

The Connection Between Early Literacy and Mental Health

Early literacy isn't just about teaching children to read; it's about opening doors to a world of possibilities. It encompasses the acquisition of language skills, the ability to understand and communicate thoughts and emotions, and the development of cognitive and emotional resilience. Here's how early literacy lays the foundation for strong mental health:

Language and Communication: Early literacy fosters robust language skills, empowering children to express themselves effectively. This ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings is a fundamental component of good mental health.

Emotional Intelligence: Through stories and narratives, children explore a wide range of emotions, helping them understand, manage, and express their feelings. Early literacy nurtures emotional intelligence, a crucial factor in mental resilience.

Self-Esteem and Confidence: Conquering the world of words boosts self-esteem and confidence in children. These attributes are essential for mental well-being, enabling children to face challenges with optimism.

Cognitive Development: Reading and early literacy activities stimulate cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. These skills are not only vital for academic success but also for mental agility and adaptability.

Imagination and Stress Relief: Books transport children to magical worlds, sparking imagination and creativity. This imaginative space serves as a therapeutic outlet for processing emotions and relieving stress.

Read to Me Project is changing lives forever.

Founded in 2011 by a speech and language specialist, Read to Me Project (RtMP) was born out of a deep concern for children entering kindergarten with significant literacy deficits. These children, often from low socio-economic families, faced educational disparities that threatened their mental well-being.

RtMP's mission is clear: to preventively address the low literacy crisis, ensuring that every child has a strong foundation in early literacy skills before they enter school. RtMP uniquely reaches little ones ages 6 months to 5 years through their older siblings in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. It empowers children with the tools they need to succeed academically and emotionally, setting them on a path towards brighter futures.

A Call for Help

You can be a part of this transformative journey. Your contribution will directly impact children in Monterey County's no/low literate families by offering them the gift of early literacy that will yield a strong foundation for their academic success, communication, emotional intelligence, and cognitive development, all of which are vital for good mental health.

Please visit montereycountygives.com/read to make your donation to the Read to Me Project and your generosity will be percentage matched today through December 31st.

For more information go to readtomeproject.org



Research reveals that the impacts of childhood literacy extend beyond academic, social, and economic achievements to physical and mental health outcomes (Johnson et al., 2022).

In aging adults, reading and literacy are proven to impact long-term cognitive health. In their extensive research on aging, Galit Weinstein, Ella Cohn-Schwartz, and Noam Damri, posit that “early-life book-oriented environment may be important in shaping cognitive aging... and to slower cognitive decline, independently of education and life-course factors such as health, lifestyle, and socioeconomic indices.” (2021).



The connection between early literacy, success in school, equitable opportunity for achieving one's dreams, and ultimately healthy aging is a profound relationship that for local under-served children begins with the Read to Me Project.

