



Wee Learners (4 - 5 years): Five Ways Families Can Support Belonging and Inclusion

Children need to feel that their world is a safe place, they need to know they are cared for, their needs are met and that they can ask and get help when they need it. When children have these things, they feel like included, and that they belong, which in turn improves mental health and wellbeing.

Benefits of belonging and inclusion:

Children who feel a sense of belonging and connectedness at their preschool, day care or school will be happy, more relaxed and have fewer behavioural problems than others, and the benefits also extends to the parents and caregivers. When children feel included, they are more likely to be accepting of others and sensitive to their needs, and they feel safer and more secure. The best learning happens when children see the adults around them putting values like care, compassion, respect, understanding and inclusion into practice.

Positive relationships are essential for mental health and wellbeing:

Positive relationships are warm, caring, consistent, predictable, and open to the other person's needs. When children experience positive relationships, they learn how to use these skills in their own relationships with others. The best way for parents to support their child's mental health is by working together and supporting each other.

Five ways families can support belonging and inclusion:

1. Find out if there are services in your area and what programs they would offer your child.
2. Support your child's social and emotional skills, create opportunities for your child to participate in fun experiences with other children. Give your child encouragement that is specific and values effort over success.
3. Talk about your child's individual needs and look at ways that you can support those needs.
4. Be informed and get involved around your community. Look at programs in your community that will help your child.
5. Get to know other families in your community, neighbourhood, or programs that you are attending with your child. Find a connection with the parents and set up playdates or social outings.

Note to reader from Wee Watch: One of the 5 ways to support belonging and inclusion noted above is to find services that support your child's social development. At Wee Watch a key component of our Program is to ensure that all Providers provide an environment where children have a sense of security and belonging. Providers role model the use of positive language and behaviours at all times, and children are encouraged to take reasonable risks and test their limits through active play and social interactions. Additionally, our Wee Learn educational programming is developed specifically to ensure that children are engaging with each other and have many opportunities to develop socially and emotionally.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2ljo0Ly>

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