



The First 1000 Days

What is the first 1000 days?



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Why is it important?

What is exceptional care?

Why is it important to promote exceptional care?

Introduction

The first 1000 days of a child's life is unique to each person. Every child is lawfully entitled to be able to develop, to be loved, be safe, nurtured and given opportunities as stated by the government policy in Wales and England (2021). The first 1000 days is referred from the moment they are conceived to the age of two. Every parent has a role to fulfil and reciprocity the needs of a child. Their welfare is paramount. I will be discussing in various titles below the challenges and care that should be given when raising a baby. By including activity ideas and reasons that show how important the environment and care that is given is paramount I will conclude by showing examples and results that support my research throughout.

Current challenges

We face many challenges when it comes to raising children. Be it how you discipline or simply how we love them. From the day the baby is conceived to the day the baby starts nursery it is important love is shown, this is proven to be just as important as feeding your children as said by Tamsin Grimmer (2021).

There are many challenges. It involves family class, money, ethnic, religion and country. Each one of the above points are critical factors and can affect the raising of children differently. One challenge that stands out is COVID. There is evidence to show that COVID not only affected us as adults but children as well. 68% of parents felt the changes brought by COVID had affected their unborn babies or young children. Because of this many young babies/ children had attachment issues because of the guidelines that had to be followed due to Covid. Social and emotional development, cognitive development and also speech and language were affected. Children with additional needs lacked in physical development and health issues including parents which suffered COVID themselves (Tyrie, Knight and Borrás 2021)

Activity ideas

There are many ways of implementing activities into daily life. It does not mean it has to involve crafts it could involve cooking, or going on an adventure or simply just reciprocity which means responding to your baby/ child's needs on a daily basis. Activity to a baby will be completely different from an activity for a 2 year old as the ability and development are completely different. What is important to remember is that by responding to your baby/ child's needs you are giving them the best opportunity in life. General daily care involves feeding and changing the baby as its compulsory but just as important as communicating with your child. There are many ways to communicate, by talking, singing, or simply by using our hands. The importance of hands gesture is proven to be huge beneficial to a child and adults. As researched by Pikler a Hungarian paediatrician he believes the benefits of hand gestures is crucial to a baby's development. Our hands are used constantly in daily activities and Pikler states that our hands are the first connection to the world. Life can turn out very different when its being ruled by the wrong hands. It is therefore beneficial that the hands we show are kind and patient and make differences. Our Actions as adults are replicated in children therefore it is important that we show and give the best of our abilities to create and help develop a world that is kind and loving. Opportunities give the children the room to explore curiosity. The aim is to put the child at the centre of their own development and education.

Created and followed by many theorists In particular Montessori. The approach was found by Barrett and Heller. They wanted to create a approach that was mindful and respectful which allows the child's creativity to flow. As the children develop the curiosity independently it helps them develops and enjoy broader as not only do they figure out how the world woks but they learn how it will work for them.

All children enjoy activities. Past and present activities are being carried out to help stimulate and nurture the children to the best of their potential. As a early years practitioner I can confirm that by giving the child opportunities and various activities to complete the child is benefiting in lots of different ways. Examples and personal research shows that making sensory boxes is a great way to stimulate and start the learning process for a baby as well as a toddler as there are various items you can include in the box that develops the child's needs. Having used sensory boxes in the past I will post photos and videos below of a example of a sensory box made for the children to explore and learn. A researcher who agrees and practices this activity is Elena Goldschmied (2004) who states the importance of treasure boxes.

Another activity that are used in nurseries are water play, loose parts play and messy sensory plays. These activities benefit children as they all contribute to their development. Giving the child loose parts and messy sensory plays helps the child develop socially, physically, language and motor skills as they will be exploring and learning by their senses of smells, taste, sounds and touch. One theorist who agrees on the importance of hands on/ experiential learning is Piaget. For the things we have to learn before we can do them , we learn by doing them (Aristotle 2015).

Having a hands-on learning opportunity allows the children to strengthen the muscles of the hand, improve accuracy and learn functional skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.

Language development is another skill which is developed by activities. Theorists including Chomsky, Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky state the importance of language development in their theory. Vygotsky in particular believed that children develop social and cognitive skills through interactions with other children. Children learn to solve practical skills with the help of speech as well as with their eyes and hands. Piaget on the other hand believed that children's learning was depending on the child's readiness to learn whereas Vygotsky stated that children development depended on the child's ability to learn with help. [Sensory bins](#)



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Environment

There are many aspects when it comes to environments of raising children. One aspect would be area, support and financial. Researches would argue that we are a product of the environment, as how we choose to engage with our children and the opportunities we give them can decide and help benefit their future. The environment adults choose to raise children can affect how the child will

develop in the future. Research shows being raised in poverty or in the country will have a completely different outlooks compared to a child raised in the city. Poverty is becoming a lot more common this era as many families struggle to financially cope with daily life activities meaning the children are affected in the long run. They are not receiving the same quality of life a child that is raised in a working-class family who is earning a lot more having.

Environments are very important as giving the children options and different varieties of activities right from a young age will help develop a child's skills in more ways than you think. There are many different environments but considering an enabling one is very beneficial. Many nursery settings are prepared and are given grants to be able to accomplish this. A curriculum for funded non-maintained nurseries are giving high quality early education for children as they believe it's essential for children's development. In their curriculum they create a positive disposition towards learning which will give them a firm foundation which all children need to support them and benefiting from the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales.

Nurseries for Wales are being funded to create an authentic experience for children indoors and outdoors. By monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the environments they are able to adapt accordingly (Welsh Government 2022) by being able to explore environments children are able to develop a sense of belonging and appreciate the world around them.

Environments will allow children to develop physically, creatively and imaginatively in a safe environment that will allow them to follow their individual interests safely independently and with others around them. The opportunities given should allow them to experience curiosity about the world and encourage them to explore and solve problems that will develop their creativity and critical thinking.

Montessori claimed that education started from birth. Her classrooms accommodated children of mixed ages and is designed to meet children's needs at periods when they are most interested and motivated. Her approach is to harness children's natural ability to learn and offers children experiences and materials to explain abstract principles. Montessori states that a child can only be free if the adult becomes an acute observer. If the adult does not allow this, they will be limiting the child's freedom. Children will learn in an environment that's designed to meet their needs. From working with children, it is necessary and compulsory that we can observe and be ready to express their senses when they are ready to. By setting an environment that is prepared to meet their needs you are able to do this.

Children learn through their senses and Montessori's curriculum are focused on how the child learns to care for the environment, care for oneself as an individual and care for others in the community. Her nursery was filled with small scale furniture for children's size including little armchairs and washstands in order for them to do gardening and gymnastics, the children were given uninterrupted periods of time to follow their interests and carry out tasks with materials that they need.

Like Montessori Froebel had firm views on play and environments. He believed that it fostered enjoyment, emotional well-being and was a fundamental source of benefit. Froebel states that children should be allowed to be children and that they should not be concerned about what comes next just to be able to enjoy play.

It has many benefits for the child as theorists like Piaget would agree. He states that a child's first two years of life is where the child most benefits from sensorimotor stages of knowledge and understanding are from their physical actions like sound, taste, touch and smell. By giving these opportunities to children you are enabling them to flourish. He states children's learning is supported by action. Children need to experiment actively with materials and to experience things in real world to develop thought. Their environments need to be uninterrupted periods of play and given time to explore. The activities need to be open ended so that they can benefit and learn.

Having wood-based toys and environmentally friendly child led equipment will give greater outcomes than plastic as you are preparing them for the real world.

Being inclusive

Being inclusive means educating and caring for children with disabilities in the same environment or setting as their typically developing peers. A school or nursery that is inclusive would allow all the children regardless of their disabilities be able to participate in the same activities and routines as their peers. (The Curriculum for funded non-maintained nurseries 2022) states the nurseries should celebrate and value diversity and demonstrate inclusivity always. Environment should ensure that all children have access to a broad range of authentic resources to help build their vocabulary and facilitate concept development.

Montessori stated that due to research she believed by researching children with mental disability she realised that all children with or without disabilities would benefit from the same work. By doing this it would offer children better opportunities for personal growth and development she states.

Being inclusive is paramount as a child's interest should always come first. There are always challenges when it comes to inclusivity as some environments are not equipped for inclusivity but this does not mean it is not important. The Curriculum for Wales celebrates every child's individuality and what they bring to the learning experience. All children should be given uninterrupted time to explore and play. There are five key developmental pathways that are the fundamental to the learning and development of children. The pathways are developed to ensure that ALL children are having equal value and support in order to develop and progress. The key development pathways have been created for the children to be supported and to make progress at their own pace and in their preferred learning environment.

Inclusive practice ensures that all children are respected and receive the appropriate support in order to participate fully in learning. All children need to feel confident in who they are. Ensuring this means that all children have a strong sense of belonging, feel valued and represented. Children are influenced by their environment and the adults around them. It is important that we as professionals are responsible to influence them positively through creating an inclusive environment that celebrates everyone.

Respectful care

What we as early years practitioners or parents of children expect for our children is very similar when it comes to logistics as all we ever want for our children is to be loved, listened too, cared for, given the best opportunities to flourish in life and to succeed. Many are wary in early years settings when it comes to showing love in our daily routine as data protection and health and safety have stated that you are not able to complete basic tasks like giving hugs or showing affection towards a child. What does love look like in a early years setting? Knowing your child's needs is met when they are upset or happy by a simple task like a hug is beneficial as a hug to some children would mean the world.

Showing a interest in the child's hobbies or likes/dislikes can leave a huge impact on the child as research shows children that are given attention and love suffer less anxiety and developing anxiety issues when they are older if they are given and shown the correct care.

Love is everywhere but asking a child what is love to them can give you very different answers. As some would say showing affection or listening to them, others would argue that being told they are loved is important but also confused as they are told they are loved by them but the parents don't give the children any time or attention.

As a early years practitioner I believe when you are working and caring for children you need to have love towards the children as if not you do not how can you be working in that environment. Children react to love, and they copy our actions as we are towards them. Grimmer (2021) states if we show children love it empowers them and helps them feel safe. She states there is 5 languages to love.

1. Words of lacrimation- are we encouraging our children in our care to be better and to progress
2. Quality time- spending time with the children by playing or talking one to one with a child. Taking time to talk and communicate. Can we create photo books to be able to show children what we are doing or have done and discuss with them what have they enjoyed or remember.
3. Physical touch- high five in the morning coming into class, a hug when they are sad or happy about something. Physical touch has been lost in ways due to the civid pandemic but is just as important as food.
4. Acts of service- showing attention to children by getting their coat or listening to their problems.
5. Giving and receiving gifts- this doesn't have to mean buying gifts for children. Can be something simple like taking a interest in a child's likes or dislikes and acting upon it for example if you know a child that likes flowers and brings you flowers then you could return the act by giving them a flower you have found and explain that the flower reminded them of the child. This act of kindness will go a long way.

Taking these steps like Grimmer does will have a lasting effect on your relationship with your baby as they absorb so much by the way you interact, talk, sing to your baby. By having routines and involving your baby as they get older and develop the child will learn basic skills like feeding themselves, getting dressed and most importantly eye contact because if they are given this when they are growing, they will learn the basic life skills like feeding. Not just this but it's also a special bonding time for mother and baby when they communicate. If the child is going to nursery, then on

it will be known to the practitioner what the baby can do and how the interaction has been for the baby developing as they will come across advanced compared to other children. It is then important for the practitioner to follow up on these skills to develop further.

International approach

Many countries have different approaches to child development, but one thing that is clear and that should be shown is Love. A approach that is becoming very popular and in known today is Forest Schools. Forest Schools are a long term process but give the children the opportunity to overcome challenges, build self-regulation and self-reflection skills. They state that taking risks and vulnerability are key to developmental change as it helps them build resilience and confidence. Forest school promotes holistic development. They inspire development on multiple levels developing Physical, Emotional, Social, Spiritual and Intellectual areas. Forest School leaders are taught to be reflective on their own practices and to the needs of their learners. Forest schools give opportunity for all children to be able to find their own path at their own pace and time. Learners become more independent, confident and are able to handle daily problems efficiently due to forest schools.

Another approach that is followed in New Zeland is Te Whariki. Te Whariki is New Zeland's Early Years Curriculum. The Curriculum uses stories as an approach to assessment and places the learner at the heart of the assessments process. The Curriculum is split into five strands which focus on wellbeing, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. Each strand has a aim and has three or four goals each. Te Whariki aim to exceed exceptional care by this curriculum by allowing children to grow up competent and confident learners, be healthy in mind body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

Te Whariki's aim is not to prepare them for the next stage of schooling but for the learning and development be based around the children's intreats only. Research shows that Te Whariki has a successful approach to exceptional care and learning as it shows respect for children's learning and value diversity but not all areas are advantages as research also shows the Curriculum is lacking on Inclusion. For children who have learning difficulties research shows that the early years setting is marginalised because the children do not have the same strategies or opportunities to become involved with other children in their play. This shows that the curriculum does not fit all as it it not represented to suit the needs and interests of all children.





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