



The First 1000 Days

Enabling Adult



Respectful care is according to Pikler Uk Association (no date) is important in creating healthy attachments, feeding, changing and sleeping off essential opportunities to build trusting relationships. The way this care is delivered will impact on how the infants brain develops and helps the infant learn about themselves and trust the adults around them. Within the early years of an infant's life caregiving is the main structure of the day. During these moments respectful care is delivered by listening to the infant and their cues and communications of their needs and wishes, including them in every notion of the care giving with tender love and care. Communication is two-way process and despite the infant being small talking to them about what you are doing and how you are caring for them in a nurturing manner will allow for calm interactions that are purposeful

and delivered with trust and care. Respectful care is considering the needs and wishes of the infant giving them opportunities to develop but respecting the infant and not forcing them to participate before they are ready or against their will. As caregivers within the childcare setting Pikler UK Association (no date) models' behaviours where the infant is a partner contributing to the situation, where the care routine of changing, or feeding is done together with the carer rather than an action done to the child because it needs to happen. The carer should be mindful of their movements and tone of voice using gentle sounds and movements allowing the infant to relax. Patience from the carer giving the infant time to respond to the carer's requests and the carer should adapt to what the infant prefers. For example, if the infant would prefer to stand when having their nappy changed then such action is permitted and the infant isn't forced to comply with a more submissive position, this approach to working with children is important to create a professional relationship of trust and respect.



Other ways childcare settings can respond respectfully is to allow the infant to develop in their own time, Duncombe (2019) suggest that not forcing activities such as tummy time before the child can naturally find that position will decrease tension within the infant, the infant when forced to assume a position they find upsetting will struggle to trust the caregiver and associate them with discomfort. Not only can it be distressing for the child, but it can also hinder stages of physical development. To encourage the natural rolling caregivers can provide the child with interesting items to attract their attention and facilitate the development of that skill.

Observing and responding to the child is important and Pikler UK Association (no date) discusses how babies send the caregivers cues all the time. It is important to tune in to their cues, discover their likes and dislikes and respond to this communication with care and consideration. Observing these preferences and helping the child to have a voice and make decisions with their care will create a trusting relationship. Within the early years setting observing children as individuals allows for their needs to be met. With this knowledge activities can be planned and delivered to enhance

the skills of the individual unhindered and encouraging healthy development in all areas such as speech, learning, confidence and self-esteem.



Professional relationships within the early year's settings will be the foundation for how well the child thrives. Knowing that the first 1000 days are key to development building that positive respectful relationship is priority. Veazey (2020) discussed an approach used in New Zealand known as Te Whāriki curriculum, this guide focuses on the relationships developing during the early years. This relationship encompasses infant to carer relationships but also relationships with places and things. Situations such as gardening has a deeper meaning, considering the relationship between the earth and how a positive relationship with the elements and nature can impact the future.

Te Whāriki has a vision that children should be *“Competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.”* Veazey (2020).

This approach is similar that to the new curriculum for Wales where the Welsh Government (2021) has incorporated a vision where professionals are to aid pupils in becoming ambitious and capable,

healthy and confident, creative and enterprising, ethically informed considering this as early years practitioners within Wales the new initiative will see a lot of change from the way education is delivered. Within New Zealand Te Whāriki curriculum (2020) relationships human places and things aim to create an environment where children are:

- Empowered to learn and grow
- Learning in a holistic environment
- Including their families and community to aid the learning process
- Developing relationships that are responsive and reciprocal.

An enabling adult according to Pikler Collection (2012), an enabling adult responds to the infant, tuned into the cues and listens and watches ensuring the way they communicate and respond to the child is gentle and child led with a joyful approach to the learning process. Within the first 1000days the role of the adult is a significant role, the enabling adult according to Welsh Government (2021) creates a learning environment that is emotionally safe for the learners to feel confident in expressing their feelings and behaviour's. The care provided is consistent, positive with modelled kindness and compassion creating a connection with the child helping them to cope with change and managing transitions.



As enabling adults within the Early years sector Welsh Government (2021) discuss how making a strong connection between the child and their families is valuable. A carer who feels their wishes and the wish of their child is respected will allow them to trust the practitioners making for a smooth relationship throughout the child's first 1000days and beyond. Families who feel respected and listened to will build trust with the providers creating a positive experience. According to HM Government (2021) a significant part of being an enabling adult is inclusivity, making the provisions provided in the first 1000days available to everyone regardless of their situation. Language barriers often hinder communication between families and professionals which can lead to anxiety and

families feeling reluctant to communicate the needs of them and their child. Another area where inclusion can often be overlooked is that of the father or partner. Often within the first 1000days the mother is the key communicant for the child and with regards to the child's needs resulting in an excluded feeling from others involved as suggested by HM Government (2021) who discuss the importance of making services inviting for others such as practical antenatal classes about changes nappies and other important skills for the first 1000days. Making in baby groups and sessions available to both parents would help with the feeling of inclusivity, the review by HM Government (2021) stated that fathers or partners often don't access services as they aren't aware they can attend and its not a mother only session, also specific sessions for the fathers or partner to attend with their child could encourage confidence and help them with skills to enhance their experience with their child.

Enabling environments



An environment that is enabling according to Vamos (2015) is where the infant can move freely with no pressure or time restrictions, can take risks learning their own limits, and doesn't have restricted movement and are able to discover the world around them freely. The Pickler Collection (2012) observed traditionally parenthood consists of the adult orchestrating development intervening with a child's movements and placing them in positions they are not developmentally ready for such as making a baby sit up or stand without them doing so themselves. Pikler Uk Association. (no date) discuss the Pickler approach where infants are never put in a situation where they are to become passive, a child is to be given embodiment and trusted to know their limits allowing them to initiate their own movements and reach those developmental milestones independently and not through

adults teaching them. An enabling environment embraces this approach providing opportunities for natural growth and development. Welsh Government (2021) suggest that as early years providers the experiences we offer should be purposeful and meaningful to the child, where their independence is encouraged. Children should be given the opportunity to be challenged, take risks and be able to experience success throughout their journey within the setting. These guidelines agree with the Pikler approach discussed by Vamos (2015) and include the need for real-life authentic activities.

An Enabling environment can be broken down into three categories suggested by Nursery Resources (2022) as: The emotional environment, the indoor environment and the outdoor environment



The Emotional Environment.

Nursery Resources (2022) discuss that an enabling environment contains an aspect of emotional of its structure, this is with regards to the children, the people who work within the setting and the family of the children attending. An enabling emotional environment considers the approach discussed by Pikler UK Association. (no date) where the relationship between child and adult is calm and gentle, time is given between child and keyworker to bond and have one to one experiences so that the child has the adults full attention and that the adult is focused and engaging with the child. Within the first 1000 days this can be done within a childcare setting or with a parent to give that special time to create a trusting attachment. Such times to slow down and connect could be:

- During nappy changing times
- At mealtimes
- Nap times preparing for and once the child wakes

A setting which is emotionally enabling Nursery Resources (2022) suggest will be a warm accepting setting where adults support children to express themselves and gently cope with the emotions that arise daily in an empathetic and understanding manner allowing children to feel accepted and valued. This approach should be extended to the families of the children helping them feel included in the care of their child with effective communication to allow the parent or carer to feel valued.

The Indoor Environment

Indoor environments are enabling when they allow a child to feel safe and secure with opportunities to become confident learners according to Welsh government (2021). Nursery Resources (2022) consider environments to be enriching when there are different types of play available that are appropriate and well maintained suitable for all stages of development. This environment needs to be adaptable and changing to the interests and the needs of the child. Enabling environments will allow free access to resources at the height of the child so enable them to explore freely without little to no adult intervention with a regular review on how the children are accessing the provision, what works well, what they are interested in and how you can develop that interest further.

The Outdoor Environment



Being outdoors is essential for children and the Welsh Government (2021) suggest that the main location where learning should take place is outdoors, it provides a great opportunity to meet the holistic needs of the child. Providing opportunities for inspiration and wonder, allowing the child to relax and be open in a stimulating safe space. An outdoor environment can provide opportunities for a child to use all their senses to grow and develop encouraging wellbeing and confidence. Whilst outdoors children can explore and improve their skills, this is a more meaningful practise when supported by an enabling adult who recognises the importance and the value of outdoor experiences. This connection with the environment teaches the child to be aware of their surroundings showing empathy and noticing the impact their presence has on the environment.

Enabling Experiences



Within the first 1000 days children may attend a nursery setting which needs to follow the curriculum for funded non maintained nursery settings set out by the Welsh Government (2021) who also suggest that experiences should be multisensory allowing children to be inspired by others, supportive the child express themselves creatively. Opportunities of chose from a range of materials should be provided giving children access to critical thinking situations and develop problem solving skills.

Ways these guidelines can be enhanced is through play opportunities we provide infants with such as providing a baby with a safe floor space (picture) with items of light stimulating items around them. This activity allows the principles of the Pikler approach outlined by Marlen (2022) to be incorporated ensuring there is complete freedom of movement where the child can explore their movements and surroundings without adult intervention. This activity coincides with the theory that Piaget has written, Cherry (2020) describes this theory where children learn about their world through their movements, sensations and basic actions, this activity allows for this learning to take place.





Goldschmied, (2004) suggests that treasure baskets are an ideal tool. These baskets usually containing loose parts and a range of everyday objects that stimulate the senses of a child but aren't purpose bought toys. These should be safe to handle and explore using all senses and giving opportunities for choice making. They are used when a baby is at the development stage of sitting up but unable to use movement to explore further than the spot they are on, they can then become fractious. The contents allow the infant to explore curiously looking, touching, tasting, dropping banging taking in the shape, size smell and all aspects of the objects.





Heuristic Play Treasure Basket
www.playlearneveryday.com

Another activity is the use of appropriate climbing structures such as a Pikler climbing frame which is a wooden structure that according to Montessori For Today (2021) promotes independent play and encourage free movement. This allows the child to develop self confidence in their own time and has no end of opportunities for play. Children can benefit from the stimulating activity building up their gross motor skills, coordination and spatial awareness.



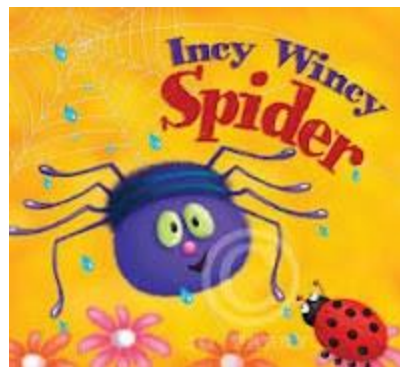


Outdoor activities mentioned by Early Years Careers (2016) using water and paintbrushes to mark make on surfaces or wet their hands and make handprints is a fun interactive activity to enhance fine motor skills but also creating a continuous provision when dried the canvas becomes blank for further creation.





A variety of songs and rhymes are opportunities for enabling experiences Yellow Door (2019) advocate for this activity and tell us that research suggests songs and rhymes assist in children with regards to the literacy attainment compared to others who have poor rhyme understanding. Rhymes often have repetition which encourage children to recognise patterns in words and beginning to develop an understanding of the sounds needed to create words. This activity also allows for opportunity to spend quality time and can have a calming effect.



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