Health and Wellbeing

Strong sense of Wellbeing

We now know through research that brain development in the early years can significantly impact on a person’s long term mental and physical health. A strong wellbeing in the early years lays the foundation for improved outcomes in later life.

The importance of supporting children’s wellbeing is recognised in the National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety. It is also outlined in Outcome 3 of the Early Years Learning Framework and Framework for School Age Care: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

“Wellbeing includes good physical health, feelings of happiness, satisfaction and successful social functioning. It influences the way children interact in their environments. A strong sense of wellbeing provides children with confidence and optimism which maximise their learning potential.”¹

Relationships, experiences and environment

Responsive relationships, engaging experiences and a safe and healthy environment all play a role in supporting children’s healthy mental and physical wellbeing.

“To support children’s learning, it is essential that educators attend to children’s wellbeing by providing warm, trusting relationships, predictable and safe environments, affirmation and respect for all aspects of their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, creative and spiritual being.”²

This involves educators considering healthy development holistically and working towards improving skills such as physical development, cognitive skills, self-expression, social skills, resilience and self-sufficiency skills.

Mental health

Mental wellbeing is as important as physical wellbeing to children’s overall health. It is important that educators are familiar with and promote positive mental health and wellbeing in children.

Mental health and wellbeing refers to a person’s psychological, social and emotional wellbeing and is affected by the context of each individual’s circumstances. Mental health difficulties relate to “…a range of challenges that people may experience in their thoughts, feelings or behaviour.”³ Mental health difficulties are not the same as mental illness or neurological disorder.


The Department of Education and the Hunter Institute of Mental Health have developed ‘Connections; A resource for early childhood educators about children’s wellbeing.’ This guide promotes understanding in children’s mental health and wellbeing, and includes reflective questions, case studies and fact sheets.

A copy of Connections is being distributed to education and care services throughout Australia. Electronic copies are also available from the Department of Education website.

**Resources**

There are many other useful resources to assist in supporting children’s health and wellbeing.

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. How Brains are Built: The Core Story of Brain Development [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmVWOe1ky8s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmVWOe1ky8s)

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. Executive Function. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIT73VpSEUA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIT73VpSEUA)

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. InBrief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efCq_vHUMqs&list=PLuKMerO1zya_3krFpcOKgaeB2_2zOgYua](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efCq_vHUMqs&list=PLuKMerO1zya_3krFpcOKgaeB2_2zOgYua)