

Health and Wellbeing: Feelings, Friendships and Keeping Safe

Health and wellbeing is about learning how to lead healthy and active lives, becoming confident, happy and forming friendships and relationships with others that are based on respect. It is also about managing feelings and having the skills to meet challenges, make good choices and manage change.

Feelings, Friendships and Keeping Safe



The importance of our emotional and mental health and wellbeing has never been more widely publicised than now. We've come to realise that feeling positive about ourselves, being confident and being able to cope with change and challenge in our lives is as important as ensuring that we look after our physical bodies.



You can give your child a great start in life by fostering these qualities and supporting their development. You can show them by your own example how to manage feelings, moods, temper and relationships positively and how to develop and sustain friendships that enrich their lives.

As parents we all worry about our child's safety and are often tempted to 'wrap them in cotton wool' to ensure this. However children need to learn responsibility, how to assess risk and what steps to take to minimise this in order to function independently and safely as they grow up. This means giving them gradual responsibility as they grow, from small things like letting them dress themselves to eventually walking to school on their own when older. We want to make them aware of danger without making them afraid. We also want them to learn how to weigh up the benefits and consequences of any decision they have to make so that it is hopefully the best decision. If it turns out to be the wrong decision they can still learn from this and be better informed when making future decisions. This is what we as adults do all the time. Experience is a great teacher!



Depending on your child's age and stage of development, please turn over to find some suggestions to try at home 

Some suggestions to help your child manage their feelings and form positive friendships

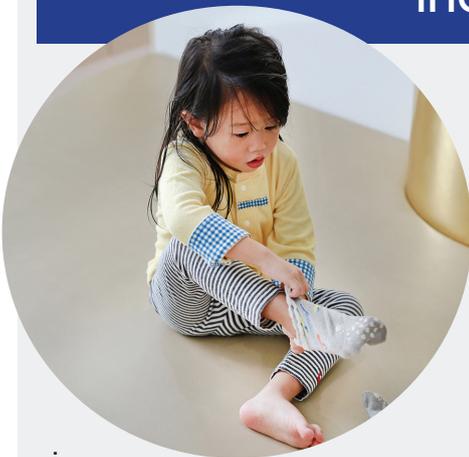
- Your baby will express feelings through crying, smiles and other body language such as waving their arms excitedly. You can give them the words for these emotions by saying things like 'You're a happy boy today.' or 'Are you hungry?'
- Use stories, soft toys or puppets to explore feelings you think your child might be struggling with. For example, make up a story about how teddy is sad because no one will play with him and think together about what teddy could do to feel better.
- Make time to chat together at bedtime or some other quiet time to give opportunity for your child to share worries, concerns or secrets. Talk together about what they might do to feel better.
- Look out for stories about friendship, bereavement,



- celebrations, partings and other emotional situations in everyday life. Read these with your child when you feel they might be helped by them.
- Talk about your own feelings. Tell them when they make you happy. You can also tell them when something they have done has made you sad, always remembering to tell them you still love them.

- Make opportunities for your child to play with other children and to form friendships. Perhaps you could invite a friend and their child to your home to chat and play, or ask them to join you in a visit to the park. Remember children play alongside each other when they are very young before moving on to playing together.
- Encourage respect and tolerance for others and for their feelings. Young children are naturally self-absorbed so talk about this with your child to make them more aware that others have feelings too.
- Let children see how you manage and enjoy friendships. Be a good role model remembering that you are the biggest influencer of your child's views and attitudes.

Some suggestions to help your child become independent and keep safe



- When planning an outing or activity that might involve risk or danger such as playing on swings or roundabouts, talk together about ways of having fun and still keeping safe. Encourage them to be responsible.
- Involve your child in choosing a safe time to cross the road using pedestrian crossings. We learn better and remember when we are involved in decisions rather than just being told what to do.
- Show them how to do things in a safe manner rather than just forbidding it such as holding scissors safely, not running with their hands full, bumping down the stairs on their bottoms when too little to hold the handrail etc.
- Talk about what to do if they are lost and who to ask for help. Talk about this in a positive way so as not to scare your child. You might say 'If you can't see me when we are in the supermarket go to the person on the checkout and tell them.'
- Encourage independence in dressing, feeding themselves, tidying their toys away and other daily tasks. It will take longer initially but we all need to practise in order to learn. Let them do a little of the task at first and then gradually increase their responsibility.



Hopefully these suggestions have sparked some ideas of your own. Have fun trying them with your child