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the first 1000 days

What is the first 1000 days

The first 1000 days is referred to a child's life from the moment they are conceived right up until the age of two. This a critical period in a child's life. The first years is where a child's cognitive, emotional and physical development is laid out. (HM Government, 2021.) If a child's brain and body develops well during this period the child's life chances are improved. From birth a babies brain is already making connections and this is where the brain develops the quickest. During the 24th week of pregnancy a babies brain already contains 10 billion cells (Harris, 2018.) As Burton, (2015) suggests these first years of a child's life are a crucial opportunity for building healthy, resilient children. During the pregnancy stage it is important that the mother's stress levels, health and nutrition are looked after as if the child experiences a negative start it can have an affect on the child's later life. After the child is born their nutrition, physical environment and relationships can have a lasting effect on their health and well being.

in the first 100 days of a child's life the child needs-

Food

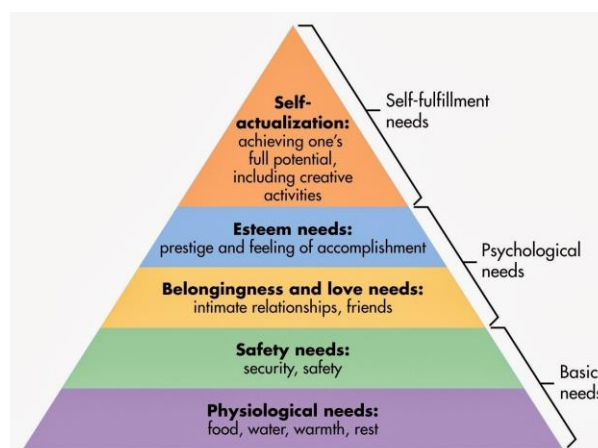
loving relationships

safety and security

time to explore and play

and a healthy relationship.

The needs that are listed above links to Maslow's theory hierarchy of needs, which Maslow states that each individuals needs need to be met for them to have a positive experience in life. (McLeod, S, 2022.)



Current challenges



There are many challenges that occur when working in early years as a practitioner. One of the most recent challenges has been COVID. The pandemic had an effect on children's well being as they were restricted into what they could do and where they could go. Gov.uk (2020) was a good source of information. Some other effects COVID had on children were their health, Physical activity and being outdoors.

(J, Tyrie. C, Knight. and M, Borrás.) carried out a survey and participants believed that children under 5 were most likely to be effected by their social and emotional development followed on by speech and language, physical development and health, as Gov. UK also suggests.

Another challenge that is faced when working in early years is poverty. Children's health and cognitive development can be influenced by living in poverty and low- income households. Poverty can negatively effect the development of both the body and mind. (childrensbereau, 2019.) Action for children (2023) suggests that children living in poverty are more likely to underachieve in school. (stephenson, F. 2019) advices that as a practitioner it is important to work closely with the child and family when living in poverty. building a close relationship with families is an important role to overcome the challenges with children living in poverty.

As well as facing these challenges in childcare practitioners face other challenges such as

Not enough time to do everything

Not enough time spent with the children

Difficulty recruiting staff who are qualified

not enough funding and difficulty with communicating with parents. (Kelly, 2016)

Activities



Messy play is a way to motivate children to use their hands to learn to explore materials such as shaving foam, mud, sand, slime and water. Messy play is an important activity in early years as it is crucial to a child's cognitive development. (Dougherty, S. 2021.) Messy play helps the child to engage with their senses. It also allows the child to develop early year fine motor skills. Occupational therapists often talk about the importance of messy play as it helps to develop so many of the key skills needed. (Dougherty, S. 2021.)

Treasure baskets



A treasure basket is a collection of natural, recycled or home materials/ objects placed into a basket which allows the child a sense of freedom to explore. Goldschmied considered the treasure basket to be a crucial component of young children's development. (Froebeltrust.) There are lots of benefits of using treasure baskets which include children to concentrate and to become curious about what is around them. Joe, (2020) described curiosity as a central motivation for children, it allows them to think about the world around them and by experiencing this it will more likely have a sense of happiness. Montessori believed that children need a 'hands on' approach whilst in early years as it will engage and allow the children to explore their own interests.

Reading



Klien, S, (2020) states reading to babies and young children is an important role in their development. Reading offers the element to build their language at an early age. A child's language development is a vital part of a child's development as well as supporting the child to communicate, it has the ability for them to express their feelings, show expression, solve problems and develop and maintain relationships. (raisingchildren) Language development supports lots of other key developments to such as cognitive and social and emotional development.



Loose Parts



Daly, L and Beloglovsky, M (2014) states that loose parts are natural materials which children can move, touch, explore and play with using their own imagination. Loose parts are open-ended they allow the child to become curious, they can be used with other materials or alone.

Loose parts supports the child's development in many ways it supports their physical, social and emotional and cognitive development. Loose parts within a early years environment are key to have as they are inclusive for everyone as there is no right or wrong way for them to be used. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there are benefits for children who play with loose parts (Hyndman et al. 2014) . Loose parts increases the child's imaginative play, they become more physically active and when loose parts are added to an outdoor environment they facilitate communication skills. (Maxwell, Mitchell and Evans, 2008.)

Environment



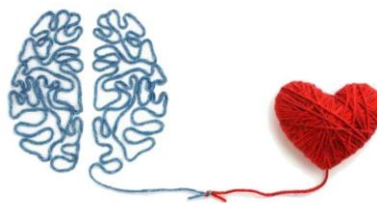
The curriculum for non-maintained settings identifies that all children are unique and that each child develops in their own way. The key principles for an effective environment is to create experiences both indoor and outdoor.

'Children learn and develop well in an enabling environment.' (early education, 2012)

An enabling environment offers the child a safe, rich, authentic space, where a child can explore, learn and play. The environment should always be child - centred and should encourage independence.

It is important that when arranging and planning your environment to think about quality over quantity. Clare, 2012) suggests that an environment that is providing quality meets the needs in a holistic manner. The environment should look and feel welcoming for the child to want to explore and learn. (Brodie,K.)

An environment can be arranged into 3 important areas.



1 - Emotional environment

The emotional environment is where you create the atmosphere of a setting so the child feels safe and warm which then gives the child a sense of belonging. by setting this environment the child will then begin to form a relationship with the practitioner, The emotional environment helps the development of the child's social and emotional needs. Before a child is ready to learn these needs need to be met. (Brodie, K.) for settings to prepare the emotional environment correctly the practitioners need to know the children and their backgrounds first. (Clare, A.). within the setting it is important to have a home corner for the child to relate to and having pictures/photographs of them selves around the nursey will give them a sense of belonging to something. The setting needs to be inclusive and value all children.



2 - Indoor environment

The indoor environment needs to allow the children to become confident learners. as the new curriculum for non maintained settings states we need to allow the children to become healthy confident leaders. (Gov.UK, 2020). By setting the emotional environment this should now allow the child to feel safe which will lead the child to become a confident learner. Whilst creating an indoor environment you need to think about creating rich, authentic experiences and play. Let children to be able to access objects for themselves by making sure everything is at their own height. Montessori believed that all settings for children the furniture needs to be child - sized and everything in reaching height. Create areas within your setting so the children can clearly see what is available for them, as the adult whilst the children is playing regularly take observations of the children. The indoor environment needs should feel safe and secure so all children can become confident learners.

Outdoor learning



Outdoor learning has been proven to have positive effects on children's development. It allows the child to experience risk taking and problem solving. Whilst outdoors more physical activity can be

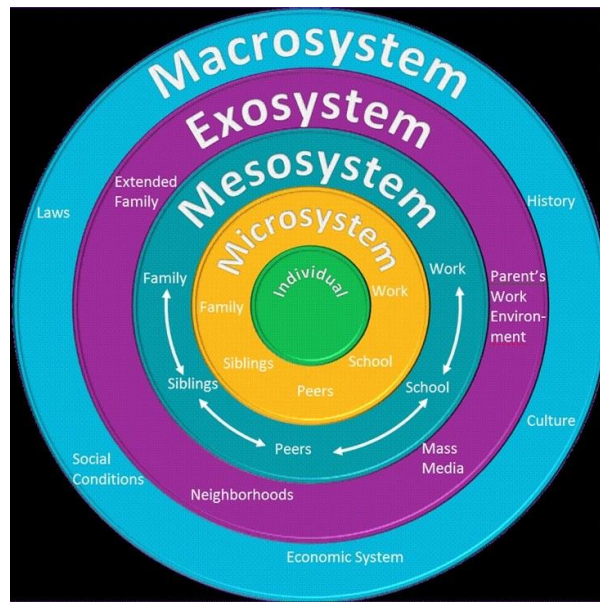
accessed and it allows the child a sense of freedom. (nurseryresources, 2018). Gov. UK, (2020) claims that being outdoors allows the child to become curious as well as supporting their physical development and well-being. An outdoor environment should allow the children to play freely without minimal interference. There are so many benefits to outdoor play as well as supporting the children's Physical development it supports the children to start to begin to understand the world around them (Berg, 2021.) Some ideas for creating an enabling outdoor environment is to

- Create a sheltered area
- wooden planters
- push and pull toys to encourage movement
- lots of natural objects for the children to explore and wonder
- have outdoor messy play, such as sand, mud, water (EYFS guide.)

When planning all these environments as an early years practitioner it is important to take on the curiosity approach. Lyndsey Hellyn and Stephanie Bennet created the curiosity approach after researching theorists such as Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Emma Pikler Hawthorne, H. 2021.) Pikler created the the pickler triangle which was a piece of equipment for a child to climb on, under and around. The triangle was made to allow children to explore, grow and develop at their own pace (Jones, S. 2021). Hellyn and Bennet believes that the curiosity approach allows children to explore, experiment and create whilst leading their own play. The curiosity approach can be used both indoor and outdoor whilst still keeping the child at the centre of learning (Hawthorne, H. 2021.) By using the curiosity approach you are allowing children to become healthy and confident, ambitious and capable, ethically informed and enterprising and creative which aligns with the new curriculum for Wales (Welsh government, 2021.)

Professional relationships

Professional partnerships is where practitioners, parents and any other professional who are involved with the child form a relationship which is in the best interest to enhance a child's development. It is important to develop these relationships to support the child's well being and learning. As winter, (2017) suggests for a professional partnership to work well it needs to be built upon trust from all those involved. Whilst holding any conversations about the child it is important that the child is always at the centre of the conversation. This links to Bronfenbrenner's theory as that always puts the child at the centre. The structure of Bronfenbrenner's theory shows that the child is always influenced either directly or indirectly by their environment.



As well as having good communication with the child's care giver there will be times as a practitioner you will need to have a professional partnership with other early year professions such as speech and language, social services and families first. this will help the child to develop further if they need this support.

Respectful caring



There are lots of experiences that practitioners support young children with in the early years. The important part when supporting children at these times is to make them engaging but also creating a respectful and calming manner for each individual.



3 - Meal time

Meal times should be calm and respectful. If feeding a child who cannot feed their self find a quiet space away from any distractions and make sure both yourself and the baby is comfortable. feeding time needs to be an enjoyable experience. Whilst the feeding routine starts always communicate and talk to the baby explaining what you are doing. The Pikler approach at mealtimes suggests that all children are learning to eat with please in sociable manner (Ma education.) Mealtimes and how children eat during mealtimes play an important role in their future development.



4 - Nappy changing

It is important at nappy changing and toilet routine time to develop a positive atmosphere .As well as supporting the child's physical needs during this time you are building a trusting and strong relationship with the child. As your changing the child or supporting them to use the toilet always take time to talk and communicate with the child. this will significantly support the child with their own language skills (Rainbow nursery.) Where age appropriate make sure to include the child where possible nappy changing is a key time to teach children about hygiene and daily routine.



5 - Nap time

Ruth Silverman explains that good sleep for children helps the child to concentrate, learn and develop. A good sleep often means a child will be happier and healthier. Within an early years setting a rest/nap area should be created and considered for each individual. The practitioner should consider the child's at home sleep routine and offer a blanket or familiar toy to make the experience calm and relaxing for the child. All nap times should be recorded so they can be discussed with the parents at the end of the day.

International approaches





6 - Forest school

Forest school is a learning process which takes place outdoors. Forest school is child centred and offers lots of opportunities for holistic growth through sessions taken regularly. Forest school has six principles that are followed during the sessions. the six principles are that all children are unique, they are allowed to discover and explore, choose their own learning, experience regular success and develop positive and strong relationships with the natural world around them (forest school association.)



The Reggio Emilia approach in early years places the child in charge of their own learning and sees each child as curious individuals. Putting the child in charge of their own learning supports them to develop and become their own person (Berg, V. 2021). A Reggio Emilia environment should be welcoming and suited to a child's developmental stage. Reggio Emilia approach sees every child as capable learners (Weebly, 2015.)



7 - Te Whariki

the Te Whariki approach believes that all children are confident and competent learners, that they are healthy in both body and mind and to make sure each individual has a sense of belonging. It recognises that each child is unique and are on their own individual learning journey. Te Whariki

curriculum is an all inclusive curriculum it gives the promise that children will be entitled to learn by experiences which are meaningful to them (Te Whariki.)

All approaches to learning has now taken the aspect that the child is the centre of their own learning and that early years practitioners are there to support the child on their own learning journey.

Being inclusive



Being inclusive is important in early years as it is the most successful way to give each child a chance to learn and develop new skills that they need to thrive (Unicef, 2017.) Every child regardless of their race, gender, background or abilities should all have an equal opportunity. Being inclusive within early years is making sure each child feels a sense of 'belong'. It is about understanding that every child is and unique and that all children develop at their own pace. So with that in mind a practitioner needs to think that it is not about treating all children in the same way but making sure every child's interests and individual needs are being met (Lee, E, 2021.) As article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child states every child has the right to develop their own personality and abilities. By being inclusive you are allowing each individual to do this.

There are quite a number of challenges relating to being inclusive one is untrained professionals but a main challenge that effects being inclusive is insufficient funding. This is a big challenge as without funding there will not be enough support because of staff ratios, facilities, resources which are suitable for the individuals and insufficient funding can effect the ongoing support of other professionals and practitioners on their up to date training Cachero, G. 2015.)

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