

# *He Kare-ā-roto*

*A Selection of Whakataukī related to Māori Emotions*





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A selection of Whakataukī related to Māori emotions



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## *He Mihi*

*Kei te mihia rā te reo māhū o Pūrekireki i arataki mai i ngā tuhinga o te pukapuka nei, waihoki ko ngā manu tuitui i ōna whārangi, tēnā koutou. Ko te hunga i whai wāhi mai ki tōna otinga, kāore i ārikarika ngā mihi.*

*Tērā ētehi wā ka mahue te titiro whakaroto, ka mahue rānei te aro ki ō tātou aurongo. Tā tēnei pukapuka, he whakaemi i ētehi kōrero hei tātari mā te kamo, hei kai mā te hinengaro e mairanga ai ngā whakaaro, e rona ai ngā au o roto i te whatumanawa.*

*Ko ngā kupu e hora nei ki ēnei whārangi, he mea tuari e ngā kaiwhao o mua. Kua āraua he kōrero pūohu ki ngā kupu whakarite, ki ngā kupu kanorau hei whakaawe i te tangata e toko ai ōna whakaaro, e pupū ai ngā kare-ā-roto. Nā, koia pū te koronga o ngā whakataukī me ngā whakatauākī nei, he pupuru ki ngā karere a ngā mātua tūpuna, kia riro tonu i ngā au rona e riporipo ana, e karekare ana ki roto. Ko ā rātou nā tohutohu hei mounga arataki i a tātou ki tēnei uki, nō reira, tā tātou he arohaehae, he āta whakarongo.*

## *Kupu Whakataki*

*This publication ‘Kare-ā-roto: Māori Emotions’ provides examples of the role of whakataukī within the context of understanding Māori expressions of emotions. Whakataukī provide us with a mode of traditional oral language transmission that brings forth knowledge gifted to us by our ancestors. The profound wisdom embedded within whakataukī serves to inform and guide whānau about Māori values, expressions and practices that are applicable within our current contemporary setting.*

*The function and purpose of whakataukī is to encapsulate the traditional wisdom of our ancestors. They advise, inform and give direction on customary practices in a concise way that continues to be relevant to contemporary times. We have a saying in the Māori world, he iti te kupu, he nui te kōrero, which means that whilst there may be few words, the message is profound. That is the intent and nature of whakataukī. While the messages within whakataukī are embedded or hidden, once the message is decoded, the recipient receives specific instruction about how a particular situation could be managed. Whakataukī are often known by many, vary in length and have a unknown author, or source. Whakatauākī, on the other hand, differ in that they are normally given by an ancestor and the circumstances surrounding the coining of the whakatauākī are also known.*

*Waereti Norman (1992) refers to whakataukī as follows;*

*What are whakataukii? Sayings or proverbs or aphorisms are perhaps the commonest terms used for them in the English language. However, when defining meaning from an actual Māori term, ‘whakataukii’ can be so rendered as to seem to set something down and bring it to rest ‘whakatau’, in speech with ‘kī’ taking the meaning of to speak, talk or tell; to say or utter something, so that the saying, the proverb, the aphorism may be remembered in the oral record of an iwi for generations to come... ‘Whakataukii’ can be described as a way of imparting meaningful knowledge in a brief and succinct way (p.3).*

*Despite the ongoing impact of colonisation in Aotearoa many traditional knowledge repositories have survived to support present and future generations. Whakataukī is one example of the incredible knowledge that is encrypted within mātauranga and te reo Māori. What is clear is that the knowledge of our tūpuna is as relevant to us today as it was when it was first given voice and can provide meaning and guidance to contemporary contexts and challenges.*

*There are many whakataukī that give us insights into the ways in which our tūpuna consider the role of emotions within Māori society and the collective cultural frameworks within which emotions and emotional expression are articulated. The term 'kare-ā-roto' itself refers to the 'ripples within' ourselves that are the physical and spiritual manifestations of how we understand and feel emotions. When we visualise ripples or the movement of waters we can see that there is always a 'ripple effect' that moves outwards. This can be representative of the ways in which our emotions have impacts that move beyond the individual and can be understood in collective ways.*

*Te reo Māori, is replete with emotional expression that is more than simply 'emotive' or 'metaphorical' but rather there is a deep ontology of emotions within te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori that transforms how emotions are understood and expressed. Exploring Māori views of emotions affirms that there are unique ways of 'feeling' within Indigenous worldviews that can serve to decolonise current understandings of emotional wellbeing to support wider Kaupapa Māori approaches to wellbeing. Wider Indigenous research highlights emotional wellbeing as essential to overall wellbeing and healthy relationships.*

*This book is a compilation of some whakataukī that provide insight and inspiration about how emotions are understood by Māori. There are unique ways of 'feeling' within Māori worldviews that can enable us to understand our own emotions as individuals and as collectives in a more holistic and culturally grounded way.*

He kokonga whare e kitea, he kokonga  
ngākau e kore e kitea

A corner of a house may be seen and examined;  
not so the corners of the heart





This whakataukī indicates that where we can visibly see the corners of a house, we do not have the ability to see the inner thoughts or feelings of a person. This reminds us to take care when engaging with others, as we are not aware of what may be happening for them or in their lives.

He riri anō tā te tawa uho, he riri anō tā te  
tawa parā

The functions of the heartwood are one thing;  
those of the sapwood (pulp) another



A person who is raised well (trained in proper conduct/taught to behave responsibly) is better equipped to deal with their emotions when confronted with conflict. Feeling angry, at times, is as much a part of our lived experience as any other emotion. Anger can be purposeful and can call us to take action when necessary, but should not be invoked lightly.

Ahakoā he iti kete, he iti nā te aroha

Although the basket is small, it is given with affectionate  
regard





Similar to the famous saying *ahakoa he iti, he pounamu*, this *whakataukī* suggests that it is the thought and feeling behind a gift, not its material value, that counts. This reflects on the importance of reciprocity within Māori society. The act of giving is regarded as an expression of *aroha*, which is more important than the gift itself.

Whāngai i tō tāua tuahine, hei tangi i a tāua

Let us nurture our sister and she will mourn for us



This whakataukī encourages people to nurture, love and care for whānau members, as they will do the same for you, even after death. Embedded within aroha is the idea of collective responsibility which emphasises the importance of whānau to the emotional and physical wellbeing of an individual.

He hono tangata e kore e motu; kāpā he taura  
waka e motu

Connections between people cannot be severed  
whereas those of a canoe-rope can





Maintaining strong relationships is vital for the wellbeing of all whānau. Regardless of the ups and downs of life and the many difficulties we encounter, this whakataukī reminds us to cherish and appreciate our loved ones to ensure that we do not take one another for granted. When we understand this it can assure individuals that they are not alone or isolated in times of need.

Tukua mai he kapunga oneone ki ahau hei tangi  
māku

Send me a handful of soil so that I may weep over it



As Māori we have an intimate connection to the land and as tangata whenua we see ourselves as kaitiaki of this taonga. This connection to the whenua provides us with a source of identity, spiritual nourishment and emotional healing. Being away from home, one feels a sense of aroha and longing for the land and often feels compelled to return to fill the wairua and nourish the soul. The land absorbs the tears that we may shed and can also provide healing in times of emotional turmoil.

Te tau o taku ate

The seat of my affections



Māori understandings of emotions are linked with a number of vital organs including the puku, the ngākau and the ate (liver). 'Te tau o taku ate' conveys one's feelings of deep affection for another and acknowledges the powerful emotions that are stirred within.

Taku hei piripiri, taku hei mokimoki, taku  
hei tāwhiri, taku kati taramea

My necklace of scented moss; my necklace of fragrant  
fern; my necklace of odorous shrubs; my sweet-smelling  
locket of Taramea





Tarama is a highly prized plant with a rich aromatic sap. It is noted that the tarama provides perfumed oil that was highly valued and was used both as a gift and for trade. This saying highlights the deep feelings of adoration you have for others, particularly children, and how precious their presence is in your life.



Me he manu au e kakapa nei

I am all a-flutter like a bird



Used by one to describe a condition of excitement. The word kakapa describes the fluttering motion of birds like the Tairāka. In this context it refers to the quivering or palpitating heart when a person is excited or impassioned by something or someone. Like the term 'kakapa manawa' this expression relates to those feelings when your heart quickens and your pulse rises in excitement.

Me he maonga āwhā

Like a lull in a storm



This is used to describe a sudden pause in a heated discussion or argument. It tells us that we need to take a moment within times of intense feelings to settle ourselves and to take the time to pause and reflect. The implication is that feelings can be stormlike but there are moments where we can make space for calm.

He ora te whakapiri, he mate te whakatakariri

There is strength in unity and defeat in anger



We are cautioned with this whakataukī to maintain some degree of control over how we express or articulate our anger. The term *oranga* in Māori language can translate to a state of wellbeing. This whakataukī supports that through maintaining a bond with *iwi*, *hapū* and *whānau* emotional and physical wellbeing can be supported. Whakatakariri is similar to the term *riri* – its negative connotations within this whakataukī indicates that anger can affect personal and collective wellbeing. Within Māori collectives debate and discussion is encouraged but within a context of *manaakitanga* and support.

Ka tuwhera te tāwhera o te riri, kāore e titiro ki te  
ao mārama

When the gates of war have been flung open, you can't  
see reason





When analysing this whakataukī in a contemporary context, it portrays the negative effects that anger can have on a person's wellbeing. Riri is one form of anger and this saying indicates that riri can spark feelings of hurt and rage that can be blinding. When a person has been provoked by extreme acts often this evokes feelings of anger which can become overwhelming, consuming their thoughts. The whakataukī itself encourages introspection and urges one to be mindful of their actions.

Mehemea he raruraru kei a koe, me wewete e  
koe

If you have troubles, free yourself



In certain ceremonies the person taking part would receive this instruction from the tohunga (expert, specialist) overseeing the process. They would then be expected to share with that person any negative issues or feelings they held, to release them and be cleansed in order to be able to proceed with the ceremony. This is an indication that our ancestors believed that certain feelings or ways of being can impact on wellbeing.

Kāore e wehi tōku kiri ki te taraongaonga

My skin does not fear the nettle



This whakataukī acts as a retort to insults, taunts or threats. The taraongonga is endemic to Aotearoa and stings can cause a painful, and at times severe, reaction. When this saying is uttered it conveys the speaker's self-confidence suggesting that they are impervious to pain, such as that felt from the strickening prick of the stinging nettle.

Hokia ki ō maunga kia purea ai koe e ngā hau a  
Tāwhirimātea

Return to your mountains so that you can be cleansed  
by the winds of Tāwhirimātea



In times when we are troubled or in turmoil we are encouraged to return home to our ancestral mountains, lands and waters, which nourish and provide us with spiritual and emotional strength. This whakataukī recognises the intimate connections we have to place and the way in which our wellbeing is drawn from the land.



He manu aute e taea te whakahoro!

A flying-kite made of paper mulberry bark can be made  
to fly fast!



The manu aute referred to here is a kite made of paper mulberry bark that was known to fly fast and fly away with speed. This is a reference to the desire one holds towards a lover and is expressive of their impatience at not being able to get away to see their lover.

Tiwhatiwaha te pō, tiwhatiwaha te ao

Gloom and sorrow prevail, day and night



Tiwhatiwha is a word used to describe darkness, it is also a metaphor of gloom and sorrow. This whakataukī reflects on the sorrow and pain that one feels all day, every day through the loss of a loved one. It is commonly heard on the marae in whaikōrero during tangihanga.

Wahine tangi haehae, he ngaru moana, e kore e  
mātaki

Wailing and laceration of women, mourning like a wave  
of the ocean, go on unceasingly



The ritual of mourning is a natural part of life and death in Te Ao Māori, with mediums such as waiata-tangi, apakura and mōteatea heavily laden with references to grief and loss. It was once common within Māori society for women to express this grief not only through wailing, but also the physical act of 'haehae', which involved the laceration of limbs, body parts and even the face with flakes of obsidian. This practice was custom following the loss of a loved one, and like the relentless tides of the ocean, women could be heard wailing during tangihanga whilst bearing the sacred wreathes of the pare kawakawa.

Ka heke te roimata me te hūpē, ka ea te mate

When tears and mucus fall death is avenged





In mourning the death of a loved one, the extreme sadness, loss and despair felt by the grieving family would be expressed openly. This whakataukī recognises the healing that takes place when one is able to express such emotions without restraint.

Whatia pototia te tihi o Taranaki!

The peak of Taranaki is broken off short!



A metaphor of grief, Taranaki ancestors would describe the peak of the mountain as being broken to convey their pain and sorrow during times of mourning. This powerful symbol of grief was used by Hurungarangi in her lament for a murdered ancestor named Hō, whom she loved dearly. The expression also features in the waiata tangi composed by Horopapera [Hori Papera] for his father Hapurona. Whilst both use this expression to communicate grief, Hurungarangi also uses it to evoke the emotions of her people, urging them to seek retribution for the death of their fallen relative.

Ahakoā kai tahi, tērā a roto te haehae kē rā

Although the meat is shared,  
there is jealousy inside them



It is common for Māori to share meals with people as a sign of friendship. What is alluded to in this whakataukī, however, is that sometimes our actions may mask our true feelings. The emotion of jealousy, which disrupts the harmony within the collective, was not tolerated in Māori society and at times people would hide their feelings as a result.

Waiho mā te whakamā e patu

Embarrassment is punishment enough



A number of whakataukī indicate that the behaviour of children was regulated by developing a sense of mindfulness, making the individual conscious of the consequences of their actions. Such is the case with this whakataukī, which implies that the embarrassment felt by someone who has done wrong can be more than enough to dissuade them from repeating such an action. Knowing that your actions reflect badly on your entire whānau and hapū, causing them shame, is a much more potent deterrent to negative or inappropriate behaviour than the notion of individual punishment.

Me he rau whārangī te kanohi

A face like a whārangī leaf





The whārangī, or rangiora leaves are white underneath and green on top. This can be compared to the appearance of someone who is whakamā. In this context the white underneath the whārangī leaves represents the feeling of whakamā. This whakataukī suggests that inside someone may be carrying with them a feeling of shame that may not be obvious to the collective. Such a state of being can be detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of a person.

Tū whitia te hopo

Overcome your fear



While fear has the potential to paralyse us, it can also be acknowledged and embraced in order to move forward. We are encouraged here to be brave and to not let our fear get the better of us. 'Tū whitia te hopo, mairangatia te angitū' is another extended version of this saying that urges the individual to eliminate the negative, and by doing so, accentuate the positive.

Mā roto rā e kata

Let me laugh inside



Humility is the quality reflected within this whakataukī. Boasting about one's own success publicly was considered arrogant behaviour, therefore personal achievements were celebrated amongst whānau. This is a lovely expression of how someone can feel a deep sense of joy about an accomplishment and savour that feeling within themselves.

He kitenga kanohi, he hokinga mahara

A familiar face stirs one's memory and the emotions  
that are associated with that memory





Another version of this whakataukī is “He kitenga kanohi, he hokinga mahara, he koanga ngākau.” A familiar face stirs one’s memory and the emotions that are associated with that memory bring joy. Both renditions tell us that in meeting people we are connecting not only to them but to all of the memories and ancestors that they represent. It is an expression of the power of memory to stir emotions, both sad and joyful in the act of remembering. The experience of emotions and feelings is a collective one and that is affirmed by this whakataukī.

He ora ngākau, he pikinga waiora

Positive feelings within you enhances wellbeing





Within Maori understandings the ngākau is where we locate many of our feelings. Where often translated as the heart, the ngākau includes all parts of our abdominal area. This is expressed in the many internal organs that we associate with feelings. This whakataukī emphasises the power of feeling positive in supporting our emotional, spiritual, physical, psychological and whānau wellbeing.

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