

✿ Regular contact and follow-up with bereaved families is key
"Having family and friends being there for us, that was a help, how people just pop in and see how we are doing and that"

✿ Providing a space to talanoa is essential in order to vent and discuss issues
"It's okay to grieve, it's natural, it's normal and it's acceptable. . . It's okay to seek help, there is no shame in it. It's okay to talk to other people whether, that be a family member, a stranger, or a professional"

✿ Promoting messages that affirm young people is vital
"It's better to hear your children out than for them to be hurting themselves"

✿ Identifying family stressors need to be worked through as a family
"I believe the main weakness of many families is communication, especially communication between parents and their children. . . there should be some activities so the youth can talk about. . ."

✿ Allowing yourself to feel vulnerable and to be affirmed
"A concept of a family, I think, is the ability to be vulnerable and know that you can admit that 'I didn't do well' and the ability of the family to pull together and give praise to that person"

✿ Youth inclusion and connectedness
"At kava we hear stories and there are good stories, funny stories and there is your history of Tonga. When they talk about it and you hear a little bit, you want to hear more and then the story will continue in the next faikava session and. . .speaking Tongan too"

SUPPORT SERVICES AND KEY CONTACTS

If you or someone you know is depressed, feeling hopeless and isolated or talking about suicide, you can also contact the following numbers:

- ✿ Tautoko Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0508 828 865 (0508 tautoko)
- ✿ Lifeline: 0800 543 354 (available 24/7)
- ✿ Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757 - txt 4202
- ✿ Youthline: 0800 376 633 - free txt 234

- ✿ Kidslines: 0800 543 754 - available from 4pm to 6pm workdays
- ✿ What's up: 0800 942 8787 (1pm to 11pm)
- ✿ Outline NZ: 0800 688 5463
- ✿ Samaritans: 0800 726 666
- ✿ LeVa: 09 261 3490 | www.leva.co.nz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This resource was prepared by 'Aulola Fuka-Lino and Dr Jemaima Tiatia-Seath, funded by a Health Research Council of New Zealand Pacific Health Research Knowledge Translation Grant.

Gratitude is extended to the invaluable contribution of the Tongan families bereaved by suicide who courageously shared their stories. Appreciation is given to the Advisory Group, and Tanaki Tatafu for all your support and contribution.

ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Kato'i e tala'o Tonga Vaivaifolau Kailahi, Cultural Advisor
Reverend Ifalame Teisi, Social Worker
Edmond Fehoko, Youth Advisor
Natalie Leger, Manager Faleola Mental Health Service
Afu Pifeleti, Psychiatric Registered Nurse
Dr Hamdi Mubarak, Psychiatrist
Haniteli Kanongata'a, Mental Health Community Worker
Valenisia Sinisa, School Counsellor
Selu Ma'asi, Social Worker in Schools
Seini Pifeleti, Youth representative

TONGAN TRANSLATION 'Ofa Palu Toki | GRAPHIC DESIGNER Henele Tautalanoa Tuita

REFERENCES:

Compton, B.R., Galaway, B. & Gournoyer, B. (2005). *Social work processes*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/ Cole Publishing.

Fuka-Lino, A. (2015). *Fofola e fala ka e alea e kainga: Exploring the issue of communication amongst Tongan youth in Aotearoa, New Zealand* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Sinisa, V. (2013). *The reflections by Tongan parents or caregivers on various factors that may have contributed to the suicide of their child* (Unpublished Master's dissertation). University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.

Tiatia-Seath, J. (2015). *Suicide prevention for Tongan youth in New Zealand: Report to the Health Research Council of New Zealand and Ministry of Health for the Pacific Partnership Programme*. Wellington, New Zealand.

Tongan Youth SUICIDE PREVENTION IN AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND.



THIS RESOURCE DERIVES FROM A 2015 HEALTH RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND FUNDED STUDY 'SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR TONGAN YOUTH IN NEW ZEALAND' TO SUPPORT TONGAN COMMUNITIES BY INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDINGS AROUND SUICIDE PREVENTION.

HEILALA MALU - TONGAN FRAMEWORK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION



- ❁ *'Ofa* (Love, compassion, care and kindness)
- ❁ *Toka'i* (To give and receive respect)
- ❁ *Loto Lelei* (Humility and open minded)
- ❁ *Fetauhi'aki* (Maintaining respectful relationship)

APPROACH TO SUICIDE PREVENTION

The 'Heilala Malu Framework' encompasses four core processes when working with someone who is at risk to suicide based primarily on critical processes within Social Work Practice:

- ❁ *Fengāue'aki* – Making connections by exploring and seeking to understand the views of the young person.
- ❁ *Faka'uto'uta* – Signs to look out for and making sense of the situation affords understanding of the young person in relation to their environment
- ❁ *Ngāue ke Fai* – Introducing optimistic energy, enhancing hope and motivation promotes steps forward and taking action
- ❁ *Fakatokamālie* – Celebrating progress and recognising areas for further work

WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Where threats are being made about killing oneself, we need to know how to respond appropriately. The following are warning signs (but not limited to) shared by Tongan youth themselves from the 'Suicide Prevention for Tongan Youth in New Zealand' study.

- ❁ **Closing up:** The inability and/or refusal to express or voice emotions and feelings.
- ❁ **Social isolation:** Choosing to be alone and avoiding family, friends and social activities. This also includes losing interest in favourite pastimes.
- ❁ **Alcohol and other drug use:** An increase in alcohol consumption and other drug misuse for temporary relief and to block out issues. This also includes other risk taking behaviours.
- ❁ **Juggling identities:** Pressures associated with walking between two or more ethnic identities and finding balance between Tongan and western expectations. Feelings of alienation and disconnect based on sexual orientation and gender identities.

- ❁ **Talk of ending their life:** Any mention of someone wanting to end their life, should be taken seriously. It is not a joking matter or one to be ignored.
- ❁ **Powerlessness:** Relates to feeling trapped, hopelessness and disconnect.

RISK FACTORS

As identified by Tongan youth in the 'Suicide Prevention for Tongan Youth in New Zealand' study, risk factors for suicide include:

- ❁ **Pressures:** Heavy family and cultural obligations mainly in relation to financial contributions and unmet cultural expectations.
- ❁ **Lack of time and little communication within families:** Minimal or no communication between young people and older members of the family.
- ❁ **Balancing identities:** Feelings of resentment and anger towards parents when they do not understand the pressures associated to balancing traditional Tongan and New Zealand worlds.
- ❁ **Shame and stigma:** The shame and stigma commonly attached to the loss of a family member to suicide, which may discourage families from talking about the event, grieving and healing as a family.
- ❁ **Maintaining self-control and keeping face:** Outwardly, pretending to be happy, but harbouring anger, hurt and pain within.
- ❁ **Hopelessness:** Believing there is no hope for the future with little expectancy that things can get better
- ❁ **Impacts of a suicide:** There is increased risk of suicide for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.
- ❁ **Expectations to achieve:** Unrealistic familial pressures for the young person to achieve academically or as an elite athlete.

SOLUTIONS: VOICES OF TONGAN YOUTH

- ❁ **Open and consistent communication in the family is key**
 "Communication is the key like to everything... Just speaking to each other more often, asking them how they are, making sure you have that strong bond because it's really important... Making sure that everyone knows that you're there for each other"

Recognising early warning signs is important to suicide prevention. Everyone has an important role to play in caring for those who are at risk of suicide. Based on the 'Suicide Prevention for Tongan Youth in New Zealand' study, the *Heilala Malu* Tongan Framework for Suicide Prevention was developed to help support suicide prevention efforts that are meaningful and effective for Tongans.

The 'Heilala Malu - Tongan Framework for Suicide Prevention' is symbolised by the Kingdom of Tonga's national red flower or *heilala*. It is usually 1cm in diameter and represents eminence in *anga faka-Tonga*. (Tongan culture). The value attributed to the *heilala* has significant historical origins in relation to *Kakala* (garland) making which, traditionally gifted to the King and adorned only by those of 'Eiki (chiefly) rank. Today the inclusion of *heilala* within any garland signifies the status of a person or the type of occasion.

The *heilala* represents elegance and beauty and within the 'Heilala Malu Framework for Suicide Prevention' metaphorically represents the value and worth of life itself. The *Heilala Malu* framework is underpinned by four core principles of the *anga faka-Tonga* and essential to Tongan youth suicide prevention: