



The first 1000 days

What is meant by the phrase 'the first 1,000 days'?



According to pregnancy birth & baby (2020), the first 1,000 days refer to a child's existence from conception to the age of two years (24 months). For a more detailed explanation of the first 1000 days, watch the following videos:



1 - (UNICEF Philippines, 2015)



2 - (Dr Morreau, 2016)

Why are the first 1,000 days so important?



The first 1000 days of life provide a once-in-a-lifetime chance to boost child development and long-term health. This crucial period has a significant short- and long-term influence on the health and well-being of unborn fetuses, newborns, early children, and pregnant and nursing mothers (Doherty and Hughes, 2009).

Furthermore, during this 1000-day window, environmental influences and diet may positively impact a baby's growth, brain development, digestive tract, metabolism, and immune system. As a result, early in infancy, a well-balanced diet rich in necessary nutrients, plays an essential role in future programming health. Moreover, HM Government (2021) claims that

'Two is too late!' From this reason, parents, practitioners, and other professionals who engage with children should be aware of the complex processes and forces that impact how children develop, think, gain new skills, acquire information, and interact with others (Doherty and Hughes, 2009). Moreover, Brodie (2018) claims that children grow holistically, and hence high-quality environments should accept and reflect this. Care quality and duration affect physical, cognitive, linguistic, and social, personal, and emotional development. Separating **caring** and **education** is implausible and unjust. **Babies are constantly learning via play and life experiences.**



3 - (Yates, 2015)

Early years practitioners in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days



According to Roberts (2009), sometimes, parents may lack confidence in playing with their children or understand their critical role in their child's learning and development.

Practitioners' interventions should consider assisting parents' by offering chances for social support, developing good parenting skills, supportive connections, and strong attachments. Parents should be considered **partners** in their child's education; as a result, they are more receptive. Sessions such as 'stay and play,' 'language and play,' and 'number and play' will help parents gain confidence in interacting (Roberts, 2009). Parents may be asked to periodically visit the day care setting to listen or participate in story time or rhyme time. Moreover, practitioners may speak with parents about their child's daily activities. Brodie (2018) claims that practitioners have a fantastic chance to provide parents (when required) with information on diet, exercise, and dental concerns.

In addition, parents may be given information about the stages of child development to have realistic expectations for what their children can do. Parents should know that they do not have to

buy expensive toys for their kids. Rather expensive, it should be stressed how critical their attention and time are to their child's growth. In [the following presentation, Zahra Kassam explains why expensive toys are not recommended for toddlers](#). Additionally, parents might be supplied with free play suggestions (Roberts, 2009). [For free play suggestions, open the link.](#)

Practitioners should consider the variety of families, acknowledging that family structures may vary. They should be kindly and friendly, assuring that parents will be able to obtain the assistance they need. Practitioners should **collaborate** with parents and assist them in identifying their own needs and aspirations (Roberts, 2009). [For more support parenting guidance, follow the link.](#)

Babies needs and their development



In 1954, Abraham Maslow developed a pyramidal hierarchy of human needs. Meeting these fundamental needs is necessary for survival. In view of this, physiological necessities are at the very bottom, constituting the foundation of his pyramid. For instance, the newborn needs food and drink, often mixed in milk. Above and beyond these physiological requirements are safety and security requirements. As, the youngster needs a secure sleeping space. The caregiver (or caregivers) must first provide the child's physiological, safety, and security requirements. To ensure an infant's survival and optimum development, they also must meet the child's desire for touch, cuddling, warmth, and human contact. Only when these elements are provided for the children, they have an atmosphere conducive to complete development (Wilson, 2015).

Above and beyond these physiological requirements are safety and security requirements.

According to Fulhan, Collier, and Duggan (2003), babies need a certain amount of food to develop healthily, but they also require appropriate food. **Breastfeeding** provides a baby's nutritional necessities on a qualitative level. Breast milk contains the optimal ratio of fat to protein, promotes healthy growth, provides antibodies that fight disease, protects against tooth decay, and aids in digestion. Breastfeeding has several advantages beyond physical development and health. Moreover, recent research shows that breastfed babies are more likely to have higher IQs, better reading ability, and overall cognitive development (Kramer *et al.*, 2008). According to health agency recommendations, breast milk should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months. Moreover, breast milk should be included in a baby's diet for at least one year (Satcher, 2001).

Furthermore, the infant can feel, smell, and see the mother during breastfeeding. That contributes to developing a tight, loving attachment between the mother and her infant (Queensland Government, 2020). [There are more resources for parents, families, and carers about babies and breastfeeding.](#)



4 - (Rubin and Growdon, 2021)

The development of attachment

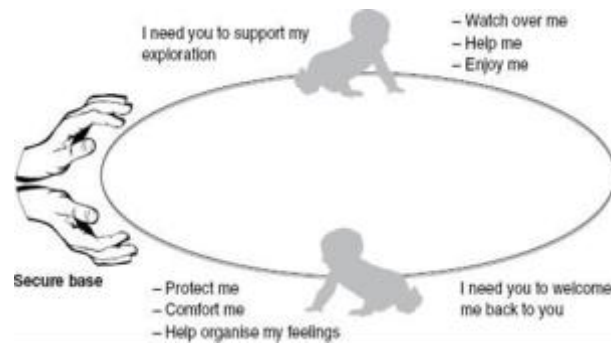


Attachment bonds develop gradually during the first two years of life. Bowlby (1969) saw the newborn's attachment to the caregiver as an evolved reaction that promotes survival.

Moreover, according to Crowley (2014), attachment refers to the infant's solid and loving link with the caregiver. The infant is born with behaviours that drive them to seek an optimal amount of proximity (in terms of physical distance) to the parent, who would nurture and protect the infant.

Additionally, human newborns have a communication system comprised of screams and facial expressions that enables them to alert the caregiver to increase their closeness (Campos *et al.*, 1983). Therefore, infants begin to produce noises from birth. The first of these noises is crying. Infants' screams initially express discomfort but quickly adjust to suit a communication purpose. (Keenan, Evans and Crowley, 2016).

Notably, Marvin's 'circle of security' is based on Bowlby's concept of 'secure base.' The technique simplifies complex topics around attachment and emotional development. Infants need safe and secure ties with their caregivers. They may fearlessly explore the world from this secure base, comforted that their primary caregiver watches over them and participates in their enjoyment. Additionally, toddlers must feel that they may return to the refuge of their caregiver relationship during times of difficulty and fear (Reed and Walker, 2015).



5 - (Parker-Rees and Leeson, 2014)

Moreover, Ainsworth *et al.* (1978) claim that sensitive parenting, in which the mother/caregiver responds to the newborn's needs, fosters a stable attachment bond that instils confidence and security in the infant. Similarly, Emmi Pikler also recognised the critical role of good attachments in a child's total well-being, physical and emotional development. She observed that feeding, changing, and bathing provided important chances for the newborn and caregiver to develop stable, trusting bonds (The Pickler Collection, 2022). For example, **baby massage** is an enjoyable method to contact skin-to-skin in a peaceful and relaxed atmosphere. There are several advantages: getting to know the baby and bonding; it is a harmonious contact between the infant and the adult, including extended family and siblings. As the levels of oxytocin in the baby's body grow, they may sleep and settle easier (NCT, 2017).



6 - (HNEkidshealth, 2016)

Fathers are also key attachment figures.



While attachment theory has tended to emphasise the mother as the central attachment figure, it is now recognised that newborns develop a range of attachment bonds. **Fathers** are also key attachment figures. Fathers who show an early interest in their infants are just as likely as mothers to touch, kiss, and speak to them and are also more likely to have an attachment bond with their children comparable to that of a mother and child (Parke, 1996). Likewise, there are distinctions in how mothers and fathers interact with newborns. Mothers participate in more verbal play, [such as 'peek-a-boo' games,](#) and 'give more toys', while fathers engage in more rough-and-tumble physical play (Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Additionally, when fathers react enthusiastically and sensitively to babies' efforts at play, children are more likely to develop a stable internal attachment model (Grossman, Grossman & Kindler, 2005).



7 - (Eidelman, 2014)

Enabling adults, environment, and experiences



According to Welsh Government (2021), **enabling adults** are receptive, listening to and interpreting learners' communication through actions, words, and behaviours, and reacting sensitively to enhance understanding. Moreover, they demonstrate a knowledge that learning to communicate is a unique process for each person and that learners acquire and improve abilities at varying speeds. Adults who are sensitive and attentive utilise infants' cries, coos, and gurgles as markers of communication, whether to satisfy a bodily need (such as being fed or changed) or to get attention to initiate a dialogue.

Enabling adults foster a communicative atmosphere by modelling various modes of expression. They facilitate learners' learning via skilled interactions, building on learners' prior knowledge to assist and encourage them in forming connections with people, places, and things. Bruner (1983) noted that caregivers facilitate children's learning by offering names for objects during play, closely checking children's understanding, and developing alternative methods to teach rules when toddlers struggle to comprehend a specific instance. Moreover, when children reach the age of increasing independence, often around the age of two, they are exposed to an almost overwhelming quantity of emotional information. If they cannot communicate their feelings to others, they may experience frustration and emotional anguish. The practitioner must assist toddlers in naming their emotions so they may express themselves verbally (Lindon, 2008).

Therefore, practitioners must establish successful cross-curricular linkages to present a comprehensive and balanced curriculum that draws on learners' prior knowledge and experiences. They enhance their planning to preserve the quality of their services, making continuous adjustments to fit the requirements of all learners and current challenges. Notably, everyone is affected by the coronavirus outbreak, including the newborns. They may be influenced by their parents' concerns, major changes in their routine, or some losses, such as not being able to visit

family members or losing touch with peers. It is essential to build new daily habits or to re-establish current ones. Maintaining consistent mealtimes and bedtimes and scheduling daily time to **play games**, **read** to them, or **sing songs** all help to their feeling of security (Anna Freud Centre, 2021). [The following link offers some ways to help babies through the pandemic crisis](#)

Enabling environments should celebrate and value diversity and demonstrate inclusivity. According to **Bronfenbrenner's views**, infants are most impacted by their immediate family and sociocultural surroundings. There will be impacts from broader society, which may be both beneficial and destructive. For example, even if a child is reared in a loving home, there may be harmful consequences from broader culture due to problems like racism (Berk, 2009). Babies need the optimum possible care in environments where practitioners have the most effect on developing self-esteem, self-confidence, and resilience if they meet unfavourable influences. Furthermore, the environment, both inside and outdoors, should be central to real learning experiences for toddlers. **Exploration of the environment** is a significant motivator for growth throughout this stage of learning. When developing their curriculum, practitioners should consider not just the physical locations but also the emotional environment that supports learners in reaching their potential. According to Roberts (2002), toddlers must be able to trust the persons who are temporarily taking the position of their parents when they first split from them. Children must develop a close bond with at least one adult in their environment, who they know is there for them. A key person in a setting and important individual at home often perform similar activities. According to Brodie (2018), the key person's responsibility is providing emotional support, monitoring the child, observing (and acting on, if required) changes in health, mood, or behaviour, communicating with parents, so having a critical role for their children. Bandura (1977) also recognises the adult's critical role in learning by emphasising the importance of observational and modelling learning. Bandura demonstrated that toddlers learn by imitation of what they see other people doing in their immediate surroundings. As a result, children will repeat the acts of others.

According to Ouvre (2000), healthy babies and infants strive to develop skills to become less physically dependent on adults. A one-year-old may begin using a feeding cup and attempting to feed himself; infants will insist on dressing and feeding themselves, gaining control over their toileting habits, and wishing to move to explore new territories. Additionally, Fisher (2013) believes that space is necessary for children to develop physical independence. A workshop-style environment might provide additional opportunities for toddlers to use their initiative. As Reggio Emilia does, a practitioner who believes that the environment is the third teacher would design the setting to foster independence and exercise extreme caution in managing and arranging physical space. Babies beginning to crawl should have enough floor area to explore freely, but they also must feel secure and focused. The quality of a toddler's self-chosen play is strongly impacted by the quality and variety of continuous supply, that is, the resources made accessible daily. As a result, Dowling (1995) asserts that when babies are exposed to **treasure baskets** and select things of interest, they have options. By offering a diverse selection of natural and open-ended materials, heuristic play encourages newborns to wander about and choose something specific to explore and study. Therefore, **enabling experiences** should foster learners' independence by providing challenges and creating opportunities for success throughout the learning process.

Mainly, according to Piaget, toddlers actively investigate their surroundings, and their activities ultimately determine their views. Piaget thought that infants create their reality via their manipulation and exploration of the environment. What they genuinely develop are cognitive structures dubbed schemes by Piaget. Two biological notions were central to his theory: **adaptability and organisation** (Ginsburg & Oppen, 1988). For instance, newborns gradually begin to connect

previously learned methods for reaching, gripping, and sucking things. It then merges them into more sophisticated structures that may be generalised to various contexts, enhancing their capacity to manage the world. (Keenan, Evans and Crowley, 2016) Moreover, in this process, adults have a vital role. Bruner was convinced that close people, especially parents, may help youngsters develop their cognitive skills by scaffolding everyday play (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976).

According to Welsh Government (2021), all children should have **experiences** that enhance physical activity engagement. Learners need consistent access to various physical activities both inside and out, using a variety of equipment and resources. **The outdoors activities** give possibilities to inspire wonder and curiosity and provide open, calm, and engaging environments. The outdoors gives abundant real chances for learners' senses to be stimulated by what they hear, touch, see, and smell. Learning Through Landscapes (2022) claims that sand and clay, for example, provide excellent chances for exploration, examination, and manipulation. Similarly, Te Whariki's outdoor environment is rich in natural materials, motivating and encouraging toddlers to participate in physical activities by playing with equipment that helps them develop **fine motor skills**.

Moreover, babies are susceptible to environmental influences. Outside, sound behaves differently - it changes naturally in response to the wind or meteorological conditions. Babies on the move use every chance to lift themselves to their feet. Installing stable low-level pots filled with powerfully fragrant herbs such as lavender or rosemary, vibrant summer plants, or delicacies like strawberries or redcurrants is an excellent strategy to foster this behaviour while also providing engaging sensory experiences. They may lay on the grass and feel it tickle their skin, or they can sense the difference in texture between hard and soft surfaces (Learning Through Landscapes, 2022).



8 - Small hillocks, tunnels, and pathways promote rolling, crawling, stretching, and trying to run. Ladders, tyres, and planks give climbing options, while low walls and rails of varying heights enable infants to pull themselves to standing. Textured paths (bark, wood chip, sand, and pebbles) give aesthetic appeal and help develop the necessary movement abilities for navigating uneven terrain (Learning Through Landscapes, 2022).



9 - (Nature Explore, 2020)

Challenges and Outcomes



The Covid-19 pandemic is the most challenging problem, affecting every sector of society, including education. Schools are urged to maintain high levels of hygiene (for example, by regularly sanitising hands, doing a thorough cleaning, and discouraging child sharing of equipment). Additionally, they should promote social distancing to the greatest extent possible.

For instance, dividing classrooms into smaller groups and putting them apart, decreasing mobility across the school, positioning desks in forward-facing rows, and limiting the number of staff assigned to each grouping. Additionally, early childhood educators face various difficulties carrying out their professional obligations. Apart from their conventional tasks, teachers should perform the roles of

curriculum specialists, diagnosticians, health care providers, family consultants, adult educators, child development experts, child supporters, mental health professionals, and nutrition specialists. (Sharp *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, working in the baby room or bringing babies into settings requires practitioners to possess a diverse set of skills, including: 'being there' both emotionally and physically; sustained interactions (talking, eye contact, cuddles) with babies and adult conversations with parents; a high level of care and intuition to pick up on small cues indicating pressure or enjoyment, as well as an understanding of early education. Due to the complexity and diversity of communications in a rapidly changing environment, practitioners working with this age group must be adaptable, sensitive, and emotionally connected to the children in their care. (Powell and Goouch, 2012).

According to Brodie (2018), **pedagogy** studies teaching techniques, ethos, relationships between infant and practitioner, learning environment, and curriculum; it is how **education** is performed in conjunction with the **subject**. Moreover, according to Welsh Government (2021), effective, learner-centered pedagogy that is responsive, dynamic, and based on strong relationships is vital to implementing the Curriculum for Wales.

Mathers *et al.* (2014) outline four critical characteristics of pedagogy that practitioners must consider when dealing with children aged newborn to three:

- Relationships and encounters with sensitive and receptive adults.
- There is a strong emphasis on play-based activities and routines that empower children to take their education initiative.
- Assistance in communication and language. (For example, Gonzalez (2016) mentioned that singing or reciting nursery rhymes - such as 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'; 'Baa, baa black sheep'; 'Incy wincy Spiders') with infants teaches them to hear specifically pitch interval, metre, phrase length, contour, and harmony. All of which contribute significantly to language development.)

The Welsh Foundation Phase combines elements of the Italian 'Reggio Emilia' method, the New Zealand curriculum 'Te Whāriki,' and the American High/Scope model (Siraj Blatchford *et al.*, 2005). Similar with 'Te Whāriki', Curriculum for Wales aims to help children grow into ambitious, competent learners ready to study for the rest of their lives; entrepreneurial, creative participants who are ready to contribute fully to life and work; and moral, informed individuals of Wales and the world; individuals who are healthy, confident, and eager to live successful lives as appreciated people in society (Welsh Government, 2021).

Moreover, according to Stacey (2009), children have the right to an individualised education appropriate to their needs. An **emergent curriculum** enables practitioners to respect the child's voice while still meeting requirements across learning areas and respecting children's and educators' learning styles and skills. Learning standards are reached through **partnerships** with resources, people, and environments—and this learning is integrated with meaningful, engaging play. **Emergent curriculum** is not linear; it is dynamic, developing, and expanding continuously.

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