

### Explore taha hinengaro

#### Mental and emotional wellbeing

##### What is taha hinengaro?

Just like your physical health, your taha hinengaro/mental and emotional wellbeing needs to be taken care of. Taha hinengaro is your mind, heart, conscience, thoughts and feelings. It's about how you feel, as well as how you communicate and think.

Taking care of your hinengaro is important, whether or not you've experienced mental illness or distress. It means doing things that make you feel good, and being able to express your thoughts and feelings in an environment where you feel safe and supported.

##### Why is taha hinengaro an important way to wellbeing for your school or kura community?

Most people who experience mental distress will have their first experience before the age of 25. Schools and kura have a key role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of tamariki and taura through building positive and safe environments, teaching skills for wellbeing and making sure people who are going through distress are included and not judged.

Teaching and being part of a school or kura environment is a hugely important and challenging role. It's important that the school or kura environment also nurtures the wellbeing of kaiako and other staff.

##### Exploring your way to wellbeing through taha hinengaro

Please adapt these activity ideas to suit your needs.

- Start the day with a mindfulness-based breathing exercise or body-scan meditation. This can be done in the classroom or the staffroom! Mindfulness Education New Zealand is a great place to start for more information and activity ideas and guides. <https://mindfulnesseducation.nz/>
- Use our check-in resource included in this pack to encourage tamariki/taura to express how they're feeling. If someone isn't feeling so great, ask them what might make things feel better.
- If tamariki or taura are feeling restless or over-energised, head outside for five minutes and encourage them to take deep, slow breaths and listen to the sounds of nature.

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- Get tamariki to draw or write about the people, places and memories that are special to them. Display these around the classroom.
- Create a compliments jar and ask taurira to write compliments or notes of aroha to their classmates. Kaiako and other staff can do this too! It's a nice idea to read these aloud at the end of the day or week.
- Create a gratitude wall in your classroom or staffroom – invite people to bring in photos or write down the things they are grateful for in their lives right now. It's a nice visual reminder of the things that make us feel good, and it's cool to read what other people are grateful for too!
- Create a wellbeing space somewhere on the school or kura grounds – a place where anyone can go to relax. It could have beanbags, a weighted blanket, books, mindful colouring books and other sensory experiences.
- Read books that talk about feelings and emotions. Check out the good reads page at [www.mhaw.nz](http://www.mhaw.nz)

#### An important note

If someone in your school or kura community is experiencing mental distress or illness and needs some tautoko/support, there is help available. See our short guide on [page 20](#).