

Editorial

Introducing this issue of the Journal is particularly satisfying for several reasons. A unique feature is that all the articles originated as presentations at the very successful NZAC conference held in Hamilton in September 2009. The Journal therefore provides readers with another opportunity to hear from a sample of the presenters who contributed to the conference programme. The rich variety of papers and workshops presented there offered diverse perspectives from which participants were invited to engage with the conference theme, “Tumanakotia te Mahi Tahi, Doing Hope Together.” Following the pōwhiri, the conference began with Kaethe Weingarten’s powerful keynote address, and it is fitting that her voice opens this issue of the Journal as well. The articles that follow bring forth the voices of Māori, Samoan and Pākehā writers, who introduce excitingly creative ways in which counselling-related practices can work to rekindle or create hope.

Promoting the concept of hope can seem superficial if done in a kind of “chocolate box,” populist way, and irresponsible, even dangerous, if it encourages false hope in the face of seemingly irreconcilable conflict, irresolvable pain, and the disasters that befall individuals and communities. Speaking movingly and cogently as an academic, as a practitioner, and as a Jewish woman who has herself faced life-threatening illness, Kaethe Weingarten argues instead for the utility of the concept of “reasonable hope.” By inviting counsellors into her own theories and practices of reasonable hope, she challenges readers’ understandings and offers possible ways in which counsellors and clients may “do hope together.”

Innovative work by Māori practitioners “doing hope” in creative ways with Māori clients in Aotearoa New Zealand is the focus of the next two articles. When Eugene Davis undertook research into the use of Michael White’s “outsider witnessing” practices with Māori men, he uncovered new possibilities for enabling men to engage in conversations of deep personal significance with their mates about what it means to be a man. These structured yet down-to-earth conversations evoked profound realisations for these men about their values and priorities in relation to their lifestyles that generated new ways of being and relating with the important people in their

lives. The spirit, practicality and potential of this work make his article, co-authored with Kathie Crocket who supervised the project, an important contribution to a small but growing number of studies on therapeutic work with Māori men.

On the programme in the same session at the conference was the presentation *Tihei-wa Mauri Ora*, on which the following article by Teina Piripi and Vivienne Body is based. They were challenged in their counselling practice, when working with young suicidal clients, by the inadequacy of existing mental health assessment tools. These innovative practitioners were inspired to create resources that have much greater meaning for these young people and that are also “audacious,” as one commentator has said, in their stunning beauty and simplicity. In this article they describe the process of the development of these resources which incorporate the key elements of the Māori creation story to depict the different phases of movement from darkness to light. Although more work is ahead on developing and evaluating the applications of this tool, it is also an exciting contribution to indigenous therapeutic resources that deserves wide recognition, and has potential for use by both Māori and non-Māori practitioners.

The focus changes in the next article to working with Samoan clients, making an important contribution to the development of Pasifika counselling theory and practice. Byron Seuli explains the traditional concept and practices of *meaalofa* (gifting) and discusses the ways in which these underpin and guide therapeutic processes with Samoan and other Pasifika people. Illustrative examples of meaalofa principles at work in practice are drawn from interviews that were undertaken with several Pasifika practitioners, and a case study is also included. Time and again, those who work with Pasifika clients express dismay at the adverse experiences many of their clients endure within the social and mental health systems, and the continuing inadequacy of cultural understandings and sensitive practices. This article will serve as a valuable resource to help establish greater knowledge of the concept of meaalofa within the mental health system and the wider therapeutic community.

From strategies and resources that bring hope through inter-personal, relational processes, the final two articles have a more intra-personal focus. In the first of these, Jeannie Wright—a journal-writer herself who has also used mindfulness techniques—explores the possibilities of dialogical journal writing, not only as a person-centred therapeutic process and as a way of practising mindfulness, but also as a research method. Each of these three intriguing perspectives is interwoven in this article by means of a case study involving conversations with “Jane” about the ways in which

journal writing became her preferred means of self-help, and through which the inner voice she created provided her with a more effective form of support than the counselling she had previously experienced. This work evokes fascinating questions about the potential of these perspectives for further research and for practice.

The final article in this issue addresses the deeply disturbing phenomenon of nightmares. Margaret Bowater will be no stranger to members of NZAC because of her regular columns in the Newsletter, and she is widely known for her expertise in dream-work. Here she discusses the potential significance of nightmares, and recommends, using illustrative examples, ways of working that can provide clients with relief from these distressing dreams. For practitioners who have felt stuck when working with clients suffering nightmares, this article will be a source of hope.

This issue showcases and celebrates not only the international wisdom and experience that informs counselling practice, but particularly the innovative thinking of researchers and practitioners local to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Margaret Agee and Philip Culbertson, co-editors