



Exceptional care in the first 1000 days



1 - What is the first 1000 days?

For babies, the first 1,000 days start from the moment they're born until the age of 2, in which they are then known as toddlers. A baby's experiences in their first 1,000 days can have a big effect on their health and wellbeing throughout their whole life (Ashton, 2022). These can be stress, trauma, poverty, or violence; therefore, it is very important to provide a baby with healthy diet, loving relationships, safety, play and a healthy environment. The first 1,000 days of a baby's life is highly important as it gives an opportunity to create brighter futures. The first 1,000 days is the most critical for brain, body, metabolism, and their immune system development. (Harris, 2018). The definition of exceptional care is providing babies or children with care that is free from harm, minimizes redundancy and waste, follows best practices and many more. Providing care for babies will allow them to feel more satisfied and secure. Care can encourage a baby to have a healthy lifestyle in their future such as healthy eating and plenty of exercise.



2 - Current Challenges in childcare.

When working in childcare it can have its challenges in which practitioners will have to overcome. Managing a room full of young babies can be hard and can drain a lot of your energy. The challenges practitioners will face can range from dealing with difficult behaviour like crying or temper

tantrums. Childcare workers may have found a lot of challenges during covid too. During the coronavirus, babies would spend all their time with their parents and sometimes their grandparents, therefore this does not allow them to socialise with other adults and babies. Social skills like communication, speech and language skills and emotional wellbeing are just some skills that babies are falling short on.



3 - Activity ideas



4 - Water play

Nearly all babies will enjoy water play. Considering children and babies learn by exploring things around them, water play is a great way for them to explore the properties of water. This can easily be done in the bath, sink or even by using different objects to fill up with water. These objects could include plastic bottles for pouring or squirting, a sponge, a colander, straws, spoons and almost anything else. When a baby is introduced to water play, they are surrounded by a range of different stimuli's. For example, they can feel the water slip through their fingers, listen to the sound the water makes by using different objects, they can observe other people playing with the water and even taste as most babies tend to put a lot of things in their mouth (*Elizabeth, 2022*). Sometimes, water can even have different smells from different taps. It is highly important to never leave a baby alone in water due to the risk of drowning. By doing water activities with your baby it helps build sensory skills and sensory awareness. It also allows them to develop their cognitive development. Children and babies absorb any information while they explore freely as they are making sense of the world around them. water play develops fine motor skills, gross motor skills and hand eye coordination (*What are the benefits of water play for toddlers? 2022*)



5 - Reading

From a young age, parents can start looking at books with their baby as this can help them with their future. This activity allows you to also create a special bond with babies which is beneficial for their emotional wellbeing. Even though babies can't talk yet, they enjoy listening to other people reading to them. By listening to others speak, it will give them a feel for the sounds, rhythms and rhymes of their language (DiProperzio & Fox, 2022). This specific activity can build a baby's development and literacy skills and help them to go on and read in the future. Also, by reading to your baby, it stimulates their imagination and helps them learn about the world around them. It's important to read slowly with babies as it gives them enough time to focus on the pictures. For babies, books with bright colours or big pictures are fantastic as they can be very interesting and easy for them to focus on. Reading to your baby also encourages them to look, point, touch and answer questions which can help their social development skills. According to Lewis, 2019, babies around the age of 4-6 months. They will start to show more interest in books by holding and grabbing them themselves and by the age of 6-12 months, babies will start to understand that pictures represent different objects, and may start to show interests in certain pictures. They should also be able to turn pages themselves (Marcin, 2020).

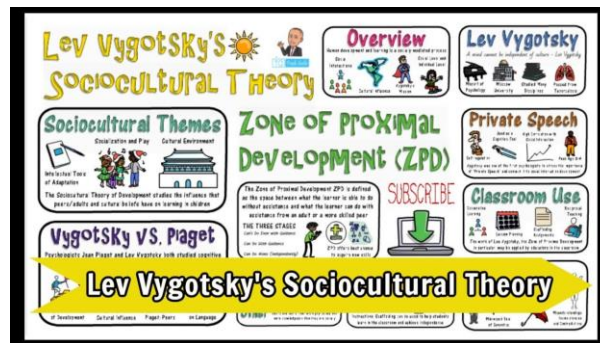


6 - Sensory play

Sensory play is any activity that includes any of a baby's senses. These senses are hearing, sight, touch, smell or taste. It can also include their movement and balance. Sensory play can support a baby's creativity and imagination, their motor skills and can even help parents form a special bond with their baby (ARanson, 2014). There are many ways you can create activities by using your baby's 5 senses. Even before babies start solid foods, their taste buds can help them discover whether they like or dislike different flavours and textures. Once weaned, parents can place food of different tastes and textures for example jelly or cream on a tray or plate or even bowl, and let the babies mix the foods and use their finger to grab and taste the new foods. Activities using the sensory touch can also include feeling different textures. However, there is more to touch than texture, babies can also explore objects that include temperatures, soft and hardness. These sensory objects can include sensory balls, feathers, blanket and textured books. Some smell sensory ideas can include making cloud dough or slime that have a specific smell for example mint or lemon. These activities can allow infants to identify objects. Hearing activities can be subtle sounds such as crunching. Use shakers and fill them up with rice, pasta, or even water. You can also use different objects around the house such as pots and pans and wooden spoons. These activities don't have to include objects, it can be as simple going on a walk and listening to the birds, cars or dogs barking. The last sense is sight (Kelly, 2016). These activities can include light up balls or any light up toys, or sensory bottles including water or oil and glitter. All these sensory activities allow babies to become more aware of their surroundings and also more mindful of themselves as individuals (Kelly, 2016).



7 - Lev Vygotsky theory of play



https://youtu.be/_fWm7cf8-WM

Lev Vygotsky was a psychologist and is best known for his theory of development. He believed that children can only develop properly through social interaction and one of the key elements of human development is play. Vygotsky believed that play plays a vital role in a child's brain development and that their abilities could be perfected through play. One of the main advantage of play is that babies and children are putting their abilities into practise without even realising it. Also, play is supposed to be fun therefore, there doesn't have to be much effort involved and they'll do it more frequently and be more dedicated (Teach Early Years Magazine, no date).

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory defines itself as the distance between the level of real cognitive development, the acquired ability up to that moment to solve problems without others' help and the level of potential development, or the ability to solve problems with the help of an adult. An example of the abilities that Vygotsky was discussing was their language. Vygotsky believed that written and oral language was the base of human development. Another example of one of Vygotsky's abilities he discussed is their worldview. Whilst playing, adults can help their child shape their worldview. For example, when adults pretend to be teachers, nurses or police, children start to understand the function of different people in society (Cherry, 2022).

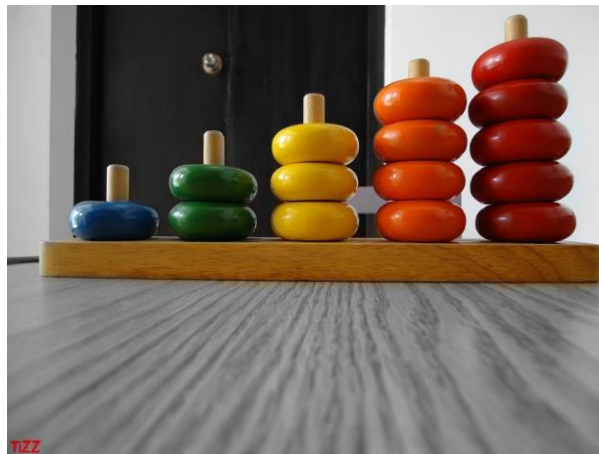
Vygotsky also believed that there are stages of play. the first stage includes babies and children playing with objects according to the meaning that adults give them. in the later half of this stage, they learn to symbolically substitute the functions of these objects. The second stage is called 'socio-dramatic play'. In this phase, children act out the adult world and play the roles of people in that world.

In conclusion, Lev Vygotsky believed that play played a vital role in a child's cognitive development. Through play, children acquire information, regulate their emotions and forge relationships with others. Play also allows them to expand and express their view of the world around them (Cherry, 2022).



8 - Environment

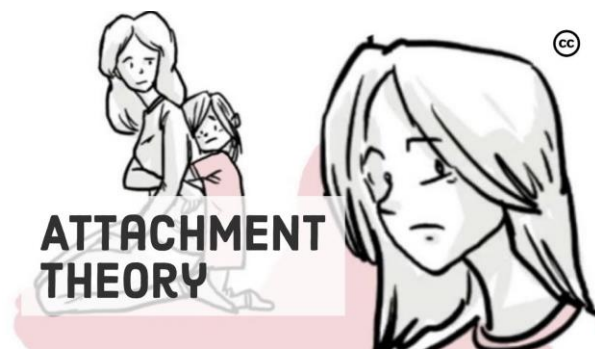
Babies need to be in a safe environment in and outside the home and providing them with this sort of environment is an important part of caring for them. Therefore, the environment plays a special role in supporting and extending a baby's development and learning. A baby's environment helps them feel relaxed, comfortable and at ease (*Enabling environments* 2016). When babies feel like this, they can explore and find out about the place they're in and the objects they can see, smell, touch, taste and hear. Babies gain a lot of benefits from learning outdoors. Allowing babies to play outdoors gives them the freedom to move around. They can use all their senses to explore the colours, noises, space and many more. Babies need a chance to use their whole body in order to develop, therefore having enough space outside allows them to develop their motor skills by crawling or walking. As they get older, they'll have this space to jump and run. Outdoor play also allows babies to burn off energy and encourages a healthy lifestyle (NCT (National Childbirth Trust), 2021). A baby's indoor environment is where most of their play, learning and development occur. In a baby's environment, it should provide plenty of resources for their development. Babies need 'hands-on' activities such as playing in water, building blocks and once they get older, they can start to colour and draw (Hale, 1994).



Loose parts play provides babies with enabling environments full of different and interesting objects that support their creativity, imagination and curiosity (*Loose parts play* 2021). Children can make their own rules with these objects which allows them to explore, create and imagine independently. By allowing babies to play with these loose parts, it can build on their physical activity, cognitive development, increases focus and developing problem solving.

Montessori is based on encouraging children to explore the world around them (*Mead, no date*). play plays a vital role in exploration because babies learn by doing and touching different objects around them. A Montessori toy is something that stimulates learning by encouraging kids to experiment. It should be a toy that a baby can hold, as learning to manipulate objects like this is vital in supporting babies to develop their fine motor skills (*Mead, no date*). These toys should also give the babies a chance to explore independently and at their own pace. A Montessori environment should include accessible furniture, a variety of work spaces designed materials displayed for free choice of activity. There are many educational and developmental benefits to the Montessori approach. Firstly, it can promote independence within the student. This approach is not teacher led therefore the child is in control. This is a vital skills for babies and children to have as it can help them develop into functioning adults in their future. Montessori also recognises that all babies learn in their own ways and therefore accommodates all learning styles. This method of education utilizes a hands on approach to learning because babies mostly use their senses to learn.

Babies learn and develop best when they have a loving and special bond with their parents or carers. Parents can build a bond like this with their babies by being in the moment and spending quality time with them. When parents give their baby lots of attention and responsive care, it can help them manage their thoughts, feelings and have a healthy relationship with others in the future. This is called secure attachment (*Positive relationships for parents and children: How to build them* 2020). By spending quality time with your baby and allowing them to get to know, helps your relationship grow and build a healthy close bond. It's important to keep your baby close. New babies will have a strong need to always be close to their parent. By comforting them and smiling and talking will help them to become happy babies and become more confident. One of the main purposes of forming a special bond with your baby, is to keep them safe always. Parents most constantly love and care for their child for them to feel secure. For mothers, their bond with their baby starts even before they're born. After birth, babies will find quick ways to connect with their parents and will tell you what they need. A baby will try and communicate in multiple ways by crying, laughing or by using their hands to grab objects. To connect with your baby and build a strong relationship, you can make noises to back to them, sing and rhyme, play peek-a-boo or share a story with them (Fargo, 2022). Creating close relationships with your baby nurtures their physical, emotional and social development. It lays the foundation for their personality, life choices and behaviour (*Parent-child relationship - why it's important* 2018).



<https://youtu.be/WjOowWxOXCg>

9 - John Bowlby's attachment theory

Attachment theory is the observation that explain the importance of a parent and child bond. John Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that babies come into the world biologically pre-programmed to form attachments with others, as this will help them survive (McLeod, 2017). Bowlby believed that there should be one primary bond in a babies live, which is much more important than any other. This is usually the mother. A baby has an inborn need to attach to one main attachment figure. This is called monotropy. Bowlby, (1988) suggested that monotropy meant that a failure to initiate the maternal attachment, can lead to negative consequences (McLeod, 2017). Bowlby (1951) also believed that mothering is highly important in a baby's first 2 years of life, and if this attachment is broken the child will suffer long-term consequences.

Bowlby worked alongside James Robertson to observe that babies and children experience intense distress when they're away from their mothers. They discovered three stages of distress, which are protest, despair and detachment. Protests is when the baby cries or even screams when their parents' leaves. Despair is when the baby's protesting begins to stop, and they start to become calmer although still feel very upset. And detachment is if the separation continues, then the baby will start to engage with other people (McLeod, 2017).



10 - Inclusion

Inclusion in a childcare setting means including every child and treating them equally. Each child is different and will develop at their own pace. Effective inclusion should provide children with access to all opportunities and support. Inclusive care in a childcare setting can be beneficial for the children. It can support babies to build relationships and develop their social skills. And by having inclusion in a childcare setting can also benefit a child from interacting with children who has a disability. It can increase appreciation of individual differences and prepare them for the adult world (*What is inclusive child care?* 2019). However, inclusion is not only about including children with a disability, but it can also include several other differences like a child's religion, culture, diet, gender or race.

Children will form their beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about other individuals from the adults around them. When practitioners promote inclusion in the workplace, then this can create a positive impact on the children around them to become more respectful of others. Within an inclusive setting children are encouraged to learn about different lifestyles other children may have that are different from their own. This is how children can gain an awareness that diversity should be celebrated. Practitioners can make inclusion a positive experience by creating an environment, both emotional and physical, where all the children and even the parents are treated with kindness respect and kindness (*What is inclusive child care?* 2019). Practitioners can also help children feel comfortable by allowing them to developing friendships by sharing their experiences and interests. Childcare providers must also embrace and celebrate each child's uniqueness.

Parents and childcare providers should work together at becoming inclusive. Before a parent sign up their baby to an inclusive setting, they must establish trust. A caregivers trust is earned through individual interactions about what is happening in the setting. Furthermore, parents should always communicate with caregivers. Communication is a two-way process, and parents should inform childcare settings of any personal needs. This is how the childcare settings can create a safe environment for any child. Especially if this child has a specific special need. Parents can inform their child's childcare setting by informing them in advance (Home Care Pulse, 2020).

Inclusive practise in a childcare setting provides children a better-quality education. Respect and understanding develop when children of diverse backgrounds play, learn and socialise together. Through inclusive practise, a child's levels of communication between other children, staff and parents which can create better outcomes for their confidence (Lee, 2022).

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Sophie Marie Sophie Marie is passionate about providing the very best for her kids and her family. She spends half of the year living in an isolated community in Far North Queensland so online research and finding the best products is a skill she's perfect, Marie, S. and Sophie Marie is passionate about providing the very best for her kids and her family. She spends half of the year living in an isolated community in Far North Queensland so online research and finding the best products is a skill she's perfected over time (2022) *What are the benefits of water play for toddlers?, Baby Toddler & Kids*. Available at: <https://www.babytoddlerandkids.com.au/benefits-of-water-play-for-toddlers/> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).

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