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Georgia Thomas

The first 100 days



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WHAT iS THE FiRST 100 DAYS?

The first 1000 days of a child's life is a crucial time from during pregnancy to the age of 2. This time of a child's life is very special, this is where the child's Bodies and brains develop at extraordinary pace laying the foundations for their future, in fact Authority of House of Commons (2019) suggests that if a child's brain and body is well developed in the first 1000 days their life chances are drastically improved.

To have a better understanding of the child's first 1000 years and why they are so crucial it is important to understand just how quick the brain develops. When a child is born, their brains are only 25% developed. This rapidly increases to 75% at the age of two. The picture below shows just how fast the brains synapses are growing. These are formed by the child's experiences from play, their caregivers, experiences, stresses and social interaction. The child brain development is vitally important as when a child experiences positive experiences it strengthens the brain however negative experiences can prevent healthy brain development. With The brain being control centre for the child it is linked and has a key role to play in many different forms of a child's development from physical,cognitive, emotional and social.

It controls physical development by controlling coordination, movement and motor skills. Supports cognitive development allowing the child to solve problems, memory and language. social and emotional development as the brain allows the child to understand emotions and build relationships, feeling safe and secure. Therefore as you can see the brains development of a child is really the concrete to the child's development.

The first 1000 days of a child day UNICEF (2017) suggests that the right nutrition and care during the 1000 day window influences not only whether the child will survive, but also his or her ability to grow and learn.

First 100 days

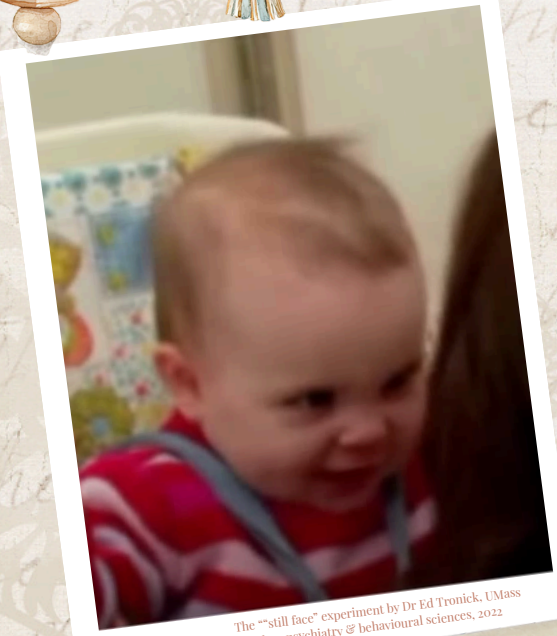


EXCEPTIONAL CARE

Exceptional care goes further than basic care it means putting the child first, meeting all of their needs in a nurturing way with consistency and care. Exceptional care is ensuring every part of a child's needs are fulfilled. Maslow (1943) emphasises that all needs must be met for development, especially important in babies and toddlers as they depend on their care giver to fulfil a lot of these needs for them. From emotional and social care, development support, physical care and health and safety care. Bowlby (1969) asserts that humans are born with a natural drive to form emotional bonds with their caregiver and when caregiver is responsive it allows them to feel safe to explore. The video below demonstrates this in a experiment known as "still face" where the mother goes through non-reactive and reactive responses to the baby, in the video you can evidently see the affect it has on a child. This allows us to understand just how important the role of a present caregiver is and how dependant babies are on their caregiver's response. When a baby/toddler receives exceptional care, it enables them to feel safe, secure and loved giving them space to develop with confidence. Exceptional care looks at a child as a whole child it recognises that every child is unique developing at different rates and with different needs. Not every child is the same and how we care for each child shouldn't be uniform. With this it's important that not all children are expected to grow, learn and develop in the same way. Being able to pick up and adapt to different child's needs and interests is a crucial element to exceptional care as it allows each child to thrive preventing barriers instead observing the child, working with them and tailoring their practice to fit the child.

A child's environment is a key element to a child's development and can have a massive impact on a child. An enabling environment ensures that the baby/toddler has the right space and environment to develop, tailored to them. Every environment should look different for each child. With every child being different it is essential that we accommodate the environment to fit the child's interests to engage the child and spark their imagination and curiosity. Piklr encourages care givers to allow the child to have freedom and their own curiosity. As an illustration, allowing the toddler to choose what to play with and observing the child and only stepping in when needed or allowing a baby to explore movement on their own instead of placing them in positions; not restricting their abilities. The power of enabling environments is significant allowing babies and children to flourish and bloom in an environment that excites and brings them to life is fundamental factor to exceptional care.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaiXi8KyzOQ



The ""still face" experiment by Dr Ed Tronick, UMass chan psychiatry & behavioural sciences, 2022

Caregiving







SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE FIRST 1000 DAYS

The role of an early year's practitioner is highly significant. Often, practitioners are one of the main adults in a child's life, in some cases may spend more time with the child than their carer. With that the practitioners support guidance and influence play a crucial role in forming the child's development, and wellbeing. supporting and building a good relationship with the child and families during the first 1000 days is essential as it creates a safe, healthy environment where good communication can be used to be able to give the best support for both child and families. With consistence communication and working with the families allows parents and practitioners to work together to be able to give the child the best support for the child's wellbeing and development. Having a positive relationship with the family allows the families to build trust with the practitioner, helping the families to feel safe, valued and supported, which is essential in early years. Having that strong trusting relationship encourages parents to communicate freely without the fear of judgment, allowing the practitioner to have a better understanding of the child's home life not just in their setting. Having a better understanding of their home life enables the practitioner to create inclusive environments and get a better insight of the child's needs to tailor the day or situations to the child.

professional partnerships

IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working within early years is a vital element to ensure that children get consistence, relevant, and effective support putting the child in the centre of care. Not only working with parents/carers but working with health visitors, midwives and lots of other professionals enabling the child to get professional support tailored to their specific needs for effective growth and development. When multiagency come together and combine their knowledge and skill to support a child it can make all the difference in allowing the child to thrive. Its important practitioners observe and identify any challenges or additional needs a child may need and be able to get the right support for them to stop them hindering their growth and development. Partnership working supports early intervention, by using good communication and sharing concerns professionals can work together to provide personalised care and support the child and families that they may need. Partnership also creates respect and equality. By understanding family's beliefs, backgrounds and languages practitioners can then give appropriate care and tailor the support to them.

One of the main benefits of partnership working is the relationship it forms with the families, it allows the families and practitioner to work together combing all necessary information from homelife, routines, health and wellbeing.

Partnership working is also a great for early intervention. With regular observations from multiple practitioners and shared communication it creates space for any safeguarding or additional needs to be picked up at the earliest stage and give prompt, appropriate support. This includes professionals like health visitors, speech and language therapists, and social workers.

proffesional partnerships



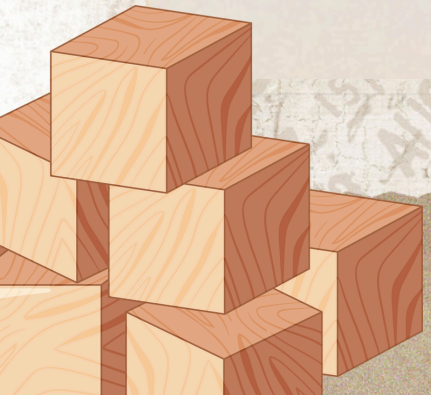
MATERNAL FACTORS

Practitioners should also consider maternal factors that may come into play during the first 1000 days. Maternal factors are experiences and circumstances of a mother that can influence a child. Having a child is a massive life change to go through. With changes and new stresses, it can be a lot for the mother to cope with. NHS,2022 claim that 1 in 10 new mothers experience post-natal depression. Mothers may also experience many other difficulties that affect the child some including physical difficulties, lack of bonding, lack of help, knowledge and support and socio—economic factors e.g. house income. Maslow, 1969 claims if a child's basic needs aren't met like nutrition and love then they will not have the motivation to develop. When a mother experiences maternal factors like such, it can become hard for the mother to fulfil these basic needs for the child. Therefore, maternal factors have a significant affect on the child's life. Support from the practitioner should be offered to support both mum and child. Practitioners can offer emotional and psychological support whether that's being a ear for them to listen, building a safe space for them to confine in them or giving guidance and advice. Practitioners can also support by giving practical support where the practitioner can get in the help of other agencies for more professional and tailored support.

proffesional partnerships

CHALLENGES

Providing high quality care is not always straight forward or smooth sailing. In fact, professional can face many complex and different challenges daily.
A challenge that many practitioners face is funding and resources limitations. Funding shortages results in restricted access to high quality resources, lacking materials and developmental resources. This limits the children access to resources to develop their learning and skills, children need stimulating resources and resources to stimulate their minds. Without the funds it can lead to outdated resources that limits the children's development. Funding shortages also can affect the staff to child ratio. With budgets being low it can mean that the practice hasn't got the funding to employ more members of staff for help and better quality of support for the children. Therefore the practices become understaffed and under a lot more pressure.
One challenge that occurs frequently in a high-quality early year's practice is staffing pressure. Working in early years whilst being very rewarding is not an easy role. With long hours, challenging tasks and stressful situations it can result in staff having to take time off work due to burnout and stress. This then leads to an understaffed practice. An understaffed practice can find it hard to give that high-quality detailed support as there isn't enough staff to do so. This is a massive challenge as things can get missed and not picked up. Which can in return lead to much larger, serious matters.
Another challenge that is regularly seen in early year practices is families not engaging, not being present or hard to communicate with. When the parents do not work with practitioners it can form significant difficulties, poor communication or in some case no communication at all can lead to key information being missed which ultimately leads to gaps in the child's support and care such as health concerns, behaviour changes or emotional needs.
Another challenge regularly seen in early years is maintaining professional knowledge. As a high quality professional, practitioners must continuously expand their knowledge and experience through training courses. Finding the time and releasing staff members to attend these courses can be a challenge, the courses can also be costly and not fit the budget of the practice. This can lead to outdated practice and failing to meet high quality care where standards are not met.
A challenge that is more regularly seen is meeting individual needs. With class numbers rising each year with more and more needs coming to practitioner's attention it is apparent that it is becoming progressively harder to meet every child's needs. With behaviour challenges, ASD's and safeguarding issues, work and curriculum is still expected in many practices which can almost feel impossible for some practitioners. This can result in needs not being met for every child and even some needs being not picked up on; more than often ones that are not obvious but just as important.



Challenges

ACTIVITIES

The first 1000 days is where the brain grows and develops the most therefore activities are crucial to support this growth. meaningful activities promotes social, cognitive, emotional and physical development.

One great activity is loose parts. Loose part is where a child uses open ended materials that can be moved, combined and taken apart to form anything the child desires. Materials may include sticks, leaves, plastic bottles, buttons, shells and many more. The way the activity works out is quite simple but has endless outcomes. The child is given the loose part as resources and given the freedom to make whatever they like. The practitioner may set up the environment ensuring there are lots of opportunities for the child to use, e.g. ensuring there are lots of different loose parts for the child. The practitioner will then take a step back and let the child lead. The practitioner can observe and watch and support without taking over whilst ensuring safety. Interestingly there are many outcomes that can come from the loose parts. Some children may make a tower other may make a pattern where some may use them as roleplay e.g. food or a phone. Loose part is a great activity to support a child's development as it allows them to completely have freewill and explore. It encourages creativity and imagination allowing the child to build independence and confidence. Loose parts activities are great for problem solving skills and gives the child a chance to solve problems for themselves which builds confidence. During the task the child will also use their fine motor skills especially when using resources like beads and smaller objects, this is a great way to get fine motor skill practice in through play, making it fun and exciting. Another positive to loose part is it a low-cost activities with most of the materials being recycled its accessible to all practices even underfunded practices. Loose part is an excellent activity is how adaptable the activity is, as its child lead the task will adapt to the child's development stage.



Activities

During the activity the child will use meaningful learning. Essame,2020 suggests that play is vitally recognised for learning and development, as it is the language of children and what they naturally do. Meaningful learning is where the child understood and remembered the task. Meaningful learning is best done through play. Piklr's theory supports this. Piklr believed that children shouldn't be forced into something when they're not ready, instead to let them to have the freedom and develop at their own pace. When a child is playing, they feel happy, safe and comfortable. This is the perfect time for a child to learn and absorb information. Trying to lead a child's learning ignores curiosity and can create anxiety for the child which can lead to disengaging, stress and potential behaviour issues.



2026, The Pennsylvanian state university

Activities

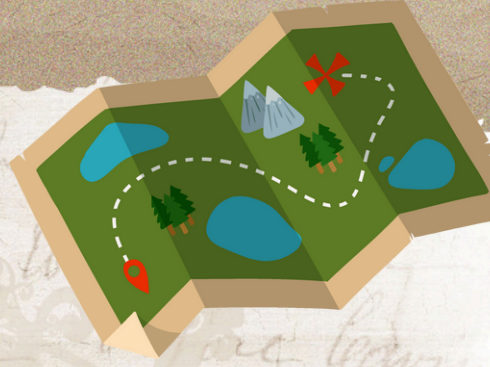
INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES

Early years learning varies internationally, many different countries have different take on early years learning, with different approaches and strategies. One international approach brought to light in Italy is the Reggio Emilia approach. The Reggio Emilia approach developed in the 1950's in the town of Reggio Emilia. The Reggio Emilia approach focuses on child led activities, similar to lose parts the approach believes children are curious and ambisous and learn best when they are using their own initiative and imagination as this is where they are fully engaged. The child's environment is a big part of the Emilia approach, classrooms are carefully designed to spark children's curiosity and imagination and known as the third teacher. During this approach like loose parts the teacher's role is to guide and be co-learners not to take over. Reggio Emilia is not like traditional teacher led learning it values the child's interests and focuses on the child's choice over curriculum.



Sarah ozuna, Community play things, 2022

Activities



Another internation learning approach is forest school. Forest school originated in Scandinavia in the 1950's. In Scandanavia outdoor learning, also known as friluftsliv meaning open air life is a strong cultural tradition. Children spend the majority of their time in nature and forest environments learning through play. Forest school is a holistic hand on approach where children are allowed freedom to explore and encourages supported risk-taking focusing on the child's interest whilst building their independence and confidence. Forest schools and the Reggio Emilia are similar in many ways they both focus on being child led and value the child's curiosity and interests. However there are some differences, although the child's environment and making the classroom engaging for a child is a big part of Reggio Emilia's approach Forest school focuses on being primarily outdoors at all times and doesn't use a classroom for learning instead sees the forest as the teacher. Another difference is that forest school promotes supported risk-taking which isn't seen as much in Reggio Emilia. With being outdoors forest schools is far more physical and resilient where Reggio Emilis Is far more controlled and low risk. Both approaches are great for child led activities just like loose parts and have been shown to be great successes over the years.



Activities



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