Module 2
Social and emotional learning in early childhood

What will participants learn from this module?

When you have completed this module, participants will:

▪ be informed or reminded of key social and emotional learning in the first five years of life and how learning in one area is related to learning in others
▪ be informed or reminded of the link between social and emotional wellbeing and mental health in early childhood
▪ be able to identify signs of children’s social and emotional learning and development, and use them to support children’s 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: identity, connections with and contributions to the social and physical worlds, wellbeing, being a confident learner, and communicating. All of these involve social and emotional learning. Having high expectations of children (Principle 3) comes from knowing the range of behaviours, dispositions and understandings that children demonstrate and appreciating their significance, which is the focus of Module 2.

An educator’s ability to support children’s social and emotional learning is enhanced when they recognise the broad range of indicators of social and emotional learning and development across the age range (NQS Element 1.1.2) and 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 (Element 1.2.1).

Preparation for this session

Read the handout Module 2: Social and emotional learning and development: KidsMatter and Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (available on the KidsMatter website).

You will need:

▪ Component 2: Professional Learning Participant Workbook
▪ Copies of the photographs for the activity: What social and emotional skills develop in early childhood? (available on the KidsMatter website)
▪ Video 2.1: Social and emotional learning and mental health
▪ Participant Feedback Forms (available on the KidsMatter website)
Suggestions for how to run this module

1 Talk about ‘Making a difference’ in Module 1

‘Making a difference’ in Module 1 helped participants work towards putting in place the personal goals they set for themselves.

Discuss the following as a group:

- What were your goals?
- How has your practice changed?
- What’s next?

2 Introduce the module to the group

This module focuses on the key social and emotional learning and development that happens in the first five years of a child’s life.

Content includes:

- a video about the social and emotional skills that develop in early childhood and how these link to mental health and wellbeing
- an activity to further explore the link between social and emotional development and mental health and wellbeing
- an activity that involves identifying signs of children’s social and emotional learning and connecting this to future learning to support children’s mental health and wellbeing.
3 Activity: What social and emotional skills develop in early childhood?

This aim of this activity is to tap into participants’ knowledge about social and emotional development in early childhood and encourage them to reflect on what they already know.

Instructions

1. Ask everyone to divide into small groups or pairs (depending on the size of the team).
2. Give each group one of the photos showing an everyday scene in an ECEC service.
3. Ask each group to look at their photo and make a list of the social and emotional skills that the scenario supports.
4. Once each group has compiled a list, come back together and discuss each group’s findings as a team.

Tips for this activity

- There is a worksheet for this activity in the Participant Workbook on page 19.
- If groups find it difficult to think of social and emotional skills their scene supports, they may find it useful to look at page 23-33 of KidsMatter Early Childhood: A framework for improving mental health and wellbeing.
- Groups should write down all of their ideas. Each scene could support the development of numerous social and emotional skills and there is no right or wrong answer.
4  Video 2.1: Social and emotional learning and mental health

Time: 11 mins 41 secs

This video covers:

▪ social and emotional learning and development in early childhood and how learning in one of these areas is related to learning in the other.
▪ the link between children’s social and emotional learning and development and their mental health and wellbeing
▪ the individuality of children’s social and emotional developmental pathways; social and emotional learning and development happens on a trajectory that unfolds at a different pace for each child
▪ the role of the child’s agency in their social and emotional learning and development.

Tips for watching this video

▪ There is space for participants to make any notes they like about this video in their Participant Workbook on page 20.
▪ This video provides context for the next activity in this module: Linking social and emotional learning and development with mental health. It would be useful for the group to start thinking about children’s social and emotional skills in terms of what educators and ECEC services can influence.

5  Activity: Linking social and emotional learning and development with mental health

The aim of this activity is to inform or remind participants of the link between social and emotional learning and development and mental health in early childhood from the perspective of risk and protective factors.

Component 1 Professional Learning explored the range of factors that can impact on children’s mental health and wellbeing:

▪ Risk factors increase the likelihood a child will experience mental health difficulties; protective factors decrease this likelihood.
▪ The interaction between risk and protective factors is complicated. It’s good to remember that even though a child might have a number of risk factors in their life, it does necessarily mean they will experience mental health difficulties.
▪ A ‘safety-net’ of protective factors in children’s lives reduces the impact of the risk factors that they may experience.
5 Activity: Linking social and emotional learning and development with mental health (continued)

- Effective social and emotional skills and positive relationships are strong protective factors for children and they are something that educators and ECEC services can influence.
- This understanding helps educators recognise the significant contribution they make to support children’s social and emotional learning and development and, ultimately, their mental health.

Instructions

1 Have the team divide into small groups or pairs (depending on the size of the group) and review the risk and protective factors diagram in the Participant Workbook on page 22.

2 Ask each group to identify the risk and protective factors related to social and emotional learning and development in early childhood and write them in the table on page 21.

3 Once groups have identified the risk and protective factors directly related to social and emotional learning and development, ask them to decide if they, as educators, and/or the ECEC service can have an influence on each factor. Possible answers are: yes, no and maybe. Also ask groups to think about the reasoning behind each answer.

4 Come back together and discuss each group’s thoughts as a large group.

Tips for this activity

- Risk and protective factors are not always black and white. It’s not always clear if educators or an ECEC service could influence a risk or protective factor, so don’t worry if a lot factors are identified as ‘maybe’.
- It’s certainly not possible for educators and/or ECEC services to influence all of the risk and protective factors in a child’s life – take socio-economic status, for example – so don’t worry if groups answer no to some factors.
6 Activity: Key evidence of children’s social and emotional learning and development in early childhood

The aim of this activity is to have participants identify and reflect on the signs of social and emotional learning that children show in early childhood.

Instructions

1. Divide participants into small groups or pairs. Ask each group to choose an age range to focus on: babies, toddlers or preschoolers. Try to make sure that at least one group covers each age range.

2. Ask groups to make a list of the signs that show children are developing social and emotional skills in early childhood. Some questions that you could ask to help groups get started with this task are:
   - What kind of behaviour shows a developing sense of self?
   - What kind of behaviour suggests emerging social skills?
   - What kind of behaviour shows developing emotional skills?

3. Come back together and share the lists. As a large group, you might like to reflect on and discuss:
   - Is there anything missing from the list?
   - What stands out as particularly important on the list?
   - Which items on the list contribute to lifelong learning?
   - How do these factors support children’s mental health and wellbeing in the early years?

Tips for this activity

- Often what children are learning or have learned is different to what children are doing. It might be helpful to remind participants to think broadly about children’s social and emotional learning when they are making their lists.
- There is a worksheet for this activity in the Participant Workbook on page 23.
7 Introduce and discuss reflections

Reflecting on new content is a good way to wrap up each module and summarise what has been covered. The following questions can support reflection, although you may wish to add your own to suit your team. Reflective questions can be considered during the module, at the end of the module or at a separate time. Reflective questions can be completed individually, in pairs or as a group.

More information on using reflective questions can be found at the beginning of this manual on page 5.

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

Tip for this reflection

- Reflective questions are in the Participant Workbook on page 24.

8 Making a difference

This section provides an opportunity for participants to connect learning from this module with their daily practice outside of the Professional Learning. Participants are asked to engage with the content between modules through reflection, observation or action. There will be an opportunity to discuss experiences at the start of the following module. More information can be found at the beginning of this manual on page 6.

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?

Invite participants to share their thoughts at the next Professional Learning session if they feel comfortable.

Tip

- There is space for participants to record reflections in the Participant Workbook on page 25.
9  Note the readings in You might also be interested in…


10 Distribute Participant Feedback Forms for completion

These can be downloaded from the KidsMatter website. Completed forms should be forwarded to your Facilitator.

11 Planning your next Professional Learning module

Module 3: Relationships and children’s mental health is scheduled for:

Date:
Time:
Venue:
Plan for Module 2: Social and emotional learning in early childhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Time allocated</th>
<th>Covered</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<td>□ No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to the module</td>
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<td>Activity: What social and emotional skills develop in early childhood?</td>
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<td>□ Yes</td>
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<td>Video 2.1: Social and emotional learning and mental health</td>
<td>11 mins 41 secs</td>
<td>□ Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity: Linking social and emotional learning and development with mental health</td>
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Content from previous session to come back to

Total time