GUIDE

childhood understood

Activities To Support Well-Being

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Introduction

Teaching children to recognise how they are feeling, and what they can do when they experience uncomfortable feelings is an important life skill. If young children learn these skills during their key early childhood years, it will help their frustration in the present moment, but also support their future well-being.

Emotional well-being is about being in a state of physical and mental balance, and being able to cope with our own, and other people's emotions. Nutrition, sleep, emotional intelligence, having our feelings validated, experiencing co-regulation and having a sense of belonging all influence children's feelings of emotional well-being.

Within this Guide are some ideas for activities that we can use to support them in day to day life:

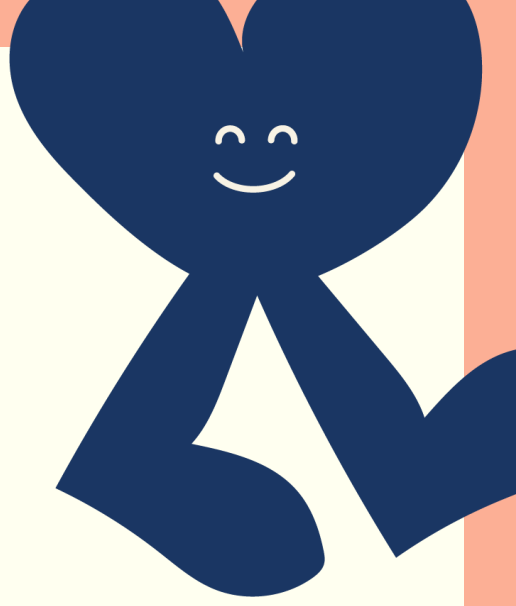
We all have different ways of feeling more regulated. Sometimes we need to be active, sometimes we need to relax. What works for one person may not work for another. It is helpful to offer children a variety of ways of feeling more relaxed so they can discover what works best for them.

Breathing & Relaxation

Breathing is a classic relaxation technique and it can be really helpful for many children. If a child needs to be physical however, breathing may not be the first thing you offer as a strategy. If they do find breathing helpful, you can show them how to do ‘belly breathing’, or use a breathing board (The Little Coach House Company make lovely wooden ones)

Relaxation & meditations can be found on platforms such as the Yoto Player, or in books such as ‘Creating Calm in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1’ by Dr. Melissa Munro Boyd. Don’t be tempted to use these as a fix when your child is over-excited! Initially introduce them in moments that are already calm, and then the idea is your child will start to use the skills they have learned when they need them.

The Senses



Sensory bottles - these can be made at home or purchased. My favourites to buy are made by Petit Boum, they include glitter bottles and ‘spy’ bottles to spot different objects in. They are nicely made, and suitable from 3 months to adulthood!
Great for looking at & shaking providing both visual and auditory feedback

Scents

Certain scents can help with feeling calm. Lavender, Roman Chamomile, Rose and Frankincense are all worth considering. Please seek advice from a qualified aromatherapist and make sure any oils you use are safe for your child.
There are also products you can buy such as room sprays, or pillow sprays etc - again just do your research to make sure it is recommended for children.

The Environment

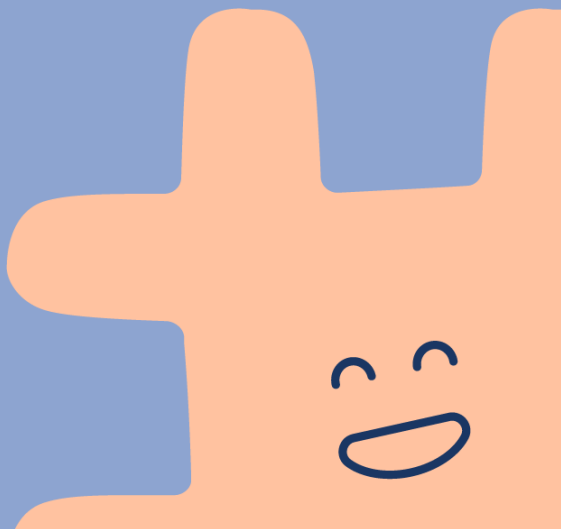
A Cosy Space or Den

This is something many children love to have access to. It can be set up with blankets, cushions, soft toys, sensory bottles, pop toys, books and soft or sensory lights. Add a Yoto player and children can pop on calming music or relaxation tracks.

Being Outside in Nature

Probably the ultimate calming activity - contact with green spaces, listening to the birds, smelling flowers and feelings grass under our feet.

This isn't possible for all children all of the time, but where we can add it into their daily experiences, it can have a significant impact.



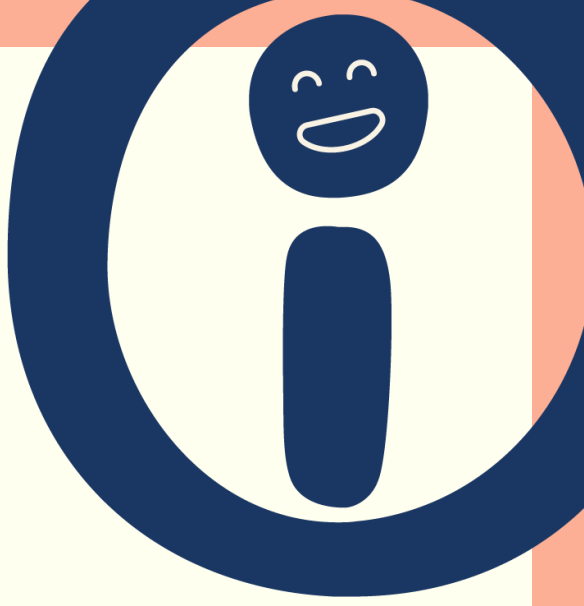
Being Active

Sometimes it isn't about breathing or listening to relaxation tracks. Sometimes we need to be active to feel regulated. Heavy lifting, outdoor work such as raking or pushing a wheelbarrow, singing, dancing, pushing against a wall, tugging on pulleys or ropes, playing ball or simply crashing into soft mats and cushions can all be helpful. Having something to squeeze may be useful - a soft toy, play doh or a stress ball (just make sure it is safe/age appropriate.) Pop toys can be great for stress relieving and /or sensory needs.

A note on biting...

Teethers - having a teether to bite on instead of a person is important! It is key they don't see the biting as 'naughty' because they will see the teether as something associated with feeling like they are in trouble. Try saying in a positive and supportive tone: "I see you need to bite, here you can bite this!".

Books To Help



These books can give your child ideas to use in different moments...

- **My First Yoga (DK)**
- **Wiggles, Stomps and Squeezes Calm My Jitters Down - By Lindsey Rowe Parker**
- **When Sadness Comes to Call - By Eva Eland**
- **Slow Down On Your Doorstep - By Rachel J Williams**
- **Happy: A Children's Book of Mindfulness - By Nicola Edwards**

As well as books there are lots of other resources out there such as cards and websites that offer handy tips & tricks...

- **Yoga Pretzels Cards**
- **Slow Down On Your Doorstep - Mindful Activity Cards**
- **1000hoursoutside.com (lots of free resources to get everyone outside!)**

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Thank You!

Don't forget to check out our other guides as well as the Cocoro Online Training Platform

About Sarah

Sarah is an early childhood and parenting consultant working with nurseries, schools, and parents to support children's emotional well-being. She advises on a variety of matters ranging from 'behaviour', 'big feelings', emotional literacy and intelligence, to boundaries, transitions such as starting nursery or school, sibling relationships, toileting, sleep and eating. Sarah holds an MA in Early Childhood Studies, a PgCert in Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Well-being, and is a qualified early years teacher, Montessori teacher and trainer of adults. She is also a holistic sleep coach advising parents on children's sleep.

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