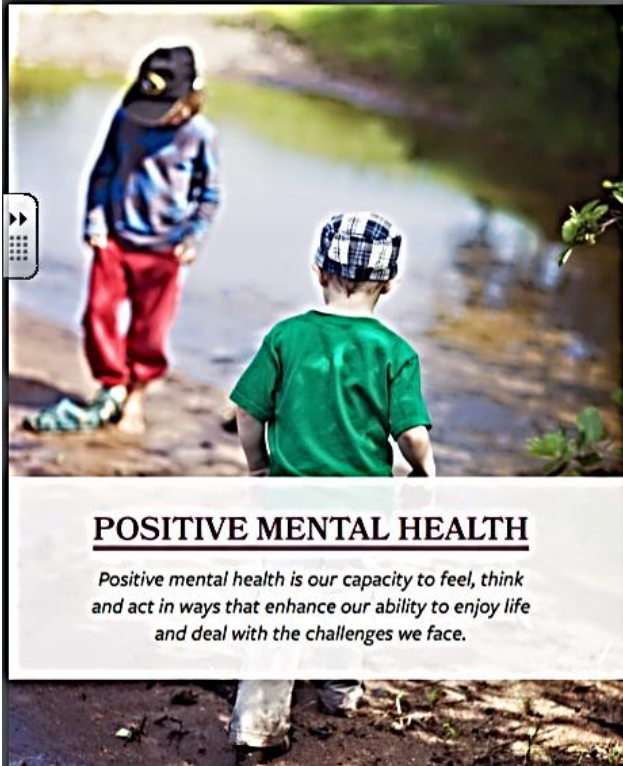


Resources Retrieved from: NBPlays.ca

The following resources can be used for learning at home opportunities to support the well-being of children, without cost to parents. More ideas can be found in the original document.



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Positive mental health is our capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.



It's never too early to promote positive mental health. Its foundations are shaped by our earliest experiences. Children undergo tremendous developmental changes before entering elementary school. In addition to physical and cognitive development, they experience great social and emotional — or mental health — gains during these early years. This interconnected development lays the foundation for lifelong learning, healthy relationships and positive contributions to society. As an early childhood educator, you have the opportunity to provide a positive environment. Nurturing and responsive care can guide the development of children's self-confidence, resilience and overall mental well-being.



DID YOU KNOW? Emotional resilience developed during the preschool years is associated with significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression in later childhood.
(Children's Health Policy Centre)

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that positive mental health be considered in all early learning and child care programming. Adopting a child-centered approach helps lay the foundations of positive mental health—feelings of competency, autonomy, relatedness and generosity. There is no one way to apply a child-centered, positive mental health approach, but the following principles should be considered:

- All children have unique strengths, knowledge and the right to develop their potential
- The best interests of children are paramount in all decisions affecting them
- The views and voices of children are considered and respected in decision-making
- The engagement and empowerment of children is essential to their positive development
- Positive relationships with children are characterized by respect, trust and compassion
- Positive social environments, including early learning settings, benefit children's mental health

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting positive mental health in your program, check out:

- » Canadian Mental Health Association. *Children*. wmha.ca/mental-health/your-mental-health/children
- » Children's Health Policy Centre. *Children's Mental Health Research Quarterly*. www.childhealthpolicy.ca/the-quarterly
- » GNB Education and Early Childhood Development. *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*. www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html

Take Five Breathing Exercise

Materials:

- Soothing music (optional)

Objectives:

- Manage big emotions
- Calm down before or after an activity
- Build awareness of the breath

Instructions:

1. Find a comfortable seated position.
2. Open one hand and stretch your fingers out like a star. Pretend the pointer finger of your other hand is a pencil and imagine you are going to trace around the outline of your stretched out hand.
3. Start at the bottom of your thumb and slide your pointer finger up your thumb, pause at the top, and then slide your finger down the other side. Now slide your pointer up your second finger, pause, and slide down the other side. Continue slowly tracing your fingers up, pausing at the top before making your way down the other side. Keep going until you have finished tracing your pinky finger.
4. Now you are ready to add some breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Remember to keep it slow and steady. If breathing through your nose is a challenge, imagine you are

smelling a beautiful flower or your favourite food as you breathe in, and then breathe out with a big sigh because it smelt so nice.

5. Place your pointer finger at the bottom of your thumb, and breathe in as you slide your finger up your thumb, pause at the top, and breathe out as you slide your finger down the other side. Breathe in as you slide up your second finger, and breathe out as you slide down the other side. Keep going until you have finished tracing your fingers and you have taken five slow breaths.

Variations:

- Instead of using your hand to slide your finger along, trace an outline of your hand on a piece of card stock and then trace your finger along the outline. You can create a textured outline or cut out the shape, if that works better for you.

Reflection:

- How does your body feel now?
- Do you feel calm or would you like to take another five?



FUN IDEA: Together, lie on the floor facing the ceiling and have everyone place their hands on their tummies. Take deep breaths and watch hands move up and down. Ask children to imagine that their tummies are big waves rising and falling in the ocean.

Simple Yoga Series

Materials:

- Yoga mat (optional)

Objectives:

- Manage feelings
- Build focus
- Increase strength, balance and flexibility
- Enhance body awareness

Instructions:

1. Ensure that you have enough space to move freely and keep in mind that all movements should be gentle and feel comfortable.
2. As you move through a flow of the following five yoga poses, you can pretend to be a surfer, tree, skier, dog and owl. You are also encouraged to state the "I am..." statements that correspond with each pose.
3. To do **Warrior 2 Pose** from a standing position, step one foot back, placing the foot so that it is facing slightly outwards. Lift your arms up so that they are parallel to the ground. From here, bend your front knee and look forward. Pretend to be a surfer and use your strength to catch tricky waves. "I am strong."
4. To do **Tree Pose** from a standing position, lift one leg and bend your knee so that you can place the sole of your foot above or

below the knee of the standing leg. Balance here, raising your arms above your head if possible. Pretend to be a tree and sway with the breeze. Your kindness offers shade to others, cleans the air and provides homes to animals. "I am kind."

5. To do **Chair Pose** from a standing position, place your feet hip-width apart and bend your knees, like you are sitting into an imaginary chair, keeping a straight back. Lift your arms out in front of you and raise them toward the sky. Pretend to grasp ski poles as you fly down a mountain like a brave and fearless skier. "I am brave."
6. To do **Downward-Facing Dog Pose** from a standing position, bend down and place your palms flat on the ground in front of you. Step your feet back to create an upside-down "V" shape with your bum high in the air. Gently straighten your legs, relax your head and neck, and look down between your legs. Pretend to be a happy and friendly dog. You can even wag your tail! "I am friendly."
7. To do **Hero Pose** from a standing position, slowly lower your knees to the ground and come down to rest upright on your heels. Pretend to be a wise owl perched in a tree. You can gently twist your upper body one way and then the other to look out into the night. "I am wise."
8. Once you are comfortable with the yoga poses and sequence, you can take deep breaths in and out during each pose, to further help calm the body and mind.



Variations:

- Start by practicing only one yoga pose at a time.
- Once you master this simple yoga series, branch out and add more poses to your repertoire.

Reflection:

- How did you feel when you were moving through the different poses?
- How do you feel after having done the whole simple yoga series?
- What does it mean to be strong/kind/brave/friendly/wise?



FUN IDEA: Combine yoga poses and movements with storytelling to actively engage children and immerse them in the experience in a more meaningful way.