

A BLUE PRINT TO REMISSION AND BEYOND

# How I Managed The Stress, Fear And Worry of Cancer



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Disclaimer: The information supplied on this website is for your education and interest and is in no way intended to diagnose or treat medical conditions or replace any medication prescribed by your primary healthcare specialist. It is your responsibility to seek advice from a healthcare professional who is qualified to help with and advise on treatment for your particular health concerns. Regarding the services I offer, results may vary from person to person as every case is different.

INTRODUCTION

# Mauri Ora! Sneeze Of Life!

My Fathers Pepeha

Ko Ngāti Whātua raua ko Ngāpuhi oku Iwi  
(My Tribes)

Ko Ngāti Torehina toku hapū (My Subtribe)

Maunganui ki Tutamoe nga maunga (My  
Mountain)

Ripiroa te moananui (My Sea)

Kaihu te awa e rere ana (My River)

Ko Mahuhu ki te rangi te waka (My  
Ancestral vessel)

Taita te Marae te turangawaewae (My  
Meeting house)

Kia Mahara Koutou te whare tupuna (My  
Ancestral house)

Ko Vonda Nepia toku ingoa (My Name)



My Mothers ancestry is from France and England. Her family names are DeLille and Irwin.

She was born in Morringsville and raised in Papakura, NZ.

She had fond memories playing in the Hunua Ranges and fishing in the Karaka Estuary.

*Vonda Nepia*

CHAPTER I

# A Patients approach to Holistic Wellbeing

## What is holistic approach?

*A holistic approach means to provide support that looks at the whole person, not just their mental health needs. The support should also consider their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing.*

During the COVID-19 Pandemic in August 2020, I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia. Chemotherapy started and life began to feel very fragile. I needed help, I was giving up the will to live – I knew I had to begin the process of restoring my mana (power).

I was frustrated with doctors and felt that they didn't understand me. Desperate to communicate better, I drew on the well-known Māori health care model – Picture below of Te Whare Tapa Whā – developed by Indigenous health leader Professor Sir Mason Durie.

One major key to my recovery was the inclusion of the fifth element “whenua / land & roots”.



CHAPTER II

# Phase I : PONO



## The First Phase of Change ; PONO

PONO translates to mean to be true and honest.

### How to get started

I knew the first step was that I needed to be honest with myself, look within and face all the darkness in my life.

The doctors didn't understand I had all these things swimming around my head. They wanted to check my temperature and heart rate, but I had other things going on'.

The psychologist asked how she could help me? So, I asked her to print off a Te Whare Tapa Whā diagram, bring me two A3 pieces of paper, cello tape and blue tack."

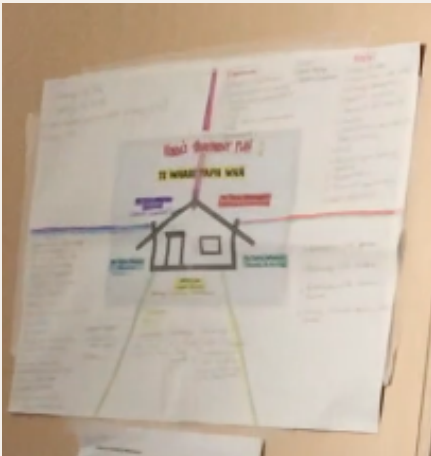
I joined the pieces of paper with sellotape then stuck the Te Whare Tapa whā diagram in the middle.

I then went about labelling each of the 5 sides of the whare; with my colourful pens.

So I used the model to organise my feelings, secrets and worries. My relationship was complicated, my son wasn't allowed to visit me, I needed to sort out my finances and my teaching career was over.

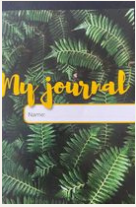
After a few days I had added most of my thoughts to it. I titled it Vondas Treatment Plan, and hung it on my wall in the hospital.

Each day, hospital staff and whānau (Family) would read my poster.



CHAPTER III

# Phase II : TIKA



TIKA : *Translates to mean to make things right or correct*

## How to make things right?

Each day, hospital staff and whānau would read my poster and we would discuss solutions. I felt I was getting back on the right track. I recognise this step as being Tika. I began to feel empowered, my will to live was restored.

Equally important was the need to record my thoughts and things to do in a diary and journal.



## My Prayers Answered

I remember the very next morning after finishing my poster, the Dr walked in my room and the first question he asked me was "How are you feeling spiritually today Vonda?" I was gobsmacked because a day earlier the Priest Chaplain and I prayed that the Dr would better understand me.

**As a patient you have the right to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect to make your own decisions about your care and treatment.**

When I realised that I wasn't going home and that I was confined to the hospital, no family around (due to Covid-19) I had to quickly get my emotions of fear, sadness, anger in check.

It was time for me to make decisions about my care and treatment. Mentally I had to be able to make sound judgements about aspects of my care. Especially when being asked for consent (verbal or written) about any treatment or procedure.

Reaching out and asking for knowledge and support became easier when put them into the 5 holistic elements.

- 1) Mental and Emotional
- 2) Spiritual
- 3) Physical
- 4) Family and Social
- 5) Land and Roots

CHAPTER IV

# Phase III : AROHA

**AROHA : *Translates to mean love***

Aroha in my case meant loving my life's purpose again.

Solutions were being created between hospital staff, whanau and myself for the various issues I had so I began to feel empowered, my will to live was restored and I felt as though I now had the energy (ha) to create my new life direction.

On another large piece of paper I cut out pictures from Magazines to depict my dreams and aspirations. This was going to be my new life direction - which I define as my 'aro'.

Photos of my whanau were displayed around my room to remind me of those who love and support me.

**What was my new life direction?**

A visual board I found was a fun way of communicating with those around me and reminding myself of what my priorities and new life direction was going to be.

Below were some of my new foci.

Spiritually - Maramataka Māori (Traditional Moon Calendar)

Mentally - Mediation

Physically - Natural remedies

Family / Social - Spending quality time

Land / Roots - Researching lost genealogy



CONCLUSION

# This is the beginning of something good.

My dream is that, like me, other patients will have the opportunity and support required to create their own wellbeing approaches to help them and their whānau (Family) navigate cancer care journeys. I hope that this will include relevant treatment plans that can be individually tailored. Visual posters like mine could help enhance the collaborative healing process within clinical spaces and enable and encourage staff to engage and co-create treatment plans with patients and whanau (family).

I'm committed to sharing my experiences with using this Te Whare Tapa Whā model with the hope of educating other patients and medical professionals to use this holistic wellbeing model.

So I've created a training programme called "**My Moko**". My Moko to me means being able to focus on you and clarify the direction your life is heading.

The **My Moko programme** will encourage and guide you to:

1. Take a snapshot of where you are now
2. Identify resources and support around you, and
3. Clarify where you are heading.

In turn the goal is to get back your power and discipline you to manage your wellbeing.

To find out more about My Moko products and services go to [www.vondanepia.com](http://www.vondanepia.com) for more details.

Tihei Mauri Ora! – I am alive!



APPENDIX

# Support

Below are a list of support services that I used while in hospital

Justice of the Peace  
FREE WIFI  
Ministers / Chaplain  
Kaitiaki Maori Services  
Leukaemia and cancer services  
Cancer Psychological & Social Services  
Social Worker  
CANTEEN  
Hospital Psychologist  
Dietitian  
Look Good Feel Good  
Massage Therapist  
Mason Durie's - Te Whare Tapa Whā model  
Cancer Society  
Whanau room for gatherings  
COVID-19 room in hospital  
Friends with other patients in my ward

# Resources

Below are a list of resources that helped guide me

Bible  
FREE WIFI  
Chapel  
Taonga gifted by Kaitiaki  
Journal  
Te Whare Tapa Wha Needs assessment tool  
Magazines  
Travel and food Vouchers  
Wig subsidy  
Food Lists  
Whanau room for gatherings  
COVID-19 room in hospital  
Magazines  
Crayons / Felts / Paper / Craft time