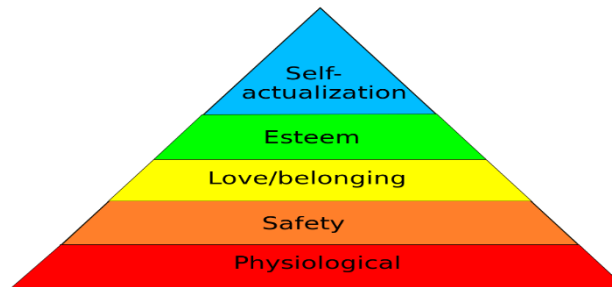


INTRODUCTION

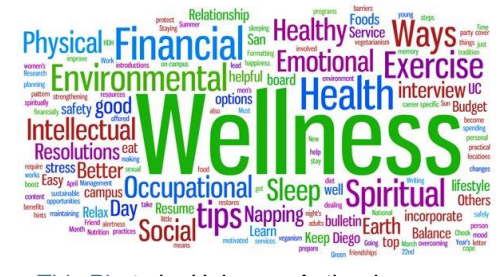
This poster attempts to clarify the concepts of health, well-being, and lifestyles and highlight their significance in the early years. According to Bust and Pedro (2022) the early years of a child's life, from birth to around 5 years old, are a critical period for their physical, mental, and emotional development. This introduction explores the key concepts of health, wellbeing, and lifestyle that shape a child's early years, setting the foundation for their future growth and success (Gradovski and Melchior, 2019). Furthermore, several models and ideas will be examined and connected to the practice of early childhood education. We'll also talk about the practitioner's role in early childhood practice and various approaches to supporting young children's health, wellbeing, and lifestyles to promote their holistic development (Neaum, 2019). The main subject that links all three ideas will be positive relationships. According to Gradovski and Melchior (2019) for young children, meaningful relationships with others lay the groundwork for their positive well-being. They'll be prepared to learn and feel protected and secure. This poster will explore these three key concepts in depth, providing a comprehensive understanding of how to support and nurture children in their early years.

Concepts

Research by Musgrave (2017) and Berlinski and Schady (2015) indicates that lifestyle, well-being, and health are related since they are all interconnected and have an impact on one another. A child's growth and well-being can be affected by their health, which in turn can be impacted by their lifestyle; on the other hand, a poor lifestyle can negatively impact a child's welfare.



Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Mcleod, 2024)



Physical Activity and Lifestyle

A child's development will be influenced by the type of environment they grow up in, according to a study by Elliott and Davis (2020). The theory of child development as a complex system of interactions influenced by a variety of environmental influences, from the immediate family and school setting to more general cultural values, laws, and practices, was examined. It was established by Bronfenbrenner.

Children's health and well-being will be positively impacted when they live in a safe play with parents or other carers with whom they have strong relationships and who are providing for and nurturing them (Marmot et al. 2012). According to Dodge *et al.*, (2012) this will guarantee that the child feels safe, loved, and inspired to grow and learn. Practitioners are vital in fostering a child's physical, cognitive, and language development. They create structured routines, stimulating learning environments, and positive relationships that complement the family's efforts Brodie (2015).

It is recommended by Archer and Sira (2015) to participate in regular physical activity, such as playing, running, and exploring, helping children develop gross and fine motor skills to improve coordination, and build a strong foundation for a lifelong active lifestyle .It helps build strong muscles, improve coordination, and enhance cardiovascular fitness, laying the foundation for a healthy, active lifestyle and Practitioners should encourage and support children with indoor and outdoor physical experiences. Play Wales (2021) says that active play stimulates children's brains, improving cognitive skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and memory. It also enhances their ability to focus, learn, and explore the world around them.

McInnes *et al.*, (2010) claims that physical activity and play have a positive impact on children's emotional well-being, helping them manage stress, develop social skills, and build self-confidence. This contributes to their overall happiness and mental health. Berlinski and Schady (2015) and Neaum (2019) claim that providing children with safe, engaging play spaces that encourage exploration, imagination, and physical activity is essential for their overall development. Well-designed indoor and outdoor play areas, equipped with age-appropriate toys and equipment, help foster creativity, social skills, and a sense of security. Howard (2019) believes that providing opportunities for children to explore their environment, try new things, and engage in hands-on learning experiences can foster their curiosity, problem-solving skills, and a love of learning. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle, with a mix of structured activities, free play, rest, and relaxation, promoting overall well-being Bradshaw (2016).

Health and Nutrition

The first 1,000 days of a child's life from pregnancy and the child's second birthday provide the foundation for lifelong health (Gradovski and Melchior, 2019). According to Bust and Pedro (2022) it is a time when our external environments, from the food we eat to our exposures to stress and adversity shape our future health in powerful ways. Children need good nutritional meals, they need to feel safe, loved, and secure and the opportunities to learn to grow and develop and be healthy (Roberts, 2010).

Implementing a consistent daily routine, suggested by Rodriguez et al (2013) with regular mealtimes, sleep schedules, and activity periods, can help children feel secure, build healthy habits, and develop a sense of predictability in their lives. Practitioners need to communicate with parents of young children to establish and agree to follow routines giving consistency to children's routines. Maslow's hierarchy of needs according to Aubrey and Riley (2022) starts with the most basic requirements for human survival, such as food, water, and sleep. Ensuring these fundamental needs are met is crucial for a child's physical and emotional well-being. The Welsh Government (2019) supports providing healthy and nutritional meals at school for children by bringing the free school meals program into all primary schools, ensuring all children get the opportunity and access to healthy meals at school.

According to Howard (2019) providing a balanced and nutritious diet is essential for a child's physical development, some children prefer a packed lunch and advise on a healthy, balanced content can be provided to parents ensuring they too get a nutritional meal at school.

This includes ensuring they consume adequate amounts of protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals to support growth, energy, and overall well-being. This wholesome approach to nutrition ensures they receive the essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients they need to thrive (Welsh Government.2016).

It is suggested by Chan (2022) that instilling healthy eating habits from an early age can set children up for a lifetime of wellness. Encouraging them to try new, nutritious foods and involving them in meal preparation helps foster a positive relationship with food and a deeper understanding of the importance of good nutrition (Brodie,2015). Practitioners can implement sensory food play during day-to-day activities allowing children to explore and play with food, this not only aids sensory development but emotional and social development and exploration of the texture, smell, and taste during play is *recommended by Manning-Morton (2014)*.

Wellbeing and application to Early years practice

According to World Health Organization (2022) nurturing a child's mental health and emotional wellbeing is crucial during the early years. This lays the foundation for their ability to build healthy relationships, regulate their emotions, and develop resilience in the face of challenges.

Montessori's educational approach highlights the importance of creating a nurturing, hands-on, and child-centred environment to support a child's natural development Schmidt (2009) and Hammond (2011) they maintain that by teaching children to recognise and express their feelings in a constructive manner, practitioners can help them cultivate emotional intelligence. This empowers children to understand themselves and others and develop the capacity for empathy. Taryana *et al.*, (2024) suggest that Goleman 'work on emotional intelligence emphasizes the significance of emotional awareness, regulation, and social skills in fostering a child's overall well-being and resilience. Maholmes (2014) argues that helping children develop the ability to recognize, express, and manage their emotions in a healthy way can contribute to their overall psychological well-being and resilience. Zones of regulations is a tool used in childcare settings and schools to support children express their feelings and daily check ins, this allows opportunities to and identify and support a child that needs support (Kuypers, 2021).

Bradshaw (2016) believes that encouraging positive social interaction, such as playing and communicating with peers, can foster the development of important social skills, empathy, and a sense of belonging. Children need to feel that they belong to thrive and succeed according to Welsh Government (2016).

According to Goldberg, Muir and Kerr (2013) establishing strong, nurturing relationships with caregivers and practitioners can help children feel safe, secure, and confident, which are essential for their emotional well-being and healthy development. According to Bowlby's attachment theory cited by Juroszek (2015) the quality of a child's early relationships with caregivers can significantly impact their emotional development and predisposition to anxiety. Secure attachments foster a sense of safety and trust.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs cited by McLeod (2018) the need for love, affection, and a sense of belonging are crucial for a child's social and emotional well-being. Additionally, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development cited by Jurosze (2015) emphasizes the importance of resolving key challenges, such as trust, autonomy, and initiative, during the early years to promote a child's overall well-being.

According to Marmont (2010), every child should have the best start in life, and more money must be spent on early childhood development. Additionally, it is considered that holistic prenatal care for mothers and families should take precedence over interventions related to maternal health. an extension of parental leave for the first year, which has a significant positive effect on a child's growth and well-being.

Marmont (2010) asserts that parenting education, counselling, and support services are necessary to provide families with holistic care beginning before the baby is born. As outlined in UNICEF's article 5, allow everyone to realise their full potential and take charge of their own life (2019).

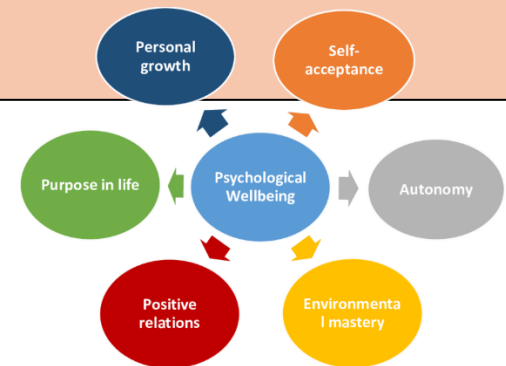
Exposing children to positive role models, can shape their values, behaviours, and aspirations, contributing to the development of a healthy lifestyle. In accordance with UNICEF (2019)'s article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that every child has the freedom to play and to enjoy leisure and rest, Musgrave (2017) proposes that practitioners could improve a child's well-being by providing opportunities for outdoor play, allowing children to explore and be creative in a safe environment, and letting them take risks without worrying about the consequences.

The 2010 Marmont Review highlights the close relationships between mental and physical health. Every aspect of life is greatly impacted by mental health and well-being. To ensure successful partnership working, fully integrated commissioning and service provision, and the promotion of positive mental health and well-being, the NHS's 560 Mental Health Services for Children and Adults, the Local Authority, and the third sector all have important responsibilities to play. However, Marmot *et al.*, (2020) review 10 years later recognises more intervention is required and the need to support and fund childcare settings and children in the early years as the impact of poor experiences and Aces increase the demands made on many government budgets, Boullier and Blair's (2018) and Ace Hub Wales (2022) research found the same outcomes.

Classrooms and childcare settings should be designed with the child's needs in mind, offering a warm, inviting, and stimulating atmosphere with displays of children's artwork, which can positively impact their sense of belonging and overall wellbeing. The Welsh Government (2019) states that the new curriculum for Wales supports early children's health and wellbeing to foster healthy, confident individuals who are capable and ambitious learners. Piaget's theory cited by Mooney (2000) highlights the crucial role of play, exploration, and problem-solving in shaping a child's intellectual and problem-solving abilities, which contribute to their well-being.

According to Boullier and Blair (2018), practitioners should treat children fairly and provide support based on each child's unique needs. Practitioners will act as the nurturing adult in the lives of children who may have experienced abuse or neglect. The ability to identify this is important since it may appear that the child is not in good health, possibly when they refuse to participate in activities, behave withdrawn or angry, or present unusual for themselves. This is crucial to give the child and their family the support they need and to make sure they get assistance to avoid any long-term problems that can result from early-life trauma (Kalmakis and Chandler, 2015) and (Ace Hub Wales , 2022).

According to Gasper (2009) and Payler and Georgeson (2013) open communication and collaboration between families and caregivers is key to ensuring a child's needs are met holistically. Regular exchanges of information, joint decision-making, and a shared commitment to the child's best interests help to create a seamless support system during this critical developmental stage. Welsh Government (2018) encourages and supports collaborative working.



Ryff's model of wellbeing (ResearchGate, nd)

In **conclusion**, the early years of a child's life are a critical period that lays the foundation for their overall health, wellbeing, and development. By prioritizing key concepts such as quality sleep, mental health, emotional resilience, and creating a nurturing environment, we can empower children to thrive and reach their full potential. Collaborative partnerships between families, caregivers, and the broader community are essential in supporting children holistically during these early years.

Script

According to Howard (2019) and McInnes *et al.* (2010) Research indicates that anxiety problems are becoming more common in young children; up to 1 in 8 of them may have clinically significant anxiety. If these early-onset anxiety disorders are not treated, they may have a significant negative influence on a child's emotional health, social growth, and academic achievement. Early intervention is critical for identifying indications of anxiety in children Public Health Wales (2023).

Bust and Pedro (2022) claims that it is usual for young children to have separation anxiety between the ages of six months and three years. When children are separated from their parents or other carers, they could cry and become upset, clingy, and needy. This is a typical developmental stage for children and should end when they reach the age of two or three

Young Children frequently experience the development of phobias or fears. Early childhood phobias include fearing animals, or afraid of storms especially thunder and lightning, some children fear heights, and the most commonly the dark at night and bedtime. Usually, these anxieties fade gradually on their own according to Lindenfield (2000).

Children may experience anxiety at different points throughout their lives. For instance, a lot of children experience anxiety when they transition parents to care givers such as day care or from nursery class to school or moving from primary to secondary school according to (Cadi ma *et al.*, 2015. Ma, Hammer and Veresov, 2022)

There are **Theories on Anxiety in Children**

Firstly, the **Attachment Theory**

The quality of a child's early connections with carers can have a substantial impact on their emotional development and anxiety tendency, according to the Bowlby's attachment theory cited by Aubrey and Riley (2022).

In contrast to insecure attachments, which may worsen anxiety, secure attachments promote a sense of safety and trust (Pound, 2012).

Secondly the Cognitive-Behavioural Approach

According to Neaum (2019) the cognitive-behavioural approach, children's learnt behaviours, beliefs, and thought processes are all important in the emergence and maintenance of anxiety. A child's capacity to cope might be hampered by inappropriate thinking that something bad will happen and avoidance behaviours, which can intensify anxious feelings.

Thirdly the Neurobiological Factors

The control of the brain's fear and stress response systems is influenced by both hereditary and neurochemical factors according to Public Health Wales (2023) and emerging research suggesting that anxiety problems in children may have a strong neurobiological base. This may put some children at risk for increased anxiety (Haartsen, Jones and Johnson, 2016).

Therefore, what are the Complications of children with anxiety in the early years and their future

Young children who experience anxiety may encounter serious obstacles that could harm their growth and long-term health.

Children with persistent anxiety can shy away from other children or struggle to build meaningful relationships, which can make it difficult for them to interact socially according to NHS (2021). This may impede the development of critical emotional and social skills, hence increasing feelings of loneliness and low self-worth (Young Minds, 2021).

According to Weed Phifer and Sibbald (2020) and Young Minds (2021) excessive anxiety can hinder a child's ability to concentrate and focus, which makes it harder for them to participate in educational activities and perform to their best academic ability. This may restrict their access to higher education and their chances for the future, worsening the effects of worry.

Childhood anxiety can have long-term effects if it is not treated according to NHS (2021) and Children who suffer from ongoing worry are more likely to face more serious mental health problems in the future, such panic attacks or depression. Public Health Wales (2023) says this may result in persistent difficulties in someone's personal relationships, career, and general standard of living. Children with anxiety need a dedicated support network that includes educators, mental health specialists, and carers to help them overcome these obstacles and prosper in the future.

Howard (2019) believes that childhood anxiety can raise the likelihood of experiencing more serious mental health problems later in life, such as panic attacks or depression, if it is not treated. Because of the potential for persistent difficulties in interpersonal relationships, the workplace, and overall quality of life, early intervention is crucial. (

Through knowledge of the underlying causes, Maholmes (2014) believes it can include both environmental and genetic predispositions, practitioners can help children manage their anxiety by offering the right kind of support and coping strategies.

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Therefore, what are the signs of anxiety in children?

According to NSPCC (2021) Healthy Children (2023) and NHS (2021) there are several changes including

Children turning grumpy and unhappy, or they become very emotional, needy, and more clingy than usual. Crying and upset for no reason.

Children may have trouble sleeping, this includes falling asleep and relaxing at bedtime, sleeping all night and have difficulties waking in the morning.

They may wake during the night due to experiencing nightmares or begin having accidents and wetting the bed

Children often experience headaches or stomach-aches, with a pattern of stomach aches occurring daily

You might observe in older children that they:

Lacking the motivation to try new things or seem incapable of overcoming typical, routine challenges

They may have trouble focusing and staying on task

They may have trouble eating, not eating at all, or overeating as a sense of comfort eating

Some children have fits of anger and rages that is unexpected without trigger

Some children may have a negative outlook on life and everything around them or have negative thoughts, for example, they think something bad is going to happen

Some children begin avoiding routine tasks like going to school and going out with friends

Atherton (2021) and the Mental Health Foundation (2023)'s research both agree with the signs mentioned.

Ma, Hammer and Veresov (2022) claims that Anxiety in children becomes a problem when it starts to affect their day-to-day activities. When a child's suffering is significant or getting worse, when it gets in the way of daily activities, and when it keeps them from doing things they enjoy according to NHS (2021) and Bradshaw (2016), Severe worry of this kind can have a detrimental effect on children's mental and emotional well-being, affecting their self-esteem and confidence. They may escape and take drastic steps to avoid situations or objects that make them anxious. Bradshaw (2016).

It is difficult sometimes to determine what causes the anxiety, but sometimes a minor change effects a child.

Children may experience anxiety related to schoolwork, teachers, bullying, or loneliness while they are in school. They may have trouble with things like other children's loudness at school according to Mental Health Foundation (2023).

Children suffering Abuse or neglect or Parental situations of domestic abuse, arguing fighting, separating according to Anxiety UK. (n.d.)

The Death of a relative according to NSPCC (2021) as that person could be the primary care giver of the child.

Children who see family disputes and disagreements may also experience anxiety and insecurity according to ACES (2022)

Injuries or illness or knowledge that a member of the family has a life-threatening condition Howard (2019).

According to World Health Organisation research from 2022, children with ADHD are more prone to experience anxiety

Children who have gone through something distressing or traumatic may develop anxiety. Such a home fire, a vehicle accident, or a traumatic event from childhood, like abuse, according to ACES (2022).

Physical abuse and neglect can be visible therefore practitioners may be able to see signs but emotional and sexual abuse they may not, making it more difficult to identify. Safeguarding Wales (2024) Family circumstances and the lifestyle of some can have an impact on children, history repeating itself with how some people choose to nurture their children, the lack of knowledge on parenting skills all impacting on the wellbeing of a child. Adverse childhood experiences (2019).

Through knowledge of the underlying causes, Maholmes (2014) believes it can include both environmental and genetic predispositions, practitioners can help children manage their anxiety by offering the right kind of support and coping strategies.

Therefore, how can practitioners help an anxious child

Young children sometimes struggle to understand or describe their feelings when they are anxious, and it is vital that practitioners offer the correct support and seek the professional advice from outside agencies according to Payler and Georgeson (2013) to support when required.

According to anxiety UK (nd) the best ways to help children overcome anxiety is by the Acknowledgment, regulating, relating and reasoning.

You must Acknowledge their feelings, even if they seem 'over the top' to an adult.

You must Regulate their physiological responses – using calming techniques.

You must Relate to them by connecting emotionally.

And finally, Reason with them – help them think through their experience and offer guidance.

According to Healthy Children (2023) and NSPCC (2021) Helping children manage their anxiety is the aim, not getting rid of it. While it is never our goal to watch a child suffer, removing stressor that cause anxiety in children isn't the ideal approach to assist them in overcoming it. The goal is to teach them how to manage their anxiety and continue to operate as best they can despite it. And with time, the worry will lessen because of that.

It is crucial to have a conversation according to Goldstein (2016) with the child about any worries or anxieties they may have, pay close attention to what they have to say and observe their emotions.

Avoid assuming anything is the advice of Mental Health Foundation (2023) or brushing off their concerns. Reassure them that acknowledging and discussing issues is a good thing and demonstrate your understanding of their feelings.

NSPCC (2021) says that avoiding anything that makes a child anxious is not a good idea.

Children will feel better in the short term if you assist them avoid the things they dread, but in the long run, this will just make them feel more anxious therefore Setting reasonable, yet positive expectations are required.

It is not possible to assure a child that their anxieties are unjustified or that a situation will not happen, However, you can convey your trust in their ability to handle the situation and that everything will work out fine. Additionally, you can reassure them that their worry will gradually subside as they confront their anxieties. This reassures them that you won't ask them to accomplish something they can't manage and that your expectations are reasonable.

Respect their feelings is what Goldstein (2016) suggests, but not to offer them further control.

It's important to understand that confirming something isn't always equivalent to agreeing with the child. You want to listen to them, be empathetic, help them identify the source of their worry, and instil confidence in them, so they can face their worries head-on. Saying to them "It's okay that you're afraid; I know you are." , "I'm here, and I'm going to help you get through this."

Avoid asking leading questions is suggested by anxiety UK (nd) urge the child to share their emotions, but refrain from prodding them with questions such as "Are you worried about sports day? Simply use open-ended inquiries, such as "How are you feeling about sports day?' to stop the worry cycle from continuing.

As you support the child to achieve their goals or meet their needs, acknowledge their emotions and the effort it takes for them to cope with fear is beneficial according to Healthy Children (2023).

Try to cut down on the amount of time spent waiting is suggested by NSPCC (2021)

The most difficult time to experience fear is just before it happens. As a result, try your hardest to cut down on the amount of waiting time when possible.

For instance, if a child is afraid of dentists, then you won't speak about it with the child hours before they leave for the appointment, try to minimise that time until it is necessary to bring it up.

According to childcare information Wales (2024) an effort to set a good example of managing anxiety is the role of the practitioner by demonstrating to children how you manage your own worry, this can benefit children in a variety of ways. Children are observant, so if you constantly say that you're too stressed or anxious they'll pick up on it. Instead, you should let them observe how you deal with a situation that you may usually find stressful and explain to them how you feel and that it is okay to feel like this on times. The loss of a pet is a good example of showing you feel sad or losing your phone or purse of a stressful situation. If the child is anxious about school, you can collaborate with the school ALNCO and make a referral to the children adolescent mental health team known as CAMHS (2020) for support. Counselling may help children understand what is making them anxious according to CAMHS (2020).

Practitioners during day-to-day activities can use Zones of regulations and check in activities on feelings with the child (Kuypers, 2021)

Mindfulness exercises are proven to help with anxiety according to Gravel *et al.*, (2023)

There are several books that can be used to help children understand their feelings and realise it's normal to feel sad or anxious in certain situations-books such as a bag full of worries or how to fill a bucket are child friendly for the younger children suggested by Healthy Children.org (2023).

if you know a change, is coming up, prepare the child by talking to them about what is going to happen and why, the use of NOW and Next visual prompts also could be helpful according to Young Minds (2021).

practise simple relaxation techniques with the child and distraction can be helpful for young children according to Gravel *et al.*, (2023.)

A worry monster or worry jar are useful for children also, Get the child to write down or draw about their worries and "post" them into the box. Then you can sort through the box together at the end of the day and allows time for the child to talk and the practitioner listen (Young Minds, 2021).

Also, social stories and visual timetables are known to help support children with anxiety as they can see what's happening next support children with anxiety suggested by NSPCC (2021).

Cognitive behavioural therapy known as CBT the talking therapy helping children manage their anxiety by changing the way they think according to NHS (2020).

If the child is anxious about school, you can collaborate with the school ALNCO and make a referral to the children adolescent mental health team known as CAMHS (2020) for support. Counselling may help children understand what is making them anxious according to CAMHS (2020).

Sometimes Anxiety medications are required if other therapy does not work suggested by NHS (2020)

From time to time, it is not just the child that needs Supporting and advising it is the parents

In some cases, a practitioner may find a parent reaches out for support therefor Offering advice and support to parents is a good form of collaborative working according to Payler, and Georgeson (2013) and Goldstein (2016).

Practitioners can suggest-

Setting aside one-on-one time every day without TV or other social media for quality time with their child

Advising them to praise their child and make them feel good about themselves

They need to make time to find out what's worrying their child, and take the time to listen to them

Parents have a big influence on their children and can help their child learn to manage anxiety

When the child is calm, they should start a conversation about things they can do to manage worries when they happen. And use the following suggestions to help them suggested by Healthy children (2023), NSPCC (2021) and (Young Minds, 2021).

Practice deep breathing exercises together

Use positive self-talk (for example, "I can try this" instead of "I can't do this").

Think of a safe place, and let them use it, such as their bedroom or favourite room or a place outdoors.

Gradually facing fears. Consider gradually exposing your child to feared objects or activities.

Praise and reward brave behaviour: the goal is to cope, not avoid.

Healthy lifestyle habits can help reduce stress and support a positive mood.

As a family, get active! Eat healthy meals, get plenty of sleep and build a family plan together with routines to help them feel secure and safe Healthy children (2023).

Thank you for listening.

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