

THE
AMBER APPROACH
FOR
CHILDREN



OVERVIEW

Children are in need of interventions to heal trauma, deal with difficult emotional experiences and build resilience for the future.

Global researchers have identified that we need many different healing traditions and modalities to come together to adequately meet the diversity that goes along with working with groups.

Fresh Little Minds programmes embed the **AMBER Approach ©** for Resilience.

The **AMBER Approach ©** for Resilience is completely unique as it explicitly integrates a range of different modalities which support healing processes, strengthen children and restore wellbeing.

Like animals humans need self correcting and self regulating mechanisms to rebound from overwhelming events. Helping children to unstick themselves when their Fight, Flight and Freeze responses are triggered helps them develop greater resilience for the future, it helps to restore and balance their energy and connects them with a sense of aliveness.

When children learn these skills they experience more confidence, more joy and more resilience later in life.

2 OUR AIM

Vessel for feelings & discussion

Spirit of Amber is Playful

Gender neutral

Mascot

Helps children connect with AMBER

Speaking in the 3rd Person

Helps children learn AMBER

Enables easy recall of AMBER



Aim: To introduce the use of the **AMBER Approach**® for working with children

Learning Outcomes:

1. To have been introduced to the background theory that underpins the **AMBER Approach**®
2. To have a basic understanding of the 5 key elements making up the **AMBER Approach**®
3. To have practiced **AMBER Approach**® resources and techniques
4. To explore how the **AMBER Approach**® and resources could be used in your context (your profession & you)
5. To take away a sample of useful resources and to know how to access further resources and training

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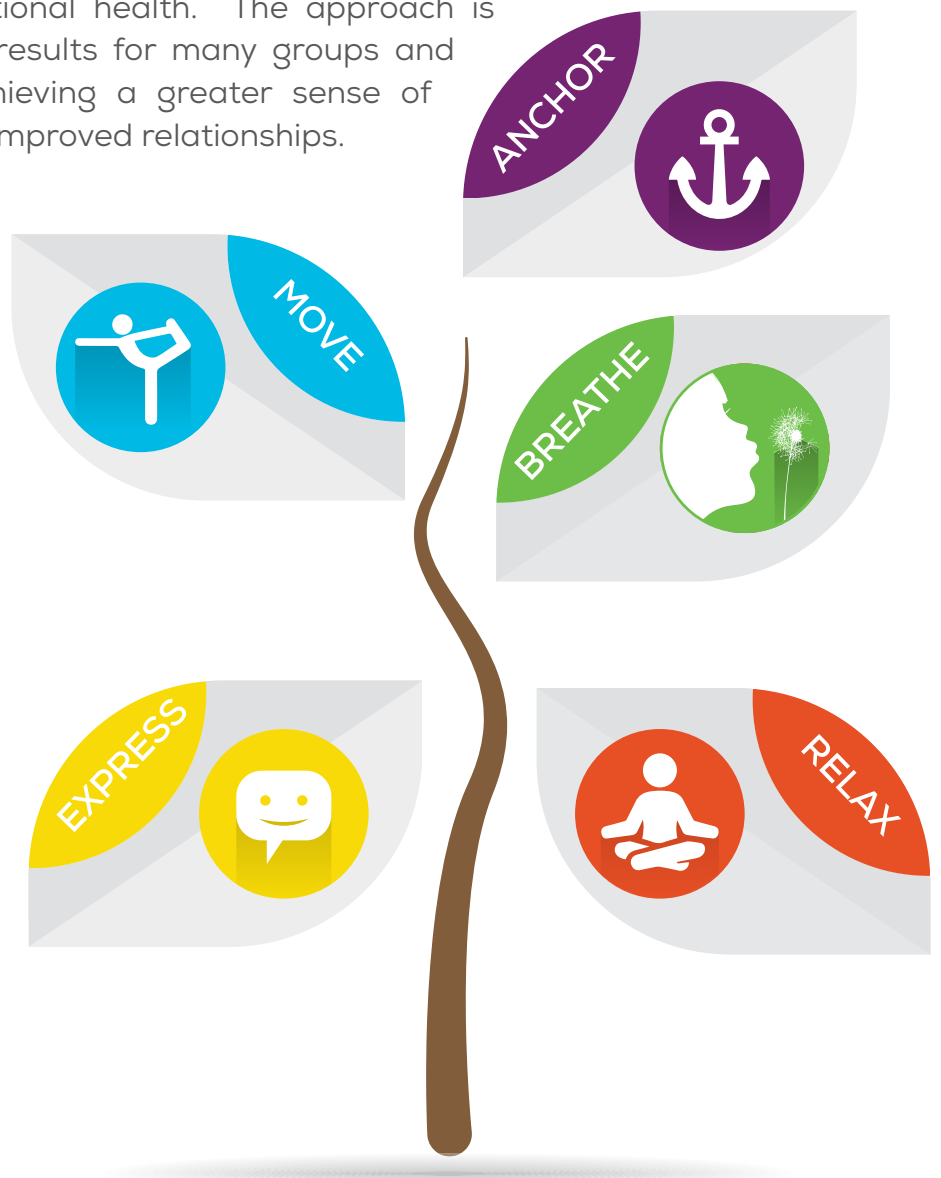
What is UNIQUE about AMBER?

The **AMBER Approach**® is a curriculum that can be used to guide our way of organising conversations, interventions, workshops or entire education programmes with the intention of bringing about improved relationships, physical regulation, restoring equilibrium, strengthening emotional health and ultimately this curriculum cultivates resilience.

It translates leading scientific and psychological research, ancient wisdom, creative processes and learning theory into a sophisticated but easy to follow model based on a number of easy to follow steps.

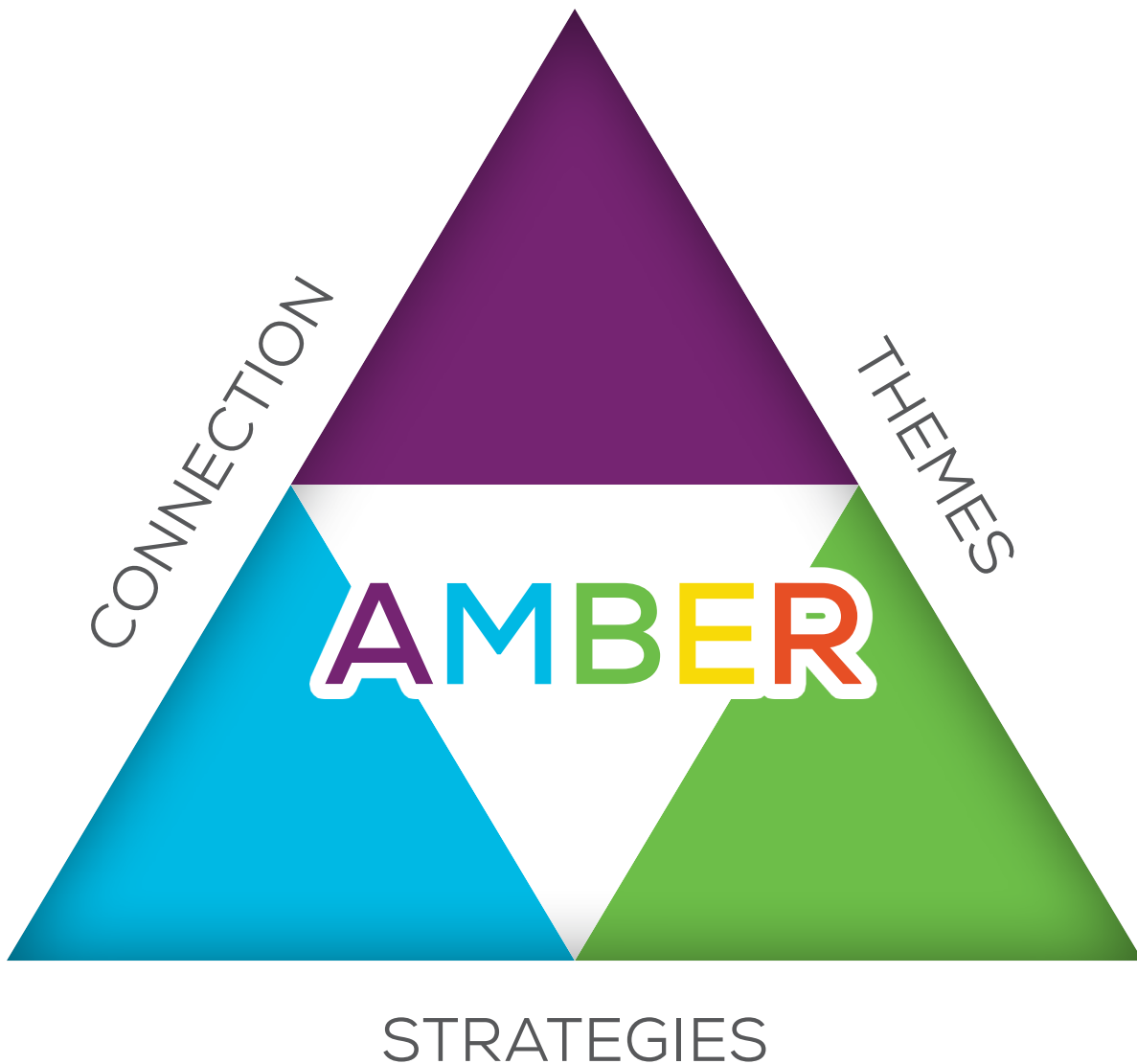
In our short course we teach the **AMBER** curriculum and participants are invited to explore the different ways that they might incorporate **AMBER** into their professional or personal life arenas.

The **AMBER Approach**® enables practitioners and parents to organise the many complex elements required when engaging with interventions that cultivate resilience, strengthen emotional health. The approach is trauma informed and the results for many groups and families have included achieving a greater sense of contentment, wellness and improved relationships.



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AMBER Curriculum 3-Core Elements



I love the resources, they are beautiful and help to reinforce the AMBER curriculum. The music and emotion emoji cards are super popular with the children, although I love the books as they have helped me easily reinforce the themes and key messages.

1. We nurture positive connections between people

The AMBER approach prizes relationships above all other elements of the programme. We believe that it is the positive caring relationships and genuine connection felt between people that enables the brain to engage to learn, grow or change. There is an important emphasis placed upon leaders and parents to focus upon:

- Attuning to one's own needs and the needs of those they support
- Becoming more emotionally and physically available
- Cultivating heart connections through creative play & fun
- Showing genuine care
- Showing up in the right state for learning consistently

2. We explore themes

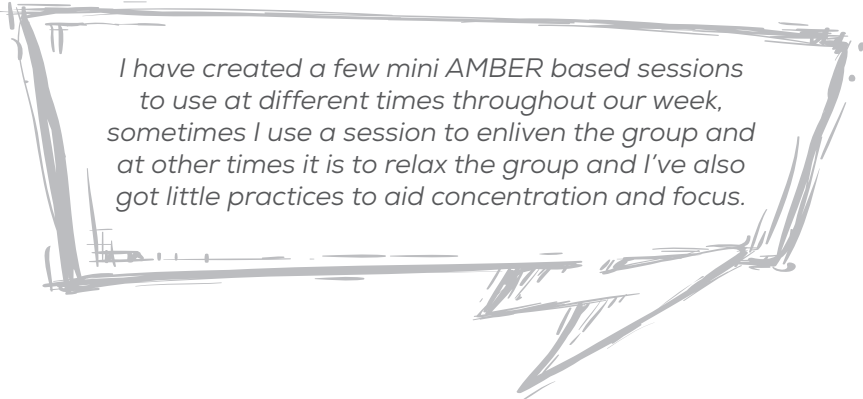
Any theme can be addressed when you integrate the AMBER approach into building your programmes or workshops. The approach lends itself particularly well to themes which are connected with improving emotional health and developing relationships.

- Third party story telling & working with puppets.
- Developing empathy: What the theme can mean for others?
- Exploring and expressing personal feelings: What this theme means to me?

3. We teach Self - Management techniques & strategies

The AMBER approach enables the practitioner to support people develop self management techniques and strategies for: self regulation, self soothing, coping, concentration, focus and self awareness. This is taught through:

- Enhancing knowledge
- Play and creative experiences
- Mirroring and modelling
- Repetition
- Incremental assimilation
- Sequential learning
- Muscle memory



I have created a few mini AMBER based sessions to use at different times throughout our week, sometimes I use a session to enliven the group and at other times it is to relax the group and I've also got little practices to aid concentration and focus.

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THE AMBER WORKOUT

A regular AMBER practice makes learning possible.

Cognitive or thinking skills

Emotional literacy & speech and language skills

Self Perception

Emotional Skills

Motor Skills

Social & Relationship Skills

- Social skills
- Increased capacity for empathy
- Relationship skills
- Activities of daily living



Self Perception:

Increasing self confidence, self belief & self acceptance.

Cognitive or thinking skills:

More curious, thinking, learning & solving problems.

Social & Relationship Skills

Social skills: Eye contact, communicating with others, increased attention span and ability to focus and stay present.

Increased capacity for empathy: Empathy for self and others, tolerance & celebration of diversity and difference, showing kindness,

Relationship Skills: Making friends, the need to be social and the need for me time.

Activities of daily living: Coping with an emotional life. Handling everyday tasks, following patterns and rules. Developing attention span and concentration to carry out activities.

Emotional Skills:

Express emotions, able to feel emotions, asking for help,

Emotional literacy & speech and language skills:

Use and understand language through developing up to 30 words to describe feelings, describing where feelings are felt in the body and how that feels. Listening and speaking in a group.

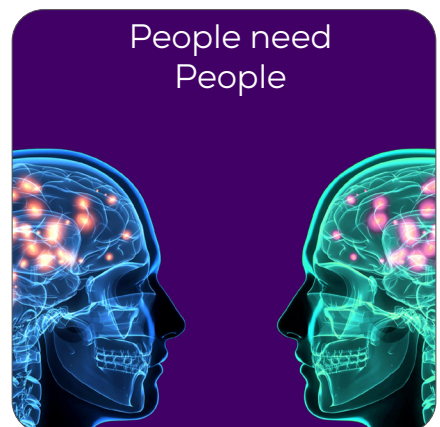
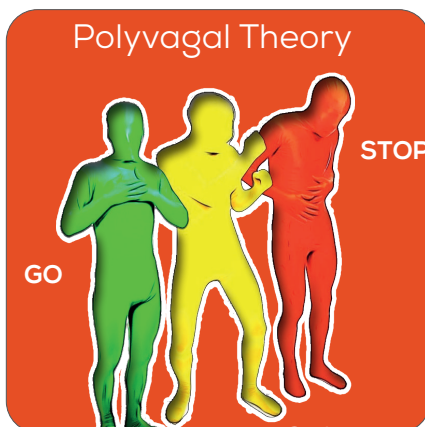
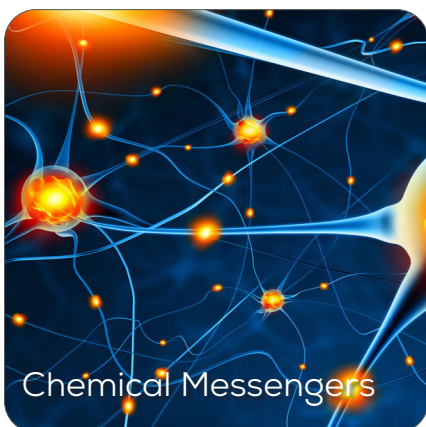
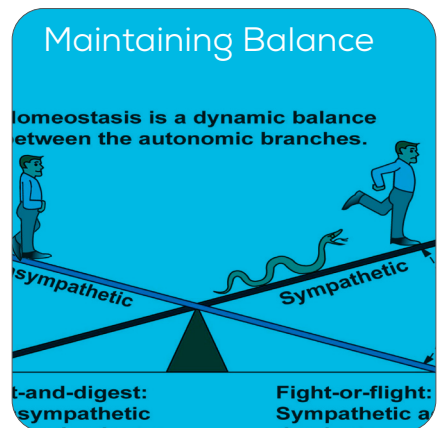
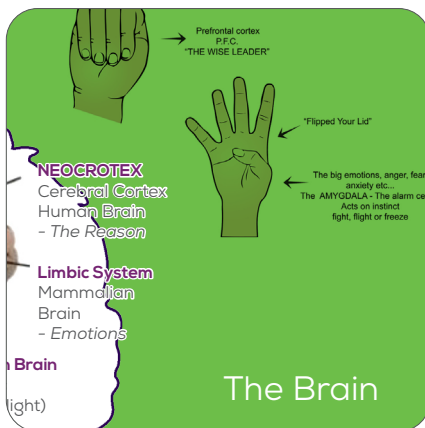
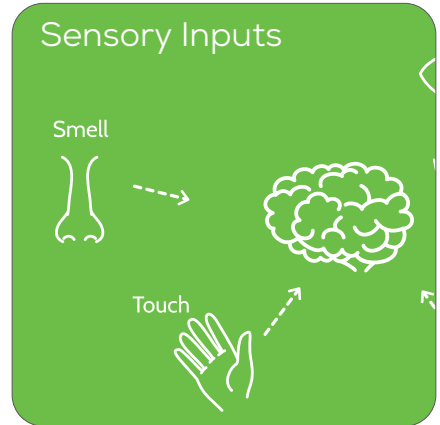
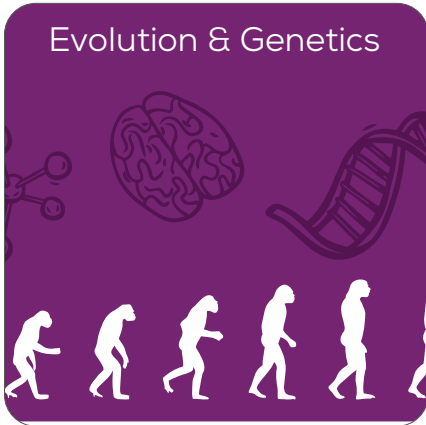
Fine and gross motor skills:

Use of hands and body to create, make and take part. Holding props, colouring in, stickers, balance, jump, run. Fresh Little Minds Medicine Moves.

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THEORIES

Some of the theories that the AMBER curriculum is based upon...



7 The AMBER Curriculum

Evolution & Genetics



Integrated Anatomy

ANCHOR

Attune, Align, Connect & Care

Sensory Inputs

Smell

Executive Function



MOVE

Unblock, release stuck or excess energy

Trauma Infor

DO NOT CUT HERE



BREATHE

Attachment



Somatic & intentional

THE WISE LEADER

NEOCORTEX

THE BIG EMOTIONAL, larger, later, slower etc.

THE AMYGDALA - The alarm bell with an ignition

EXPRESS

Emotional Literacy 3 - 30,
Explore, Express, Empathy

Maintaining Balance

Homeostasis is a dynamic balance between the autonomic branches.

Sympathetic

Parasympathetic

Fight-or-flight: Sympathetic a

Chemical Messengers



Polyvagal Theory


RELAX

Release, Rest, Receive,
Restore, Reset, Ready

People need People

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The AMBER Approach[®]



MOVE

RELEASE...
excess energy and disempowering memories held in the physical body.

NURTURE...
connection with the body and a sense of aliveness. Produce helpful endorphins and body chemistry that restores equilibrium.



ANCHOR

RELEASE...
fear, judgement, criticism, distraction and loneliness.

NURTURE...
security and safety to learn, in relationship with another. Nurture resilience.



BREATHE

RELEASE...
tension, worry, anxiousness, fear, stress and over stimulation. Release toxic energy held in our minds and bodies.

NURTURE...
calmness, relaxation, restorative rest and sleep and improved physiological and mental health benefits.



EXPRESS

RELEASE...
emotions, feelings and stories built up, repressed and depressed.

NURTURE...
self awareness, self acceptance, self efficacy and self expression. Unlock unhelpful personal beliefs and cultivate the confidence to thrive.



RELAX

RELEASE...
restlessness, negative thoughts, control and excess energy. Regulate chemicals and hormones responsible for toxic stress, poor mental, emotional & physical health.

NURTURE...
mind wandering, grounding, being, restorative rest, and the immune boosting cycles of calm. Reframe experiences and nourish a positive life outlook. Repair and improve mood, produce enjoyment, reward and flourish. Be here now.



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The AMBER Approach Expanded

AMBER REGULATION TECHNIQUES



We anchor ourselves first and once we have settled and grounded our own dysregulated energy we are in the right state for working with children. We are free to attune to their needs, match their energy and begin to support them to regulate through co-regulation. We foster positive relationships through showing warmth, empathy and through taking time to be present.



Movement and Stretching: A set of stretches and poses are playfully taught to help children to lengthen and stretch their bodies improving postural awareness, increasing flexibility, building strength and nurturing balance. These exercises help release physical and emotional tension from children's bodies through the movement which also encourages the development of core physical skills, improves coordination, boosts energy, improves circulation and contributes to a healthier immune system whilst helping release feel good endorphins.

Games and Play. A range of energetic and fun games that help children express themselves, move and ultimately relax. Our play and games are drama inspired they provoke thought, encourage and promote social and communication skills, help build confidence and develop concentration and focus.

Singing and Sound: A series of simple melodies, jingles, rhymes and rhythms that help embed our messages as well as promote the benefits of singing together as a group.

Clapping & Tapping: Using our hands and finding ways of reducing anxiety, stress and physical symptoms through working with powerful acupressure points and positive self affirmation. Clapping and Tapping offer children instant relief from excess energy running through the body and help restore physical equilibrium.



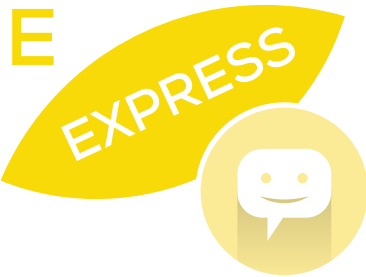


Belly Breathing: Using creative props, play and fun games children become conscious of how they are breathing and begin to take control of their diaphragms and actively engage the digest and rest response in the body.

Nostril Breathing: Children learn how to work with the nostril to bring immediate sustainable relaxation into their bodies. They are also taught the science behind how it works which encourages them to practice their new techniques.

Counting Breath: Using creative and fun props children get to play their way to feeling better. They are taught exercises to help stimulate energy and uplift their moods and they are taught simple ways of relaxing their bodies and getting ready for restorative sleep.

Laughter Breathing: An internal workout that helps children release a build up of energy, deepen their breath and increase oxygen throughout their body. Laughter work builds group cohesion and provides light relief from the day to day worries of children.



Storytelling: Through stories, writing, making art and drama children get to explore their problems through the experience of others making the emotions that come along with stories much more manageable. Our fun, interactive and inclusive workshops give young people the space to gain perspective, articulate and respond to emotions, consider the consequences of actions and formulate solutions. They will also have the opportunity to rehearse and practice responses to stressful situations.

Kindness Practice: We promote the benefits of performing kind acts which includes increasing happiness, peer acceptance, compassion and emotional intelligence. Though acts of kindness children connect with a sense of the world and being part of something greater than themselves. We also use kindness as an avenue to talk about some of the unkind actions children experience allowing emotions and feelings to be expressed.

Affirmation Practice: Self Affirmation: Self affirmation



incorporates a range of activities that enables children to overcome self limiting beliefs and express their truly held beliefs about themselves. Self affirmation also empowers children to release emotional hurt and pain when combined with other AMBER techniques.



Mindfulness & Meditation: Guided meditation incorporates mindfulness, body awareness, guided imagery and relaxation. These exercises help, increase somatic awareness, release physical and mental tension, lower blood pressure and give children tools to stress and self management tools.

Mindfulness helps children to develop interior resources that will help them navigate adolescence as it cultivates within children the capacity to pay attention, focus, concentrate, listen, learn, and be with oneself and others.

Visual Art / Making: Visual Art / Making: Art activities generally support positivity and reduces stress. They serve as a mood regulator and as a distraction from negative affect both of which are important roles within group work. A self-soothing, reward-driven art activity can be helpful to most any child who engages in the activities.

Gratitude Practice: Developing a gratitude practice is one of the simplest ways to improve your satisfaction with life. Teaching children to take time to express gratitude for the things they already have in life can improve children's positive outlook, increase levels of happiness, lower levels of stress and depression and contribute to stronger social relationships. Expressions of gratitude serve as a reminder that there is positivity and strengths in their lives.

Essential Oils: Children engage with and explore essential oils. Working with the olfactory sense children develop focus and concentration as well as benefiting from the calming effect that using essential oils has in a learning environment.

Tickle Touch & Hugs: Platonic positive touch and hugs help healing happen and encourage respect and the development of empathy. Children learn important emotional centres held in the body and learn new ways to release and move emotion out of the body boosting the immune system, calming the nervous system and lowering stress. Learn through storytelling, games and through self massage and group massage.





FRESH LITTLE MINDS GOLDEN RULES

What is it that we are trying to achieve on the Fresh Little Minds programme.

Children's emotional health and strengthening resilience is very important to the survival of children. What the experience in these early years of their lives from you will have a lasting impact. Your interaction with each child you connect with will show up in how they treat their children and how their children will treat their children.

All children have different lives and whilst some children's lives are fantastic, other children's lives can feel tricky and difficult. Some children hear their parents fight a lot, some children are bullied, some children have illnesses, some children don't get a lot of relaxation time, some children don't feel liked or loved, some children are lonely, some children are stressed with tests and learning, some children don't get to play or have a lot of fun and not all children feel safe.

So at Fresh Little Minds we believe that when children are with us that it is our job to help children feel safe and free from their troubles.

We know that when we do this that children can light up, feel bright, trouble free and learn to love themselves and grow in confidence.

This is how we win their hearts and gain access to their minds :)

But to do this all of the leaders and adults in the room have to work really hard to help us help children feel safe and comfortable to take part. That means that we have to be brave and do things that sometimes feel strange or unusual for us in our normal role, like play little games, read stories, sing and talk, listen to and help children and relax the usual rules a little.

Children will look up to the leaders and if we feel weird or awkward then they will too, so even if we feel a little silly, we have to know that it's okay to be a little silly, or its okay to sing or its okay to take part, because it's our being brave and silly that will give children their permission to take part.

When children join in, they use new amazing parts of their brains which are still growing super fast during their early development and when they do, they develop new skills and grow in confidence.

And this is why we do it. We do it because when children play and feel safe with others they grow strong from the inside out.

Other Jobs you can help out with

1. You can help up set up at the beginning
2. Help children feel calm during relaxations by spraying essential oils on their pillows and helping them feel cosy under blankets by tucking them in
3. Help them create their passports
4. If you can help us pack up at the end it really helps too



Take a breath before we start, leave our worries at the door.

Because when we do children can sense that you are there for them and when they do it helps them feel special and safe. It doesn't matter what has happened before or what is going to happen after, for this time we are going to focus on creating a positive safe learning environment for children and it starts with being available for them.

Join in on all the activities, even if it feels cheesy.

Because when we do children learn that it's okay to be silly and it helps them to join in. When children do this, their brain and confidence grow, their bodies and minds feel better. Adults never ask children to do anything they won't do themselves. Joining in improves children's health and happiness.

Help children join in, especially those who are struggling.

Many children find it difficult to take part although they would like to. It is easy for quiet, shy and children who like to please to get overlooked in a big group. Don't force children to take part or do something that they don't want to do, in Fresh Little Minds its ok to wait until you feel safe to join in.

Support each other through our words and actions.

Children need to see and sense adults treating each other with genuine kindness to feel safe. Children can only learn when they feel safe.

Be kind to children, never shout at children, be gentle.

When we shout or raise our voices to children their brain gets freaked out, activating a stress response and they struggle to take part. This happens on the inside of their bodies so we can't see the reaction. Shouting hurts children's confidence and takes away all the benefits that the programme can give.

Include children even when we are tested.

Don't punish children through excluding them because exclusion disempowers a child, reducing their ability to cope in difficult situations. Witnessing exclusion also impacts other children present who may now stop expressing themselves, fearful of the consequences. When children are scared, the part of their brain required to learn is not accessible, children need feel safe to express themselves fully.

Get Involved where possible.

Children crave one to one time from adults, but adults are increasingly under more & more pressure, with more distractions reducing opportunities for that essential one to one time. It is more important than ever to take the time out to simply be with and nurture children.

Be patient with children. Don't be too strict, use kind voices, encouraging words & support restlessness be moved out.

Emotion is E (energy) that needs Motion. Energy is built up from both a lack of opportunity to regularly move and as a result of trauma, distress or big emotion that is trapped in the body. Children who are naturally restless need to move to survive, self-regulate and to get themselves into the right state to make friends and learn. Patient adults let children know that It's okay in Fresh Little Minds to be restless and to move.

It's good to acknowledge mistakes. We all have our 'L' plates on.

When we make mistakes, we learn. When children see adults make mistakes and dealing with it positively, they learn it's okay to get things wrong, reducing their worry and need for perfectionism. It is the adult's responsibility to be a role model, making mistakes and normalising them.

Ask for help, show them the way.

When we do children know that it is okay for them to ask for help. It is the adult's responsibility to be a role model and show them the way.

Fun with you comes first.

When children are having fun with their trusted adult, learning becomes possible. When adults win children's hearts, they gain access to children's minds. Care for enjoyment as it builds a connection between child and adult, and this is the gateway to building resilience.

Smile

A genuine smile creates a warm, happy, caring, safe and loving environment for children to be nurtured. **AND YOU FEEL BETTER TOO!**

