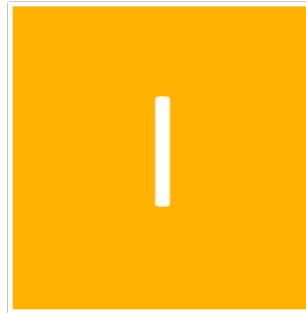




**hunter institute**  
of mental health



Using the evidence base to effectively support the social and emotional wellbeing of infants and young children

**Elizabeth Kemp, Senior Project Officer, Hunter Institute of Mental Health, Response Ability initiative.**



Put your hand up if in your current role you are promoting **social and emotional wellbeing (SEW)**

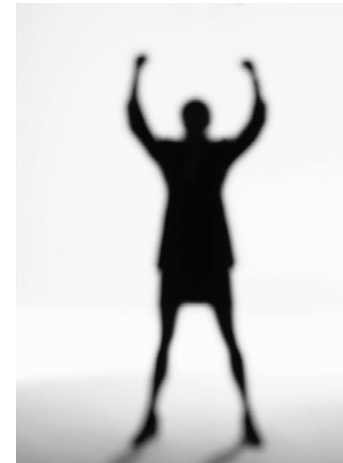
Keep your hand up if you can think of **5 ways** you are doing this





Put your hand up if in your current role you are promoting **mental health (MH)**

Keep your hand up if you can think of **5 ways** you are doing this





**Results of poll** are you promoting:

- Social and emotional wellbeing (SEW)?
- Mental health (MH)?

Was there a difference in your response to these two questions? ...**Why?**



## Mental health literacy 101:

Mental health  $\neq$  mental illness / disorder (e.g. depression)

Mental health  $\neq$  mental health problem (internalising & externalising signs)

Mental illness and mental health problems  $=$  mental ill-health

Mental health  $=$  social and emotional wellbeing

Mental health  $=$  positive, capacity (like physical health)

C

H

I

L

D

C

Creating safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development

H

Helping children to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour

I

Identifying babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support

L

Linking families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing

D

Developing broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing.



C



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## Creating safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development

By providing opportunities to:

- Build secure attachments
- Establish and maintain respectful, trusting relationships
- Develop a sense of belonging
- Acknowledge and reflect diversity

For example maintaining regular routines; ensuring the environment is welcoming, safe and friendly; celebrating different cultural events.



## Helping children to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour

By providing experiences and activities that offer opportunities to:

- Understand emotions of self and others
- Develop empathy and respond to others' feelings appropriately
- Learn effective social interaction with peers and pro-social skills.

For example try mindfulness and meditation:

- Mindfulness of eating
- A breathing meditation (focus on your breath)
- Safe spaces for quiet time.





## Identifying babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support

Early childhood educators are skilled in observing children and can pick up early signs of difficulties, such as:

- Not achieving developmental milestones
- Challenging behaviour occurring in multiple settings and persisting over time.

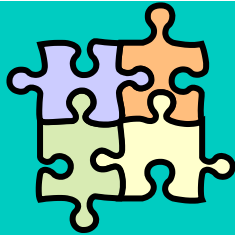
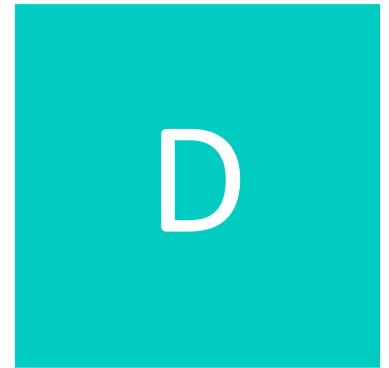
Key things to consider: severity, persistence over time, impact on functioning (reduced functioning or delay in achieving developmental milestones) and if this represents a significant change in behaviour for that child. Look at the **GRIP** framework.



## Linking families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing

Children's services and early childhood educators can do this by having:

- Knowledge of local support services (have a folder, GP as first step)
- Effective partnerships with parents, children and other agencies in the community
- Referring children and families to other agencies for further assessment, treatment and support when required.



## Developing broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing

Children's services and early childhood educators can also contribute to broader wellbeing strategies by developing:

- Policies and procedures for wellbeing
- A service goal or philosophy
- Documents, procedures and daily practices
- Staff orientation and training to key policies
- Relationships and networks with community organisations and reflecting the life and culture of the local community.

For example invite a member of the local Aboriginal community to the centre to meet and do some activities with the children and to share their culture.



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