

## How to Make a Referral to Higher Ground

Higher Ground welcomes self-referrals.

Health, social and legal professionals wishing to make a referral to Higher Ground should note that our admission criteria require residents to be over 18 years and over, have a primary diagnosis of alcohol or other drug dependence, an interest in 12 Step recovery and a drug-free status on admission.

Referrals or self referrals can be made by telephoning 09-834 0042 for a pre-admission assessment appointment on weekdays between 8.30am and 4.00pm.

Assessments in detox facilities or hospital can be arranged. Applicants who have outstanding legal charges are considered on a case by case basis. If required, Higher Ground can organise a medical detox through referral to the Auckland Regional Alcohol and Drug Services.

## Making a Donation

Higher Ground is a registered Charitable Trust. Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible and may be sent direct to Higher Ground. Higher Ground is dependent on charitable donations for the continuation of its programme.

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# HOW MAORI NAVIGATE RECOVERY

*He toa takitini, drawing on the strength of many*  
- Simon Waigh's research.

Whanau Group is an important component of treatment at Higher Ground. It's open to anyone who wants to join and often two thirds of the house take part.

Twenty five percent of residents are Maori, and their treatment needs to be consistent with the values and views of Maori. "Higher Ground, specifically through the Whanau Group, has implemented this approach and my research has identified that in doing this, there has been a level of success for Maori who have participated," says Simon Waigh, a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Auckland.

Simon is Ngati Makino and Ngati Pikiako of Te Arawa (Bay of Plenty) and grew up in Manurewa, South Auckland.

He initially interviewed 18 people who identify as Maori and who successfully completed Higher Ground and stayed in recovery for at least a year. In Whanau Group they spent time on various Maori cultural activities such as powhiri to welcome newcomers; kapa haka; karakia. In addition, there is a marae noho, a weekend stay at a local marae.

Most importantly, Whanau Group is set on a foundation of values that are important to Te Ao Maori. Maori programme leader Matua Rawiri Pene summarises those values as 'wairua focused, whanau driven'.

Interviewees talked about Whanau Group helping with cultural identity or personal identity in relation to being Maori. "They might say, 'I really liked feeling like I was Maori again' or 'it was like I was feeling Maori for the first time'," says Simon.

Experiences in life and active addiction have distanced many Maori from their families and culture. This disconnection can happen very early in life and typically by the teenage years, says Simon.

For example, they may have been brought up in a non-Maori family, or their parents were separated and didn't retain strong Maori connections. Over time their lifestyle changed and they thought being Maori wasn't relevant.

Many of those interviewed didn't expect to be exploring their identity in this way at Higher Ground. Some initially resisted going into Whanau Group or took a few weeks to make that choice.

"Some people are encouraged by staff because they might have a Maori name, for example, but internally they might not identify and there may be some anxiety about might be expected." With help, negative experiences change for many as they begin experiencing their Maori identity in a positive way.

"There's one quote that always sticks with me. 'From the very first day when I was welcomed with a powhiri I felt I was being accepted as a Maori for the first time'. What Higher Ground does well and what I think the Whanau Group does, is to provide Maori with a safe environment in which they can explore their identity."

Those with more cultural experience participate and grow in other ways, such as mentoring in a tuakana/teina relationship to other peers (in the way of older siblings).

Whanau Group is also valuable for non-Maori, as they gain an insight into their own spiritual and cultural experiences as well as the Maori world within New Zealand, he observes.

Meaningful connections are absolutely fundamental to a successful recovery from addiction, says Simon, and Whanau Group helps makes connections that continue and which can become a source of great pride and confidence.

"Add to this the extensive, ongoing contact in recovery provided by Matua Rawiri Pene and Whaea Kohe Pene, and what you notice in many people is the continuation of the journey." This has a profound impact for many people in helping them to stay alcohol and drug free.

Simon's Higher Ground research has continued over the last four years. "I have been very fortunate. Out of the people who have gone through my study programme I think I'm one of the luckier ones in terms of the support I have been given by Higher Ground."

The research forms part of his doctorate, alongside clinical skills. Simon is currently completing an internship at a Maori mental health organisation.

Establishing cultural identity can be part of restoring mental health. "But it may not be the most pressing issue, for example in Higher Ground the most pressing issue is addiction which can completely undo any efforts you make to build a positive identity."

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Higher Ground News. If you do not wish to remain on our mailing list, or are incorrectly listed, please write to HGDRT, PO Box 45 192, Te Atatu Peninsula, Waitakere, 0610.

For further information about the Higher Ground rehabilitation programme phone Programme Director, Johnny Dow 09-834 0017 or fax 09-834 0018 email admin@higherground.org.nz www.higherground.org.nz

# HIGHER GROUND

## DRUG REHABILITATION TRUST

2016 • ISSUE # 59

# NEWS

# INNOVATION AND COMPASSION



Having the Associate Minister of Health visit is heartening recognition of Higher Ground's work, says Johnny. "We've felt very supported by him over time, with his experience working in the alcohol and other drugs field.

"He spoke extremely well to the residents, he was an open and very thoughtful speaker and he knew what he was talking about. The residents felt respected and were impressed."

Mr Dunne visited as Higher Ground's building programme was nearing completion. "Seeing the quality of the facilities, the whole demeanour of the place and the magnificent surroundings this is a high quality treatment programme. I was very impressed with everything about it and won't hesitate to say so."

He saw a cross-section of New Zealand life among clients and was encouraged to see people being treated from a health perspective.

"Again, the fact that everyone was working together constructively and seemed to get on with each other, given the diversity of their backgrounds, I thought was quite outstanding. All the work with families and whanau and the wider community in respect of a patient is pretty powerful as well."

Mr Dunne says Higher Ground reflects the values of compassion, innovation and proportion which are key principles of the recently launched 2015-2020 National Drug Policy which shifts the focus of drug abuse and related problems from criminal to health issues.

"That's why I am so proud of the policy. It normalises the idea of addiction and that makes it easier for people who need help to come forward."

He was interested in Higher Ground's on-going research on the progress of clients who graduate. "I read some good statistics. That was pretty impressive as well."

Before becoming a Member of Parliament, Mr Dunne was executive director of the Alcohol Liquor Advisory Council (ALAC).

"One of the criticisms then of in-patient treatment facilities was it was all very well to take people out of their normal settings, of course they're going to be well-motivated and perform well while they're in treatment, but what happens when they go back?"

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# THE FAMILY DISEASE OF ADDICTION

**After 15 years on methamphetamine, she didn't believe anyone could help with her pain; she thought it was too late. A Higher Ground graduate tells her anonymous story.**

“My upbringing was just like *Once Were Warriors*. It all started from there.

I am half Maori, half Samoan. Mum was a lovely woman. Dad was the one who physically abused me. When he was drinking he was a real mean man. I've seen a lot of abuse with my Mum, with myself.

The sexual abuse from my Dad's family started when I was eight or nine, and continued until I was 14. A lot of uncles, a lot of parties, it just went on and on. I was so much in the dark I got used to where I was – it was just the same old thing.

I tried to protect my sisters by putting my body over them. So the men carried on what they did with me. That's what I knew as a child.

If you ever talked about the sex or the beatings you just got more beaten up. We were told to shut up; we didn't have a voice. My Dad was the worst one. I was so resentful of my dad for so many years I wanted to kill him.

I hated Mum as well because she stayed with this marriage. I suppose in those days it was different – I'm 49 now.

When I was 14 or 15 the street was my playground, my freedom. My friends were in the same situation. I would try and take off, get taken back at home and get another hiding while Mum tried to protect me.

I was so violent and angry – that's all I thought, all I knew.

Schooling was not great, going to school with black eyes and bruises and there was no help. I went to a local South Auckland high school. Primary school was worse, there was a lot of teasing and times I hurt people because of the way they looked at me.

I couldn't read and write, it was beyond my concentration. I couldn't think properly. I got a lot of the strap. I got beaten at home and then I got beaten at school. So I lacked confidence.

I couldn't stop one of my younger sisters being sexually abused, and I felt bad about that. I held a lot of wounds.

I left school at the start of the fourth form. I'd been trying not to go because I felt dumb. Around that time my Mum had cancer so I was looking after her, going to school, getting my sisters to school.

Then my Dad walked out on his family with another woman. All this and then he walked out when she was sick. But my mum still loved him.

It was all to do with alcohol, Dad worked as a barman; both sides of my family were alcoholics, Mum too after my Dad left. I said to myself I would never get married if this were going to happen.

I used to take Mum to hospital for treatment; something with a long needle in her spine. She lost a lot of weight. She wouldn't go in the ambulance, I had to go home with her on the bus all the way to Mangere, get her to bed.

My sisters looked to me as the mother. I looked after Mum for two or three years then she went into remission.

It was a lot of looking after. There was no time for me. I was more like an adult. I thought I was born to be a slave.

All that time I was on drugs. I started when I was eight or nine, there was weed (marijuana) around. Drugs were an escape because I knew what would happen the next day, especially when they drank.

I started drinking and I kind of loved it, then I got hooked onto heroin, cocaine, pills. I would get in that buzz, stick something in my arm, ping something, put it up my nose, smoke it, anything to get me to that high but I hated the world. I'd wake up and go, “gosh, I'm still living”. I just wanted to end my life.

My anger and violence came out. My way was, “So? What are you going to do?” I didn't care. I wouldn't listen to anyone, that's how I lived. I did things my way, the tough way.

Every relationship I seem to be attracted to addicts or alcoholics or someone wearing leathers or who rode a motorbike.

They were kind to me at first but abusive as well. All I wanted was someone who loved me but I never could get anywhere with that: “Anyone decent around here, anyone normal around here?” Not looking at myself.

My son's father was so abusive I packed the truck and left Auckland with two kids. That's one thing I did right. I was so sick of being beaten up.

Two years after that I met my husband – he's the good one; he's more too nice which I couldn't handle. I didn't know what he was doing with me. He took a lot of my violence and he never left. I felt like the more anyone came close in a loving way the more I pushed them away: “You're crazy, what are you doing?”

I didn't know how to relate to someone who loved another person.

He was more of a weed smoker. He didn't know until years later I did a lot of other drugs. I thought no one would listen to me. He said, “That's why you're so angry.” I said, “That's not my problem that's other people's problem.”

I rescued or I put people on a pedestal, but I never helped myself.

We lived up North for 20 years. We brought our kids up by the sea, lived off the land, did seasonal work but were also dope

growers. We were good at it; we had syndicates. We used to trade weed for food, services.

I was the talker, the controller – everyone came to me and I made the decisions.

I was hard on the two older kids, but I protected them a lot because of my past. I didn't realise that they saw me as an angry, violent person towards my husband. I was acting more like my father but I didn't beat my kids.

If anything happened to them I would be in there, threatening. I did everything for them; they never got a chance. I spoke for my kids. I said everything. I was one of those women.

But there was no one for me to talk to.

I ended up using methamphetamine for 15 years, selling then manufacture. I got tired of it. My kids grew up; now I've got eight grandsons under the age of 10.

When I was 47 I'd had enough. I became suicidal after Mum and Dad passed away. I was still an addict; there was no use for me. I was hard out on the meth, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

A real dark time, shut away in my room the last five years. I was frightened, I was doubtful, unhappy, argumentative, anxious. I needed help.

I was on meth that much I would be awake for two weeks, dehydrated and couldn't sleep. I wanted some particular sleeping pills, my doctor wouldn't give me them and referred me to a psychiatrist.

He prescribed the meds – being an addict, I just wanted what I wanted – but I had to go and see a psychologist. I agreed so I could have the pills.

For about four sessions I went as far as the door and took off. She rang so many times and got me once in the evening. I tried to make excuses – no car, no money. So she sent a cab.

It took four sessions before I could talk – we sat there, the whole hour ticking away until I could go back and use. I couldn't trust. I'm grateful that I went, because she's the one who said, “Have you heard of rehab?”

I knew institutions – I'd been to jail but I didn't know what a rehab was. She asked my permission, made an appointment and brought me to Higher Ground for assessment.

I didn't really understand the questions. I was staring not listening. I asked: “Does it work? Can you guarantee me that I'll be better when I leave here?”

The answer was, “Yes, but you've got to work at it.”

Higher Ground set a plan. I went to Detox first, then to a Wings Trust residence for two months, Higher Ground for four and a half

months, and back to Wings for four months.

When I came into Higher Ground, it was like, “you mean, there's so many white people? You mean I have to sleep with those white women, isn't there a single room?”

I was brought up in Mangere, I've only known brown people. The only time I had to deal with white people was in authority, when there was an issue. I'd never slept under the same roof or sat beside them.

And guess what? My Narcotics Anonymous sponsor now is Pakeha, it's hard case.

I found safety at Higher Ground. I was loud out in the world but here I couldn't even talk, let alone challenge anyone.

I didn't think I was worth it, I wouldn't see it. But other people could. My case manager dug into my past and I never wanted to go there. I had to deal with my core issues and then my behaviour.

A lot of times I wanted to leave because I couldn't do what I wanted to do. It was very busy. I learned how to manage my time, and I stopped swearing.

Whanau Group gave me confidence, gave me my voice back. I was so shy to stand up in front of people to do the karanga and that's what I really wanted. Singing in Sound Group gave me back the volume.

For me it's always, “I don't want to do this” first, I do everything the opposite, but at Higher Ground I did what was suggested.

Mum died when I was 46, I'd looked after her with Alzheimers for 10 years. I was at Higher Ground for her first anniversary and we had a ceremony down at the beach. That was a blessing. Things like that helped me stay.

I learned to be in the day. If you go to the past - depression; if you go to the future – anxiety; if you stay in the present you're safe that way.

So I do that now.

When I graduated I felt scared again. I didn't realise how much they would help. It wasn't like they said “You're done, fine, on your way”. There were people who believed in me.

I started my life again, and 19 months later I wonder: “How did I get from here to there?” Now I'm a peer support specialist. I'm qualified.

I'm alive, I'm clean and sober, I have connections. I've done what's been recommended, I go to five 12-Step meetings a week, I do service.

I was told, look in the mirror – I thought that was a big laugh, what would you want to tell yourself? I can look in the mirror today and I feel good about myself. ”

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*Continued from page one - Innovation and Compassion*

Higher Ground's results showed a positive impact on clients and that many were going to go on to good and productive lives, he says.

Many of Higher Ground's clients are recovering from methamphetamine addiction and eight of the 54 beds are funded by the Prime Minister's methamphetamine initiative.

Mr Dunne says the methamphetamine initiative sent an important indication of a more compassionate approach, and gives a higher profile to treatment programmes. “Yes it's methamphetamine based, but it's also sent the signal that treatment works.”

New Zealand will attend the United National General Assembly

Session on drugs in New York. “Focusing on the health aspects of addiction is the fundamental issue, and that is consistent with what's happening around the world. I think that our drug policy and the work that will come out of the UN will further move in that direction.”

Another indicator of the changing approach to treating drug abuse was the Alcohol and Other Drugs Treatment Courts pilot. “It's part of the total shift that's taking place and I think that's really good, to quietly let that happen, to let that seep through all aspects of our approach so it becomes the norm.”