



Aroha in Action

A Resource for Whānau



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Children are our greatest treasure and we celebrate when a new mokopuna is born. But we all know about tragic situations where mokopuna have been seriously hurt or killed by someone in their whānau.

We share a sense of responsibility for keeping mokopuna safe, and we need to respond when we see or hear about child abuse. It is important that we know what changes we can make to stop abuse happening.



We want whānau to:

- provide a safe and nurturing environment for all whānau members, especially children
- know about the impact of violence and abuse
- declare violence unacceptable and not culturally valid
- be prepared to act, and know how.



What Can We Do as Whānau?

- Respect the mana and tapu of mokopuna.
- Stop mokopuna from seeing or hearing violence.
- Keep mokopuna spaces alcohol and drug free.
- Learn how to use positive discipline, not physical punishment.



- Support parents and caregivers.
- Establish whānau tikanga around caring for mokopuna.
- Know that babies can't be naughty.
- Respect mokopuna space.
- See things through mokopuna eyes.

Respect the Mana and Tapu of Mokopuna

Each mokopuna carries the mana and tapu of their whakapapa and tūpuna.

Mokopuna will learn respect and maintain ngā kaupapa tuku iho when they are treated with respect.

To humiliate and abuse one of our mokopuna is to takahi on the mana and whakapapa they carry.



Mokopuna who are humiliated, threatened and shouted at may look obedient and respectful on the outside, but often their anger and mamae shows up in their teenage years.

Mokopuna learn by watching. If they grow up with violent behaviour they will repeat these behaviours with their own partners or tamariki.

Stop Mokopuna from Seeing and Hearing Violence

It's not OK for our mokopuna to see or hear violent and aggro behaviour. It hurts mokopuna, even when they don't seem to notice what is going on. The stress has a serious impact on their brain development and learning.



Seeing or hearing violence or being violently abused can lead to problems later, like:

- teenage violence
- suicide attempts
- learning and behaviour problems
- mental health problems
- drug and alcohol issues.



Keep Mokopuna Spaces Alcohol and Drug Free

Adults who are drunk or out of it shouldn't be caring for mokopuna.

If we are out of it, we are more likely to:

- have poor physical co-ordination and injure a mokopuna by accident
- get aggro with other adults so that mokopuna see violence
- swear, shout or be verbally abusive
- get physical and injure a mokopuna



- be distracted and not watch mokopuna closely enough to keep them safe

- think that humiliating, frightening or hurting mokopuna is funny – especially if there is a group of adults and the mokopuna does something they see as annoying or naughty.



Learn to use Positive Discipline not Physical Punishment

Physical punishment is not a traditional tikanga. However many of us were physically punished as children and grew up thinking it was normal and OK.

Now we understand a lot more about the negative effects of physical violence and the emotional harm to mokopuna when physical punishment is used.



The simplest tikanga we can have for our whānau is 'no hitting'.

This helps maintain the mana and tapu of all whānau members and reduces the risk of anyone getting hurt. There are lots of strategies for positive discipline. All of us need help and support to keep learning how to be good parents and to look after mokopuna well.

Check out the SKIP website
www.familyservices.govt.nz/skip

Support Parents and Caregivers

Being a parent can be stressful, especially when this is combined with financial pressure. Kaumātua, kuia, uncles, aunties and grandparents can tautoko young parents and help reduce stress.



We can make sure young parents:

- have access to the information they need
- have practical help with household mahi like washing
- have time to kōrero and share kai with supportive whānau
- get lots of praise and awhi for their parenting role
- are encouraged to use support services, including parenting classes.

We can create mokopuna-safe spaces within our whare, marae and all whānau celebrations and hui. This makes it easier for parents to come and be involved. Parents with good support networks are more likely to feel positive about their children and ask for help when they need it.



Establish Whānau Tikanga around Caring for Mokopuna

In our mobile, busy whānau we can awhi our mokopuna by making sure there is always someone around who knows about:

- their kai preferences and feeding times
- their sleep patterns
- their health needs.



When things are busy and stressful this is even more important.

Introduce people coming in and out of our whare to our whānau tikanga around caring for mokopuna, especially in relation to alcohol and drugs and protecting mokopuna from humiliation, violence or abuse.

Know that Babies Can't Be Naughty

Many things that mokopuna do can make us frustrated or stressed but we need to remember it is part of their normal development. They can be messy, dirty their pants, throw up, cry or stay awake when adults want to be asleep.



Sometimes they do these things all at once – but they don't do it on purpose or because they are trying to upset someone.

It's helpful to know the stages babies and young children go through, so we all understand what is going on. Then we can cope with our responses and feelings, or help support other people with theirs.



Respect Mokopuna Space

It's OK for mokopuna to say no to unwanted physical contact. At different stages they become tangitangi and anxious if they are separated from their main caregivers or if someone they don't feel sure of comes into their physical space.



- This is a good sign – it means they are learning about relationships and trust.
- It shows their brain is developing the way it should.
- Don't take it personally or over-react, be glad they are going through these important stages.
- Give them time to get used to you being around.

Being heard and respected as babies will help mokopuna develop their confidence to talk to a whānau member if they are feeling unsafe when they are older.



See Things through Mokopuna Eyes

Before we react negatively to what mokopuna are doing, we need to step back and think about how it is for them.

Mokopuna hold the wisdom of the world and they can teach us the power of unconditional love. They remind us how each one of us began and they are our connection to our tūpuna and to our future. The centre of their world is their whānau, and they learn from us.



When we love them they learn to love, when we respond to their needs they learn to respond to others, when we are peaceful then peace flows through them. Everything they learn, they learn from us.

They are our aroha in action.

Notes

