

This poster will talk about the key concepts of health, well-being, and lifestyle and highlight their importance during the early years. To link it to early years practice it will include information from different theorists and the role of an early practitioner and how they support a healthy lifestyle and good well-being in children to ensure holistic care. According to the Department of Health (2014), health and well-being have a two-way relationship as they both influence each other. In agreement with this Farrhud (2015) stated that mental and physical health have a connection with well-being which can affect a positive lifestyle as they are all interconnected.

Health

The World Health Organization (2024) states that health is a condition of total physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than just the lack of illness or disability. Whereas the Institute of Medicine (n.d) suggests that health is a condition of overall well-being and the ability to adapt and thrive in varying situations. Health is not always a physical matter it can also be a mental battle for certain individuals according to the World Health Organization (2024) mental health is a state that allows individuals to handle life's challenges, recognize their potential, learn effectively, perform well in their tasks, and positively contribute to their community. According to Bhugra, Till and Sartorius (2013), Mental health is not separate from overall health; it is a vital and essential component. Overall health can be understood in three ways such as the absence of illness, as a state that enables the full functioning of all bodily systems, or as a state of harmony within oneself and with one's physical and social surroundings. The definition applied depends on how well an individual's basic health needs are met. The NSPCC (2024) says that for a child to have holistic development and good health their development needs to include all aspects such as physical, cognitive, emotional and social growth. The environment around children, the relationships they build and the experiences they have can all influence a child's health and well-being (NSPCC,2024). Similarly, Howard, Burton and Levermore (2020) stated that looking after one's holistic development results in better health and well-being and enables one to experience a better quality of life and achieve their personal goals. Good health allows individuals to reach their full potential, contribute to society, and drive economic growth (The Health Foundation, 2024). Tierney and Wilson (2013) argued that good health is vital for the appropriate development of young children, as it establishes the groundwork for their physical, cognitive, and emotional growth. Children's bodies and brains develop rapidly during their first few years of life, and good health enhances their ability to learn, explore, and interact with their surroundings.

Whereas the Dahlgren and Whitehead model of health takes a multi-layered approach to health, emphasizing that health is not solely determined by individual behaviour or biology, but is shaped by a range of social, economic, and environmental factors. The model is often represented as a series of concentric circles, with each layer reflecting a different determinant of health (Public Health,2021). The Dahlgren and Whitehead model has multiple layers of circles which each represent a different layer that can affect an individual's health. For example, the innermost layer is the individual characteristics such as age, sex, genetic predisposition, and personal behaviour. The second layer investigates lifestyle factors which include a person's habits, choices, and activities, such as diet, exercise, substance use, and social interaction. These factors can be influenced by individual decisions but are often shaped by broader social and environmental conditions. The third layer is the social and community net works meaning family, friends and the community surrounding the individual (Public Health,2017) According to the Dahlgren and Whitehead model the support or stress that people receive from their social relationships can have a substantial impact on their mental and physical health. Strong social bonds and supportive interactions are associated with improved health outcomes, whereas social isolation can lead to bad health (Public Health,2017). In agreement with this statement, the Welsh Government (2023) stated that having good relationships and bonds with others has a great impact when it comes to children's health, the more positive the relationships the healthier the child. The fourth layer investigates the broader environment in which people live and work, including factors such as employment, income, education, housing, and access to healthcare. These social determinants have a direct and indirect impact on health, influencing access to resources that promote well-being. Lastly, the outer layer explores General Socioeconomic, Cultural, and Environmental Conditions. At the outermost layer are macro-level factors like national policies, social inequality, economic conditions, and cultural norms. These wider societal influences shape the conditions in which individuals live and work, influencing their overall quality of life and health outcomes (Public Health,2021). According to the NHS (n.d) building a secure relationship with your baby helps them develop into happy and healthy children. It also helps them manage their emotions, develop confidence and gain better relationships in the future. Giving a baby responsive care and lots of attention can help them regulate their emotions and form safe, healthy relationships in the future. This is considered a secure attachment (NHS, n.d).

Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1979, cited in, Holmes 2014) is a psychological framework that emphasises the importance of children's early ties with their primary carers, usually their mothers, in moulding their emotional, social, and cognitive development. Bowlby (1979) believed that as part of a natural process that aids in survival, people are biologically predisposed to develop bonds with their carers. To feel safe and protected, children are motivated by this attachment system to seek intimacy with their carers, particularly during difficult times. The child's emotional growth depends on this connection, which also offers a safe environment for learning and discovery.

Well - Being

Well-being is a positive state that both individuals and societies experience. Similarly to health, well-being is a resource for day-to-day living and is influenced by environmental, social, and economic factors. Quality of life and the capacity of individuals and communities to make meaningful and purposeful contributions to the world are both components of well-being (WHO, 2021). Dodge *et al* (2012) believe that well-being should be seen as a condition of equilibrium or balance influenced by life events, so providing a universal and quantifiable definition that reflects its complex nature. They discovered two key approaches to well-being research, Hedonic Tradition, which focuses on happiness, positive affect, and life satisfaction, and Eudaimonic Tradition, which emphasizes healthy psychological functioning and growth in oneself. Despite these distinctions, many academics agree that well-being is multidimensional (Dodge *et al*, 2012). The WPA (2013) states that well-being is more than simply the absence of disease or illness. It is a complex interplay of a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Well-being is closely related to happiness and life satisfaction and can be defined as how one feels about oneself and the way one lives. According to the WPA (2013), Well-being is essential because it can add years to life, relates to favourable health behaviours in adults and children (weight, smoking, alcohol/drug use), improves recovery from disease, and can eventually decrease the healthcare burden. Musgrave (2017) stated that well-being can be studied from a philosophical, economic, psychological, social, and health standpoint. Because of the variety of factors that might influence well-being, the concept of well-being is likewise ambiguous, with numerous definitions. Musgrave (2017) argued that the term 'well-being' is a mindset and could mean different things for different individuals. Promoting children's well-being is an important component of keeping them safe, assisting their development, and ensuring they have a happy and fulfilled adulthood (Public Health, 2017).

According to the NSPCC (2021), mental health is important for a child's general well-being and can be influenced by a variety of factors such as abuse and neglect, stress, their surroundings, family-related circumstances, and loneliness or social isolation.

Glazzard and Bligh (2018) agree and state that mental health is essential for emotional control, which is an important aspect of children's well-being. Children with a good mental state can express and manage their emotions appropriately, such as dealing with frustration or disappointment without becoming overwhelmed. When children face mental health issues like anxiety or depression, they may struggle to control their emotions, resulting in mood swings. This lack of emotional regulation can harm their relationships with friends and carers, as well as their capacity to enjoy daily activities and social situations. Howard, Levermore and Burton (2019) argue that children's mental health is strongly linked to their cognitive development and learning ability. Anxiety, depression, and attention issues can impair children's focus, memory, and problem-solving abilities, making it difficult for them to fully participate in academic activities. A psychologically healthy child, on the other hand, is more focused, motivated, and confident in their learning, which helps them succeed in school. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychology theory that proposes a five-tier model of human needs. The hierarchy is frequently represented as a pyramid, with the most fundamental demands at the lowest level such as food, water, sleep and shelter and the higher, more complex needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization at the top. Maslow believed that before focusing on higher-level desires, individuals must first satisfy lower-level demands (Pichère and Cadiat, 2015). This model helps one understand children's well-being since it shows that if the fundamental elements of the pyramid are fulfilled completely it will enable the child to grow emotionally, socially, and physically, resulting in the child becoming a more confident, healthy, and resilient person. (Early years and childcare service, 2021).

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Lifestyle

According to Brivio *et al* (2023), Lifestyle is a multifaceted term that defies easy explanation. Different fields, such as psychology and sociology, provide different viewpoints and research variables on lifestyle that do not always agree. However, Brivio *et al* (2023) do state that there are three viewpoints regarding lifestyle, these are, Internal, which emphasises personal characteristics including habits and behaviours. External, which considers how culture, society, and the environment affect lifestyle. Finally, temporal analysis examines how lifestyles evolve over time and at various life stages. There are many factors that can have an impact on individuals living a healthy lifestyle, specified by Hacıhasanoğlu *et al* (2020) such as socioeconomic position, education, marital status, social networks, age, gender, and interpersonal interactions, which can all have an impact on lifestyle choices related to diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, drug use, and risk behaviours. These elements influence a person's capacity to make healthy decisions and live a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, according to the Welsh Government (2021), a person's lifestyle is typically determined by their employment, culture, and personal interests. According to Musgrave (2017) for children to have a happy and healthy lifestyle they need to be supported by a variety of variables that improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Key components include a balanced diet, regular physical activity, enough sleep, and promoting mental well-being through strong family support and positive relationships. All these components can affect a healthy balanced lifestyle. For example, according to NSPCC (2021) and the Department of Education (n.d) having strong positive relationships can help teach children kindness and empathy which can lead to them making strong connections with friends in the future and resulting in having a good social life. Having good hygiene has been stated as highly important by UNICEF (n.d) to ensure children have a healthy lifestyle as bad hygiene can result in illnesses and make children sick, whereas good hygiene can help children understand the importance of self-care and keep them healthy and promote a good quality of life.

Linking to Early Years Practice.

Early childhood practice settings and early years practitioners have an important role in promoting healthy habits, and ensuring that children receive proper nutrition, physical activity, and emotional support (UNICEF, 2023). Practitioners follow guidelines such as those from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or UNICEF's child development frameworks, which emphasise the importance of a balanced diet, regular exercise, and sufficient sleep for young children (UNICEF, 2023 and Department of Education,2024).

In addition to this, the Welsh Government (2014)encourage practitioners to promote healthy eating by guiding healthy school meals and healthy packed lunches, including fruit and vegetables for the children to eat in school. In accordance with Article 31 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Bento and Dias (2017) stated that outdoor play for young children can enhance a child's well-being by encouraging exploration and creativity in a safe lifestyle and allowing them to take risks without fear of negative consequences. According to Read and Hughes (2014), mental well-being for young children is important to ensure they have a healthy balanced lifestyle and are supported through nurturing relationships by practitioners and caregivers and offered a safe and inclusive environment where children feel secure can help children's mental wellbeing. By practitioners introducing positive lifestyle choices within daily routines such as handwashing, mindfulness activities like colouring, and structured play, early years practitioners equip children with lifelong skills that contribute to their well-being. These practices not only enhance children's immediate health but also set the stage for their future learning, resilience, and overall quality of life (Maholmes, 2014, UNICEF 2017 and Welsh government,2022).

Conclusion

This poster clearly shows how health, well-being, and lifestyle are all connected and influence each other. It highlights the importance of giving young children a healthy start in life, especially by building positive and supportive relationships that help them grow and develop. It also emphasizes the role that practitioners play in promoting well-being, offering practical ways to support children and explaining the benefits of doing so.

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