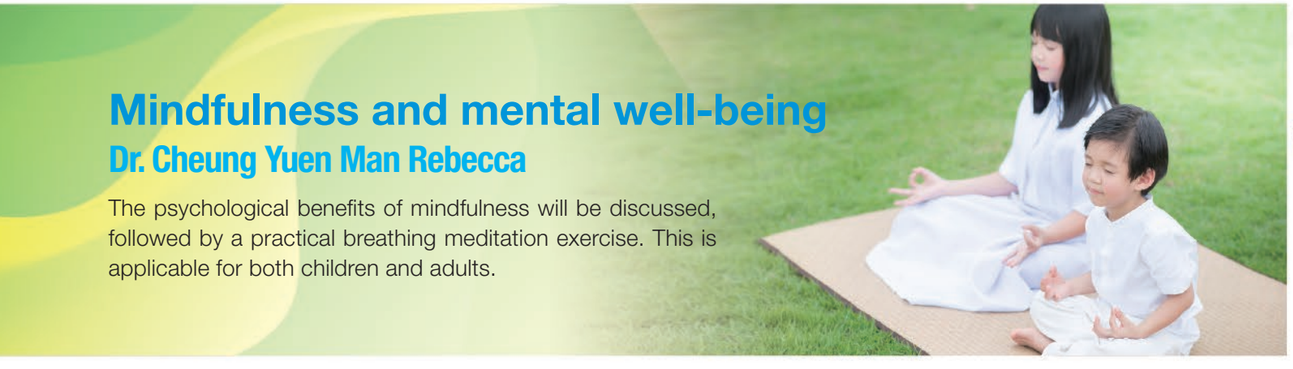
Maintaining positive well-being in the time of social distancing

To help control the spread of COVID-19, our practice of social distancing may lead to a sense of isolation. It is, therefore, very important to look after the well-being not only of children, but also of parents and teachers. Based on the research done by members of the ECE department, this series of short talks in Cantonese on 9 May (2 pm to 2:45 pm) will offer practical ways of promoting positive well-being. The video can be viewed on the ECE department's webpage (https://www.eduhk.hk/ece).



Mindfulness and mental well-being

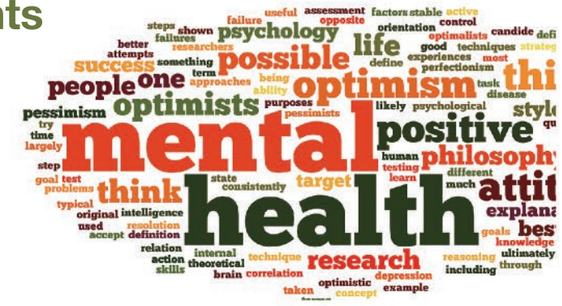
Dr. Cheung Yuen Man Rebecca

The psychological benefits of mindfulness will be discussed, followed by a practical breathing meditation exercise. This is applicable for both children and adults.

Enhancing emotional expressivity among children and adolescents

Dr. Ng Sau Man Catalina

The importance of being able to express feelings and emotions in relation to psychological health will be discussed. Practical tips for teachers and parents will be provided to help children and adolescents recognize and use words to describe their feelings and emotions, and also to apply strategies to manage emotions.



Self-control and well-being

Dr. Li Jianbin

Self-control and how it leads to better life outcomes will be discussed, followed by practical strategies to promote self-control.

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Rhythmic movement and early self-regulation

Dr. Alfredo Bautista
Associate Professor

In Hong Kong, the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (Curriculum Development Council, 2017) argues that music and movement foster the *holistic* development of children. Kindergarten teachers are therefore encouraged to implement a variety of music and movement activities, including moving to the beat and rhythm of music. In recent years, researchers have found that engaging children in activities that involve coordinated rhythmic movement has the potential to improve their self-regulation, that is, their skills to manage their behaviours, cognition and emotions. Self-regulation is a crucial foundation of school readiness, academic achievement, and lifelong well-being. It is estimated that 30% of young children display self-regulation problems, particularly among children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

"Rhythm And Movement for Self-Regulation" (RAMSR), developed in Australia by Dr. Kate Williams (2018), is a classroom intervention based on coordinated rhythmic movement. There are four main session plans. Each plan includes a series of rhythmic movement activities that involve beat synchronization and challenge one or more of the executive functions in a fun and engaging way. For example, there are start/stop games to foster inhibition, reversal of instruction games to enhance attention shifting, as well as activities that train children's working memory (e.g., remember the moves associated to different tunes). The sessions end with a yoga-based series of movements to target emotion regulation. Extension activities are provided to allow for increasing levels of challenge, accompanied with original sound tracks, low-cost instruments, and visual resource packs to provide rhythmic support. RAMSR is designed to be delivered by kindergarten teachers with no musical background, in a group setting with up to 25 K1-K3 children. Each plan is repeated four times. The whole intervention lasts eight weeks.

Our team is currently working with Dr Williams to translate the original intervention materials into Chinese (e.g., lesson plans, audio tracks, video demonstrations) and to pilot RAMSR in some Hong Kong kindergartens. In addition, our team is designing a course to train Hong Kong kindergarten teachers in RAMSR, enhancing their confidence in moving children to the beat of music. This course will involve face-to-face and online learning activities. It will be offered in 2021. If your kindergarten would like to get involved, please register at https://ramsrblog.wordpress.com/. There is an urgent need for this course because, according to our prior research findings, Hong Kong kindergarten teachers: (a) rarely conduct activities involving coordinated rhythmic movement in classrooms; (b) lack pedagogical strategies to systematically support children's self-regulation and; (c) perceive RAMSR to be a viable and powerful intervention to improve children's self-regulation in Hong Kong.

References:

Curriculum Development Council. (2017). *Kindergarten education curriculum guide: Joyful learning through play, balanced development all the way.* https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/ENG_KGECG_2017.pdf

Williams, K. E. (2018). Moving to the beat: Using music, rhythm, and movement to enhance self-regulation in early childhood classrooms. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 50*(1), 85-100. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-018-0215-y

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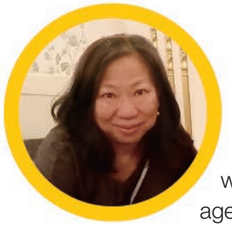
Movement Activity Teachings in the Early Childhood Context



Dr. Anita Tsui
Assistant Professor of Teaching

The movement skill acquisition window ranges from 2 to 7 years of age; children within this age experience fundamental movement phases (Donnelly et. al., 2017). Hong Kong preschools offer various types of core movement activities to aid children's physical development. Children dedicate a minimum of 30 to 60 minutes to physical activities in their daily Physical Education (PE) lessons. Physical activities are the epitome of hands-on learning. Early childhood teachers provide a broad spectrum of exercises and hands-on practices of movement activities based on diverse creative themes (e.g., animals, vehicles, nature, fruit, etc.). Such practices provide opportunities and experiences for unlimited exploration, imagination, and creativity (see Table 1).

Table 1: Movement activities for a class of K3 (Extracted from a classroom teacher's anecdotal records in various movement lessons)

Examples of Fundamental Movement Activities	Early Childhood Teacher Actions & interactions	Children Performance & interactions
Theme_Food Body Manipulative Activities (BMA) - Rolling on the mat	Children laid down on the ground (with a mat), and rolled from left to right. Teacher asked, "What are you doing?"	A child replied, "I imagine I am a sausage, rolling on the floor." Another child said, "I'm sushi, rolled up by laver. My body can roll up and roll away."
Theme_Vehicle Rhythmic Activities (RA) - A moving bus	Children followed the music and moved the bus in various ways. Teacher asked, "Why do you do this?"	A child replied "This is my own bus. I am the driver." "I have to wait for the traffic light." Another said, "My speed is 60 miles per hour."
Theme_Disneyland Body Manipulative Activities (BMA) - Static balancing with supporting activities	Each child selected a favorable character in Disneyland. Paired up with a partner, each child was required to perform a static balancing action in a few seconds for the partner's photo taking.	A child held up both arms and performed a static balancing action, said, "Buzz Light-year is my favorable character." "I like him."
Theme_Balloon Object Manipulative Activities (OMA) - Hitting balloons with different parts of the body	Each child hit a balloon with any part of the body (arm, head, hand, etc.). Teacher asked, "Why do you do that?"	A child replied, "It is a feasible way to pass the balloon. I can use my elbow and both hands."

As shown in Table 1, an extensive amount of discovery and innovative ideas were generated from young children, as demonstrated through their responses. The teacher's exploration and guided discovery teaching methods collectively enriched children's imagination and provided space for children to develop verbal and physical expressions. It is noteworthy that early childhood teachers should set their focus on children's learning processes in regard to movement activities, as opposed to task outcomes. In the preschool context, using demonstration and imitation or adopting exploration and guided discovery in PE lessons vary depending on teaching and learning contents. However, all the movement activities must be performed under a safe learning environment.

References:

Donnelly, F. C., Mueller, S. S., & Gallahue, D. L. (2017). *Developmental Physical Education for All Children: Theory into Practice* (5th ed.). Human Kinetics.

Movement behaviours around the clock

Dr. Catherine M. Capio
Assistant Professor

Across the globe, children are not sufficiently active. Reports gathered through a collaboration of 49 territories, including Hong Kong, have shown consistently low levels of physical activity among children (Aubert et al., 2018). This suggests that children may miss out on the benefits of sufficient physical activity that include physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional domains of development. A concerted, multi-sectoral effort to promote physical activity is warranted, especially for younger children because patterns of movement behaviours developed early in life could influence physical activity patterns that track to adulthood.

The World Health Organization (2019) recently released guidelines for younger children which put the spotlight not only on physical activity, but also on sedentary behaviours and sleep. Thus, the guidelines now highlight that movement behaviours across 24 hours need to be considered. These are consistent with territory-specific guidelines that had been released in Canada and Australia. Work to adapt the guidelines specifically to the Hong Kong community will be underway soon. In the meantime, it is important for early childhood educators to be aware of the relevant evidence-based guidelines, and contribute towards helping young children adopt healthy movement behaviours. To gain the most health benefits, young children should meet all the recommendations for physical activity, sedentary behaviours and sleep in a 24-hour period. However, it is important to remember that some physical activity is better than none.

For children in K1 to K3 of Hong Kong kindergartens, it is recommended that:

1. **throughout the day, children should spend at least 180 minutes engaging in a variety of physical activities at any intensity; at least 60 minutes should be of moderate to vigorous intensity (energetic play such as running, jumping, ball games);**
2. **children should not be confined in position (prams, strollers) continuously for more than 1 hour, or sit for long periods of time; screen time (tablet, mobile phone) should be no more than 1 hour and it is good to engage children in storytelling;**
3. **children should have 10–13 hours of good quality sleep (including nap time); regular sleep and wake-up times are encouraged.**

References:

Aubert, S., Barnes, J. D., Abdeta, C., Nader, P. A., Adeniyi, A. F., Aguilar-Farias, N., ... & Tremblay, M. S. (2018). Global matrix 3.0 physical activity report card grades for children and youth: Results and analysis from 49 countries. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health, 15*(s2), S251-S273. https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2018-0472

World Health Organization. (2019). *Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age.* https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/311664