

# Child Wellbeing and Human Flourishing



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Save Childhood Movement  
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For children the world has changed more rapidly in the last two decades than at any time in human history

The external pressures on natural childhood are enormous and growing



In many countries we are seeing a growing crisis in child health and wellbeing





## Childhood in a changing World

Erosion of family and community life  
Rapid expansion of screen technology  
Less physical activity

Less risk-taking

Less freedom

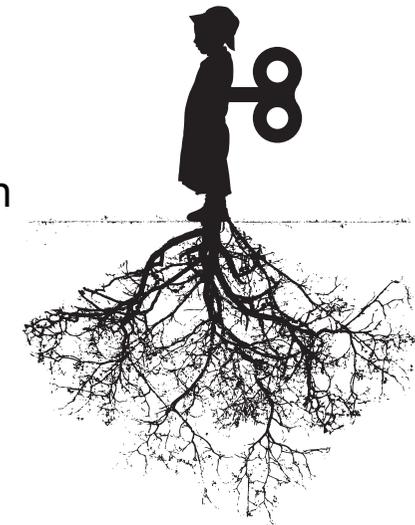
Less trust

Less access to nature

Pressures of commercialisation and sexualisation

Pressures of the digital world

Pressures of the schooling system



## What is our cultural image of the child and childhood?

Weak, fragile, needing constant adult input  
and guidance/shaping to master skills

or

Strong, capable, powerful and resilient natural  
learners with unique experiences and interests



In the UK and USA education has been seen primarily  
as the route to academic achievement and economic success

whereas in the Netherlands it is seen as the route to a child's wellbeing and  
their development as an individual (i.e social skills and character)

The defining feature of modern-day parents in the UK and USA  
has become anxiety and 'aspirational anguish'

**modern studies have revealed that the emotional wellbeing of children  
is just as important, if not more so, than any external validation of  
success**

## **Around the world people are concerned about the pressures on modern childhood and the erosion of child wellbeing**

**With increasing global interest in the development of child wellbeing 'indicators' (that measure how happy and healthy young children are)**

UNICEF 40 Indicators (6 aspects) of Child Wellbeing  
ONS 2011 Report on Measuring National Wellbeing  
Children's Society Annual Good Childhood Wellbeing Reports  
Scotland Eight Indicators Wellbeing Wheel  
Wales Children and Young People Wellbeing Monitor  
Jonathan Bradshaw – an index of Child Wellbeing in the European Union  
Hong Kong – Gross National Realisation Measurement

They also want to see a move away from very self-focused and individualistic definitions of wellbeing and success

To ones that acknowledge our fundamental connectedness, with the best interests of the self intimately interwoven with the best interest of others and society as a whole

i.e a more loving and interconnected world

**Creating a world  
fit for children**



There is growing interest in understanding the **'Ecology of Childhood'**  
and the vital importance of the environment

that children are

**'Young Citizens and the Holders of Developmental Rights'**

and that early childhood should be recognised as a **Unique**  
**(and hugely important) Stage of Human Development** in its own right

*(and not simply a preparation for school or adulthood)*

## What makes a 'good life'?

What most parents really want for their children is that they can achieve higher levels of health and wellbeing than they themselves had

We know that it's about more than simply being happy...the 'gold standard' of wellbeing is flourishing

Flourishing is a combination of feeling good and functioning to the maximum of our capacities

It is when our environments support us in being the 'best version of ourselves'



**GDP does not reflect all aspects of what makes a 'good life - 'Money is not everything'**

**We pay enormous attention to the wellbeing of the economy, but are not equally concerned about the wellbeing of our children**

*"The time has come for a new prosperity, one that takes flourishing seriously as the goal of education and of parenting"*

*Martin Seligman*

## Society flourishes when individuals flourish

Flourishing adults tend to miss fewer days of work, experience fewer physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, and are more productive at work

### What is wealth for?

The accumulation of goods? – or to help us achieve higher levels of wellbeing



Child development and wellbeing in the early years is significantly impacted by adult wellbeing



Children learn from the environment  
which includes the adults in their worlds



Adults can consciously change their environments  
Young children must live in the worlds that adults have created

Children learn from the environment

## What do we all need?

All human beings have **developmental needs** that motivate them and help them to grow. These start with feeling safe and secure, having enough to eat and drink and being able to make positive connections with others

and go on to help us make sense of the world  
and our place within it

For healthy development each of these needs must be addressed before the next one can be fulfilled

There are seven core human needs that need to be fulfilled for us to feel whole

Starting at the bottom



## 7 LEVELS

GROWTH

CONTRIBUTION

FULFILMENT

ENGAGEMENT

INDEPENDENCE

RELATIONSHIP

SECURITY



And these need are expressed through the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of what it is to be a human being



Depending on whether our early environments are supportive or limiting we will develop particular values and belief systems about ourselves and the wider world

**Positive environments will result in positive mindsets and dispositions and the healthy development of the child's sense of wholeness and self**



**Difficult or negative environments will result in limiting mindsets and dispositions and the compromised development of the child's sense of wholeness and self**



**Positive experiences within the environment will result in healthy growth and development**



**RELATIONSHIP**

Nurturing, Care, Affection, Attention, Feedback, Support, Validation, Patience, Respect, Satisfaction, Emotional Fulfilment, Humour, Laughter

**SECURITY**

Safety, Positive Contact with Environment, Health, Positive Physical Growth, Positive Neurological Growth, Familiarity, Comfort



**Negative experiences within the environment will result in compromised growth and development**



Neglect, Lack of Attention, Lack of Connection, Isolation, Abuse, Exclusion, Distrust, Control, Undermining, Disrespect, Dislike, Dissatisfaction, Sadness

Threat, Insecurity, Negative contact with Environment, Fear, Disassociation, Vulnerability, Compromised Physical Growth, Compromised Neurological Growth





# 7 LEVELS

## UNNATURAL GROWTH:

Potentially limiting mindsets and dispositions and the compromised development of the system as a whole



### GROWTH

Disconnection, Flatness, Lack of Meaning, Lack of Purpose, Sense of Loss, Sadness, Yearning, Isolation, Loneliness, Diminishment, Stagnation, Anger

### CONTRIBUTION

Feeling no-one cares, Anger, Frustration, Self-interest, Self-focus, Lack of concern for others, Greed, Arrogance, Superiority, Contempt

### FULFILMENT

Boredom, Frustration, Lack of Interest, Apathy, Avoidance, Greed, Unhappiness, Discontentment, Depression

### ENGAGEMENT

External Control, Rigidity, Predictability, Anxiety, Caution, Comfort with the Known, Addiction, Measurability, External Motivation, Need for Rewards, Pessimism

### INDEPENDENCE

Reliance on Others, External Discipline, Duty, Impatience, Passivity, Confusion, Self-Doubt, Negative Body Image, Fear of Failure, Inferiority, Value linked to things, Challenge as Threat, Lack

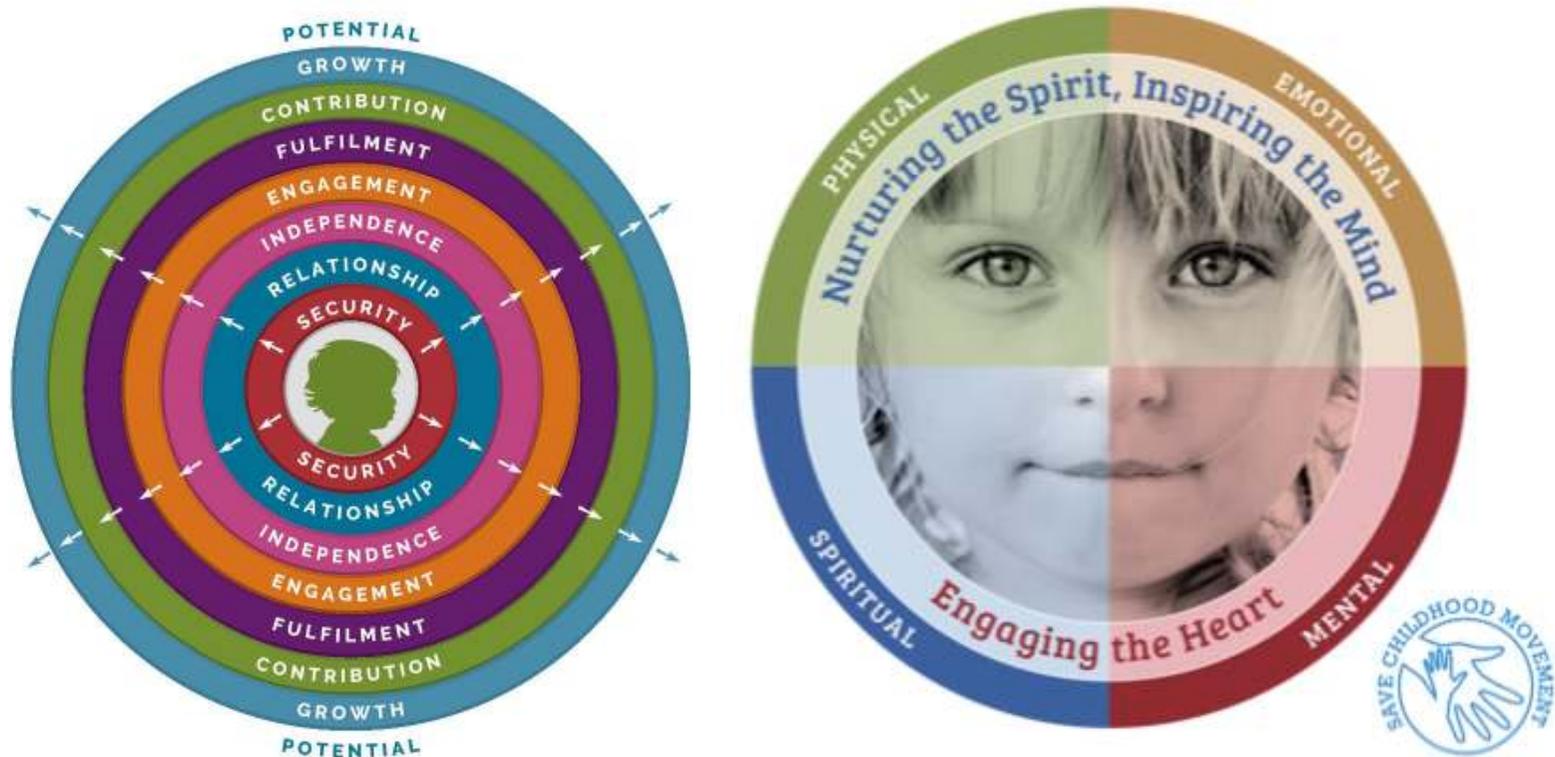
### RELATIONSHIP

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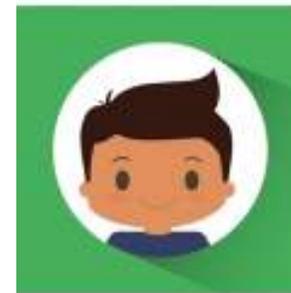
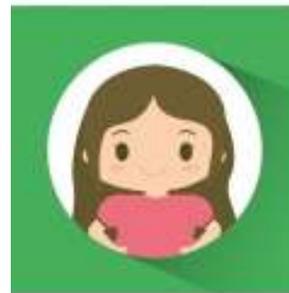
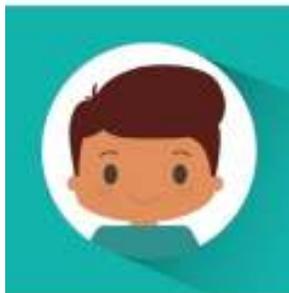
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**So it's important that we fully understand and support the development of the Whole Child**

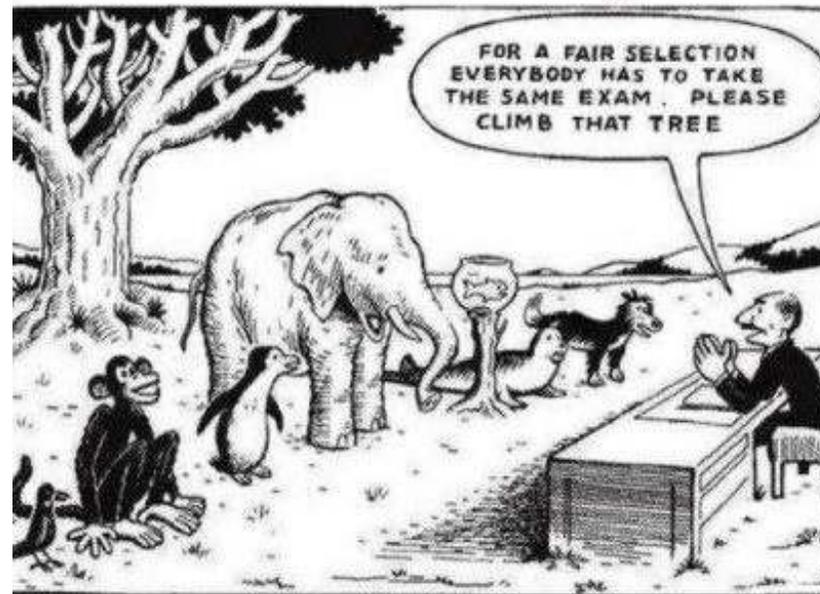


maximising capacities  
fulfilling potential  
  
and being able to become  
the best version of ourselves



Rather than focusing our attention on some aspects of children's development at the expense of others...

## Our Education System



If you judge a fish by its 'ability' to climb a tree, it will spend its entire life believing its stupid - Albert Einstein

We need to take a clear, hard look at our current  
cultural belief and value systems, as well as the  
decisions they produce

What kind of future are we creating for our children  
and young people?

*As a nation we pay enormous attention to the well-being of our economy, the state of the weather and sporting league tables, but we need to make more effort to monitor the well-being of our children. We need to devote more resources to understanding how they are doing and to ensuring that their childhood is as good as it can be.”*

**Jonathan Bradshaw**



## The Big Questions

What is the role of the environment in human development?

What is our image of the child and childhood?

What is the role of government in childcare?

What is the role of the school in society?

What is the definition of success?

What values do we want to see in society?

**What kind of people do we want young children to grow up to be?**

## What the movement is calling for...

- **Much more focus on what helps all children to flourish as happy, healthy, connected human beings**
- **A new evidence-based Science of Human Learning and Development**
- **A fully accountable cross party Department for Children and Families**
- **A Cabinet Minister with responsibility for Child Rights and Wellbeing**
- **Early Years policymaking in line with the UNCRC**
- **Holistic wellbeing tools and indicators**
- **An appropriately trained, valued and remunerated workforce**
- **A reversal of the funding curve to prioritise the vital importance of the early years**

**In an increasingly connected world  
young children are the future  
we cannot afford to get it wrong**



Wendy Ellyatt, Save Childhood Movement 2017



**Save Childhood  
Movement**

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**Putting Children First**