

Introduction

This poster is based on health, wellbeing and lifestyles and the links they have to the early years. The concepts of these terms will be explored, and theories linked to the early years practice will be investigated. The practitioners role within supporting health, wellbeing and lifestyles will also be explored and how they help with children's holistic development. The importance of children being protected and safeguarded from harm and various health conditions will also be discussed. Musgrave (2017) explains the link between health and wellbeing. It is said that when a child's health is made a priority and they are protected from ill health, that in turn it will help to promote their wellbeing. The links between all three of these terms will be looked at and critically evaluated using various sources from early years researchers.

Health

Svalastog et.al (2015), define health as the ability to function well mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. In order to express the full range of one's unique potentialities within the environment that they are living in, health needs to be in a respectable state. Likewise, World Health Organization, (2023) defines health as not only the absence of disease and illness, but the state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing.

The Welsh Government set up the 'Healthy Child Wales Programme'. They believe that a child's health, social wellbeing and educational development is significantly impacted by the investment in their early years. Their findings express how much children in poverty have negative impacts on their physical and mental health due to their environment. The Welsh Government aim to deliver improved health outcomes and ensuring children in poverty do not miss out on support and early interventions in the case of suffering poor health. (Welsh Government, 2022). The term social determinants of health applies to a wide range of circumstances which impact health throughout someone's life. Public Health England (2017) explains that there is a social differential exists for many of these factors which results in poorer people having worse health outcomes than those who are better off. Physical health includes sleeping well, good eating habits, engaging in physical activity, having good hygiene and getting a sufficient amount of relaxation. (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, 2023). A factor that has a negative impact on physical health in children is, obesity. Children suffering with obesity will more than likely develop a high blood pressure and develop cardiovascular disease. The percentage of typical development in children who are obese has increased from 5% to 17% over the last 20-30 years. A lack in physical activity could be one of the main causes of obesity in children along with poor eating habits. (Feehan, et.al. 2012).

Wellbeing

Berlinski and Schady (2015) defines wellbeing as "the state of being happy, healthy or prosperous". Wellbeing in early years begins at conception and continues up until around age 9. Ryan and Deci (2001) believe that wellbeing cannot be defined, contrary to the beliefs of Berlinski and Schady (2015) as there are so many factors such as, teaching practices, parenting and government practices that people are influenced by that define their wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing relates to the way people evaluate their lives and experiences based on particular domains and activities within them. (Stone and Mackie, 2013).

St Catherine University (2022) explains the approach to wellbeing that encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual components of health is known as holistic.

Physical wellbeing is sustaining a good quality of life that enables people to make full use of their daily activities without the physical impact of stress. It also involves taking care of the human body and realizing what habits and behaviours impact someone's overall physical wellbeing. (Australian National University, no date).

Physical wellbeing in the early years is paramount for healthy development in young children. (Bradshaw, 2016). Physical wellbeing in the early years promotes a healthy lifestyle. Advocating this type of lifestyle to young children with poor physical wellbeing is enough to make changes in behaviour. Lynch (2019) applies the transtheoretical model of behaviour change to children as the adoption of healthy habits to promote regular physical activity, good eating habits and the ability to avoid destructive behaviours which, in turn, improves a child's physical wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing is known as developing the capacity of children. Experience, emotions, relationships and a child's environment are all focused on in regard to emotional wellbeing. (Mincemoyer, 2016).

Emotional wellbeing refers to how well humans manage their emotions and face the challenges of life. Emotional wellbeing can present in children as how well they can function on a day-to-day basis and how they react to change and the unknown. Children with good emotional wellbeing will appear happy and stress free. (Park et.al, 2022).

Ussher et al. (2007) shows the link between physical and emotional wellbeing in results of their research as poor physical wellbeing and low levels of physical activity presents as a negative impact on psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Psychological wellbeing includes the mental and emotional health of children. Practitioners working with children have the responsibility to promote psychological wellbeing. (NSPCC, 2021). Psychological wellbeing is described as an individual being autonomous, being able to problem solve and someone who portrays resilience. (Sonnentag, 2015).

Hedonic wellbeing represents a focus on the individual self involving pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction. Whereas eudaimonic wellbeing represents a focus on the individual self and others balancing a focus on the present and the future. (Huta, 2016).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a theory that links closely to wellbeing. Maslow argued that the basic needs of the child must be met in order to satisfy the higher needs. As more of the child's needs are met, the better their wellbeing will be as a whole. (McLeod, 2023). Poston (2009) says that Maslow applied his findings to human behaviour to establish the needs of the child and how they impact development and wellbeing. Maslow states that when an individuals needs are not fully met, they have a deficit.

The World Health Organization (2022) defines mental health as the state of mental health that enables individuals to cope with stress, realise their abilities, learn and practice well and to contribute to the community. Early experiences shape the development of a child's brain, so negative early experiences can have a detrimental affect on their mental health. When a child is experiencing, family stress, poverty, abuse, neglect or violence, it may elevate the risk of mental health problems. (Harvard University, 2023). In children with attachment problems, there may be difficulties in expressing emotions or control them and form favorable relationships that can influence their mental health. (NSPCC, 2021). John Bowlby's attachment theory expresses the importance of early attachments. Secure attachments have proved to form empathy and trust in children which has a positive affect on their mental health. Children who are securely attached in their early years develop resilience and a higher self-esteem than children who have insecure attachments. (George, 2014).

Lifestyle

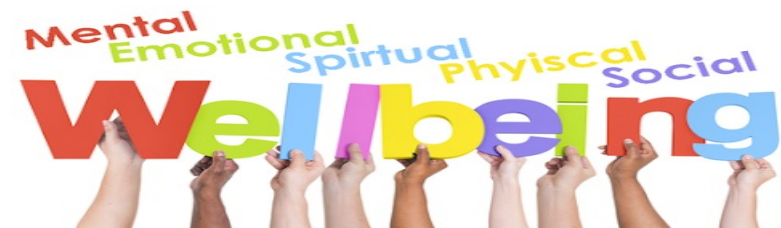
The American Psychological Association (2023) defines lifestyle as the way of life expressed by behaviour, attitudes, interest and other factors that are distinctive to an individual or group. Young children’s lifestyles are closely linked to their early development. Their lifestyle may implicate them long-term, therefore it is important for the early stages to be positive (Mollborn et al., 2014). Farhud (2015) explains factors that contribute to an unhealthy lifestyle. Malnutrition, unhealthy diet, smoking, substance abuse and stress are all things that when children are immersed in, can have a detrimental affect on the lifestyle they live. Children living in poverty are deprived of a healthy lifestyle. Families in poverty are more likely to struggle to pay for essentials such as food and heating. Children living this lifestyle will potentially become malnourished and experience poor living standards. (Action for Children, 2023). Welsh Government (2015) aimed to eradicate poverty by 2020 to ensure no child was unsafe, without food or clothing and that children live healthy lives that are full of happiness and opportunities. However, Children in Wales (2023) shows that Welsh Government failed to meet their target as the latest figures of children living in poverty in Wales is at 28%. This lifestyle has a negative impact on children’s overall health and wellbeing. Save the Children (2018) state that every child has the right to a healthy start in life whilst being safe and having opportunities to learn. Barnardo’s (2023) present a healthy lifestyle for children as eating nutritious meals, exercising and engaging in outdoor play and making sure the child has a sufficient amount of sleep. Health Direct (2023) emphasises the importance of hygiene on someone's lifestyle. Children should be encouraged to wash and practice good hygiene to prevent ill health. Adverse childhood experiences, (ACES’s) can affect a child’s lifestyles in ways that can affect them long-term. ACE’s can include physical and emotional abuse, childhood trauma, and dysfunction within the household (O’Neill et al., 2021). In households where ACE’s occur, caregivers may not have the ability or knowledge to fulfill their responsibilities as they may be struggling with mental health or involved in substance abuse and violence. Such behaviours from the caregivers may precede to the child having adverse childhood experiences and their lifestyle becoming overlooked. The welfare of the child in question can have an impact on their relationships with people around them (Kalmakis and Chandler 2013). Holmes (2014) researched a theory founded by Bowlby named as, ‘the attachment theory’. This theory links to the effects adverse childhood experiences have on children’s relationships. It is said that the social and emotional development of a child is shaped by the relationships they have with their caregivers, especially the relationship with the mother. Bowlby believed that this maternal attachment is vital to be formed in the early years to ensure a happy and healthy start in life. When this is disrupted for any reason, such as, environment, lifestyle and adverse childhood experiences, it can have long term lifestyle consequences.

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
 Physical	 Physical	 Mental Illness	 Incarcerated Relative
 Emotional	 Emotional	 Mother treated violently	 Substance Abuse
 Sexual		 Divorce	

Source: NPR (2023)

Application to Early Years Practice
Every child has the right to a high-quality education and access to a setting of high standards that is tailored to meet their needs and enables them to realise their full potential. (GOV.UK, no date). The role of the practitioner in the early year's workforce influences the lives of the children in the early year's settings (UNISON, no date). When professionals come together from several different roles to accomplish a goal for a child, it is known as multi-agency working. This is generally put in place to support children and families at risk as well as those with additional learning needs (Training Express, 2023). The research undertaken by Payler and Georgeson (2013) surrounding early years practitioners skill level and knowledge of multi-agency working showed that when interventions from outside agencies are put in place, it can better the learning outcomes. Practitioners can also support children’s overall health and wellbeing by setting up multi-agencies to come together and provide youth workers, councilors and mental health services for those children who struggle with social and emotional difficulties (Solomon, 2019). Karlsen and Lekhal (2019) explains that the role of the practitioner within early years is to make children feel safe. This can be applied by responding to their individual needs and creating relationships that allows children to develop healthy lifestyle habits and be of good physical and mental health.

Conclusion
After extensive research throughout this poster there have been significant findings that link health, wellbeing and lifestyle to one another and the impact these factors have on children. The models and theories looked at during this piece of work emphasise the importance of supporting every child individually and encouraging positive health and wellbeing to allow them to live a happy and fulfilled lifestyle. There have been articles that have shown the detrimental effect poverty has on children’s health, wellbeing and lifestyle and how practitioners can support those children who are living in this environment. The benefits of multi-agency working have been discussed and this has proven to be a way that supports the children and families who live in poverty and those with additional learning needs. This poster has expressed the need for children to form healthy relationships to thrive in various aspects of their lives and education.



Source: Albany Senior High School (2023)

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