



WELCOME TO WELL-BEING PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN PULL-OUT



A video by the author, introducing the **Welcome to Well-Being** programme to parents/carers/guardians, is available on: www.otb.ie/w2w-parent

This short 4-page leaflet is designed to give an introduction to the **Welcome to Well-being** programme and to help support children at home as they complete their pupil book **Meet Mo and Ko!**

Welcome to Well-Being is a 3-level programme that aims to promote positive mental health, resilience and flourishing in children. It is based on concepts from Positive Psychology and emotional regulation. In each lesson, Mo and Ko (2 small aliens from the planet Zo) introduce children to an idea or skill to help them to feel good. They also give them a challenge to encourage them to use the skill over the course of each lesson.

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology is the science of well-being, thriving and resilience (*Seligman, 2011*). It is underpinned by concepts including positive relationships, self-worth, self-compassion, character strengths and positive emotions such as gratitude, love, joy, hope and pride. It uses evidence-based activities to help us to grow, reach our potential and flourish in life. It makes sense to introduce these concepts and skills to children from as early an age as possible.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional Regulation is the process of consciously managing your own emotions, for personal growth, fulfilment and goal satisfaction (*Mayer & Salovey, 1997*). Emotional regulation skills are important in building resilience. By giving children tools and strategies to cope with their strong emotions, we can also build their self-confidence and give them a sense of inner strength.

Emotional regulation is a process with 4 distinct parts as follows:

1. Understanding and labelling emotions
2. Accepting and expressing all emotions
3. Up-regulating positive emotions such as love, pride, joy, gratitude, humour and calm
4. Down-regulating negative emotions such as anger, sadness and worry

Supporting your Child

You can support your child's well-being and emotional regulation by normalising all feelings and emotions and by reinforcing the message that *'all feelings are OK'*. Empathise with and comfort your child when they are experiencing a difficult emotion and encourage them to express how they are feeling. Some children internalise the idea that certain feelings, such as anger or frustration, are not acceptable and then try to suppress these emotions. This can then lead to emotional outbursts or feelings of shame or regret at expressing them. Try not to over-protect your child from normal feelings of disappointment, frustration or sadness – it is through experiencing these feelings, with your love and support, that they learn to cope with them. By reinforcing and modelling positive ways of accepting and processing all feelings, children can know that it is OK to have these feelings and that there are helpful ways to cope with them.

To gain most benefit from the programme, encourage your child as much as possible and support them as they try the challenges. The rest of this guide provides some ideas for doing this.



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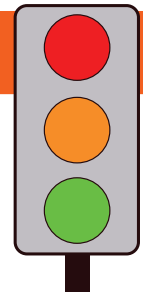
In each lesson, Mo and Ko (2 small aliens from the planet Zo) introduce children to an idea or skill to help them to feel good. They also give them a challenge to encourage them to use the skill over the course of each lesson.

Homework:

Each lesson has a homework activity which involves reading a short poem about the lesson with your child, discussing the challenge and trying it out at home over the course of each lesson. There is a Parental/Guardian/Carer comment box at the end of each homework page for you to sign and comment on if you wish.

Self-assessment traffic lights

This is an optional activity to try with your child if they would like to. On each homework page there is a small set of traffic lights. After each lesson, discuss with your child how they feel they did with the challenge. If they feel it went well, they can circle the green light, if it went OK they circle the orange light and if they didn't do it or it didn't go well they can circle the red light.



Lesson 1: It's good to be me

Children are introduced to the characters of Mo and Ko as two small aliens from the planet Zo who know a lot about children and want to help children to feel good about themselves. The children are then introduced to the Positive Psychology intervention '**3 good things**' (Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006) which encourages them to focus on the positives of life by noticing and savouring all of the small positive events of everyday life.

Support your child: Read the poem ***It's good to be me*** with your child during this lesson and talk about all the good things that they have in their lives. Talk about their **3 good things** each evening and get them to draw one of them. Mo and Ko's challenge to the children is for them to talk about their **3 good things** every day, so try to support them with this as much as possible.

Lesson 2: All feelings are OK

Your child learns that all feelings are OK. Try to get them to name as many feelings as they can including – happy, sad, angry, calm, proud, excited, surprised, afraid, jealous and worried. They learn it's not OK to hurt others because of our feelings.

Support your child: Read the poem ***All feelings are OK*** with your child during this lesson and talk about how they are feeling. Remind them that all feelings are OK. Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for the children to use their words to say how they are feeling and to remember that all feelings are OK.



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Lesson 3: I'm ready for my big feelings

This lesson discusses ways to deal with big feelings that children may struggle with including anger, fear, worry and sadness. Children learn that feelings come and go. They learn a particular breathing technique to help them manage their big feelings called **Slide breathing with Mo and Ko**. The children imagine Mo and Ko going up the slide while they breathe in for the count of 4, then coming down the slide as they breathe out for the count of 4.

Support your child: Read the poem **Big Feelings** with your child. Practise doing the **Slide breathing** technique with them. Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for your child to use **Slide breathing** if they have a big feeling that they don't like. You can support them with this by reminding them to use the technique and by using the technique yourself with them.

Lesson 4: Spread happiness

In this lesson, children discuss what makes them feel happy and share some of their happy memories. They are also encouraged to spread happiness to others through being kind.

Support your child: Encourage your child to spread happiness through kind acts during this lesson. Mo and Ko's challenge is for your child to spread as much happiness as possible by doing at least three kind things each day. Support them by noticing and encouraging their kind acts. Keep a visual record of them if you can.

Lesson 5: It's cool to be calm

Children discuss what helps them to feel calm and learn the **3-2-1... Listen** mindfulness-based technique for feeling calm. This technique is based on the senses. This involves naming 3 things they can see, 2 things they can touch and 1 thing they can hear. After children do the activity, they can be encouraged to close their eyes, put their hands on their knees and listen to their breathing for a few rounds.

Support your child: Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is to use their **3-2-1... Listen** technique whenever they would like to feel calm. Try it with them and maybe do some colouring or drawing together while listening to some relaxing music.

Lesson 6: It's OK to feel sad

Children discuss what makes them feel sad and learn that everyone feels sad sometimes. They discuss what they can do when they feel sad including using their words, getting a hug or crying.

Support your child: Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for your child to choose something that they can do when they are sad to help them feel better. If your child is sad, it is important to empathise and validate their feeling, to listen to them and to let them know that it is OK to feel sad.



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Lesson 7: I'm proud of myself

In this lesson children think about why they are proud of themselves and share their ideas. They also think of things they can do to feel proud of themselves.

Support your child: Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for your child to feel proud of themselves every day, perhaps when they have been kind, brave or worked hard on something. You can tell your child how proud you are of them when you notice their efforts and praise them. Praise is very important in helping children to feel a sense of accomplishment and pride in their efforts. When encouraging a sense of pride in children, it is more beneficial to focus on their efforts and perseverance towards achieving a goal, rather than any fixed quality or personality trait, for example, intelligence or cleverness.

Lesson 8: It's OK to feel angry

Children discuss what makes them feel angry and learn that everyone feels angry sometimes. They discuss what they can do when they feel angry including using their words, using **Slide breathing**, running on the spot or doing ten Jumping Jacks. They are reminded that it is OK to feel angry, but it's not OK to hurt others when they are angry.

Support your child: Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for your child to choose something that they can do when they are angry to help them feel calmer. If your child is angry, it is important to empathise and validate their feeling, to listen to them and to let them know that it is OK to feel angry.

Lesson 9: I can be brave

Children discuss when they were brave and share their experiences. They learn that being brave doesn't mean not being afraid, but rather not letting their fear or worry stop them. The children also share ways to help themselves to feel brave. They are introduced to the yoga pose **Mountain pose**, which they can do whenever they need to feel brave and strong.

Support your child: Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for your child to be brave whenever they need to be. If they are feeling anxious or nervous about something, you can remind them that they can be brave. They can try **Mountain pose** and tell themselves '*I can do it. I can be brave.*'

Lesson 10: It's good to be me

Children discuss what they like about themselves and are given suggestions based on the Character Strengths of Positive Psychology, for example, '*I like that I am brave, kind, funny, loving, hard-working, fair, helpful, friendly...*'

Support your child: Mo and Ko's challenge in this lesson is for your child to remember all of the reasons why they like themselves. You can comment on their positive traits as much as possible during this lesson and remind them of how much you love them.