



The first 1000 days



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- What is the first 1000 days?

When it comes to a child's physical and cognitive development, the first 1000 days of life—from conception to the child's second birthday—are quite important. This time frame affects aspects of lifelong health and wellbeing, including immune system development, emotional stability, and brain growth. Sufficient nourishment, engagement, and nurturing in these formative years have a long-term influence on an individual's resilience and future capacities. The first 1000 days are a critical window for a child's brain development, where experiences shape cognitive abilities. Quality nutrition, responsive care, and a stimulating environment are pivotal, fostering resilience and laying the groundwork for a healthy and thriving future. The brain develops remarkably during life, creating vital neural connections that impact cognitive function and learning capacity. Adequate nourishment,

particularly through nursing or suitable formula, is crucial for promoting the best possible physical and mental development (House of Commons, 2019).

The first 1000 days have a significant influence on social and emotional growth. Secure bonds, emotional resilience, and social skills are formed through positive interactions with carers, a loving environment, and early experiences (Public Health England, 2021).

Recognizing the importance of the first 1000 days has led to a global focus on providing comprehensive support for parents and caregivers. To guarantee a solid basis for a child's lifetime health and well-being, early childhood programmes, nutrition education, and access to healthcare are crucial. By supporting healthy people and society, investing in these formative years is an investment in the future (First 1000 Days A Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents, 2023).

Why is it important?

The first 1000 days of a child's life, which span from the moment of conception to the child's second birthday, are critical to its long-term development and health. This crucial period lays the groundwork for a child's future development in terms of their physical, cognitive, and emotional health (simplestepsnutrition.com.au, 2023). The rapid brain development that occurs during the first 1000 days establishes the neural architecture that underlies future learning, behaviour, and overall cognitive function. The brain is exceptionally malleable, making it an optimal time for acquiring language and social skills. Exposure to diverse stimuli during this critical period enhances adaptability and problem-solving abilities, shaping a child's capacity for learning and interpersonal relationships. Adequate nutrition during this period is crucial for supporting this brain development, as well as fostering healthy growth and immune system strength. Breastfeeding, in particular, provides essential nutrients and contributes to the child's resilience against infections and diseases (Cusick and Georgieff, 2016). Emotionally, these early days lay the groundwork for social and emotional skills. Positive interactions with caregivers, responsive parenting, and a supportive environment foster secure attachments, emotional intelligence, and social competence. Language acquisition also undergoes significant progress during this period, influencing a child's ability to communicate and learn later in life (Harvard University, 2007). The first 1000 days not only impact an individual's physical and cognitive development but also play a key role in shaping their susceptibility to chronic diseases later in life.

Early experiences with nutrition, physical activity, and sleep patterns can influence future lifestyle choices and contribute to the prevention of chronic diseases. Recognizing the multifaceted importance of this critical time frame underscores the need for comprehensive policies and support systems that prioritise the holistic development of children and contribute to a healthier and more resilient society (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).



2 - What is exceptional care?

A higher degree of healthcare or support services that beyond ordinary expectations is known as exceptional care, and it guarantees that individuals getting care have a better and more memorable experience. Reducing health disparities throughout the life course depends on providing every child with the best start in life. Early childhood lays the groundwork for almost all facets of human development, including the physical, intellectual, and emotional. Early experiences, which begin in the womb, have a lasting impact on numerous facets of health and wellbeing, ranging from obesity, heart disease, and mental health to economic standing and academic success. Even while they are nonetheless significant, later interventions are far less successful in situations where strong early foundations are lacking (Public Health, n.d.) Compassion is an essential characteristic. It plays an essential role in nursing and directly influences patient outcomes in healthcare. It offers emotional support to patients, instilling in them the confidence required to confront illnesses, prepare for recovery, or undergo significant medical procedures. Attaining optimal success in patient care hinges on nurses feeling a genuine commitment to expressing compassion. The lack of compassion can result in patients feeling undervalued and emotionally vulnerable (Bates, 2018).

Compassion, also known as intelligent kindness, is the way care is provided through relationships that are founded on empathy, respect, and dignity. It is fundamental to how individuals view the care they get (Huziej, 2023). Making sure individuals are central to the decision-making process and partners in their own care is another way to show compassion. People want services that allow them to participate in their care, and they want their opinions and thoughts to be heard and taken into consideration.

To provide outstanding treatment, effective communication is essential. This entails polite and transparent communication between carers, healthcare professionals, and the people getting care, as well as their relatives (Huziej, 2023). Communication encompasses various skills that caregivers must employ to deliver top-notch care. These skills include aspects like customer service, identifying needs, handling complaints proficiently, and collaborating effectively within internal teams and external agencies. When providing care, safety comes first to avoid any potential injury, and respect guarantees that people are treated with respect and autonomy. Making care accessible to people in need is the main goal of accessibility. Providing exceptional care acknowledges the emotional components of health and well-being and fosters a happy, encouraging environment (Care Quality Commission, 2023). In essence, outstanding care involves exceeding conventional expectations to generate a positive and meaningful experience for care recipients. It represents a dedication to excellence in healthcare or support services, nurturing a culture of ongoing enhancement and prioritising patient-centred care.



3 - Why is this important?

Engaging patients effectively in their healthcare is crucial for enhancing health results, increasing satisfaction with the care process, cutting down on expenses, and positively impacting the experience of healthcare providers (Krist et al., 2017). Developing and preserving a solid patient-provider relationship is not only desirable, but also imperative. Like any other relationship, its success depends on patience, clear communication, and teamwork. Maintaining a positive patient-provider relationship is essential to any healthcare practice's success. Important elements include teamwork, empathy, effective communication, and careful use of technology. Furthermore, investing time in active listening and thinking about using outside medical transcribing services can greatly improve the standard of treatment and patient-provider confidence (Partners, 2023).



4 - What Is the role of an early years practitioner in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days?

The following are typical obligations and responsibilities of an early years practitioner: Taking care of children's daily bodily requirements, including eating, changing diapers, teaching them how to use the toilet, and providing first aid offering a variety of entertaining and engaging activities, such as messy play and story reading (The Nest Day Nursery, 2021). An early childhood educator works closely with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, attending to their basic needs such as feeding and changing as well as planning developmentally, academically, and physically appropriate activities. They may work as a nanny or childminder, in a private nursery, or at a childcare facility that is provided by the local government (All About Children, 2021). Early childhood educators work with a variety of age groups; for example, the needs of a four year old who is about to enter school are considerably different from those of a baby. Working with children who have special needs is their area of expertise for some practitioners (All About Children, 2021). Parents have a crucial role in a child's life over the first thousand days, influencing their experiences and interactions with the outside world. Parenting that is resilient, self-assured, and optimistic is linked to children's learning,

health, and wellbeing both now and in the future. It is possible to end intergenerational cycles of adversity and improve the wellbeing of coming generations by taking action to support parents in fulfilling their role as parents. One of the most crucial facets of regular professional practice while working with children of all ages is observation. It is the process by which we ascertain the particular requirements of every kid by closely observing, paying attention to, and taking note of the activities of a child or group of children. Seeing a child as an individual through observation is crucial for all children in any situation, but it's crucial in situations with big groups of people. Observation enables us to identify each child's likes and dislikes and their responses to different situations such as care routines or new people. We can find out which experiences, routines or activities a child seems to enjoy or to find difficult and any that seem to make them anxious (Daniel Rosa, 2015). The emotional well-being of individuals entering an early years setting is significantly influenced by the physical environment within the facility, including children, parents, and staff. It is crucial for children to experience a sense of order for them to feel secure and at ease during their time in the setting. This aspect is particularly vital for children facing disorganisation in their home environments, as the structured and organised setting of the nursery can play a key role in enhancing their feelings of safety and overall well-being. Environments that are neat, orderly, and maintain consistent item placement, allowing children unrestricted access, offer a crucial feeling of stability and predictability. It's helpful to keep in mind that young children express their sentiments through their actions because they lack the language skills of adults and are unable to express their feelings verbally (Teach Early Years Magazine, 2019). The responsibilities of an early years practitioner are diverse, covering educational, supportive, and collaborative elements to guarantee that children and families receive thorough care and support throughout the crucial initial 1000 days.

Effective partnership working is of paramount importance in the context of child development, aligning seamlessly with Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. His theory suggests that development is shaped by the interactions between different environments, or "systems", that we are a part of. These systems include our immediate family, our school, our friends, and even the broader society we live in. Each system has its own influence on us, and they all interact and impact our development in unique ways. According to him, there are five different levels or systems that influence our development. The first level is the microsystem, which includes our immediate surroundings like our family, friends, and school. The next level is the mesosystem, which looks at how these different microsystems interact with each other. Then we have the exosystem, which includes external influences that indirectly affect us, such as our parents' workplace or our community resources. The macrosystem is the broader cultural and societal context in which we live, like the values, customs, and laws of our society. Lastly there's the chronosystem, which recognises that our development is influenced by changes that occur over time, such as historical events or personal transitions. Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasises the importance of understanding how all these different systems interact and shape our development. His theory also highlights the importance of considering the developmental context and the dynamic nature of these systems. It recognises that our development is not static, but rather influenced by ongoing interactions and changes over time (Guy-Evans, 2023). Bronfenbrenner's theory links to effective partnership working because for example, in the microsystem, effective partnership working would involve close collaboration between parents, caregivers, and healthcare professionals to ensure the child's physical and emotional needs are met. This could include regular check-ups, access to quality nutrition, and support for the child's cognitive and social development. In the mesosystem, effective partnership working would involve coordination between different settings that the child is exposed to, such as home, early childhood education centres, and healthcare facilities. This coordination ensures that the child's experiences and support are consistent and complementary across these different

environments. Overall, Bronfenbrenner's theory highlights the interconnectedness of systems and the importance of collaboration and coordination in supporting a child's development. Effective partnership working in the first 1000 days recognises the significance of these systems and aims to provide a holistic and supportive environment for children during this crucial period (Paquette and Ryan, 2021).



5 - What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

Providing high quality care can be quite a challenge. Healthcare professionals often face limited resources, such as funding, staffing, and access to necessary equipment and facilities. Healthcare providers have demanding schedules and limited time with each patient, which can make it challenging to provide comprehensive and individualised care to every person (Babiker, 2019). Another challenge is the complexity of healthcare needs. Patients may present with complex medical conditions or multiple health issues, requiring specialised knowledge and coordination among different healthcare providers. Ensuring that all aspects of care are addressed effectively can be quite a task. Communication and coordination also play a crucial role in providing high-quality care. Effective care requires good communication and coordination among healthcare professionals, patients, and their families. However, communication breakdowns or lack of coordination can hinder the delivery of high-quality care. Despite these challenges, healthcare providers strive to overcome them and deliver the best care possible. They are dedicated to continuous education, collaboration, and a patient-centred approach. By working together and putting their patients first, they aim to provide high-quality care that meets the unique needs of each individual (O'Daniel and Rosenstein, 2008).



6 - Activities (Froebel)

During the first 1000 days of a child's life, there are so many awesome activities inspired by Friedrich Froebel that can promote their development and creativity. Froebel believed in the power of play and hands-on learning for young children. One great idea is sensory play, where you can create a bin filled with different textures like fabric scraps, natural materials, and other exciting objects. Another idea is construction play, where a child can use blocks, wooden shapes, and connectors to build and create. Taking children on nature walks to collect leaves, stones, pinecones, and shells for nature

exploration is another fun activity. These activities are not only fun but also help with their cognitive, physical, and social#emotional development (Merrick, 2021).



7 - Activities (Montessori)

Montessori is another good approach to early childhood. It focuses on independence, self-directed learning, and hands-on exploration. In the first 1000 days, you can incorporate Montessori principles into a child's daily activities. A few examples of this is; encouraging practical life skills such as dressing themselves or pouring water, providing sensorial activities with different textures, scents, and sounds, surrounding them with a language-rich environment and engaging in conversation, and finally introducing maths concepts with hands-on materials. These activities foster independence, creativity, and overall development (Ruhl, 2021).



8 - What are the benefits?

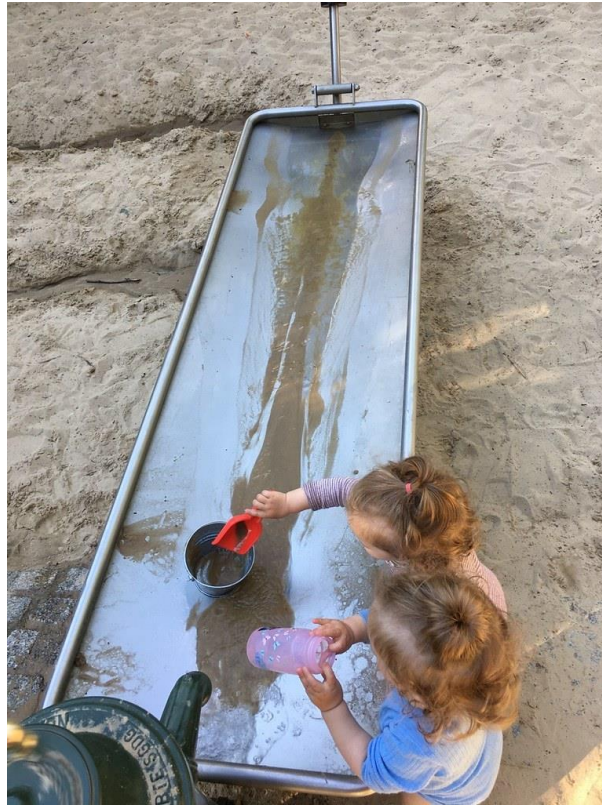
One of the key advantages is that it promotes meaningful learning. By allowing children to explore and engage in hands-on activities, they develop a deeper understanding of concepts and make connections to real world experiences. This approach encourages critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. It also fosters independence, self-discipline, and a love for learning. The emphasis on individualised learning helps children progress on their own. Overall, Montessori provides a rich and meaningful learning experience for children (Absolutely Education UK, n.d.).



9 - International approaches (Forest School/Reggio Emilia)

Forest School is an outdoor-based educational approach that focuses on connecting children with nature environments, allowing children to explore, play, and learn in the outdoors. The emphasis is on fostering a love for nature, developing environmental awareness, and promoting physical activity. Forest School encourages independence, resilience, and problem-solving skills, as children engage in activities like building shelters, identifying plants, and learning about wildlife (Spencer-Milnes, 2021). On the other hand, the Reggio Emilia approach is an innovative and child-centred educational philosophy. It emphasises the importance of child-led learning, creativity, and collaboration. The approach views children as capable and active contributors to their own learning process. Reggio Emilia classrooms are designed to spark curiosity and provide a variety of materials for children to explore and express themselves. The approach values the arts, encourages project-based learning, and promotes strong relationships between children, teachers, and parents. While both approaches share a focus on hands-on learning and child-centred education, there are some differences (NIDO EARLY SCHOOL, 2021).

Forest School primarily takes place outdoors and centres around nature-based experiences, while Reggio Emilia can be implemented in indoor settings as well. Forest School places a strong emphasis on environmental awareness and physical engagement, while Reggio Emilia emphasises creativity, expression, and collaboration. In summary, both Forest School and the Reggio Emilia approach offer unique educational experiences for children. Forest School connects children with nature, fostering environmental awareness and physical development. Reggio Emilia promotes child-led learning, creativity, and collaboration, creating a rich and engaging environment for children to explore and express themselves.



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