

Cognitive connection cards

Cognitive connection cards are intended to support and strengthen confidence when engaging with tāngata whai ora.

This resource is part of *Whakaohoho Manawa Ora: Cognitive Screening and Support in Alcohol and Other Drug Services – Aotearoa New Zealand Practice Guidelines*, developed by Te Pou and published by Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora.

Use these cards to:

- › initiate respectful, non-judgemental conversations about cognitive challenges
- › identify patterns that may suggest cognitive challenges
- › adapt your approach to better meet the needs of tāngata whai ora.



Introducing cognitive impairment

Cognitive functioning: functions of the brain such as attention, memory and problem-solving that allow people to process and respond to information in an adaptive and helpful way.

Medical definitions of **cognitive impairment** refer to noticeable and measurable difficulties or reduced functioning in one or more cognitive domains.

Every **tangata whai ora** is unique and has a diverse range of **strengths** which can be used to **compensate** for cognitive impairment.

Cognitive function is just one part of a person's overall functioning.

Ask if there has been recent changes or difficulty with any of the following when not under the influence of substances:

- › remembering things (especially recent events or information)
- › organising themselves (manage time, tasks, bills, and environment)
- › making decisions
- › planning ahead
- › interacting with others
- › focusing on tasks and maintaining focus
- › following directions or multiple steps
- › managing emotions, thoughts, and behaviours
- › communicating ideas
- › finding their way around.

If any patterns emerge, consider cognitive screening.



What might the previous information indicate? (Cognitive domains)

Social cognition:

- › interacting with others
- › communicating ideas.

Executive function:

- › following directions or multiple steps
- › organising themselves (managing time, tasks, bills and environment)
- › making decisions
- › planning ahead
- › regulating behaviour.

Memory and learning:

- › remembering things (especially recent events or information).

Attention and concentration:

- › focusing on tasks and maintaining focus.

Visuospatial function:

- › finding their way around.

Adaptations to treatment examples

Memory and learning

Focus on the most important information, ask people to summarise, provide a written list of key points, take photos of information.

Social cognition

Encourage people to take notice of other people's reactions and work through any challenging situations with them.

Executive function

Use examples from a person's life when using therapy modalities.

Help and encourage people to use to-do lists.
Use short simple sentences.

Language

Use short sentences and consistent, familiar kupu/words. Avoid long words or clinical jargon.
Use alternative communication strategies like writing, pictures or body language gestures.

Remember to

Validate what the person in front of you is saying and reflect back what you are hearing.

Whakaohooho Manawa Ora - quick page references

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Cultural models



Micro-learnings to help you use Whakaohooho Manawa Ora

The micro-learning is available on our e-learning site, Pūkoro. You will need to create an account to access the module, which can be found in the Te Pou courses in the addiction section.



Do the cognitive connection cards work for you?

Please help us to continue delivering effective resources by completing an evaluation survey.

This will take less than five minutes.

