



Frontline Services

NGĀ TAU MIHARO – INCREDIBLE YEARS PARENT PROGRAMME – EMPOWERING WHĀNAU THROUGH MANAAKITANGA

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Vivian Cope was born in Hamilton of Ngāti Pakau, Ngāti Hine and Ngā Puhi iwi descent.

She was raised and educated in Putaruru and has five children and seven mokopuna. In 2014 she graduated with a Whānau Ora Diploma and a Mauri Ora Diploma. For over 20 years she has been working in services for tamariki. She has worked at Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust for nine years within a range of services. She became an accredited group leader for the Incredible Years® (IY) parent programme in 2015 and is now a training IY peer coach and the senior lead for the Ngā Tau Miharo team.

Abstract

The Incredible Years (IY) parent programme is evaluated considering the value of manaakitanga. The programme aims to support positive parenting through developing communication with a specially developed Māori framework which can be applied when working with whānau. The case study is a frontline observation of the programme and manaakitanga in action, concluding that it is the values that make the programme.

Key Words: parenting, manaakitanga, whānau

Introduction

Manaakitanga is an integral part of Te Whānau o Waipareira's Te Kauhau Ora (code of conduct). It sits alongside nine other values – *whanaungatanga*, *wairuatanga*, *whakapapa*, *tautoko*, *pōhiri*, *te reo Māori*, *kawa*, *aroha* and *kotahitanga* – encompassing the beliefs, values and goals of a Whānau Ora organisation. Very broadly, *manaakitanga* embraces skills in sharing, listening, setting strategies, experiences, support, empathy and *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face interaction). *Manaakitanga* plays an important role in the Incredible Years programme – Nga Tau Miharo, as a core value.

The Programme

The Incredible Years® (IY) is a 14-week parenting programme for parents with children aged between three to eight years. Parents attend one 2.5 hour session per week. IY was founded by Professor Emeritus Carolyn Webster Stratton, a clinical psychologist from Washington DC. IY is an evidence-based programme which evolved from more than 30 years of research and development. Evaluations of IY have demonstrated its effectiveness for many families who have participated in the programme. IY is inclusive of all ethnicities and cultures and is suitable for children with ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia and Autism. Professor Webster Stratton realised in the early 2000s that this programme would enhance and better serve whānau in New Zealand to support child development and parent knowledge. IY aims to reduce challenging behaviours in young children, increase their social and emotional skills, teach self-regulation for children and manage misbehaviour for parents. More specifically, the programme aims to:

- support positive parenting and bonding with their *tamariki* through communication;
- support parents by coaching and supporting their *tamariki*'s language development; persistence, attention, academic knowledge, social, emotional and cognitive development;
- support parents in decreasing harsh discipline and improve skills to be able to manage their anger through positive communication.

The Eyberg child behaviour inventory and social competence assessments are completed at the beginning and at the end of the programme and determine the positive or negative changes of a child's behaviour. From the initial assessment IY group leaders work with whānau to support the transition into the programme, ensuring that whānau are prepared for the start of IY.

Whanaungatanga is the introduction session which has been added to the programme by most Māori group leaders. Prior to the programme start whānau are able to share, “ko wai koe?” (who are you?), “no hea koe?” (where are you from?), “mo tēnei akoranga he aha tō whāinga?” (for this programme what is your goal?); then set up a group *kawa* (rules) and discuss the content of the programme.

Once the 14-session programme commences, ongoing contact via calling or texting becomes a weekly standard practice, and is increased if required for those parents who may be struggling to ensure they are coping through the week. Weekly evaluation forms are provided to ascertain how the whānau are finding the programme. Home activity reviews of the last session and for the current week are viewed and discussed by both parents and group leaders. These are opportunities for parents to head home and practise learnt strategies. Other programme features include:

- “Principles and Gems” that are pulled from parent conversations;
 - vignettes (video snippets viewed to raise conversation of effectiveness by parents, “what would you change?”);
 - buzzes and brainstorming points for session topics;
 - role playing or practices to enable parents to practise strategies with a positive focus in a safe environment;
 - group leaders are able to share personal experiences when they can, allowing parents to know “we too struggle”;
 - collaboration;
 - group leaders learn to promote collaboration through reflection, reframing, reinforcing, support and acceptance of parent perceptions and ideas.
- By using this process, the programme validates cultural sensitivity as each parent’s personal goals and values are acknowledged and respected where the connections are made from past to present perspectives and attitudes. (Webster-Stratton, 2008, p. 21)

Cultural Responsiveness

*Ruia te kakano o te tumanako ki roto i te
maara o te hinengaro
Plant the seed of hope in the garden of the mind*

The Treaty of Waitangi creates mutual obligations for all of us. In 1988, the Royal Commission on Social Policy suggested three broad principles for thinking about the Treaty: partnership, protection and participation. These principles resonate with the principles and practices of this programme.

Cultural responsiveness for Māori whānau in IY involve:

- Māori *tikanga* (procedure/protocol), metaphors (symbolism with specific cultural significance), te reo Māori, waiata (songs), karakia (prayers), whakatauaāki (proverbs) and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination and autonomy);
- implementation of the Te Whare Tapa Wha model (Māori holistic framework), integrating the four dimensions of wellbeing: tinana (physical), hinengaro (mental/emotional), wairua (spirit), and whānau (family);
- *kaumātua* and other cultural advisors for consultation on delivery and cultural content and in interactions with Māori parents and whānau.

Through consultation with Māori group leaders and kaumātua, the Werry Centre has developed Māori resources to compliment and support group leaders in the delivery of the programme to whānau Māori.

Accreditation Process

An option to the accreditation pathway is available for Māori group leaders either in addition to or in place of the Werry Centre accreditation pathway, inclusive of the component of cultural support incorporating marae-based accreditation hui, consult days and ongoing support from kaumātua.

Case Study: *Our Colourful Whānau*

Mo is a 30-year-old mother of one who was awaiting sentencing by courts due to charges of domestic violence. Desperate to change her life, she made a long-term goal to obtain access to the child she had never raised. She did not fit the IY criteria of having a child in her care and the age of the child was a second barrier, as her son fell outside the age requirement. Upon speaking more with Mo and listening to her story, it became evident that domestic violence had impacted her majorly as a child and had become generational. Mo wanted a chance to change and build the maternal bond with her son, “I’m not perfect, I struggle to understand why – for a lot of reasons, but I just need to know I am a good person.”

At the time of referral Mo was living with her Mum, Step Dad and three younger siblings. One sibling was seven years old so an idea was to speak with her mum and gain consent allowing Mo to practise positive strategies from the programme with her sibling. Being flexible and finding ways to wrap around and accommodate families referred to the service is a part of the manaakitanga our service gives to whānau. It isn’t a common practice for group leaders to suggest practising strategies on siblings, but as Māori we felt the need to *awhi*, to wrap positive support around Mo to enable her to move forward and succeed. After meeting with Mum and explaining Mo’s long-term goal, consent was approved and Mum agreed she would support her daughter.

In the whanaungatanga session carefully planned around cultural responsiveness, a kawa (ground rules) was collaboratively developed to allow parents to share their expectations of the programme. The kawa is scribed by facilitators and this becomes a live document throughout the programme. Mo’s uncanny humour, no filter, and colourful language to match her personality when she met and shared her story with others, set the scene for the following 14 sessions. Mo faced challenges with the programme language saying: “It’s awkward and fake using a softer more positive tone when practising strategies” – this is a normal response from parents. She spoke of her brother disrespecting her by laughing in her face, calling her a “dumb-arse” and telling her to speak properly when she loses her temper returning to the use of sarcasm and threats, a language he is more familiar with. What Mo didn’t realise was that other parents struggled with the language too, however they hadn’t been able to voice this as they were not ready to let down their walls. The role as facilitators is to pull out instances from parent experiences, allow them to discuss, role play, practise and ask what they would want to change. It’s an interesting insight for both parent and group leader, a need to be clear and specific, follow through and remain consistent. Mo, though struggling at the beginning in all three areas, never gave up.

“E taka te hoiho, e heke te hoiho me haere tonu koe”
(A kiwaha or saying referring to “even though there will be challenges keep going, don’t give up”)

One confrontation occurred near the end of the programme. Mo had shared with the group a challenge she had with her mum, when she was trying to apply strategies and her mother opposed her approach, undermining Mo’s practice. Another parent in the group had negatively responded to what Mo had shared. The parent showed her annoyance through body language and then verbally saying “what a load of ...”. Taken aback Mo shut down, she looked up and responded to the parent, “Y’a know, I’m going to ignore your fake comment, I’m taking five minutes for myself and then I’ll be back”. We acknowledged this and responded “Well, good on you Mo using your ignoring strategy, take five minutes and we’ll see you back soon.”

Leaving the room, the other parent sat quietly. As group leaders we need to get our parents back on track so we revisited the kawa reminding parents of what they set up during the whanaungatanga session and its importance. To support and respect each other’s values regardless, without judgement. Mo returned, sat down and apologised to everyone, the humble Mo we got to know. When asked if she could have done anything differently her response was, “Probably spoke with my mum about what I wanted to try and the reason to use the strategy”. It is the skill of a group leader to listen to the tone used, allowing parents to think of solutions that will benefit both child and parent problem-solving. It is important to acknowledge our parents for the small things they do.

Alongside 32 other parents Mo graduated at the Nga Tau Miharo Graduation June 2017. She had successfully gained full time employment in carpentry by the end of the programme and is now a supervisor. She was invited to present as one of our inspirational speakers for our IY November Graduation 2017. With ongoing feedback to the courts and support letters regarding Mo’s progress, Mo was granted access visits with her 11-year-old son. Mo also completed interviews with the Te Whānau o Waipareira Research Team and the Ministry of Education about her journey as an IY parent.

Conclusion

Manaakitanga is a word inclusive of many actions and as a group leader I never understood how one measures such a *taonga*. A vehicle alongside its nine *whanaunga* vehicles, weaving our values and beliefs, empowering our *hīkoi*. Each whanaunga having specific roles, but without the other there is no support or value, such as when you hear parents say, “Maybe we need to manage our own behaviours before we are able to manage those of our children”. Parents participating in the programme arrive with challenges and walls built to protect themselves. Group leaders have a priority to build trust and respect with parents – there is an opportunity of manaakitanga as a vehicle to achieving this.

Attending an annual Nga Tau Miharo Māori group hui, one facilitator asked “how do you stay true to your values as Māori if the programme fidelity doesn't fit?” I responded, “it is the fidelity that makes the programme; it is your values with tika (doing things right) and pono (honesty, integrity) that will enhance the fidelity”.