

BEING AND BECOMING MENTALLY HEALTHY IN INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD



BEING

This aspect of babies' and young children's mental health is how they are NOW, which might be described as their **wellbeing**. It describes their present-day thoughts, feelings, emotions and experiences.

Being mentally healthy in this sense involves babies and young children feeling safe and good about themselves and the world around them, experiencing sensitive responsive care from a reliable caregiver(s), and being able to explore and play in a way that is appropriate to their level of development.

BECOMING

This aspect of the mental health of babies and young children is related to their **development** of different capacities that enable them to be mentally healthy. It might be called social, emotional and behavioural development.

Being mentally healthy in this sense involves babies and young children developing abilities that will help them to be mentally healthy in the future.

EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS



Experiencing a range of emotions as appropriate responses to events and the environment but overall, **being** content, at ease, and feeling safe.

Becoming able to express, understand, and manage a range of emotions

SOCIAL ELEMENTS



Being engaged in meaningful, safe, caring relationships with others (including both with adults and, as the baby grows, with peers). Trusting they will be cared for.

Becoming able to form and maintain safe, satisfying and trusting relationships, including – as children get older - the ability to play with others and form friendships.

BEHAVIOURAL ELEMENTS



Being able to enjoy childhood. Exploring, learning, and playing in a way that is appropriate to them.

Becoming able to navigate the world, and work towards goals. Developing independence, confidence, and agency. Becoming able to cooperate and play with others to achieve shared goals.



Young children's mental health & development is dependent on nurturing care which includes their physical health and nutrition, responsive caregiver relationships, safety and security, and early learning - including sensory, motor, cognitive and language skills.