

AUGUST 2012

# Foundations

*Developing Social & Emotional Wellbeing in Early Childhood*

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*Supporting children's*  
**WELLBEING**

managing  
**MELTDOWNS**

**FATHERS**  
*for school readiness*

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resources

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the third issue of *Foundations* for 2012. In this issue we will visit a variety of topics. We will hear from one of our own, Karen Stafford, about her team's recent work for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in early childhood mental health content across early childhood education and care qualifications. The outcomes of the project will have potential implications for current and future early childhood educators.

For the first time, we feature a contribution from one of our region's learning centres. Julie Finch, the Director of the Warners Bay Early Learning and Care Centre shares how their centre engages with parents and the wider community. Julie outlines different ways to connect not only with busy mums and dads but also with extended family and friends to build meaningful relationships.

We also look at practical strategies for managing emotional meltdowns, a fun child-friendly relaxation activity and a mindfulness exercise for adults, a practice that relieves stress and builds resilience.

If you would like to share information or exciting news about your centre's approach to social and emotional wellbeing, we are eager to hear from you. As always, we value your feedback and suggestions for future themes and contributions to the publication. Please feel free to share with us your ideas or an interest in writing, we always enjoy hearing from our readers.

## *The Editorial Team*

**Everymind**





# Children's Wellbeing

## BUILDING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

by Karen Stafford



What do early childhood educators need to know and be able to do, to most effectively support children's mental health and wellbeing?

This question is at the heart of a project recently completed for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

### *The Project*

There is growing awareness of the importance of early brain development and life experiences for children's social and emotional wellbeing and their long-term health and learning. Early childhood educators play a vital role in the lives of many children and families and help to support children's development and wellbeing in many ways.

DEEWR funded a project to identify the specific skills and knowledge that educators need to promote children's mental health and wellbeing, and to examine the coverage of these in current training and professional development.

This was done by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health and the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council. The project team considered research and policy on children's wellbeing and looked at current workforce practices and contexts. They also consulted with registered training organisations, universities and organisations offering training and professional development.

## *Defining Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing*

The project partners needed to reach a consensus on a definition of children's mental health and wellbeing, to ensure they were using the same language and ideas with all of the project's stakeholders. To do this, the project team drew on policy and research, international definitions of infant and child mental health, and the views of an advisory group of early childhood practitioners and mental health professionals.

Mental health refers to a person's psychological, social and emotional wellbeing. Mental health is related to capacity and wellbeing and should not be confused with mental illness.

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, understand and express emotions
- understand and regulate their behaviour
- interact appropriately with others, including peers
- develop a secure sense of self.



## *Challenges to Mental Health and Wellbeing*

Part of promoting children's mental health and wellbeing is about supporting children or families with particular needs. Picking up any additional mental health or wellbeing needs will allow educators to work in partnership with the child's family and identify if further assessment or support is needed.

Because childhood involves complex changes in children's abilities and behaviour, it can be hard at first to tell the difference between healthy development, a temporary challenge to a child's wellbeing, a mental illness (eg anxiety or depression), or a developmental disorder (eg autism or ADHD). These issues often become clearer as we work with families to observe and support a child over time.

To describe this part of the educator's role, the project team needed a broad 'umbrella' term that could be used to describe the potential early signs of a range of issues – not just those defined by a particular behaviour or family context or diagnosis. For this project, the term 'emotional, behavioural or mental health problems' was used to include all of these challenges.

## *Domains of Practice for Wellbeing*

Based on an analysis of policy and research, and discussion with a multi-disciplinary advisory group, the project team identified five areas of practice that relate to children's mental health and wellbeing.

The five key domains of practice are:

1. **The environment** – creating a supportive, inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness.
2. **Child development** – supporting the social, emotional and psychological development of infants and children.
3. **Early intervention** – supporting children with emotional, behavioural, or mental health problems, and their families.
4. **Partnerships** – building effective partnerships with families, professionals, agencies and the community to promote mental health and wellbeing.
5. **Professional practice** – building the capacity of early childhood services, professionals, families and the community to promote children's mental health and wellbeing.

Under each domain, the project team listed examples of relevant knowledge and skills for early childhood educators. For example, professional practice includes activities related to reflective practice, ethics, mentoring, professional development, policies and advocacy.



## *Consultations and Surveys*

In terms of the information collected and the consultations undertaken, the project team aimed to cover a range of different types of children's services, such as long day care, preschools, out-of-school-hours care and family day care. A number of early childhood peak bodies were also consulted.

The analysis of training and professional development included teacher education, children's services qualifications and competencies, workshops and access to information and resources.

Specific strategies used throughout the project included:

- desk-based research, involving analysis of documents and web-based information
- multi-disciplinary subject matter expert groups for discussion of specific issues
- mapping the domains of practice against the core units of competency in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Children's Services qualifications as part of the CHC08 Community Services Training Package
- structured telephone interviews with program coordinators at universities to map the structure and content of teacher education programs
- online surveys for educators, service providers, registered training organisations and early childhood peak bodies, conducted by CS&HISC
- online surveys for teacher educators and researchers in universities and other higher education providers, run by HIMH
- telephone discussions with other key informants in early childhood and mental health.

## *Existing Programs and Resources*

One aim of the project was to document programs and resources that support the training and professional development of educators in regard to children's mental health and wellbeing.

Courses are available through inclusion support and professional development services and other training providers, but few deal comprehensively or specifically with early childhood mental health. Some cover topics that are related to certain elements of mental health (eg attachment) or the needs of a particular group (eg children with autism).



There are also some national or state-based programs that provide resources or training relevant to early childhood mental health and wellbeing, but these are not necessarily widely available or used by all services.

Examples include:

- **Foundations** (NSW and online)
- **KidsMatter Early Childhood** (long day care and preschool)
- **Response Ability resources** (universities and registered training organisations)
- **the Children of Parents with Mental Illness** (COPMI) initiative
- **the Social Emotional Early Development Strategy** (SEEDS) in Queensland.

## *Main Findings*

There was wide support for the importance of early childhood mental health and wellbeing and an appreciation of the vital role of early childhood educators.

Much of what educators already do is consistent with the principles of promoting children's mental health and wellbeing, but many could see value in having specific guidelines. These could help educators throughout Australia to develop a common language and knowledge base, and highlight training and development needs.

A key theme was the need to link any guidelines or documents about children's mental health with existing processes in early childhood, such as the National Quality Framework and the Early Years Learning Framework. Anything that is developed needs to fit easily with educators' current work practices and documents.

At present, there is a lot of variation in workforce preparation in terms of what is covered and how it is addressed, both among universities and among other registered training organisations. This could be addressed by defining mental health and wellbeing competencies or topics that should be covered.

Specific professional development in children's mental health is not necessarily widely available and many educators face barriers such as time, cost or location which impact on their ability to access training. Tapping into existing mechanisms of staff development, such as in-service professional development by service leaders, could be one way to address this.

Of the domains of practice identified as being important for children's mental health, practitioners and educators seemed least confident about the current knowledge and coverage of early intervention. This included knowing how best to support children and families with a wide range of emotional, behavioural or mental health challenges and being able to refer them on for further assessment and management.

The project partners recently wrote a report for DEEWR that presented their data and summarised their findings. It is hoped that this project will inform future training, professional development and other initiatives in the early childhood sector.

Our ultimate aim is to ensure educators are able to develop the knowledge and skills they need to feel confident and positive when supporting children's mental health and wellbeing.







# Engaging Parents in our Program

by Julie Finch, Director,  
Warners Bay Early Learning  
and Care Centre

## *About the Centre*

The Warners Bay Early Learning and Care Centre is a non-profit community based centre that has been providing high quality care and education for children for over 22 years. The Director and a Parent Management Committee, elected by the parents of the Centre, provide management of the 51 place long day care centre, catering for children six weeks to five years.

The Centre has three rooms:

- **The Nursery Room**  
(birth to two years; 10 children total)
- **The Dreamtime Room**  
(Toddler Room two to three years; 16 children total)
- **The Preschool Room**  
(three to five years; 25 children total).

The Centre employs 18 qualified and experienced staff and provides valuable training and work experience for students from the local university, TAFE Colleges, Work for the Dole programs and high schools.

## *How the Centre Engages Parents in its Program*

At Warners Bay Early Learning and Care Centre we care and educate children in a relaxed, homelike, safe and secure setting, where parents are encouraged to visit as they please. Our Centre's philosophy and aims recognise the importance of partnerships with families and the value we place on families in our community.

There are many things we do at our Centre to engage the children's parents in the program and broader community, which forms part of our philosophy and approach.

### **ESTABLISHING RAPPORT AND TRUST**

It is important to establish a good rapport with a family at the very first stage of enrolment. When we make the call to a family to offer a position for their child we are polite and considerate, answering any questions the parents may have. All our orientation meetings are undertaken individually for the comfort of families and to prevent interruptions.

Establishing trust is vital to the child successfully settling in. If the parents are feeling uncomfortable or stressed, these feelings may also be experienced by the child. We encourage parents who are very anxious about starting, to visit the Centre as often as they like and to participate in play. Parents very quickly learn that we don't have anything to hide and that they are free to visit at any time.

### **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

Every February the Centre holds a parent information night for all the families, to review the Centre's program and examples of the children's portfolios. On these nights the Preschool Room talks about their ongoing Transition to School Program and we often invite special guests to talk about immunisation or guiding children's behaviour. This year one of our parents who is a kindergarten teacher discussed many issues with the families in the Preschool Room. We also hold workshops for parents throughout the year covering topics of interest selected by the members of the Parent Management Committee.





## SOCIAL EVENTS

Some of our families do not have extended family in the area and can often experience isolation because of this. To help families and parents network and support one another, the Centre organises several social events throughout the year. These include family discos, working bees, celebration parties (we recently celebrated our 20th birthday party), Christmas parties, family picnics and visits to the local steam train exhibition. As a result of these social events many families at the Centre have developed lifelong friendships with one another.

To help mothers get to know each other the Centre holds a Mum's Night Out as part of Mother's Day celebrations each year. At this event mums can participate in a massage or a reading and the Centre organises some shopping on the night. For Father's Day, the Centre holds a Daddy and Me Night. This event has been very popular with over 50% of dads at the Centre attending each year. Maybe the free pizza wins them over???

Grandparents and special friends (aunties, uncles, etc) of the children are not forgotten. Each year the Centre holds a special day in order for the entire family to be a part of the Centre's program. For children at the Centre this is an opportunity to share their experiences with their loved ones and extended family.

## CENTRE GUESTS AND SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, a range of visitors and children's shows are invited to attend the Centre. These include musicians, Kindi Farm, reptile shows and other cultural activities. The Centre encourages the children's parents to come along to these special events and to join in the fun with their children. For the last few years, we have made an annual excursion to the Newcastle Civic Theatre to see a live performance. Parent helpers are an important part of excursions, and we find that parents are keen to participate and share the experience as helpers on the day.

## INCLUDING THE FAMILY IN THE CENTRE'S PROGRAM

Including the whole family in the Centre's program is important to our philosophy. Special handouts are provided to families to complete when something exciting happens in their life, such as a new addition to their family. These handouts form the basis of the children's interests and contribute to the child's program and portfolio at the Centre. By completing these handouts, parents are encouraged to participate in the Centre's program through stories, play or simply by being with the children.

We recognise that for some families it can be difficult to attend events during work hours. Therefore we encourage these families to meaningfully contribute to the Centre's program in other ways. For example, many of our busy families contribute by providing an endless supply of recycled materials, such as paper for drawing and boxes for collage. Materials are greatly valued by the Centre and the children.

At Warners Bay Early Learning and Care Centre all parents and families are encouraged to participate in the Centre's program. By providing a variety of options for participation, parents are able to choose the activities that best suits them and their family. Some parents enjoy being very involved and join our Parent Management Committee, while others prefer to provide the Centre with an endless supply of resources. Both roles are vital and regardless of how parents decide to participate, they are valued members of our Centre's community. Developing positive relationships with our parents and families also means that the Centre is running at full capacity at all times, as word of mouth throughout the local community ensures an extensive waitlist.



# Managing Meltdowns

by Ally Logatchova

Early childhood educators carry a lot of responsibility for helping children in their care develop control over their feelings and behaviours. The capacity to regulate our emotions and behaviours is a skill we begin to learn during the early years by watching others and then practising ourselves. Therefore it is only understandable that as children develop and learn to master these skills, they will occasionally have emotional meltdowns. Although educators cannot completely prevent these meltdowns, there are a number of strategies they can use to de-escalate these situations and to minimise re-occurrences. When children experience success at managing their feelings and behaviour it can help them to become better at self-regulation.

## *What Can You Do?*


Imagine a situation when you find yourself with a child who frequently has difficulty with self-control. You may have already tried to help them but nothing has worked. What do you do? In his book, *No More Meltdowns* (2008), Dr Jed Baker outlines practical strategies for managing and minimising unwanted behaviour, particularly meltdowns. In this article, we summarise these strategies and highlight the practical techniques. Think about how you could use these ideas in supporting children and families.

The first step in de-escalating a meltdown is to manage any of your own frustration and to remain calm. When you are in control of your own emotions, you can use a distraction to avoid further emotional escalation in the child. The type of distraction will vary depending on the age of the child. For younger children a simple act such as showing a favourite toy or book is usually enough to draw their attention away from the meltdown. For older children the distraction may need to be more engaging, for example:

- Use specific interests of the child (eg favourite activity)
- Make the child laugh
- Validate the child's feelings
- Have the child be a messenger
- Get closer to the child (useful when child is frustrated with game/task but not with instructor)
- Use a secret sign (eg a look or a hand motion) which signals to the child to check their behaviour
- Provide a safe base the child can go to when they are upset
- Walk with the child (allow the child to speak while you only listen).

Some children may already have identified self-soothing strategies (eg counting to 10, taking deep breaths, etc), in this case encourage the child to use their strategy. It is important to keep in mind that distractions are a crisis tool, and not the solution. If the distraction allows the child to avoid particular tasks, then distraction should only be used once with that particular task – overuse is likely to actually increase meltdowns.





*“Life’s challenges are not supposed to paralyse you, they’re supposed to help you discover who you are.”*  
Bernice Johnson Reagon

### *Why Do Meltdowns Occur?*

Having the ability to de-escalate a meltdown is the first step. In order to prevent the repeated behaviour meltdowns in the future, it is helpful to understand why they occur in the first place. Understanding the purpose behind the behaviour requires a bit of structured detective work. The aim is to observe and gather information about the (a) triggers, (b) behaviour and (c) consequences.

The triggers are specific events that occur directly before a meltdown. The most common triggers generally fall into the following categories:

- **Demands** - eg doing a difficult task, new social situation, trying new foods
- **Waiting** - eg cannot have what they want immediately or at all, stop doing a task they are enjoying
- **Threatening or potentially embarrassing situations** - eg lose a game, being teased, make a mistake
- **Unmet need for attention** - eg others refuse to play with them, jealous of others, fear being alone.

As you can see the triggers place demands on the child’s ability to manage their feelings and behaviour. The more demand on the self-regulation resources the more the possibility of a meltdown increases.

The behaviour includes the child’s actions in response to the trigger. It is important to identify specifically what the child did and said in the particular situation.

The consequences are the reactions of others to the child. What did the others do or say? What was the outcome? It is particularly important to consider what function or purpose the behaviour served. For example, did the child avoid doing a task? Did they get an object they wanted or attention from others? Essentially what did the child learn from this experience?

Using a diary table can be a helpful way of keeping track of the information (see example below).

#### **EXAMPLE OF AN ‘ABC’ DIARY**

DAY/TIME	(A) TRIGGERS	(B) BEHAVIOUR	(C) CONSEQUENCES
12/5, 10:30am	Lily walks up to two girls playing a board game and asks if she can join. They say, “Not now.”	Lily squints her eyes and knocks over the board game.	The girls yell, “No Lily!” The educator puts Lily in the time-out corner.



## Developing a Prevention Plan

In reviewing and reflecting on the information you collect you may begin to see a pattern for the type of situations that act as triggers for the child's meltdown. The final step is to use this information to develop a prevention plan to help the child in better managing their feelings and behaviours. An effective prevention plan generally consists of the following components:

- **CHANGE THE TRIGGERS**

Whatever the trigger is for a particular situation, modifying it can help prevent a meltdown. This may include altering the sensory stimulation (eg quieter environment), changing the timing, modifying the difficulty of the task, or using visual supports.

- **TEACH COPING SKILLS**

Providing the child with skills for dealing with the trigger will also help reduce meltdowns. This involves teaching and modelling for the child the behaviour you want, not the behaviour you don't want (eg "ask nicely" versus "don't grab").

- **REWARD OR WITHDRAW**

It can be helpful to reward the child for engaging in the new behaviour or skill (eg access to a toy) and to withdraw or withhold something positive when the child reverts to the old behaviour (eg remove privileges, do not respond to negative attention seeking behaviour).

- **BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL STRATEGIES**

Part of the prevention plan should involve working with the family to assess what the child is eating because making dietary changes can reduce irritability. For example, allergies to certain foods can increase irritability. Medication can also have a significant impact on behaviour, therefore it is important to keep up to date with the children's medication status and when appropriate recommend a medication review. There is an increasing wealth of evidence for the positive effects of exercise and relaxation on mood. Another strategy is to incorporate plenty of physical activity into the day but also make time for more relaxing activities, such as meditation.

Learning to manage emotions is a crucial part of development. Young children develop these skills as they grow and rely on the adults around them, particularly parents and educators, to guide and model appropriate ways to manage their feelings. As children move through this process it is not unusual that they will inevitably experience some meltdowns.

When meltdowns occur it is essential that adults remain calm and control their own feelings before attempting to calm the child. A distraction may then be used to de-escalate the situation. If the issue is recurrent, it is important to investigate the issues underlying the behaviour and to develop a prevention plan to minimise future incidents. This approach does not guarantee a complete absence of meltdowns, but it does offer practical strategies which may help diffuse the storm when it erupts and minimise reoccurring episodes.

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Baker, J. (2008). *No more meltdowns: Positive strategies for managing and preventing out-of-control behaviour*. Arlington: Future Horizons.





# Fathers *for School Readiness*

by Dr Jennifer StGeorge and Dr Richard Fletcher,  
Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle

Self-regulation is an important component of school readiness. When educators and researchers talk about self-regulation, they usually mean a person's ability to control and manage thinking and feeling as part of the learning process. Children who display flexible and consistent self-regulation have higher achievement, language and social outcomes (NICHD, 2003).

Various studies have confirmed that positive parenting practices, such as supporting children's curiosity and expressing affection for the child, are linked to their capacity to self-regulate their behaviors and emotions, as well as to their cognitive and intellectual development (Deater-Deckard & Petrill, 2004).

Interestingly, most of these studies have focused on mothers' influences, yet there is now increasing acceptance that fathers are central to children's development, and that their influence may be separate to that of mothers' (Paquette, 2004).

So, given that being ready to cope with school life depends on social-emotional competence, language skills and physical ability, what do fathers do that helps their child move successfully from home to school?

## *Fathers' Role and Contribution to School Readiness*

### **BUILDING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE**

A key component of school readiness is the child's ability to recognise and manage their own emotions. Children who throw tantrums or have emotional outbursts have not learned how to do this! Children also need to be able to recognise and understand other people's emotions.

Research has shown that Dads' interactions with their children are particularly important in learning to regulate emotions. Fathers' attentiveness and support can enhance infants' positive social interactions with people they do not know (Goldstein-Ferber, 2009), and it also helps older children create good relationships with peers and teachers (NICHD, 2004). An important factor here is Dads' use of humour. Teasing, humour and physical rough-and-tumble all may help the child to develop mental strategies such as perspective-taking and emotion management.





### LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Reading skills are important to children's academic skills. Reading builds language, literacy, knowledge - and it can be fun! In fact, when fathers share book reading with their children, they tend to use more humour and unusual words. Dads also tend to ask more questions and be more direct in their talk; all these interactions can improve toddlers' vocabulary, reading skills and language development (Pancsofar & Vernon-Feagans, 2010). Additionally, children seem to use language that is more sophisticated when they tell stories or explain things to their fathers (Abkarian, Dworkin, & Abkarian, 2003). Dads can also influence children's enjoyment of reading just by modelling; not just books or educational material: newspapers, magazines, maps, or instruction manuals will all do.

### PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MOTOR COORDINATION

While it is common knowledge that Dads are usually more involved physically with their children than mothers, what effect might this have on their children's school readiness and physical health? Dads can influence their children's activity levels and even their eating habits just by spending more time with them (Morgan et al., 2011). All that batting, bowling and biking helps children's gross motor development. And how Dads play matters too, as sensitive, responsive play also affects motor development. Furthermore, Dads' involvement in physical play may help stimulate children's pretend play, and it is well recognised that pretend play contributes to children's cognitive competence.





### *What Can Educators Do?*

Many parents regard educators as experts in child development and education: they value your knowledge. If you have a strong belief in parents' capacity to contribute to children's learning, then messages about the benefits of father involvement will be an important resource for your families. So it is important to ensure that this knowledge is communicated to the parent community. You can facilitate this by:

- building connections with Dads
- addressing Dads by their first names
- inviting fathers to Dad events
- creating collaborative learning activities for Dads and children
- keeping it active
- designing learning activities that draw on fathers' interests and strengths.

*“You will find that if you really try to be a father, your child will meet you halfway.”*  
Robert Brault

Good practice in knowledge transfer is to understand your 'targets' and to send a clear message! Get to know the fathers in your centre and help them understand the developmental and educational needs of their children; this will help them to activate their own strengths and resources.

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See web page for more details:

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/fac/research/fathers/fathers-for-school-readiness.html>

## Children's Activity: Sea Turtle

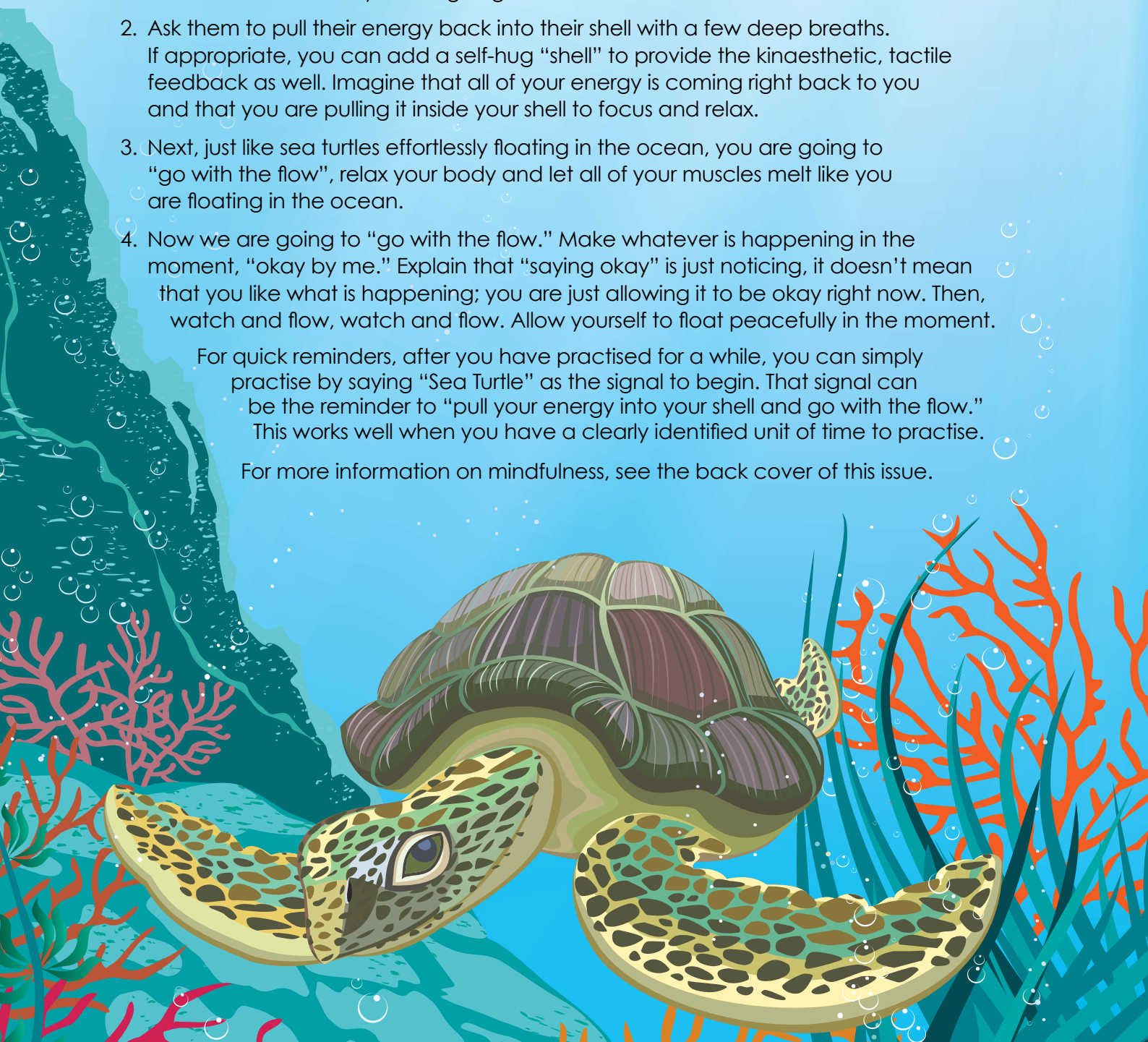
**Do you ever need a quick relaxation tool for children in your service? When you notice that a child is struggling to manage their energy try using this relaxation method. It is a fun and easy way to relax in the moment. You may even find that it works for adults as well.**

You can use this with individual children at your service or practise it regularly in small groups. It can be particularly useful during transitions.

1. Tell the child/ren that you are going to relax like a sea turtle.
2. Ask them to pull their energy back into their shell with a few deep breaths. If appropriate, you can add a self-hug "shell" to provide the kinaesthetic, tactile feedback as well. Imagine that all of your energy is coming right back to you and that you are pulling it inside your shell to focus and relax.
3. Next, just like sea turtles effortlessly floating in the ocean, you are going to "go with the flow", relax your body and let all of your muscles melt like you are floating in the ocean.
4. Now we are going to "go with the flow." Make whatever is happening in the moment, "okay by me." Explain that "saying okay" is just noticing, it doesn't mean that you like what is happening; you are just allowing it to be okay right now. Then, watch and flow, watch and flow. Allow yourself to float peacefully in the moment.

For quick reminders, after you have practised for a while, you can simply practise by saying "Sea Turtle" as the signal to begin. That signal can be the reminder to "pull your energy into your shell and go with the flow." This works well when you have a clearly identified unit of time to practise.

For more information on mindfulness, see the back cover of this issue.



**Resources:** For this and other relaxation and meditation activities for children, visit: [www.kidsrelaxation.com](http://www.kidsrelaxation.com)



# Mental Health and Health Promotion

## *Information for Educators*



The field of early childhood education and care is changing rapidly, therefore ongoing professional development is an important part of maintaining up to date skills and knowledge in the area. The recent shift in government focus to mental health and wellbeing in the early childhood care and education sector has placed additional demands on early childhood educators to increase their knowledge and capacity to promote mental health in their services. Formal sources of professional development such as attending workshops and conferences provide excellent opportunities for growth, however these can be expensive and time consuming.

Fortunately, there is now an increasing amount of online alternatives, which provide evidence-based information, seminars, videos, podcasts and printable resources to support both professional practice and professional growth in the early childhood care and education setting. The vast amount of information available on the internet can be daunting and finding information that is relevant and reliable is often difficult. The purpose of this article is to provide a sample of reputable websites, books and peer-reviewed journals that offer information and resources relating to mental health promotion in the early childhood care and education setting.

Think about how you could you might use these resources for your own development or work with colleagues as the basis for a group discussion, a team development exercise or as part of providing information for families.

## Web Resources

<http://www.aaimhi.org/>

*Australian Association of Infant Mental Health Inc.* is a national organisation, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of psycho-social development during infancy. The AAIMHI holds yearly national conferences, offers membership and provides seminars and workshops.

<http://circleofsecurity.net/>

*Circle of Security* is an early intervention program for parents and children based on attachment theory. The website offers information about upcoming training, publications and other resources.

<http://www.copmi.net.au/professionals/professional-fields/early-childhood.html>

*Children of Parents with Mental Illness* provides information and advice for early childhood educators in regards to supporting children of parents who have a mental illness or mental health difficulties. The website offers a variety of different resources about mental illness, the effects on children and how educators can support these families.

<http://www.cscentral.org.au/>

*Children's Services Central* provides research reports and professional development training in NSW through a variety of formats (eg face-to-face, online, phone).

<http://cccncsw.org.au/publications>

*Community Child Care Co-operative* is a not-for-profit organisation, which aims to provide information and inspiration to early education and care services and influence government policy to promote quality care across children's services. The website provides podcasts, videos, publications and other resources, which target the delivery of quality care. The website offers subscription to *Rattler*, a quarterly published magazine, which consists of essays and articles on a wide range of topics relevant to the childcare industry.

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

*Early Childhood Australia* offers a wide range of information about key developments in the early childhood field including research, information sheets, workshops, conferences and other resources.

<http://www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/>

*Australian Child and Adolescent Trauma, Loss and Grief Network* website facilitates networking between professionals working with children and families affected by trauma and loss through a variety of resources and training opportunities.

<http://www.foundationyears.org.uk>

*Foundation Years* is a UK based website which offers a variety of multi-media resources to support child-centred practice as well as general resources in the area of early childhood education and care.

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/ec/resources/resources-for-families-and-staff/>

*KidsMatter Early Childhood* initiative aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing, reduce mental health problems and support children experiencing mental health difficulties. The website provides resources to help educators plan and implement mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies.

<http://www.martemio.com/>

*MARTE MEO* program aims to help individuals identify their strengths to facilitate development and human interaction. Specific MARTE MEO programs with an early childhood care focus are available. The website also offers subscription to their online magazine.

<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org>

*Nutrition Australia* provides evidence-based information about nutrition. The website offers free resources and fact sheets with recommendations specifically targeting young children's eating habits.

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

*Raising Children Network* provides resources to help professionals support parents including information about basic parenting skills, parenting issues and communicating with families.

<http://responseability.org>

*Response Ability* is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The education arm aims to support the pre-service training of children's services educators and teachers in their roles in mental health promotion, the prevention of mental ill-health and suicide. This website provides fact sheets, publications and relevant information related to mental health and wellbeing.

<http://www.rch.org.au/ccch>

*Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne* offers professional development courses and a variety of resources such as fact sheets and resources for parents, articles and conference papers, training and practice resources.

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

*Zero to Three* is a US organisation which aims to provide information and support for professionals, policymakers and parents in order to foster the lives of infants and toddlers. The website provides podcasts and written resources across four broad areas: behaviour and development, maltreatment, care and education and public policy. Also offers a subscription to the *Zero to Three* journal.



## Books

Summers, S. J. (Ed.). & Chazan-Cohen, R. (Ed.). (2012). *Understanding early childhood mental health: a practical guide for professionals*. Baltimore: Brooks.

Offers insight into the critical relationship between early development and mental health, and provides practical skills which professionals can implement in their everyday practice to promote and support the mental health of children, their parents and professionals themselves.

Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (2005). *How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk*. Collins.

An internationally acclaimed resource which offers practical strategies to help build communication, resolve conflict and enhance lasting relationships with children.

Dogra, N., Parkin, A., & Gale, F. (2009). *A multidisciplinary handbook of child and adolescent mental health for front-line professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Provides an introduction into child mental health such as nature, prevalence and management of mental health problems. Includes case studies and self-directed exercises.

## Journals

### ***Australasian Journal of Early Childhood***

Offers research based articles that provide new developments in the field.

### ***Childhood Education***

Specifically targets teachers and early childhood practitioners of children birth to eight. Topics include curriculum, child care programs, professional development, partnerships with families, special needs and more.

### ***Early Child Development and Care***

Covers a wide range of child development and care topics including medical programs for young children, research studies, critical reviews and summary articles.

### ***Early Education and Development***

Focuses on linking research evidence with professional practices in the early childhood education and care setting. Topics include, at risk and special needs children, program curriculum, assessment techniques, parental role, professional practices, service environment and early intervention.

### ***Early Childhood Research Quarterly***

Publishes empirical research relating to child development, theory and educational practice, with a strong focus on practical application of research findings.

### ***Infant and Child Development***

Publishes empirical research and theoretical reviews in the areas of child development including, social and emotional, cognitive, physical and atypical development.

### ***Infants and Young Children***

Focuses on vulnerable children birth to five and their families. Topics include cutting edge interventions, research summaries, professional development and more.

### ***International Journal of Early Childhood***

Brings together a multitude of international perspectives regarding the research and practice of early childhood with a focus on children's rights and education.

### ***Journal of Research in Childhood Education***

Provides different perspectives on early years research and emerging initiatives in care and education.

### ***Topics in Early Childhood Special Education***

Publishes works that target service improvement for preschool children with additional needs and their families.

### ***Young Children***

Offers publications based on themes in the area of early childhood education. Topics include program curriculum, environment and professional development.

# A MINDFULNESS exercise

- Find a comfortable position either sitting or lying down.
- Choose either to close your eyes or fix your gaze on a spot in front of you.
- Bring your awareness into the present moment.
- Start by taking a few deep breaths in and out.
- Now focus on emptying your lungs completely and then allowing your in-breath to occur naturally, there is no need to force the in-breath. Practise doing this for 10 cycles (1 cycle = an in and out-breath).
- Now allow your breathing to follow its natural rhythm.
- Spend a few minutes just noticing the breath entering your body through your nose. Feel it flowing down your throat, noticing how the lungs and belly expand, and then following the breath as it exits your body.
- After a few minutes return your focus to the rest of your body and then to the room and your surroundings.
- Congratulate yourself for taking the time to practise some self-care.

Please note that your mind will wander off track **throughout** the exercise. This will happen! Each time you notice yourself getting distracted (eg thinking about dinner...), simply bring your attention back to the present moment and back to the breath. This will happen again and again, so be kind to yourself.

*Mindfulness is  
essentially about  
being present –  
here and now.*

For more information please visit  
[www.everymind.org.au/foundations](http://www.everymind.org.au/foundations)



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