

These notes and thoughts come originally from a training material developed for Hale Na`au Pono's Adult Mental Health Team, and subsequently reformed to become the basis of a discussion held at the Church of the Crossroads in September 2007. A disclaimer should be made immediately, that the writer does not consider himself in any way an expert in the cultural practices of the Hawaiian people or in the specific practice of Ho`oponopono. Instead, this writing is a collection of experiences, limited practice, readings, discussions, consultations, and thinking over the years.

From Poka Laenui, Executive Director, Hale Na`au Pono

Training Notes on the practice of Ho`oponopono:

Ho`oponopono can be interpreted as "to make things pono or right". This could mean to restore relationships back into balance, to clean away the hihia or mess which has caused problems. The processes or practices in achieving this outcome are many.

To separate the original practices from the very spiritual foundation from which those practices arose is to lose sight of the historical and cultural foundation of Ho`oponopono. Some people may practice Ho`oponopono through the use of water, and its cleansing nature. Others may use other environmental elements or a combination of them, i.e., salt, ti plant, olena root, as representatives of different aspects of God. Some may use the Christian Bible and have God speak to them through the open bible, (wehe i ka paipala), others through prayers and showings which come to them, etc.

The form popularized more recently is the practice which comes from Ka`ū via the teachings and the writings of Kupuna Kawena Puku`i, and whose principle work on the subject may be found in the two volumes of Nana i ke Kumu, published by Hui Hanai, the support organization of the Queen Lili`uokalani Children's Center.

This is the form I am addressing as I speak of Ho`oponopono.

It may be helpful to first recognize other dispute resolution and social healing forms already in practice in Hawai'i. Some of these forms may be more dispute resolution than social healing. The most prominent form is the judicial practice whereby one brings a law suit in a "civil" action or a charge or indictment, in a criminal action. The rules for processing these contests are set forth in various "Rules of Court" or "Rules of Procedures" that may extend across the variety of courts. A single Judge generally presides over the proceedings, at least at the initial level of the controversy. Once a party initiates the court proceeding, the other party is pulled into the proceeding, involuntarily, as long as there is "jurisdiction" of the court over that party. Jurisdiction is generally attached if the opposing party falls within the territorial boundaries of the court, is a "citizen" of the place, or the subject of the law suit is of such a nature that jurisdiction is deemed to be conferred to the court over such person.

The parties usually speak through "specialists" or lawyers, a category of people trained in promoting a client's interest more than an outcome of pono or of social healing. Their aim while engaged in this judicial system, is to "win" for their client.

The standards of conduct used in a judicial system are generally clear. Usually these standards can be found in a Constitution, statutes, administrative rules, or agreements entered by the parties. At times, the standards may be found in decisions reached in earlier cases (precedents), or if a new issue has been raised, a standard is formed considering such precedents.

The outcome is generally like a physical contest or a battle. There will be a winner, a loser, or a tie. The parties, if they survive the process, will have resolved their "legal rights" but not necessarily the social pain. For example, a drunk driver of a vehicle crosses the center line and runs into another vehicle, killing the driver and passengers of that other vehicle. He is charged with the violation of a criminal statute, pleads or is found guilty by the court, and thus "losses". The "State" or the "People" win.

The beer company who advertised and prodded the sale and consumption of its products was left untouched. The anger and hurt felt by the family of those who died as a result of the accident remains, aimed at the drunk driver, and probably spills over to his family and associates. The drunk driver and his family carry a guilt, unresolved even by the service of a

sentence imposed by the court. The parties most injured by the event never get to speak to one another, except possibly during the sentence phase of a court proceeding, and limited only to their initial statements of pain, anger, outrage, etc. Their burdens are carried on for years, and often carried to their graves.

The courts have come to alternative methods of resolving controversies: arbitration, mediation, and `Ohana counseling. These methods generally take the judge out of the process except for the court's final stamp of approval if the process has brought about a resolution.

There is also a legislative formulation for raising and resolving issues of conflicts. With legislation, however, the conflicts thrown into the fray are generally of large, social policy nature. The U.S. Congress and the Hawai'i State Legislature have, for example, expressed itself on the large area of U.S. invasion and overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation-State in 1893. While legislative actions can effectively take on such large social issues, individual and family pain, grief, guilt, and inter-personal conflicts often persist.

There are other conflict resolving methods practiced in the general society. Many such conflicts are resolved in temples or churches. The conflicts may or may not be of a spiritual nature, but the resolution will often incorporate the aid or appeal to spirituality.

There are a number of dispute resolution systems in the international arena as well. Such tribunals, courts, or legislative bodies operated very closely to form of the states. One of the problems found in that arena is obtaining jurisdiction over the parties to a controversy. The second difficulty is the limited parties who may be included in the process. Third is the power to enforce decisions, which may emerge from the earlier dispute.

The Process of Ho`oponopono:

1. Gathering of the parties:

a) Selection of the Haku:

The Haku will be the person from whom leadership and responsibility over the process will fall. This person must be able to carry the respect and regard necessary to take the participants through what may become a very painful process. Oftentimes, this person is regarded highly for the wisdom he or she may have exhibited. The Haku may come from the clergy, may be the leader of an ohana, etc.

b) Identification of the participants (parties),

Who are the injured parties who are ready to engage in the Ho`oponopono process? Are they able to enter into this process with a correct intent? What is that intent?

c) Preliminary idea of the pilikia to be resolved.

2. Selection of the venue

Place where the process and parties will not be disturbed,
Neutral surroundings,
Comfortable, Accessible, Adequate, Safe,
Food and other refreshments available,
All participants situated such that each is seen as an equal,

3. Basic Rules:

- i) absolute truthfulness and sincerity (`oia`i`o) is required;
- ii) self-scrutiny, introspection, and review of individual conduct, attitudes and emotions required.
- iii) All discussions are channeled through the Haku in order to maintain control over disruptive emotions, no cross-talking is allowed.
- iv) Haku may question involved participants in an on-going search for absolute honesty in the participants.
- v) If disruptive behavior arise, tempers flare, or other conduct which interferes with getting to the problems one

at a time takes place, the Haku may call for a time of peace, cooling off, silence, or Ho`omalū. Hopefully, this ho`omalū will provide the participants a time to reflect on the purpose of the process and to bring aroused emotions under control.

4. Proceeding to Ho`oponopono

Haku

- a) Pule, Providing space for people to get in touch with their identify of a spiritual power, silence, meditation, (depending on the nature of the participants – do not include or force upon anyone a religious precept to which that individual does not abide) Again, depending on the nature of the participants, prayer may be used at ther times as deemed appropriate or even necessary.
- b) Kukulu Kumuhana, A statement of the obvious problem(s) to be solved or prevented from growing worse.
- c) Mahiki, Setting to Right, consisting of a systematic discussion of the problems, layer by layer, much like the peeling of the layers of an onion until they get to the root of the problem. At each layer or identification of a problem, each of the participants are given a chance to address the problem, before moving on to the next one. This is a methodical process which may call for a number of ho`oponopono sessions.
- d) Mihi, Repenting, confession of wrongdoing and the seeking of forgiveness. Confession of the error must be full and honest. Nothing can be held back. Intertwined within the repenting, apology, confession, and seeking of forgiveness is the constant test of truthfulness and sincerity (`oia`i`o). The repenting must come from the heart, otherwise it is nothing but form over substance. Included in this stage is the making of immediate restitution or arrangements to make restitution as soon as possible. The terms of restitution should be clear and agreed upon by the offended party(ies).

- e) Kala, Acceptance of the apology and forgiveness extended. This kala is said to unbind the transgressor of the fault, and by doing so, the forgiving party is also unbound to the fault as well. The transgression is dissolved and the parties transgression is released. The incident or transgression is not brought up again, and when remembered, it is seen in a matter of fact attitude, as an event which took place but since resolved and no hard feeling attach any longer.
- f) Ho`omalū, Closing prayer, reflection, meditation, etc. bringing to end and to peace, the subject or transgression resolved in the Ho`oponopono, and not to be raised by and between the parties again.
- g) Pani, Closing rites which may include offerings of chicken or pig to the gods, a ceremonial ocean bath, kapu kai, and an `aha `aina or feast. If none of these are available, just some small snack or a meal may follow to ceremonially close the session and to honor the spiritual forces, which helped in bringing about the peace.

5. Post-Ho`oponopono

Parties are restored to a place of reconciliation through a process in which they became actors, participants, and owners of the process. Parties are cleansed and released from the kaumaha or burden of the past they may have carried, and which they could have transferred on to their children.

If the process fails, try again later. Gained clarity in the positions and the personalities involved. Wait for the parties to change.

For more information on the topic:

Queen Lili`uokalani Children's Center: 847-1302

Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation: 521-2302

[Nana i Ke Kumu \(Look to the Source\) Volume 1](#) by Mary Kawena Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine Lee
(Paperback - 1983)