

HEALTH WELLBEING AND LIFESTYLES

Introduction

In this poster it will discuss three concepts, health, wellbeing and lifestyle of children and how they are fundamental to early childhood development. The first years of a child's life are vitally important as these are the years that children start to develop their physical, social, emotional cognitive skills. These three concepts together shape how a child will develop. This poster will also show the impact of practitioners can make and to provide the care to children in early years. Children's Commissioner (2023) states that in 2017 1 in 9 children were found to have a mental health disorder and more recently that number has increased to 1 in 5 children suffering from mental health issues. Physical and mental health issues are severe issues affecting the younger generation and a plan is needed to prevent and support children from negative life experiences.

Concepts

Willows Health care (2025) suggests lifestyle choices directly affect our wellbeing and health. If individuals choose unhealthy lifestyle choices such as poor diet choices, overuse of alcohol or increased amount of screen time this can lead to many physical health issues like heart disease, diabetes or obesity. Labrum (2025) states that how we feel physically affects how we feel emotionally mad mentally and vice versa, physical changes or being unwell causes stress on the body leaving feeling of anxiety which then may cause issues socially as this could be projected onto those around you.

Health

World Health Organisation (WHO) (2025) states that health is not just the absence of disease, but a feeling of complete state physically, mentally and socially. Cambridge Dictionary (no date) states that health is when the body and mind a free from sickness and in a good state of physical health and mental health.

Local Government Association (no date) states that health should be looked at in a positive light rather than focusing of the negative side. Even though some individual's health may not be seen as complete health due to having a lifelong disease, a disease does not stop them from being healthy in other areas of their life. NSPCC (No date) states that children health and mental health are vital for their development, there are many factors that can affect their mental and physical health, and they grow such as the environments they grow in, the experiences they are exposed to and the attachments they make and relationships that form. Children will develop their emotional, physical, cognitive and social throughout their lives. These areas of development are all linked to their health, wellbeing and lifestyle as they work together to help a child shape themselves but also how to socially function.

Underdown (2007) states children need to be able to develop their physical health as they develop but to do this, they need to have access to nutritional food and access to water by their right. Article 27 of the UNCRC states that it is a right for children to have access to adequate food and water to allow them to develop physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Allowing children to receive nourishment will allow children the chance to reach their full potential (Children and Young Peoples Commissioner Scotland, no date). Department for Education (No Date) states that physical development is a vital part of a child's life as this can lead them to happy and healthy active lives, developing their fine motor skills so they can have precision and good coordination for their future literacy work and their gross motor skills so that they can develop their awareness and exploration of surrounding, strengthen their muscles to help them form positive social and emotional wellbeing. Piaget, child development theorist, discussed that in the first two years of a child's life is when they begin to develop their motor and sensory experiences. The use of physical activity was seen as developing children's skills and exploring the outdoors but also a way of releasing the big emotions children try to hold in (first Discoveries, 2015).

PIAGET'S STAGES



(Koblin, 2020)

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Well-Being

Mental Health (2015) defines wellbeing as a state of happiness and feeling comfortable. Wellbeing can be seen as how a person may feel and function personally ad socially. NHS (2022) states that wellbeing is not just being physically well but how an individual feels about themselves as a whole. Wellbeing is made up of experiences between others based of perceptions or meaningful encounters that are memorable. Wellbeing is based off physical and mental health. Having a good mental health is a vital part of children's healthy development. However, having a good mental from an early age is detrimental to the outcome of a child's life later into adolescents and adulthood. In school, practitioners can support children's wellbeing by being role models and supporting resilience (Howard, 2020). There are ways of identifying if a child is showing signs of mental health issues and what to look out for, if a child is showing signs of change in behaviour or becoming withdrawn from social situations or if there are any signs of self-harm or abuse. There are many organisations that can help when children are experiencing mental health issues such as the NHS, Action for Children or Young Minds Parents Helpline. To receive help it is up to parents/guardians or practitioners to aid making sure children are receiving care from the right organisations (NHS, no date).

Vygotsky's approach of scaffolding is based on helping children get on the right track by intervening if a child seems to not have the knowledge to complete a task. Vygotsky believed that it was more beneficial to a child to give them the knowledge they lack than leave them as working together with someone that has the knowledge provides the child with better information to help them learn (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). Helping children develop their resilience and self-regulation will help them to improve their future. This can be done by practitioners, parents or guardians supporting the through a scaffolding approach, when it becomes visible that a child is becoming frustrated an adult should intervene to support the child through so they still feel accomplished, this then leaves them feeling that they can do what is asked of them and feel supported by trusted adults. Eventually adults will reduce the amount of scaffolding and not need to intervene as often.

Play helps children to relax and process the world around them, children see play as just play, however from playing children are developing their gross and fine motor skills, communication, social and emotional skills. Play is a great way for children to relieve themselves of stress, they see it to do what they enjoy most, long periods of stress can have a huge impact on children's mental health. Children will often show how they are feeling through their play expressing their deep emotions through imaginative play, adults can observe what they are saying or acting out their feelings in a way to justify or explain their trauma (UNICEF, no date). The Montessori approach promotes children to develop self-discipline and self-regulation through a child-centred approach to allow children to learn through their own choices of play, with adults nearby but not interfering (Early Years TV, no date). Play can therapy to children as they can have feelings bottled up inside, play helps as children can act out their emotions with adults by to support in explaining to children to work through them without directing it towards the child. This approach means that children don't feel as though they are being interrogated or having to openly discuss those feelings yet.

Maximizing Learning
Keeping Kids in the Zone
of Proximal Development

Learning is Too Hard: Anxiety



Learning is Too Easy: Boredom

(Warren, 2021)

7 MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES



(Natalie, 2021)

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Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle for a child is when a child is provided with healthy balanced meals and nutritional foods, children can maintain good hygiene, take part in a healthy amount of exercise and being able to maintain a positive physical and mental health (Barnardo's Family Space, no date)

Physical exercise is a lifestyle that can be shown to children by practitioners or parent/guardians. Statistics show that over 70% of the UK do not do an hour of exercise a day, this exercise is being replaced with screen time (Public Health England, 2013). It is up to adults to help children to exercise and maintain a healthy lifestyle as children cannot make decisions for themselves. Children do not exercise are more likely to develop heart disease and more likely to live a longer life. American Heart Association (2023) states children who do exercise will have improved brain function, less stress levels and better brain and heart health.

Children's nutrition and diet play a role in their lifestyle. Many children of school age are overweight for their age; this can affect their performance at school and socially due to the stigma related to being overweight or obese. As a family children should rely on the adults and practitioners around them, in schools they promote healthy eating to children. Schools will provide children with nutritional food throughout the day and model healthy eating as part of the routine. 1 in 5 children are suffering from tooth decay, sugar should be limited to children to help prevent the risk of developing tooth decay (British Nutrition foundation, no date).

Early Years

In early years practitioners have a duty to children to support them in their health, wellbeing and lifestyle. Local authorities will ensure that the children in the care of local schools and childcare facilities are keeping up to date strategies and provision for children in their care (Welsh Government, 2017).

Department for Education (no date) states having a key worker that a child can trust is vitally important to children in a care setting, not only does this help a child feel they are with someone they trust but, in an environment, they can trust and relax in once building a relationship with practitioners. From this practitioner will be able to get to know their key children, begin to understand them and what works best for them and learn the children's home life. The Royal Society of Medicine (2022) agrees that it is important that a relationship between practitioner and the children form because practitioners can affect the health of children. Teachers become a safe place for children to open to which reduces the stress on a child and helps improve their mental health.

Practitioners can also support children by keeping informed and up to date with training and paperwork. Making assessments and observations from the children and using this to ensure that targets are being set to push children to improve at a pace they can handle but to gain knowledge on works for individual children. Including the children's interests when planning is important to centre around them, however including the parents will give another insight into building positive working relationships for the children (Department for Education, 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, children's Health, wellbeing and lifestyle are all interconnected and play an important role in a child's development during their first few years. A child's health, wellbeing and lifestyle all influence how they develop and learn to interact in the world around them. Parents, guardians and practitioners have a responsibility to provide children with support and a healthy environment to model how they should maintain a healthy lifestyle for themselves all while developing their skills and confidence needed for a healthy future.

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(University of Greater Manchester, 2023)

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