



Values informed practice

He mahi whai tikanga

Let's get real 

*Real Skills for working with people and whānau
with mental health and addiction needs*

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Kindness
Matters

Introduction

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

Our values inform and direct everything we do. In health, it starts with valuing the person sitting in front of you right now and everything they bring with them. The impact of personal and organisational values in providing health services is gaining worldwide recognition, particularly in mental health and addiction services.

In Aotearoa, New Zealand, it is expected that values in health services recognise and reflect the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Values across health services should reflect Māori world views.

We live and work with people from a broad range of cultures and life experiences. People's diverse values and perspectives inform their understanding of health and wellbeing.

All individual and organisational values have a direct influence on the outcomes for people and whānau. Working in a values informed way is person-centred and improves engagement which has a positive effect on outcomes. Quality health services rely on effective relationships with and between people, whānau and groups. Working in ways that recognise and acknowledge values enables the creation of stronger relationships and more responsive health and social services, leading to better outcomes. Prioritising values enables services to be more person and whānau centred (Fulford, 2011a).

Let's get real (Te Pou, 2018) is a framework of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills, relevant to everyone working with people experiencing mental health and addiction needs in any health setting. *Let's get real* highlights that values are at the core of health relationships and describes the interplay between values, attitudes and skills to promote more effective practices.

This resource explores values informed and values-based approaches that align with *Let's get real*. It describes how these approaches can be embedded into practice across health settings where people and whānau with mental health and addiction needs are accessing services.

What are values?

Many people describe their values as 'what they believe in'. This includes morals, ideals, principles and ethics. Values also include needs, wishes, preferences and the ways people express value judgements, both positive and negative (Fulford, 2011b).

A value is something which we personally or collectively have a preference for. This can include a personal focus on areas such as compassion, honesty, manaakitanga, whānau, education or wellbeing.

Our own values and beliefs are personal to us, evolve over time, are shaped by our culture and experiences. Values underpin all the decisions we make, for example, how we spend our free time, how we bring up our children, and how we are with our whānau. When working with people it is important to be aware of our own values and realise they are likely to be different to other people's world views.

Values are central to all relationships and develop within a cultural and contemporary context. The concept of values from a Māori perspective has been described by a number of writers as kaingākau (McLachlan, Wirihana, & Huriwai, 2017). For example, manaakitanga, or the practice of supporting and taking care of others, can be understood as the outcome of manaaki, the value of protecting the mana of others by showing generosity, care and support (Te Pou, 2018).

Diversity of values and cultural capability

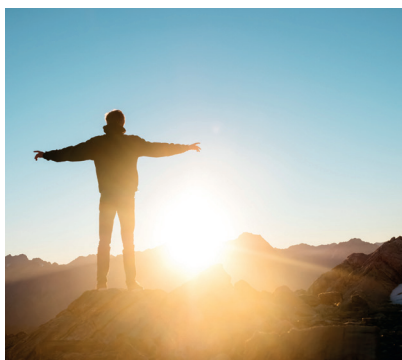
"By ...[people's] values we mean the unique preferences, concerns and expectations each ... [person] brings to a clinical encounter and which must be integrated into clinical decisions if they are to serve the ...[person]."
(Sackett et al., 2000, p.1)

Working in a values informed way requires understanding that people hold many diverse values and the importance of these different values for people. It is about openly acknowledging the cultural and social context in which a person's values originate and develop so their specific preferences can be understood and acknowledged. It is about acknowledging what is important for people.

Acknowledging differences in values is an important element of ensuring health services and practitioners are culturally responsive and person-centred. Values differ between and within different ethnic, cultural or population groups and may change over time. Working in a culturally competent way means being aware of cultural diversity and being able to work effectively and respectfully with people of different cultural backgrounds. Assumptions that all people within a group have the same values may be incorrect and leads to stereotyping.

In a Māori context, tikanga or customs are practices guided by Māori values. Health services can provide culturally responsive services if workers are familiar with and are able to work across different cultural dimensions. This requires awareness and understanding of different cultures including how they function and how people communicate (Whakaatere & Pohatu, 2011). When cultural factors are ignored, there can be negative impacts on people's satisfaction and health outcomes. For example, when whānau are not allowed to participate in planning then there is likely to be poor acceptance of a plan (George, Dogra, & Fulford, 2015). Cultural competence is the integration of the 'clinical and cultural' awareness and knowledge into a set of intentional behaviours.

The need to recognise, acknowledge and respect the diversity of cultural values is highlighted in *Let's get real* (Te Pou & Ministry of Health, 2018), *Let's get real: Disability* (Te Pou, 2014), and Real Skills Plus ICAMH/AOD (The Werry Centre, 2014). For example, the *Let's get real* Working with Māori Real Skill describes the importance of recognising the diversity of cultural beliefs held about whānau and having an open attitude to other spiritual values that might be considered essential to whānau wellbeing.



I love that my psychiatrist talks about spirituality with me and how she supports me. She has her own beliefs too, I respect that. It's not just about medication with her. When we discuss medications she really listens to my experience of them and sometimes we look for better options to try. I feel like we are a team and she is on my side.

Anne

What is values informed practice?

Values informed practice recognises that values influence what people see as most important in their lives and their vision for wellbeing and recovery.

As values influence all decisions and actions they are highly relevant to decision making in health contexts (Fulford, 2008). Sometimes a person's values become clear when working with them and making shared decisions about their treatment options, but sometimes they do not. Sound shared decision making based on understanding people's values improves the likelihood of positive outcomes. This involves recognising the interaction between values, awareness of our own conscious and unconscious biases, cultural safety and competence.

Working in a values informed manner means taking an intentional and integrated approach to applying values into health processes and combining three key components:

1. using the best available evidence
2. individual clinical expertise
3. the values and expectations of people (Fulford, 2011a; American Psychological Association, 2006; Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Quality of Health Care in America, 2001).

Why is values informed practice important?

The aim of values informed practice is to enable better experiences and outcomes for people and whānau accessing services.

The New Zealand Health Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2016) describes the direction of all health services as being 'people-powered' and 'people-centred'. To meet these aspirations, health providers need to work in partnership with people to understand their needs and values. This drives a more collaborative approach and a greater focus on processes and relationships to give people more control in addressing their health needs.

All people have values and needs that have a cultural basis which impacts how people access and experience healthcare (George et al., 2015). Values informed practice asks workers to understand their own values, question assumptions about people and how these may influence relationships, decisions and work. Examples of this might be an addiction practitioner coming from their own lived experience of recovery, rejecting the use of medication to help with mood disorders, or a mental health clinician avoiding involving whānau, to protect the person from distress. Another example might be a clinician making assumptions about why a person is not taking suggested medication without understanding the context of the person.



Most of the services we provide aren't very different to general clinics, except for kaupapa Māori services. The main difference here is that all the staff are LGBTI informed and sensitive. We value diversity and having open conversations. It's about the people – that's what matters.

Richard (youth worker)

Shared values

It is important to recognise that ‘shared’ values operate in all health systems. Organisational mission statements often include values such as compassion, respect and working together. Depending on the orientation of the organisation, these values may promote a particular approach of working within a health setting. Fulford’s model of values-based practice acknowledges that individuals’ and practitioners’ values operate within and are constrained by shared values (Fulford, 2011b).

Alongside this, many workers belong to professions or occupational groups where there are codes of conduct or ethical guidelines to guide practice. For example, the Nursing Council of New Zealand’s code of conduct is framed around four core values – respect, trust, partnership and integrity (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2012).

Consider...

- › How do organisational shared values relate to a worker’s own values or the values of a person accessing services?
- › How do workers and people accessing services reconcile any mismatch between the organisation values and their own values?





Let's get real values

Let's get real is a shared values-based framework for the Aotearoa, New Zealand health context. The **Let's get real** values were devised collaboratively by people with lived experience of mental health and addiction needs, their whānau and health workers. The **Let's get real** values are not intended to replace organisational values, but express fundamental shared values across health services. For this reason, these values are important for all people working in health services.



Respect

We respect people and whānau who are accessing health care, their world views, their values and the choices they make. We believe respect is fundamental to all human relationships.

Practice example:

Take time to listen to and hear people, to understand what's important to them, remember people's names and how to pronounce them correctly, negotiate appointment times, be on time yourself, and develop plans led by people that include what they value.



Partnership

We work in partnership with people and whānau who are accessing health care. We listen, hear and respect. We support choice, shared decision making and equity. We value the strengths and expertise that people and their whānau bring. We value the expertise of all colleagues, groups and services, and work in collaboration to support people and whānau.

Practice example:

People and their whānau are given full information about the choices available for support and treatment, including the option of no treatment. People and their whānau choose the option that they believe meets their needs. Responsibilities and risks are shared, we work as a team.



Hope

We believe that hope is fundamental to wellbeing, and that a life that has meaning and value for the person is always possible. We support people to have hope.

Practice example:

Workers genuinely believe and communicate that recovery and wellbeing are possible for all people and share stories of success. Workers acknowledge the tremendous courage and strength people have. There is always potential for things to be different than they are today.



Manaaki

We support, care for, tend to and show generosity to others in all that we do. We seek to uphold the dignity and protect and enhance the mana of others through our work. We take time to know people and what is important to them and to establish positive and authentic relationships.

Practice example:

All people have mana. People are warmly welcomed; we take care of the transitions between tapu and noa and engage with their whānau. Our assessments and reviews explicitly address physical aspects, wairua, identity and mauri. Time is taken to be with people and whānau, acknowledge and value their experiences and what they bring to create genuine, supportive relationships.



Whanaungatanga

We believe that a sense of connection and belonging is fundamental to wellbeing. We are in relationship with people and support their relationships with others, to enhance a sense of belonging for all. We value communities and connections to communities.

Practice example:

Health workers share where they are from, their cultural background and seek to make connections with people and their whānau. Workers purposefully identify the communities, relationships and connections people have and seek to support them.



Wellbeing

We focus on wellbeing, encompassing all dimensions of health: tinana, hinengaro, whānau and wairua. We support wellbeing as a key part of recovery.

Practice example:

People are supported to identify and achieve their own wellbeing goals across all dimensions of their lives. Workers understand that wellbeing is more than symptom management or accessing mental health, addiction and disability services. Wellbeing is defined by the person and whānau receiving services and what is meaningful for them.

Embedding values informed practice

Values informed practice can be put into action and embedded at individual, team, service, and organisational levels.

At an individual level this means we work in a way that reflects agreed shared values, while being aware of our own values and through taking a person-centred approach that focuses on the values of the people and whānau we are working with. When a person's values or preferences are not seen and acknowledged, they may disengage from a relationship with a worker.

At a service level, values informed practice is most likely to occur if there is both a person-centred and a team approach. A team approach means that teams in organisations have the opportunity as a team to explore their own personal and professional values, their shared values and the impact these have on service delivery. Different perspectives on values are balanced within teams taking account of the values of people and whānau accessing services.

Consider...

If an agreed shared value as a team is 'respect'. How might the team demonstrate this?

How can a team resolve conflicts between identified values and organisational requirements?

At an organisational level, values informed practice is likely to be reflected in person-centred policies, in job descriptions and in recruitment informed by values-based frameworks such as *Let's get real*.

Organisational development

Attention to policy, drives change at an organisational level to in turn, support practice development.

Policy developed through a values approach might, for example, focus on the value of partnership to ensure policy is co-produced with people who have lived experience of mental health and addiction needs. Policies can also incorporate values in all aspects of organisational and service development from human resources initiatives to more accessible treatment environments and approaches. Services or organisations taking a values informed approach might incorporate the shared values of *Let's get real* into recruitment policies, and processes, to promote alignment between workers' values and the organisation's values. For example, interview questions used in recruitment ask where and how an interviewee demonstrates values in their work. Policies that are values-based, which recognise and respond to the values of people and whānau accessing services, are more likely to result in person and whānau centred positive outcomes (Fulford, 2008).



When the team that was working with me didn't support me to try living independently I felt disrespected, unheard and misunderstood. I don't like what's happened and wonder if I am being treated like this because they don't believe in me. I feel so disempowered.

Sarah

Learning and development

Training, mentoring, coaching and supervision that focuses on raising awareness, facilitating reasoning (critical thinking), and increasing knowledge and communication skills, encourages workers to integrate values informed approaches into their everyday work (Fulford, 2011a).

Raising awareness involves developing an understanding of what values are and how they drive and inform behaviour and decisions. This means making values explicit by exploring assumptions and discovering how our preferences can shape our practice and relationships.

It is useful for workers to consider real-life examples and to examine their values with colleagues so that assumptions can be tested through discussion. Paying attention to language when talking to and about the people we work with is one way of identifying values at play (Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui, 2017). One example of this is noticing when practitioners refer to people by their 'diagnoses' rather by name.

Reasoning involves the use of critical thinking processes to explore the values that influence different situations. Hearing other workers' responses to a situation can show there are many different possible responses to a set of circumstances (Godbold & Lees, 2016). Not only do different values lead people to make different decisions, but people can reach different conclusions, despite saying they hold the same values. This challenges the assumption that everyone would have the same response to a situation. The knowledge gained by increasing awareness of and using clear reasoning processes about the influence of values, can then be applied along with knowledge from other evidence.

There is a risk that people may see organisational shared values or mission statements as irrelevant to their day-to-day practice. Reflecting on organisational values in a team is a good way of encouraging people to consider collective values. Different opinions about values within teams should not be seen as a problem as it reveals the diversity of values and encourages people to think about their own, others' and collective values.

Using opportunities such as team workshops, mentoring or supervision sessions enables people to reflect on, challenge and talk about values. People may become aware of differences between their own values and their behaviour and actions.

Without a focus on awareness it is difficult to work with values at any level, in a conscious way.



I'll never forget the time we decided to use the *Let's get real* Human resource tool and asked our job applicants to use three short phrases or words to describe people who access mental health or addiction services. Up until then it had been hard to decide who the preferred applicant was, but this question proved to be the tipping point and quickly highlighted if their values matched ours through the language they used.

Joanne

Consider...

- › Can a worker develop a respectful relationship and support someone to solve a problem when their values and goals are so different?
- › How are shared values that have been developed by organisations, professional bodies or the wider sector demonstrated or 'made real' by people in their work, eg how is a wellbeing focus evident?
- › How do people 'own' values so that they are not just a list on a website that no one really thinks about, eg how is hope conveyed?

Communication skills are essential to working in a values informed way. Workers need to talk with people in a way that allows them to express their own needs for treatment, recovery and wellbeing.

For teams, open communication allows for more effective working, but there can be many different responses to any situation based on people's values. These underlying differences of values can be a source of poor communication, difficulties in teamwork, and shared decision making. When team members become aware of these differences through open communication, their ability to work together and with people improves (Fulford, 2008).

Understanding the diversity of values within a team means workers' skills and approaches can be matched with the different preferences of people accessing services.

Working in partnership

Partnership, a core value of *Let's get real*, is described as one of the most important elements of values informed practice, where decision making is undertaken by people and workers working together (Fulford, 2011b). Good decisions are based on being purposeful in establishing a collaborative relationship between the person and practitioner (McGonagle, Jackson, & Kane, 2015).

People with experiences of accessing mental health and addiction services describe the importance of relationships, where values and attitudes are often rated over technical skills. The effectiveness of workers' technical skills are largely dependent on the establishment of a relationship where there is trust and support (Hewitt, 2009).

Partnerships between health providers and people accessing health services results in more people-centred approaches that are responsive to people and their needs. Partnership is important when working through conflicts in values and accepting that our values may be different to those of the person and whānau we are working with.

At an organisational level, the key to successful partnerships and collaborations is being clear about the values on which the partnership is based.



I work in mental health. Our team had a workshop on values. It was a really interesting day, I found out stuff about other people I didn't know even though I've known them for ages. We developed some ideas about how we could work better using our agreed values. I really liked this, we all felt more aligned and positive about going forward together.

Carla



Conclusion

Values informed practice in healthcare is:

- › people-centred
- › based around the person and their own goals and vision of wellbeing
- › based on partnership
- › reflected throughout an organisation
- › providing people with control over their own health and the services they access.

A values informed approach helps workers become aware that values inform all decision making, whether this is explicitly acknowledged or not.

Supporting values informed practice requires attention to one's own values, team values and organisational values. Awareness of our own values is necessary in order to demonstrate them. Without explicit awareness of values, assumptions are often made about what people want and need when they access services. Achieving this requires communication skills and trusted relationships with people, teams and our organisations.

To bring values to life in our work, we need to recognise and acknowledge:

- › our own values and the impact they have on how we work with people
- › the diversity of values that people hold, how values work in a belief system, cultural safety, and competence
- › 'shared values' or the wider frameworks of values to which we might subscribe within particular contexts, eg organisational values or those values articulated in *Let's get real*
- › how to work with and embed values informed practice at organisational, team and practice levels.

Let's get real expresses important shared values that were developed by and for people with lived experience of mental health and addiction needs, whānau and workers. Conscious use of these values promotes effective, respectful relationships that support recovery and wellbeing.

Facilitating discussion and transparency within teams around values leads to awareness and informed solutions. Talking about values in teams and in supervision will help to develop awareness and understanding of how the beliefs and attitudes we hold may interfere with or enhance the establishment of trust relationships within health settings.

Actively adopting values informed practice will support improved engagement, outcomes and wellbeing for people who experience mental health and addiction needs and their whānau in all health settings.





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