

Children's well-being: detecting emotions

Well-being is at the core of the early years and vital for all areas of learning. Increasing levels of well-being in the first five years of the child's life is key to future mental health.



Tuning into a child's emotions can help to increase their levels of well-being and as a practitioner, you need to be able to detect the emotions of the children in your care.

But how can you do this?

Look for the signals

What does it look like when well-being is at a low level? It can be different for everyone, but there are a few things to observe with children.

Often, low well-being is manifested in a physical way in our bodies: illness, aches and pains, or stiffness, for example. Signals can be aggressive behaviour, being upset, withdrawn, or in some cases, overly happy and giggly.

Be observant and vigilant

Being in tune with children and understanding how they might be feeling today can be referred to as being an "emotions detective".

An emotions detective is observant and vigilant, recognising when big emotions are too vast for the child's body to handle. The signs might not be what we expect, such as laughing hysterically, hitting someone else, or not following instructions. Outbursts like these could come from when a child's cortisol and adrenaline levels are high.

In order to calm these emotions, we must first understand them.

Recovery

Being aware of these emotions and taking a two-second pause before reacting, can really help to support recovery from these emotions.

Remaining calm and asking questions to ourselves, such as, 'how can I help?' or 'what do I want the child to learn here?' can prevent the situation from escalating and make the child feel safe again.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Play and creativity with apps: How to get the most out of using apps with your pre-schooler

http://techandplay.org/reports/TAP_Parents_Report.pdf