

GLOSSARY OF BASIC HO'OPONOPONO TERMS:

Ho'oponopono is a traditional process for “setting things right” in Hawaiian families. It is also a healing process, focusing upon the relationships between family members as well as on individual relationships to self, loved ones and community.

Aloha: Love (and so much more!). Ho'oponopono relies upon the aloha that exists between all family members, regardless of pilikia, as a powerful force for the resolution of differences.

Haku: Leader of the Ho'oponopono process. Generally, the Haku is the eldest member of the family, or a family member specially selected for his or her abilities. In modern times, haku are sometimes specially-trained non-relatives.

Hala: Transgressions. Any offense that is known by the doer or is felt by another person constitutes hala, even if the person who transgressed felt that it was justified.

Hihia: The “entanglements” that contribute to the problem that is being resolved. In Hawaiian thinking, problems do not “separate” people, but rather bind them together with negative ties. Ho'oponopono seeks to remove these negative links and restore positive bonds through which aloha can flow.

Ho'omalū: A “cooling off” period, called by the Haku when needed, to allow the process to continue in a pono way. Can be short or long.

Kala: Release. When a person has made a genuine effort to make things right with another person, it is expected that the person who was harmed will release the wrongdoer from all negative thoughts, feelings and intentions. This is done through a sincere exchange of aloha, following mihi.

Kūkākūkā: Discussion. This is another problem-solving form that is utilized within Hawaiian culture. It does not hold the same level of power as Ho'oponopono, but allows for discussion in a culturally-based manner.

Kūkulu Kumuhana: Unifying the spiritual energy of the group. At the beginning of Ho'oponopono (and sometimes elsewhere in the process), the haku will consciously unify the group's focus through prayer and directed consensus on the purpose and process of the session.

Mahiki: Peeling back the “layers” of a problem to reach its deepest roots, for the purpose of healing. Each level must be resolved fully on all sides in order to proceed.

Mea'ai: Food. The sharing of a meal after the process is complete is a very important part of the closing of ho'oponopono. Foods with cultural meaning, such as 'ulu (which means “to grow”) and kalo (which connects land, people and the divine) may be chosen for this.

Mihi: Apology. Soul-searching is an integral part of Ho'oponopono, and it is expected that participants will themselves find what they have done to contribute to the problem and sincerely apologize for it.

'Ohana: Family. Often includes close friends and others with strong connections. Also includes extended family, including all generations.

'Oia'i'o: Absolute truthfulness. Hawaiians believe that truth exists in many layers, from simple correctness to very deep spiritual truth. 'Oia'i'o refers to the deepest kind of truth, and it is expected that this is what will be spoken by all participants during Ho'oponopono.

'Oki: To cut off. Once a problem is fully resolved, the family will 'oki it from themselves. It is considered pau (finished, over) and is not even to be brought up again.

Pilikia: Problems. Hawaiians generally see problems as existing in “layers” that occur at the same time. In Ho'oponopono, all layers must be dealt with, generally starting from the “surface” problems, and working toward the resolution of deeper, more spiritual issues.

Pono: Harmonious balance of all things, all elements of the situation. Pono is often translated as “righteousness”, but in truth there is no English equivalent for this word.

Pule: Prayer. Very important for all aspects of Ho'oponopono.



A BRIEF VIEW OF THE HO'OPONOPONO PROCESS

Ho'oponopono is traditionally a family process, conducted by a haku who is generally the senior member of the family. Today, haku are sometimes non-family practitioners who have been specially trained in the process.

Training is serious. Competency requires deep cultural understanding and experience, extensive training, and pono lifestyle; also, the work (including training new haku) is traditionally never done for payment.

Ho'oponopono is important for social healing. This process of “setting things to right” can be used to resolve longstanding differences, to heal a problem that has “come to a head”, to help a physical illness or situation, or simply to maintain healthy, positive relationships within a family.

Ho'oponopono is a deeply spiritual process. The haku prays for a long time – possibly days or weeks, throughout daily life – before beginning, and the family prays together to open and close the session. Pule may be used at any other time during the process as well. The focus of the pule is generally to ask for guidance, forgiveness, help, cleansing, and for strength that will help everyone to be pono. Pule also help to focus the group's energy, and to encourage positive feelings of peace to flow between everyone.

It is expected that all participants will be totally sober, open and deeply honest at all times. In Ho'oponopono, omitting something that needs to be said or telling partial truths is not acceptable; 'oia'i'o, or deep truth, is expected.

At the same time, there is careful control of the “heat” of the process. Generally, “venting” is not allowed, and aloha should be part of all interactions. Problems are stated calmly. Intense feelings may be expressed through description, but not enactment.

Breaks may be called for cooling off. No discussion is allowed during breaks.

The Process:

- Problems are identified and brought to the haku for consideration. In a family where Ho'oponopono is done regularly, the haku might be the one to identify problems, or perhaps to call for periodic Ho'oponopono sessions, regardless of pilikia.
- Background “research” and prayers are done, and a Ho'oponopono is called.
- Food is prepared beforehand and set aside. If it is expected that there will be more than one session involved, the family may only prepare a large ceremonial meal for the last session.

- Everyone gathers together, and the process begins with a prayer. The haku then focuses everyone's attention and energy on the immediate problem at hand.
- Discussion ensues, during which everyone shares their role in the problem, their perspective, concerns and feelings, with emphasis on how they were affected, and how they affected others.
- The haku guides the group through the different layers of the problem, possibly uncovering new problems that had gone unrecognized. Related matters that may have affected the problem are also identified.
- Everyone is asked to mihi with one another – to sincerely apologize and to forgive. This part can be very emotional.
- Once the situation is agreed to be pono by all, the conflict is cut from the family forever, never to be brought up again. Prayers of thanks and blessing are given.
- Food that was prepared beforehand is shared together.

As with any healing process, great discernment is needed in order to insure that the ultimate result is the genuine resolution of conflict and the restoration of good relationships between everyone involved.