

# After the Cyclone: Care & Communication When Supporting Your People



UMBRELLA

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E tū Kahikatea, hei whakapai ururoa  
Awhi mai, awhi atu, tatou, tatou e

Kahikatea stand together, their roots intertwined, strengthening  
each other





# Today's objectives

1. What makes an event traumatic?
2. Recognise how to spot signs of stress/distress in your people (and yourself)
3. Tools for looking after your people in the short-term
4. What does good leadership look like?
5. Q&A

# What makes an event traumatic?

- Extraordinarily stressful event
- Can involve a threat to our life or safety or that of others
- Unexpected
- We're normally powerless to prevent
- Causes us to question our sense of safety and security

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

# Priorities

- 1) Safety, Security, Comms (self and whānau)
- 2) Practicalities: food, power, \$\$
- 3) Community connection
- 4) Professional support (not everyone needs a psychologist!)

NB: these may change over time (e.g., if more rain comes)

# The emotional journey

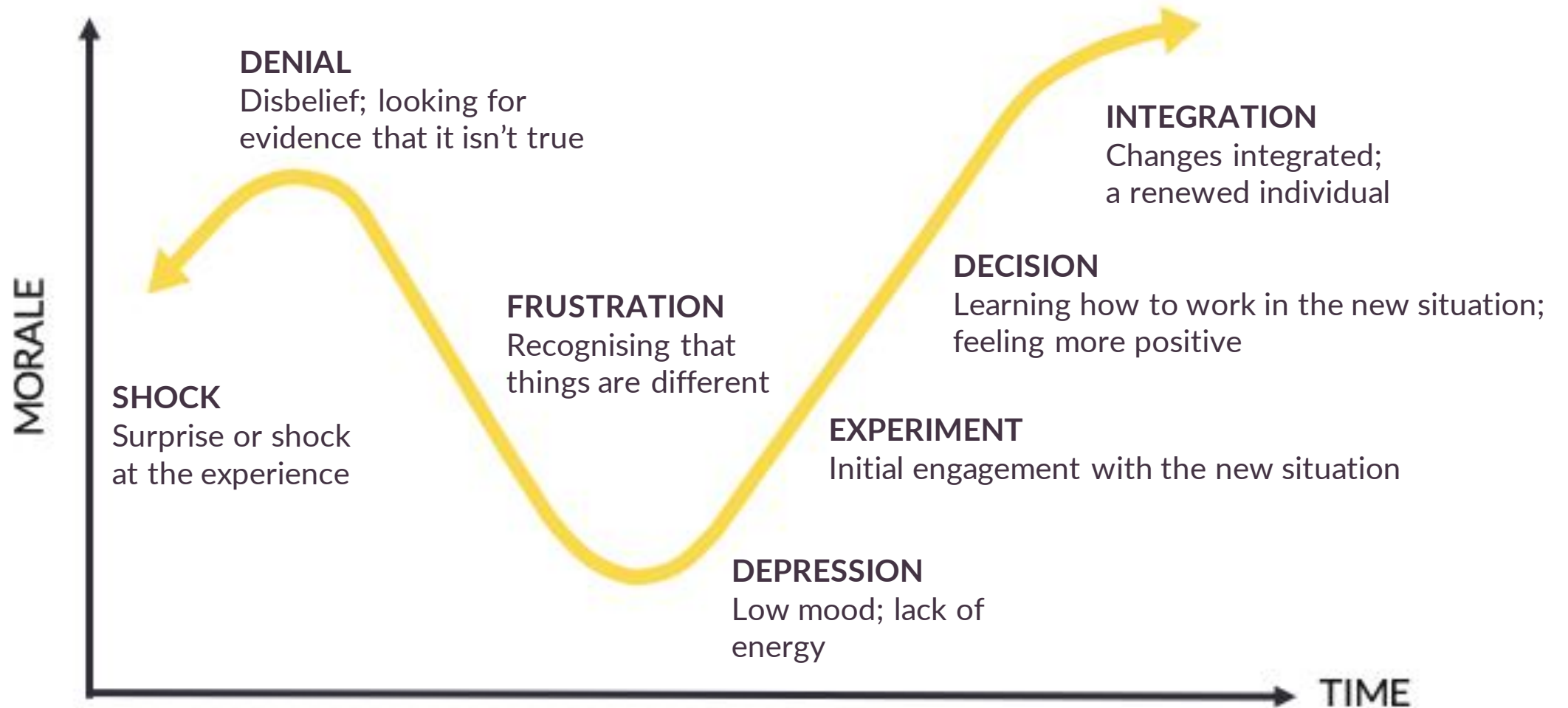
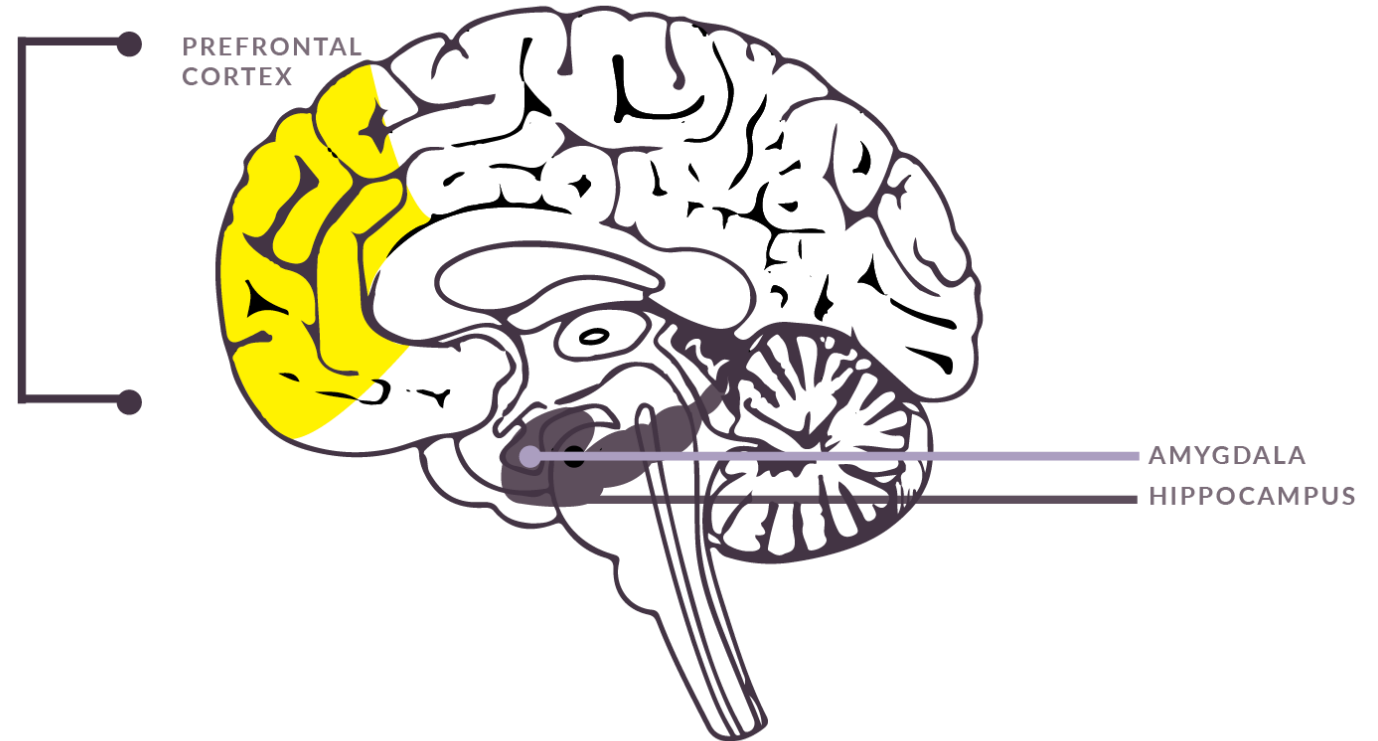


Figure 1: Kübler-Ross Change Curve

# Trauma and your hippocampus

- Stressful information can be trapped in the hippocampus
- Information therefore stay's 'active' and we can be easily triggered (e.g., when it rains)







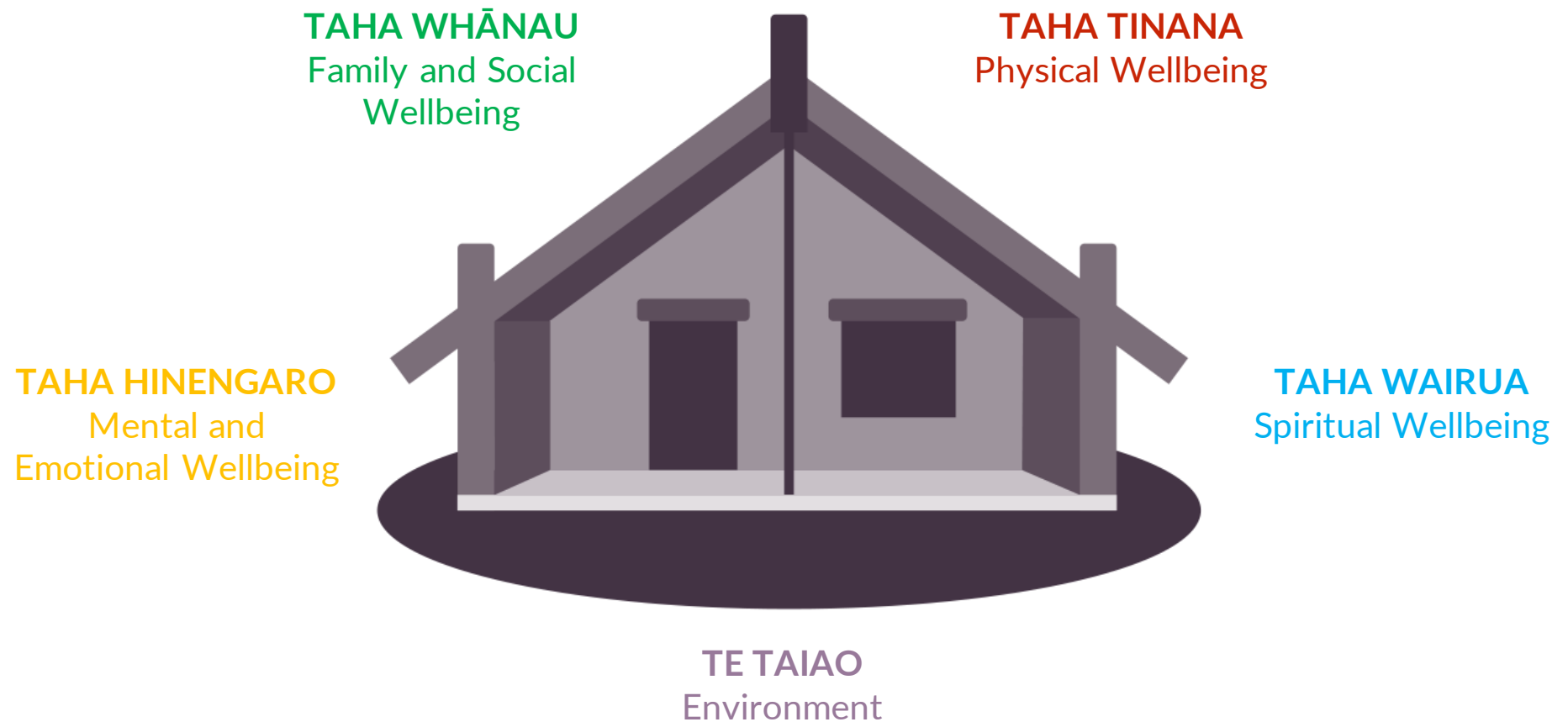
# Signs of concern

How do you spot them?



# Spotting Signs

## Te Whare Tapa Wha



# Timeframes

Days, weeks, months

Signs and symptoms will gradually fade  
for most people

Recovery will have ups and downs

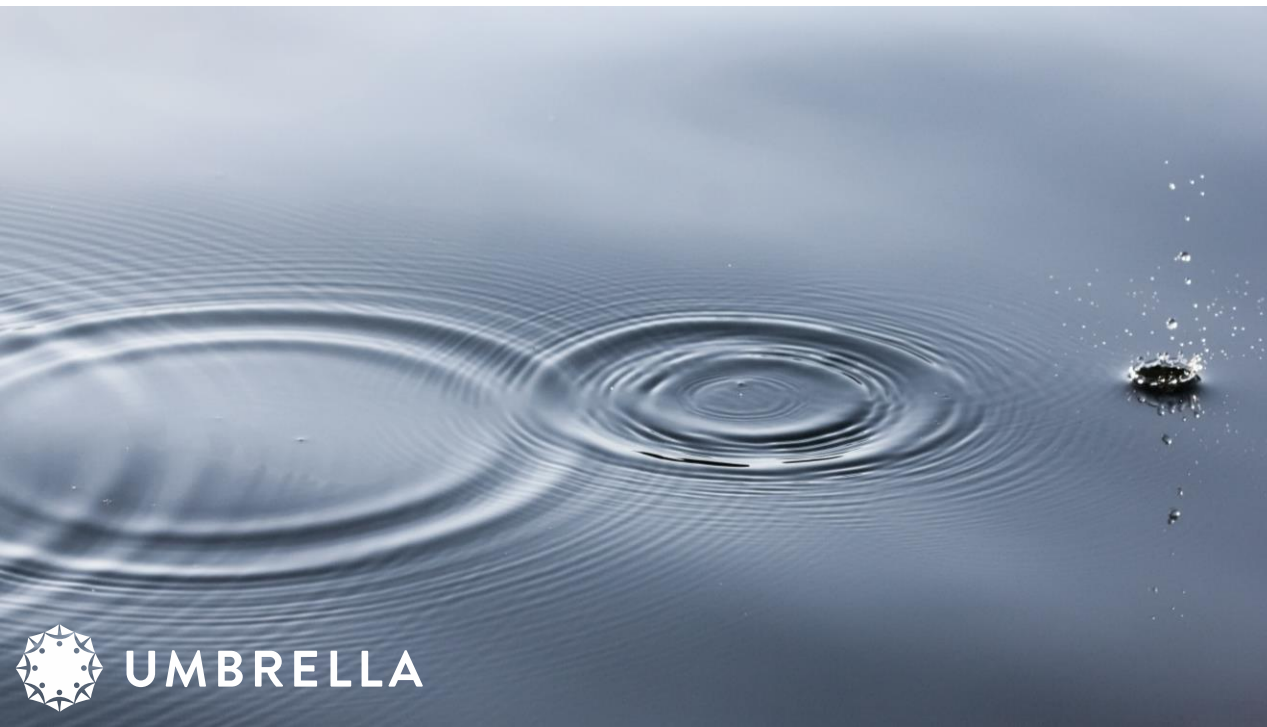


## Longer term impact

Majority of people who experience  
trauma DON'T develop PTSD

But increased risk of mood & anxiety  
problems

Ongoing monitoring important





# Then what?

How do you follow up if you're concerned?

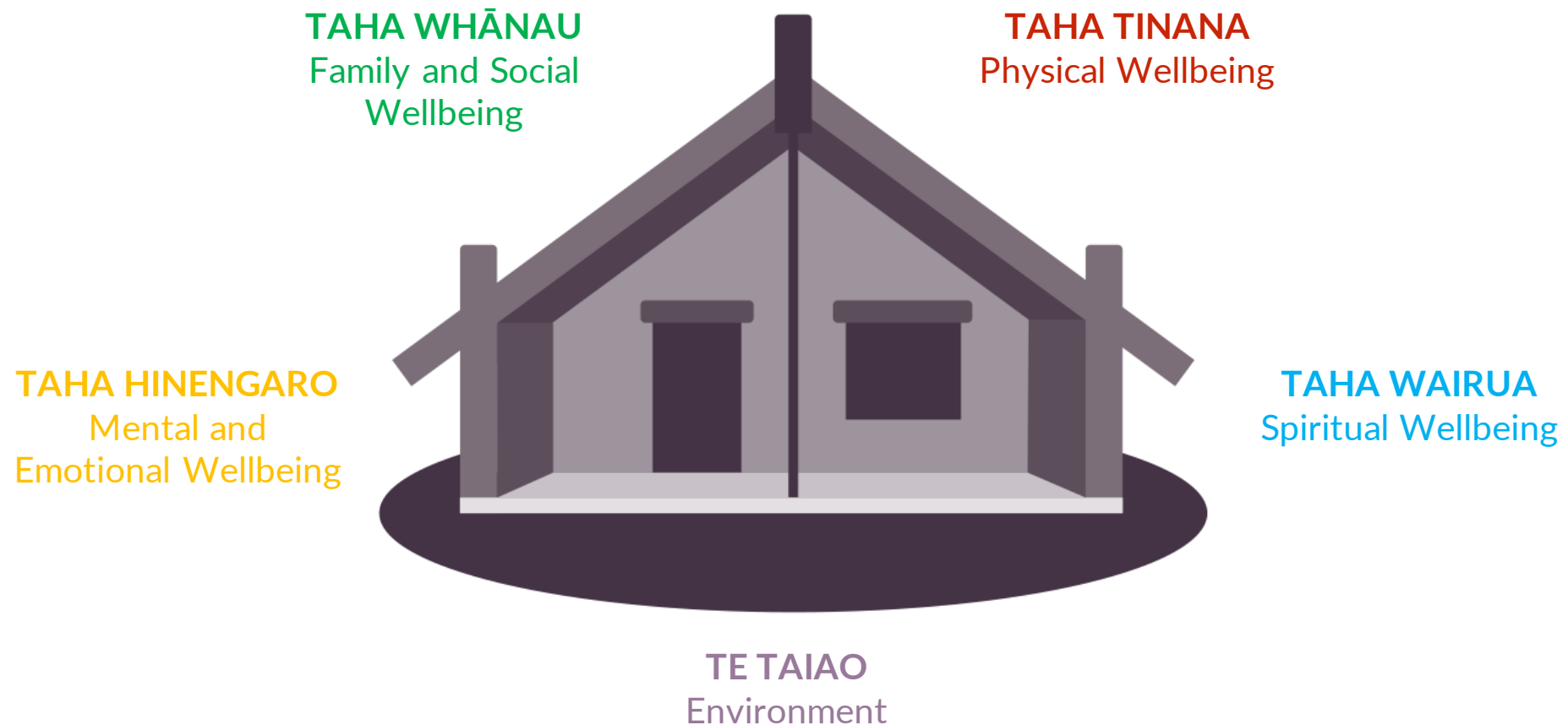
A black and white photograph of two people standing on a beach, looking out at the ocean. The person on the left is wearing a dark jacket and a backpack, with their hair tied back. The person on the right is wearing a dark jacket and a cap. The ocean is calm, and the sky is overcast.

# Starting a conversation about mental health

- Getting beyond ‘how are you doing?’
- Observe & describe
- Traffic light system
- Make it meaningful to your team
- Include wellbeing check-ins at team meetings



# Forms of Support Te Whare Tapa Wha



A vertical banner on the left side of the slide features silhouettes of several stylized human figures holding hands in a circle. The background of the banner is a gradient from light yellow at the top to dark purple at the bottom.

# Forms of support in businesses/orgs

- Peer support
- Team meetings – formal and informal opportunities to connect
- Supportive leadership
- Foster a culture of care for team members
- Community supports
- EAP
- Access professional supervision
- Online resources

**Reflection**



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# Some key things to note...

- No right/wrong things to feel
- No right/wrong amount to talk about experiences
- Burnout Risk: “I’m the only one”; “I have to do it/be there”
- May need to put limits around staff working
- Survivor guilt (still need support)
- Keep monitoring!

**What does good leadership  
look like right now?**



# Supporting Workplace Wellbeing

- 0 1 Be visible and accessible
- 0 2 Listen and engage actively
- 0 3 Validate the challenges and emotions
- 0 4 May need to set limits for staff
- 0 5 Help make meaning of stressors
- 0 6 Notice positives, express gratitude
- 0 7 Keep alive professional values and ethics
- 0 8 Be patient
- 0 9 Acknowledge own struggles  
Model being ok with not being perfect

# Trust in leadership



## Competence

A sense that someone is capable and able to state when they don't know something



## Considerate

The state of being well meaning and having someone's back



## Predictability

Demonstrating consistency and transparency



## Integrity

The quality of being honest and doing the right thing

Reflection

# Clear Communication



Communicate (even if nothing's happening)

Acknowledge

Explain

Be honest

Fairness is crucial

Ensure equity of information/opportunity





**Ask people about their concerns  
and needs**

# Don't assume! Ask, take action and then ask again

Surveys, forums, questionnaires,  
1 on 1 conversations

1

Ask, get baseline/monitor change,  
inform future action

2

Set up conditions for success;  
empathy, flexibility, safety

3

Trial, take collaborative action



# Making a plan

KEEP	STOP	START	WHAT WOULD HELP?
What are you already doing well?	Anything you are doing that isn't helpful?	What new strategy would make the most difference?	What support would you need to action this plan?





# Questions?

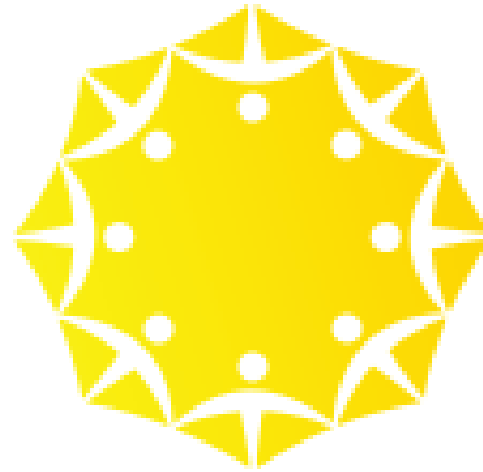
For more info and ideas, get our newsletter  
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