

Activities & Ideas for Promoting Emotional Health and Well Being in Early Years Settings

Many of the activities done in early years settings on a day-to-day basis contribute to enhancing emotion health and well-being (EHWB). Personal, Social and Emotional Development is one of the areas of Learning and Development. As such, there is a wealth of activity ideas within the Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Further, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD) Guidance has activity ideas and case studies for practitioners. In addition, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum offers a whole year programme for the Early Years.

It is also important to critically evaluate your provision to ensure that it actively promotes emotional health and well being. Characteristics for this include:

- Having a key worker for each child, who knows the child
- Low staff turnover and adequate staff to child ratios
- A safe and support environment
- Positive behaviour management.

ACTIVITIES & IDEAS

For easy planning, activities have been listed under the six areas of learning and development for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

😊 PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ~ Circle time, giving the children the opportunity to explore and express their feelings, taking turns and listening to others.
- ~ Giving praise and encouragement for achievement and for trying hard, to both individuals and groups.
- ~ Structured play - giving the children the opportunity to take turns, share, problem solve, explore and take risks.
- ~ Regular 'show and tell' where the children bring in a special 'thing' to show the class and get to tell a story about it or a recent event.
- ~ 'Warm fuzzies' and 'cold pricklies' - (giving and receiving compliments and put downs). How does it make you feel, how does it make the other person feel?
- ~ Needs and Wants. To explore what children need and want as they grow up.
- ~ Talk about feelings and emotions, both your own and those experienced by the children.
- ~ Celebrate different cultural and religious events throughout the year

☺ COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

- ~ How do you feel today? Being able to recognise and name feelings and emotions in themselves and other children. Expanding children's vocabulary of different emotions.
- ~ Talking about special people and special places.
- ~ Talking about worries and fears.
- ~ Children tell stories and do role-play about life events - for example, my new sister/brother, going to stay with Daddy etc.
- ~ Take time to listen to children and let them know that they are important to you.

☺ LITERACY

- ~ Draw a face and name the feeling being expressed.
- ~ Using books with a 'feelings' theme for literacy activities
- ~ Use puppets or persona dolls to talk about feelings and events.
- ~ Learning how to say hello or good morning in different languages.

☺ MATHEMATICS

- ~ How many people are in your family? Each child to count how many people are in their family and then draw this. Create a bar chart with how many families have two people, three people etc.
- ~ How old are you? How old is your brother(s) and/or sister(s)? Again, you could create a bar chart to show the ages of the children and their siblings.
- ~ Drawing faces and naming the shapes the children use.
- ~ Making faces out of geometric shapes.
- ~ 'Star Charts' - collecting stars, or other shapes for positive behaviours with a reward for achieving at the end. For example, when you get three stars, you can play with your favourite game.

☺ UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

- ~ Have speakers (either parents or other people in the community) talk to the children about 'where they are from' and some of their cultural activities/beliefs.
- ~ Have a world map showing where all the children are from.
- ~ Make collages or displays about different countries/regions in the world
- ~ Cooking and tasting foods from different countries
- ~ Explore happy places and unhappy places.
- ~ Make a room in their house
- ~ Have a 'baby photo' display, where children bring in a photo of them as a baby. Talk about how they have grown, what they can do now and past events in the children's lives. Make a book about past and present life events.

☺ PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- ~ Cut and stick faces from magazines
- ~ Learn simple dances from different countries
- ~ 'Treasure Island' - set an adventure course to get to 'Treasure Island' (or any imaginary place), where the children have to work together to plan how to get there.
- ~ Making and playing musical instruments.
- ~ Movement and music games, using feelings (happy, mad, sad etc). For example, when the music stops, hop to the happy face, jump to the sad face, or crawl to the mad face.
- ~ Listen to 'Mood' music (eg happy, sad, angry music) and move in this way
- ~ Giving lots of praise and encouragement when child both attempt and master new skills.

☺ EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

- ~ Role Play, taking on different roles for different people in the family.
- ~ Acting out different scenarios with the class and trying out different ways of 'resolving' issues. For example, Sally has come and taken the toy you were playing, what could you do?
- ~ Explore music from different countries.
- ~ 'Feeling' songs, for example; If you're happy and you know it... Make up new verses and actions for the song
- ~ Face painting
- ~ Making faces using a range of different materials, for example clay, play dough, papier-mâché or cardboard/paper plates.
- ~ Whole Body Collages - draw around children and make life size collages