

Contents

Introduction	4
What is the definition of Well-being?.....	5
The Brain	11
Chemicals and Hormones	16
Sleep.....	21
Resilience	25
Coping with Feelings.....	33
Outdoor Play	37
Autonomy	40
Creativity.....	42
Practical Tips and Techniques.....	43
Conclusion	56
References	57

DO NOT COPY

we acknowledge emotions. A good question to ask ourselves is ‘what is this child trying to tell me?’.

Well-being is at the core of the early years and vital for all areas of learning. To promote well-being effectively, practitioners need to comprehend what emotional literacy is and ensure that it is embedded within daily practice. Once this is established, emotional literacy can be promoted through games and the environment. The children are then able to name emotions, know that it’s okay to express emotions and will start to link them to how they are feeling.

Name that emotion game

Have some fun with emotions charades, act out the emotions that the children may recognise and get them to do it too. You can add more emotions as you repeat the experience. There is often lots of laughter with this too, which releases the feel good chemical oxytocin. It is also useful to have pictures of emotions that can be matched by the child. They can mimic the faces shown on the cards and act them out within their role-play.

Feelings boards

There are many different ways to visually represent feelings in the form of emotion fans, real pictures of people showing emotions, mirrors for children to see their own emotions, boards that have various emotions on them with Makaton signs or real pictures.

Whichever way the setting decides to add these to the environment, it must have purpose and be meaningful. This must be something that is referred to regularly to become part of the children’s growing vocabulary. For example, ‘I feel very tired today, I am going to sit in

the quiet area, would you like to come with me?’ ‘I am feeling really frustrated right now because I have so much to do. I should probably sit down for a while and relax’.

Feelings can be picked up within story time, using the puppets, small world and role play. For example, ‘How do you think Little Red Riding Hood felt when she found her Grandma wasn’t there? Do you think her breathing was slow?’.

The last section of this publication offers further tips and techniques to support emotional literacy, well-being and connection.

What does it look like when well-being is at a low level? This can be different for everyone, however, there are a few things to observe with children. Often, low well-being is manifested in a physical way in our bodies; illness, aches and pains, stiffness etc. Signals can be aggressive behaviour, being upset, withdrawn, or in some cases, overly happy and giggly.

Being in tune with children and understanding how they might be feeling today, can be referred to as being an ‘emotions detective’. An emotions detective is observant and vigilant, recognising when big emotions are too vast for the child’s body to handle. This is sometimes shown in ways that we may not expect, such as laughing hysterically, hitting someone else or not following instructions. This is often when a child’s cortisol and adrenaline levels are high and to calm these emotions, we must first understand them. Being aware of these emotions and taking a two second pause before reacting, can really help to support recovery from these emotions. Remaining calm and asking questions to ourselves such as ‘how can I help?’ or ‘what do I