



# Talanoa to Connect



*This factsheet is part of a series of helpful information on how to maintain respectful relationships with people in your household while navigating stressful times.*

Crisis events, such as pandemics, severe weather events, or a troubled economy, can lead to stress for many people. A lot of us may experience higher than usual levels of stress during these times.

For Pasifika people, **talanoa** is how we communicate and is key to maintaining respectful relationships. Talanoa is about open and respectful interactions. It includes the sharing of ideas and stories between people. When we **talanoa**, we connect.

The following are reminders of how we **talanoa** and build meaningful relationships.

## Key Messages

When we **talanoa** respectfully, we nurture the va and maintain relationships.

Pasifika culture and traditions place great importance on how we **talanoa** with each other.

Thinking before we speak helps us decide how best to deliver a message so that the other person understands.

Part of **talanoa** is knowing how to handle challenging conversations. We need to stop, breathe and think before reacting.

When we listen to understand, we deepen our knowledge and awareness of where the other person is coming from.

## The spoken word

Our cultures and traditions value **talanoa**. Pasifika people have a long rich history in the art of spoken word. Long before the written word arrived on Pacific shores, Pasifika people passed on knowledge, traditions, and the treasures of our culture through **talanoa**.

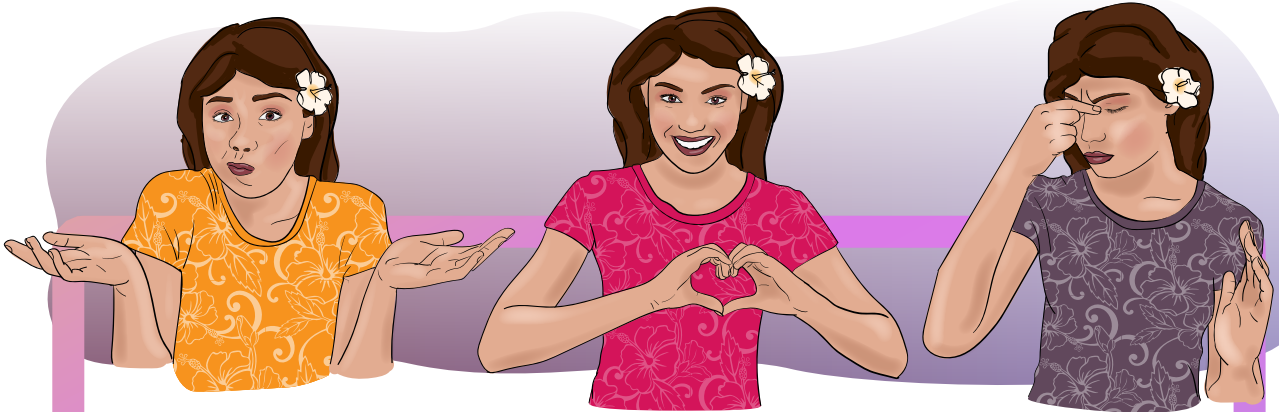
*'E pala le ma'a ae le pala le tala'* is an old Samoan proverb meaning *'stones and rocks decay, but words do not'*. This proverb speaks to the lasting impacts of our words; they can either build people up or tear them down. Let's use our words wisely.

## Talanoa is more than words

**Talanoa** is not just about words. During our **talanoa** we are also sending information to others through our body language.

Body language includes the way we move or react with our body while speaking. It also includes our facial expressions, tone of voice and eye contact.

Body language is important in **talanoa** because it can show others whether we care or not by the way we pay attention. When we **talanoa** with respect, our body language must match our words. How body language is interpreted can vary for different cultures.



*Here are a few examples of how we might use our body language to complement our words:*

- When we **talanoa** with our elders, we would sit down alongside them and not be standing during **talanoa**.
- When walking past a person or group of people we may say 'tulou/turou/excuse me'. Our tone of voice would likely be calmer and quieter, matching the sincerity and respect of our actions.

We might be more mindful about maintaining eye contact for long periods of time as it can be seen as disrespectful, especially when we **talanoa** with our parent or an elder.



# Talanoa to Connect

Many things can influence how we deliver and receive information. Sometimes messages are not received how we intended, or we misunderstand what someone is trying to say. It is important that when we *talanoa*, we really listen to understand and think before we speak.

## Listen to understand

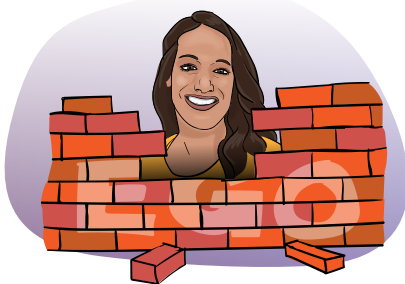
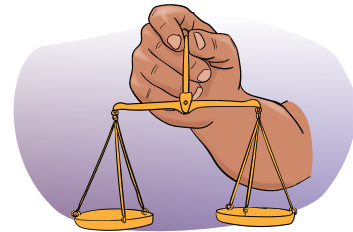
Check out the listening tips below that help us to connect meaningfully.

**Showing interest** - When we show our genuine interest in others, they are likely to feel heard and understood. We can encourage others by turning to face them, and showing interest with gestures such as nodding, saying mmhmm, aha, etc.



**Giving our full attention** – Did you know that brain studies have shown people cannot focus on more than one thing at a time? This reminds us that to really connect and understand others, it requires that we give our full attention to them. This means putting down that phone, iPad, and turning off the TV.

**Ditching the judgements** - When people feel judged, they are less likely to open up and share in *talanoa*. When we can accept what others are saying as their own truths, and are mindful of our own opinions and how they can impact our judgements, we can allow for more open and transparent *talanoa*.



**Letting go of our ego** - Sometimes our own sense of pride can get in the way of our understanding of others. We may be focused on reacting, rather than understanding. When we become more aware of this, we can begin to shift the focus back to understanding by listening and paying attention to others, rather than our own feelings.

**Asking questions** - It can be easy for us all to misunderstand what others might be saying. We may even make assumptions and miss out on opportunities to really understand. We can avoid this by asking questions and asking for clarity, providing summaries of what we hear and checking in that others have understood correctly.



## Think before we speak

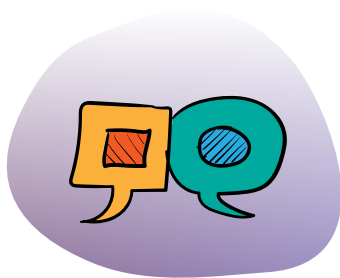
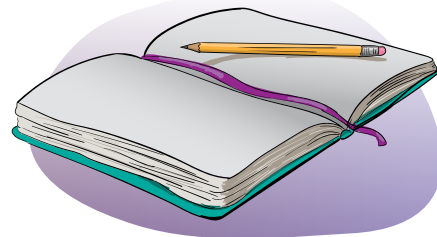
Check out the talking tips below that help us to connect meaningfully.

**Think first** – When we don't think before we speak, we may hurt others without meaning to. It's helpful for us to consider how our words will impact others. We may need to take a moment to think about what messages we are trying to deliver.



**Choosing the right time and place** – Creating the right environment, with minimal distractions, can provide a safe space to **talanoa**. It's helpful to choose a time when we are not busy and distracted, and a place where everyone feels comfortable.

**Being open and honest** – When we are honest, others will have a better understanding of our needs. Sharing what we really think and feel in a non-attacking way is a great start.



**Being reasonable** – We can understand that others will not always share the same views and opinions as us, and that's ok. Let's enter into **talanoa** with an open mind.

**Checking in** – When we check in with each other during **talanoa**, we can ensure that people understand what is being said. This is also a good way to ensure that everyone has the chance to have their say. During **talanoa**, we can take pauses and check in – asking others to share their understanding, inviting questions and comments.



## Challenging Conversations

Part of *talanoa* is knowing how to handle challenging conversations. It is not always easy trying to maintain good communication skills when we are faced with difficult situations or when we feel our emotions are starting to get the better of us. It is possible though, and it may take some practice. Check out some helpful pointers below.

### Don't let your emotions control your responses

- **Stop, breathe and think** before reacting. Give yourself some time to sit with the emotion then choose carefully what you want to say.
- Decide whether this is the right time to have a conversation or whether it is best left for a later time.

### Own your feelings by using "I" statements

Try these steps to get your messages across without attacking the other person.

- **I feel..... so frustrated.**
- **When..... you don't listen to me.**
- **Because..... I start thinking that you don't care.**
- **What I need is ..... for you to please stop what you're doing for a minute and hear what I'm trying to say.**

Avoid these, as they can make the situation worse.

- **You make me..... angry.**
- **You never..... listen.**
- **You did this....**

### Hate the behaviour or the situation not the person

- Don't make personal attacks.
- Stick to discussing the current issue or behaviour you don't like.
- Avoid bringing up the past.
- Resolving issues one on one may not be possible so, where you can, try to involve a mediator, someone who can support you both to get back on good communication terms with each other e.g. a relative, a good friend or someone you both trust.



## More support



[auntydee.co.nz](http://auntydee.co.nz)



[mentalwealth.nz](http://mentalwealth.nz)



[atumai.nz](http://atumai.nz)



[leva.co.nz](http://leva.co.nz)

## If you need to talk to someone now

Help is always available. Reach out if you are feeling unsafe or if you, or someone close to you, is finding it difficult to manage their anger. Check out the information below.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call the Police on **111**, even if you're not sure.

### 1737

Free call or text **1737**. Kiwis feeling down can talk to a trained counsellor for free.

**1737**

### 0800 HeyBro

**(0800 439 276)** - Keeping Whānau Safe: We're here to support Men 24/7 to listen and to help. So give us a call next time you're on the edge!

### Women's Refuge

free call **0800 733 843** (0800 REFUGE) for 24-hour service advocacy and accommodation for women and their children experiencing family violence

### Youthline

Call **0800 376 633**, free text **234**, or email [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)

### Elder Abuse Helpline

Call **0800 32 668 65** (0800 EA NOT OK). 24-hour service answered by registered nurses

### Tu Wahine Trust

Call **09 838 8700** for kaupapa Māori counselling, therapy and support for survivors of sexual harm (mahi tukino) and violence within whānau

Preventing violence by supporting families to have respectful relationships  
[www.atumai.nz](http://www.atumai.nz)

Equipping young people to look after their mental health  
[www.mentalwealth.nz](http://www.mentalwealth.nz)

Growing the Pasifika mental health & addiction workforce  
[www.leva.co.nz/our-work/mental-health](http://www.leva.co.nz/our-work/mental-health)

Improving the quality of health services through cultural competency  
[www.leva.co.nz/training-education/engaging-pasifika](http://www.leva.co.nz/training-education/engaging-pasifika)

Enhancing mental health literacy in online gaming  
[www.manarestore.nz](http://www.manarestore.nz)

Igniting community collaboration for wellbeing solutions  
[www.leva.co.nz/our-work/gps-satellite-seminars](http://www.leva.co.nz/our-work/gps-satellite-seminars)

Supporting community-based suicide prevention for Pasifika families  
[www.leva.co.nz/our-work/suicide-prevention](http://www.leva.co.nz/our-work/suicide-prevention)

Equipping all New Zealanders with skills to prevent suicide  
[www.lifekeepers.nz](http://www.lifekeepers.nz)

Fostering te ao Māori approaches to suicide prevention training  
[www.lifekeepers.nz](http://www.lifekeepers.nz)

Championing equity for Pasifika people with disabilities  
[www.leva.co.nz/our-work/disability-support/faiva-ora-leadership](http://www.leva.co.nz/our-work/disability-support/faiva-ora-leadership)

Shaping resiliency in young people with digital mental health tools  
[www.auntydee.co.nz](http://www.auntydee.co.nz)

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#CatchYourself | Respect your village

Le Va

*Epala le ma'a  
ae le pala le tala*

Stones and rocks decay,  
but words do not



**#CatchYourself** | *Respect your village*