

Explore taha wairua

Spiritual wellbeing

What is taha wairua?

Taha wairua explores relationships with the environment, people and heritage in the past, present and future.

The spiritual essence of a person is their life force – their mauri. This defines us as individuals and as a collective, who and what we are, where we have come from and where we are going.

The way people view wairua can be very different. For some, wairua is the capacity for faith or religious beliefs or having a belief in a higher power. Others may describe wairua as an internal connection to the universe. There is no right or wrong way to think of or experience wairua, but it is an important part of our mental wellbeing.

As part of exploring your way to wellbeing we encourage your school or kura community to think about what wairua means to you and the things you can do to strengthen your wairua.

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

Feeling comfortable in your identity, values and beliefs helps you to feel secure in who you are and what you stand for. When you are content with yourself you are better able to cope with challenges, build strong whānau relationships and discover the things that uplift you.

At school and kura, taha wairua needs may be supported through creating a respectful environment, where mindfulness and kindness are encouraged, bullying is not accepted, and diversity is embraced.

Exploring your way to wellbeing through taha wairua

- Learn a classroom waiata and karakia that you can open and close the day with. Invite different taura to share their own karakia if they have one. Carry this across to staff hui, too.
- Start and end the day with some mindful breathing. There are plenty of short exercises on YouTube. Teach taura to use this in times of stress too.

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- Celebrate the different cultures within your school community – during language weeks invite taura and kaiako of that culture to share their food, stories, beliefs and rituals.
- Get taura to research and explore the concept of wairua and spirituality and what it means in different cultures and/or communities.
- Take tamariki/taura on a nature walk – ask them to be as quiet as possible and to listen to the sounds of the natural environment – the birds singing, leaves rustling, clouds moving.
- Have an exhibition where people contribute something that represents what wairua means for them. It may be something they create such as an artwork, a piece of music or just an object that symbolises wairua.
- Have a random acts of kindness week and encourage the whole school or kura community to look out for the people around them.
- As a class hold a reflection and goal setting session. Think about the things your class has collectively achieved, the things you're proud of, the challenges you've overcome and the things you hope to achieve in the short and long term. This is a great exercise for kaiako and other school staff to do too!
- Ask taura to think about who they look up to and admire the most and why. What qualities do they like about that person and what can they learn from them? Kaiako might like to consider finding a mentor – someone you admire who can support, guide and encourage you through challenges and triumphs at mahi.