

Suzy Cato explains E Tū Tāngata to Parents and Kaitiaki

Kia ora, Talofa, I'm Suzy Cato, working with the wonderful team of E Tū Tāngata who are working with your tamariki on some really positive strategies on how to navigate some of the challenges life can throw at us.

You may remember me from your own childhood, well I am still committed to working with children today, as I ever was, and that's why I am supporting the mahi of E Tū Tāngata, as they work to help you and your tamariki.

As parents, we want our kids to grow up in a world that embraces them and allows them to live their fullest potential. Unfortunately, in New Zealand we have had culture of criticism for many years, sometimes called the Tall Poppy Syndrome, and that permeates all parts of society. Often this culture is seen in subtle ways, attitudes like Your success is a threat to my success. I wish you well, just not too well.

This sort of culture often leads to self-deprecation and negative self talk. And unfortunately, this culture of criticism is what our kids are growing up in. And growing up afraid that we will be put down for our thoughts, opinions and actions can make us reluctant to share our hopes and dreams in case someone laughs at them. It can make us reluctant to risk looking stupid by trying something new. It can make us talk ourselves down before others get the chance to. And we can sometimes feel uncomfortable if we stand out, even if we're standing out for something good.

However, we can change that culture of criticism and one of the best places to foster change, is inside our own homes. If we create a culture that builds up, instead of tearing down we can make a world of difference, for ourselves, as well as for our tamariki. The three simple ideas of E Tū Tāngata are aimed at building that culture of positivity. These ideas are: You Have Value, We Succeed Together and Others Matter.

We can use the three ideas of E Tū Tāngata to build a culture where we can feel valued, are able to work well as a team together and see others as just as valuable as ourselves, because they are.

E Tū Tāngata isn't a complicated or time consuming programme either, it is just about being aware of the problem, and beginning a conversation about it. It's about three simple mindset shifts that anyone can make. And although the ideas are simple, the results can be profound, especially because the three ideas encompass the way we want our children to be as strong, confident, passionate adults and how they interact successfully and inclusively with the world.

If you want to incorporate E Tū Tāngata into your home, just start with a having conversation with your tamariki. If your kids are older, you may want to start by asking them about their own experiences of this Tall Poppy culture. You could even share times when you yourself have felt pulled down by others. If your kids are younger, you might want to start by just using the language in conversation as things come up. Or explain that, as a whānau you are going to work towards building each other up, not knocking each other down.

Then start implementing the three key ideas of E Tū Tāngata.

The first idea is, You Have Value. And you do. You have value as a parent, as a member of your community, and most importantly as an individual. You have value, so do your tamariki. Reminding ourselves of that, and teaching our kids to know their inherent worth as a human is so important, so is living in a way that shows our kids that we respect ourselves and know our own worth.

Knowing that succeed or fail, you are a person whose life is worth so much is something we all need to know. When we know our worth we are more likely to, as kids as well as adults, make better decisions for ourselves and to be prepared to take positive risks like trying something new. When we know our worth we are empowered to ask for help when we need it because we know we are worth helping. We're more likely to acknowledge our mistakes too, we are human after all. But we'll then try harder after learning from those mistakes. You have value means being able to accept ourselves as we are, and know that we are valuable no matter what.

The second strand of E Tū Tāngata is We Succeed Together. This is about reminding ourselves, and helping our kids to see that others are potential collaborators, and not just seeing them as competitors. This is about becoming people who are willing to work with others in a way where everyone wins. It means seeing the people around us as friends and supporters, rather than as a threat to us. It means celebrating the successes of our friends without worrying how their success might have a negative impact on ours.

The last strand of E Tū Tāngata is Others Matter. This is about recognising ourselves, and helping our kids to recognise the worth in others, and seeing all people as valuable and worthy of support. This is about helping others and understanding that when people are different from us, they are still valuable and that they matter just as much as we do. We want to raise children who see the worth in others and who are willing to accept people who are different, so we can all live in a community that is supportive and collaborative.

When we make these positive shifts in ourselves as parents, and encourage this in our children, we are supporting the values that we already have in our homes and are reinforcing the positive messages we are already giving our children. It also reinforces the positive behaviours you tamariki are being encouraged to share at school. And all of this will filter out into our communities, our sports groups and hopefully our workplaces.

Thank you so much for sharing these key values with your whānau. E Tū Tāngata: by standing together as a whānau, we are stronger. By standing together as a community, we are even stronger. E Tū Tāngata: We Stand Together.