

## **Script**

### **Introduction**

Today I'm going to talk about children's mental health and why it matters...

Mental health is an essential part of children's overall development and understanding...

In this presentation, I'm going to cover four key areas

- What we mean by children's mental health
- Why is it significant and how it can affect health in young children
- Who tells us? We will look at a range of theorists, frameworks, charities and research
- What we can do about it supported by an example

### **Introducing the theme**

NSPCC 2026 – mental health is how someone thinks and feels, manages emotions and relationships..... includes the ability to learn, play and form friendships..... NSPCC also highlights... mental health isn't the presence or absence of condition, it's Is the child overall....

NHS 2026 – This is supported by NHS...describes mental well-being as being able to cope, feel connected, sense of purpose, confidence... good mental health helps builds resilience, manage stress and enjoy relationships...

These definitions help us understand that mental health is something all children have, and it can change depending on their experiences, relationships and environment.

### **Why is it significant?**

Children's mental health is significant because it affects their development... their physical health, their learning, relationships and well-being.

When a child feels emotionally secure, they are more able to explore, play, learn and cope with everyday challenges.

When a child is struggling with their mental health, it can influence how their body reacts, how they behave and how they experience the world around them.

The Mental Health Foundation 2021 - children's emotional well-being is just as important as their physical health... good mental health helps children develop resilience so they can cope with whatever life brings, supports them to grow into healthy, well-rounded adults.... highlight that things like being physically healthy, having time to play and being part of a family that gets along well....

The GOV.UK framework - early experiences can shape how a child's brain develops.... stress or instability can affect how children learn to regulate their emotions and behaviour... supporting mental health early can help protect children's long-term development

NHS- poor mental well-being can affect children physically.... changes in sleep, appetite or energy, or experience headaches and stomach aches when they feel overwhelmed or anxious.... physical symptoms can make it harder for them to concentrate, join in activities or manage daily routines....mental health difficulties can show up in the body as well as in emotions (NHS, 2024).

Together, these sources show that children's mental health is significant because it influences their physical health, their brain development, their behaviour and their long-term ability to cope with life's challenges.

### **Who tells us?**

When we think about understanding of children's mental health, there isn't just one source. There are many theorists, frameworks, charities and research that all help us understand what children need and how we can support them.

Attachment theory (Bowlby - earliest influences.... suggested that children need secure, consistent relationships with caregivers to feel safe and develop emotionally.... He believed early attachment shapes how children manage stress and form relationships later in life. This helps us understand why emotional security is so important in early childhood

Erikson's (1950) - stages of development... young children are learning to build trust, independence and confidence.... If they don't feel supported during these stages, it can affect their emotional well-being and how they see themselves. .. give us the foundations for understanding why early relationships and experiences matter

Alongside theorists... national frameworks guide practice....

Healthy Child Wales Programme ...universal support for children and families, emphasising early identification of emotional or developmental concerns....

Mental Health and Well-being Strategy 2025–2035.... children have the right to good mental health and that early intervention is essential

Children's Commissioner for Wales.... children should have access to support when they need it and that their emotional well-being must be protected as part of their rights

Charities - play a major role in telling us what children need....

Mind Cymru.... gaps in support... importance of accessible mental health services for young people in Wales

Children in Wales - raise awareness of the pressures children face today and how these can affect their well-being

Mind Cymru – statistics show young people experience mental health difficulties but do not always receive help early enough

These theorists, frameworks, charities and research help us to understand children's mental health from different perspectives. They help us to understand children's needs, what affects their well-being, and why early support is essential.

## Application

Understanding children's mental health is important, but what really matters is how we apply this knowledge in practice. In Wales...

Curriculum for Wales - gives clear starting point.... four purposes...children to become healthy, confident individuals.... being able to manage their emotions, build relationships and make informed choices about their well-being...

This tells us that supporting mental health is not optional.... it is a core part of learning and development

Schools and early years settings - use structured approaches to support emotional well-being.

The Thrive Approach- focuses on building secure relationships and understanding children's emotional needs.... encourages practitioners to notice changes in behaviour, respond with empathy and create predictable routines that help children feel safe.... provides strategies for co-regulation, helping children learn how to manage strong feelings with adult support

Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme (HSPSS) – shares aims to support physical and emotional well-being... highlights the importance of good relationships, the right to play, and creating settings where children feel valued and included.... supports the idea that mental health is shaped by the environment

## In my setting

- 'circle time'
- conversation picture cards
- help children share their thoughts and feelings
- cards include images of family, friends, weekend plans, after-school activities, achievements, emotions and hopes
- child's choice

During one session, a child pointed to the "friend" card and said they couldn't choose it because they didn't have any friends. This moment gave us important insight into how the child was feeling socially. It encouraged us to observe them more closely during play, paying attention to their social interactions, confidence and preferred ways of engaging with others.

Through these observations, we noticed...

- child often played alone and seemed unsure about joining in
- gently supported them by modelling simple social language, pairing them with children who shared similar interests, and creating small opportunities for collaborative play.
- we saw the child begin to join in more confidently, laugh with others and take part in shared activities.

This shows how communication and an emotionally supportive practice can help us identify children who need help. By creating opportunities, we can foster a sense of belonging and ensure every child feels safe, happy and supported.

Together, these frameworks, approaches and research show that supporting children's mental health is about creating safe, predictable environments, building strong relationships and giving children the tools to understand and express their feelings.

### **Conclusion**

Children's mental health is something that affects every part of their development... their learning, their relationships and their physical well-being.... explored all show that early experiences, supportive environments and strong relationships make a real difference to how children cope and grow.... Curriculum for Wales.... helping children become healthy, confident individuals is a core purpose of education... Thrive and HSPSS show us practical ways to create emotionally supportive settings.

Overall, what we do every day in practice matters. By noticing children's needs, building trusting relationships and creating safe, predictable environments, we can support their mental health and help them thrive now and in the future.

Thank you for listening to my presentation today. I hope it has helped highlight how important children's mental health is, and the difference we can make through our everyday practice.

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