



# WAYFINDING THROUGH STIGMA

A Pacific journey of understanding  
mental distress

Help make Aotearoa an inclusive, safe, and  
uplifting place for people who live with mental  
distress. Find out how you can make a positive  
change for the better.



NŌKU TE AO

# WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH MENTAL DISTRESS?

It's normal to go through tough times in life, but sometimes these tough times can feel really intense, negatively impacting the way a person thinks, acts and feels, making daily life difficult. This experience is what we call mental distress.

“ If you understand more about what someone with mental distress may be going through, then you'll be more aware of the impact that your words and actions can have on others. ”  
- Esta



**One in four Pasifika people experience mental distress every year, a higher rate than the national average of one in five.**

## WHAT'S MENTAL DISTRESS STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION?

People living with mental distress deserve understanding and respect during their toughest times, but are sometimes met with negative words, attitudes or behaviours and left out by others. This is what we call stigma and discrimination.

Mental distress stigma refers to the negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes surrounding mental distress. Mental distress discrimination involves unfair treatment or actions directed towards people based on their mental health condition.

## WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN & WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Mental distress discrimination occurs everywhere, including in workplaces, schools and in the health system. It can affect people's:

- relationships with whānau and friends
- quality of day-to-day living
- access to employment, education, housing, government support and healthcare.

Discrimination is one of the biggest barriers to recovery. It prevents people from taking part in the opportunities and privileges of daily life that are available to others. It can also make it hard to speak up and seek help.

**1 in 5 people who experience mental distress reported they had avoided doing something, or were afraid to do something, because they anticipated being discriminated against.**



**Now you know a bit about the problem, you can be part of the solution!**

## **CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AOTEAROA**

An inclusive society supports people, provides opportunities, and celebrates diversity.

Welcoming spaces do not discriminate or judge.

They allow people with lived experience of mental distress to feel like they:

- belong without feeling judged
- contribute without feeling ashamed
- participate without feeling worthless
- feel safe enough to ask for help
- are valued in our community.

## OUR WORDS HAVE POWER

Choosing our words carefully helps to avoid excluding anyone with experience of mental distress. Some everyday words and phrases can be really hurtful to people living with mental distress.

### AVOID HURTFUL WORDS/PHRASES LIKE:

- “crazy”, “insane” or “psychotic” to describe someone whose behaviour you dislike
- valea in Samoan means crazy and affected with madness or insanity
- pōrangi in te reo Māori means insane, mad, crazy, mentally ill and deranged
- koretake in te reo Māori means useless, no good and hopeless
- being ‘OCD’ to describe someone who likes to keep things tidy
- having ‘ADHD’ to describe someone with high energy levels
- being ‘bipolar’ to describe mood swings
- being ‘psycho’ to describe temper outbursts.

“ To feel included, whether it’s at home, work, school or within your wider community, makes you feel less alone, and helps to uplift you. ”

- Chloe

“ When people describe a moment of hyperactivity as having ADHD, it diminishes my own experience of living with this condition to just one aspect of something that affects my whole life. ”

- Esta

“ [With] our Pasifika people, boys are seen as strong, you're not allowed to cry... [boys are] brought up strictly, so not able to express themselves. They're all taught to be strong, and you can't open up. If you do, you're seen as weak. ”

- Faith



# ABOUT NŌKU TE AO

Nōku te Ao is a public awareness programme that aims to increase social inclusion and end discrimination towards people with experience of mental illness or distress.

[www.nokuteao.org.nz](http://www.nokuteao.org.nz)

This resource was bought to you by the Nōku te Ao Social Movement team, made up of The Mental Health Foundation, Hāpai te Hauora and Ngā Hau E Whā.



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[shop.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://shop.mentalhealth.org.nz)

# IMAGINE AN AOTEAROA FREE OF STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

If your mate was experiencing mental distress, what are some simple things you could do to help them feel less judged or ashamed, and more accepted and included?

## SHARE YOUR KŌRERO

We're on a mission to make Aotearoa a more inclusive, safe, and uplifting community for all. It will take a village! So, join us and share your kōrero to help make change for the better! Scan the QR code and fill out the form to help us create a discrimination-free Aotearoa.

**SCAN HERE**

