

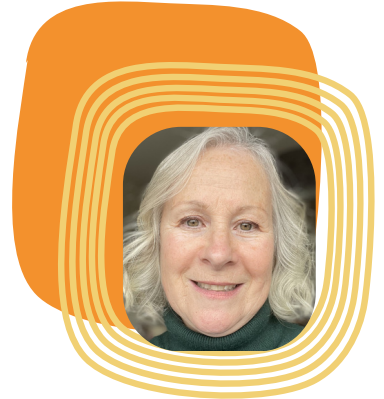


Why Wellbeing Matters

About the AUTHOR

Most of my life has been dedicated to supporting young children and families. This started with an early career as a nanny to being a headteacher of two Local Authority Nursery Schools for 15 years.

I am the founder of Gabriels Wellbeing and Education, a place where children can learn through nature and a co-founder of Parenting with Passion, supporting parents through the challenges that parenting can bring. I also mentor neurodivergent young people with Inclusive Outsource and I am a tutor with Targeted Provision working with children and young people struggling to engage in mainstream education.



Promoting children and young people's wellbeing is a key part of keeping them safe, helping them develop and ensuring they have positive outcomes into adulthood.

Public Health England, 2021

Body and Mind

As every generation unfolds we learn more about how the body and mind works, emotionally and physically - including how it responds to positive and negative experiences. In his book *The Body Keeps The Score*, Bessel Van der Kolk discusses his research on this, and the wealth of evidence that proves that the support we provide in early years really does make a difference in a child's lifelong outcomes. He highlights in Part 5 Chapter 12 how extremely good early years practitioners are at working with our youngest preschoolers to nurture the immature brain, helping children to calm themselves. He highlights the value of activities such as yoga, deep slow breathing, rhythm, movement and the positive impact these all have on relaxing the parasympathetic nervous system.

We know that if children learn these skills in their early years - they will then have tools that they can use effectively throughout the rest of their lives.





Power of Reciprocity

They can share them with others too. Van der Kolk discusses the power of reciprocity where children feel connection and response through giving and receiving. This could be through:



- ★ Shared stories.
- ★ Song and rhymes.
- ★ The power of touch, such as reassurance and rocking.
- ★ Alongside play, laughter and other activities.

These all play such a vital role in a young child's development and especially their feelings of wellbeing.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

It is now recognised and known from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) work, the importance that positive experiences with our main carers have on long term outcomes and achievements. So guiding, demonstrating and teaching children ways to manage their feelings and emotions with love and support has a positive effect on their life chances.

Young children have many opportunities to naturally move and create through dance and art - which are forms of releasing and processing any fears, worries and anxieties. In most early years settings these are the kind of activities that are available for children to access at any time. Practitioners get to know the children so well from the first home visit to the day they leave our care. With regular input and discussions with parents and carers, we are able to work together to ensure a child has the best support for their emotional development, and how to manage challenging situations.

Conclusion

Wellbeing matters because if we nurture and support our very youngest children, teaching them strategies and techniques to manage difficult feelings and emotions, they grow into secure young people who can navigate their way through the challenges that life brings.

Whilst running our Gabriel's Wellbeing days the Yoga room was always one of the most popular, as the children could explore different poses and moves, relaxation and calm breathing techniques and colouring mandalas with Claire Hutchins from Chillax Kids. Which left them feeling calm and relaxed.





Resources:

There is a wealth of further knowledge and useful ideas in the EEF Early Years Evidence Store for supporting our young children's mental health and wellbeing.

These can be found in the Self Regulation and Executive Function section alongside the Personal, Social, Emotional Development section too.

There is a really helpful document that discusses supporting children's Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Early Years.

[Early Years Evidence Store | EEF](#)

[Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing in the early years | Education Endowment Foundation](#)

Recommendations of picture books to share with children:

- ★ Mind Hug: The First Story by Emily Arber
- ★ ABC of Feelings by Bonnie Lui
- ★ Feelings by Libby Walden
- ★ In My Heart A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek
- ★ Love - A story about who you truly are by Anita Moorjani
- ★ I think, I am by Louise Hay
- ★ The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

Books to support children in understanding:

- ★ My Hidden Chimp by Professor Steve Peters
- ★ You're a Star, A Guide to Self-Esteem by Poppy O'Neill
- ★ Don't Worry, Be Happy, A Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Poppy O'Neill

Books for adults:

- ★ There's no such thing as 'naughty' by Kate Silverton (0-5s)
- ★ There's still no such thing as naughty by Kate Silverton (5-12s)
- ★ The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read (and Your Children Will Be Glad That You Did) by Phillipa Perry
- ★ When the Body Says No, the Hidden Cause of Stress by Gabor Maté
- ★ The Body Keeps the Score, Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk

Feedback:



We'd love your feedback!

Take our 2-minute survey to help the Thames Valley & South Central Early Years Stronger Practice Hub make our blogs even better.

For more information on Why Wellbeing Matters please access [The Thames Valley Early Years Stronger Practice Hub](#) webinar by Lisa Bedlow [here](#) or email admin@tveysph.org for more details and resources.



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