



Paving the Way to Better Outcomes for our Children

CSIE workshops for parents in spring & summer 2025



Workbook

Paving the way to better outcomes for our children

A workshop for parents of children with labels of SEND, exploring strategies for our own wellbeing and for advocating for our children's rights in education.

Developed and offered free of charge thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Introduction

The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) is a national charity, established in 1982, working to develop more inclusive education for all, especially those with labels of SEN and disability.

The aim of this 2-hour workshop is to empower you, as parents, to make sure your children's rights are respected, by offering practical knowledge and tools to:

- Support your own wellbeing & resilience (look after yourselves)
- Advocate for your children's rights in education (look after your children)

The workshop will cover:

- Understanding mental health and wellbeing
- Maximising wellbeing and minimising stress in our daily lives
- Exploring different ways of understanding disability
- Understanding and protecting children's rights in education
- Support and resources

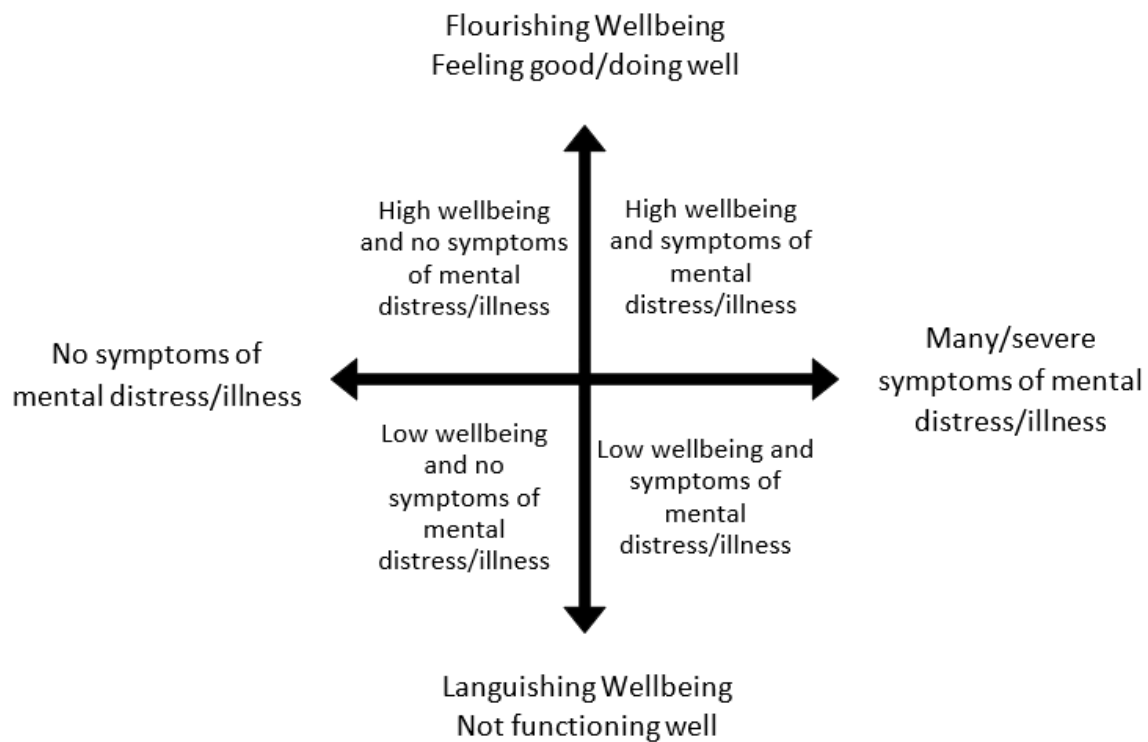
Supporting Your Own Wellbeing and Resilience

One thing I do regularly that makes me feel good:

The Crossed Axes Model of Complete Mental Health

- When we think of 'mental health' we tend to focus on the absence or presence of mental distress or illness.
- But complete mental health is more than just the absence of distress/illness (just like physical health). It involves the presence of a positive: wellbeing.
- Complete mental health requires us to learn the skills and develop the everyday routines and habits that both maximise wellbeing and minimise stress.

Crossed Axes Model of Complete Mental Health



There are two dimensions of wellbeing: feeling good and functioning well.

- **Feeling Good:** Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life.
- **Functioning Well:** Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important elements of wellbeing.

The crossed axes model captures the broader picture – the continuum - of total mental health. We all have the ability to self-maximise wellbeing (vertical axis) and self-manage stress (horizontal axis) by learning and applying the evidence-based skills below.

Learn More

Crossed axes origins: Keyes C.L.M. (2005). *Mental illness and/or mental health? Investigating axioms of the complete state model of health. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. 73:539–548*

Maximising Wellbeing: The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Connect: Feeling close to other people is a fundamental human need and contributes to our wellbeing

Learn: Setting goals is associated with higher levels of wellbeing

Give: Acts of kindness are associated with an increase in wellbeing

Notice: Being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing

Active: Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of anxiety and depression

Weaving the **Five Ways to Wellbeing** into the fabric of our daily routines, habits, and skills cultivates a life that meets our human needs. When we humans have our needs met, we:

- Feel generally stable and comfortable in life and experience balance and happiness. *It's important not to interpret this to mean that negative emotions are not part of good wellbeing.* Negative emotions are part of our shared humanity and they need to be felt and processed to keep mind and body healthy and balanced. If you enjoy good wellbeing, you experience negative emotions in a way that leaves your wellbeing intact (e.g., you feel sad after a loss but also feel connected and cared for).
- Build the necessary resources (self-esteem, resilience, coping skills) to meet the inevitable challenges that come our way. Human life is bound to have episodes of change, loss, transition and difficulties within it.

The evidence indicates that each action theme (Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Give) positively enhance personal wellbeing. The model suggests that following the advice of these interventions enhances personal wellbeing by making a person feel good and by bolstering his/her mental capital.

Putting wellbeing evidence into everyday use

Think about those small things in life which are important to your wellbeing and can be prioritised in your day-to-day routines. It is likely that you are already, to some extent, involved in specific activities under the overarching themes of connecting, being active, learning etc.

Rather than seeking a completely novel set of behaviours, focus on increasing the time you spend in activities known to enhance wellbeing and becoming more aware of the impact on your mood and wellbeing i.e., building self-knowledge and understanding your self-care needs.

Learn More

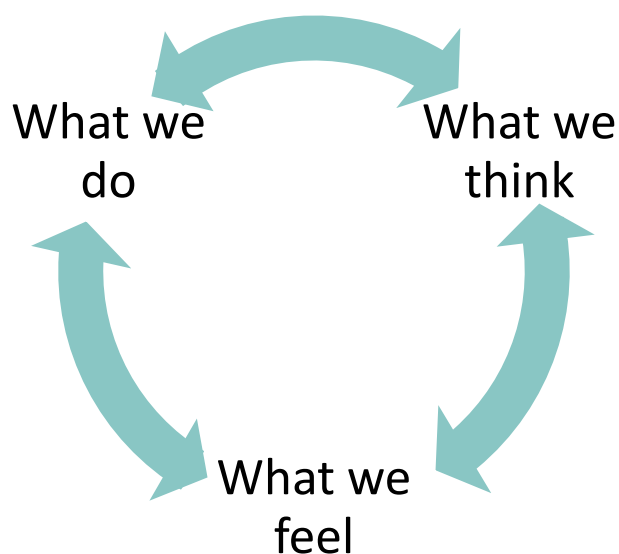
Five Ways to Wellbeing Evidence: <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing>

NHS Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

Build happiness, resilience, connection and more with research backed tools:
<https://ggia.berkeley.edu/>

Minimising Stress

Emotions are especially important to us humans. They tell us what matters to us, underpin our decision-making and motivate us to action. Because they are so fundamental to our functioning, they command a number of different aspects of our experience (thoughts, feeling, body sensations and urges to behave). The felt sense of our experience is the interrelationship of all these aspects. Each thing feeds off the other and sometimes we can get stuck in a vicious cycle which creates a negative unpleasant mood or mind-body state.



This is a practical application of **Cognitive Behavioural Theory** which gives us a way to help a person understand their feelings and what they need to do to change. It is a way to conceptualise and describe experience. This model is widely used in therapeutic treatment as well as more proactive interventions such as coaching, resilience building, decision making and teaching.

Applying the essence of CBT by mapping out our thoughts, feelings and behaviours in the stressful moments of our lives is a powerful life skill which can help us understand why we feel the way we do and what we can do to feel better (break the cycle).

We can use this skill to:

1. Understand your feelings
 - Explore and break your experience into thoughts, feelings, behaviours.
 - Understand how these areas of experience all feed into each other.
 - Understand how this creates a vicious cycle and makes you feel bad (unhappy, stressed, distressed etc)
2. Identify what needs to change to feel better

- Action in **any** of the areas of experience will have a positive impact on the others, breaking the vicious cycle and putting you on the path to feeling better

Notes

Learn More

Living Life to the Full - Helping you help yourself using online courses, written books, face to face classes, and worksheets: <https://littf.com/>

Every Mind Matters - Get expert advice, practical tips and a personalised action plan here: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>

Sharing Stories

Tell us about how your child's education responds to their needs – both the challenges and what is going well.

One thing I am grateful for:

One thing that is challenging:

Ways of understanding disability

Being different is a natural part of life. In other species, differences are more easily accepted without judgement.



Having an impairment is one way that people can be different. It is a natural part of life and an ordinary part of human diversity. Many people have physical, sensory or mental impairments from birth, or after an illness or accident.

The official definition of disability is in the Equality Act 2010. This says that a person is disabled if they have an impairment that lasts a long time and has a serious negative effect on their ability to do everyday tasks.

A widespread way of understanding disability is the belief that some people become disabled by their impairments. This is known as the medical model of disability.

An alternative is to understand that some people become disabled by barriers in society. This is known as the social model of disability.

The Equality Act 2010, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are all based on the social model of disability. They say that disabled people are those with long-term physical, sensory, or mental impairments. These impairments, when combined with barriers in society – like inaccessible buildings, poor communication, blanket rules, or negative attitudes – can make it harder for disabled people to take part fully and equally in everyday life. For education, this means that it is not a child's impairments that stop them from being included in school. Instead, it is the way schools are set up – for example blanket behaviour policies and poor expectations – that can make it harder for children with impairments to be included in their local school.

Learn More

Short video on Social Model, in National Disability Arts Collection and Archive:
bit.ly/3Y0Yil6

The Social Model of Disability Factsheet by Inclusion London: bit.ly/Social-Model

What the law says

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act says that all public bodies, including schools, have a duty to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity for all those who are in a minority because of a “protected characteristic”, and to foster good relations between those who have any particular “protected characteristic” and those who haven’t.

The Equality Act also says that all public bodies, including schools, have a duty to make “reasonable adjustments” in response to people’s impairments, in order to create equality of opportunity. With regard to education, this means that schools must make sure that disabled pupils can fully participate in every aspect of school life. The duty to provide “reasonable adjustments” is an **anticipatory** duty, which means that organisations, including schools, must not wait until a disabled person comes along, before making such changes.

Under the Equality Act 2010 schools also have a legal duty to publish an Accessibility Plan, to address access issues relating to: the curriculum, information and the physical environment.

Children and Families Act 2014

Part III of the Children and Families Act 2014 is about the education of children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities. The Code of Practice gives statutory guidance on how the law should be put into practice. It says: *“As part of its commitments under articles 7 and 24 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. The Children and Families Act 2014 secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEN should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled people.”* (SEND Code of Practice 2014, p. 25)

International instruments

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal #4 are all based on the social model of disability and state very clearly that every country should aim to develop an inclusive education system at all levels.

Learn More

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://csie.org.uk/inclusion/child-rights.shtml>

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <https://csie.org.uk/inclusion/rights-persons-disabilities.shtml>

Person-centred planning

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK has signed up to, says very clearly that the best interests of children must come first in any decision that affects them (Article 3). When it comes to education, some people believe that it is best for children to learn alongside their peers and have a sense of belonging in their local community. Others think that sending children to separate “special” schools is better for them. As we have already seen, there is an international push to make sure all schools have the skills and resources to educate all children, whatever their needs.

The Convention also says (Article 12) that children who are able to form their own views have the right to share their opinions freely in all matters that affect them. Adults must take children’s views seriously, in a way that matches their age and maturity.

One way to do this is through Person-Centred Planning, to make sure that children’s voice is central when making decisions about them.

The SEND Code of Practice is meant to be based on this principle—that children and young people who can express their views should be listened to, and their views should be taken seriously when decisions are made about their education and support. It says: “Decisions about provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities should be made jointly by providers, parents, and children and young people themselves, taking a person-centred approach, with the views of children, young people and parents taken into account when those decisions are made”.

Person-Centred Planning involves finding out how a person wants to live their life and what it will take to make this happen. It is grounded in the social model of disability and is a powerful way to involve children and young people in decisions about them.

Key elements of Person-Centred Planning, originally developed by leading thinker and advocate John O’Brien, are that the child or young person:

- is experiencing choice and control about what is happening
- has enough opportunities to contribute
- gets to share ordinary places as a result of this planning
- develops a sense of identity, of who they are
- has a sense of belonging.

Learn More

SEND Code of Practice: <https://bit.ly/SEND-Code-of-Practice>

The Five Dimensions of Person-Centred Planning, from Inclusive Solutions:
<https://bit.ly/Person-CentredPlanning>

“Anyone for ice-cream?” <http://sharonsmith.net/anyone-for-ice-cream>

Review and Next Steps

Please reflect on everything covered today and begin to make some notes on how to put this into action. You may want to revisit this page in three months or so, to review where you are and maybe rekindle your intentions if appropriate.

One positive thing you will be taking away from the workshop:

One way in which you will be using your learning:

What you will aim to do in the coming days & weeks:

Thank you for attending; we hope you have enjoyed the workshop and learnt about looking after your own wellbeing and about advocating for your children's rights, to ensure the best outcomes for them.

Please drop in to any of our follow-up sessions (2-3pm on 8/5, 22/5, 5/6 and 19/6) using the link: <https://bit.ly/CSIE-follow-up>

