

Mental Health and Wellbeing

2023

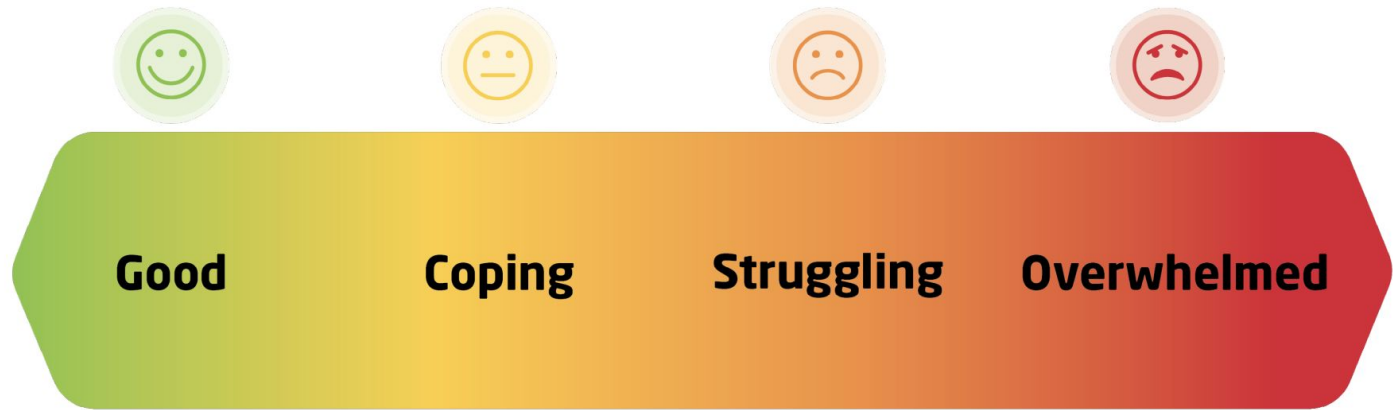
Learning Intentions for the MHWL role

- To build the capacity of staff to be able to identify and support mental health concerns in the classroom
 - To help teachers and schools feel supported and more confident to support their student's mental health and wellbeing

Background to how the role came about

Mental Health as a Continuum

The Children's Wellbeing Continuum



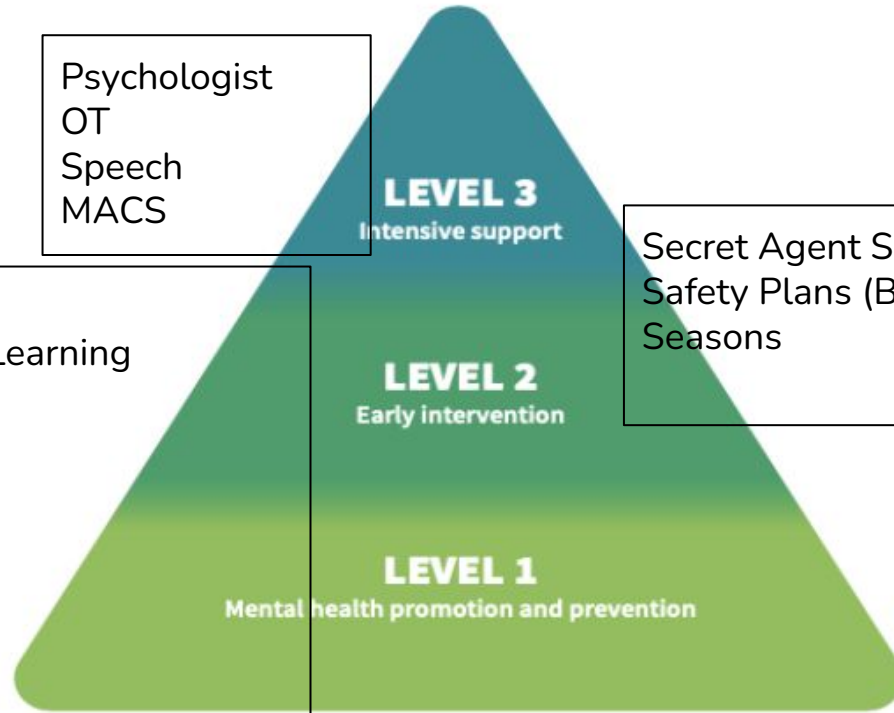
Mental health is a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. (WHO)

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (Be You)

When we aren't able to do this:

Mental Health Conditions or Concerns (Usually a diagnosis)

Multi-Tiered System of Support



Psychologist
OT
Speech
MACS

Secret Agent Society (SAS)
Safety Plans (Berry St)
Seasons

Kimochis
Respectful Relationships
Circle Time
Morning Circles
Brain breaks
ESmart
Young Carer Program
Dispositions
Lunch Time Clubs

Berry Street Strategies
Positive Behaviours for Learning
Character Strengths
Meditation
Be You
Kids Helpline
Prayer
Bear cards
Restorative Prac
We Thinkers
Tuning Into Kids
Seasons

Tuning in to Kids



Emotional Intelligence



Overview of Program

The goals of the 6 week program are to:

- Learn about Emotional Intelligence
- Learn about Emotion Coaching and why/how it works
- Gain some skills about how to respond to children's emotions

Emotional Intelligence

What is Emotional Intelligence?

It is the ability to:

- identify and understand your own emotions;
- successfully use emotions during social interactions;
- use your emotional awareness to guide you when solving problems;
- deal with frustration and be able to wait to get what you want;
- keep distress from overwhelming your ability to think;
- be in control of how and when you express feelings.

Emotional Intelligence

Why is Emotional Intelligence Important for children?

- Emotional outcomes: Better able to regulate emotions; to self soothe and to focus attention; to empathise with others and to use emotions to get what they want in life; and they have less negative and more positive affect
- Social Outcomes: Their peer relationships are better and they are more socially skilful
- Behavioural Outcomes: They have fewer behaviour problems and are less likely to be drawn towards deviant peer relationships
- Academic outcomes: They do better in school, in part due to improved attention and concentration, but also due to better social relationships
- Physiological differences: Lowered heart rate, better health and immune systems because of lower levels of physiological arousal

Emotion Coaching

There are five key steps to Emotion Coaching proposed by John Gottman (1997) and colleagues:

1. Become aware of the child's emotion and especially notice lower intensity emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear
2. View these emotions as an opportunity for connecting and teaching
3. Listen empathetically and validate the child's feelings. That is, you communicate understanding and acceptance of the emotion
4. Help the child put words to the emotion – verbally label feelings
5. Set limits while helping children to problem-solve. Communicate that all wishes and feelings are acceptable but not all behaviours are acceptable. These basic steps provide the methods for engaging with children in a supportive way when they are emotional or when they are talking about emotional experiences. In time, greater complexity in emotional communication will begin to occur.

Why Emotion Coaching Works (Gottman, 1997)

The main reasons for why children's behaviour improves as a result of emotion coaching:

1. Emotion coaching is about responding to children at low level intensity emotions, which reduces the need for children to escalate their emotions and behaviour and provides a more optimal time to teach children about emotions;
2. Children who are emotion coached have practice in self-soothing and can remain calmer under stress: They are less likely to misbehave as a result
3. Emotion coaching does not involve disapproval of children's emotions so there are fewer points of conflict. There are also clear limits so that children know when they have crossed the line
4. Emotion coaching develops a strong bond between teacher/carer and child so children feel more responsive to requests and feel respected and valued by them
5. Emotion coaching is knowing that all emotions are okay.

Children and Young People's Program

Seasons for Growth



What is Seasons for Growth?



- *Seasons for Growth* is a small group change, loss and grief education program
- Developed for children and young people 6-18 years (Levels 1-4)
- Based on a belief that change, loss and grief are part of life
- Explores a range of issues associated with change and loss – what we may experience and ways we can respond and adapt



What does *Seasons for Growth* do?



Seasons for Growth helps children and young people to:

- Learn about how the death of a loved one, parental separation/divorce, or other significant loss event may impact on their lives
- Learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand and respond well to such experiences, including:
 - understanding the grief process
 - recognising their feelings and other reactions to loss are normal
 - developing skills for coping, problem solving and decision making
 - building a peer-support network
 - restoring self-confidence and self-esteem.

The story of the seasons

- Based on the work of J William Worden
- Using the metaphor of the four seasons as a framework to explore the experience of change, loss and grief participants recognise:
 - no season lasts forever
 - each season is unique and important for our growth
 - each season has its own story, there are easy days and difficult days
 - seasons are unpredictable
 - individuals experience the seasons differently
 - we find different ways to adapt to changes within each season
 - seasonal change is often silent, gradual and unseen.

Learning outcomes of *Seasons for Growth*



In adapting Worden's work to an educational context, the participants in *Seasons for Growth*:

- Learn that change and loss are part of life
- Learn about different ways people experience change and loss
- Learn skills to assist with adapting to change and loss
- Learn about ways that help in moving forward with life

Young Carer Project

LITTLE
DREAMERS



THE YOUNG CARER PROJECT








AGES 8+



In every classroom across Australia, two to three students will have a caring role. The Young Carer Project strives to create a school community where Young Carers have equal access to educational opportunities as their peers.

The Young Carer Project currently works with schools in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. The program adopts a whole school approach to engineer a kind, safe and supportive school environment where Young Carers can thrive.

Lunch Time Clubs

When 1.40-2.00pm	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Where	Gym	Library	Art Room	Library	Library
What	<p>Dancing and Singing</p> 	<p>Chess</p> <p>Board Games</p> <p>Cards</p>  <p>Gardening Club (garden)</p> 	<p>Art</p>  <p>Gardening Club (garden)</p> 	<p>Lego</p> 	<p>Reading and Drawing</p> 

Going Further

Our actions:

- Embed evidence-based training and resources across the school to build the capability of teaching and educational support staff to better identify and support students with mental health concerns
- Support the school to create clear pathways for referrals for students identified as requiring further assessment and intervention within the school and connect with local community-based services
- Provide a parent program called Tuning Into Kids
- Lunchtime activities
- Seasons (Grief and Loss) group
- Teacher/student/parent survey
- Little Carers