About mental health

Some people may be surprised to hear the term ‘mental health’ being applied to young children. Mental health - like physical health - is something we all have. Like physical health, it can range from good to poor, and can also change over time.

Good mental health helps us form positive relationships with others, handle ups and downs, and generally enjoy life. With good mental health, children can feel confident and be more open to trying and learning new things.

Mental health doesn’t mean being happy all the time. We all know what it’s like to be sad, angry, afraid, or upset, and everyone will experience a range of these feelings. Sometimes these can lead to difficulties for children to manage. Because children grow and change so quickly, the way they experience mental health, and the support they need from adults, can be quite different depending on their age.

Mental health basics

As children grow, their social skills get better and their emotions, learning and thinking continues to develop. All of these changes influence a child’s mental health.

Family circumstances, relationships, and access to support are also factors that impact mental health. When mental health professionals talk about these things, they often refer to them as ‘risk and protective factors’.

Learn more about mental health basics below. (Click on the links below)

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers

School children

- Children and hardship
- Children and grief
- Children and bullying
- Mental health risk and protective factors
- Building protective factors: Suggestions for families
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Resilience

Research shows that young people with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to be resilient. New SEL activities for students across all years of schooling are available through the online portal. These materials support schools in helping students to build the key skills they need to lead balanced, happy lives. They help build skills in emotional intelligence, problem solving, personal strengths, positive coping, stress management and help-seeking, which together support children and young people to be resilient both within their learning and in their lives outside of school.

Building Resilience at home

You can play an important role in supporting your child’s social and emotional learning. To help families build resilience in at home, a range of information sheets are available. See the links below to download this information.

- Building Resilience and Social and Emotional Skills (docx - 4.23mb)
- Challenges to Resilience - the concerns of children and young people (docx - 4.23mb)
- Emotional Literacy (docx - 4.24mb)
- Problem-solving (docx - 4.29mb)
- Stress Management and Positive Coping (docx - 4.28mb)
- Help-seeking (docx - 4.25mb)

Resources for the first 8 years

Grow & Thrive provides information on children’s learning, health and development for early childhood educators, primary teachers and families.

The website is managed by the Centre for Community Child Health.

Read more.
Ebooks help parents

A new resource from beyondblue and researchers from Monash University and The University of Melbourne will help parents reduce the risk of their children developing depression or anxiety.

The free eBooklets offer parents advice on how to distinguish ‘normal’ child behaviour from behaviour that could indicate more serious mental health conditions. There are also practical strategies for parents to support their kids.

Read more.

Helping children with disabilities transition to school

Early Childhood Intervention Australia has just launched a new Transition to School web resource. It aims to support a smoother transition to school for children with a disability.

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