

# Collaborative and indigenous mental health therapy

## Tātaihono – Stories of Māori healing and psychiatry

Wiremu NiaNia, Allister Bush and David Epston

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Tēnā koutou katoa,

In 1996, as a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Social Work degree (Massey, Albany), I was fortunate to be exposed to the ideas of Narrative Therapy by working in an agency that had been heavily influenced by the work of David Epston. Over the course of my career I have been able to develop my mental health clinical skills, while simultaneously building my knowledge of bicultural competencies. I wish this book (I will refer to it as *Tātaihono* for the purposes of this review) had existed when I was a new graduate; it would have saved me and my colleagues much angst as we scratched about trying to understand how Māori healing and psychiatry could be complementary to one another.

This book is a taonga, particularly for those professionals working in a traditional mental health service, for example one that is funded by a District Health Board. The book begins with a foreword by Sir Mason Durie, who clearly supports and articulates the rationale for a book like this, which is to provide a model of care that the reader can begin to grasp. The word used in the title is *tātaihono*: this paints a picture about what this book is hoping to achieve, which is to explore how Māori healing and psychiatry can acknowledge their differences but also seek a dialogue about what can be mutually beneficial and therefore ultimately of benefit to the Māori clients we work with.

This book seeks to braid together two world views, a western scientific paradigm with an indigenous Māori epistemology. For Māori practitioners within a mental health work environment these two aspects have always been a part of their consciousness but, for non-Māori, this book may serve as a way forward to legitimise this duality of knowledge bases. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is echoed throughout *Tātaihono* as the book provides excellent examples of partnership approaches, particularly when working together on client-centred issues.

There is a space and a place for the reflection on Matekite – this is incredibly valuable as I have not seen this work written up in this manner before. For me and how I was brought up there is a great sense of tapu about this area and I would urge caution to the reader when thinking about undertaking work where Matekite is present. It is important to keep one's self safe and their client too, therefore cultural consultation with Kaumātua and/or Whaea is extremely important when thinking about exploring the area of Matekite.

There are eight chapters and many of these highlight a specific mental health disorder or group of symptoms. The chapters include topics such as complex grief, auditory hallucinations, psychosis, schizophrenia, suicidal ideation and the many different comorbidities that accompany these

problems. The book utilises a case study methodology that includes the wider ecological presentation of the mental health disorders that are discussed. This includes the important roles that whānau and clinicians have in the recovery of the client. Chapter two includes a relevant summary about the wider philosophical context within which the case studies are presented. Chapter two also contains a discourse about epistemology, particularly the legitimization of kaupapa Māori knowledge. This is one example of how the principle of *tātaihono* is operationalized. Chapters three through seven follow a pattern of symptom presentation followed by a discussion about how the authors seek to implement their integrated model of care approach. Chapter eight, the last chapter, presents what the reader may be looking for in terms of a

systematic approach to Māori healing as told to us by the authors; this is a model of care that we can all learn from.

The book is a wero, it presents a challenge to reflect on, not only our own bicultural practice, but also our commitment to Māori, one could say our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. *Tātaihono* seeks to reach into our hearts and plant a seed, a seed about empowerment for a people that have had so much taken from them over the past two centuries and who continue to struggle to gain it back. There is much *mamai* expressed here; the challenge is how to respond to what we as practitioners see in the buildings that we work in and the communities that we engage with. This book is a taonga that has been handed down to us, its case study approach will keep the reader engaged as the interventions are unique and effective.

Reviewed by **Dr Matt Shepherd (Ngāti Tama)** Senior Lecturer, School of Counselling Human Services and Social Work, Te Kura Tauwhiro Tangata The University of Auckland Email: m.shepherd@auckland.ac.nz