

# **Development and Support of Social and Emotional Wellbeing for Individuals with Complex Communication Needs and Coexisting Diagnoses**

Cale Begley<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Team Teach Anz

## **Short Abstract**

Social and emotional wellbeing is important for every person. Receptive and expressive language skills have a significant impact on the developing and maintaining of social and emotional wellbeing. Additional consideration should also be given to coexisting factors including the impacts of mobility, vision, hearing, sensory regulation and executive functioning. These factors may lead to increased anxiety, frustration and potential for adverse childhood experiences. This can, in turn, lead to trauma and crisis behaviour which may have either outward or inward expression. This presentation will explore the increased potential for adverse childhood experiences when there is a deficit in communication and coexisting conditions. It will also explore strategies to support improved social and emotional outcomes.

Links will be addressed between the specific needs of children with complex needs and the impact on their development, experiences, feelings and behaviours. It will explore the increased potential for the development of trauma and unhealthy neurological pathways, as well as avenues to minimise this based on created experiences and responses to non-preferred behaviours and behaviours of concern. It will explore ways to support regulation and engaged behaviour and will look at specific considerations and strategies to support students in escalation, crisis and recovery as well as additional considerations for supporting the restoration process.

## **Long Abstract**

Social and emotional wellbeing is important for every person. Receptive and expressive language skills have a significant impact on the developing and maintaining of social and emotional wellbeing. Additional consideration should also be given to coexisting factors including the impacts of mobility, vision, hearing, sensory regulation and executive functioning. These factors may lead to increased anxiety, frustration and potential for adverse childhood experiences. This can, in turn, lead to trauma and crisis behaviour which may have either outward or inward expression. This presentation will explore the increased potential for adverse childhood experiences when there is a deficit in communication and coexisting conditions. It will also explore strategies to support improved social and emotional outcomes.

This presentation is based on professional experience as the principal of a K-12 school specialising in supporting students with complex needs. Through the implementation of whole school strategies related to engagement and wellbeing, the school experienced significant improvements in academic and social engagement. In an environment where the student

population may be typically associated with significant behaviours of concern, the school recorded a significant decrease in incidents and related injury and increases in social and academic engagement. This presentation will focus primarily on wellbeing and engagement in a school setting but will also look at the considerations for early childhood and adulthood.

Links will be addressed between the specific needs of individuals with complex needs and the impact on their development, experiences, feelings and behaviours. It will explore the increased potential for the development of trauma and unhealthy neurological pathways and avenues to minimise this based on created experiences and responses to non-preferred behaviour and behaviours of concern. It will explore ways to support regulation and engaged behaviour and will look at specific considerations and strategies to support students in escalation, crisis and recovery as well as considerations for supporting the restoration process.

The research and strategies this professional practice is based on includes Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model (Perry, B.D., In Press) and whole school approaches to Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Restorative Practice and Team Teach.

#### References:

Perry, B.D. (in press) The Neurosequential Model: a developmentally-sensitive, neuroscience-informed approach to clinical problem solving in (Janise Mitchell, Joe Tucci & Ed Tronick, Eds), *The Handbook of Therapeutic Child Care: Evidence-informed Approaches to Working with Traumatized Children in Foster, Relative and Adoptive Care*. Jessica Kingsley, London