into my room. There was a lot of blood. Mum put a wet tea towel on it and I just lay there for two days.

I understand the meaning of agony, inside and out. I will show you the scar the knife left, Teeps, It's still there. He was right when he told me my running days were over. I've never run since. My world is full of hate. What happened to me, who am I Teeps?

I am Rua. I am a twenty three year old Māori man. I remember spending more time living with my koro, grandfather than with my parents. He taught me lots of neat stuff about eeling, the land, the forests, Māori culture and our language. When I was seven I had to go back to my parents and stay with them full time. It seemed O.K. but they were piss-heads, drunkards and so were most of their mates. I was eight years old when I was raped for the first time. He was a close family friend. I wasn't sure what to do, so I did nothing. He told me not to tell anyone, and that's how it stayed for the next six years. I grew to think that it was normal, but I didn't like it at all. Then, when I was 14 years old, I found out that it was all wrong. It was all wrong. He tried to do it again and I attacked him. Soon after that, he and his family moved away. But I was stuck. I had six years of being raped by that bastard and it made me feel worse every day. I felt so ashamed, so whakama. I couldn't talk to anyone. I brewed on it. I was a volcano and when I was sixteen I exploded. I followed a woman into her house. I walked straight in. Her family was home, a husband and two children. I shut the kids in a bedroom, bashed the man and tied him up and I bashed and raped the woman. I did it because she was the same color as the bastard that had raped me for six years. Can you believe that, Teeps. What have I done?

I phoned Rua's mother near the end of his sentence, to check on his granddad's health. She knew that Rua and I were close, so she said, "Before he gets out, ask him about the beatings and burns his father gave him. And that's not the half of it. His aunties used him sexually also and his father kept him locked in a cupboard for most of six years. Talk to him about that stuff". To my shame, I couldn't do it. Rua still carries his burden.

I first met Toru, a sixty eight-year-old convicted paedophile, nine years ago. He was, and still is, an incredibly knowledgeable man in the world of Tikanga Māori. His expertise in advising both Māori and non-Māori on matters of lore goes all the way to the top. Raised by his grandparents in the traditional dirt floor, no power environment, he was kept from going to school, instead, being taught an enormous amount about the world of Māori. Unfortunately, Toru, at a young age, was initiated into the cultural practice of kai-whiori or ngau-whiori. It is the situation whereby a selected grandchild is used as a sexual partner by a grandparent, in this case, his grandmother. Kai-whiori literally means 'to devour one's own tail', the parallel being the grandparent feeding on the grandchild.

Toru lived like this for many years and held close a cultural expectation that he could repeat the cycle when his time came. He did. Three of his

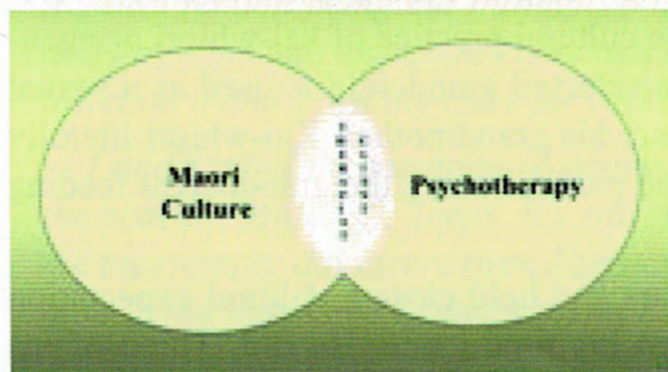
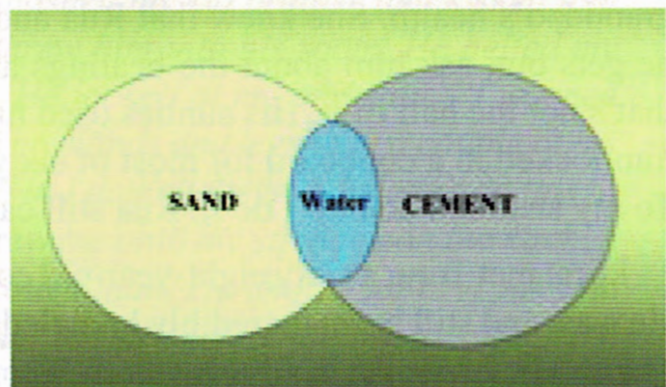
granddaughters bear the wounds. There may be even more. Sadly, any mainstream rehabilitation offered to Toru could not cater for his demand for cultural sensitivity and a protected environment. Nor could any cultural provider come anywhere near to him in mātauranga thereby negating any form of cultural redress for his offending. To add to the dilemma of his accepting responsibility for his actions, he has been wholeheartedly and unconditionally welcomed by a church that reinforces his denial by telling him, “Only God can judge you. In our church you have not sinned”. Toru has been in the community now for three years. I sit and talk with him often. I fear, but I’m not sure about what or for whom.

I will leave you to sit with those stories for a while, and come back to them later.

When strength comes from mixing two ingredients together

Several months ago, I was hand mixing some concrete to lay a small foundation. I observed that the sand and cement, dry mixed together in the wheelbarrow still remained separated. With the addition of water this mixture created a new and powerful substance that, even after the water has evaporated, is laid as a strong foundation for building upon. The water, although no longer present, has left elements of itself behind to strengthen the bond. I grabbed a pen and the cement bag and started drawing and scribbling. I drew two

conjoined circles representing Māori Culture and Psychotherapy. But what was the catalyst that could bind these two worlds together? The question is answered by a whakatauki, Māori proverb. He aha te mea nunui o to ao nei? What is the most important thing of this world? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata, it is people, it is people, it is people. It is PEOPLE who bring cultures together and the lack of them that keeps cultures apart. So, the two cultures



need to find a place to meet and trust each other. I wondered, what is the solid foundation they stand on? What elements of themselves do they leave behind and what do they take with them? Suddenly, I realised that there was a need for a practice model wherein the two

cultures could stand safely and respectfully in the same place and understand each other. What I was looking for were powerful and visible processes from each culture that not only ran parallel to each other but also carried sufficient integrity to work together and fulfil the requirements of developing a singular and strong platform, which linked the two cultures. The response came quickly to me. The powhiri/wānanga dynamic from the Māori culture and the therapeutic relationship dynamic of psychotherapy were the two processes that made themselves visible and volunteered to support me in my search to develop a viable model. So what follows is a stepping through each of these processes, beginning with first contact. Please walk beside me on this ara, this path through both worlds. What follows is a way of thinking about the dynamics and values of Māori culture alongside to the dynamics and values of the clinical practice.

Māori will always identify and define themselves by reciting their geographical and familial factors by naming their:

Mountain, Maunga The most significant feature of the landscape.

River, Awa which supports all life.

Canoe, Waka, in which their ancestors travelled here hundreds of years ago.

Locality, Marae, where local people and guests gather.

Meeting House, Whare Tupuna, where the ethos of the ancestors is tangible.

Tribe, Iwi. The larger group, which can often be scattered, but united.

Family, Hapu. Their immediate family and support.

As a clinician, I have arrived at the following understanding that for Māori

Mountain is their therapeutic foundation (Cognitive therapy, Behaviourism, Gestalt or a blending of various disciplines).

River is the flow of therapeutic models and knowledge they employ in their practice.

Canoe is the means of their learning, e.g. University, school etc.

Locality is their place of practice.

Meeting House is their therapeutic environment wherein abides the ancestors of their practice.

Tribe is their therapeutic community, which could be international.

Family are those with whom they are closely aligned in practice and supervision.

First contact

Traditionally, prior to the Powhiri, meeting, runners would approach Manuhiri, visitors, when they are a long way out and ascertain who they were and where they were from. Even today, before the Powhiri commences, the Tangata Whenua, local people, engage Manuhiri in their own subtle manner to ascertain the appropriate manner in which to conduct the Powhiri. In the therapeutic relationship, the answers to the questions “Who are you?” and “Where are you from?” are gained often through referral or appointment and can be supplemented by file notes or detail given at the time of appointment.

What is common to both is that ‘first contact’ is largely a vicarious and important precursor to initiating a Powhiri or a therapeutic relationship. The next phase is the call of the Karanga, or the call of the therapist. In both cases, to attend a kanohi ki te kanohi, or face-to-face event.

The Karanga is the first voice Manuhiri hear, and unique to Māori, it is always that of a woman. It reaches out over Manuhiri, extending over them the tapu and kawa of the Marae. After hearing this call, Manuhiri begin the walk on to the Marae. At this initiating stage of the therapeutic relationship, the call has gone out to the client and they arrive at the reception or waiting area of the practice. At this time, they are held under the code of ethics of practice. When they are called, they move toward the therapeutic environment. It is interesting to note that in both cases, a heightened state of emotion exists within Manuhiri and the client. They are about to be challenged.

Manuhiri are confronted by the wero, challenge, at the gate of the Marae, threshold and the Take, the issue to be discussed, is laid down on the ground in front of them. Then Manuhiri singularly pick it up. It is a sign of acceptance that they intend to open the way for them to continue their progress forward. Non-acceptance would be a stepping back from the take and reversing the process with Manuhiri leaving the area to return home without addressing the issue.

Accepting the challenge

At the time of laying down the take, the wero, the physical manifestation of the challenge, is exhibited. In this moment, what is known as the ihi, the wehi and the wanawana become tangible and necessary dimensions in the perceptions of Manuhiri. The ihi is the feeling that the Kai wero, challenger,

carries in themselves at such a moment of potential, where a new and unknown relationship is about to be initiated. It is one of awe and thrill, and in Māoridom, it is openly and intentionally displayed to Manuhiri. The wehi are the response emotions that Manuhiri hold in the face of the wero. They are typically ones of excitement, trepidation, anxiety, arrogance, fear, confidence, pride and others. They serve to shore up the intention of Manuhiri in their role of acceptance. The wanawana is the emotion and intensity of all present, combining the ihi and the wehi into a single dynamic as an entity in itself. The wanawana imbues itself into the whole of the occasion and is shared by Tangata Whenua and Manuhiri alike.

With these explanations in mind, consider the phenomena of transference, countertransference and group dynamics. It is interesting to note that Māori have practiced this ritual for hundreds of years and are intimately aware of the dimensions within it. For the client, to move on with their intention to meet the therapist, they are confronted with the anxiety of approaching the therapeutic threshold for the first time. The question is generally asked “What can I do for you?” and so the issue at hand is identified and laid out before the client and accepted by them. The way is now open for dialogue and forward movement.

Together, Manuhiri and the client begin to talk about broader and finer aspects of engagement in the following way. First Manuhiri walk on to the Marae and seat themselves on the pae, Marae seating, and the whai-korero, speaking begins. The kawa, rules, are more firmly established at this time. Marae protocols are clarified. The process of whakawhanaungatanga seeks to set Manuhiri at ease by identifying as many links as possible between them and the tangata whenua. References to the take are made, and after all the requirements of this first phase of talking are completed, the more tactile ritual of hongī, the touching together of forehead and nose at once, is performed. For the client, seated in the therapeutic environment, the code of ethics is established, the protocols of engagement are set, and a relationship is initiated which fosters ease, openness and honesty. Reference is made to the issue, and acceptance that further talking is needed.

In both cases, the initial relationship is established and further and deeper engagement is agreed. In Te Ao Māori, the world of Māori, the above process may take hours to complete but generations ago, it could have taken two or three days. In psychotherapy, it can take weeks, or months, to establish a relationship, which is strong enough to take to a deeper level. And so we move on, into the wānanga or deep therapeutic relationship.

The meeting

The wānanga is a difficult process to describe. It is alive with many dynamics and energies that serve to attain movement toward a successful conclusion. The deep, intense therapeutic relationship is also a difficult process to describe. It is alive with many dynamics and energies that serve to attain forward movement toward a successful conclusion. The whare tupuna or meetinghouse is always a symbolic of an ancestor. In this space, where we now sit, is where the very valuable exchanges take place. It is where wounds are examined and attended to, where there is laughter and weeping where there is talking and silence and through it all, there is healing. In every one of these dimensions, there is healing. This is the realm of Rongomatane, the bringer of peace. It is the realm of the therapeutic relationship in the most potent of therapeutic environs. Inside the whare tupuna, inside the body and soul of humanity. And, when each of these twin processes is at an end.

Concluding the encounter

As we will always come to do, we arrive at a respectful conclusion. We review, all the work covered and revisit the events and learning. We acknowledge, the energy of all those who have been involved in the intervention. We validate, the learning and the movement of energies. We thank, we thank each other for the respect and trust that we have shown each other. We close, with a karakia, a prayer, or a 'thank you'. But what can this model give us? Simply, a strong place to stand where we can be joined by Tahi, Rua and Toru.

Tahi is too whakama (shamed) to talk with Health providers. He has no faith, based on past experience, that he will get his whanau, aroha, kai and fun through his culture. But also, he is sceptical that non-Māori are able to meet him at a cultural level that can recognise who he is as a Māori man and show understanding of his culture.

Rua, although now less volatile, is still a man struggling with his sexual abuse issues, trauma through violence, and intense anger toward his whanau. He too, feels his place to stand needs to be recognised and understood by whomsoever it is that eventually attempts to help him. At this stage there is nobody who can stand and talk kanohi ki te kanohi, face to face, on a firm foundation, with Rua.

Toru will not 'lower himself' to talk with Iwi providers. Past attempts have seen him gain cultural dominance easily through whakapapa, genealogy and mātauranga, cultural knowledge. He would be best suited to a therapist who

can earn the right to stand beside using a model such as this as a foundation of engagement, and building the relationship on euro-centric models, hence removing the catalyst for power and control from the client. He needs to be drawn away from Te Ao Māori, the world of Māori, because that is where justification, in this case, kai whiori, literally, 'eating one's own tail' is embedded. Who, among you, are ready for this wero, challenge? This is what I offer you for your consideration. I see it as a strong place to stand.

This is the real challenge!

Our cultures are in need of each other. Imagine the difference your practice could make if you could safely reach those in Māoridom who are in need and there are many. Imagine how exciting it would be to introduce the essence and dynamics of Te Ao Māori to euro-centric models. Imagine how they could enhance each other. Imagine how we could grow and research our own models and employ conventional and cultural elements to create a world first and defyingly successful outcomes. To be able to meet and talk in a place that is safe for all is a key to the door to generations of transpsycho-cultural models and practice.

I humbly lay this wero at your feet. For Tahi, for Rua, for the potential victims I fear that Toru may still create, especially for the victims, I beg you, please, walk beside us, help us. Pick up this challenge.

At the conclusion of this presentation, in a manner fitting to the traditions of Māori culture, I performed a haka, which was not a challenge but a celebration of the voice of my ancestors being heard through the presentation of this model. It is called 'Nga Atua Māori' and pays respect to the elements that Māori hold in high esteem.