



# Building strong relationships with families using Be You

With the support of Be You, Sacred Heart Early Learning Centre is focused on establishing and nurturing authentic and collaborative relationships that allow children, educators and families to feel safe, secure and thrive.



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# How to use this story

This story shows how Sacred Heart Outside School Hours Care service developed relationships with children and families using the Family Partnerships domain and other resources from Be You to foster the mental health of children.

**Who is this story for?** Action Teams looking for ways to developing relationships with children and families using Be You.

**When could we use this tool?** When developing your Action Plan as a way to share learning and discuss change to practice as a learning community or Action Team.

**How can our Be You Consultant support us to use this tool?** Contact your Be You Consultant to provide your Action Team with advice and support every step of the way.

**There are some great links at the end of this pdf:**

- Be You resources
- Implementation articles
- Sessions and Events.



Sacred Heart Outside School Hours Care is one of Discovery Early Learning Centre's 23 services, all of which are actively engaged with the Be You initiative.

Joey Williams is Sacred Heart's Outside School Hours Care Person in Charge. She says working through the Partner and Assist modules within the Be You Family Partnerships Professional Learning domain has been a turning point for her in terms of building and nurturing relationships with families.

"Forming strong relationships with families is the most important tool that you can develop as an educator," she says.

"It ensures that there is meaning behind every conversation you have and that families feel safe leaving their child with you.

"Be You has provided a variety of amazing templates and informative documents that have really impacted the way that I have progressed into this part of my career in



Joey Williams, Sacred Heart's Outside School Hours Care Person In Charge.

the leadership team. Communication hasn't always been my strongest suit, but utilising Be You's family and partnership-based resources has really supported me."

Particularly, says Joey, in having difficult conversations with families, about emerging behaviours of concern.

“If we do have a child that may have an additional need or require a lot of behavioural support, it’s important to remain sympathetic and empathetic during those moments,” says Joey.

“Be You has provided me with the language and the knowledge to ensure that when I’m having those exchanges, families recognise that I’m coming from a good place of support and that I’m there alongside them, on their journey.”

## Joey and Payton

One relationship that has really blossomed at Sacred Heart is the one between Joey and Payton. They are both palawa, Tasmania Aboriginal people. That shared experience has helped Joey build trust, and allowed her to support Payton in developing social and emotional skills.

*“Forming strong relationships with families is the most important tool that you can develop as an educator.”*

– Joey Williams, Sacred Heart’s Outside School Hours Care Person In Charge.





Joey and Payton's relationship has blossomed at Sacred Heart.

"She's always been an incredibly bubbly and happy, and enthusiastic person," said Joey.

"I think with my support and through our relationship, she's become an advocate for those around her.

***“Be You has provided me with the language and the knowledge to ensure that when I'm having those exchanges, families recognise that I'm coming from a good place of support and that I'm there alongside them, on their journey.”***

– Joey Williams, Outside School Hours Care Person in Charge.

"I've noticed over the last year, and I'm not sure if it's just my influence or if it's the schools or her growing as a person, that she is always consistently looking out for somebody that she can support, someone she can play with, someone that she can adore."

### **Mia's success story thanks to Be You**

Whenever Adam James arrives at Sacred Heart to pick up his daughter Mia from Outside School Hours Care, he's always greeted by the familiar face of Jonelle Crawford, the educator Mia has chosen as her safe person.

"The consistency of staff and the faces that we see is a huge benefit," says Adam, who describes the relationship his family has with Jonelle and other Sacred Heart educators as essential.

“Mia has some challenges around self-regulation. She can feel really strongly about things that perhaps you wouldn’t expect. Certain things can knock her off kilter and she finds it really hard to get back to a regulated, calm state,” says Adam.

Before Mia hops in the car to go home, Jonelle and Adam always take the opportunity to chat.

“Jonelle and everyone at the service have been really proactive in helping us to understand what’s been going on, how Mia’s day has been,” says Adam.

“And the handover that we get at the end of each day sets us up for the evening shift, if you like.”

In a mark of what’s a genuinely reciprocal relationship, what’s shared during the regular afternoon catch-ups helps Jonelle, too.



Mia and her dad Adam at drop off.

“For example, Adam and I might talk about what Mia has been enjoying doing at home so we can try and incorporate that into our program,” she says.

Mia and Payton play together.



*“Be You has supported us in creating a baseline of what to expect from our educators around staffroom culture, as well as just creating a healthy environment.”*

– Jonelle Crawford, Educator at Sacred Heart



Jonelle Crawford at Sacred Heart.



### Joey's Be You journey

- 1 Joey was looking for tools and resources to improve her communication skills with families.
- 2 The Be You Family Partnerships domain and modules provided her with the confidence to discuss these ideas with her leadership group.
- 3 Joey now has the knowledge to open discussions with families and show that she's coming from a place of support.



“We're working with Mia, her family and the teachers at her school to find a way for Mia to be happy to come to after-school care.”

Like Joey, Jonelle credits Be You with helping her understand both the value of strategies like this and how to action them.

“Be You has helped me develop mutual trust with families through having open and honest communication about their child's days – and particularly with Mia, who needs all-round support from everyone, including her parents, myself and the school.”

### Educator relationships are prioritised

Jonelle describes the culture at Sacred Heart as being like a little family.

“We're all very close, and the health and mental wellbeing of our staff and children are

Discovery's number-one priority. Joey credits Be You with helping her, too.

"Be You has supported us in creating a baseline of what to expect from our educators around staffroom culture, as well as just creating a healthy environment."

Ben Kikkert was, until recently, Sacred Heart's Director.

With lived experience of what a positive impact Be You can have across an entire learning community, he claims the initiative's heavy reliance on evidence-based strategies is a big plus.

"At Sacred Heart, the long-term aspiration is to increase the holistic understanding of things like wellbeing and supporting strategies for children, families and staff across the service. The aim is to embed it so that every staff member has a shared understanding based on great information," he says.



***“It can be really scary for a child to have something happen to them in terms of feeling angry or frustrated and not be able to name what it is.”***

— Ben Kikkert, Sacred Heart Director.



“Be You is so good at that because the modules have a really strong foundation in research and current theory.”

Ben mentions that it sets educators up for the future, too.

“There’s a feeling in our services culture that we have a responsibility to new people coming into the sector; to teach and nurture them to be the best educators they can be,” he says.

“We all believe we have an obligation to do a great job teaching and mentoring those entering the sector, and hopefully by doing



### **Ben’s advice for building relationships with Be You**

- 1** Start with knowing children and seeing the whole picture including relationships, environment and time.
- 2** Work together to establish authentic partnerships with families based on your shared goal of supporting children and young people
- 3** Use evidence based Be You PL Family Partnerships module to learn ways to communicate about mental health with families
- 4** Be You Fact Sheets are a great way to share information with other educators about social skills and family relationships.
- 5** Work as a team to build children’s sense of security, identity and autonomy.
- 6** Use your Be You Champion to keep motivated and maintain momentum.
- 7** Keep connected to your Be You Consultant to continue building a mentally healthy community for everyone.

that, it’ll eventually have great outcomes for children not only at our service, but across the whole sector. That’s the hope and the goal.”

### **From little learnings, big relationships grow**

Ben believes that the way Be You equips educators to help children register their emotions is one of the initiative’s most powerful impacts.

“It can be really scary for a child to have something happen to them in terms of feeling angry or frustrated and not be able to name what it is,” he says.

“Registering these emotions is key because it gives children an understanding of what’s happening so they can start to put into place things to regulate and deal with it.”

He says that prior to Be You, this concept flew under the radar for educators.

“Actually, before Be You, it wasn’t really on the radar at all. If we don’t have a really good





Una Lalagavesi, Discovery's Manager of Quality, Culture and Operations, with Sacred Heart children.

understanding of this as educators, the children aren't going to learn the best practice to manage their health and wellbeing."

"Be You has been really great for that, for giving educators a window into understanding mental health, and giving us tools to talk about it with children and families in a way

***“Be You has been really great for giving educators a window into understanding mental health, and providing us tools to talk about it with children and families in a way that’s non-judgemental, supportive and based on evidence.”***

— Ben Kikkert, Sacred Heart's Director.

that’s non-judgemental, supportive and based on evidence.”

Often, that triggers an important ripple effect.

“Our educators will be helping a child register their emotions, providing empathy and support, and then, all of a sudden, you’ll notice a four-year-old go up to a three-year-old who’s crying and sit down, put their arm around them and say, “Are you feeling okay? You look a bit sad. Do you need a cuddle?”” says Ben.

“That is literally like magic because that child has learned empathy, as well as how to teach others about wellbeing and health. They’ve learned to express how they’re feeling, and that it’s okay to feel and talk about it. That’s what we’re aiming for with all of our children.”

**If you’d like to connect with a Be You Consultant and begin your Be You journey, register as a Be You Learning Community and join a Be You Essentials event to discover what [Be You](https://beyou.edu.au) has to offer.**

# Reflective questions

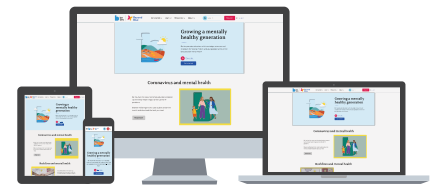
**How can the learnings in this story be used to start a conversation with a family in your learning community?**

**Do you have some examples and strategies of how you already connect with families?**

**How does your approach change from family to family?**

**What has this story made you think about your practice and how you build relationships with families?**

## Here are some links to additional Be You resources that might also be of interest.



### Be You resources

- 1 [Family Partnerships domain](#)
- 2 [Partner](#) and [Assist](#) modules
- 3 [Early Support domain](#)
- 4 [Educator wellbeing resources](#)



### Implementation Support articles

- 1 [A focus on help seeking in my learning community](#)
- 2 [Welcoming and connecting with families](#)



### Sessions and Events

- 1 [The benefit of building family and community partnerships](#)
- 2 [Transitions: preparing children and young people for change](#)

### Be You stories

- 1 [Kids Capers North Lakes and family partnerships](#)
- 2 [Bright Sun Family Day Care and educator wellbeing](#)



Looking for more inspiration? Why not watch the [video](#) associated with this story or share in your meetings.

Find us on

