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## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Social and Emotional Wellbeing: Domains, Contributing / Risk factors and Protective Factors

In broad terms, social and emotional wellbeing is the foundation for physical and mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is a holistic concept which results in a network of relationships between individuals, family, kin and community. It also recognises the importance of connection to land, spirituality and ancestry, and how these affect the individual (Gee et al, 2014).

Social and emotional wellbeing may change across the life course: what is important to a child's social and emotional wellbeing may be quite different to what is important to an Elder. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's understanding of social and emotional wellbeing varies between different cultural groups and individuals (Gee et al, 2014).

Culture and cultural identity is critical to social and emotional wellbeing. Practicing culture can involve a living relationship with ancestors, the spiritual dimension of existence, and connection to country and language. Individual and community control over their physical environment, dignity and self-esteem, respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights and a perception of just and fair treatment is also important to social and emotional wellbeing (Gee et al, 2014).

Domain	Connection to physical wellbeing	Connection to mental wellbeing	Connection to family / kinship	Connection to community	Connection to culture	Connection to land	Connection to spirituality / ancestors
Description	All elements of a person's life that is linked to their physical body - including the normal biological markers that reflect the physical health of a person.	Cognitive, emotional and psychological human experience, as well as fundamental human needs – i.e., perceived safety and security, a sense of belonging, sense of control and mastery, self-esteem, meaning making, values and motivation.	Connection to family/kinship is central to the functioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. These systems are complex and sustain interconnectedness through reciprocal relationships. The kinship system provides multiple carers and attachment figures.	Aspects of wellbeing that are rooted in interpersonal interaction.  Community can take many forms. A connection provides opportunities for individuals to connect with each other, support each other and work together.	Refers to having relationship with aspects of one's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage.  A connection to a culture provides a sense of continuity with the past and helps underpin a strong identity.	Connection to land / country is closely tied to spirituality, a sense of belonging, and underpins identity. Feeling connected to country has been reported to evoke a positive sense of wellbeing among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural worldviews are grounded in a connection to spirituality - stories, rituals, ceremonies and cultural knowledge, and connection to person, land and place. Spirituality provides a sense of purpose and meaning.
Possible Contributing / Risk factors *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited/no access to adequate:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– nutrition including traditional food/s</li> <li>– medical / physical care</li> </ul> </li> <li>Limited opportunities to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– engage with peers/explore environment</li> <li>– exercise</li> <li>– access Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racism and stigma</li> <li>Trauma, including Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>Exposure to domestic and family violence and sexual abuse</li> <li>Mental illness / Substance exposure to and/or misuse</li> <li>Exposure to grief and loss</li> <li>Low socioeconomic status</li> <li>Limited opportunity to access cultural healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trauma and loss, including Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>Removal from family at birth and / or living with non-Indigenous peoples</li> <li>Disconnected from family and kin - family history of disconnection</li> <li>Absence of safe family and kinship relationships</li> <li>Exposure to domestic/family violence and sexual abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family part of the Stolen Generation - disconnection to culture and community</li> <li>Trauma and loss, including Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>Family and/or individual disengagement / limited connection</li> <li>Lack of clarity regarding cultural, family and community connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family part of the Stolen Generation</li> <li>Trauma and loss, including Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>No sense of belonging to culture and/or identity</li> <li>Cultural identity being minimised / disregard by others</li> <li>Exposure to domestic and family violence and sexual abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited too not understanding of connection to Country</li> <li>Limited, to no, knowledge or access to family story / narrative of where family / kin are from</li> <li>Family / kin still exploring their traditional Country</li> <li>Restricted / no access to Country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trauma and loss, including Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>Limited / no messages about Dream Time</li> <li>No connection to the spiritual dimension of existence</li> <li>Limited / no access to family religious affiliation/s</li> <li>Spiritual beliefs and culture being minimised / disregard by others</li> </ul>
Possible Protective Factors*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to treatment and care that is appropriate to, and consistent with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices, including accessing ACCHO and local services</li> <li>Access to adequate nutrition and traditional food/s</li> <li>Access to regular required medical assessment and care</li> <li>Opportunities to participate in exercise and sporting activities</li> <li>Knowledge and resources to maintain self-care</li> <li>Opportunities to attend programs to develop positive physical health and body image</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities and ability to access culturally appropriate services that:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– recognises their trauma and loss</li> <li>– limits the impact of racism and stigma</li> <li>– enhances their mental health</li> </ul> </li> <li>Residing / attending a placement / educational facility where they feel safe and supported</li> <li>Opportunities to develop their skills to connect and engage with other YP</li> <li>Opportunities to safely 'process' traumas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural involvement and participation</li> <li>Opportunity to explore own and family/kin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander story</li> <li>Opportunity to safely explore and process family/kin story</li> <li>Support to develop their own 'social story'</li> <li>Regular, structured and safe contact with family, kin, siblings, and significant others</li> <li>Loving, stable, accepting, safe and supportive family/kin and care provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and programs</li> <li>Links with, and accessing, appropriate cultural supports, workers and networks - including accessing ACCHO and local services and community</li> <li>Enhanced understanding of their community</li> <li>Connection and access to their own community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to explore culture and cultural identity for instance through normalising conversations and attending cultural events and programs</li> <li>Has contemporary expressions of their culture and can interact with Elders, community members and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</li> <li>Witnessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people / culture that is promoted / supported positively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to learn from family / cultural mentors to develop connection to land</li> <li>Capacity to attend activities / programs / events on Country to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to land</li> <li>Access to stories / images / objects / reminders of Country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to treatment and care that is appropriate to, and consistent with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices, inclusive of traditional healers, Elders and other cultural healers</li> <li>Capacity to explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality</li> <li>Access to contemporary expressions of spirituality</li> <li>Enhanced understanding of spirituality's significance to identity</li> <li>Opportunities to attend cultural events and ceremonies</li> </ul>

\*\* a number of these factors cross multiple domains.