

Tip sheet

Family / whānau

What is family? The dictionary defines family in several ways. One traditional definition used to define family is 'a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.'

This definition has expanded to be more inclusive and now holds a place for a wider variety of people.



- Are children (if any) growing up in a supportive, emotionally-healthy environment?
- Do you treat each family member as an individual?
- Does your family have regular routines?
- Is your immediate family an active participant in your extended family and community?
- Are your expectations of yourself and other family members realistic?
- Does your time spent with your family contribute to good relationships among you?
- As a parent, individually or as a couple, are you taking care of your own needs?

Redefining a family in Aotearoa New Zealand

In the 21st century, children do not always live with a biological mother and father. Instead, many are raised by single-parent homes, same-sex parents, adoptive parents, etc. Some families opt not to have children or cannot have children due to a medical or emotional barrier.

Whatever this immediate family looks like for you, maintaining these close bonds can bring us great strength and comfort. Our relatives often know us better than anyone and are likely to be there for us throughout our lives.

How do I feel about my family?

Think about your immediate family unit and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my family a happy and well-adjusted unit?

Beyond the immediate family

These days, there are not the large extended family units of the past, where older siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents were readily available to offer advice and support.

It's easy to feel isolated and alone with smaller family units, and many older adults are still in the workforce at an age when their own parents had long been retired.

With that in mind, when we expand our definition of family to more broadly include those closest to us, we find that can have several families in our lifetime, even several families at once. We may refer to our immediate and extended family, our whakapapa, our work family, our friends and neighbours and wider community as family.

Expanding and connecting to our support network contributes to wellbeing and supports positive mental health.

Home and work issues

Family relationships can be difficult at times. The busyness of life can get in the way and prompt us to take stock; is our to-do list taking precedence over our wellbeing and the wellbeing of the family?

Furthermore, there is a growing awareness that conflicting demands at work and at home can affect people's mental health.

Take time to think of what is really important – after all, there will always be things to do. Don't be afraid to reach out for help and make more time for mindfulness, kindness and rest. Look after your own wellbeing and in turn there will be a flow-on effect within the family unit.

We also know that families can enrich work and work can enrich family life. Here are some things to look for in your workplace that may uplift your family life:

- great organisational culture;
- family-friendly policies and practices;
- effective communications around change;
- a strong relationship with a person's direct supervisor;
- variety in work;
- opportunities to learn and grow.

Building and maintaining cultures that are respectful of families is an essential component of doing good business in a New Zealand context. We encourage all workplaces to further review their practices and acknowledge their role in fostering family-friendly workplaces.



Contact

0508 664 981
assistance@vitae.co.nz
www.vitae.co.nz