

**BEING,
BECOMING** AND
THRIVING AS AN
**EARLY YEARS
PRACTITIONER**

A Guide for Education and Early Years Students and Tutors

**ANNIE
PENDREY**



A **David Fulton** Book

Being, Becoming and Thriving as an Early Years Practitioner

Being, Becoming and Thriving as an Early Years Practitioner captures the authentic and often humorous experiences that occur when working with young children, providing a comprehensive and accessible guide to the reality of early years practice. Designed to support practitioners through the early stages of their careers, it reveals what child development theory looks like in practice through real-life examples and case studies alongside guidance on practitioner well-being, continuous professional development (CPD), and studying alongside work.

The book is structured around three key themes: **BEING**, **BECOMING**, and **THRIVING**. Each theme is divided into several chapters, and they cover a range of topics which will support you on your academic and professional journey including:

- Being a reflective practitioner
- Inclusion
- Key theorists
- Creativity
- The foundations of Play
- Reflection and Reflective Practice
- Continuous professional development

Aligned to some of the core components for Early Years and Education, the book blends theory and practice with humour and honesty, revealing what makes the Early Years such a magical sector in which to work. Including tools and activities to support your

professional and academic journey, this is an essential read for any early years student beginning their Early Years journey.

Annie Pendrey is an educational consultant, lecturer, and creative researcher. Annie is studying for her PhD and is the author of *The Little Book of Reflective Practice* and *Reflection and Reflective Spaces in the Early Years*.

Being, Becoming and Thriving as an Early Years Practitioner

A Guide for Education and Early Years
Students and Tutors

Annie Pendrey

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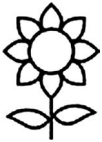
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My final thanks go to YOU, for picking up this book and beginning to interact with our words that we have chosen wisely from all our years of Early Years professional practice.

Introduction

Beginning Your Journey

Starting any new experience can be filled with a mixture of anxiety, trepidation, and excitement. As a NNEB to established author, I am always appreciative of anyone who chooses to read my words. So, thank you for choosing to pick up this book, which I hope will support you in your studies and/or professional practice. This is a book that combines my many years of Early Years practice and my teaching career from Early Years to Higher Education.

As you begin to make a start to read, interact, and reflect upon the contents of this book, I hope you will find its contents useful and applicable to your academic and professional studies. I hope you find the case studies and reflections shared by other professionals and parents' useful.

Much like a sunflower, which I chose for the cover of the book, I would like you to consider the start of your journey just as the sunflower does, as a seed. This is your **BEING**: the beginning of your professional journey where you discover your sense of being and reflect upon who you are as an individual and an early year's practitioner.

Following being, I would like you to imagine how a seed is then transported to a pot where it belongs for a short while whilst it germinates. During the germination stage, the seed is nurtured with water and sunlight in the hope it begins to shoot and be strong enough to then be planted outside where it will turn its face to the sun and **THRIVE**.

Introduction

I have used these themes which I very much hope you can relate to in your journey into Early Years, where you will develop from **BEING** to **BELONGING** and to **THRIVING**.

Each theme is divided into several chapters. As a student, you may wish to begin with the theme of **BEING** and work through the book systematically. Having said that, as you begin to work on your assignments, observations, and reflections, you may interact with different themes and chapters according to your needs. As a tutor or assessor, you may wish to move between themes and chapters to support the delivery of modules.



Each chapter begins with a short introduction and the learning opportunities you will explore. The learning opportunities are represented as ‘seeds of knowledge’, and each seed is a different topic within the chapter.

At the end of each chapter, you will be invited to reflect upon how you might apply the new seeds of knowledge to your future professional practice and/or studies.

Before you begin to delve into the themes of the book, I feel it is important to share with you my own professional journey of **BEING**, **BELONGING**, and **THRIVING**.

My **BEING** began at a career’s interview where I was advised to go into employment as opposed to college. However, I chose to study at my local Further Education (FE) college and became an NNEB. My first sense of **BELONGING** was as an NNEB in a primary school. For over 20 years, I worked across Nursery, Key stage 1 and 2, before working in a special educational needs setting.

Introduction

My journey towards **THRIVING** began with my foundation degree in Childhood Studies and the many years of studying that followed. Today, I am a qualified lecturer, an external Higher Education (HE) examiner, and an established author, and my thriving continues as I aim to complete my PhD.

It's now time for you to commence your journey.



Being

BEING is the first theme in this book. As an author and educator, I believe that the concept of **BEING** represents the beginning of your journey as an Early Years practitioner. The beginning of a journey where you will begin to develop your personal and professional values. In the theme of **BEING**, you are laying down the foundations of a career where you will begin to grow and flourish, **BELONG**, and **THRIVE**.

The theme of **BEING** explores the following:

Chapter 1 – The Curious Practitioner

In this chapter, you will have the opportunity to consider how curious you are. You will be able to reflect upon why being curious is important in your role as an Early Years practitioner.

Chapter 2 – The Critically Informed Practitioner

In this chapter, you will explore what is critical thinking and critical analysis. You will have the opportunity to consider how to apply these skills in your role as a critically informed practitioner.

Chapter 3 – The Humanistic Practitioner

In this chapter, you will explore the topics humanism and attachment. You will engage with humanistic and attachment theory and reflect upon how these apply to your role as a humanistic practitioner.

Chapter 4 – The Observant Practitioner

In this chapter, you will be introduced to different observation types and how observation informs assessment and planning. You will also be encouraged to observe the observer.



Belonging

The next theme is **BELONGING**. Having explored the theme of **BEING**, you are now ready to connect theory and practice as you feel a sense of **BELONGING** within your community of practice and your Early Years vocational training and/or setting. Within this theme, you will begin to explore concepts such as play, creativity, inclusion, and within this theme, you will begin to explore concepts such as play, creativity and inclusion. These chapters offer you a starting point for further research in your role as an Early Years practitioner.

The theme of **BELONGING** explores the following:

Chapter 5 – The Playful Practitioner

In this chapter, you will define play. You will also consider the importance of learning how to play yourself alongside the stages and types of play you will encounter in your professional practice. This chapter

Introduction

offers you a snapshot of some of the approaches to play as you begin your Early Years practice. There are many more approaches which you may wish to research further.

Chapter 6 – The Creative Practitioner

In this chapter, you will define creativity and consider the qualities you need to be a creative practitioner. You will explore possibility thinking and the stages of creativity.

Chapter 7 – The Inclusive Practitioner

In this chapter, you will be introduced to the terminology and acronyms that you will encounter as an inclusive practitioner. You will explore your personal values and you will explore your personal values and beliefs and consider how your values align to Early Years settings and the wider society. You will also examine models of disability, legislation, frameworks, policies, and procedures.



Thriving

In this theme, you will build upon themes of **BEING** and **BELONGING** and apply your skills and knowledge as you **THRIVE** as an Early Years practitioner.

The theme of **THRIVING** includes the following:

Chapter 8 – The Reflective Practitioner

In this chapter, you will begin to explore what is reflection and reflective practice. You will be introduced to the concept of reflective activism and a range of reflective theory, all of which will support you in your academic and professional practice. The chapter ends with an overview of how to write reflectively.

Chapter 9 – The Research Practitioner

In this chapter, you will be introduced to what is research and how research informs you as an early year's practitioner. You will reflect upon the qualities you need as a research practitioner and how you can apply these qualities to your research journey. You will become familiar with key research terminology and be able to use a research design template to help you plan your research.

Chapter 10 – The Developing Practitioner

In this chapter, you will examine the benefits of professional development and ways in which to engage, reflect, and capture your development.

Whilst the contents of the book are set out in the three themes, **BEING**, **BELONGING** and **THRIVING**, you can use this book in any order that best suits your learning and development.

My hope is that you will be able to visualise your journey using the three key themes, reflect upon the contents of the chapters, and be able to apply all you have learnt to your day-to-day professional practice within Early Years.

Introduction

How to Use This Book

Within the book, you will find three icons which are aligned to several activities, case studies, or reflections.

The icons are roots, shoots, and blooms.



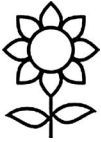
Roots – Reflective Questions

The roots icon will give you the opportunity to stop and reflect. You can spend time answering the reflective questions.



Shoots – Journal Activity

The shoot icon will give you the opportunity to complete a journal activity. You can spend some time reflecting upon your reading, as well journaling your responses to the reflective questions set within the book. You also have the opportunity to journal and summarise your learning at the end of each chapter, personal, and you can revisit any of the journal activities more than once as part of your professional and reflective journey.



Blooms – Reflective Account

The Sunflower icon invites you to read a reflective account. Each reflective account will give you a different perspective of professional practice. At the end of the reflective account, you will be able to answer a set of reflective questions and contemplate on the key messages from the account.



Planting Your Seeds of Knowledge and Understanding

At the end of each chapter, you will see a captured image of an Early Years practitioner in action, a play activity, an infographic, as well as a set of questions.

You can use this opportunity to reflect upon the topics you have covered from each chapter and either journal your thoughts or merely sit a while and reflect.



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Being

Be prepared to be perfectly imperfect, be prepared for wins and challenges, but most of all be prepared to be YOU.

Annie Pendrey



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1

The Curious Practitioner

Welcome to the first chapter of this book, *The Curious Practitioner*. The mere fact that you have picked up this book shows you are curious to learn, develop, and thrive as an Early Years practitioner. This chapter explores the concept of curiosity and how being curious will support you at the start and throughout your academic and professional journey in Early Years.

This chapter invites you to reflect upon your childhood memories of curiosity. There is also the opportunity to journal and reflect upon narratives shared by other Early Years professionals before reflecting upon why you need to be a curious practitioner.



The seeds of knowledge explored within the chapter are:

Curiosity

Epistemic curiosity

Curious practitioners: Your academic practice

Curious Practitioners: Your professional practice

The ladder of participation and curiosity