What Can I Do to Help?

Promoting mental health and wellbeing in your service means not only caring for babies, young children and families, but also looking after yourself and your colleagues.

Mental health problems and difficult life events can affect anyone, including children, parents, educators, directors, or community members.

Working with children is a complex task with many important responsibilities. It is very rewarding but it can also be challenging.

You need to maintain your own wellbeing in order to effectively work with children and provide support for your colleagues.

1. Link families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing.
2. Health professionals and early intervention services can assist with the assessment and management of emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties in babies and young children. Some professionals and agencies also provide information and support for early childhood services about working with those who have additional needs. When you join a new service find out about support options and referral pathways in your area and refresh this information regularly.
3. If you become concerned about a possible emotional, behavioural or mental health problem in a child, use the GRIP framework.

   - Gather information
     Write down your observations about the behaviour or situation. Consider the potential impact on development, wellbeing or learning. Many difficulties are transient, so re-evaluate whether your observations persist over time.
   - Exception: if you suspect abuse or neglect, inform your Supervisor or Director without delay.
   - Is further support needed?
     No or I need more information
   - Yes - the situation impacts on development, wellbeing or learning
     MONITOR
   - Review ongoing care and education practices, update policies, foster optimal social and emotional development, build community connections, collaborate with other agencies, provide staff training, etc.
   - Involve others
     Talk with colleagues to develop a plan for assisting the child within your service - eg discuss with your Director. Arrange referral for specialist intervention and support if needed, eg Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
   - Promote wellbeing
     Continue to promote wellbeing throughout your service. For example, adopt new ways of working with children who need support, review ongoing care and education practices, update policies, foster optimal social and emotional development, build community connections, collaborate with other agencies, provide staff training, etc.

   - Web Links
     - Mental Health
       • www.lifeline.com.au
       • beyondblue info line – information and referral
       • Suicide Callback Service – support and referral
       • Early Childhood Information
         • http://raisingchildren.net.au/
       • Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Helpline
       • Men’s line – information and referral
       • Parent Line – counselling for children’s carers
       • Mensline Australia – support for men
     - Childhood Information
       • Childline Australia – support for children
       • www.himh.org.au/foundations
       • www.copmi.net.au
       • www.kidsmatter.edu.au/ec/
       • www.casel.org
     - Specific Early Childhood Information
       • Early Childhood Education
       • www.responseability.org
       • Response Ability initiative: www.responseability.org

Looking After Myself and Others

Promoting mental health and wellbeing in your service means not only caring for babies, young children and families, but also looking after yourself and your colleagues.

Mental health problems and difficult life events can affect anyone, including children, parents, educators, directors, or community members.

Working with children is a complex task with many important responsibilities. It is very rewarding but it can also be challenging.

You need to maintain your own wellbeing in order to effectively work with children and provide support for your colleagues.

1. Here are some tips to help maintain wellbeing:
   - Look after yourself physically, through a healthy diet, regular exercise and adequate sleep.
   - Foster and maintain your personal relationships, such as those with family and friends.
   - Develop interests and friendships outside of your work environment.
   - Make time for positive activities for yourself that will help you to relax and have fun.
   - Times for balance between your professional role and your personal life try to leave work issues at work.
   - Limit the use of alcohol and other substances; don’t rely on these for relaxation.
   - Learn how to monitor and manage your stress in positive ways, eg through exercise, relaxation, breathing, etc.
   - Find a mentor through your workplace or professional networks and use that person’s support to help you grow professionally and personally.
   - Provide support and encouragement for colleagues, give constructive feedback and be a role model.
   - If you have spiritual beliefs, make time for regular spiritual practice, or relationships with others who share your philosophy.
   - Reach out for support when you need it – from colleagues, friends, family, your GP or a psychologist, or an employee assistance program through your workplace.

For more tips on looking after yourself go to: www.theenemyinpocket.com/projects

Tips to help maintain wellbeing:

YES - the situation impacts on development, wellbeing or learning
NO
EXCEPTION - if you suspect abuse or neglect, inform your Supervisor or Director without delay.
MONITOR
NO or I need more information

Inclusion Support Agency. Alternatively, a child and their family could visit their GP.

MONITOR

MONITOR

MONITOR

YES - additional or alternative support needed
NO

Gather information

Write down your observations about the behaviour or situation. Consider the potential impact on development, wellbeing or learning. Many difficulties are transient, so re-evaluate whether your observations persist over time.

Exception: if you suspect abuse or neglect, inform your Supervisor or Director without delay.

Is further support needed?

No or I need more information

Yes - the situation impacts on development, wellbeing or learning

Inclu...
Introduction

Early childhood mental health and wellbeing is seen in the capacity of a young child - within the context of their development, family, environment and culture - to:

- participate in the physical and social environment;
- form healthy and supportive relationships;
- experience, regulate, understand and express emotions;
- interact appropriately with others, including peers;
- develop a secure sense of self.

Early childhood mental health and wellbeing is related to healthy physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Early childhood development and life experiences contribute strongly to a person’s mental health and wellbeing during childhood and later in life.

There are a number of developmental disorders and mental illnesses that can affect a person’s thoughts, feelings, relationships or behaviour. Examples include autism, attention deficit disorder, anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. Children who experience a developmental disorder or a mental illness will need additional support to help them manage their health needs and achieve their optimum academic and life outcomes.

To support children’s social and emotional development and wellbeing, and promote mental health and wellbeing later in life, early childhood educators need to:

- Create safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development
- Help children to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour
- Identify babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support
- Link families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing
- Develop broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing

How Can I Promote Wellbeing?

- Create safe and supportive environments that promote wellbeing and development
- Develop an awareness of children’s interests and achievements
- Set clear guidelines for behaviour and relationships in your service and enforce them consistently
- Develop honest and respectful partnerships with other staff members, parents and families
- When guidance or discipline is needed, focus on changing behaviour rather than blaming or labelling the individual
- Set high but achievable expectations that are tailored to a child’s development and abilities and help them identify how they can work toward these
- Acknowledge each child’s strengths and abilities and support their capacity to improve and achieve
- Help children learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour
- Model effective social and emotional skills in your behaviour and relationships
- Set practical tasks and cooperative activities that promote problem-solving, social skills, negotiation and communication
- Help children to develop an understanding of their own emotions and empathy for the feelings of others
- Teach children skills for managing difficult emotions, such as going to a safe quiet place, relaxation, talking about feelings, etc.
- Help children to identify, plan and work toward their goals, both individually and in group activities
- Develop broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing
- Contribute to learn discussions about promoting social and emotional wellbeing and development in your service
- Participate in programs adopted by your service designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of babies, young children and staff
- Participate in professional development on social and emotional development, resilience, mental health, etc.
- Work in partnership with parents, families and community members to promote positive social and emotional development and wellbeing
- Advocate for the social and emotional needs of children, families and communities

What Should I Look Out For?

Some babies and young children need additional support in relation to their development or wellbeing. You might see a difference in a child’s capacity when compared with their peers, or you might notice changes in their mood or behaviour.

A minor or short-term change, or an isolated incident, may not be a problem. A child’s services educator should be more concerned if the behaviour or issue seems to be severe, persists over time, or if there are several problems occurring together.

- Early Childhood
  - Attachment problems with parents or caregivers such as persistent difficulty in separating
  - Not reaching developmental milestones
  - Poor quality play that seems limited and repetitive
  - Being anxious, withdrawn, fearful or upset much of the time
  - Not talking or communicating appropriately (consider culture and language at home)
  - Difficult with social interactions
  - Significant changes in sleeping and eating patterns
  - Behaviour that is out of step with peers at a similar age and stage
  - Difficulty in paying attention, following instructions and completing tasks
  - Difficulty managing anger and frustration, persistent temper tantrums or aggression

- Family and Community Context
  - Parenting styles that are overly controlling, harsh or critical
  - Parenting styles or family situations involving inconsistent supervision
  - Lack of involvement in children’s health, activities or development
  - Experiences of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect
  - Experiences of trauma, or unresolved loss and grief
  - Mental illness in a carer
  - Substance abuse by a carer
  - Serious physical illness or disability in a carer
  - Conflict, violence or criminal behaviour in the family or community
  - Unemployment and socioeconomic disadvantage

For more information visit: www.responseability.org
Early childhood mental health and wellbeing is seen in the capacity of a young child - within the context of their development, family, environment and culture - to:

• participate in the physical and social environment;
• form healthy and secure relationships;
• experience, regulate and express emotions;
• interact appropriately with others, including peers; and
• develop a secure sense of self.

Early childhood mental health and wellbeing is related to healthy physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Early childhood development and life experiences contribute strongly to a person’s mental health and wellbeing during childhood and later in life.

There are a number of developmental disorders and mental illnesses that can affect a person’s thoughts, feelings, relationships or behaviour. Examples include autism, attention deficit disorder, anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. Children who experience a developmental disorder or a mental illness will need additional support to help them manage their health needs and achieve their optimum academic and life outcomes.

To support children’s social and emotional development and wellbeing, and promote mental health and wellbeing later in life, early childhood educators need to:

• Create safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development
• Help children to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour
• Identify babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support
• Link families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing
• Develop broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing.

How Can I Promote Wellbeing?

• Create safe and supportive environments that promote wellbeing and development.
• Develop an awareness of children’s interests and achievements.
• Set clear guidelines for behaviour and relationships in your service and enforce them consistently.
• Develop honest and respectful partnerships with other staff members, parents and families.
• When guidance or discipline is needed, focus on changing behavior rather than blaming or labelling the individual.
• Set high but achievable expectations that are tailored to a child’s development and abilities and help them identify how they can work toward these.
• Acknowledge each child’s strengths and abilities and support their capacity to improve and achieve.
• Help children learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour.
• Model effective social and emotional skills in your behaviour and relationships.
• Set practical tasks and cooperative activities that promote problem-solving, social skills, negotiation and communication.
• Help children to develop an understanding of their own emotions and empathy for the feelings of others.
• Teach children skills for managing difficult emotions, such as going to a safe quiet place, relaxation, talking about feelings, etc.
• Help children to identify, plan and work toward their goals, both individually and in group activities.
• Develop broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing.
• Contribute to learning discussions about promoting social and emotional wellbeing and development in your service.
• Participate in programs adopted by your service designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of babies, young children and staff.
• Participate in professional development on social and emotional development, resilience, mental health, etc.
• Work in partnership with parents, families and community members to promote positive social and emotional development and wellbeing.
• Advocate for the social and emotional needs of children, families and communities.

What Should I Look Out For?

• Identify children and families who may be in need of additional support.

Some babies and young children need additional support in relation to their development or wellbeing.

You might see a difference in a child’s capacity when compared with their peers, or you might notice changes in their interests, thoughts or behaviour.

A minor or short-term change, or an isolated incident, may not be a problem. A children’s services educator should be more concerned if the behaviour or issue seems to be severe, persists over time, or if there are several problems occurring together.

• Early Childhood
  • Attachment problems with parents or caregivers such as persistent difficulty in separating.
  • Not reaching developmental milestones.
  • Poor quality play that seems limited and repetitive.
  • Being anxious, withdrawn, fearful or upset much of the time.
  • Not talking or communicating appropriately (consider culture and language at home).
  • Difficulty with social interactions.
  • Significant changes in feelings and behaviour.
  • Behaviour that is out of step with peers at a similar age and stage.
  • Difficulty in paying attention, following instructions and completing tasks.
  • Difficulty managing anger and frustration, persistent temper tantrums or aggression.

• Family and Community Context
  • Parenting styles that are overly controlling, harsh or critical.
  • Parenting styles or family situations involving inconsistent supervision.
  • Lack of involvement in children’s health, activities or development.
  • Experiences of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.
  • Experiences of trauma, or unexplained loss and grief.
  • Mental health issues in a carer.
  • Substance abuse by a carer.
  • Serious physical illness or disability in a carer.
  • Conflict, violence or criminal behaviour in the family or community.
  • Unemployment and socioeconomic disadvantage.
Introduction

Early childhood mental health and wellbeing is seen in the capacity of a young child - within the context of their development, family, environment and culture - to:

- Participate in the physical and social environment;
- Form healthy and supportive relationships;
- Experience, regulate, understand and express emotions;
- Understand and regulate their behaviour;
- Interact appropriately with others, including peers; and
- Develop a secure sense of self.

Early childhood mental health and wellbeing is related to healthy physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Early childhood development and life experiences contribute strongly to a person's mental health and wellbeing during childhood and later in life.

There are a number of developmental disorders and mental illnesses that can affect a person's thoughts, feelings, relationships or behaviour. Examples include autism, attention deficit disorder, anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. Children who experience a developmental disorder or a mental illness will need additional support to help them manage their health needs and achieve their optimum academic and life outcomes.

How Can I Promote Wellbeing?

- Create safe and supportive environments that promote wellbeing and development.
- Develop an awareness of children's interests and achievements.
- Set clear guidelines for behaviour and relationships in your service and enforce them consistently.
- Develop honest and respectful partnerships with other staff members, parents and families.
- When guidance or discipline is needed, focus on changing behaviour rather than blaming or labelling the individual.
- Set high but achievable expectations that are tailored to a child's development and abilities and help them identify how they can work towards these.
- Acknowledge each child's strengths and abilities and support their capacity to improve and achieve.
- Help children learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour.
- Model effective social and emotional skills in your behaviour and relationships.
- Help children identify, plan and work toward their goals, both individually and in group activities.
- Develop broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing.
- Participate in programs adopted by your service designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of babies, young children and staff.
- Contribute to team discussions about promoting social and emotional wellbeing and development in your service.
- Participate in professional development on social and emotional development, resilience, mental health, etc.
- Participate in leadership, team building, work groups and training.
- Advocate for the social and emotional needs of children, families and communities.

What Should I Look Out For?

- Some babies and young children need additional support in relation to their development or wellbeing. You might see a difference in a child's capacity when compared with their peers, or you might notice changes in their behaviour.

A minor or short-term change, or an isolated incident, may not be a problem. A child's services educator should be more concerned if the behaviour or issue seems to be severe, persists over time, or if there are several problems occurring together.

- Early Childhood
  - Attachment problems with parents or caregivers such as persistent difficulty in separating.
  - Not reaching developmental milestones.
  - Poor quality play that seems limited and repetitive.
  - Being anxious, withdrawn, fearful or upset much of the time.
  - Not talking or communicating appropriately (consider culture and language at home).
  - Difficulties with social interactions.
  - Significant changes in behaviour and environment.
  - Behaviour that is out of step with peers at a similar age and stage.
  - Difficulty in paying attention, following instructions and completing tasks.
  - Difficulty managing anger and frustration, persistent temper tantrums or aggression.

- Family and Community Context
  - Parenting styles that are overly controlling, harsh or critical.
  - Parenting styles or family situations involving inconsistent supervision.
  - Lack of involvement in children's health, activities or development.
  - Experiences of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.
  - Experiences of trauma, or unresolved loss and grief.
  - Mental illness in a carer.
  - Substance abuse by a carer.
  - Serious physical illness or disability in a carer.
  - Conflict, violence or criminal behaviour in the family or community.
  - Unemployment and socioeconomic disadvantages.

For more information visit: www.responseability.org
If you become concerned about a possible emotional, behavioural or mental health problem in a child, use the regular GRIP framework.

- Gather information
  Write down your observations about the behaviour or situation. Consider the potential impact on development, wellbeing or learning. Many difficulties are transient, so re-evaluate whether your observations persist over time.

EXCEPTION - if you suspect abuse or neglect, inform your Supervisor or Director without delay.

Is further support needed?  No or I need more information  MONITOR

- Respond
  Talk with the child and/or with their parents or caregivers, depending on their age and stage of development. Discuss your observations seriously and explain your concerns regarding the child’s development, wellbeing or learning. Ask about any contextual factors that may be affecting the child.

Is further support needed?  No or I need more information  MONITOR

- Involve others
  Take with colleagues to develop a plan for assisting the child within your service, or discuss with your Director. Arrange referral for specialist intervention and support if needed, eg Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Inclusion Support Agency. Alternatively, a child and their family could visit their GP.

Is further support needed?  YES - additional or alternative support needed

- Promote wellbeing
  Continue to promote wellbeing throughout your service. For example, adopt new ways of working with children who need support, review ongoing care and education practices, update policies, foster optimal social and emotional development, build community connections, collaborate with other agencies, provide staff training, etc.

- Link families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing.

Health professionals and early intervention services can assist with the assessment and management of emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties in babies and young children. Some professionals and agencies also provide information and support for early childhood services working with those who have additional needs. When you join a new service find out about support options and referral pathways in your area and refresh this information regularly.

You need to maintain your own wellbeing in order to work effectively with children and provide support for your colleagues.

- Here are some tips to help maintain wellbeing:
  - Look after yourself physically, through a healthy diet, regular exercise and adequate sleep.
  - Foster and maintain your personal relationships, such as those with friends and family.
  - Develop interests and friendships outside of your work environment.
  - Make time for positive activities for yourself that will help you to relax and have fun.
  - Strive for balance between your professional role and your personal life by trying to leave work issues at work.
  - Limit the use of alcohol and other substances; don’t rely on these for relaxation.
  - Learn how to monitor and manage your stress in positive ways, eg through exercise, relaxation, breathing, etc.
  - Find a mentor through your workplace or professional network and use that person’s support to help you grow professionally and personally.
  - Provide support and encouragement for colleagues, give constructive feedback and be a role model.
  - Reach out for support when you need it – from colleagues, friends, family, your GP, a psychologist, or an employee assistance program through your workplace.

For more tips on looking after yourself go to: www.theenergyproject.com/tips

- MONITOR
  - Here are some tips to help promote wellbeing:
    - Limit the use of alcohol and other substances; don’t rely on these for relaxation.
    - Learn how to monitor and manage your stress in positive ways, eg through exercise, relaxation, breathing, etc.
    - Strive for balance between your professional role and your personal life by trying to leave work issues at work.

- Social and emotional wellbeing may also be called mental health, which is different from mental illness. Mental health is our capacity to manage our thoughts, feelings and behaviour positively so we can enjoy life, maintain positive relationships and work toward our goals.
If you become concerned about a possible emotional, behavioural or mental health problem in a child, use the regular framework and contact the support services you join a new service find out about support options and referral pathways in your area and refresh this information. 

Health professionals and early intervention services can assist with the assessment and management of emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties in babies and young children. Some professionals and agencies also provide information and support for early childhood services about working with those who have additional needs. When you join a new service find out about support options and referral pathways in your area and refresh this information regularly.

Promote wellbeing throughout your service. For example: adopt new ways of working with children who need support, review ongoing care and education practices, update policies, foster optimal social and emotional development, build community connections, collaborate with other agencies, provide staff training, etc.

Here are some tips to help maintain wellbeing:

- Look after yourself physically, through a healthy diet, regular exercise and adequate sleep.
- Foster and maintain your personal relationships, such as those with friends and family.
- Develop interests and friendships outside of your work environment.
- Make time for positive activities for yourself that will help you to relax and have fun.
- Strive for balance between your professional role and your personal life. If you need to work extra hours, ensure you have time for relaxation.
- Learn to monitor and manage your stress in positive ways, eg through exercise, relaxation, breathing, etc.
- Find a mentor through your workplace or professional networks and use that person's support to help you grow professionally and personally.
- Provide support and encouragement for colleagues, give constructive feedback and be a role model.
- If you have spiritual beliefs, make time for regular spiritual practice, or relationships with others who share your philosophy.
- Reach out for support when you need it – from colleagues, friends, family, your GP, a psychologist, or an employee assistance program through your workplace.

For more tips on looking after yourself: go to: www.theenergyproject.com/tips

© Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Health and Ageing 2012