Module 2
Social and emotional learning in early childhood

Children’s social and emotional development occurs within the context of their relationships with others. Children can be supported by providing repeated, consistent opportunities for the development, practise and integration of new learning. Social and emotional learning in early childhood lays the foundations for future learning, mental health and wellbeing.

Connections to the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standard

Social and emotional learning feature throughout the EYLF, particularly in the concepts of belonging, being and becoming and in the five learning outcomes.

An educator’s ability to support children’s social and emotional learning is enhanced when they recognise social and emotional learning and development across the age range (NQS Element 1.1.2) and then use this information to plan and implement a curriculum that supports each child’s learning and builds on their strengths and interests. The NQS also requires educators to engage in ongoing assessment of children’s learning, including social and emotional learning (NQS Element 1.2.1).

Activity

Which social and emotional skills develop in early childhood?

Social skills

Emotional skills

“We’re not born knowing how to manage our feelings; we learn how to manage our feelings. This is a job of infancy and early childhood, to learn how to manage one’s own feelings. These skills develop in relationships with primary caregivers, like Mum and Dad, and with others, and this is where early childhood educators can come in to play very important role.”

Dr Nicole Milburn, KidsMatter Component 2 Professional Learning Video 2.1

“Educators play a very big role in promoting children’s social and emotional development and learning. The first thing that comes to mind is through the relationships that they develop with children, that start from the very first encounter they have with families and children.”

Anne Stonehouse, KidsMatter Component 2 Professional Learning Video 4.2
Children develop socially and emotionally at their own pace, depending on a range of factors. Children learn in both areas at the same time – each complements the other and supports children’s mental health and wellbeing. Record any observations or questions you may have in the space below.

“Prosocial behaviours really mean socially effective and socially attuned interactions. So we’re trying to help children develop a sense of how to live with others; and to help them to understand how relationships operate and what their values are in terms of those relationships.”

Professor Louise Newman, KidsMatter Component 2 Professional Learning Video 2.1

A number of factors can impact on children’s mental health and wellbeing. Risk factors increase the likelihood that a child will experience mental health difficulties, while protective factors decrease this likelihood. The interaction between risk and protective factors is complicated, so even though a child might experience many risk factors in their life, it doesn’t necessarily mean they will experience mental health difficulties. The risk and protective factors diagram on page 22 will help you complete this activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors related to social and emotional learning</th>
<th>Can an ECEC service have an influence on this risk factor? (Yes, no, maybe)</th>
<th>Why do you think this is the case?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Activity

Linking social and emotional learning and development with mental health
Risk and protective factors

Risk factors
- Difficult temperament
- Low self-esteem
- Impaired cognitive development
- Poor physical health
- Poor language skills
- Family disharmony or break up
- Any form of child abuse or neglect
- Harsh or inconsistent parenting
- Care with mental illness or substance abuse
- Bullying
- Poor relationships at school
- Limited experiences of social interaction with peers
- Stressful life events
- Death of a family member
- Experience of trauma
- Discrimination
- Isolation
- Socioeconomic isolation
- Lack of access to support services

Protective factors
- Easy temperament
- Good social and emotional skills
- Well developed cognitive skills
- Good physical health
- Good language skills
- Stable home environment
- Warm and supportive parenting
- Secure attachments with significant carers
- High quality education and care services
- Service climate enhances belonging and connectedness
- Warm and supportive relationships with carers
- Warm and supportive relationships with carers
- Secure attachments with significant carers
- Inclusion
- Access to support services
- Economic security

Activity
Key evidence of social and emotional learning and development in early childhood

What would you observe that shows children are developing social skills, emotional skills and a sense of self? (Think about children of different ages.)
Think about the early childhood social and emotional learning and development topics you discussed today. Were there any surprises or new ideas? Is there anything you would like to consider further?

What do we do in our ECEC service to find out about each child’s social and emotional learning and development? Do you have a clearer picture of where some children are at than others? Why do you think that is?

What role does cultural and language background play in shaping children’s social and emotional learning and development?

“You educators can make a major contribution to children’s developing identity or sense of self.”

Anne Stonehouse, KidsMatter
Component 2
Professional Learning

This activity has been designed for you to take away and do before you move onto the next module. It will help integrate what you have learned during this session.

Think of a child you consider to be mentally healthy. What evidence of this do you see in their social and emotional learning and development?

You might also be interested in...


Module 3 is scheduled for:

Date:  
Time:  
Venue: