

## **Well-being and failure to thrive – a need for both humanistic and scientific understanding**

*By Anders Lindelof*

The article is based on the increase in people with psychiatric diagnoses and the need for psychiatric treatment that we have seen over the past several years. The development has challenged the capacity of psychiatric institutions, which is why, in recent years, there has been a political will to prioritise the psychiatric system. A “10-year plan” to secure psychiatric treatment has been launched in Denmark, which is put into a historical context of psychiatry that shows that psychiatry’s target group was originally insane people but now primarily deals with non-insane people. However, due to psychiatry’s natural scientific base, the approach is roughly the same and is based on both an individualistic and a positivist foundation. Next, I look at societal trends such as increased individualisation, demands for performance, and increased pace and complexity in society. At the same time, there is an increasing understanding of medicalisation and psychologisation. With these in mind, we can possibly understand part of the increase in people with psychiatric needs. Following this, I argue that securing mental well-being requires a focus on psychiatry and educational/humanistic work that ensures a framework for good well-being. The latter seems to have been under-prioritised in recent times.

## **Body, psyche and self-regulation – Somatic Experiencing and the Polyvagal Theory in pedagogical practice**

*By Christian Dalgas & Carsten Møller (Illustrations by Niels Rahbæk)*

Focusing on the Polyvagal theory as described by Stephen Porges, and on the trauma treatment method known as Somatic Experiencing, this article explains how knowledge of the way the human nervous system constantly and autonomously works to regulate the internal arousal state of the individual can be helpful for teachers and pedagogues in their daily interactions with children. From our point of view, children need to learn how to deal with the rather intense states of arousal that arise in the body every time the nervous system reacts to a real – or imagined – danger. We describe key aspects of the development children need to go through in order to learn how to manage these states of high arousal, and we give recommendations as to how parents, teachers and pedagogues can help children go through this development.

## **STIME**

### **– cross-sector collaboration on children and young people’s mental health**

*By Lisbet Tuxen & Anne Suurballe Tornelund*

STIME (Strengthened Cross-Sectoral Effort for Child and Adolescent Mental Health) is a collaborative model in Denmark that combines municipal and child psychiatry services to address mental distress and symptoms in children and adolescents. Developed in response to increasing mental health challenges, it offers a holistic approach through five specific treatment paths such as anxiety, self-harm, and inattention. The treatment, based on cognitive behavioural therapy, adapts psychiatric methods to a municipal context, ensuring timely support for families. Positive feedback from families and schools in Tårnby Municipality highlights STIME’s effectiveness. Starting from 1 July 2024, all municipalities are required by law to provide accessible treatment for mental distress, with STIME supporting this new framework. It has also led to greater specialised knowledge within organisations, improved staff retention, and a deeper understanding of the child’s challenges through involvement with the learning environment.

## **Dynamic assessment**

### **– the forgotten little brother in cognitive testing?**

*By Jens Wilbrandt & Simon Wilbrandt*

The article looks critically at educational psychological services (EPS) and explores the possibility of dynamic assessment being a valuable approach in EPS. Dynamic assessment is a method that focuses on a child’s learning opportunities rather than their current performance. Dynamic assessment focuses on exploring the learning process and potentials by integrating guidance in a test-intervention-test format. This approach aligns with Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development, emphasising the potential for cognitive change and development. Dynamic assessment can provide detailed insights into a child’s cognitive challenges and the effectiveness of interventions, making it a valuable tool for pedagogical and psychological practice. While norm-based testing remains useful for certain purposes, dynamic assessment offers a complementary approach that can enhance educational and psychological support for children.

## **Hypnosis and hypnotherapy as a method**

### **– treating functional abdominal pain**

*By Anna Knakkegaard*

Functional abdominal pain (FAP) is common in children and adolescents, significantly impacting their quality of life. Hypnotherapy has proven to be an effective,

non-invasive, and resource-efficient treatment, using guided visualisations and positive suggestions to strengthen internal resources, self-esteem, and confidence. Adaptable to individual and digital formats, hypnotherapy is accessible to more families and offers documented long-term benefits. This article examines its mechanisms, evidence base, and potential integration into early intervention services like PPR (Pedagogical Psychological Counselling).

## **Best for Us**

### **– A boost for children and young people with mental health problems and mental illness that require treatment**

*By Anna Sofie Hansen, Jacob Davidsen, Søren Paaske Johnsen, Anne Gulbech Ording, Klaudia Kristensen, Malene Terp, Birthe Dinesen, Marlene Lauritsen, Jan Mainz, Anna Pacak-Vedel & Thomas Szulevicz*

Best for Us is a 5-year mission-driven project that aims to develop and implement an improved regionally anchored family-centred stepped-care model that ensures faster assessment and more and better treatment in time for children and young people with mental health problems and mental disorders.

Best for Us has two general paths: 1) Improving the cohesiveness of care pathways for CYP with mental health problems and mental disorders and 2) Delivering more timely treatment within child mental health services of superior quality. This paper gives an overview of Best for Us. The core principles of the co-creation approach applied across Best for Us as a fundamental principle is outlined. The paper describes specific new models and innovations to support better cross-sector collaboration and treatments developed as part of Best for Us, as well as what research efforts Best for Us will link to the new municipal treatment offer which will be implemented as part of the Danish national 10-year plan for psychiatry and mental health.

## **How do we “treat” young people at risk of crime?**

### **– Experiences with “On the Right Path” in Aarhus**

*By Jette Petersen*

Young people who are the most at risk of becoming delinquent and have anti-social and/or abusive behaviour are a major challenge for our schools and society. Two important questions arise: 1) Should we try to treat these young people for their challenging behaviour, or should we give up on them? 2) Should we segregate these young people to separate locations away from public schools or try to solve the problems as close to public schools as possible? In this article, I present an approach to helping these challenged students get back on track, an approach that is based on established psychological research and 17 years of work developing ‘On the Right Path’.

## **“Unified through Anxiety”**

### **– Time has come to understand and treat anxiety in children and teenagers in a different way**

*By Gry Andersen Teichert, Ditte Juul, Sisse Malene Trier Nielsen  
& Bjørn Michael Mikkelsen*

This practice article was written by school psychology practitioners in Viborg Municipality in Denmark. It presents the anxiety treatment intervention “Sammen om angst” (unified through anxiety). It was and is still being developed and implemented in Viborg Municipality by the authors. It is a model for systemic family therapy and joint action plans concerning children who express anxiety to a degree where they feel limited in their daily lives. It is based on a transcontextual framework and focuses on context management, subjective experience and meaning and by the child’s involvement. Viborg Municipality states that “the joined professional position is that we are to focus on the context and our own and others preconceptions in the understanding of children’s (lack of) well-being and challenges concerning learning and health”. What are feelings, then? What is anxiety? We, the authors of this article, understand feelings not only as a condition or disposition for action but as a reaction closely linked to our values and needs. With that understanding, it holds great importance that our society has a social discourse that focuses on managing feelings and behaviour instead of being concerned with what the feelings are trying to express to us – what they are trying to communicate, what we are to understand and learn as a family, as professionals, as a community, as a society and as a system as a whole. With this article, we wish to share our experiences with you in the hope that we, professionals and parents alike, will understand (the behaviour and feelings of) our children and young people as whistleblowers who put something important on the agenda for the benefit of us all.