



A long-term arthritis condition brings with it many challenges. Every part of life can be impacted by pain, tiredness and changes in what we can do physically. Arthritis symptoms may stop us from taking part fully in our work, family life, social connections, loved hobbies, and sports. We can feel fearful and alone. All of this can affect our mental wellbeing, and how we feel about ourselves and our place in the world. Feeling sad, anxious or worried at times are normal reactions to coping with arthritis. Knowing where to go for support is important.

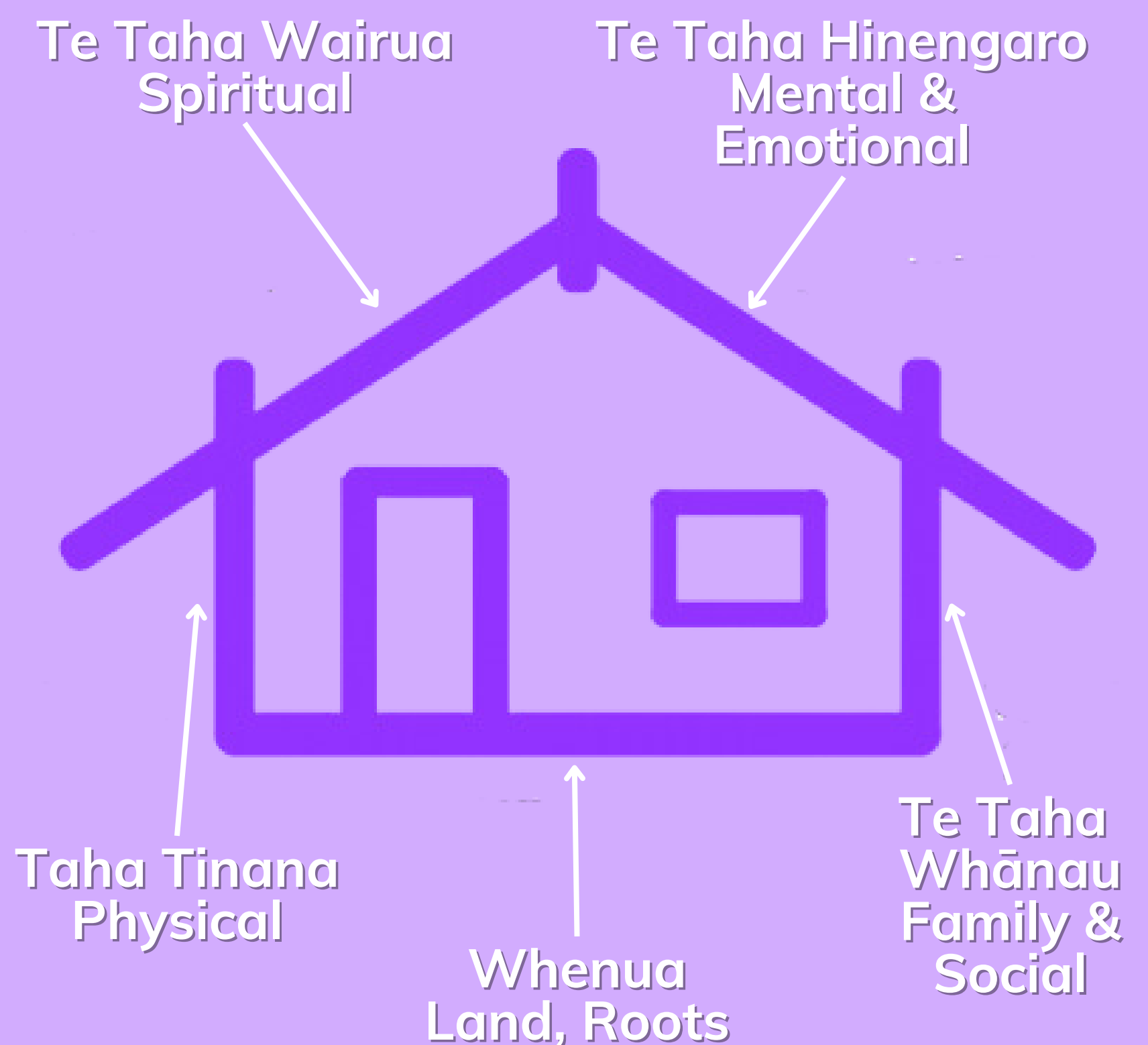
The four sides of wellbeing

Using the symbol of a house/whare, Sir Mason Durie created a model of health called Te Whare Tapa Whā (the four-sided house) identifying four cornerstones of health. It reminds us that health is about more than just physical wellness - all parts of who we are must be included to find balance and wellbeing.

As the foundation for the other four dimensions, the health of the land and the natural environment is strongly connected to your health and wellbeing. You can think about whenua as your place of belonging. Connection to the land and to nature has been shown to improve mental and physical wellbeing.

When coping with a long-term condition like arthritis, we need to take particular care to strengthen each wall to stay protected and encouraged. When physical pain and exhaustion challenges mental wellbeing our whare needs to be able to weather the storm and stay connected to the land/whenua.

TE WHARE TAPA WHĀ



How is your whare doing?

It's a good idea to check your whare regularly to identify what needs strengthening and what already gives you structure, security, and protection.

Think about the five sides of your whare:

- What keeps each side in place?
- Which one feels strongest?
- Is there one that needs more support?
- What is one thing you could put in place to strengthen that wall?





Physically/Te Taha Tinana

Have your symptoms changed or worsened? If so, contact your GP, specialist, or rheumatology nurse for a check-up and review.

Are you moving your body? Regular enjoyable movement that puts your joints through their full range of motion, stretching, strengthening, and getting your heart pumping is good for every aspect of wellbeing. Movement is proven to reduce pain and disability. However, if you are having a flare of symptoms, rest and gentle stretching is all that is needed.

Are you doing nice things for your body? Self-care is important. Building time into your day for massage, mirimiri (traditional Māori healing, deep breathing), aromatherapy, saunas, tai chi, rhythmic deep-breathing, quiet alone time, good food, rest, and sleep all help to promote wellbeing.

Are you pacing yourself, or are you in the 'Boom-Bust' cycle? Taking on too much can result in exhaustion, increased pain, and low mood.



Family/Whanau & Socially/ Te Taha Whanāu

Are you connecting with whanau/family, friends, or community groups regularly?

Would it be helpful to reach out to existing supports you haven't spoken to in a while? Would it be more helpful to find new connections who are a source of strength and comfort? Connection with others nurtures wellbeing.



Mentally & Emotionally/Te Taha Hinengaro

Are you struggling to cope with difficult thoughts, feelings, and emotions? You are not alone; we all need support to get through hard times. Reach out to a trusted friend, church leader, family member, spiritual advisor, counsellor/therapist, or community support group.

Your GP/doctor may be able to provide access to free mental health support, or text or phone 1737 for free mental health support 24 hours/7 days a week. Visit our website for mental wellbeing information.



Spiritually/Te Taha Wairua

Do you need to link back into spiritual practices that nourish you?

Building in spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, rongoā (traditional Māori healing), song, karakia, chanting, listening to music or being in nature can help support you to connect with your inner source/wairua and with others on the same journey.



References: Mental Health Foundation, Access & Choice Mental Wellbeing