

ATAWHAI Program Summary and Evaluation 2019

What happened?

ATAWHAI worked with 12 rangatahi intensively. Through the training-the-trainer model, over 600 people were impacted. Through an intensive week-long programme, monthly workshops and ongoing mentoring, rangatahi learnt how to regulate their emotions, deal with conflict, improve their ability to forgive, and build their motivation, decision-making and relationship skills.

ATAWHAI supported rangatahi holistically through activities including positive mental health mahi, mindfulness, self-reflection, Maori movement, yoga and the creative arts, with the aim of equipping them with lifelong communication, stress-management and resilience skills. Importantly, rangatahi were supported to teach and share their skills in their daily life through the Tuku Iho (training the trainer) model, with their whānau and wider community so the benefits rippled beyond the young people.

Rangatahi that participated in ATAWHAI this past year provided overwhelmingly positive feedback after just five days, including reporting feeling: “more like myself, more open with everyone and happy with life”, “really accomplished in my emotional and mental state”, and “way more present and capable to handle all my emotions” and learning: “to be kind to others”, “acceptance” and “I control my own thoughts and my thoughts can be questioned”.

ATAWHAI is our unique resilience and mentoring programme which has been designed to build strong mental health, resilience and leadership skills for disadvantaged rangatahi. ATAWHAI was developed and evaluated in 2019 in consultation with rangatahi and is kaupapa and tikanga Māori-driven. Based on Te Whare Tapa Whā framework, ATAWHAI is responsive to the needs of marginalised rangatahi aged 13–18.

Importantly, the programme was also co-designed by rangatahi for our rangatahi with input into the design, delivery and evaluation of our programme.

We also employ the Tuku Iho (training the trainer) model, whereby rangatahi who have been through the programme also step into teaching, mentoring and governance roles. Rangatahi become capable teachers who can go on to share their life skills and stress management tools with their whānau and community. The innovative model is based on the principle that we are training our rangatahi who in turn train other people in their home, school or community. Becoming the teacher allows students the opportunity to build self-efficacy, respect and support from their peers. We also developed a leadership program to train tuakana (alumni students) to become yoga teachers, mindfulness teachers and youth mentors; two of our rangatahi were employed as a result. This was very successful and we urgently need funding for this program.

Below is the structure of the ATAWHAI program that was delivered:

The Atawhai Programme

Grounded in Te Ao Māori, the kaupapa of Atawhai is built on five principles: non-judgement; vulnerability; self-compassion; aroha; and support. These five principles guide our tikanga and are reflected throughout each class.

The Atawhai programme is made up of two key parts: Atawhai Intensive and the Atawhai 12-month programme. Each Atawhai cohort works through the following programme:

Two Atawhai Intensives: delivered over seven days.

Day 1-2: Mentor, Coach, Counsellor preparation and induction

Day 3-7: Atawhai Programme delivery

The daily activities in the Atawhai programme include:

- Groups Classes (as detailed below) on emotional intelligence building, stress management and capacity building activities
- Yoga and mindfulness practice
- Group korero around themes for mindfulness practice e.g. forgiveness: how to forgive ourselves and how to forgive others
- One-on-one/small group work with mentors for reflection and integration through group meditation, gratitude practice and a gratitude circle

MODULES 1 to 3 WHAKAAROHIA: Understanding mindfulness, stress and resilience

- Contextualizing Te Whare Tapa Whā
- Understanding whanaungatanga and class community connection
- Strengthening self-reflection, open-mindedness and focus

MODULES 4 to 5 TIROHIA: Self-understanding and reflection

- Understanding thought processes, identifying ineffective thinking and behaviours
- Training the trainer: sharing tools with the community

MODULES 6 to 8 ARO-HA: Kindness, empathy and forgiveness

- Conflict resolution
- Honest and mindful communication
- Self-compassion and empathy for others
- Forgiveness of self and others

Day 7: Whānau Event: The week of learning culminates in a whānau event. As a collective, rangatahi share and teach their community what they have learnt during the week about transforming their own hauora.

Ongoing events: Throughout the year rangatahi are supported to teach and share their resilience skills to the community. This year rangatahi taught mostly youth, teen Mums and Maori and Pacific communities in need of support with their mental health.

Atawhai 12-Month Programme

Part 1

- Youth mentor & facilitator training

Part 2 (Mentor and rangatahi)

- Mindfulness and resilience group workshops
- Stress management coaching and mentoring
- Community and whānau events so rangatahi can continue to share their learning and upskill the community with their newly learned skills.

Evaluation

Atawhai has a youth-led development and evaluation process, and our programme evaluation and development advisors include psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, frontline youth workers and cultural advisors. We're committed to ensuring that there is a sound evidence base for all of our mahi.

Evidence that we are achieving our outcomes was measured through quantitative and qualitative evaluation methodologies for all Atawhai Programmes:

- Pre and post programme written and verbal evaluations assessing rangatahi resilience capabilities after the intensive week-long programme.
- Rangatahi-led feedback during daily classes.

- Written and verbally recorded reflections with rangatahi, whānau, teachers and mentors, including feedback on the number of people from the community who benefited from Tuku Iho model.
- Mentors and facilitators' observations of participants' behaviour.
- Thematic analysis and identification of additional themes.
- Evaluation report.

Our formal evaluation reports share the voices of our young people and have informed the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction.

Who participated or benefitted?

12 rangatahi participated in our intensive mental wellbeing program and over 600 community benefited from the program.

Our programme supported rangatahi (youth aged 14 to 18) facing anxiety, depression and self-harm. The ATAWHAI participants are marginalised youth with low self-efficacy but lots of potential. Rangatahi joined the program from community partners, kura kaupapa, alternative education, low-decile schools and oranga tamariki.

Ethnic groups and communities who benefited from the intensive ATAWHAI program:

- Maori - 83%
- Pacific - 17%

Community Participation & Benefit:

As a result of our unique Tuku Iho model, we estimate each rangatahi shared the tools they learn at ATAWHAI with a minimum of 10 community members. As a result, during 2019 we believe that our programme has positively impacted over 600 people.

The communities that were impacted by ATAWHAI rangatahi are impressive in their numbers and diversity. In 2019, for example, ATAWHAI rangatahi have taught mindfulness, yoga and stress management to: whanau, community members and supporters at ATAWHAI whanau events; refugees (including women and children); members of the Muslim community; teen mums and their babies (pepi); teenagers (400+ in high school based classes); other rangatahi Māori at weekly sessions and wānanga.

Over 25 people were trained in our wellbeing and resilience kaupapa and in mindful kaupapa Māori youth mentoring.

One of our 17 year old rangatahi, who joined the program to work on low self-efficacy, received the Humanitarian Award at her school in 2019 for teaching mindfulness and stress management to so many students at her school.

Two 17 year old students who have been through the program were employed and trained to be youth mentors to our ATAWHAI youth in 2019.

What was achieved?

"I feel more like myself, more open with everyone and happy with life"

Significantly, all of the rangatahi (100%) who participated in the most recent ATAWHAI program delivered by The Kindness Institute, described feelings of reduced stress. All of these same rangatahi (youth) felt that they had achieved, or are on the path towards achieving, their mental

wellbeing goals. Through the intensive ATAWHAI program, our target youth outcomes were achieved and are described in more detail below.

The Kindness Institute has a robust evaluation methodology in place to ensure the best possible program is delivered to the rangatahi, recognising their unique needs and aspirations. Most significantly, it is the rangatahi who are at the forefront of the evaluation methodology. Rangatahi design and develop the ATAWHAI program. For example: rangatahi provide feedback during daily wananga (classes / workshops), complete pre- and post-retreat questionnaires, participate in daily group debriefs and engage in a one-on-one interview following the retreat, to provide insights into how they are integrating key learnings from the retreat into everyday life. This means The Kindness Institute has the ability to continually update and assess what aspects of its offerings continue to be relevant and what may need tweaking or updating.

Evaluation of Youth Outcomes 2019

The evaluation methodology deployed by The Kindness Institute has elicited the feedback set out below from the rangatahi. The specific feedback focuses on the target youth outcomes.

Outcome 1: Increased calmness and ability to manage stress and anger

Importantly, when the rangatahi were asked to reflect on how and when they had used the mindfulness, stress management and yoga tools they discovered at ATAWHAI, in their daily lives, many of the rangatahi reported that they used the tools to manage stress or anger. Some of the rangatahi commented on how they had used the tools to increase a sense of calm. For example,

- *"My intention was to notice and feel my feelings before letting them out and I feel like I'm on the path and getting closer to my goal."*
- *"I used mostly breath and manifestation meditations at home in stressful situations as it lessened this and I look forward to the future."*
- *"I feel a lot at peace with dealing with stressful thoughts. I feel relaxed and positive. "*
- *"I used yoga at home with my family and I felt relaxed and calm."*

Outcome 2: Increased ability focus

Many of the rangatahi challenged themselves to be more focused during ATAWHAI whether this was by being engaged in the often emotionally and physically challenging activities, being more alert, more present or more aware of themselves in their surroundings. The rangatahi saw this as a challenge for themselves not just during meditation but in all facets of ATAWHAI and their everyday lives. Rangatahi reported:

- *"I practice mindfulness everyday now. Sometimes I do it without realising, just taking a moment to notice things around me like the sound of the birds, certain smells, or the feel of the sun on my skin and how it makes me feel."*
- *"I want to challenge myself by being more aware. My intention is to be more present."*
- *"I would like to challenge myself by staying more present and focused for the day not just when we meditate."*
- *"My goal was to enjoy this process. Not being on my phone has helped my goal of opening up by connecting to myself and others."*

Outcome 3: Increased kindness to others and self

Rangatahi reported an increased ability to be kind to themselves and others around them. Kindness underpins much of the mahi at ATAWHAI and we are excited to see the rangatahi share their experience of increased kindness. The rangatahi reported:

- *"I have learnt to be kind to myself and others because you don't know what they have been through."*
- *"I have learnt that being kind to yourself isn't selfish."*
- *"At ATAWHAI I have learnt to be kind to others."*
- *"I have learnt that everyone is perfect, no matter what shapes and sizes they come in."*

Outcome 4: Increased sense of connection and improved relationships

Rangatahi reported an increased sense of connection and improved relationships following, and in some cases during, the intensive retreat held as part of ATAWHAI. For example:

- *"My relationship with my family was more strained before I joined ATAWHAI. I was feeling disconnected from my family and other people. I found it hard to fit in with them. Now the connection I have with everyone at ATAWHAI is the connection I have with everyone at home. Since joining ATAWHAI I've gotten a closer relationship with them. We've been able to talk more and joke around. I'm able to share how I feel and I feel like they've opened up to me."*
- *"We're brought up in an environment that doesn't really encourage connecting with yourself and growing better relationships with others that are more meaningful. When we were taught this, it's weird but you kind of know you need it, deep down, That's why you stick with it. "*
- *"I have enjoyed the people, connecting to everyone here at ATAWHAI"*
- *"Every day after ATAWHAI, I tell my Dad everything we've learnt that day and was also talking to my friends about belly breathing"*

Outcome 5: Improved ability to communicate and manage conflicts

Rangatahi reported how they deployed certain skills that ultimately improved their ability to communicate and manage conflicts. For example:

- *"I used the mindfulness pillar of patience today because I was patient with others and myself."*
- *"I tried to use the mindfulness tools when me and my mother were in an argument."*
- *"On ATAWHAI I have learnt to communicate. My goal was to be more confident and communicative with everyone. I feel like I'm closer to my goal."*

Outcome 6: Increased ability to forgive

Throughout the ATAWHAI program a range of activities are delivered, including group korero around the theme for the mindfulness practice. Ultimately, the kōrero leads to the adoption of a particular theme for the practice. Learning to forgive ourselves and forgive others is one of the themes that were adopted and the rangatahi reported this as increasing their ability to forgive. For example,

- *"The tools that were really helpful was the forgiveness meditation because I now know that forgiveness is my choice and not anyone else's."*
- *"It felt good to forgive. It's something new for me."*
- *"The mindfulness stuff and the forgiveness meditation. It's hard for me to forgive, but now I've done it with that person in mind I feel happy and light. Byron Katie was also really interesting and helpful. I can use that tool to strengthen my head."*
- *" Forgiveness meditation helped me learn to forgive no matter what."*

Outcome 7: Increased self-efficacy and leadership capabilities

All of the rangatahi reported instances of improved self-worth, confidence and ability to lead as a result of ATAWHAI. For example,

- *"I've started teaching friends and family. I've taught the year 9 and 10 students at my school in the hall. At first it was scary but when you're teaching mindfulness you become calm and the whole room becomes calm. It's just a safe vibe so you don't feel the pressure."*
- *"My goal was to gain more confidence and be able to speak. I feel I have achieved that by opening up and being myself"*
- *"This programme has given me a lot of confidence. It's given me a lot I never thought I had in me, like leading. Every Wednesday at my school, I teach yoga in the morning. It felt very natural [after] being on this programme because I was given so many opportunities to lead a class and I felt like I was giving back to ATAWHAI by training as a mentor. I was receiving skills and tools that would help me and I was giving more of a Māori feel to the kaupapa. I definitely know that ATAWHAI will be in my future."*
- *"My goal was to be more open and confident. I feel like I have achieved that."*

Outcome 8: Increased connectedness to culture and identity

In addition to the above youth outcomes, throughout the ATAWHAI programme and evaluation process it has been exciting to identify a further key outcome: an increased connectedness to culture and identity. The majority of our rangatahi are fluent in Te reo.

We believe that the increased connectedness to culture and identity is in part due to the focus on Kaupapa Māori & Tikanga Māori. For example, rangatahi do a daily personal and group reflection focused on Māori health model Te Whare Tapa Whā. The rangatahi reflect on the taha (wall of the whare) they have felt most connected to and why, the taha they need to strengthen and how they will embark on the challenge to do so. This self-reflection exercise allows the rangatahi to consider and implement different aspects of mental and physical wellbeing (hauora) holistically and through the framework of tikanga Māori.

Rangatahi reported:

- *"I feel more connected to my culture because Māori has been intertwined with ATAWHAI"*
- *"I feel like I'm connected to my Māori side from thinking of te whare tapa whā¹ everyday and what it causes"*

¹ The model for understanding Maori health: taha tinana (physical health); taha wairua (spiritual health); taha whānau (family health); and taha hinengaro (mental health)

- *"I feel so much more connected to my Māori culture because of the Māori Tai Chi"*

What other community benefits or outcomes were achieved?

Widespread community impact

In addition to the demonstrable rangatahi related outcomes that have been achieved, ATAWHAI also impacted positively upon the wider community. A main focus of The Kindness Institute kaupapa is the Tuku Iho 'train the trainer' model through which our rangatahi are empowered to teach mindfulness, yoga & stress management to each other and to their community. This model has been hugely successful & has seen our work having a much wider impact. For example,

- As a result of our unique Tuku Iho model, we estimate each rangatahi shares the tools they learn at ATAWHAI with a minimum of 10 community members. As a result, during 2019 we believe that our programme has positively impacted over 600 people.
- The communities that are impacted by ATAWHAI rangatahi are impressive in their numbers and diversity. In 2019, for example, ATAWHAI rangatahi have taught mindfulness, yoga and stress management to: whanau, community members and supporters at ATAWHAI whanau events; refugees (including women and children); members of the Muslim community; teen mums and their babies (pepi); teenagers (400+ in high school based classes); other rangatahi Māori at weekly sessions and wānanga.
- Over 25 people were trained in our wellbeing and resilience kaupapa and in mindful kaupapa Māori youth mentoring.
- One of our 17 year old rangatahi, who joined the program to work on low self-efficacy received the Humanitarian Award at her school in 2019 for teaching mindfulness and stress management to so many students at her school.
- Two 17 year old students who have been through the program were employed and trained to be youth mentors to our ATAWHAI youth in 2019.
- A leadership program was developed to train tuakana (alumni students) to become yoga, mindfulness teachers & youth mentors.
- Strong collaboration and partnership was formed with Hoani Waititi Kura Kaupapa - staff & students experienced great benefits of the program through the tuku iho model

Partnerships

The Kindness Institute has a strong track record in partnering with a number of organisations, to deliver our programs as part of our Strategic Plan to reach as many rangatahi as possible.

In addition to previous collaborations with the Mindfulness Education Group, The Mental Health Foundation Oranga Tamariki and START Taranaki (specialists in working with marginalised youth from youth justice), we also work closely with a number of high schools, in both mainstream, kura kaupapa and alternative education. In 2019 we strengthened our relationship with Hoani Waititi Kura Kaupapa.

Recently, we have partnered with the University of Waikato to research the effectiveness of our ATAWHAI project, particularly for Māori and Pasifika youth. The researchers are using a robust and universally validated evaluation methodology for our rangatahi including the Adolescent Self-Regulation Inventory questionnaire and The Oxford Happiness test. We look forward to receiving the research results.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

The ATAWHAI program has been developed with long-term outcomes in mind and is based on world leading models in mindfulness and stress reduction education. The model is inspired by Jon Kabat Zinn's mindfulness stress reduction programme, "The Work" of Byron Katie and Holistic Life Foundations (HLF) successful model in delivering outcomes for youth living in urban poverty and suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Aotearoa / New Zealand is facing a youth mental health crisis. In the Youth '12 Survey of 8,500 secondary school students, 38% of female students and 23% of male students reported feeling down or depressed most of the day for at least two weeks in the year over the previous 12 months (Clark et al., 2013). Our youth suicide mortality rate, an indicator of a population's mental health, was 15.6 per 100,000 adolescents aged 15 to 19 years in 2010 — the highest among reported OECD rates (UNICEF Office of Research 2017).

Childhood mental health difficulties tend to predict adult mental illness (Britton et al., 2014). Experiencing mental illness while young has also shown to significantly increase the risk of substance abuse, suicide attempt, educational underachievement, unemployment, and early parenthood (Fergusson & Woodward, 2002). Thus, there is a clear impetus to develop strategies that foster wellbeing among children and young people (Bernay, Graham, Devcich, Rix & Rubie-Davies, 2016). There is also a growing focus internationally on primary and secondary intervention aiming at providing young people with the capacity to better withstand the stresses of the teenage years (Gluckman, 2017).

The unique offering of The Kindness Institute has a demonstrable impact on the mental health needs of our rangatahi, as evidence throughout our responses. In order to continue with our work and make an even bigger impact across Aotearoa further funding is required.

"ATAWHAI has changed my life course in a significant way, I had heaps of dreams and hopes growing up. I actually thought about acting, but I didn't really know how. Mindfulness and yoga weren't on the list then, but since joining I've been drawn to that pathway. I've found a huge interest in it. I hope to continue with it. I think every child in New Zealand needs this. Some more than others. We have a huge mental health crisis. It's an issue that's been talked about quite a lot, which is good, but there's no action. Teaching mindfulness to children helps them to know that they can trust themselves, to be independent, and do what they want to do and not have the stress of meeting certain expectations that society always puts out." - 17 year old rangatahi