



The Little Book of
FLOURISHING

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There is
only one

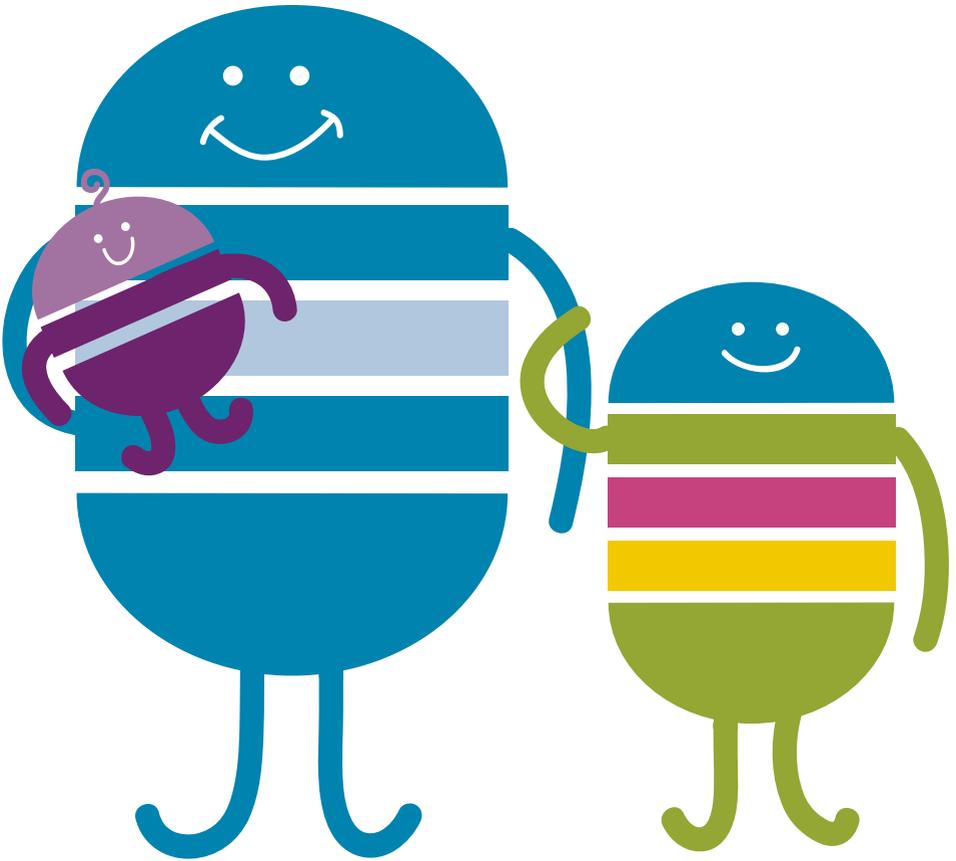
YOU

We all come into the world as
genetically unique human beings,
which is pretty amazing!

We also come into the world full
of wide-open possibilities



We now know that what happens to us in the first five years of life massively impacts on healthy gene activity. In fact, even before we are born, we are constantly tuning in to our mother's every action, thought and feeling – **which means that having happy, healthy mums and dads really matters.** Our parents and early care givers effectively act on us as genetic engineers.



So our genes (that we carry forward through the DNA of our family and ancestors) are really important in shaping who we are, but they are then altered and tailored by the experiences that we each have.

Only 50% of who we are is shaped by our genes - with the other 50% coming from the environment.

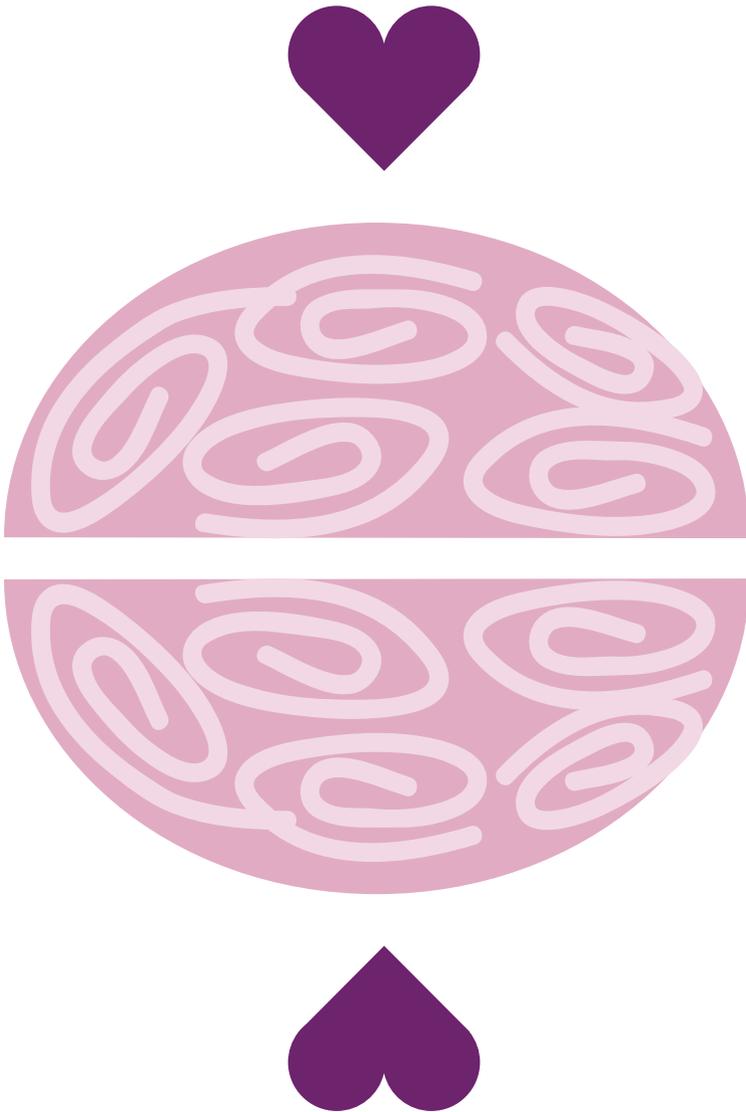
Both
nature
and
nurture
really matter





Resilient children are made, not born.

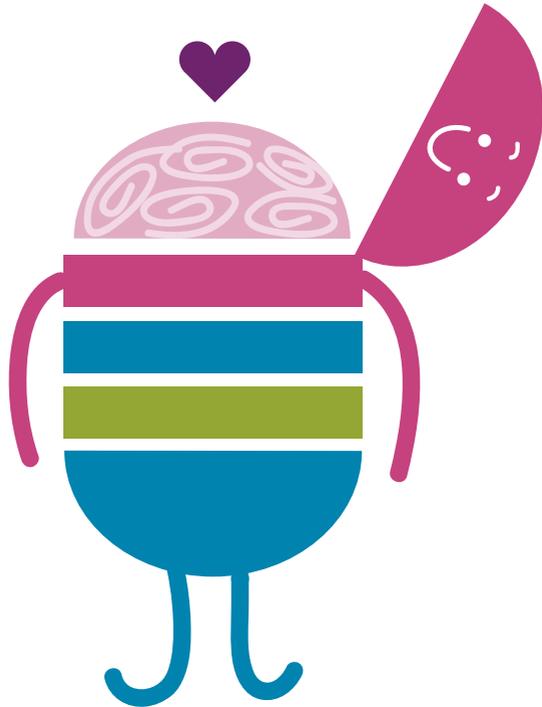
Children become resilient as a result of the levels of stress and nurturing that they experience early on in life. If our early experiences are dysfunctional they will lead to changes in the way we respond and behave. The healthier the relationships a child has, the more likely he or she will be able to recover from trauma and thrive.



The physical structures of our brains change with patterned, repetitive activity. The systems that get repeatedly activated are reinforced and re-shaped, whereas the systems that don't get activated diminish or stay the same.

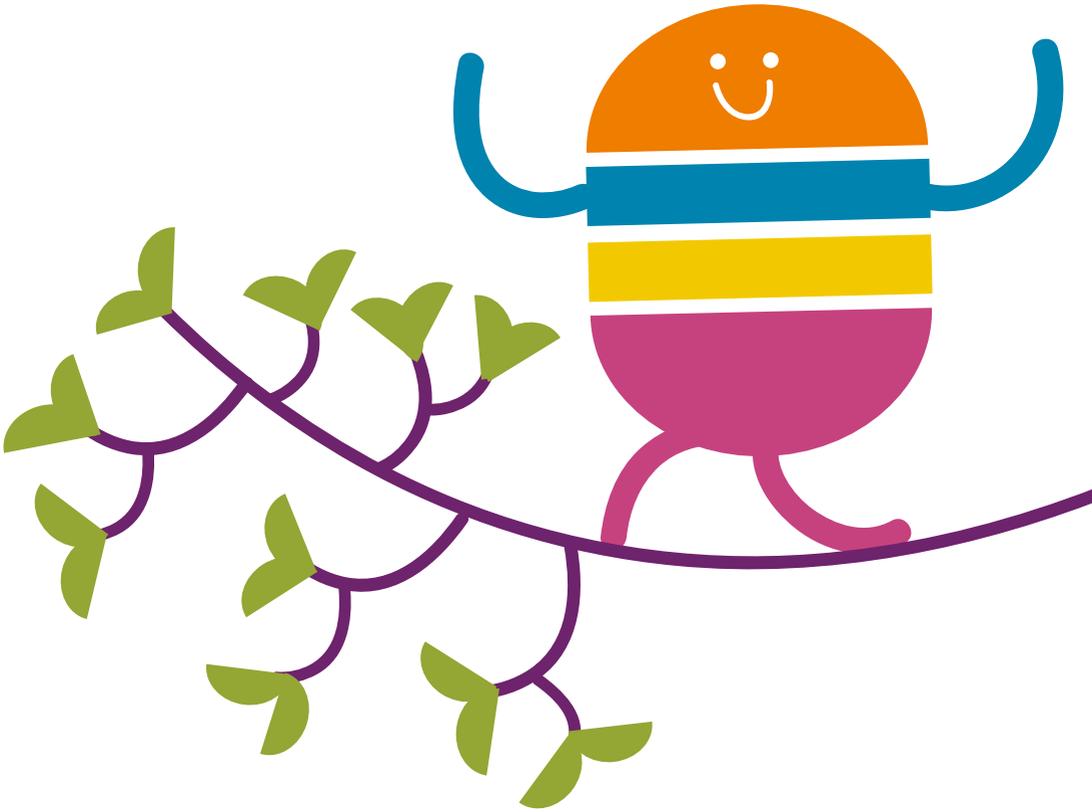


In the first few years of life there are critical periods of time in which certain large-scale wiring occurs in children's brains. These sensitive periods are developmental 'windows of opportunity' during which the child can learn specific concepts more easily and naturally than at any other time in their lives. An example of this is the acquisition of language. Children effortlessly learn how to communicate in their mother tongue, but later on in life learning new languages becomes much more difficult.



Our brains are constantly changing as they adapt to our unique set of experiences in the world and the first few years of life are critical for the acquisition of certain capacities and skills.

Neural systems organise themselves in a very structured way. This means that the development of the less mature regions depends upon the incoming signals from the lower, more mature regions. If one system doesn't get what it needs when it needs it, those that rely upon it may not function well, even if the stimuli that the later developing system needs are being provided appropriately.



The key to healthy development is therefore getting the right experiences in the right amounts at the right time.

You can't accelerate the process without potentially undermining the brain's essential building blocks.

SEVEN CORE NEEDS

All human beings have the same core needs that underpin our happiness and wellbeing

SECURITY

We all need a safe and secure place to grow

RELATIONSHIP

We all need to love and be loved

INDEPENDENCE

We all need to feel strong
and independent

ENGAGEMENT

We all need to explore and take
risks in order to learn

FULFILLMENT

We all need to test our skills and know
that we can overcome challenges

CONTRIBUTION

We all need to contribute to
something greater than ourselves

GROWTH

We all need to expand who we
are and what we know



As we grow we learn to...

As we grow we learn to prioritise and value some needs over others and we have to develop our core life skills in worlds that are very different.



If the environments that we grow up in are positive and nurturing we are able to maximise our natural development and potential – which helps us to grow up as happy, healthy and fulfilled adults.

But if we grow up in difficult or stressful environments our natural development is sacrificed to help us survive – and we are less likely to become happy, healthy adults.



So 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 and nurturing environments will result in positive mindsets and dispositions and the healthy development of the child's sense of wholeness and self.

Negative or limiting environments will result in limiting mindsets and dispositions and the compromised development of the child's sense of wholeness and self.

SEVEN LEVELS

*Foundations
of wellbeing*

SECURITY



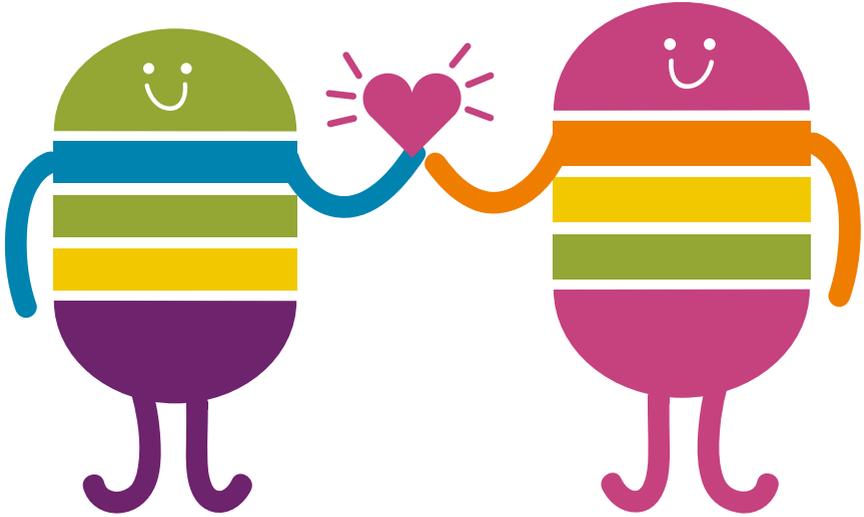
NATURAL GROWTH

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

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

RELATIONSHIP



NATURAL GROWTH

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

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

INDEPENDENCE



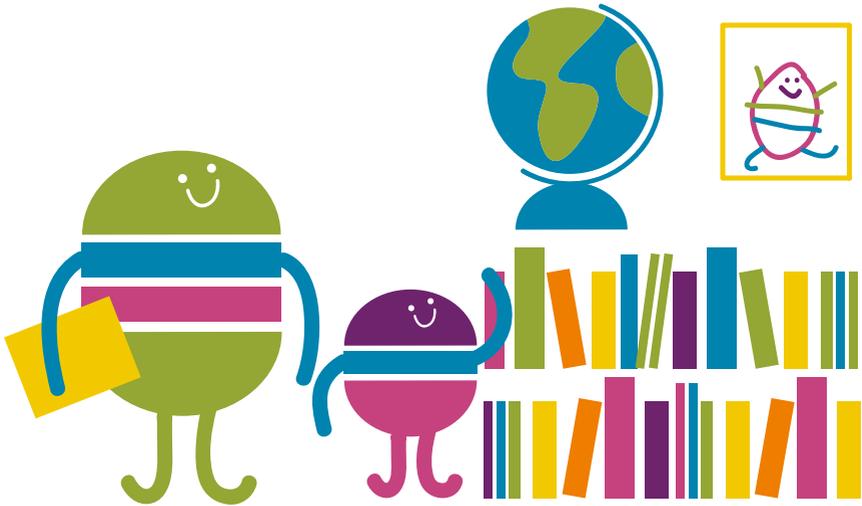
NATURAL GROWTH

Self Mastery, Self Regulation, Internal Discipline, Physical Achievement, Positive Body Image, Intrinsic Motivation, Confidence, Challenge as Learning, Knowledge

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

ENGAGEMENT



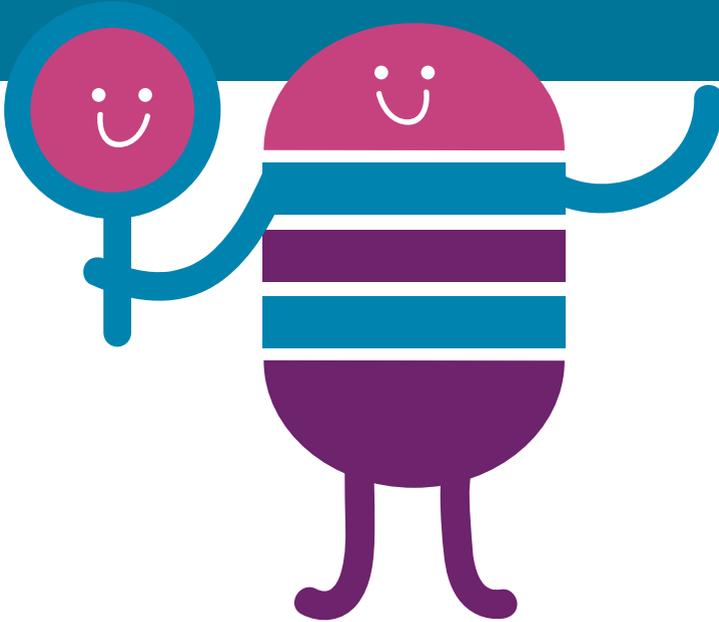
NATURAL GROWTH

Concentration, Purpose, Play, Flow, Risk-taking, Problem-Solving, Excitement, Creativity, Curiosity, Desire to Explore, Desire to Learn, Resilience, Optimism

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

FULFILMENT



NATURAL GROWTH

Self Expression, Self Reflection, Personal Challenge, Thrill, Satisfaction, Authenticity, Integrity, Joy, Contentment

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

CONTRIBUTION



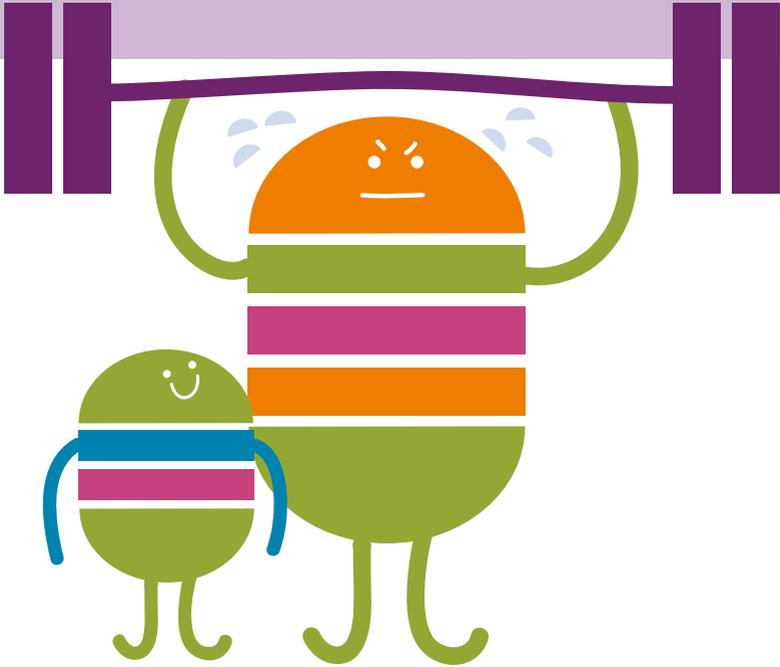
NATURAL GROWTH

Feeling that you matter, Having a Voice, Sense of Connection, Collaboration, Caring for Others, Empathy, Openness, Inclusion, Trust, Compassion, Humility

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

GROWTH



NATURAL GROWTH

Passion, Purpose, Expansion, Vitality, Abundance,
Wisdom, Sense of Wonder, Awe, Love

UNNATURAL GROWTH

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

Ten Things to Remember

- 1.** We are all born different (which is amazing and important)
- 2.** Both nature and nurture matter (we are not ruled by our genes)
- 3.** Our early experiences literally shape the architecture of our brains (which is why the early years is the most important period of our lives for later wellbeing)
- 4.** Brains need lots of experiences to grow (and in the early years it is important that this means real experiences in the real world)
- 5.** Brains never stop changing and adapting (we are not our labels and can always learn new things)
- 6.** We have lots of different intelligences (we are not designed to be interested in or good at the same things)
- 7.** Our intelligences are dynamic (we are designed to constantly seek out new learning and challenges)
- 8.** Risk and failure matter (we will not learn unless we take risks and challenge what we already know)
- 9.** Playfulness and creativity matters (we are designed to think out-of-the-box and be playful explorers of the world)
- 10.** Flourishing happens when our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs are being met through our experiences in the outside world



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with grateful recognition to Richard Barrett



www.flourishproject.net