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Health, Well-being and Lifestyles

Introduction

To begin, this poster will focus closely and explore Health, Well-being and Lifestyles, define what they are, link them to the early years and explain why they are so important for the child's holistic development. It will also focus on the practitioner's role to support the child's health, well-being and lifestyles and what types of support will be effective to enable the child to be and do the best they can. This poster will enable the reader to have an understanding of how each of these concepts interlink with one another. Furthermore, there will be theories linked to the concepts for in depth knowledge of how they effect the child holistically. The concepts the poster will be focusing on is a statutory framework that early year's professionals must follow and promote (Foundation Years, 2023).

Concepts

Health, well-being and lifestyles link into one another to support the development of the child. In early years settings the practitioners should promote each concept to ensure the child is given the best support for their development and to enable the child to thrive in their early years (Early years careers, no date). However, it is vital to note that if any of these concepts are negatively impacted during the child's early years it can have a detrimental impact on the child and their holistic development, this can also be known as a 'knock on affect', if the child is unable to participate in physical activity to keep fit, this can then lead to health problems and insecurities causing long-term mental health issues (Marmot, 2010).

Health

World Health Organisation (2024) states that health is the individuals physical, mental and social well-being and not merely absent from diseases or illnesses. However, health is quite a complex concept to many, some may have different perspectives when defining what health is, according to Oleribe,Obinna Ositadimma et al (2018) health is having a healthy state physically and mentally.

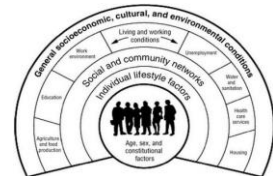
Gov.uk (2016) states that health is crucial in the child's early years, it is believed that the child's experiences during their early years will impact them throughout their whole life whether it be positive or negative, the child's health begins when they are in the womb during this time it is the mother's responsibility to ensure they receive the correct nutrition and care. A positive start to the child's life will ensure positive-open opportunities to ensure a quality future for the child. Musgrave (2017) believes that promoting health is important as it is an umbrella covering mental health, physical health and social well-being, each of these concepts contribute significantly towards the development of the child. Furthermore, the hierarchy of needs pyramid represents the child's needs for satisfaction and development, this is Maslow's theory. Maslow's theory has a strong connection to health as whole, if the child is unable to have their basic needs met then they will most likely struggle to reach their full potential, this can then cause significant impact to their health (Care Learning, 2024).

Well-being

Well-being is believed to be interconnected with health and both concepts can not be separated completely from each other, for example if an individual's health is poor this could have a significant effect on their well-being. However, each concept has different definitions, Statham and Chase (2010) states that well-being is a multi-dimensional concept, the concept is made up of physical, emotional and social well-being, each of these are focused on in their current state and how their future may be affected. Musgrave (2017) also states that well-being is an individual feeling comfortable, happy and healthy.

The importance of well-being in the early years is paramount to enable the child to understand their own needs and have a sense of belonging in their environment, this will help to open opportunities for their development (Department for education, 2023). Promoting well-being for children is vital to allow children to feel safe within their environment, if a child does not feel safe, they will withdraw from their surroundings, and this will lead to dysregulated behaviours. A child's well-being can be affected from any safeguarding issues, such as abuse and neglect, family circumstances, stress or loneliness, it is then the role of the practitioner to be a key adult for the child and make positive experiences to support them (NSPCC Learning, 2021). During 2021 in Wales the government put a framework in place for a whole school approach to support emotional and mental well-being for those in need of interventions, however, the government made it clear that schools are unable to meet the needs of all children due to complexities, this framework required third sectors to support schools and the children (Welsh Government, 2021). A theorist called John Bowlby has an attachment theory, the theory explores different attachments and how they affect the child's wellbeing as they grow older. If a child gains a secure attachment to their caregivers from a young age, they will enable themselves to create strong secure relationships later on, however, if the child gains an insecure attachment in their earlier days, they will begin to display negative behaviours and increase their risk for mental health issues later on (Holmes, J. 2014).

Health is important in the early years because there are many detriments to be aware of that could cause significant impact to the child's holistic development. Below shows Dahlgren and Whitehead's model of the main detriments that have been recorded worldwide (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 2021). Here are some examples of how the child can be affected by various factors: Social detriments, this includes, social support networks, education and income, it is believed that often children with higher income families are more likely to have successful education due to having access to more resources. Environmental factors, the conditions of where the child lives, opportunities to use outdoor access for physical exercise, nutritious food and water (WHO, 2024). A theorist Bronfenbrenner also created a similar model that emphasises the influencing factors within the child's health, Bronfenbrenner's model shows how positive relationships can help a child overcome a gloomy experience. El Zaatari, W., & Maalouf, I. (2022) presented the below model to emphasise the amount of responsibility and an important role the practitioners in a setting have to enable a child's development.



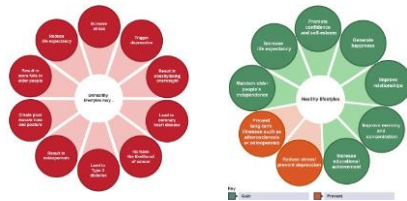
Source: El Zaatari, W., & Maalouf, I. (2022). Source:Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991).

Lifestyles

Lifestyle is the way everyone chooses to live, this includes, their nutrition, their relationships, physical exercise, hygiene, environment, parenting ability, engagement with services, income and all-round life habits. According to BBC (no date) an individual's lifestyle will determine what person they are and want to become, if a child has a healthy lifestyle, for example, hygienic, regular exercise, good diet, seeking support, if necessary they are more than likely to improve overall health and well-being. Thomas and Lewis (2016) believe this can be successful if three key actions are followed, being motivated, developing good habits and developing a positive way of thinking. However, if these actions are not followed and the individual has an unhealthy lifestyle, they may develop long-term diseases and illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and cancer, this is then likely to affect their mental health and cause depression (Mandelli, 2023).

Lifestyles are usually influenced by something within the individual's life, it is believed that in some ethnicity, strong lifestyles are passed through in genetic disorders for example, some countries would rather misuse drugs instead of using other interventions for support, unfortunately this could then lead onto younger generations and negatively influence their futures (Farhud, 2015). Furthermore, from a young age children will adapt to their adult's eating habits, if the adults promote healthy eating, then the children will most likely be influenced from living in a healthy environment. However, if they are influenced by unhealthy habits, the child will most likely have a low self image and that may cause a longterm health and mental health problems. It is important to add, there are many more influences on an individual's lifestyle, these may include, social media, financial situation, peer influences, personal interests and knowledge (Ochieng,2006)

Due to the support and interventions in Wales, changing for the better is always advertised and promoted, there is a model called 'The Transtheoretical model', this has five stages to support individuals to make a change for a healthier lifestyle. Firstly, Pre-contemplation, this is where the individual feels there is no need for change, next, contemplation, this is when they may take action, then, preparation, this is when the first steps are usually taken., after that, action, the individual is now practicing the changed behaviours and finally, maintenance, working to continue the changed behaviour (Raihan, N., & Cogburn, M., 2022). When the behaviours have changed for a period of time the individual may feel a boost in their overall health and well-being.



Source: BBC, (no date).



Application to Early Years practice

Abou Jaoude (2024) states the early years settings are at the centre of supporting children's overall health and well-being. It has been found that interventions that are delivered within setting improves a child's social, emotional and mental wellbeing, this enables the child to participate in their learning experiences. However, if the interventions are not delivered, this could be because of the lack of funding then the child could be at risk from long-term health and well-being issues. Department for Education (2023) states that children rely and build trusting relationships with their key adult, it is the practitioner's role to listen and understand the child in a nurturing approach. Having a key adult will enable the child to learn and maintain trusting relationships, communicate their needs and develop a healthy stress response system to navigate away from stress related illnesses. Early years settings will work alongside agencies to provide the child with the correct care and nutrition, these include, design to smile, this is a dental company that provide care to the child's teeth, school nurses, they provide vaccinations and healthy lifestyle advice to children, CHAMS, these provide well -being sessions to support the children, each of these agencies report on any concerns of the child's health. Gov.uk (2025) have recently set out a nutrition guidance for early years settings to ensure the children are taking in the correct nutrients to allow growth and avoid unhealthy consumption of foods that could eventually cause obesity and health issues. Settings can support healthy eating by providing fruit, planning healthy eating activities into the children's learning experiences. It is important to add that all children in the early years educational settings are now eligible for free school meals, school meals are healthy options, for example, this supports the child to try new things and even choose fruit instead of chocolate.

Practitioners have an important role in supporting a child's well -being, this can be done by being an enabling adult, creating safe spaces, delivering well -being interventions and creating new enabling environments for play, this can support the child's regulation and helps them to feel a sense of belonging (Manning -Morton, 2014). Whilst these interventions and experiences take place the practitioner can use observational methods such as the 'Leuven scale' to observe, assess, plan, implement and analyse the child's behaviours (Learning Journals, no date). Many settings promote outdoor learning to allow the children to experience nature and use their imagination, this is believed to support the child's mental health, socialisation and also allow them to have consistent physical exercise opportunities within setting.

Although promoting health, well-being and lifestyles in early years settings helps and influences the children to choose a healthy lifestyle; it is vital that the children's rights are also promoted to everyone, the needs of each child should be met to ensure the best start to life, this is stated in section 42 of the rights for a child (Unicef, no date).



Source: Joshua Seong/ Verywell (2024).

Conclusion

To conclude, this poster has shown the interconnections between health, well-being and lifestyles and the significant impacts that could occur if the child chooses unhealthy lifestyle habits. It has also displayed the importance of enabling adults and environments for the holistic development of the child. Furthermore, it has stated various support strategies early years settings can offer to promote a better future for the child, including the multi -agency approach. Throughout the poster, each concept is followed by theorists and guidelines to further understanding.

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