

Introduction

This poster will explore the concept health, well-being and lifestyles and the reasons they hold significance in supporting Early Years Children. This poster will include theorists and models which connect to supporting children. The role of the practitioner when supporting children will be reviewed and various ideas on how to support children's health, well-being and lifestyles while encouraging holistic development. Finally, this poster will examine the interconnections between the concepts with positive relationships being the key theme. Mainstone-Cotton (2017, pp. 5-6) acknowledges the fundamental impact positive relationships have on an early year's child's wellbeing and states that for a child to thrive and have positive mental health they need to develop supportive relationships. Roberts (2010) agrees that positive relationships have a fundamental impact on supporting a child's development across all concepts especially during the early years.

Concept

Rose, Gilbert, and Richards, (2016) suggests health, well-being and lifestyles are complex terms to define as individuals interpret it differently based on their socio cultures. They suggest that an individuals' belief of health, well-being and lifestyle may be based on their idea of what healthy means, their income, or their perception of an excellent quality of life. Turning to research conducted by Chenung (2018) he discovered that health, well-being, and lifestyle are interconnected and can have a negative and positive impacts on each area. Chenung (2018) suggests that social determinants such as deprivation can negatively affect a child's health and well-being. Algeria et al., (2018) agree that social determinants can influence a child's health and well-being, they state that these determinants include where an individual is born, their lifestyle and poverty. However, Green et al., (2021, pp. 1-2) states that not only social detriments can influence the overall health and well-being of a child, but health detriments can affect physical and mental health. Healthy Child Wales Programme is an essential service run in Wales to support parents and early years children with expert advice on a range of challenges that can affect physical, emotional health and well-being. This programme promotes supporting parents through a variety of topics including environmental factors such as domestic violence or lifestyle changes such as poor nutritional habits (Healthier Together, no date).

Health

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to the best possible standards of health and governments are responsible to provide high quality health care (UNICEF, no date). Health is a contrasted term to define. Smith and Sarafino (2022, pp. 29) suggest that health is a term used by individuals to refer to how they are feeling overall. They suggest that health and diseases are not separate concepts but are interconnected. Musgrave (2017) agrees with the complexity of defining health and states that the term health has no commonly agreed upon definition.

According to Allen et al., (2025) a child feeling a sense of belonging from the attachments they form with their caregivers affect their health. Theorist Bowlby suggested through his attachment theory that the connections that children form especially during pre-natal and their early years influence psychological and biological development (Rose, Gilbert, and Richards, 2016). Bowlby found that by a child experiencing secure attachment their health with flourish (Brown, Learmonth, Mackereth, 2015, pp.80)

Sarafine and Smith (2022) suggests if a child faces depravation this can result in them be exposed to adverse childhood experiences and suffering from stress and anxiety which can affect their mental health. A child experiencing stress can lead to their body producing high cortisol levels which will affect their health. Not only will they experience poor mental health, but they will be at greater risk of developing physical health conditions such as high blood pressure. A child experiencing stress impacts beyond health and can affect their lifestyle choices leading to an unhealthy lifestyle such as obesity which then will connect back to their quality of health (Sarafino and Smith, 2022). Rose, Gilbert, and Richards (2016) agree with the negative impact poverty can have on a child's health. They state that children who live in poverty and depravation are at risk of dying approximately 20 years younger than those who live in affluent area. Brown, Learmonth, Mackereth, 2015, pp.135) state that if a child has unhealthy eating habits and is obese, they will have an increased chance of developing cardiovascular health conditions and mental health conditions compared to a child who consumes a healthy diet. Musgrave (2017) agrees with the impact poor nutrition can have on a child's health and states that children who receive poor nutrition are less likely to thrive as their bodies are not receiving the correct nutrients to be considered healthy.



For children to be able to flourish they need to have the opportunity to develop the fundamental foundations to support their growth into adulthood with the skills to form and support positive relationships while being considered as healthy (Fenton and Bennett, 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO) agree with the impact that caregivers have on the health of a child and the intergenerational benefits. The WHO have developed an evidence-based framework to support caregivers and practitioners in early intervention to build the foundations for children to have their needs met (World Health Organizations, no date).

Stoianov (2017, pp. 14-16) states that theorist Maslow developed the Hierarchy of needs theory based on healthy individuals and what factors supported them to develop healthily and support good well-being. Pichere and Cadiat (2015, pp. 5-6) state that Maslow's theory covers a multitude of areas and to be able to move through the hierarchy each level needs to be satisfied. If a child does not have their needs met, they are unable to move through the hierarchy and can result in a child developing poor health and low well-being (Stoianov, 2017, pp.14-16). Theorist Maslow highlights an individual's personal development, so they can achieve a high-quality healthy lifestyle (Pichere and Caiat, 2015 pp5-6).

Well-being

The term well-being embodies a multitude of concepts which according to Rose, Gilbert, and Richards (2015) well-being consists of how an individual feels and is a term to describe the resilience and how an individual manages their emotions while maintaining positive relationships. Mainstone-Cotton (2017, pp 4-5) agrees, and states wellbeing refers to an individual who can cope with challenging situations and feel secure. According to Allen et al., (2025) children's perspective of well-being is based on the feeling of happiness and being in a caring environment.

Musgrave (2017) states that there are several factors that can influence well-being. These factors are analysed from the perspectives of economic, psychological, and sociological health perspectives. In Wales, guidance has been developed to promote and improve social, economic, environment and cultural well-being. This framework is protected under the Well-being of future generations Wales 2015 (Welsh Government, 2024). Musgrave (2017) states that a child being exposed to environmental factors such as domestic violence can result in them having a high cortisol level which will lower their well-being and increase their risk of health conditions.

Assessment of a child's wellbeing is fundamental as it connects with the early life experiences a child has, their social well-being and economic outcomes (Fane, et al., 2020). In the United Kingdom practitioners assess a child's well-being through the 'Leuven Scale,' this scale encourages practitioners to view the child and their development holistically (Francoise, 2020). Practitioners assessing a child using the Leuven scale allows an enhanced intervention to be delivered to the child to enhance their overall wellbeing (Woods, 2016, pp. 28-36).

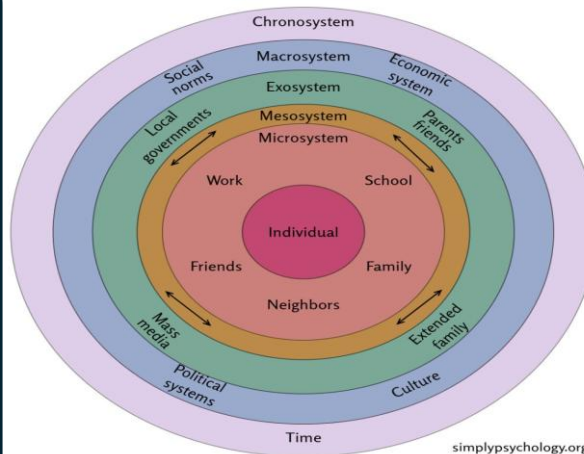


Figure 2- (Simply psychology, 2025)

Lifestyle

The way a person lives their life is considered a lifestyle, there are various factors that can impact a child's lifestyle, including learnt behaviours from caregivers, it is suggested that to achieve a healthy lifestyle an individual should maintain a healthy BMI (Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2022). When referring to the term lifestyle an individual's living conditions are included within the concept, fostering healthy habits within everyday life through nutrition and improving living conditions to promote hygiene can increase psycho physical well-being (Bagordo et al., 2017).

According to Bank, Berlinski and Schady (2015, pp. 55-61) the environments and lifestyle that children experience supports shaping their health and well-being, and that this can be a detrimental factor as parents influence their lifestyle and eating habits. Providing the child and families with early intervention will increase the chance of improving lifestyles. According to Brown, Learmonth, Mackereth, (2015, pp.132) early intervention will provide families and children the opportunity to be educated on the impact their lifestyle has on their health and well-being. Musgrave (2017) suggests that if a child is sleep deprived this can affect their well-being as it can lead to them becoming irritable. Wein (2021) agrees with the impact that sleep has on overall health and well-being and states having poor sleeping habits can increase the risk of being diagnosed with early diseases however, having good sleeping habits enhances cognitive functioning and supports positive well-being. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory provides a model for understanding the influence environments such as immediate families and the community has on supporting a child's health and well-being (Elliot and Davis 2020). Bradshaw (2016) agrees on the impact environment has on a child's health and well-being and suggests that by children having a nurturing environment it provides them with a feeling of safety that supports good development and interconnects back to Maslow's theory.

Application in Early Years practice

Practitioners working with children play a fundamental role in safeguarding the child and reducing the risk of them developing health conditions. It is their role to promote and support maintaining good health and wellbeing (Musgrave, 2017). In the Early Years Foundation Stage compulsory guidance have been developed to ensure that all professionals working with children are fostering a practice that supports children's health and wellbeing. Under the guidance it outlines the role of the practitioner to identify when a child's well-being and health is poor, so early intervention to nurture a child's wellbeing and promote health can be provided (Peill, 2022, pp. 113). According to Musgrave (2017) she states that practitioners play a fundamental role in supporting a child holistically as the role of the practitioner is to support a child in developing mentally and physically at a rate that is tailored to their individual needs while ensuring that core needs are met. According to Lindon and Brodie (2016, pp. 251) practitioners need to respect the child's well-being so they can flourish, this can be displayed by practitioners supporting children to develop resilience skills to overcome adversity. Providing the child outdoor play provision can support growth in their health and over-all wellbeing (Mainstone-Cotton, 2017). Ngan, Kven and Lai (2018, pp.625-643) agree that practitioners need to provide the child with opportunities to play as this foster's better health and holistic well-being. The role of the practitioner goes beyond supporting the child and includes supporting the families. Mainstone-Cotton (2017) state that practitioners need to foster strong meaningful relationships with the families to provide them with support and knowledge on how their lifestyles can affect the child's health and well-being.

Curriculum.

The Curriculum for Wales sets out a holistic structure to guide practitioners. This structure allows practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of health and well-being and notice the positive impact it has on a child's readiness to learn. Through the curriculum for Wales having a key focus on health and well-being allows children to foster the skills required to deal with challenges. Health and well-being in the curriculum for Wales is built up of fundamental components which include physical health, mental health, emotional and social well-being. Through these components it allows children to gain a deeper understanding of how health and well-being interconnect and gain the skills required to become healthy confident individuals (HWB, 2022). Similar, New Zealand's curriculum prioritizes health and well-being to provide children with an in-depth understanding on how they hold a sense of responsibility to promote their own health and well-being (Tahurangi -New Zealand, no date).

Holistic Development.

Figure 3- (Forest Explorers, 2015)



According to Brodie (2018, pp.12-15) holistic development is fundamental to supporting a child's health, well-being, and lifestyle. She states that holistic development in these areas interconnect. Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that providing a child with the experience to form secure attachments it will lead to better health and well-being holistically as it allows the child to become, confident and learn to trust (Rose, Gilbert and Richards, 2016). According to Brown, Learmonth, Mackereth, (2015, pp.14, 91) mental health and well-being is a holistic concept which emphasises social, emotional and autonomy aspects by providing a holistic approach it can result in them changing their lifestyles.

Conclusion

This poster has clearly demonstrated that health, well-being, and lifestyle are interconnected and have a profound impact on one another. As discussed, children and their families need to be provided with the opportunities to develop an understanding on the impact their lifestyle has on health and well-being. It is clear the role the practitioner has on supporting a child and their family. Through models, theories, research, and frameworks discussed it shows the benefits of a holistic approach and how fundamental it is to provide early intervention.

I have not used AI within this portfolio.

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