

'Hygge' in a Playwork Setting

Hygge is a Danish word pronounced 'Hyoo-Gah' and conveys feelings of coziness, warmth and togetherness, of enjoying the simple pleasures in life and being in the moment, all of which bring contentment. Perhaps in Welsh it shares some meaning with the concept of 'Cynefin' – the place where we feel we belong and where the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable.

What's more, as with many of these best things in life, hygge is free – or at least very cheap. Ranked as one of the happiest nations in the world, the Danes must be getting something right by incorporating Hygge into everyday life.

Focusing on children's wellbeing and helping them develop a positive mindset and habits is fundamental for their lifelong health and happiness. This is particularly important with clubs telling us there are more and more children attending with wellbeing and support needs [National Club Survey Report 2023]. Experiences that evoke Hygge will differ from person to person, but there may be some shared elements you can incorporate in a playwork setting that create warmth, togetherness and happiness all around. Think:

- Conversation and stories around a fire with some food cooked outdoors after a day of playing hard.
- Building a cosy den or getting comfortable under a shady tree, depending on the season.
- Learning about one another over a craft activity or muddy play.
- Sipping hot chocolate on a cold day.
- Calming music and scents.
- Twinkly lights.
- Cosy corners/dens to reflect, spend time alone or to read.

Making special experiences and moments with friends and adult Playworkers builds fond childhood memories which evoke feelings of 'Cynefin' or belonging and 'Hygge'. That feeling of belonging contributes to happiness, and comfort in venues which may not initially be thought of as cosy and homely.

Meik Wiking highlighted 10 core elements in his [The Little Book of Hygge](#).

1. Atmosphere – creating a cosy and relaxing, homely atmosphere
2. Presence – focusing on their current interests in the present moment
3. Pleasure – promoting happiness and wellbeing
4. Equality – respect for others
5. Togetherness – spending time with friends and family
6. Gratitude – taking time to reflect and talk about what they are grateful for

7. Harmony – enjoying playing together and not focusing on competitiveness
8. Truce – learning to manage conflict and share experiences
9. Comfort – a relaxing and comfortable environment
10. Shelter – a space to relax

How to recreate this in your setting

- Provide a cosy feeling with the use of cushions, rugs, soft blankets and lamps. Building dens and tepe tents give the children opportunities to relax and snuggle down throughout the day. In summer, move these cushions and blankets outside, under a shady tree.
- Twinkly lights, LED candles and soft glow lamps provide an ambient atmosphere for the children to explore and investigate in. Use these alongside the natural light that shines through the large windows and doors.
- Calming zen/spa music playing throughout the day to enhance the relaxing atmosphere which can help improve moods and reduce stress levels.
- Natural scents from herbs, oranges and foods dried in the oven and from flowers that are changed to suit the season. Think herbs, oranges, pumpkin spice around Halloween and cinnamon or clove for the Christmas period.
- Take inspiration from the Muslim recognition of Ramadan and its connection with kindness and gratitude.

Create a calendar with children with gratitude/kindness prompts e.g. smile at someone, ask someone if they would like to play with you, say 3 good things about yourself, share what moment of today was special.

- Enjoying the simple pleasures in life and the environment around us: enjoying the outdoors and bringing nature indoors.
- Nature walks and collecting/playing with natural loose parts such as fallen leaves, branches, feathers, shells and flowers.
- Foraging/gardening and creating your own feast.
- Baking, planting flowers and reading stories. Let children explore in their own time, as much as they want to.

Find out how your childcare and play setting could become an accredited 'Hygge in the Early Years Early Childhood Provider' by visiting <https://www.hyggeintheearlyyears.co.uk/hygge-accreditation>

References

- [The Feeling Of 'Hygge' And How We Can Implement This Feeling Into Childcare - School of Play](#)
- [Hygge in the early years - What it is and how to do it | Enabling Environments | Teach Early Years](#)
- The Little Book of Hygge, The Danish Way to Live Well, [Meik Wiking](#)
- [Cynefin \(Cwlwm\)](#)

