Unlocking SEMH
Parents and Carers – Fact sheet

Children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health – facts and figures - 2022 Key findings

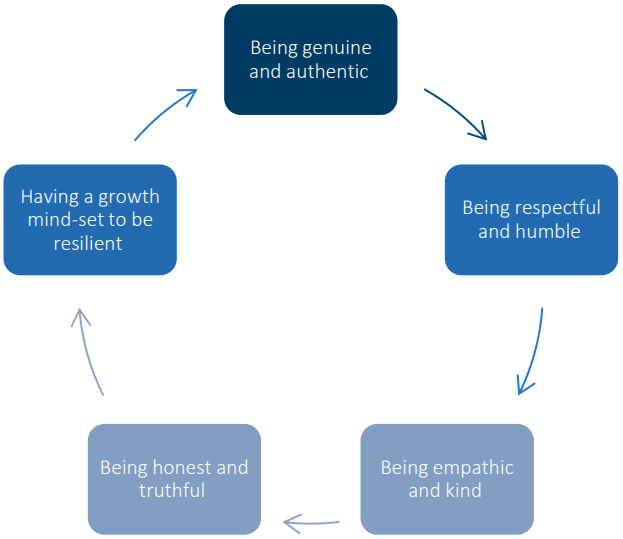
- 1 in 6 children will have a diagnosable mental health condition
- Boys aged 6 to 10 years were more likely to have a probable mental disorder than girls.
- 50% of children who are permanently excluded have a diagnosis of SEMH needs
- 1/3 of families in the UK are experiencing mental health needs
- Half of all mental health disorders begin before the age of 14
- 99% of children who have a diagnosis of SEMH do not make the national average academic progress of their peers
- In a recent study, researchers found that those children struggling with mental health issues had a reduced life expectancy by 20 years

Relational approaches

A relational approach puts relationships at the heart of every aspect of life. They help everyone to feel valued, supported and safe.

Relational approaches can support all those who are experiencing SEMH needs.

When our brains sense danger and we don't feel safe it can stop our brains from reasoning and making sense of what's around us and our behaviour can become erratic and sometimes, unsafe. Relational approaches can support the idea that whatever is happening, you are not alone. Through acts of being genuine, respectful empathic, honest and modelling a growth mind-set you are regulating those who are unable to regulate for themselves.



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Our Triune Brain

Our Triune Brain is made of three parts;

Our Brain stem; sometimes we might remember this as our crocodile brain, this is because it is responsible for maintaining all of our natural instincts, like breathing, sleeping, eating, going to the toilet.

Our limbic system; sometimes we might remember this as our monkey brain, this is because it is the part of the brain responsible for all of our emotions, our playful side of the brain.

Lastly our Cortex; we might remember this is as the human part of the Triune Brain. This is because the Cortex helps us to make sense of the world, adding language to thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes our Triune brain works really well together. However sometimes when we feel threatened, overwhelmed, scared or sometimes too excited the three-parts stop working in sync and the connections between each area become blocked.

When our brain senses danger we act only in our instincts. Our crocodile brain kicks in and we go into survival mode. This can sometimes be called fight/flight/freeze.

Alongside our Triune Brain, when bodies sense danger, we feel this through our bodies physiological responses. When we sense danger we may need to suddenly go to the toilet...or our mouth might go really dry...we may get hotter, or all of a sudden feel a sense to move about. This is our bodies way of keeping us safe and it's called our Sympathetic Nervous System. On the flip side of this we also have a Parasympathetic Nervous System which helps us to rest and digest. Its equally important that our bodies have the time, space and sense of safety to be able to do this, because this is what helps to preserve our body, our health and wellbeing

A helpful clip explaining the Triune Brain model can be found here; The Triune Brain - YouTube

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The Key Strategies

- ✓ **Routines** are key to establishing expectations
- ✓ Attention seeking behaviour is the child seeking your attention. **Understanding behaviour as communication**
- ✓ **Contain** the feeling – co-regulate the child
- ✓ **Play is powerful** and will build new connections - bridging the gaps of emotional development
- ✓ **Long term** = impact
- ✓ **Relational** and **restorative** approaches offer nurturing experiences for the child
- ✓ **Proactive** is the key to success

Useful resources, webpages and links

Improving children's and young people's mental health – Place2Be

Resources (annafreud.org)

Resources for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants - ELSA Support (elsa-support.co.uk)

YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds

Signs That a Child Is Suffering From Mental Health Issues | NSPCC

The Go-To - Emotional wellbeing and mental health (thegoto.org.uk)

North Yorkshire (Compass Phoenix) - Compass (compass-uk.org)

Find local mental health support, starting with Barnardo's | Barnardo's | Online mental health support for young people (barnardos.org.uk)

Remembering to look after our own wellbeing too

It's important to look after own mental health, to ensure that we can be fully supportive when we need to be for our loved ones. Find out more about the NHS campaign 'The Five Ways To Wellbeing here; 5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS (www.nhs.uk)



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