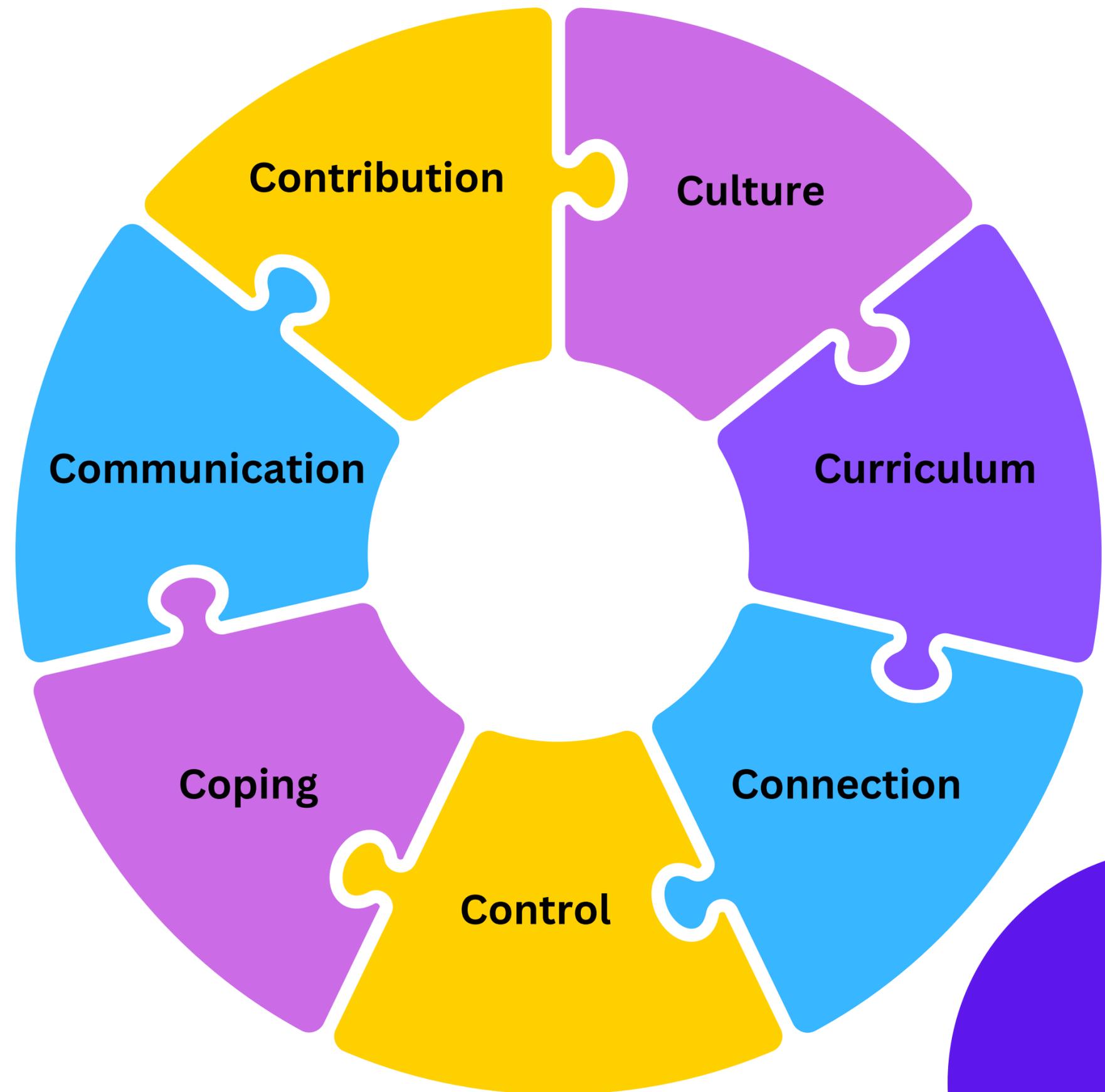


DEVELOPING

YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING



In today's world, prioritising children and young people's mental health is ever more important. We want children and young people to thrive - emotionally, socially and academically. A holistic approach is key and this 7 C's approach offers a great roadmap for fostering wellbeing in schools.



Culture

Creating a supportive, mentally healthy environment where everyone belongs

A positive and inclusive culture is the foundation of good mental health and wellbeing. This means creating environments where children feel safe, valued and respected.

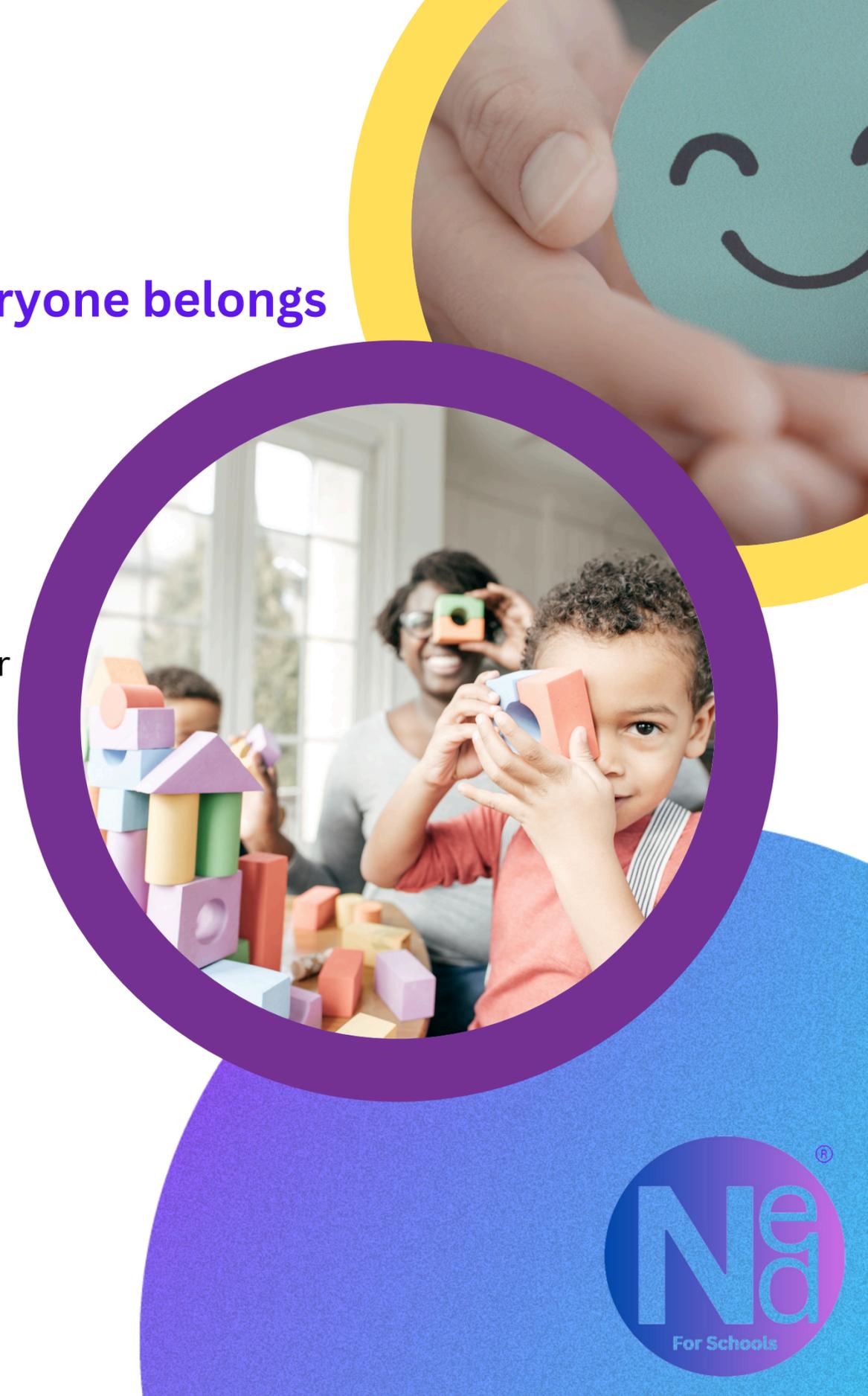
Sense of Community: Encourage a strong sense of community where students feel connected to their peers and the school as a whole.

Inclusivity and Belonging: Ensure all students feel valued and respected, regardless of their background, identity, or any challenges they may face. Foster a sense of belonging and acceptance by providing rich opportunities to participate, be involved, share opinions and ideas and gain personalised support.

Safe Physical Spaces: Ensure the environment creates a sense of safety with areas that promote calmness, spaces to reflect and areas for privacy for students to openly express themselves without fear of being overheard.

Atmosphere: Promote wellbeing through natural light, colours and bringing nature indoors. Access to comfort through weighted blankets, fidget toys, calming areas can also support regulation.

Graduated approach: A clear, robust graduated approach which identifies the different layers of support for mental health, which are accessible ensures clear signposting.



Curriculum

Integrating Mental Wellness into Learning

Mental health education should not be an add on or tick the box exercise; it should be well integrated within and across the curriculum. Schools play a vital role in equipping children and young people with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate their emotions and build resilience and self-efficacy. Consider:

Emotional Capital: You've heard of cultural capital and the same applies to mental health and wellbeing through building emotional capital - the ability to understand, manage, and express emotions effectively. It includes skills like empathy, self-awareness, resilience, and the ability to build healthy relationships.

“Best that has been thought and said”: Harnessing evidence-based practice such as Carol Dweck's 'Growth Mindset' or strategies for mindfulness.

“Essential knowledge and skills”: Promoting strong social and emotional programmes, emotional literacy and restorative practices such as conflict resolution to ensure a robust approach to enable children to understand their emotions and the emotions of other.

“Appreciation of human creativity and achievement”: Promote self-expression and creativity. Expose children to diverse forms of art, culture and forms of creative expression. Share stories of individuals who have overcome challenges and achieved great things. This can inspire students and give them hope in the face of their own struggles. Encourage students to embrace and explore others and their own unique talents and perspectives.



Connection

Building Strong Relationships

Strong, healthy relationships are essential for mental wellbeing, whether between peers, with adults or wider community connections. Children and young people need to feel connected to their families, friends, peers, teachers and communities. We can foster connection by:

Promoting Relational Learning in Schools:

- Teachers act as facilitators, mentors, and co-learners, building trust and rapport with their
- Creating opportunities for students to collaborate, support each other, and build a sense of community.
- Helping students find personal meaning and relevance in what they are learning.

Collaboration: Encourage students to work together, share ideas, and learn from each other.

Foster 'Quality Time': encourage children and young people to put down digital technologies and engage in the real world in meaningful activities.

Active Listening: Teach adults and young people how to truly connect through active listening skills.

Creating Opportunities for Social Interactions: encourage wide ranges of ways for children to connect with peers and in different groups including class, year group, school, small groups, extra-curricular, out of school teams and groups and leadership opportunities.

Give time to talk: In a busy school environment, giving time to talk can be overlooked but is vital to build connections as well as deepen our understanding and learning.



Control

Fostering a sense of agency

Fostering a sense of control is incredibly important for children's mental health as it reduces anxiety, builds confidence, increases motivation, promotes independence and builds resilience. Control can be fostered through:

- **Offer Choices:** Provide children with choices whenever possible, even small ones. This could be what to wear, what to eat for a snack, or which activity to do.
- **Create Structure and Routine:** While offering choices is important, children also benefit from structure and routine. This helps them feel secure and know what to expect.
- **Involvement in Decision-Making:** Include children in discussions and decisions that affect them so they are involved and can be part of the process.
- **Encourage Problem-Solving:** When children face challenges, encourage them to come up with their own solutions. Offer guidance and support, but let them take the lead.
- **Respect Their Opinions:** Listen to children's thoughts and feelings, even if you don't agree with them. Show them that their opinions are valued and respected.
- **Give Responsibility:** Assign age-appropriate chores and responsibilities. This could be anything from making their bed to helping with meal preparation.
- **Promote Independence:** Encourage children to do things for themselves as much as possible. This could be getting dressed, packing their lunch, or walking to school with friends. Encourage children to explore their own talents and strengths.
- **Be Supportive:** Let children know that you are there for them, no matter what. Offer encouragement and support, and help them learn from their mistakes.



Coping

Building Strong Relationships

Life throws curveballs, challenges and setbacks, as well as the positives. Learning how to cope with these, through developing healthy coping mechanisms is an essential part of wellbeing.

Promote healthy habits: Encourage positive self-care such as exercise, healthy eating and good sleep routines. Everyone's self-care will look different and that's ok. Encourage sharing ideas.

Set Realistic Expectations: Help children and young people set achievable goals and break down larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps both in learning and academics and for life transitions and goals. This helps them experience success and builds confidence.

Teach Coping Skills and Self Regulation: Equip children with strategies for managing stress and difficult emotions. This could include deep breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques, positive self-talk or problem-solving steps.

How can you help in your role?

Modelling: Children learn by watching us. Show them how you handle stress in healthy ways.

Teaching: Explicitly teach them coping strategies.

Creating Safe Spaces: Let children and young people know they are safe to talk about how they feel or challenges they are having, in trusted, confidential spaces.

Encouraging practice: Give them opportunities to practice coping skills in everyday situations. This also helps build resilience by creating new habits and ways of coping.

Being patient: Learning to cope takes time and practice. Be patient and supportive throughout the process.



Communication

Open and honest dialogue

Creating environments and cultures which encourage open and honest conversations about mental health and wellbeing and seek to reduce stigma, and allow children and young people to feel comfortable talking about anything without fear of judgement. This might include:

Champion a visible environmental presence: clear signposting and environment championing support for wellbeing and mental health.

Strong pastoral teams, policies and procedures: Ensuring everyone knows who to go to, where to go, what the expectations are for aspects such as behaviour and routines or what support they can receive.

Open dialogue: encourage conversations about mental health, wellbeing, feelings and emotions so everyone knows it is OK not to be OK, as well as promoting coping strategies.

Known pathways and targeted provision: Promote robust graduated approaches which are well-known in terms of how they are accessed and services that are provided.

Training for mental health conversations: Talking about mental health, especially if someone is in crisis can be difficult. Ensure staff have effective training to support mental health conversations and that there are people available to support children and young people requiring more specialist conversations or support.



Contribution

Finding Purpose and Meaning

When children and young people feel that they are making a positive contribution, it can boost wellbeing, self-esteem and a sense of purpose. These are all key components of positive mental health supported by positive psychology.

We can encourage contribution by:

Leadership Opportunities: Contribution should not be a token gesture, so if you have leadership opportunities, ensure they are meaningful and lead to empowering young people, not just ticking a box.

Volunteering: Involve children and young people in age appropriate volunteering within the school community or as appropriate, outside within their wider community.

Making a difference: Show children their actions can make a positive impact and plan events and actions, big and small to highlight this. Share how other young people have made a difference. Involve students in projects like environmental campaigns, fundraising for charity, or organising school events.

Student voice: Create platforms for students to share their opinions and ideas, such as student councils, surveys, or suggestion boxes.

Peer support: Encourage students to help each other through peer tutoring, mentoring programs, or buddy systems.

Display and celebrate contributions: Celebrate achievements and milestones to reinforce positive behaviours and build self-esteem and showcase these for acknowledgement and appreciation.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION OF SUPPORT DEVELOPING YOUR MENTALLY
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