You can think of child mental health as your child’s feelings, moods, emotions and behaviours. Together, these make up your child’s wellbeing. You can help your child to develop positive wellbeing from the moment they are born by providing a secure and consistent parenting style with lots of love, hugs, attention and encouragement.

**Promoting child mental health**
It is not possible to eliminate all the risk factors that could negatively affect your child, but there are things that you can do to buffer those risks, reduce the impact of a stressful time, and help your child to build their resilience.

**Maintain routines**
Routines can help your young child and baby to feel secure. A routine around nappy changing, bedtime and meals provides structure and predictability for your child.

**Listen to your child’s concerns**
Having an adult to talk to when they’re worried, one who won’t judge and who will listen carefully, is an important factor in children’s mental health.

**Build a network with other adults**
Your relationships with the other adults in your child’s life – their child and family health nurse, early childhood staff, and family and friends – is not only good for you, but good for your child. Modelling healthy relationships and helping your child to feel part of a community network contributes to developing mental wellbeing.

If you’re ever concerned about how your child is going with their mental health, there are places where you can go for help. Speak to friends, your GP or child and family health nurse, and find reliable information from evidence-based websites such as Raising Children Network, raisingchildren.net.au and KidsMatter, www.kidsmatter.edu.au
In the early years, your child experiences positive and negative influences. All of these influences affect the way that they develop.

As a parent, you are working hard to increase the number of positive influences for your child, and reduce the negative ones.

What can you do to tip the scales in favour of positive influences for your child? You can:

**Encourage your child to have positive expectations for themselves and for the future**

In the early years, your child is constantly learning and experiencing new things. Believing that they will figure it out when your child tries to do something new and that things will work out for the best helps to build persistence and self-confidence.

**Help your child to develop a sense of independence**

As your child grows and develops, they begin to express themselves and explore their world independently. You can encourage your child’s growing independence by providing opportunities for simple decision making, such as offering a choice between two different vegie sticks at snack time.

**Encourage your child’s communication, problem-solving and social skills**

Babies are communicating from their earliest days. When your baby cries, smiles or grimaces, your appropriate and attuned reaction helps to develop their communication and social skills.

**Help your child to learn to regulate their own emotions**

For your child, learning to regulate emotions is an important part of promoting mental wellbeing. Encourage your child to express their negative feelings without hitting or yelling; to express enthusiasm without being over the top; and to manage impulses by trying to stop and think before speaking or acting.

Positive experiences and influences help your child to tip their scale in the direction of healthy development. With healthy early development, your child can establish a great foundation for lasting health and wellbeing.