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No Time to Say Goodbye:
the Personal Journeys of Whānau Bereaved by Suicide

The experiences of four parents bereaved by suicide.

A dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work

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ABSTRACT

Nominal literature exists concerning the experiences of Māori whānau bereaved by suicide. Māori are vastly denoted in the suicide mortality statistics. The sudden and unexpected loss of a whānau member to suicide is an overwhelming occurrence for peoples of various different ethnic and cultural milieus.

Informed by means of a Māori paradigm; Māori research procedures are merged alongside each other to become the keystones to this study. A Case Study approach to research was applied in conjunction with Māori methodologies and which also provided the researcher with the course to circumnavigate the research procedure. These four whānau who contributed to this research are the manawa or core of this study and in the course of sharing their stories, they proffer knowledge and describe experiences of their bereavement as a consequence of the suicide of their young adult child.

Different sources of evidence were gathered together and included participant interviews, researcher observations, and literature that documented the experiences of whānau bereaved by suicide. The four Māori whānau identified several iwi (tribal) connections and came from a variety of small rural communities, took part in the interviews. These participants experienced losing their young adult child to suicide within the last 9 years. The interviews were all audio taped, each transcribed and analysed thematically.
This research found, that whānau bereaved by suicide undergo various emotional responses. Shock, anger, denial, helplessness and guilt were some of the responses identified by the whānau. Coping in response to suicide entailed seeking and gaining support, psychological and social isolation as well as searching for reasons as to ‘why’ the suicide occurred. Self-blame or blaming others for the suicide were also imperative factors in how whānau coped in response to suicide.
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GLOSSARY

A
Awhi to embrace

H
Hapu sub tribe
Hui a gathering or meeting

I
Iwi tribe

K
Kai food
Karanga ritual call of welcome
Kaumatua elder
Kaupapa purpose, reason for meeting, Māori philosophy and practice
Kawa natural order of things created by Te Atua
Korero speak
Kuia elderly female

M
Mana prestige, authority, privilege, responsibility
Manawa heart
Manaaki to give, to share, hospitality
Mihi greeting

P
Pōwhiri ceremony of welcome

R
Rangatahi youth
Rohe  boundary
T
Tapu  sacred, sacredness
Tautoko  support
Tikanga  behaviour, customs, habits, rituals, etiquette
W
Whakamomori  suicide
Whakapapa  genealogy
Whānau  family
Whānaungatanga  establishing family connections