

# **Developing challenging young people: Honouring their authentic story**

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## **Abstract**

Worldwide, a multitude of adventure-based outdoor programmes exist that are designed to develop ‘challenging’ young people. Recently, Aotearoa/ New Zealand has seen a resurgence of interest from central government in implementing programmes for such young people that draw on military models of practise. The philosophy and format of adventure therapy programmes implemented by St John of God Waipuna in Otautahi/Christchurch Aotearoa/ New Zealand present a strong contrast to these military-style programmes. Evaluation of these programmes suggests that if adventure-based programmes are to be effective in developing young people and sustaining change, they must focus on developing all aspects of the young person.

This approach is grounded in building respectful and meaningful relationships among everyone involved with the programme, and that approach, in turn, is predicated on power sharing and taking responsibility for oneself. The over-arching aim is to give young people a sense of ownership. This is achieved by an intentional shift throughout the programme from dependence, through independence and on to interdependence. The paper interweaves consideration of these aspects, especially in terms of how they have informed the design and delivery of the Waipuna programmes, with various models of personal development and leadership, along with the self-reported narrative of a young person involved in one of these programmes.

**Key words:** adventure, therapy, development, at-risk, adolescents, respectful relationships, interdependence, ownership.

## Introduction

*What we do is important, but how we do it is what makes the difference.*

Young people are required to participate in a world that has been created by preceding generations, often without input from their generation. We maintain that any setting, whether school, church, community, family, workplace, outdoor programmes, which gives young people little opportunity to “map and walk their journey” into adult life limits their ability to make a meaningful and satisfying life for themselves, let alone make a meaningful contribution to this planet we inhabit together. Conversely, situations that help young people gain respect for themselves and their abilities, help them feel their contribution is important, give them resiliency, and provides them with hope and *aroha*.<sup>1</sup> These situations, we believe, arise out of settings, both formal and informal, where young people are able to form respectful, robust relationships with more experienced others (usually adults) who are prepared to walk with them as they transition through a state of dependence through independence and on to interdependence. Adventure therapy programmes offer one such setting.

Adventure, by introducing us to challenging encounters and experiences, takes us to new places within ourselves. As the following definition suggests:

The word “Adventure” arises from ancient Latin definitions, originally meaning ‘a movement towards’, and more recently meaning ‘movement into the unknown’. “Therapy” is from Greek origins, meaning ‘to pay attention to’. As an intentional process, *bush adventure therapy* may be said to ‘pay attention to the possibility that individuals can move towards greater wellbeing’ (Pryor, 2009, p.16).

Adventure Therapy can open up new parameters of understanding for them and for those of us guiding them, and it allows our spirituality, connectedness and cultural identities to breathe upon our respective life stories so that we can make new meaning of our pasts, experience growth in the present, and bring hope into our futures.

The majority of adventure therapy programmes are implemented by adults for adolescents, many of whom are designated as “at risk”, or to use the term we prefer to use; “challenging” in terms of their behaviour, learning, and life skills. How do those of us delivering these programmes balance our philosophical beliefs with the needs of the young people? How do we support them to make reasoned choices, take responsibility for their actions, and build respect for themselves and others? How do we honour, respect and do justice to their journey to develop their own philosophy of understanding? Why should they invest in us and our philosophy—after all, in their view, it is we who ‘stuffed the world’. How do we create therapeutic enhancing environments for young people who consider themselves “bombproof and bulletproof”?

These are the questions that the Waipuna Trust in Otautahi/Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand, has kept in mind since first implementing its adventure therapy programmes for challenging young people. These questions inform the account we give in this paper of Waipuna and the principles and practice underpinning its programmes. We begin this account with a brief overview of the characteristics of adventure therapy programmes, followed by an outline of Waipuna’s adventure therapy programmes. This

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<sup>1</sup> This is a Māori word for love, affection, empathy. A glossary of Māori words used in this article appears towards the end of the paper.

is followed by a summary of an evaluation of these programmes undertaken in 2007, and of the success factors and themes that emerged from that evaluation. We then discuss these themes in more detail, drawing in particular on the models that underpin the programmes' principles and practice. During this section of the paper, we draw on the experiences of Ihaka, a young man who recently participated in the programme.

### **Adventure Therapy: History and Characteristics**

In 1997, Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards undertook a meta-analysis examining “the effects [for young people] of adventure programmes on a diverse array of outcomes such as self concept, locus of control and leadership” (p. 43). The authors concluded from their analysis, which focused on 96 studies featuring over 12,000 participants, that “adventure therapy programmes can obtain notable outcomes and have particularly strong, lasting effects” (p. 77).

Jansen's (2004) outline of both the nature and the strengths of adventure therapy approaches presents a similar picture. Such programmes, Jansen explained, are characterised by an engaging and action-orientated setting within an unfamiliar environment, which serves as a catalyst for change. The programmes typically focus on finding solutions, on gaining immediate understanding of the consequences of actions, and on success. Staff facilitate supportive peer groups, opportunity to process intense emotions, and opportunity to create new stories about one's life. The programmes offer approachable professionals and role-modelling, and an overall approach underpinned by the principle of developing young people holistically. The literature also cautions that not all adventure therapy programmes are inherently good, in particular that some may have very limited long term outcomes (Hattie et al., 1997; Jansen, 2004).

### **The Waipuna Programmes**

The St John of God Waipuna (Waipuna) is a service of St John of God Hauora Trust. It has, for over 25 years, operated a range of services and programmes that supports young people and their families who encounter risk from poverty, abuse, neglect, violence, low self-esteem, addiction to alcohol and drugs, and / or other addictive behaviours

Adventure Therapy at Waipuna integrates Maori (NZ indigenous people) concepts and understanding into its programme as part of honouring its commitment and belief in Te Tiriti O Waitangi (treaty between Maori - NZ indigenous people, and Pakeha - visitor settlers, signed in 1840).

The Adventure Therapy (AT) programme featured in this paper has evolved over 10yrs. Its initial philosophy was to target behavioural changes needed so as to allow a young person to fit into set outcomes, and has evolved to having an overt focus on meeting the developmental needs of each person within the family and community that surround them. Young people are referred by self, other agencies/schools and the interview process identifies a match between the young person and the programme. The age range is 13-19 years and groups are single gender with 80% of total participants being male.

Each programme differs according to the need of participants but includes;

- Interview with participant and family (inclusive of first three weeks of day programme)
- 12-16 weeks - one full day per week with AT experiences
- Family AT day

- 4 hrs per week meeting one on one with young person (2 seen each week)
- Participant and parent/guardian evenings (four evening sessions, each two hours in duration)
- Natural world journey of 6 days in area of participants' ancestors
- Family natural world weekend
- Celebration evening

Selection on to a programme involves the young person being informed about all aspects of the program and given time to think about it. If the young person is still interested in the programme, Waipuna staff set up an interview with the young person's *whānau*, followed by extended periods of time to ensure the young person makes a fully informed decision to engage in the programme. During this time they and a Waipuna staff member sit down together to talk about the programme, the nature of the young person's involvement on it, and what outcomes they hope and want for the young person - a "you chose, we chose" consensual approach is taken. The interview may also clarify that the timing is not right or there is not a match with the programme and the family. Once admitted to the programme, the young person spends the first four days (over four weeks) experiencing the medium (outdoor experiences) and processes. Following this a further interview takes place where the young person can now make an informed choice for further involvement.

Not everyone who applies to engage in one of Waipuna's adventure therapy pursuits is admitted to it. An important aspect of the facilitator's role is to identify from applicants and their *whānau* which individuals will benefit from both the overall philosophy of the programmes, in general, and the outdoor (adventure therapy) experiences, in particular. Contrary to popular belief, engaging in outdoor pursuits and the processes surrounding them are not always good for everyone at all points in time. As Pearce and Boyes (2003) found from their New Zealand-based research on the processes that programme managers use to select adventure therapy participants from among challenging youth, young people's "readiness" to participate and their desire to make changes in their life are important selection criteria.

The natural world journey is scheduled after the day component and the parent/young person evenings. The young people receive a letter from the facilitators inviting them to apply to go or applying not to go. Further interviews follow with all young people thus maintaining the developmental approach regardless of the choices made.

Data we have gathered show that 80% of the programmes' participants have little interest in going away on an actual physical (natural world) journey when asked at Week 2 of the day component of a programme. However, by Week 12, the situation has reversed, with 80% of participants writing a letter applying to participate in a natural world experience. The weeks leading up to this opportunity allow each young person to make an informed choice about whether to apply to go on the natural world journey.

. The programmes have evolved from experiences that tended to be imposed on the young people, to one in which the needs of young people are the reference point. The journey is now theirs, which means that the facilitators within the programmes must have a sufficiently flexible approach to ensure a progression of experiences that meet the developmental needs of individual programme participants. Over this time of change, we have developed and trialled, in collaboration with the young people, various tools and models that we consider helped us address the questions raised above. We emphasise that the tools are core only because individual facilitators take those tools

and use and shape them in ways that suit their own ways of working *with* and *alongside* young people.

### **Journal Writing**

An important component of the natural world journey is journal writing. According to West and Crompton (2001), journal writing enables young people to understand the relevance of their experiences. This is because journal writing requires self-reflection, both individually and in group contexts. Journal writing thus helps young people to make sense of and to learn from their experiences in ways that benefit their skills acquisition and social interactions with others. These gains, say West and Crompton, tend to be transferred to the home environment. Cassidy (2001) makes the important point that the value of journal-based reflection is not determined by programme staff and facilitators; rather the value lies in what the experience means for the individual participants and how they use that learning to advance and inform their own understandings of their lives, past, present, and future. Invariably, the ability for the young person to experience, then reflect, then write, and finally speak their truth is a part of the value of narrative approaches with young people. The ability to transfer new knowledge to various other circumstances in their lives is significantly enhanced. Because this unconditional supported writing allows young people to tell authentic (their truth) stories, those stories begin to merge with their bigger life stories, helping them gain new understanding and engendering hope within their lives.

During the wilderness journey, reflective journaling starts on Day 1. The focus is on narrative. Progressions initially begin with participants answering questions and then moving to sentences and on to stories. Participants are asked to write in their journals each night. They do not have to write for long, but they must write something. It does not matter if their writing is not well formed; their “unpolluted” writing is what has meaning within the world of their truth. This comment from one young person on Day 4 of the wilderness journey is typical: “My confidence is getting deeper and deeper and my thoughts more usable.” On Day 5 of the wilderness journey, the programme facilitators interview each participant. The focus is on the young person’s inner journey (as opposed to his or her outer journey). Each person then spends the rest of the day writing his or her story of both the inner and the outer journey. Typical questions to spark this writing would be; “what have you noticed about yourself in this time away? what thoughts have been your friend along the way? what has excited you and who has known about it? what would your friends/family be saying if they observed you over the last 6 days?”

### **Success factors emerging from the evaluation process**

In 2007, Waipuna commissioned an extensive evaluation of the impacts of the adventure therapy programmes on the young people involved in them. The researchers opted to use qualitative research methods to gather and analyse data because they considered this approach the best one for encouraging the participants to readily discuss relevant matters with them. Interviews were conducted with four focus groups, comprised of the different people associated with the programmes, 80% of all invited accepted this invitation. The groups were the young people, their parents or care givers, key community representatives, and the program facilitators.

The interviews were conducted with one researcher interviewing, one writing and each session was recorded for transcribing and analysis, these interviews typically took 1-2 hours and involved groups of between 6 - 12 people. The researchers used thematic

analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) to explore the data and determine major themes and success factors.

One of the major positive impacts of the programmes that the researchers identified was the development of healthy personal and social skills among the young people involved. The researchers noted improved school work, higher school attendance rates, and improved relationships with peers, family and adults. They also noted that the skills the young people developed expanded to influence other sectors of their lives, such as school and the wider community.

The researchers attributed much of the success of the programmes to the facilitators' skill and ability to form effective relationships with the young people. Every focus group gave examples of how facilitators used adventure therapy experiences to develop strong relationships with the young people, and, from there, help instil positive change in their behaviours and life skills. The facilitators also identified these relationships as the particular strength of the programme, and said that the aspect of the relationship most crucial to success was trust. Trust, they said, enabled the programmes' facilitators to challenge—especially through the adventure therapy experiences—the young people with the idea that the power to change resided within them. This process, the facilitators explained, helped young people develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own journey and outcomes.

The young people's parents and caregivers also acknowledged the broader impact the programme had on their parenting skills and the relationships within their families and their family support networks. They reported growing in confidence as a result of the changes they saw in their children, the support they received from facilitators, the skills they learned at the GAIN (parenting) programme, and the informal support networks they developed with other parents and caregivers on programme courses.

In summary, three key themes emerged from the evaluation which are embedded as core principles in the Waipuna programmes. (1) Development of the whole person; (2) Respectful and meaningful relationships; and (3) Building ownership through the sharing of power. These principles are discussed in the following sections, drawing on models of personal development and leadership from the literature, and the community perspectives gathered in the research. Throughout our discussion, we interweave a journal narrative from a young man, Ihaka, who participated in one of Waipuna's adventure therapy programmes, and make explicit how these principles are practically applied in programmes.

### **Ihaka's story**

Ihaka was a 14-year-old young man who came to Waipuna because of experiencing some major challenges in his life both at home and at school. He wrote his journal account over many days, while involved in a Waipuna programme called Te Tira Horomaka. (Te – the / Tira – travelling party / Horomaka – geographical area of Banks Peninsula). Ihaka has given his consent to use his writing and story within the context of this paper, his writing as it appears in this paper is his own authentic authorship. Ihaka self narrated story has been shared with audiences throughout New Zealand, Australia, and Scotland, each time the audience has been invited to write brief notes telling him how his story has affected them. He now has over 600 pieces of feedback and he continues to be humbled and moved that people think his story has added meaning to other people's lives. The ongoing therapeutic value continues well after the programme has finished its delivery. As Ihaka's story unfolds, we make links between it and the key success factors/themes.

## Theme 1: Developing the Whole Person

### My Journey Writings: Ihaka Moody

Today I woke up with a pit in my stomach. I was dreading the week ahead and didn't want to leave my stable position at home. I knew that I would get homesick and was a little bit scared. I wasn't sure how I would fit into the group.

When we arrived at the beach I was sort of hoping that I was in the wrong place or missed them but as soon as I saw them I knew that my journey had begun.

The work was tiring and I was getting frustrated and in a way wished I had of either slept in or just not come, but I knew that was selfish because so many people wanted to come on the trip and *I was chosen*. It felt great when I reached the top of the hill and I felt happy when we were standing on the rocks with the names in them. *It made me feel like I was standing on top of the world.*

I started to wonder where we were going now because I couldn't see any route down. Then came the dreaded gorse bush, it hurt and it was everywhere.

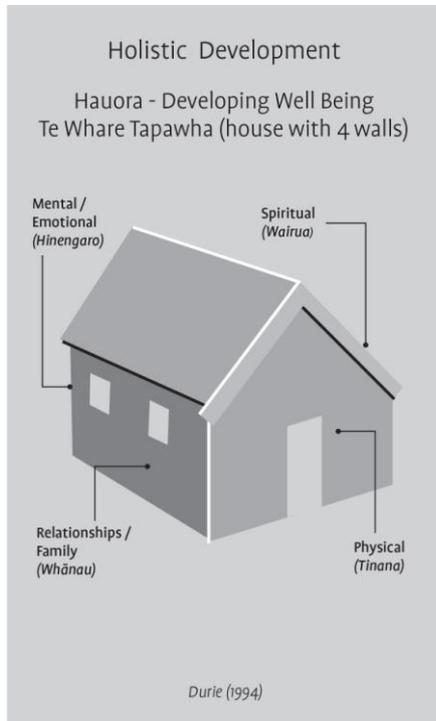
The campsite was ok and *I was feeling a lot of emotions when we started writing the pages. Then when I showed my paper to Bevan [facilitator] and we started talking and I shared a lot of them with him.*

One of them was how I get angry a lot when I am at home/school. And how instead of taking control of my own problems I take out a lot of that anger on other people. Another way I let go of anger is by swearing which I think is wrong. I feel a lot happier now and I think that from now on at home, school or wherever I am I will be nicer and more considerate of other people.

How do you develop a person? Answers to these questions are found in the various models of development that underpin the Waipuna programmes. We consider three here. The main principle informing the first two models is that development of the whole person must be holistic if we are to have healthy communities and societies. The third considers how the developmental journey of young people from dependence to independence might be best expedited.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Dr Mason Durie (1994) developed a Māori philosophy toward health that is based on a holistic health and wellness model called Te Whare Tapa Wha - the house with 4 walls (see Figure 1). For Durie, health is underpinned by four dimensions representing the basic beliefs of life—*te taha tinana* (physical health); *te taha hinengaro* (psychological or mental health); *te taha wairua* (spiritual health); and *te taha whānau* (family health). These four dimensions are represented by the four walls of a house. Each wall is necessary to ensure the strength and symmetry of the building. Thus, if a troubled young person is to gain wellbeing and resilience, his or her needs in all of these areas must be met. Durie's model also suggests that the various cultures we come from express holistic development from their own perspectives.

**Figure 1: A Māori conception of holistic development: model developed by Durie (1994)**



*Taha tinana* describes our capacity for sound physical growth and development. Good physical health is required for optimal development; our physical “being” supports our essence and shelters us from the external environment. For Māori, the physical dimension is just one aspect of health and wellbeing and cannot be separated from the aspect of mind, spirit, and family. *Taha hinengaro* (mental health) describes our capacity to communicate, to think and to feel. Thoughts, feelings and emotions are integral components of the body and the soul.

*Taha wairua* (spiritual health) describes our capacity for faith and wider communication. Our physical and mental health is related to unseen and unspoken energies; the spiritual essence of a person is his or her life force. Spiritual health determines us as individuals and as a collective; it “tells” us who and what we are, where we have come from, and where we are going. *Taha whānau* (family

health) relates to our capacity to belong, to care and to share; individuals are part of wider social systems. *Whānau* or family provides us with the strength to be who we are. *Whānau* is also the link to our ancestors—our ties with the past, the present, and the future. Understanding the importance of *whānau* and how it contributes to illness and how it assists in curing illness is fundamental to understanding health issues, especially for Māori.

Another model of youth development underpinning the Waipuna programmes is the Circle of Courage (see Figure 2), which grew out of North American indigenous philosophy and resilience research and focuses on the development goals of generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence (Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, 2002). The Circle of Courage is a philosophy that integrates what Brendtro et al. consider to be the best of Western educational thought with the wisdom of indigenous cultures and emerging research on positive youth development. The model has four core values: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

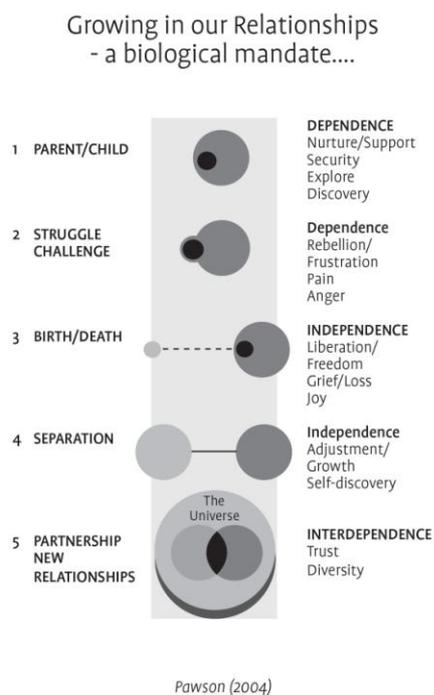


**Figure 2: The circle of courage: model developed by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2002)**

As is evident from the figure, the model is represented by a circle—the medicine wheel—that is divided into quadrants. The circle is sacred and suggests the interconnectedness of life. It also expresses the sacredness of the number four—the four directions (East, West, North, South), the four elements (wind, water, fire, earth) of the universe, and the four races (red, white, black, yellow). Each quadrant of the circle of courage stands for a central value - belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

This third model outlined in Figure 3 describes the changes in our relationships that we encounter as we grow from being a child, to an adolescent, and finally to an adult. This process is biologically mandated—it is a natural and necessary part of our lives. The circles represent the growth and separation of a young person from his or her parents and caregivers. The descriptions on the right denote some of the characteristics likely to occur during each stage of our developing relationships.

**Figure 3: Growing in our relationships: model developed by Pawson (2004)**



The essence of the process outlined in Figure 3 is that, as we grow, we seek to gain more say over our lives (locus of control), a happenstance that can create conflict with those who have previously supported us. The Waipuna maintains that the sole purpose of any developmental experience with young people should be to give voice to their life story; once they and we hear it, we are all in a better position to avoid this conflict.

Many of the young people we encounter during our work at Waipuna are living a story full of problems, labels, issues, deficits, and negativity. Wisdom is inherent in all of us, and we need experiences and relationships that give us the ability to discover what we already have and know, thus allowing us to create the beginnings of a new story. There is a vast difference between the premise that young people are empty vessels that need filling up with our wisdom/knowledge and

the premise that young people are inherently wise and knowledgeable, and who need environments and relationships that allow them to discover what this aspect of themselves and then to contribute their wisdom to the world we inhabit together.

### ***Programme example: Needs-focussed flexible programme design***

The underpinning theories contained in the three models are seen in the structure of the Waipuna programmes, which are built around meeting the developmental needs (emotional, physical, intellectual, social and spiritual) of young people. Each young person, with facilitator guidance, selects programme activities that accord with where the young person is “at” and which then allows him or her to progress through various experiences, which again are primarily of the young person’s choosing. Choice is important because Waipuna does not want its programmes to

provide environments of situational change in which young people are put under so much stress and pressure that they have to change without necessarily buying into the change. Imposed change, we believe, equates with short-term, non-lasting situational change in the young person. Positive developmental change, brought about by the individual being able to choose the growth and change trajectory, equates with long-term, lifelong change. Waipuna programmes focus on meeting the needs of the whole person inclusive of the wider relationships that surround a young person's life. For example in Aotearoa/New Zealand the indigenous Maori people have concepts of spirituality that are important in forming their world view which without make it difficult for them to fully develop.

## **Theme 2: Respectful and Meaningful Relationships**

### **My Journey Writings: Ihaka Moody**

Today was completely different to yesterday. *Somehow I woke up feeling a little bit happy.* I felt a bit nervous when we put the kayaks out in the water. It was so hard at the start and even turning was a problem. It was scary when we got caught on the rocks and I started to get angry when we couldn't turn to get out of the waves. As soon as we swapped over it was all good until our boat flipped over, I was afraid that I might drown. If I couldn't undo my skirt so I just panicked, and pushed off the boat. In a way I was glad that I was in a double hull because me and Karape were a good team and we always had someone beside us for support.

I was actually disappointed when I found out we weren't riding the bikes *but that all went away when I saw my Nana and Granddad. I was so pleased to see them and it was great to be able to have a laugh and some kai with them as well.* It was sad when I left but I know I would see them again soon. I think that I handled my swearing well today. And I kept my anger to a minimum.

When I was at the front of the group it made me feel like I belonged somewhere because I had to control the pace of the entire group. *With this also came a lot of responsibility.* The bike ride was awesome I had so much fun.

I have great respect for my Nana and Granddad. They have been so good to me and even though sometimes I admit that I am a nuisance, they have always been good to me and brought me up with good morals. It makes me feel happy when I see all of the things I have in life and see the way I could have turned out.

I never really knew my father ... one day I might want to meet him but I'm still not sure because I might be disappointed.

The reasons that I like my dad are because he brought me into this beautiful earth and because he chose to bring me into this earth through my mother.

And I love my mum, she's awesome. Even though she wasn't able to bring me up herself, she still stood by me and put me in the best care she could.

I think *if my dad saw me now he would be happy with the way I turned out and the hands that care for me now...*

What type of relationship best fits the need of the developing adolescent who has the innate desire to be the author of their own life, to enhance the journey through independence to interdependence and thus grow into contributing young adults who can have relationships that are healthy for themselves and all around them? Counselling

literature is unanimous in stating that the strength of the “therapeutic relationship” is the most significant factor in the development of healthy outcomes for a client. Rogers (1960), the founder of person-centred counselling, coined the phrase “unconditional positive regard” as a prerequisite for any effective therapy.

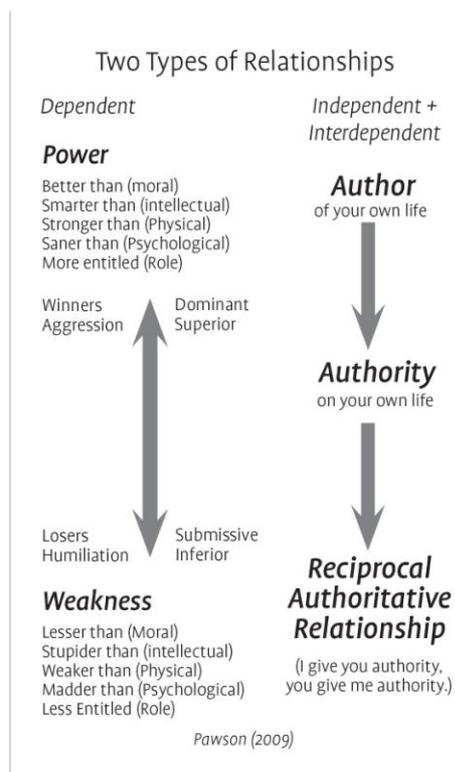
In 2003, an extensive educational research project titled *Te Kōtahitanga*, conducted by researchers at Waikato University in Aotearoa/New Zealand, sought to investigate how to improve the educational achievement of disengaged Māori students in mainstream secondary school classrooms. One of the main approaches of the research was to talk extensively with Māori about their educational experiences.

The Māori students, those parenting these students and their principals (and some of their teachers) saw that the most important influence on Māori students’ educational achievement was the quality of the in-class face-to-face relationships and interactions between the teachers and Māori students. In contrast, the majority of teachers suggested that the major influence on Māori students’ educational achievement was the children themselves and/or their family/whānau circumstances, or systemic/structural issues. (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 1)

The researchers concluded that deficit theorising by teachers is the major impediment to Māori students’ educational achievement because it results in teachers having low expectations of Māori students. This, in turn, creates a downward spiralling, self-fulfilling prophecy of Māori student underachievement and failure. Bishop et al.’s research has had a strong impact across on educational provision in New Zealand, particularly with respect to highlighting the importance of a reciprocal trusting relationship between teacher and student.

Figure 4 outlines two types of relationship that young people encounter in our society as they consciously and unconsciously seek to have their developmental needs

met. With the onset of puberty, the relationships that characterised the early stage of young people’s lives tend to become less central as the desire to be the “authors” of their own lives takes over. At this point, young people generally want adults to relate to them in ways that allow these youngsters to have some authority over what happens to them.



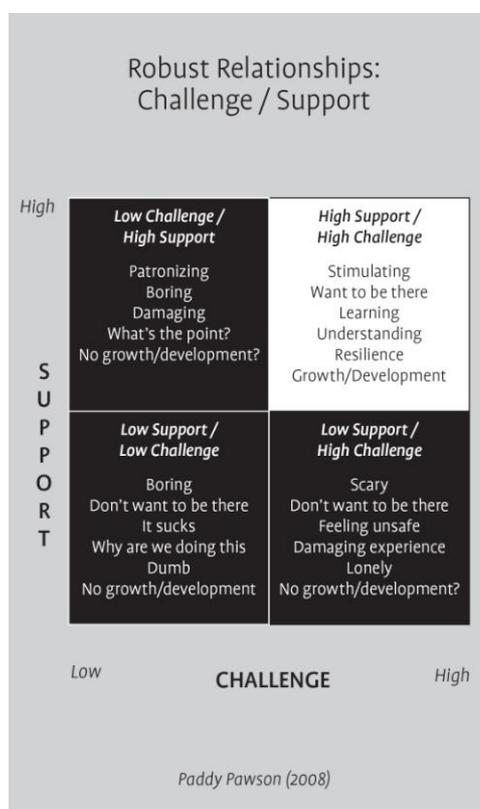
**Figure 4: Characteristics of dependent and independent relationships: model developed by Pawson (2009)**

In Figure 4, the relationship on the left fits within a dependence framework and is characterised by power/weakness. The person on the receiving end of power typically feels a sense of weakness, which leads him or her to want to have power over others. The process becomes one of a vicious cycle because both parties seek not to feel weak. Ultimately, the downward spiral ends in the destruction of the relationship. Also, because the relationship is a very dependent one, it does not allow growth or development. This kind of relationship produces temporary situational change at best, and perpetuates power relations at worst.

In contrast, the relationship on the right is characterised by independence and interdependence. We all have a biological mandate to become responsible for our lives; this mandate gives each of us the impetus and drive to be the authority on our own life. But the mandate will only be realised if the relationships that surround young people are reciprocal in nature, that is, each person in the relationship gives the other (or others) permission to be the authority on his or her own life. However, the other exercises that right by honouring and respecting those around him or her. The reciprocal relationship is somewhat different to a friendship relationship where the energy can be one way; when we engage in reciprocal authority relationships, we give one another conscious and unconscious consent/permission to step out with us on the pathways to development that we traverse during the various stages of our lives.

A respectful and meaningful relationship is also one that is characterised by the twin imperatives of high challenge and high support. Figure 5 depicts four quadrants that blend combinations of low and high challenge and support. The programme has found that environments of high challenge and high support are more conducive to effecting long term development. The black quadrants tend to lead to situational change. Wachtel and McCold (2001) in the restorative justice literature refer to a similar diagram as the Social Discipline Window, which describes 4 similar environments; neglectful, punitive, permissive and restorative.

**Figure 5: Characteristics of robust relationships: model developed by Pawson (2008)**



We consider that the staff of many programmes and organisations that claim to be focused on youth development use the right language but offer “youth development” programmes through relationships between programme staff and young people that are punitive or coercive in nature. The need to control young people through reward and coercion is often at the heart of these “relationships”. There is a public perception that coercion works—the “a bit of discipline never hurt me” brigade. Unfortunately, we consider that schools and educational settings are often the worst for using coercive methods to “control” young people.

We need to ask ourselves if the change we hope to see in young people is being brought about by power based relationships, in which the adult is the one providing the intrinsic or extrinsic motivators. We maintain that genuine change for young people happens only when they experience environments, situations, and relationships that are meaningful to them within the context of their respective developmental journeys. Change does not become meaningful or long-term for individuals until it becomes one that *they* have internalised and not had imposed on them. We note here that sometimes young people do need extrinsic motivators to instigate change, but these motivators should be gradually removed in accordance with the goal of supporting intrinsic motivators.

***Programme example: Positive relationships between participants and whanau***

McKay et al.’s (2007) evaluation of the Waipuna programmes showed that, with respect to the building of positive relationships between participants, facilitators and others in their lives, the line of positive impact starts with a facilitators’ respectful relationship with the participant. This then sets the scene for the culture of relationships both within and outside (transfer) the programme, followed by their family, then their peers, followed by the school and then the wider community. The programmes’ resources and energy follow the above sequence, with family receiving the following interventions.

- After the interview process, the young person, parent(s)/caregiver(s) and other supporters commit to four evening sessions, each two hours long, of a facilitated, interactive engagement on the issues that impact on their home lives.
- After the natural world journey (young people only), the participant’s families gather for a family adventure weekend in a wilderness location. This opportunity offers two adventure experiences and two therapeutic sessions, each one and a half hours in duration.

All participants in these sessions are asked to complete evaluations at the end of them. This comment from a parent is of a kind we often see:

*The relationship the boys have with adults has changed. They are more confident with adults. I have had comments from others in the community that have been very impressed with the way the boys communicate and their confidence. This course has bridged the gap between parents and teenagers (Parent of participant, 2010).*

### Theme 3: Building Ownership through Sharing Power

#### My Journey Writings: Ihaka Moody

*Ko Aoraki te maunga  
Ko Waitaki te awa  
Ko Takitimu te waka  
Ko Ngai Tahu te iwi  
Ko Ihaka toku ingoa*

[Aoraki (Mount Cook) is my mountain  
Waitaki is my river  
Takitimu is the canoe on which my ancestors arrived (into Aotearoa)  
Ngai Tahu is my tribe  
Isaac is my name]

To me this means the places and tools my ancestors used to use a long long time ago.

I feel happy when I see or say this because *it makes me feel like I really belong in the tribe*. And I can see where my ancestors grew up. I guess in a way this is to me like a family tree. This tells me where I came from.

Before I came on Te Tira Horomaka I never thought I would truly be able to express my feelings. But as I have found on this journey it's ok to express yourself to others. And there is nothing wrong with speaking the real truth. It feels good to be able to let off some steam. And instead of keeping everything bottled up inside, actually express yourself and let it all out.

On Te Tira Horomaka, I have discovered that you don't always have to do things for yourself. *Sometimes you can do things for others without wanting anything in return but a simple thank you. I have found that thank you is a beautiful word and can mean so much to a person who is happy to help.*

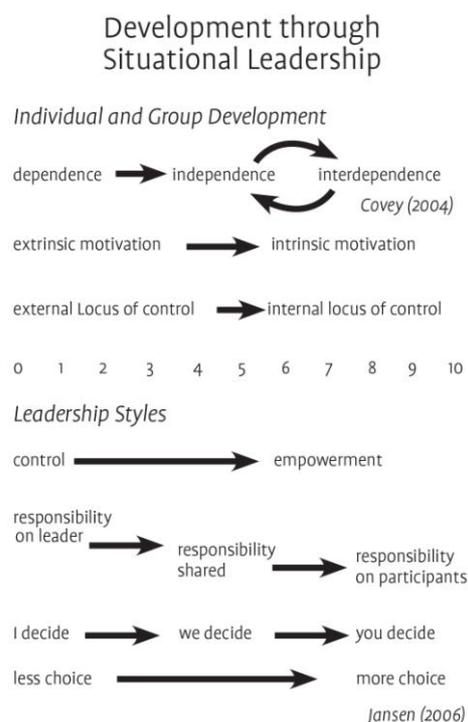
There is some ways that I have found to express myself throughout this journey.

At the start of this journey I was feeling UNSURE about the road ahead and how I would handle the challenges that would come my way, and whether I would handle those challenges well or breakdown under pressure.

Not all of the road was HARD, but it just depends whether you just push on and put up with it or you take your anger out on your fellow peers, or *whether you realise that they have to go through everything that you are going through, and help them out with their problems.*

Covey (2004) identifies human growth as a sequence of three stages: dependence, independence, and interdependence (see Figure 6). As we noted in Theme 1, the natural development process is that of moving from dependence as a child, through to a growing independence as a person during adolescence and on into adulthood and a growing interdependence.

What role do we, as programme leaders have in this development process, and what options does this role give us? How do we create opportunities for healthy development to happen? The top half of Figure 6 illustrates the development process we have outlined. The bottom half of the figure is based on the theory of situational leadership, developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1982). This theory holds that there is no single "best" style of leadership but that the particular leadership style chosen at any stage in a programme is based on the developmental level of the individuals being led.



**Figure 6: Individual and group development through situational leadership: model developed by Jansen (2008)**

The leadership style depicted in the bottom left-hand side of Figure 6 is that of a leader who is directive—who sets boundaries and parameters that are not negotiable. This means, within the context of the Waipuna programmes, that the young people involved in them have no input into them. On the right-hand side of the continuum, we see a leader who has become much less directive, whose role is now that of facilitating the decisions being made by the individual and/or the group. This role involves aspects of power-sharing—of providing choices, allowing for negotiation, and building responsibility. This is the style

of leadership/facilitation that Waipuna ultimately promotes.

In reality, it is seldom that leaders will give total responsibility to a group; however, from the young person's perspective, even a small amount of choice can feel considerably different from having no choice at all, which is often their experience. This consideration presents a challenge for those of us leading and facilitating the Waipuna programmes. The challenge is that of providing a programme of activities and opportunities that have structure and boundaries, yet offer young people room to move within those boundaries so that they can exercise choice as they progress along their developmental pathway. We will return to this matter shortly.

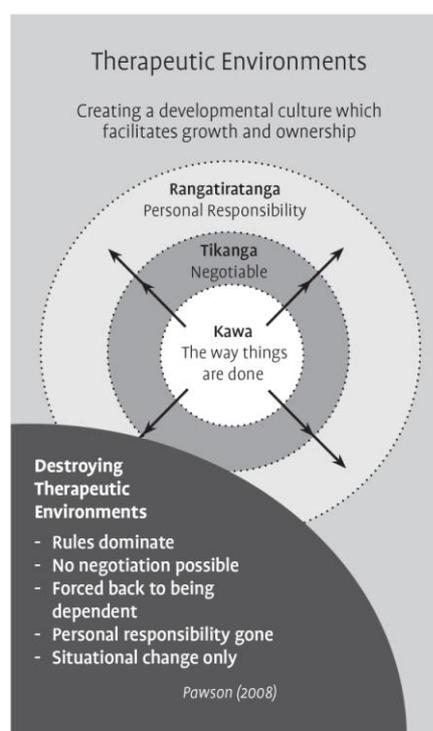
Programmes that have adolescent development as a primary objective thus need to focus on an intentional shift throughout the programme from dependence through independence and on to interdependence, and from a more directive to a less directive style of leadership. Schusser (2005) describes how he sees this process occurring with the young people he teaches:

My students are highly at risk when they enter the programme. Most students are *dependent* on me to guide them down the bumpy road. ... In the second and third term a change starts to occur ... our relationship deepens and they experience a class feeling that they like and want more of ... a feeling of respect, dignity and trust. In this setting *independence* grows, skills grow and students are challenged on their selfishness. ... In the third and fourth term magic occurs; challenges to behaviour are met with consideration rather than cursing, acceptance and apologies rather than violence. People are feeling more empowered and *interdependent*. They help each other and some of this is transferring into other areas of life. (pp. 107–108)

Hersey and Blanchard's implies that if we choose to adopt a development model, then we must also adopt a situational or contingency leadership model, so that our style and role can vary as the individual and the group develop. We need to remember that not all individuals and groups start on the less cohesive side of the continuum set out in Figure 6; some may already have a strong degree of interdependence and maturity in place, so leaders may not always have to begin their leadership style on the directive side. Among the factors that influence the individual's and the group's development, and that can act as indicators of current developmental needs, are the participants' ages, the size of group, how well the leader knows each individual and the nature and composition of the group, the setting and type of activity on offer, and the prior experience and competence of the individual/group.

A practical example of this concept is group agreements and guidelines. These state, for both the individual and the group, the acceptable ways of behaving and interacting with others. We consider that young people's developmental needs are best met by ensuring that the experiences they have during our programmes rely on only a few dictated rules: the more space available for negotiation of rules and responsibilities, the bigger the space available for development of personal responsibility. It is therefore important that we, as leaders and facilitators, choose the environments/experiences that give young people opportunity to "operate" within this framework. The Maori concepts of *kawa*, *tikanga* and *rangatiratanga* have relevance here. These concepts, as interpreted by Bevan Tipene (Ngai Tahu-Kahungunu), are depicted in Figure 7.

The middle circle of the figure represents *kawa*—protocols. Protocols are set conventions; they are "the way we do things around here", and they are usually non-negotiable. *Tikanga*, meaning customs, fill the bigger middle space of Figure 7. Customs differ according to one's background and according to the place/environment in which one is situated, and so are more negotiable than *kawa*. The biggest area of Figure 7 is taken up by *rangatiratanga*. A *rangatira* is a chief; the suffix *tanga* refers to the quality or attributes of chieftainship; with young people, we take this quality to mean personal responsibility



**Figure 7: Characteristics of therapeutic environments: model developed by Pawson (2008)**

The models of development and of situational leadership that we have considered here, and the relationships between the two, require leaders who are tuned into the needs of individuals and groups and who adapt their style and role to suit the current needs of each. The models also require leaders who are continually looking for opportunities to share power with the individual or the group by having them take responsibility for as many as possible of the choices in the programme. We are mindful that leaders are likely to have a preferred style and that tensions can exist when the

leadership style required to match a participant's or a group's developmental stage does not accord with this "natural" style. However, unless these challenges are met, it is possible—probable even—that the leader will impede the healthy development of both individuals and groups.

***Programme example: Intentional focus on developing choice and responsibility***

This focus, within the Waipuna programmes, starts with the referral process and increases as the programmes continue. Programme staff make clear to participants from the outset that if participants are to develop healthily within their own worlds, they need to make intentional choices, a practice that fosters personal responsibility and accountability for one's decisions and actions. This approach makes the journey wholly that of the participants, and one that they can celebrate as an achievement of their own (development). A family member provided this account of the process in her evaluation of the programme.

It takes a while, the shakedown period, when they are first in the group, you know, about how the leaders are not going to be telling them what they should be doing ... [there are] really clear processes. So building a raft like they did ... that's all got to be them pushing that thing ... it's not all going to come along on the back of a trailer ... they've got to build it, they have got to work out what they've got to do. ... [It's] their responsibility.

Pearce and Boyes's (2004) findings are consistent with those of Mossman (2005) and Russell (2005), who both suggest that a young person's readiness to make changes is an important element of the therapeutic change process. Mossman argues that consideration of young people's motivation to attend adventure therapy programmes is overlooked. Often, she says, the young people who enter such programmes do so on the recommendation (or direction) of adults, such as parents, teachers and counsellors, and they may not have the desire to make changes in their lives. An individual who self-refers into a programme usually has a degree of insight into their personal circumstances, abilities and behaviours. However, the young people who do enter adventure therapy programmes generally have been referred by others, partly because they do not have the degree of self-reflection/insight to take this step themselves. Such tends to be the case with the Waipuna programmes. While we do encounter young people who are very keen to participate (just as Mossman found), many have been pressured (or required) to attend the programme and, as a result, are not highly motivated to engage in processes focused on change processes. Working with these young people to establish goals can be a particularly complex and challenging situation. Interestingly, Mossman reported higher levels of motivation amongst young people who had been referred by peers. Peer referral is an approach that Waipuna promotes and supports.

## **Reflections on Ihaka's story**

### **My Journey Writings: Ihaka Moody**

Sometimes when people make mistakes you automatically get ANGRY at them. But all you can do is remember that everyone makes mistakes and it's better for everyone if you just forgive and forget rather than just hold a grudge.

I have improved a lot of things on this journey as well as I have had a lot to think about. I haven't got as angry because I have learnt to control my anger. As a result of

that I haven't cursed as much either. Another thing that I haven't yet had a chance to practise is helping out my Nana, Granddad, Mum and even my brother. I'm sure that when I arrive back home they will all see a difference in the way I act towards them. I won't be as selfish and I will never backchat about doing a job when a job needs to be done.

This journey has been cool but I still can't wait to be back in my own bed again!

Bevan and Paul [facilitators] have been awesome to us. They have led the way and put so much into this journey. I sort of *see them as role models*. If I grew up to be like them that would be all good. If I had anything else to say it would be thank you Paul and Bevan and ... TE TIRA HOROMAKA Rules!!!!!!

But last and definitely not least is HAPPY.

This journey has really opened my eyes to the better things in life. Not everything is life has to do with technology. *Sometimes it makes you feel good about yourself to just get outside, have some time to think, and really get into the idea of MANA.*

Ihaka's writings are sprinkled with unconscious reference to the programmes' success factors/themes identified by the evaluation undertaken by McKay and colleagues (2007) and confirmed by us, through our engagement with the Waipuna and its programmes during its 10 years of operation. Opportunity to share power and engage in mutual authoritative relationships along with the appropriate holistic approaches that honoured the "whole of Ihaka" are the "sunshine moments" in his writing, for they express life, growth and hope. Ihaka arrived at Waipuna with some significant challenges. He finished the programme having encountered critical experiences that allowed him to view his world through a different lens. By respecting and meeting Ihaka's developmental needs, Waipuna and its staff helped Ihaka confront, reflect on, and address the challenges and concerns that had long confronted him

Ihaka's new discovery of who he is (identity, belonging) made for a cloak of many people hanging over his shoulders; he now felt he belonged. His ability to understand himself gave him more understanding of his *whānau* and of his *taha whānau* (reality)—understanding that flowed on to a sense of growing *mana* within his *whānau* structure. When the opportunities (developmental experiences) arose, he grabbed them with a desire that was both intuitive and innate (biological mandate). Each progression added a piece to the jigsaw making up Ihaka's present life. The natural world (journey with ancestors) gave him reflective (and writing) space to encounter a new narrative. Paramount to his success was the relationships that walked with him; the trust he gathered through them meant he had a supportive reference point as he took more risk with his feelings, actions, peer relationships and the challenges associated with discovering himself. Ihaka expressed through his writing qualities that were already inherent in him; the programme did not give him something he did not have but rather gave him relationships and experiences that allowed him to discover what was already there. All of this is embodied in Ihaka's comment that "This journey has really opened my eyes to the better things in life."

What we can take from Ihaka's story and our consideration of the facets of the Waipuna trust programmes that he and many other challenged young people have been part of is that a change of mindset is needed if we are to truly address and honour the developmental needs of challenging young people and their families. Young people need to be viewed as having wisdom. Because they generally do not know they are wise, they need experiences and supportive relationships that give them the ability to discover what is already inherent. Older wise people do not give these younger people

wisdom but rather facilitate their ability to recognise their inherent wisdom. This wisdom then becomes *their* wisdom, *their* story, *their* contribution, and the ongoing ownership of that wisdom and of the decisions and actions it engenders logically follows. This positioning is very different from that in which young people are viewed as empty vessels that need filling up with everyone else's wisdom—something young people encounter regularly, even in well-meaning adventure therapy programmes. We strongly believe that seeing young people as inherently wise will make a significant difference to how we respect our young across not only our programmes but indeed our whole society.

### **Summary and conclusion**

Authentic development programmes understand that young people are the biggest stakeholder, they form relationships based on mutual respect and honour the unique journey each individual must make and create within their diverse world views. This consideration needs to be reflected in decisions relating to the structure and delivery of the programmes; honouring every person with a respectful relationship, developing the whole person, power sharing, developing choice and responsibility, and creating a safe environment so each authentic story is honoured. Our role, as facilitators and leaders within these programmes, is that of ensuring we remain focussed on meeting the holistic needs of the participants, ensuring our structures from governance to management through to practice reflect a culture that is committed to fully developing every person as we choose to walk together.

### **GLOSSARY OF MAORI TERMS**

Aotearoa	New Zealand, land of the long white cloud
Aroha	to love, feel concern for, feel compassion and empathy
Haka	dance, to perform
Hinengaro	mind, thought, intellect, consciousness, awareness
Kai	food
Kawa	protocols; customs related to greeting and the like
Mana	prestige, authority, status, spiritual power
Rangatiratanga	sovereignty, chieftainship, right to exercise authority
Te tira Horomaka	tira—travelling party; Horomaka-Ngai Tahu geographical area
Tikanga	correct procedure, custom, practice, convention
Tinana	the main part of anything—person, self, reality
Wairua	spirit, soul of a person that exists beyond death
Whānau	family group, extended family

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