

Discovery's tailored approach to using Be You

Video transcript

One of our mantras at Discovery is that happy educators make happy families and happy families mean happy children.

If we don't have mentally healthy educators, they're not being their very best when they're working with children.

So the mental health and wellbeing of our educators is integral to our operation and the Be You resources have really made it happen.

Discovery Early Learning Centres is a family-run organisation. We started with two services back in 2008 and we now have 23 services across Tasmania with over 450 staff.

We operate in some very vulnerable communities which adds an extra layer of challenge.

Every community is very different. They operate differently, they think differently, they have different values.

So our services reflect those values. Our organisational structure is a circular model.

The child at the centre with the rings of support around them. So when we critically reflect on what we're doing, we say, "what's best for children in this space? How can we improve our practice for children in this space?"

From resources to environments to the way we interact with them, to the conversations that we have with them, to the experiences that we have on offer with them, everything is about the child and their wellbeing.

Discovery has been working with Be You since its inception.

I'm very passionate about and my team of managers are very passionate about including it in all of our programs.

We use the mental health and wellbeing continuum that Be You have to ensure that staff in our workplaces support each other and are part of a mentally healthy community when they're at work so they recognise and respond to people who are needing help and we know what to do when someone does reach out.

One of the really great things about Be You is that it's not a set framework. You get to pick and choose the way that you use it and you can adapt the resources to be beneficial for each community or each service that you work in.

You use them to develop understanding, use them as professional development tools for educators and use them in the way that your service needs them. Discovery Early Learning Centres works on a champion model in our services.

Our champions all have access to the same resources, but they all use them in very, very different ways, and part of Lizzie's role is to work with the champion to make sure that they're implementing it in the best way possible for their community and their service needs.

All of the Be You champions from our services across Tasmania will meet three to four times a year.

It's opportunities for us to come together and share what we've been doing in our own communities, challenges that we may have faced and things that we've been able to achieve and do within our own communities.

It's very beneficial coming together and talking about our own experiences and sharing that with the team at an organisational level because most likely if one service is facing a challenge, another service may be facing that exact same challenge.

Some of our services, we have really large amounts of children that have additional needs and additional support needs with their behaviour or with additional medical needs.

We use the Be You resources to make sure that we're inclusive of all children in that space.

Every service is different in that and every program that we run is different because of the different needs of each child, and the Be You resources being as flexible as they are mean we can pick and choose the bits that we use and implement.

The thing that has always stuck with me with Be You has been the importance of teaching children language so that they can register their emotions.

It's not that long ago in the sector that we just told children to, "calm down, stop crying, you're okay!"

Now it's, "oh, I see you're upset. Let's talk about registering your emotions, so that we can give you tools to deal with it in the future."

Be You has been really great for that.

At the moment, we are really trying to get a great understanding of the Be You framework across all the staff and really embed that holistically, giving educators a window into understanding health and wellbeing and giving us tools about how to talk about it with children and families in a way that's non-judgmental and supportive and based on evidence.

As Be You has become more embedded in our practice, I found our conversations have become more critical, more reflective, and definitely more empowering for the educators.

Because we're able to access evidence-based research in a way that's so accessible and specific to our sector, we are able to make real change. Mental health is a big thing and it's one thing I personally am a big ambassador for.

Going on to Be You I've found some tools and some strategies that I've used. For example, some of the children that have come to me say they don't feel welcomed and I'm just like, "look tell me why you are not feeling welcomed.

Express to me why that is. It's okay to feel these things. What can I do to help you?"

I had struggled a lot with my personal mental health and so being able to go through what I've gone through, to incorporate and to be able to connect with children and know that they can come to me and they can blurt out whatever they feel in confidence and know that I'm there to listen to them.

Yeah, it's really nice. As Be You has grown and developed into the wonderful resource and support network that it is now, Discovery has grown with it.

We really want to continue to grow and learn and use the Be You resources more in our daily practice and to make sure that all of our educators have a vast amount of knowledge in this space.

Mental health and wellbeing is at the forefront of what we need to be thinking about every day.

We need to be using that lens when we're analysing our educational programs, our environments, our curriculum and the way that we work with communities.

That really is the way that we are working with children in the future.

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