



The First 1000 Days

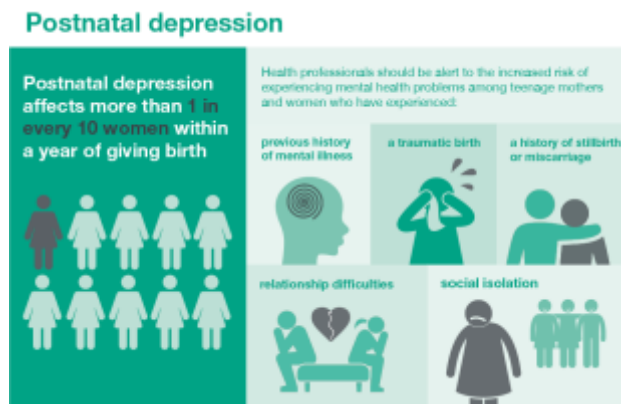
Why are the first 1000 days important?

According to Home Start (ND) the first one thousand and one days are from conception to age 2. During this time, it is suggested that babies have a period of rapid growth and development, and their brains are formed from their environments and experiences. Supporting this HM Government (2021) explains that foundations for a human's physical, emotional, and cognitive development are developed in the one thousand and one days between conception and the age of two, also stating that more than a million new neural connections are formed every second during the first 12 months

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9IJkws>

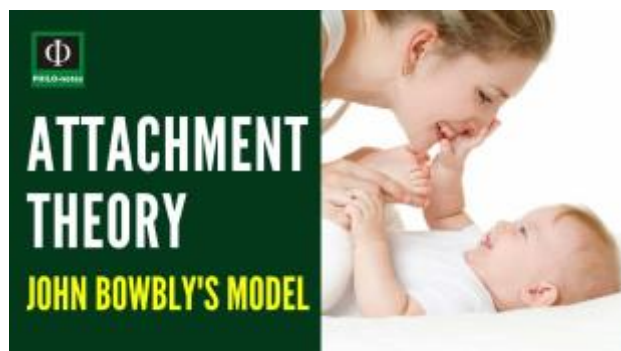
Karakochuk et al (2017) supports these views by suggesting that the first five years of life are critical for ensuring that children are healthy and resilient. Onethousanddays.org (2021) ascertain that the brain grows more quickly in the first one thousand and one days than at any other time in an individual's life. They expand on this by explaining that this is also a period where babies are at their most vulnerable and that during this period the infant's development can be compromised by poor nutrition and neglect. Gerhart (2014) suggests that a fetus quality of life is shared with its mother. The fetus not only shares the mother's physical state but is also affected by her mental health.

Nutbrown and Page (2008) explain that mothers' initial reactions to pregnancy vary with feeling of excitement, shock or worry. Department of Health (2022) explain that many mothers, an estimate of one in ten, experience mental health issues including post-natal depression and that this can not only affect the mother but can also affect an infant's development. They expand by suggesting that Maternal mental health issues can prevent a mother from developing a natural bond with an infant or even struggle to meet an infant's mental and physical needs thus preventing them from forming a secure attachment. HM Government (2020) maintain that problems such as Mental health issues, traumatic birth experience, substance misuse, negative relationships with partners and sleep deprivation can cause issues in parenting.



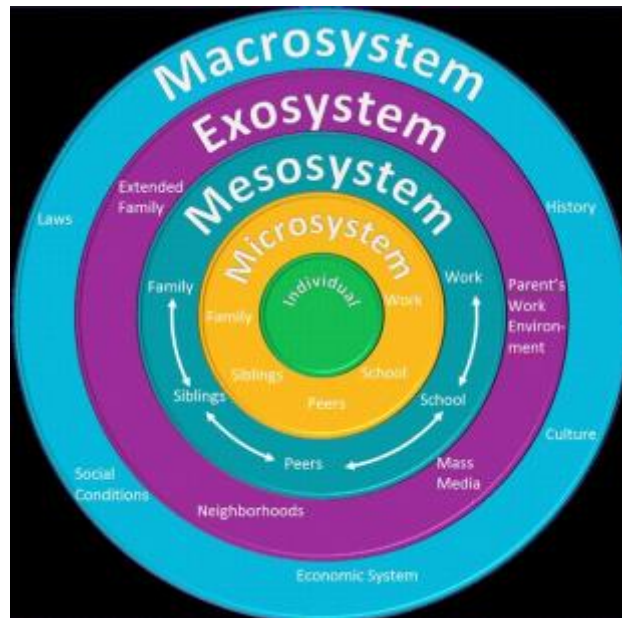
1 - Source: Public Health England (2022)

Shaffer and Emerson (1964) suggest that all infants and children require a secure, consistent relationship with a caregiver to allow for socioemotional development. Bates (2019) when discussing Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that infants who form as secure attachment are more likely to be confident and learn by exploring their environment. Gerhart (2015) supports this by stating that if children do not develop positive relationships in early life, then the dependent child and the child's brain needs to adapt. Stress affects the infant's brain, and the brain's emotions and immune system become less effective causing a greater risk of difficulties in later life such as depression, addictions, and anti-social behavior



Bronfenbrenner's theory of Ecological Systems as explained by Bates (2019) shows that the individuals and environment around a child has an influence on the child's development. The closer the sources are to the child shown in the center of the diagram, the larger the influence on the child. The circle directly around the child is called the microsystem and Parents, Peers and Childcare are shown in the child's

microsystem. This again somewhat supports the attachment theory where negative relationships in the microsystem which could be lack of attachment to caregivers have a negative influence on the child



The Enabling Adult

Nutbrown and Page (2008) explains that a secure attachment may not necessarily be a maternal attachment, but the secure attachment could develop with the individual who shows the most care and sensitivity. Early Years Matter (2021) also explain that children thrive when receiving loving and secure relationships and when this is not being provided by parents it can be provided by a key person. Responding sensitively to the child's emotional, physical, and behavioral needs the key person can provide reassurance to the child allow them to feel supported and safe. Welsh Government (2016) expect that all children should have the best possible start in life and receive care to ensure the best growth and development. This mirrors the United Nations Conventions on rights of a child where UNICEF (ND) mention article three, where the best interests of the child must be taken into consideration in all decisions. Article twenty-nine, where all children should receive an education that meets their individual requirements, supporting them to reach full potential and respects individual cultures and parents and Article thirty-six to protect children from exploitation. Welsh Government (2016) expect that early year's practitioners ensure theses needs are being met and provide guidance through the national minimum standards document.



Harvard University (2017) state that when a child cries and an adult responds with touch, speech, or eye contact, the enables the child to develop communication skills and the neural connections in the brain are built and strengthened. This is called a serve and return interaction. When the interactions are inconsistent and the serve is not returned, for example an infant cry and is not picked up by the caregiver, the serve is not being returned and brain development may be disrupted, thus again supporting Bronfenbrenner and Bowlby's theories.



The Pickler Approach (ND) when discussing Emmi Pickler's approach explain that Pickler believed that daytime activities such as changing, feeding, and bathing provided opportunities for establishing a positive, trusting relationships between infant and caregiver as it was during this time the infant learns about themselves. When the infant received tender care, where the care giver gives them sole attention, eye contact and gentle touch and speech, encouraging the infant to be active in the care routine such as

offering a foot for washing. The infant should never be forced, and the practitioner should wait until the infant is ready or find a way in which the infant is comfortable, this ensure that the infant feels like an equal and feels safe and secure in the relationship thus creating a secure attachment. Lee (2006) agrees and states that the time taken building a firm relationship between the caregiver and the infant should be a meaningful and beneficial experience. There should be a mutual understanding between both parties by responding to each other's behavior. Whilst Appel and David (1973) somewhat agree and explain that any contact should be respectful, and the baby should have free movement.

Welsh Government (2021) state that children need an enabling adult to create emotional safe, interesting environments assisting learners to regulate and express their feelings and to learn new skills. The enabling adult will be consistent in their care and show kindness and compassion, helping the learner develop social and communication skills and learning from their environment by modelling behavior such as communication or play. The enabling adult will ensure that the child is cared for holistically, with all their needs met, observing their likes and dislikes, and collaborating to solve problems with them. The enabling adult should role model communication, play and relationships and Bates (2019) suggests, when discussing Bandura's Social Learning theory that children learn from observation and modelling and copying others.



Nutbrown and Page (2008), state that separating education and care is unreasonable, they describe professional love as love, care, and affection that practitioners feel for babies and children in their care. Welsh Government (2021) mention when describing the enabling adult as a teacher, helping them with development and an observing learner but also a carer showing kindness compassion and care. Degotardi and Pearson (2009), suggest that infants who develop a secure relationship with an early years practitioner are more likely to engage in complex or dramatic peer play, and are more independent and empathetic than infants have no secure attachment. Pacey (2016), state that most practitioners have a positive attitude towards professional love in practice and are comfortable with hugging and using sensitive touch to build love, security, and attachment. Gerhart (2004) explains that early year's practitioners are doing their best to provide infants with suitable attachment relationships as it is a requirement within the Early years Foundation stage and explains that defining professional love can be problematic as there is no skill set to apply teach or measure. But when research already conforms, that love is required to develop secure attachments to deny the existence of it would be unhelpful. University of Sheffield (Nd), states that Professional Love is the loving bond that develops

overtime between the practitioner and child in their care. It is with mutual agreement and a shared understanding again supporting Dr Picklers view of the mutual respect and understanding between the caregiver and infant as described by The Picker Approach (ND).



Early Education (2005), state that adults who are successful in early years can carry out sustained shared thinking, to be able to establish trusting relationships, they can recognise a child's interests and have a conversation with the child to encourage further thinking, exploration, and learning.



The Enabling Environment

According to Bates (2019) the Montessori approach suggest infants thrive on structure, have absorbent minds and high motivation to learn new things, Early years environments should be in order where everything is accessible, to provide opportunities to explore areas that capture the infants interested and provide opportunities for self-directed play. Bates (2019) explains that the Te Whariki approach uses resources to challenge the children's wider interests, ensuring their environment encourages them to interact with peers, be creative and celebrated as an individual to ensure that the infant thrives with their health and wellbeing. Welsh Government (2021) also agree that the environment should be inclusive and celebrate diversity, and that the environment should ignite learners' curiosity, so they are able to learn through independent exploration of their environment. Donaldson (2015) when developing the New Curriculum for Wales explains that education in Wales should be inclusive and meet the needs of the pupils. They explain that the environment should include risk and challenge to ensure children develop confidence resilience and independence. The Pikler Approach (ND) again support this by suggesting that children who can play and roam freely were less likely to fall and hurt themselves and

more alert and physically capable. Gopnik et al (1999) explains that babies require interesting surroundings and company.



Early Years Matters (ND) explain that the setting should also be an emotional enabling environment and in that the in the setting there is an invisible measure of feelings, both negative and positive but staff should try to ensure that there is a positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and secure and can express their feelings knowing there is an adult nearby to help. Nutbrown and Page (2008) supporting this explain that it is vital for children and parents alike to feel safe and confident in the environment and that parents should be familiar with routines and the environment. Early Years Alliance (2019) also suggest that practitioners create a warm welcoming, nurturing space for children and parents, providing ideas such as hanging family photographs on the wall of the setting, and providing a welcoming space for parents to sit with staff and their child thus allowing staff to create successful professional relationships with the parent and child.

Early Years Alliance (2019) explain that enabling environments should cater for children and babies and provide activities for all children at each stage in their development. HM Government (2021) explain that play should be uninterrupted so that children become familiar with their learning allowing them to progress. Welsh Government (2021), explain that during the period of learning to progression step one, curriculum design should include play and playful learning, being outdoors and observation. There should be purposeful learning based on real life experiences. This follows Dewey's theories as described by (Aubrey and Riley, 2016; Bates 2019) where practitioners should act as facilitators to challenge children's interest. Allowing them to participate in real world experiences learning from the experience by reflection rather than learning from theory.



2 - This video shows how a nursery uses real life objects rather than toys in thier practice.

Enabling Experiences

Welsh Government (2021) describe enabling experiences as experience that should promote pupils' independence, consist of real life or challenging experiences, and provide un-interrupted play to maximise learning. Brighton and Hove Council (ND) explain that children need to learn from experience and play and describe possible activities for Infants to participate in the setting to develop their social skills such as turn taking games. For example: children may roll a ball across a circle or play a parachute game with their peers.

As mentioned by Bates (2019) when discussing Piaget's constructivist theory between birth to two babies are at the sensorimotor stage where children feel the world with their senses such as seeing and hearing and motor actions such as reaching and touching.

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Typical Age Range	Description of Stage	Developmental Phenomena
Birth to nearly 2 years	<i>Sensorimotor</i> Experiencing the world through senses and actions (looking, touching, mouthing)	•Object permanence •Stranger anxiety
About 2 to 6 years	<i>Preoperational</i> Representing things with words and images but lacking logical reasoning	•Pretend play •Egocentrism •Language development
About 7 to 11 years	<i>Concrete operational</i> Thinking logically about concrete events; grasping concrete analogies and performing arithmetical operations	•Conservation •Mathematical transformations
About 12 through adulthood	<i>Formal operational</i> Abstract reasoning	•Abstract logic •Potential for moral reasoning



Bates (2019) also explains Bruner's theory where there are three stages of development. Bates (2019) explains that the enactive stage appears first, involving the storing and encoding of information. Although there is a direct manipulation of objects there is no internal representation. An example of this in practice could include providing a baby with a rattle, when it shakes, they hear a pleasurable noise. The infant may shake his hand going forward even if there is no rattle with the expectation that their hand will make a sound. As the baby does not have internal representation of the rattle it doesn't understand that the rattle is required to make a sound. Towards one year this moves to the Iconic stage where children can have internal representation of external objects in form of a mental image. A child drawing a tree for example. This moves to the symbolic stage from seven where information is stored in the form of a code or symbol such as language, or mathematical symbols.

Brighton and Hove (2021) suggest children may bring chatter boxes in from home filled with some of their favourite items with the support of an adult they can show their peers. Personal items may help the child feel more comfortable participating thus developing their communication skills and building their confidence, they also suggest enabling them to understand how other people are feeling, or what behaviour is acceptable making use of a persona doll or using role play. Delano and Snel (2006) suggest that social stories could be used to explain to children how others are feeling. A social story is a story about an interaction or event that a child may find challenging. They explain the likely reactions of others, giving details of appropriate actions a child should consider in the situation. Again, following Bandura's theory where children learn from the actions of other as discussed by Bates (2019).



Circle Time Rules



Welsh Government (2021) that enabling experiences improve communication skills of children. Familiar Rhymes and stories sing or read to a child not only introduces vocabulary to the infant but provides the relationships building experience that is described in The Pikler approach (ND) where the child has the caregiver's close attention and they are mutually, singing, turning pages, performing actions together. A young infant may be soothed by the caregiver's voice.

Ullsten et al. (2018) explains that singing is a positive way for children and caregivers to communicate. These loveable interactions are essential for the release of dopamine in a baby's brain, which increases curiosity and prevents the infant's brain from abnormal development due to stress and pain and promotes positive attachments

Welsh Government (2021) explains how play is essential and supports holistic learning across the curriculum, for social behaviour, creative, physical, and intellectual development.



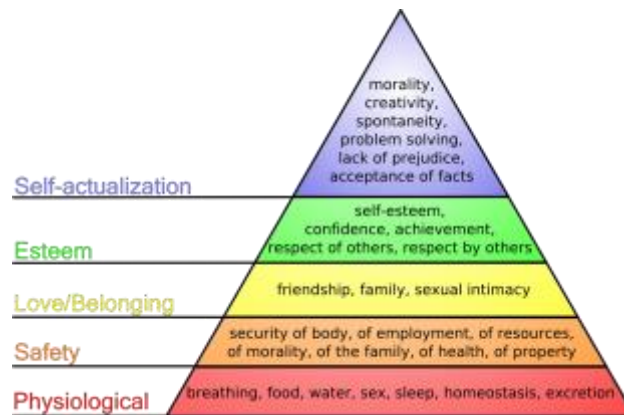
Challenges

Onethousanddays.org (2021) state that there is a worldwide problem where many mothers and infants struggle to receive adequate nutrition, care, and support to enable them to thrive. Karakochuk (2017) mentions that to allow a child to follow normal growth patterns they must receive adequate nutrition during infancy, if nutrition is poor during this period, then the infant is at risk of permanent stunts in growth and have defects in cognitive development. World Health Organization (WHO) as cited by Karakochuk et al (2017), explains that interventions in nutrition in pregnancy could improve outcomes for infants who otherwise may show concerns in linear growth. Karakochuk (2017) explains that maternal body mass also effects a babies development where mothers with a Body Mass index of over 25Kg/M2 are more likely to suffer with pregnancy diabetes , high blood pressure and pre -eclampsia and contribute to large gestational age infants and childhood obesity whereas mothers who are severely underweight are more likely to give birth prematurely, deliver a still born infant or deliver a child who is underweight again supporting the view of Gerhart (2014) that a mothers physical state has a direct effect on the infant. Department of Health England (2022) states that a healthy mother is more likely to give birth to a healthy baby. NHS (2022) state that mothers over 10 weeks' gestation or with a child up to the age of four on certain benefits can receive a healthy start card that will allow them to purchase the milk, vegetables, and vitamins.



Public Health England (2019), state that to give a child a healthy nutritional start mothers should breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of an infant's life. and that breastfed children are at lower risk of obesity, allergies, respiratory infections, and sudden infant death syndrome. UNICEF (2022) explain that not only does breastfeeding have health benefits for the infant but also has health benefits for the mother. It also assists with developing a bond between mother and baby to support a secure attachment. They have developed the UNICEF Baby friendly initiative that is set up to work with the government to improve uptake of breastfeeding in the United Kingdom. Welsh Government (2013) expected that all maternity services in Wales attained the UNICEF baby Friendly initiative by 2015, they also suggest that infant born from a pregnancy free from alcohol, drugs that are well fed and cared for in a warm supported environment are more able to reach their full potential in life again supporting the view an infant who is having their needs met is likely to have a positive outcome in life. This is supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory as discussed by Bates (2019) where individuals need their basic physiological needs such as food, shelter, then safety needs, then a sense of belonging and self-esteem met to allow them to progress and develop to the next stages and reach self-actualization, their full potential. This is due to the infant's development being delayed as their priority becomes survival rather than learning, when failing to have their basic needs met.

Welsh government (2013) expect early years practitioners to continue supporting children to remain healthy by ensuring schools take a support the child to achieve good physical health and wellbeing by promoting health lifestyles to pupils and families. UNICEF (2020), maintain that early year's practitioners have an important role in improving outcomes for children at their families and that early year's practitioners should work collaboratively to support the UNICEF baby friendly initiatives in settings and suggest practitioners should be able to answer questions relating to early years nutrition and support parents to build a relationship with their baby. They should also support bottle feeding and be able to advise on the appropriate introduction to solid foods.



The Covid pandemic has provided challenges to Early Years practitioners, HomeStart et al. (2021). mention that parent they surveyed felt abandon during the lockdown period, some suggesting their babies interacted with them differently during lockdown and others reporting their own deteriorating mental health often related to mothers who were required to give birth without the support of their partners. Many reported concerns in delays in social development. Reason (2021) also explained that the keyworker role of Early Years Practitioners was also disrupted during the pandemic thus potentially causing further stress and lack of safety and secure attachment to infants and parents.

Welsh Government (2020) agree and explain that the pandemic has put even more pressure on already struggling families and recognise that they need to improve and expand health and care provision for mothers and babies.

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