



Wellbeing | Mana Atua

ECE resources

This series of guides on the principles and strands of Te Whāriki offers an overview of the key areas of learning within Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum. Each guide provides links to other resources across our website which can help in implementation of the curriculum.

Wellbeing | mana atua is an important foundation on which other learning depends. Children's wellbeing involves:

- Being **physically cared for**, for example with optimal nutrition and physical activity opportunities, as well as **appropriate and responsive care** or support for self-care
- Feelings of **self-worth** and a strong sense of identity
- Feelings of **confidence**, an ability to handle familiar and unfamiliar events in the setting, and an ability to regulate their emotions with support
- A sense that their family and cultural backgrounds are **valued** and **supported**

Some particular features of practice are significant for supporting children's wellbeing. These include:

- **Consistency, continuity and stability** within the early childhood environment which helps children feel safe and confident. **This guide** considers pedagogical strategies for building strong relationships with infants and toddlers and **this one** for children of all ages. Also see how to develop and maintain **consistent expectations** in relation to children's social behaviours.
- **Responsive interactions, routines and environments**. Teachers should demonstrate trust and respect for children by acknowledging their ideas and feelings, explaining decisions and events, and responding sensitively. See **this interview** on trust and respect within the RIE™ philosophy of infant and toddler care.
- **Culturally responsive practices** so that children's family background, culture and language are affirmed and included.
- **Strong relationships**, including strong **partnerships with parents and whānau** which enhance parent and whānau wellbeing.
- Appropriate **challenge**, and encouraging children to take reasonable **risks** to build feelings of confidence and competence
- Supporting children to take **responsibility** for their own care and their play choices, as well as taking responsibility for the care of others, and encouraging children to **understand and respect rules** that work well for the group. This is all part of **developing a positive culture** and set of expectations within the group.
- **Intentional teaching** to support the development of **social and emotional competencies**, including emotional regulation and **social skills**.
- Building **transition practices** on a focus on children's existing foundation of experiences, knowledge and skills and encouraging children to anticipate similar experiences and the ongoing application of their knowledge and skills in the new setting.

How might provision vary for children at different stages of development?

For infants, wellbeing is supported and promoted within **calm and unhurried environments** in which teachers recognise and **are responsive to infants' cues and communications**, and in which infants can develop **trusting attachments** with key people. These key features of effective pedagogy with infants and toddlers are covered in more detail [here](#). Play environments should be **safe** and offer plentiful opportunities for **independent sensory exploration**, in which teachers refrain from unnecessary interruption. Also refer to [this guide](#) for tips on managing primary caregiving approaches to infant and toddler care.

For **toddlers**, wellbeing is tied up with opportunities to exercise an increasing ability to make **choices** and demonstrate **autonomy** as well as to take on **responsibility** for themselves (including self-care tasks), others and their environment. They are increasingly able to **express feelings** and **resolve conflicts**, and will benefit from being supported with **intentional teaching strategies for learning about emotion** and handling **conflicts**. Toddlers appreciate ample opportunities for **exploring** their world and what they can do within it, and to take risks.

For older children, a **stimulating programme** that includes investigations and inquiries (such as [this example of localised curriculum planning](#)), balanced with **predictable routines and activities** can help to ensure that children feel engaged, valued and secure. Find some tips for planning an effective and enriching programme [here](#). Children should be encouraged to manage their own feelings of wellbeing through accessing opportunities for physical movement as well as quiet rest and reflection. These needs can be met through **well-planned environments**. Wellbeing also hinges on children having the skills and opportunities to **express feelings**, and articulate and resolve emotions and social conflicts. See a range of intentional teaching strategies for supporting children's **social and emotional competence** [here](#).

Other areas that teaching teams may wish to explore in relation to promoting children's wellbeing include child protection, accessing intervention services, and [support for teachers' wellbeing](#). Some specific advice about supporting neurodiverse children can be found [here](#).

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