

## CREATING A HĀ HABIT

### Utilising Māori innovations in breathwork to alleviate and build resilience to the effects of trauma, PTSD and generalised anxiety

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#### Abstract

This article describes how the creation of a “Hā habit”—a breathwork practice that is inspired by the whakapapa of the Hā—can alleviate the debilitating effects of trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and generalised anxiety. The article first conducts a literature review that examines the definitions and contributing factors of these disorders and their psychological and physical symptoms. An analysis of Aotearoa New Zealand mental health statistics is then carried out, which is followed by a description of breathwork and its benefits. Inspired by an existing breathing tool, co-author Julia Wikeepa explored the whakapapa of the Hā and developed a Māori innovation called the Hā tool—a stainless steel breathing tool that can be worn as a necklace. By using the Hā tool and creating a Hā habit, people can learn about the underlying causes and contributing factors of their poor mental wellbeing. The Hā habit acts as both an intervention strategy and a preventative strategy, building resilience against poor mental wellbeing, and supporting people to move from a place of trauma, PTSD or generalised anxiety to one of resilience, recovery and calm.

#### Keywords

trauma, PTSD, anxiety, breathwork, Hā habit, resilience, calm, Tū and Rongo

#### Introduction

This article begins by identifying and defining a range of debilitating disorders—trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and generalised anxiety—and their symptoms before presenting a statistical analysis to give scope to the impact of the disorders. The article then explores the science behind breathing and breathwork as a valuable antidote to these disorders. The whakapapa of the concept of Hā, and how the Hā tool

was developed, is then described. The article then describes how the creation of a Hā habit through intention, purpose, mindfulness and presence alleviates traumatic experiences and acts as both an intervention strategy and a preventative strategy to build resilience against poor mental wellbeing. Finally, the development of a new wellbeing measuring tool called Tū and Rongo is described, and positive feedback from users of the Hā tool is presented.

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## Literature review

Current research clearly indicates that mental health issues such as trauma, PTSD and generalised anxiety are serious debilitating disorders (American Psychological Association [APA], 2022; Jenita & Soni, 2021). These mental health issues are impacting a large percentage of the New Zealand population, and the country has seen a significant increase in the proportion of people with poor mental wellbeing, up from 22% in 2018 to 28% in 2021 (Stats NZ, 2022).

## Definitions

According to Jenita and Soni (2021, paras 7–21), *developmental trauma* can be defined as events in childhood like physical, sexual or emotional assault; abandonment; rejection; betrayal; or death of a family member. *Vicarious trauma* can occur when a person listening to someone who has experienced trauma firsthand absorbs the disturbing aspects of the traumatic event(s), which results in harm to their own mental health. *Acute trauma* occurs as a result of an accident or a natural disaster. *Complex trauma*, meanwhile, stems from multiple traumatic experiences, such as ongoing physical or sexual abuse, and violence.

*PTSD* can be defined as feelings of generalised anxiety stemming from past traumatic events. Co-author Rawiri Waretini-Karena observes that experiences of PTSD can also lead to flashbacks of abuse, hearing voices, and going into a trance as a coping mechanism for dealing with historical trauma (TEDx Talks, 2018, 1:25). *Historical inter-generational trauma* is defined by Duran (2006) as a “soul wound”:

Ancestral wounding that occurred in the community was passed down through the generations that gave accounts of genocide. . . . In addition they explained, how the earth had been wounded and how when the earth is wounded, the people who are caretakers of the earth are also wounded at a very deep soul level. According to the APA (2022, para. 1), *anxiety* is defined as an emotion characterised by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry and they may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat. (p. 16)

## Psychological symptoms

Whilst there is a wide variety of mental wellbeing issues that stem from trauma, their symptoms do have a lot in common. They range from a deep sense of dread and feeling stressed, scared, anxious and overwhelmed to intense experiences of fear, shock, horror and shame. Smith (2013, p. 11) builds on these symptoms by utilising kupu Māori.

Patu ngākau can be defined as a strike, assault or shock to the heart. It can also cause conditions of whakamā and pōuritanga.

Historical examples of whakamomori are described in Ngāti Kahungunu accounts. As Smith (2013) relates,

Ngāi Tumapuhia-a-rangi, being besieged by a war party consisting of several thousands of warriors, decided to whakamomori and commit to the battle. This included preparations and rituals incorporating ceremonial dress, including hair dress, and the use of ceremonial paint. Similarly given is the story of Te Ao Huruhuru in an account given to Sir George Grey by the chief Te Potangaroa. . . . Te Ao Huruhuru committed to whakamomori after she considered a misdeed of her husband towards her. . . . There is a high rock that stands out with a cliff and the name of that rock is now called the flight of Te Ao Huruhuru. That young girl went and prepared herself, combing her hair, the feathers being that of the huia, kotuku and toroa. . . . She was up on the hill doing her song and when she finished, she became visible to the old man as she flew from that cliff face, he saw the cloak flashing white as she flew down. (pp. 13–14)

Whakamomori does not necessarily always result in death; however, it does appear to represent the final stage of pōuritanga prior to death, when the will to live is no longer present.

Suicide may be considered the only option available to escape the emotional turmoil someone is experiencing. In addition, those experiencing incapacitating thoughts may also turn to harmful substances, develop eating disorders, become addicted to pornography or work beyond their capacity and strength as a coping mechanism for suppressing uncomfortable emotions. Other psychological symptoms such as dread, worry, shame and fear can intensify due to biomechanical reactions manifesting in the body. Distressing psychological states can be relieved more effectively when those suffering begin to comprehend how to work with the physical symptoms of their body.

**Physical symptoms**

Traumatic experiences can have a variety of unexpected physical consequences. The US-based Newport Institute explains that what matters is the impact of the traumatic experience on the individual and how it continues to affect their life (Newport Institute, n.d.). The sympathetic nervous system prepares your body to either run from danger or fight back (Health Within, 2019). It is also activated in response to mental or physical stress. During the fight-or-flight response, the following occurs: blood pressure increases; blood flow increases to muscles, lungs and other areas essential for moving away from perceived danger; blood flow decreases to the digestive and reproductive systems; and concentrations of stress hormones, such as cortisol, and neurotransmitters, such as epinephrine, increase to make us stronger and faster. Finally, glucose is rapidly released to be burned for quick energy (Health Within, 2019).

Nunez (2020) describes three reactions—fight, flight, freeze—and notes that response can sometimes be overactive: “This happens when nonthreatening situations trigger the reaction. Overactive responses are more common in people who have experienced [trauma and anxiety].” Trauma responses have also been described in terms of four reactions: freeze, fight, flight and fawn (Gaba, 2020). The first reaction is to literally become incapable of moving or making a choice; the second is to become aggressive; the third is to run or flee the situation; and the fourth is to fawn or try to please a person to avoid conflict (Gaba, 2020, paras 3–4).

**Aotearoa New Zealand mental health statistics**

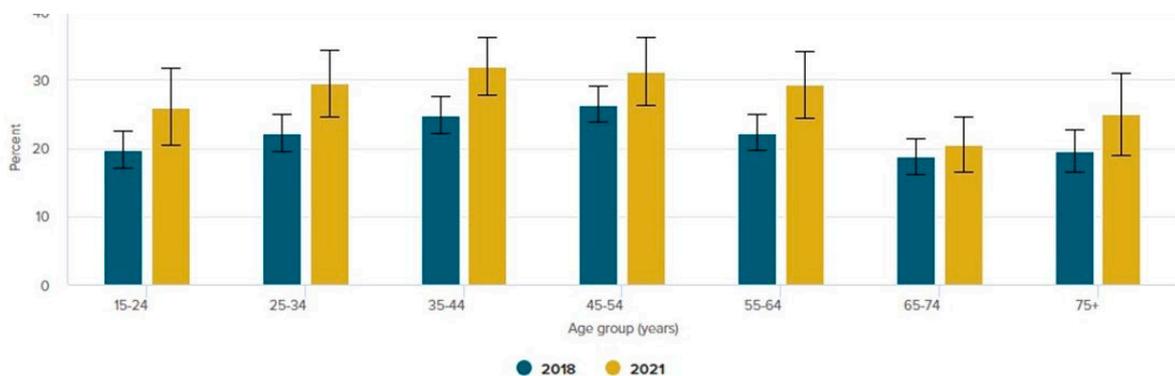
Figure 1 shows that experiences of poor mental wellbeing in Aotearoa grew significantly between

2018 and 2021 across all age groups. The percentage for those in the 15–24 age group grew from 19.7% in 2018 to 26% in 2021; for those in the 25–34 age group the percentage increased from 22.2% to 29.5%. The percentage for those in the 35–44 age group went up from 24.7% to 31.9%. The 45–54 age group saw an increase from 26.3% to 31.2%; the 56–64 age group percentage grew from 22.2% to 29.3%; and the percentage for the 65–74 age group grew from 18.8% to 20.5%. The final age group (75+) saw an increase from 19.6% to 24.9%. Although contributing factors are not included in the data, one should consider the potential role the COVID-19 pandemic played in these results.

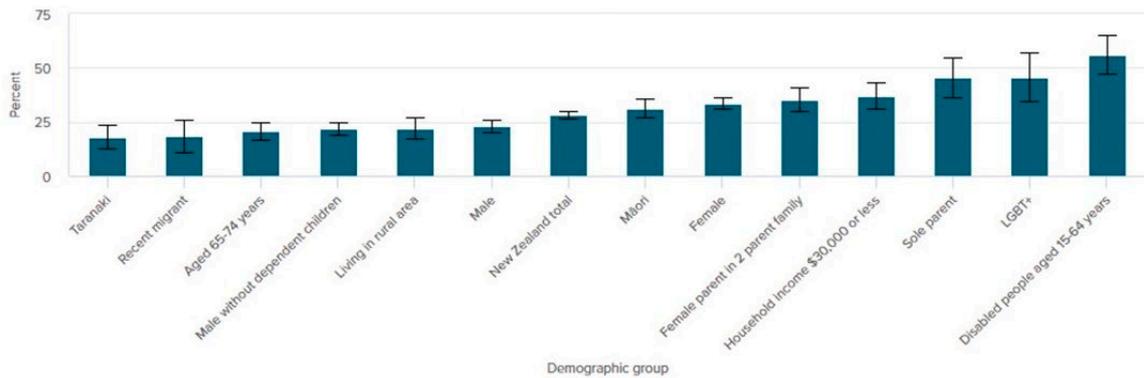
Stats NZ (2022) also released data highlighting the percentage of specific demographics experiencing poor mental wellbeing in 2021 (Figure 2). Demographics selected included the region of Taranaki (18%), recent migrants (18.3%), those aged 65–74 years (20.5%); males without dependent children (21.7%); those living in a rural area (22.1%); males (22.8%); the country as a whole (28.2%); Māori (31.1%); females (33.4%); female parents in two-parent families (35.3%); those with household income of \$30,000 or less (37%); solo parents (45.5%); LGBTQ (45.7%); and disabled people aged 15–64 (54%).

**What is breathwork?**

The term *breathwork* describes therapy that utilises breathing exercises to enhance spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing. The concept draws from Eastern philosophies and practices while incorporating Western and Indigenous knowledge systems. The ability of a person to deal with stress has a huge bearing on the way their body ages and functions. Brown and Gerbarg (2009) note:



**FIGURE 1** Proportion of people with poor mental wellbeing, by age group, 2018 and 2021 (Stats NZ, 2022).



**FIGURE 2** Proportion of people with poor mental wellbeing, by selected demographic groups, 2021 (Stats NZ, 2022).

A Harvard Medical School study of 1,623 heart attack survivors found that when subjects became angry, their risk of further heart attacks doubled compared to those who remained calm. In a study of 5,716 middle-aged people, those with the best self-regulatory abilities were 50 times more likely to be alive and without chronic disease 15 years later than those with poor scores on measures of self-regulation. As the only autonomic function is easily controlled through voluntary effort, breathing serves as a portal through which imbalances in the stress-response system can be corrected. (p. 56)

Jarath et al. (2006) report that *pranayama* (the yogic practice of voluntary breath control, consisting of conscious inhalation, retention and exhalation) is often practised in conjunction with *dhyana* (meditation) and *asanas* (physical posture). Versions of *pranayama* vary from single nostril breathing to belly breathing, and it consists of three phases: *puraka* (inhalation); *kumbhaka* (retention) and *rec-haka* (exhalations) that can be either fast or slow (Jarath et al., 2006). Breathwork usually consists of inhaling the breath through the nose, holding the breath for a short period, and the exhaling the breath through the mouth. Brown and Gerbarg (2009) suggest that

the emphasis is on the mindfulness of breathing. . . . The pursuit and development of mindfulness of in and out breathing leads to the culmination of the four frames of reference: 1. Focus on the body, 2. Focus on the feelings, 3. Focus on the mind, 4. Focus on mental qualities. (p. 55)

The aim of these frames of reference is to clear away anything hindering a person spiritually, mentally or physically.

### The sympathetic nervous system

The sympathetic nervous system is part of the autonomic system. Grujičić (2022, para. 4) explains that the sympathetic nervous system is essential for preparing the body for an emergency response—fight-or-flight—in endangering situations. When a person perceives a threat (e.g., at work, in a relationship, finance- or health-related), they can experience symptoms of anxiety, such as fast or shallow breathing. Over time they can end up in a constant sympathetic state. This means that cortisol is constantly pumping through their body, impacting their mental health on a daily basis. Esler et al. (1988) state that “the regional sympathetic nervous activation present in patients with essential hypertension . . . suggests that mental stress is an important factor” (p. 14). Being in a constant sympathetic state is associated with anxiety, depression, irritability, fatigue, muscle tension, high blood pressure and weight gain. Kekre (2020) conveys that in an extremely stressful situation clavicular breathing may also become activated, dynamically speeding up and activating the intercostal muscles. The inhaling of the breath triggers the sympathetic state and initiates a fight-or-flight episode. This leads to hyperventilating due to fast and shallow breathing. Entering a parasympathetic state through the prolonged exhaling of the breath can counter the hyperventilating state, and slow breathing down. The practice of deep prolonged belly breathing into the diaphragm helps to relieve stress, boost metabolism and reduce pain; it also contributes to cell regeneration. People can be trained to be in a parasympathetic state, and the quickest way to do this is through breathwork. Grujičić (2022) notes that the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems usually work antagonistically but in a well-integrated manner, balancing the actions

of both systems while simultaneously working to maintain a stable internal environment in the body.

### The parasympathetic nervous system

The parasympathetic nervous system can be described as a network of nerves that can relax your body after it has experienced symptoms of stress, anxiety and overwhelm. Jarath et al. (2006) explain that “slow breathing pranayamic exercises show a strong tendency of improving or balancing the autonomic nervous system through enhanced activation of parasympathetic nervous system” (p. 2). Jarath et al. (2006) continue:

Research has revealed pranayamic breathing to be a low risk, cost effective adjunct treatment that can be potentially applied to improve symptoms associated with cardiovascular disorders, autonomic disorders, and psychological disorders including those involving stress. Although slow pranayamic breathing is said to be one of the most practical relaxation techniques, *it also* holds a great deal of potential in the treatment of autonomic and psychological disorders. (p. 3)

The main nerves of the parasympathetic nervous system are called the vagal nerves. The vagus nerve system is the largest network of nerves in the body and can be manipulated through breathwork to activate the parasympathetic nervous system and systematically calm the body down.

### Inspiration for the Hā tool

The Hā tool was inspired by the work of an American couple, Todd and Vanessa Steinberg. Their breathwork journey began in 2015 when a friend suggested Todd try meditating to relieve his generalised anxiety (Haines, 2021). Todd found meditation uncomfortable, so his friend suggested that he try breathing through a straw. Todd was immediately amazed by the result: “My heart rate slowed, my shoulders dropped, and I felt lighter and calmer” (Haines, 2021, para. 4). Todd became determined to come up with a practical way to integrate deep breathing into everyday routines. The couple’s aha moment came when they met a local artisan at a neighbourhood fair who was selling shakuhachi flutes used by 17th-century Japanese Komuso monks as a meditation tool (Haines, 2021). Drawing on Vanessa’s fashion design experience and Todd’s entrepreneurial spirit, they created a necklace that replicates the straw-breathing technique. They wanted to create a minimalist piece—no technology, no batteries.

The final product is a sleek stainless steel pendant with a Japanese inscription on the back that translates as “to be still”—a fitting sentiment for a necklace designed to support a 10-second exhale. The Steinbergs went on to found a company, Komuso Design. Their breathing tool, called Shift, has proven to be an effective solution for generalised anxiety and stress management for thousands of people around the world.

Co-author Julia Wikeepa is from Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Maniapoto and Te Atihaunui-Ā-Pāpārangī on her father’s side, and has Dutch, English and Jewish ancestry on her mother’s side. Just like Todd Steinberg, Julia silently suffered from the debilitating effects of generalised anxiety and other psychological disorders. As a result of employing the practice of breathwork for calming and soothing her anxiety, Julia came across the Steinbergs’ concept design for the Shift necklace. She could see similarities between shakuhachi flutes and a traditional musical instrument native to her Māori cultural identity. This inspired Julia to adapt the Steinbergs’ concept in two significant ways. The first thing she did was implement a Kaupapa Māori worldview over her idea, instead of adopting foreign concepts from overseas. The second thing she did was change the shakuhachi flute, which she has no whakapapa connection to, to a traditional musical concept indicative of her Indigenous identity.

Julia created and launched her company Hā Habit on 17 January 2022, introducing her breathing necklace concept using the notion of Hā (see FashionNZ, 2022). The company is an expression of Julia’s life mission to destigmatise autonomic and psychological disorders, and to give people who suffer their debilitating effects access to the benefits of breathwork through a Māori lens. She encourages sufferers to put down technology and reconnect to their energy in an organic way using the Hā tool, and to develop, cultivate and sustain their health and vitality by developing an emotional awareness.

Hā Habit acknowledges that debilitating disorders impact people from all walks of life and cultures. As a result, Hā Habit applies a he kākano rua approach to engaging with Hā tool users. He kākano rua refers to two seeds of knowledge: one is Māori and the other is Pākehā; it also reflects Julia’s diverse cultural background. The Kaupapa Māori approach of Hā Habit can be defined as applying Māori concepts in a Western societal construct to explain Māori notions and values around breathwork. This approach allows Hā Habit to engage with Hā tool users via Māori concepts

and culture in a multicultural environment with English translations, and explanations for Māori concepts in culturally diverse situations.

### The whakapapa of Hā

Hā can be defined as air taken into or expelled from the lungs. It can also mean to gulp, to inhale, to inspire, to expire, to pant, to gasp and to wheeze. Hā relates to breath, breathing, life force and vitality. Yet from a Māori worldview the Hā means so much more.

The Reverend Māori Marsden (2003) relates that the supreme being Io “delegated various tasks to Tane and his brothers. So they became regents of Io to continue creation in the departments of nature” (p. 18). Many atua participated in the creation of Hineahuone, the first human life form: Tangaroa, atua of the sea, gave her blood; Tāwhirimātea, atua of the winds, gave her lungs; Tūmatauenga, atua of war, gave her sinews; Io gave her a heart; and, finally, Tāne Mahuta, atua of the forests, used the Hā to breathe the essence of life into her. Hineahuone awoke and sneezed the words “Tihei mauri ora” (“It is life”) (Marsden, 2003, p. 11).

Wikeepa (2022) expands on why the Hā is so significant:

Breath is so much more than a biological calmer and stress preventative. For me, the Hā is a reminder of my connection to my creator and every living creature in this universe. When you look at the word spirit, it is derived from the Latin word spiritus, meaning breath. With each breath I take, I can draw upon an unseen energy that gives me strength, power and guidance in this journey of life. (p. 14)

Wikeepa’s (2022) account draws on traditional Māori creation narratives, and her own awareness and connection to atua, and to the Hā that encompasses every sentient being. Whakapapa is the fabric of those connections, meaning that atua can be called on for strength, power and guidance in times of need. (p. 14)

Other Māori discuss the power of combining the Hā with other elements. Te Whaati (2022), for example, discusses the concept of haka therapy:

Hā is the breath and ka is the fire within. I liken that to . . . a taniwha that can build energy from the source of your pū, and build that up into an ihi that is blazing from your fingers, your toes, the ends of your hair, so everything is on fire. . . . You know fire jumps as soon as it connects to another flame, it grows into multiple sources of energy. . . .

Therapeutically what it does to ones internal processes is that it gets to sterilise. If you are carrying so much mamae, all you have to do is sterilise it through haka therapy.

### Whakapapa connection to the Hā tool

The same atua that combined to create Hineahuone also dwell within the elements of the Hā tool. As noted above, the Hā tool was inspired by a traditional Māori musical instrument. These instruments were customarily made from wood. The atua responsible for that area is Tāne Mahuta, whose name was later changed to Tāne-nui-a-Rangi because of a different role he had to perform. Hā equates to life essence and stems from Tāne-nui-a-Rangi. The hau, or “wind breath”, comes from the lungs. That is the realm of Tāwhirimātea. The metal of the Hā tool is comprised of solid inorganic minerals found in the earth. The atua responsible for that realm is Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother.

The realms of atua are also involved when people use the Hā tool and develop a Hā habit. When commencing with the Hā tool, the person is encouraged to apply four concepts: intention, purpose, mindfulness and presence. These equate to ngākau, hinengaro and wairua, which are in the realm of Io. As the Hā tool user exhales air through the hole in the Hā tool, they are applying Hā and hau, invoking Tāne-nui-a-Rangi and Tāwhirimātea. This affects the breath, the lungs, the nerves, the circulation and the muscles and sinews. The muscles and sinews sit within the realm of Tūmatauenga. The Hā tool’s overall goal is to treat the hauora of the body, which is also within the realm of Papatūānuku.

As part of their alleviation and resilience plan, Hā tool users have invoked Io, Papatūānuku, Tāne Mahuta/Tāne-nui-a-Rangi, Tāwhirimātea, Tangaroa, Tūmatauenga and Rongo-mā-Tāne, atua of peace, to assist them in moving from trauma, generalised anxiety, fear and conflict to resilience, recovery and calmness. These are the very elements involved in remedying mate Māori, porangitanga and wairangi.

### The Hā tool: A Māori-based breathwork innovation

What is the Hā tool? Put simply, it is a stainless steel breathing apparatus that can be worn as a necklace. Co-author and Hā tool creator Wikeepa (2022) had herself suffered from poor mental wellbeing: “I know all too well, what it’s like to be trapped by overwhelming feelings of stress



**FIGURE 3** The “Classic Silver” version of the Hā tool.

and anxiety” (p. 1). Wikeepa (2022) explains that the design was inspired by the taonga pūoro, specifically the koauau, a traditional Māori musical instrument. Flintoff (2014) states that taonga pūoro are seen as the children of the families of the gods who brought them into being (p. 1). “Rangi” means tunes as well as Father Sky, to whom music drifts up, so melodic instruments are from the world of Rangi. The heartbeats of Papatūānuku are the basis of musical rhythms.

The one major feature that is common across all psychological disorders and forms of anxiety is that they are all affected by, and can be addressed by, intentional breathwork. The main role and function of the Hā tool is therefore to address these issues by using the breath to activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

### **Intention, purpose, mindfulness and presence**

Co-author Waretini-Karena explains that “all issues and behaviours have a whakapapa or genealogy. Those issues or behaviours came from somewhere for some reason, and didn’t just manifest out of thin air” (TEDx Talks, 2018, 16:59). This is similar to psychological disorders. They too have a whakapapa. All the trauma definitions, including PTSD and depression, use the past tense. What this indicates is that a person experiencing these issues is dealing with trauma from their past. Alongside this, those suffering from anxiety

disorders are dealing with perceived complications they may experience in their near future. Their worry about future events can become all-consuming. Consequently, psychological disorders can manifest based on a person’s past trauma or future perception of events.

A person applying intention and purpose—the first two Hā tool concepts—whilst engaging with the Hā tool gives themselves a foundation for changing their trajectory of thought from disorder to resilience and recovery. This is based on the notion that you are not your disorder; you are a person *experiencing* the disorder. This recognises that disorders are learnt perceptions, and Hā tool users can be supported to unlearn those perceptions and take back power and control over their lives in meaningful ways.

Mindfulness, the third Hā tool concept, is also important because it encompasses compassion and supports a Hā tool user to be kinder to themselves. Mindfulness also encourages people to work towards changing the negative way they perceive themselves, and to work towards loving themselves and being more compassionate to themselves. The final Hā tool concept is presence. Psychological disorders can inflict painful triggers so overwhelming that coping mechanisms can make a person switch to autopilot as a vehicle for dealing with the stress and physical symptoms. The problem is that their minds are living in a painful past or in a debilitating future, and they have lost

sight of developing, cultivating and sustaining their lives by being present in mind, body, soul and spirit. The thing to understand about triggers is that they cannot physically hurt you. They are nothing more than indicators of issues, situations and emotions yet to be resolved. They are similar to when you are driving and the yellow light comes on indicating you are about to run out of petrol: the message is “Please take care of it as soon as possible.”

### Using the Hā tool

There are many ways to utilise the breath for wellbeing; however, the pursed lip method is used most frequently with the Hā tool to reduce generalised anxiety and stress. It helps to trigger the parasympathetic nervous system, which activates the vagus nerve and calms our mind and body. The user inhales through the nose (hā ki roto) for 4 seconds into the belly. On the exhale, they purse their lips around the Hā tool and exhale for 8+ seconds (hā ki waho). The key is to focus on the breath, and then repeat this process until a sense of calmness is experienced.

### Applying the Hā tool in a scenario

There are many scenarios in which applying the Hā tool can help relieve tension, stress and anxiety. Below we describe a four-step process that can be applied during a tense situation such as a conflict with a partner. When a Hā tool user initially feels the onset of tension, anger or stress, they should follow these steps:

Step 1: Decide to breathe consciously. This will interrupt the habit of reacting.

Step 2: If you need to remove yourself from a situation to take a breather, then do this. Communicate this with your partner, and let them know, you will talk when you are calm. Reach for your Hā tool, and go through the breathing process using the pursed lip technique. Allow yourself to feel the emotion, but don't attach any meaning. Keep applying the technique until you are calm.

Step 3: Give your partner time to calm down as well, so that instead of reacting to each other, you respond in a respectful manner. When we are calm, we are more likely to have considerate conversations.

Step 4: Once you are in a position to respond, get on board with each other, and focus your energy on solutions.

### Creating a Hā habit

Creating a Hā habit involves establishing specific rituals for the purpose of building resilience as both a prevention and an intervention strategy. Hā Habit offers a variety of workshops that run for either four or six weeks. Figure 4 shows the weekly planner for the “28 Day Challenge”.

On any given day, take Rāhina: Monday for example, a Hā tool user ticks off each habit (1–8) as they do it throughout their day. For example, once they have completed five minutes of breathing, they cross off “1”; they then cross off “2” once they have worn their Hā tool and responded to stress with breathing; and so on. As they go, the Hā tool user applies the suggestion that goes with each number. This can be applied both during the day and at night. The *interventionist* approach involves applying the Hā tool breathing techniques when an episode occurs. This can begin to alleviate experiences of generalised anxiety. The *preventative* approach involves applying the Hā tool breathing techniques consistently at appointed times during the day and night to establish a continual calm throughout the day. Applying the Hā tool in this manner enables the Hā tool user to implement prevention as well as intervention strategies for addressing trauma, PTSD and generalised anxiety.

### A measuring tool inspired by Tū and Rongo

Tū and Rongo are short forms of Tūmataunga and Rongo-mā-Tāne, respectively. There are positive attributes that stem from Tū, including courage, tenacity, boldness and assertiveness. Hā Habit applies Tū and Rongo as Kaupapa Māori social science concepts to appraise a Hā tool user's transition from tension or conflict (Tū) to resilience, recovery and calm (Rongo). The Tū and Rongo measurement tool is inspired by the Māori creation story. After the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, the children were dispersed between both parents. Keane (2012) relates that Tāwhirimātea waged war against his brothers for separating their parents. He ended up subduing a number of them, but Tū proved to be his equal. Tū was angry at his other brothers for not helping him defeat Tāwhirimātea, so he fought, subdued and defeated them (Keane, 2012). Through his actions he made his brothers noa. Tū then set up two whare wānanga: the House of Tū and the House of Rongo (Keane, 2012). The Hā tool user can employ intention, purpose, mindfulness and presence to move their trauma, generalised anxiety, fear and conflict from the House of Tū to a

**HĀ HABIT WEEKLY PLANNER: 28 DAY CHALLENGE**

TE WIKI O-The week of: \_\_\_\_\_

Tahi: 1	Hā ki roto - hā ki waho. 5 min breathing. Set positive intentions, & purpose	Rua: 2	Wear Hā tool- respond to stress & anxiety with the breath
Toru: 3	Get used to sitting in discomfort	Wha: 4	Become aware of thoughts that don't serve you, hā ki roto, hā ki waho. Breath
Rima: 5	Get balance in your day – use Te Whare tapa whā	Ono: 6	Mahi ki te po: Night habit: Hā ki roto - hā ki waho-5min breathing, gratitude and reflections
Whitu: 7	Humarie: Mindfulness; be gentle on yourself. It takes time to rewire the mind	Waru:	Kanohi kitea-Presence: Focus on what you want. There is always a solution

**Schedule:**

Rāhina: Monday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Rātū: Tuesday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Rāapa: Wednesday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Rāpare: Thursday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Rāmere: Friday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Rāhoroi: Saturday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Rātapu: Sunday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Notes: Each day, review the eight reminders. Tick each number as you consciously practice them. e.g 1= Morning habit. 2= Wear Hā Tool

**TE WHARE TAPA WHĀ GOALS**

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**FIGURE 4** Weekly planner for Hā Habit’s “28 Day Challenge” workshop (Wikeepa, 2022).

space of resilience, recovery and calm: the House of Rongo.

The Tū and Rongo measuring tool is comprised of a series of questions for the Hā tool user to ask themselves:

Question 1: Do these symptoms sit in the past or the future?

Question 2: What are the psychological symptoms they are currently experiencing?

Question 3: What are the physical symptoms they are currently experiencing?

Question 4: When a Hā tool user applies intention and purpose, does this resist the temptation to internalise being their symptoms, as opposed to being a person experiencing symptoms?

Question 5: In what way does a Hā tool user comprehend that learnt behaviours can be unlearnt?

Question 6: What are their understandings of triggers and indicators? What are issues, emotions, behaviours or situations in a Hā tool user’s life that are yet to be resolved?

Question 7: When applying mindfulness, which part of a Hā tool user’s life needs compassion?

- i. To forgive self and others
- ii. To be more loving of self and others
- iii. To be more forgiving, loving or understanding of the circumstances
- iv. To be more aware of your needs and how to address them in respectful ways—what does that look like?

Question 8: How do you move from being emotionally and psychologically unavailable to practise being present in mind, body, soul, spirit?

- i. What are 5 things you can see? Call them out and name them!
- ii. What are 4 things you can touch? Touch them and name them!
- iii. What are 3 emotions you can feel? Name them and feel them!
- iv. What are 2 things you can smell? Sniff, smell and name them!
- v. What is one thing you can taste? Name it, imagine it, and taste it!

This process allows a Hā tool user to become grounded and present. The asking and answering of these questions can support a Hā tool user who is transparent and open to self-reflection to move from a place of trauma, PTSD and generalised anxiety (House of Tū) to one of resilience, recovery and calm (House of Rongo).

### Where to from here?

The statistics cited earlier in the article highlight worsening mental wellbeing among New Zealanders and an increase in those experiencing trauma, PTSD and generalised anxiety across many demographics. The disabled, the LGBTQ community, single parents, low-income earners, females and Māori all reported high levels of poor mental wellbeing. It is Hā Habit's intention to pour energy, resources and research into this area to address these disparities, and to support those suffering from debilitating disorders.

Early feedback from Hā tool users, some of which is shared below with their permission, suggests Hā Habit is indeed having a positive impact:

*"Being and feeling the now."* I absolutely love my necklace. I have a very hectic life and am constantly planning what's next. I have loads of anxiety that I don't know what to do with. I just want to slow

down my thought processes and appreciate the "now". I have been told numerous times about the benefits of conscious breathing. The problem is I just forget to do it. Since I have had my necklace I am making a real effort to stop, look around my environment and breathe. My necklace reminds me to do it. I am feeling so much better too. This is a wonderful tool; it helps me reset when I need to just stop and be present with me. I don't take enough time for me, and this is teaching me how to make more time for me, thank you so much :) I have plenty of compliments too on my taonga. This is just what I have always needed. I have social anxiety and while I know to breathe deeply to calm my anxiety, once I'm in the midst of anxiety it's something I forget. Not only is it a stunning taonga, but a constant reminder to me to regulate my breathing. The booklet is also such an awesome resource to help create good breathing habits and tools and strategies which complement the taonga (Brigid Davidson)

*"Absolutely love it."* I was gifted this by my māmā as I have pretty bad anxiety and it's really helped me with slowing down my breathing during anxious times. It's also helping me to cut down on how much I vape. I love that it's silent to use and beautiful to wear! Would highly recommend to anxious people! (Raven Maniapoto)

*"Amazing."* I was sceptic[al] about whether or not this would help my problem. After just a couple of days, I felt more relaxed and calmer. It is helping with my anxiety which has got worse since Covid and I am a teacher. However, I am also a really bad asthmatic I was hoping this would help with my breathing and slow my breathing down. It has worked—my asthma is so much better. Thank you so much to Hā Habit. These are amazing; I cannot recommend them highly enough. (Mandy Veza)

### Conclusion

This article has described how the creation of a "Hā habit" can alleviate the debilitating effects of trauma, PTSD and generalised anxiety. When those experiencing these disorders habitually use the Hā tool—whose creation was inspired by the whakapapa of the Hā—they become equipped with both an intervention strategy and a preventative strategy. In this way, they are supported to build resilience against poor mental wellbeing, and to move from a place of trauma, PTSD or generalised anxiety to one of resilience, recovery and calm. Early feedback indicates that Hā Habit,

the company behind the Hā tool, is already having a positive impact on the lives of those affected by these disorders.

No reira

Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa

## Glossary

atua	deities, gods
Hā/hā	life essence, breath/to taste, to breathe
haka	traditional Māori war dance involving chanting, posture and rhythmic movements
hā ki roto	breathe in
hā ki waho	breathe out
hau	breath
hauora	health
he kākano rua	lit. “two seeds”; bicultural approach
Hineahuone	the first human life form
hinengaro	mind
huia	a glossy black bird, now extinct, which had prized white-tipped tail feathers and orange wattles
ihi	essential force
Io	supreme being
Kaupapa Māori	a Māori worldview applied in a Western societal construct
koauau	traditional Māori musical instrument
kotuku	white heron
kupu	words
mamae	pain, hurt
Māori	Indigenous peoples of New Zealand
mate Māori	Māori mental illness
ngākau	heart
noa	common
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Papatūānuku	Mother Earth
patu ngākau	an assault or strike to the heart
porangitanga	psychosis
pōuritanga	intense overwhelming state leading to whakamomori
pū	source, foundation
Ranginui	Father Sky
Rongo-mā-Tāne	atua of peace and cultivated food

Tāne Mahuta/ Tāne-nui-a-Rangi	atua of the forest who gave Hineahuone the Hā
Tangaroa	atua of the sea
taniwha	supernatural creatures in Māori tradition
taonga	treasure, prized object
taonga pūoro	traditional Māori musical instrument
Tāwhirimātea	atua of the winds
tihei mauri ora	lit. “it is life”; the sneeze of life
toroa	albatross
Tūmatauenga	atua of war
wairangi	mental/emotional distress
wairua	spirit, soul
whakamā	to be filled with shame
whakamomori	to become devastated
whakapapa	genealogy, ancestry, familial relationships
whare wānanga	houses of learning

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