



Haumanu Framework – A restorative systems change approach



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Haumanu – to revive, restore to health, rejuvenate

This time of global disruption holds the seeds of change for the way we approach systems work. As a global pandemic and collective trauma, COVID-19 is drawing the collective traumas of the past to the surface, accelerating social movements and a desire for significant change worldwide.

For some, Covid lockdowns have provided spaces of tau (calm), where we can step out of the busyness we have created and reflect on how we are being and what is important. Humanity is being called again to make choices between repeating the trauma and destruction of the past and present, to keep going against the flow of life, or to face our collective trauma histories so they can be healed. We can then move forward from paradigms of connectedness and mauri ora – aliveness and vital life force.

Over the last two years, a small group in Aotearoa New Zealand has been exploring how to bring healing and restoration into systems change work. This has led to the creation of the Haumanu Framework for restorative systems change. We are now testing the framework with the willing and will evolve it through real world application.

The Haumanu Framework aims to respectfully weave te ao Māori, the indigenous knowledge system of Aotearoa, with Western knowledge, including what is known about how the human central autonomic system works. The framework draws from [Theory U](#), [Thomas Hübl's](#) work on healing collective trauma, [Peter Levine's](#) work on a somatic approach to healing trauma, co-author Louise Marra's experiences working globally with others to heal collective trauma in places as diverse as Bangladesh and Germany, and from the wisdom passed down from our tupuna or ancestors.

Māramatanga - Insights

The Haumanu Framework is grounded in several assumptions.

The way we approach problems is the problem

The way we currently approach challenges and systems change is perpetuating the status quo. We know that our dominant paradigms and systems are based on ideas of separateness, human superiority, white superiority, and an energy of trying to 'solve' or 'fix'. How often do we hear of the need for innovative 'solutions' to the issues we face, of the yearning for new technologies or other silver bullets that will sort everything out? How widespread is the pinning of responsibility onto governments or someone else to make things better? How come so many of our systems are fragmented, are built on racist and sexist foundations, perpetuate inequities and exclude the wellbeing of other species and our planetary life support systems?

Trauma is running the show

The trauma of the past affects our present and future. We see this play out in our own families, neighbourhoods, communities and nations. Trauma that is pushed down or ignored will keep repeating through the generations and gets threaded through our systems. Acknowledging and working with the injustices of the past and how this trauma shows up in the present to be healed is an integral part of systems work. The question of how to do that lies at the heart of the Haumanu Framework.

Moving from changing systems to being the system that is changing

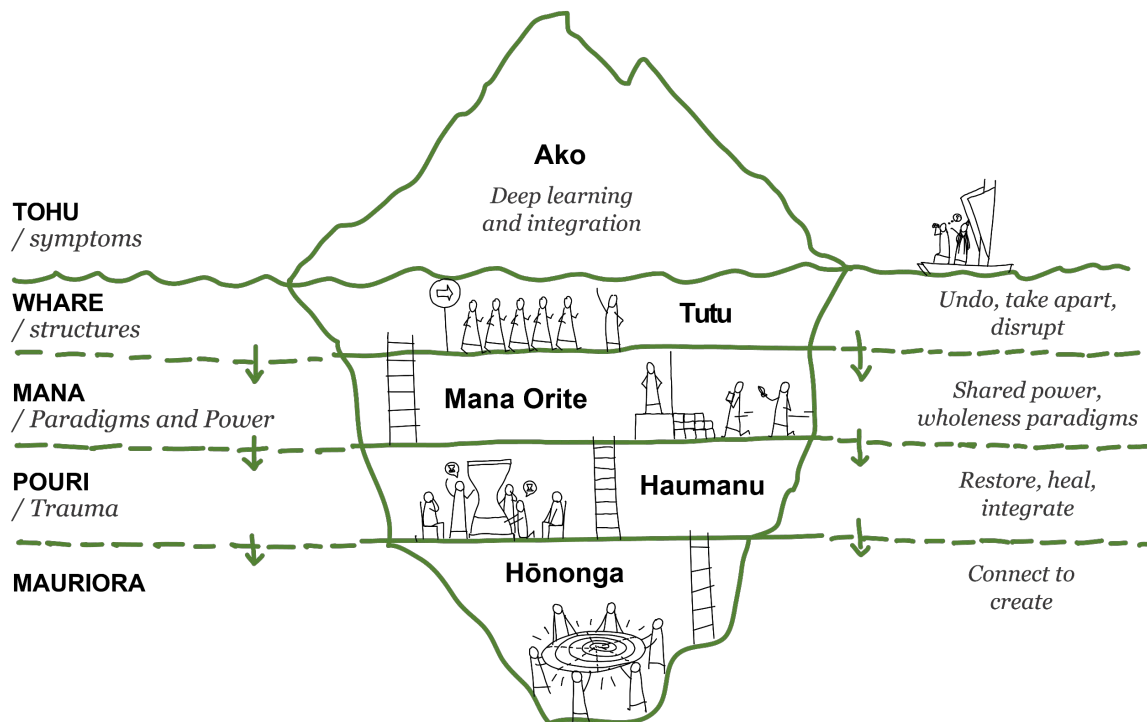
We are seeing that answers lie in changing ourselves and the way we meet and work together. This includes realising that instead of systems being ‘over there’ and separate to us, that we are the system and that as we change, so will our systems. Being the change we want to see for systems change work involves making these kinds of shifts in our hearts, minds and behaviours:

- **Kotahitanga** coming together – from separation to interconnectedness
- **Mauri ora** aliveness and vital life force – from trauma-directed to healing centred and mauri (life force) directed
- **Mana ōrite** to be equal – from white, human, male supremacy to equality
- **Wairua** spirit and inspiration – from stuck energy to flowing energy
- **Whakapuāwai** blossom and flourish – from scarcity to abundance
- **Pono** honest, genuine, sincere – from surface work to depth work

A recentering of indigenous knowledge and indigeneity is part of this shift, while acknowledging that this requires its own awahi, or nurturing and restoration, after centuries of repression. Disruption to the Western or Eurocentric view of systems and systems change is required. Yet we are all steeped in this Western view and our own biases, so the change journey is complex. It is a journey of unlearning, relearning and reconnecting in ways that do not other, shame or blame. Skilful weaving of indigenous and Western knowledges is the pathway to new futures.

The Haumanu Framework

Bringing restoration into the work of systems change involves changing the way we meet, relate, work, design and learn together. The Haumanu Framework for restorative systems change below starts to show how this might work. All levels of the framework are interconnected, with the fundamental aspect of the framework on the left-hand side and the core strategies for each layer on the right.



The Haumanu Framework involves people coming together who want to work together in a different way – who want to address trauma as it arises and include healing and restoration in their day-to-day work. These people are up for connecting, sharing and learning at deeper levels, for being uncomfortable, for being vulnerable – for depth work. They want to work from a paradigm of interconnectedness and from *mauri* (life force), and flowing energy.

When *pouri* (trauma) arises in the group in the course of its work, as it always will, there are capacities in the group to recognise this and to pause and allow it to be voiced, heard and worked through by the group. When hurt is voiced, heard and acknowledged in a healthy way it dissipates, which can increase the energy available for inspiration and creativity. This requires us to slow down. Trauma needs a different pace to the pace we usually apply to our work, in order to be restored.

There is acknowledgement of where power currently lies in the issue, context or system involved and what the dominant mindsets and paradigms at play are. The group explores how power might be shared and power dynamics shifted, and what it might take for paradigms and mindsets to change. Paradigms of connection to support *mauri ora* are designed.

Systems change work in this framework looks at the structures at play and how they affect *mauri*. The strategy at this layer is to *tutu* - disrupt, advocate, undo and let go - and the energy is of fire and activism.

Across all layers of the framework is an *ako* or learning focus, where deep reflective practice processes are threaded through the group's work. *Tohu*, or signs of progress and change, are sought or observed, to guide adaptation. The metaphor for learning is one of navigation and wayfinding, looking to surface what is possible, what is needed, and insights for influence.

Much of the current work of systems change occurs in the top two layers of this framework – focusing on the symptoms created by systems and changing the structures that are the most visible face of systems – especially policies, legislation, rules and practices. Trauma will keep running the show until we get to the deeper levels, creating from a place of mauri rather than disconnection, and healing past and present hurts together.

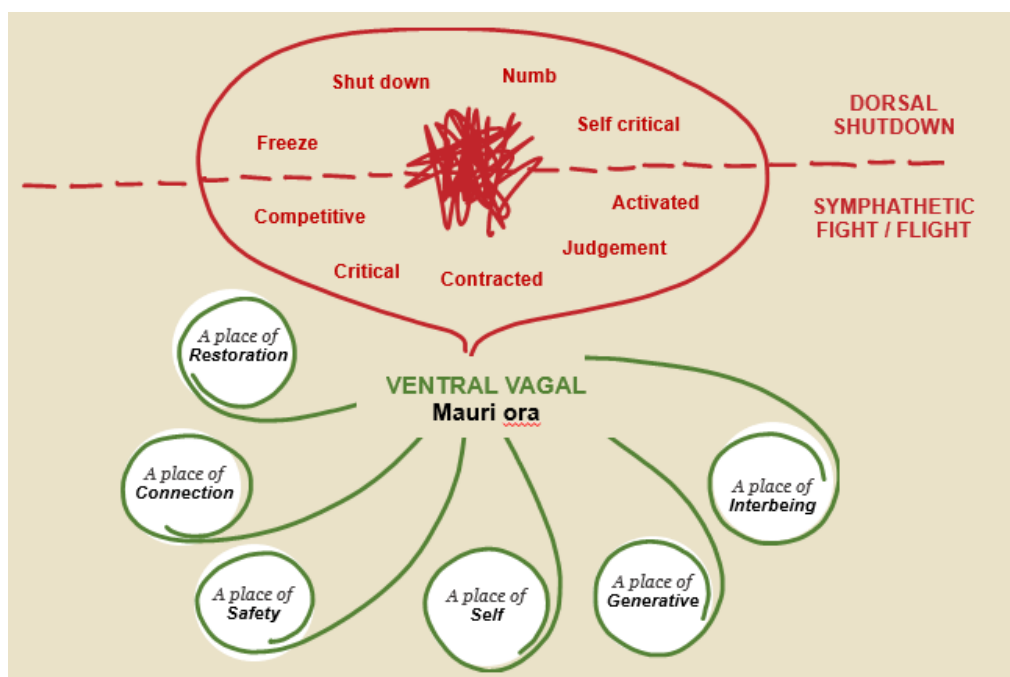
Working from a place of mauri

Western science is instructive on what we as human beings need to be able to work from a place of mauri. Our central nervous system’s fight or flight response has been key to our survival as a species and continues to hold the key to our future.

When we are stressed, anxious or busy we are not in an optimal space to support restoration. When we come together in groups in our workplaces we are often masking how we are and who we are. The trauma in ourselves and our workplaces is rarely acknowledged, leading to projections, distortions and a host of unhelpful behaviours.



Seeking to work from a place of mauri means activating spaces of tau, calm, safety and connection, where flow can happen and where triggers and challenges can arise and be addressed in mana-enhancing ways. People are free and encouraged to be fully themselves, to bring all their strengths and shadows. This requires skilful facilitation, with participants agreeing principles for working together and choosing to develop capacities such as poutama (continuous learning). Systems change work becomes less about the job you do and more about the capacities you can bring or develop to support restorative work.

The image below signals the move sought from working with activated central nervous systems when doing systems change work, to working with mauri via calm, connected and relaxed central nervous systems.










Principles and capacities

While each group will develop its own principles for working together for restorative systems change, we have identified the principles below as being important in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. In particular, giving effect in this work to Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, and the foundational partnership between tangata whenua (Māori) and tangata Tiriti (non-Māori) in this country. The Haumanu Framework can be adapted to suit different cultural contexts and diverse cultural rituals and practices can be applied to work in this way.

<p><i>Honour Te Tiriti and build relationships</i></p> 	<p><i>Deep conversations that reconnect across divides</i></p> 	<p><i>Re-connection, empathy and intimacy with self, others and Papatūānuku</i></p> 	<p><i>Experimentation, play and inquiry</i></p> 
<p><i>Everyone has their place and a part to play based on their rongoa – their medicine and superpowers</i></p> 	<p><i>Aroha atu, aroha mai – reciprocity is vital for systems to flourish</i></p> 	<p><i>We work at the pace needed</i></p> 	<p><i>We all need to heal for our systems to be healing</i></p> 

The emphasis is on healing, healthy relationships and connection, with self and with other people, places, ecosystems and species. We take the time the mahi (work), needs in a spirit of curiosity, play and creativity. We know that everyone has valuable things to offer and reciprocity underpins the work.

This work is challenging and it is not for the faint hearted. It requires people to be able to hold these spaces, recognise when trauma arises, be able to help it be addressed in real time, and be prepared to navigate and learn as we go. Some of the capacities we have identified that need cultivating for restorative systems change work are: taonga, tutu, kotahitanga, haumanu, whakatipuranga, ahi kaa and poutama.

<p>Taonga - resource and re-source</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being still • Being connected • Being embodied • Being earthed • Being spacious 	<p>Tutu - undo, let come apart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being disorientated • Being trackers • Being un-doers • Being lost • Being present • Being wrong 	<p>Kotahitanga - coming together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being real • Being with • Being beyond role • Being sanctuaries • Being authentic • Being deep performing 	<p>Haumanu - transform, transmute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being healers • Being paradigm switchers • Being conscious • Being witness 	<p>Whakatipuranga - generate, co-create</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being alchemists • Being dreamers • Interbeing • Being wild 	<p>Ahi kaa - keep the embers alive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being support • Being receivers • Being love 	<p>Poutama - continuous learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being deep learners • Being fluid • Being evolutionaries • Being emergent 
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Testing the Haumanu Framework

During 2022 we are sharing the Haumanu Framework for restorative system change far and wide and testing it with the willing in a range of community and organisational settings. We are intensely interested in how it lands and how it is adapted in various cultural and community contexts.

To support those interested in taking a deeper, healing-oriented approach to systems change and building capacities for this work, we are developing a kete or basket of resources that people can use, including tools, processes and practices.

We will be tracking what changes from this mahi and wrapping evaluative learning processes around it, so we can evolve the approach. We are also creating a small community of practice for those working in this way, so that we can learn and grow together. We will share what we learn to strengthen the growing field of restorative systems mahi in Aotearoa and beyond.

To find out more or connect with the authors please contact: info@csinz.org.

Acknowledgements

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