

**cache** alumni

**A store of meaningful  
well-being experiences  
for children**

## A store of meaningful well-being experiences for children

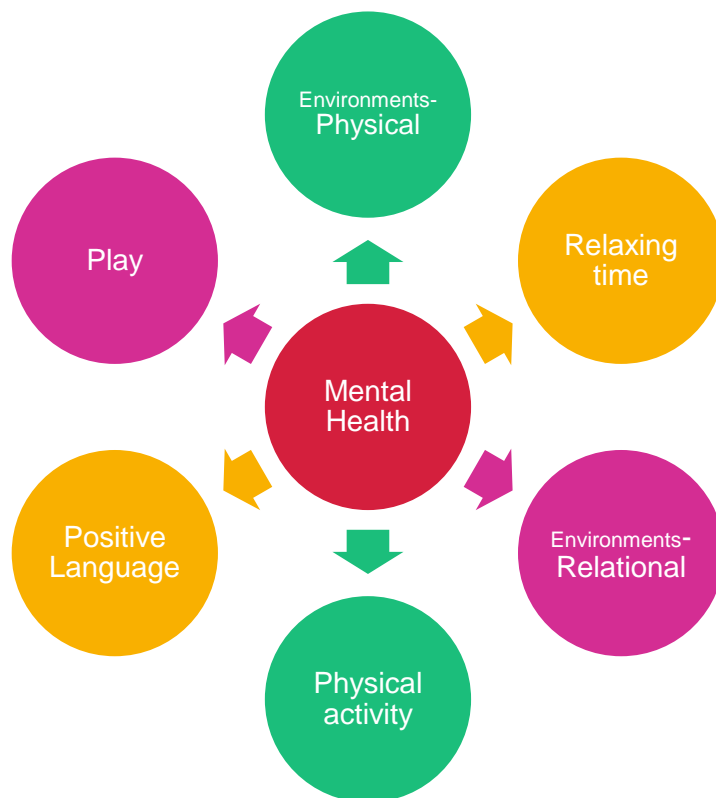
This store of meaningful experiences has been designed to equip practitioners with children’s well-being ideas that could be embedded in everyday practise and physical environments.

Children’s Mental Health is extremely important, particularly with the rise in Mental Health Statistics. The Mental Health Foundation (2019) reported that 1 in 8 children and young people are affected by mental health issues. Settings are reporting a lack of early help and intervention and so it becomes paramount that we support personal, social, and emotional development at every age and stage.

The advice and guidance available is often geared towards parents and how to best support them but parents are not the only adults in the children’s lives and therefore, we must make it a priority to upskill in this area, learning as much as we can to support the children of our future and their families. An awareness of our own practise allows everyone to have ownership on the delivery. It ensures that everyone’s wellbeing is considered too. The factors.... that we can challenge and support, means that we can do what we do best in early years.... and get creative!!

It is amazing how by changing the language of ‘activity’ to ‘experience’ it broadens our practical ideas and vision in the setting. Improving wellbeing in Early Years comes from embedding these experiences into our every day, not just activities that are set up (although these are still beneficial for awareness).

There are areas that settings and practitioners can focus on such as:






Play

### **Yoga studio idea**

Yoga is becoming hugely popular for both children and adults due to the calming effects and the benefits of stretching your body (and mind). Yoga is an ancient form of exercise and is perfect for stilling the mind. A lot of children instinctively do yoga poses (have you ever noticed this?). A good way of adopting some yoga poses is to use Yoga cards and create your own yoga studio. The children can liken their poses to animals and the environment around them. Mats and mirrors can be used and guidance for the children is recommended.

### **Dissecting our routine**

It is so valuable to dissect your routine and to identify any areas that are causing stress for the children, anything they are finding particularly tough. These are indications to us that we need to support them and to ease the pressure somehow. For example, if you are dreading a certain part of the day such as snack time, think of ways that that this could be relieved. Is snack time too long for them to cope with? Is it too big and too loud? Could you consider making it more fun? A nice idea for snack time is to have a 'conversation box', pictures that the children could talk to each other about and topics that they can tell their friends about. A snack shop or stop can work well and can be adapted to suit the cohort of children you currently have as well as allowing for independence, autonomy, and choice. Whatever part of the routine that it is, think of how this can be changed and improved, with children at the centre and remember to embed experiences in play!



Environments-  
Physical

### **Calm spaces**

Create a calm space for children to just be. A nice, calm, and quiet space where children can choose to lie down or just to sit quietly. Within this calm space consider what it feels like, what it looks like and how calm it is to be there. Too much colour or stimulation can have the opposite effect, so soft and neutral is best. Inside the calm area, ensure that there is a calming basket of some sort, that has cushions to feel, tools to support breathing deeply, nice smells and emotion examples to look at. Around the calm area, consider what else is impacting on it. For example, are the instruments on the other side creating noise and unnecessary distractions or is the calm area being used for construction. Calm spaces do not need to just be inside either, it is so nice to be in the fresh air and be able to relax. A dedicated space outside where children can lie down

and be still, watching the clouds is perfect for recalibrating our senses. 'Our' senses because the adults can join in too, modelling relaxing and being still.



Relaxing  
time

### **Relaxation time**

The children are so busy and that means that their brains are busy too. Have you ever been to an all-day course or conference? Afterwards, do you feel drained and more tired than usual? The children's days are like this almost every day, so much to do, so much to explore, all of that learning for all the time. So, we need to encourage times to be still, times to relax, times to rejuvenate. Clear a space, lie down on the floor on your backs, bellies facing the ceiling (adults too) turn the lights down or off, maybe play some relaxing music or guided visualisations or maybe you quietly read a story. Encourage the children to see what you are reading or to hold their favourite soft toy and feel the textures. This can be for a short time, but it is so beneficial.

### **Breathing**

The benefits of deep breathing are countless. One of the most important ones is that it calms and relaxes the whole mind and body. By learning how to breathe correctly, we can tap into this amazing skill whenever we need to. When doing this with children, get creative!! Make some breathing dragons by using a paper cup or coned cardboard and attaching some tissue paper on the ends. Encourage the children to get the dragon to breathe fire. Make or buy some windmills and take big deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. You could even put a calming box into an area where breathing could be demonstrated and modelled by the practitioners. This could include slinkies, mermaid material pillows, bubbles and sensory bottles filled with glitter.



Environments-  
Relational

### **Relationships-information-what staff can do**

When adults are asked what serves their well-being and how they keep it healthy, many comment on how they turn to friends and family, how they speak about what's going on for them and how they feel best when they are not judged or reprimanded for having a bad day. We are seeking out co-regulators and need those co-regulators to be calm, non-judgemental and to sometimes just be


there. What a powerful reminder when we are working with children who are looking to us for exactly the same. By spending time with the children, talking to them, being close and trying to understand them, we are supporting their well-being in ways we cannot replicate in any activity. We must of course, be self-regulated ourselves and ensure that we are taking care of our own well-being too. After all, you cannot pour from an empty cup.



Physical  
activity

### **Can you be a.....?**

Make a large space for the children to use the whole of their bodies, say to the children 'can you be a....?' and then say the names of lots of different animals and maybe extend to include the way in which those animals feel to increase emotional literacy. The children will be using all their bodies and releasing endorphins whilst exercising.



Positive  
Language

### **Positive affirmations activity**

Using positive affirmations can have beneficial effects when used consistently and help to promote self-esteem, confidence, and self-belief. A nice way to do this is to use a daily affirmation calendar and each day say the new affirmation with the children. You can explore what the words mean, how we can show them and feel them. This helps to adopt a positive language in the setting too. Children can create their own and have an affirmation jar to decorate. We will also be extending their emotional literacy as part of this activity.

### **Positive language challenge**

Telling the children what we want to see, instead of what we don't want to see is paramount when talking to children. Considering our language when speaking to children can change it completely. Challenge yourself to avoid using the words 'no' and 'don't', just for a few hours. It is astounding how we have to really think about what other language to use and it can shock us into thinking how positive or negative our language is. Our words have so much power, use them well!

## Useful Resources to support

- [Relax Kids website](#)
- [Yoga Pretzel cards](#)
- [Mindful activities for children](#)
- [Children's well-being publication](#)
- [Keep your cool toolbox](#)