

Unlocking Childhood

with Mary Hewitt

Portfolio of Sessions

Mary is a Pedagogical Leader, Speaker, and Writer from Ontario, Canada with 15+ years of experience in the Early Learning field and a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education.

At the heart of all her sessions, she aims to empower educators, families, and communities to:

- re-connect with their own humanity,*
- honour the humanity of others, and*
- cultivate a renewed sense of purpose by way of these common threads.*



On Mental Health & Well-Being

BIG Emotions and Little People



In this session, educators will learn how to support children as they navigate BIG emotions while nurturing their emotional competence and well-being.

Through approaches such as Conscious Attunement© and Sensory Shifting©, educators learn to first meet up with their *own* emotional world from a place of compassion and care, and then *translate* this new way of being to their practice with young children.

Finding Your "Well": An Educator's Unexpected Path to Long-Term Well-Being



This session examines the impacts of societal messaging and pressures (“the cultural backpack”) on the educator today and explores ways to “return to self”—following intuition instead of expectation—and approach life and work from a place of being ‘well’ (according to their own inner compass) , instead of being ‘good’ (according to other’s standards, needs, and expectations).

This highly-liberating, heart-opening session is sure to empower educators to let go of what’s unhelpful and diminishing...allowing true nourishment and intentional living to emerge both professionally and personally.

Nurturing Children' Mental Health in Today's World



In this session, we examine the current landscape of children’s mental health in a post-pandemic world, the psychological impacts of the past several years, and how we can thoughtfully re-build for a brighter future in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Specifically, we also explore what it means to support children in finding and nurturing what makes them ‘well’, while releasing our unconscious expectations for compliance and conformity.

On Trauma-Informed Care

Creating Trauma-Informed Programs in Early Childhood Education



What is childhood trauma? What are the developmental impacts of childhood adversity (ACEs)? This session begins by exploring the ground-breaking research which helps us more clearly understand how trauma influences the trajectory of an individual's life. From there, we explore early trauma's impact on attachment and connection.

We then shift our attention to the impact of positive childhood experiences (PCEs) and good relational health in the early years—including the incredible impact of warm and responsive educators, the role of 'rhythm' in children's healing, and effective strategies to co-regulate with children experiencing triggers related to their traumatic histories.

The Unspoken Trauma of Hidden Neglect in Early Childhood



Childhood neglect is often overlooked and misunderstood, and yet, it can be the most damaging of all forms of trauma.

In this session, we explore: What is 'hidden neglect'?; How might neglect manifest in children's behavior?; And, as educators, how can we thoughtfully respond in empowering ways that remind children of their innate, unwavering worthiness.

Honouring Children as they Navigate Grief, Loss, and Change



Children experience grief, loss, and change too. Understanding how to support them in meeting up with these human experiences, instead of suppressing them, is key to ensuring they remain connected to their own humanity and the healing process.

In this session, you will gain the tools and perspectives necessary to respect, honour, and nurture children as they 'weather the storm' and help them pave a new way forward in their transformed world.

On *How* Does Learning Happen?

BELONGING: Through the Lens of Neurodiversity



What is the true meaning of belonging? And, how does learning about the research on loneliness, isolation, and the troubled history of inclusion in Canada—help us better define true belonging?

In this session, we explore How Does Learning Happen?'s BELONGING Foundation from the perspective of inclusivity and nurturing neurodivergent ways of being.

Together, we will explore concepts such as the role of 'ableism' in shaping our practice; how to 'presume competence' for all children; and what it means to create spaces and relationships with children that honor neurodivergence and true belonging.

More than Materials: Creating ENGAGING Invitations for Play and Learning



How do we create engaging environments and invitations that truly meet up with the minds and hearts of children?

In this session, we explore How Does Learning Happen?'s ENGAGEMENT Foundation through the lens of Materials and Invitations for Play.

We will explore the important research surrounding "awe" and partake in exercises that re-acquaint us with our own deep sense of awe and wonder. In doing so, we can truly see the world (and materials!) through the 'eyes of a child'—an essential element to offering engaging opportunities in our programs.

Educators will also have the opportunity to live-into engagement by creating their own invitations for play, developing their understanding of the 'educator as provocateur' and immerse themselves in learning about the role of 'emergence' in children's play.

On *How Does Learning Happen?*

WELL-BEING: Through the Lens of Attachment



What is attachment? How do children’s early attachments shape their developmental and relational foundations for life? What is the Attachment Lens © and how can it positively impact our practice as educators?

In this session, we explore *How Does Learning Happen?*’s WELL-BEING Foundation from the perspective of childhood attachment theory. We will learn how attachment creates a “blueprint” for the many ways children show up in the world, and how to foster secure, healthy bonds with the children in our care.

The Art of EXPRESSION



Young children are meaningful ‘initiators’ and equal partners when it comes to contribution and communication in the classroom. And, the ways they contribute and communicate come in many different forms.

In this session, we explore *How Does Learning Happen?*’s EXPRESSION Foundation from the perspective of art and creativity. We will learn what it means for children to be a ‘maker’, a ‘maker-artist’, and an ‘artist’—as well as the benefits of each of these forms of creative expression.

We will also learn how to notice, engage, and nurture children’s creative voices by leaving judgment and fear of the unknown/novel ‘at the door’ AND re-framing creativity itself as a living, breathing entity in our programs!



Igniting AWE and WONDER: Re-Imagining Our Materials and Spaces in the Natural World



In this session, we take a deep-dive into understanding how ‘awe and wonder’ transform our perspectives of natural materials and environments.

From there, we will create nature-based invitations for play, discovering how entering ‘the mind of the child’ changes our overall approach in real-time.

We will then explore “inspiring outdoor environments”, reflecting on the values educator’s hold as the backdrop to the creation of these contexts. We will also dream about our own natural environments and imagine the possibilities that exist—and are simply awaiting us!

On Timeless Practices in Early Learning

*The *MAGIC* of Music and Movement*



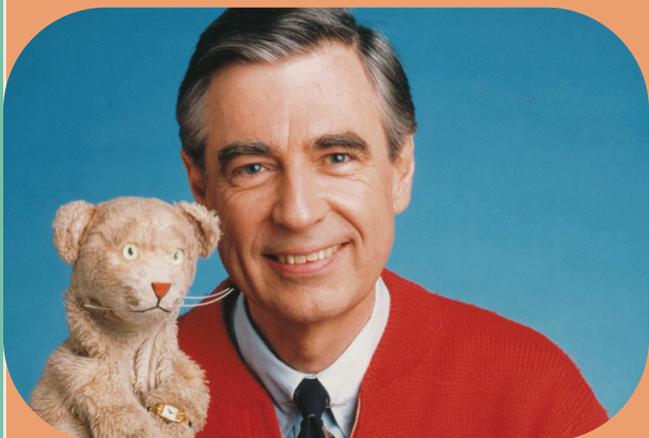
Together, we will dive-into the theory and research underneath why music and movement are essential elements of our everyday practice in early learning classrooms and programs! We will explore how music and movement support children's well-being during some of the trickiest times of day—TRANSITIONS!

Also, come prepared to LEARN, SING, MOVE, and DANCE during this special session! Prepare to leave this experience more informed—but also deeply inspired—and with a “toolbelt” of activities, songs, dances, fine motor & big-body movement experiences you can implement in your programs right away!

And, learn about inspiring musical and movement-based invitations, materials, and environments for play AND spend time dreaming about the possibilities for your own programs as well!

Let's get back to important “roots” of our practice—songs, dances, poems, and nursery rhymes—with a session dedicated to these time-honored traditions in ECE!

The Wisdom of Mr. Rogers: Puppetry, Storytelling, and Imaginative Play



Dust off the puppets, felt boards, and small-world playthings... it's time they found their way back into our programs!

Rooted in the wisdom of *Mr. Fred Rogers*, we explore how these timeless tools:

- ~ support children's early development,
- ~ offer us an array of methods to engage in meaningful Storytelling experiences with children *while* building empathy, perspective-taking, problem-solving skills, and a sense of relational safety among children, and
- ~ how to leverage these tools as "blank canvases" or "open ended materials" for children's emergent and/or recounted storytelling and imaginative endeavors.

On Leadership

Humanity-Driven Leadership in Today's World



How does 'the history of work' during the Industrial Revolution impact the ways we think and behave as leaders today?

Together, we will unpack the cultural baggage of historical, top-down approaches to leadership. From there, we will explore the research surrounding 'what employees are looking for' in workplaces, especially since the many shifts that emerged post-pandemic.

Finally, we will learn what it means to implement a Humanity-Driven Approach © to leadership—wherein teams feel authentically seen, heard, and valued in the workplace.



Nurturing Intentionality in Teams: a Values-Based Approach to Practice



In this session, teams are facilitated through a process of inquiry which helps them establish their individual, core values. From there, we examine how these values "show up" in their practice, and where they can continue to *grow-into* their values at work.

Each individual has the opportunity to communicate these insights to their team in a collaborative discussion, increasing understanding and cohesion amongst colleagues.

*By request, formal '*Values Statements*' can be created for attendees to carry forward from this session as a launching point for ongoing reflective practice.

*By request, a '*Visioning*' workshop can also be offered as an extension to this session, with teams facilitated through the creation of '*Collaborative Vision Boards*' for their programs.

On Parenting and Families



Raising Resilient Children in Today's World

In this session we explore key facets pertaining to the role of parenting, including:

- ~ 'Hardwired for Connection' (the role of early attachment and serve/return)
- ~ Supporting Children's BIG Emotions (and our own!)
- ~ Establishing Healthy Boundaries with Children
- ~ Technology and Children's Mental Health
- ~ Whole-Family Well-Being, and
- ~ Nurturing Children's Competencies

This session is also accompanied by a takeaway e-toolkit of key learnings, reflection questions, and infographics to support parents in taking next steps towards nurturing their family dynamic.



Weaving Wisdom: Authentically Co-Creating Early Learning Programs with Families



Deeply valuing perspectives, voices, and contributions of families is central to the work we do every day in EarlyON and Child Care Programs.

In an effort to explore this core practice further, during this session we will explore the concept of "family engagement" through the lens of the Funds of Knowledge Approach, New Zealand's Te Whariki Curriculum, and foundational anthropological research on family experiences. Together, we will deepen our understanding of how to recognize, truly value, and incorporate the wisdom of families attending our centres.

To complement this learning, we will also explore 'psychological de-centering' as a beneficial form of mindfulness for EarlyON and Child Care Program facilitators, which equips us to engage in relationships and interactions with families, children, colleagues, (and ourselves), from a non-judgmental, open stance—ultimately enabling us to better understand the individual's lived experiences within our programs and beyond.

Frequently Asked Questions



? Does Mary offer ongoing Communities of Practice as well?

Yes, Mary offers an ongoing, Communities of Practice model. She calls these "*Pedagogical Partnerships*", emphasizing the dual commitment required in this format to ensure impactful learning for all!

? Does Mary travel out-of-town for session delivery?

Yes, Mary travels internationally to deliver her sessions!

? Does Mary offer free consultations to learn more about her services?

Yes! Before committing to a specific session or series, you can reach out to Mary and book a free video/phone consultation.

? Who are Mary's typical audiences/clients?

Early Childhood Educators, Leaders, EarlyON Facilitators, Kindergarten/Primary Teachers, Parents/Caregivers, Child-Centered Professionals, Community-Based Family Organizations, and beyond.

? What are the possible delivery options for sessions?

Mary offers her sessions *virtually* or *in-person*. That being said, some specific sessions are best suited for in-person delivery.

? How much does Mary charge for her sessions?

A number of factors determine the cost of sessions, including: audience size, modality, session selection, etc. If you provide Mary with these specifics in your request, she can promptly provide you with a free quote.

Are you ready to collaborate?

Reach out to Mary at
unlockingchildhood@hotmail.com

Unlocking Childhood

with Mary Hewitt

More About Mary...

Mary Hewitt, founder of Unlocking Childhood, is an experienced public speaker, writer, and consultant specializing in the well-being of children, parents, educators, and child-centered professionals. With 15 years in the Early Learning field as a classroom educator, early childhood education professor, and early years system leader—she leverages her expertise to develop engaging and meaningful learning experiences for her clients. Mary holds a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education, a Bachelor of Education degree, a diploma in Early Childhood Education, and a Psychology degree.

She has captivated audiences up to 500+ attendees and has delivered her work in a variety of contexts from large-scale arenas to individual classrooms. Mary offers *keynotes, workshops, conferences, virtual sessions, and even one-on-one coaching and consultations*. She has appeared as a guest on several podcasts and as a writer for various publications.

Mary credits her eclectic experiences, extensive education, and neurodivergent mind for her dynamic approach—and is passionate about sharing it with the world!

Mary resides in rural Ontario with her husband and beloved dog.

 Find Mary...

[Facebook](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[WEBSITE](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)

or, e-mail at:

unlockingchildhood@hotmail.com

