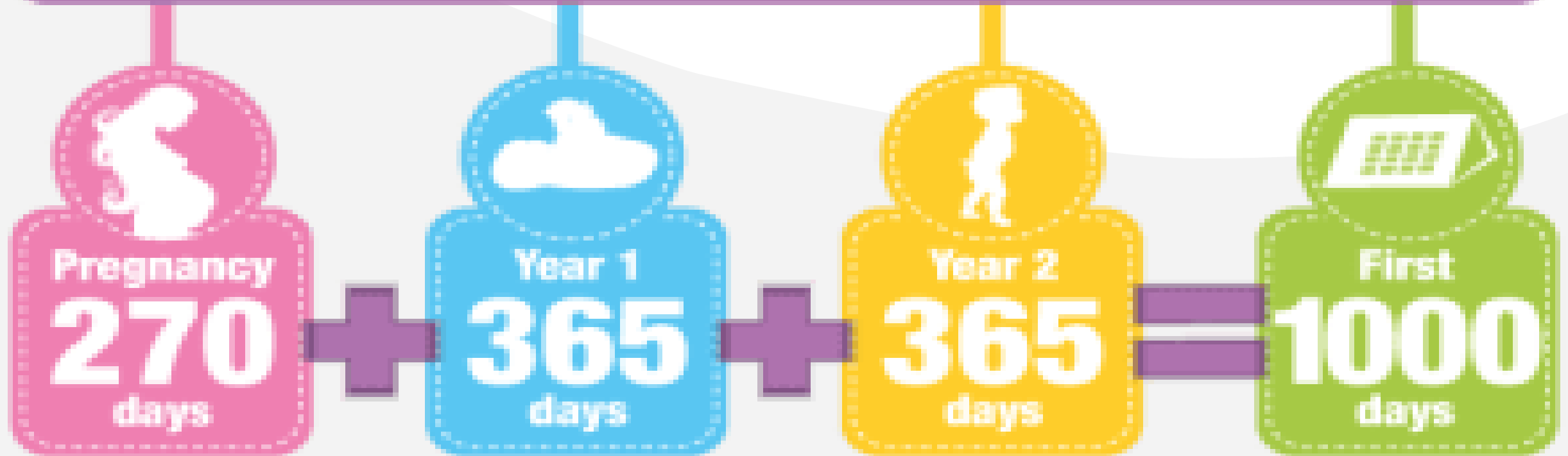


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I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work.

I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

Welcome to first 1000 days



What is the first 1000 days?

The first 1000 days is the timeline from conception to two years of age (Karakochuk et al. 2025). These early days are when young children will develop at a fast pace and are essentially building a foundation for their future (Karakochuk et al. 2025). This suggests that the initial 1000 days are crucial for the establishment and growth of a child's character and personality.

The 1000 days starts from conception, meaning the mother plays a key role in the development of their child. During conception it is important for mothers to eat well to ensure that she and the baby are getting all the nutrients they need to develop and thrive (UNICEF, 2021).

What is the first 1000 days?



(UNICEF, 2015)

This UNICEF video explains the three stages to the first 1000 days, which are pregnancy, 0-6 months, and 7-24 months (UNICEF, 2015). The video highlights the importance of the mother having a good diet during pregnancy to ensure good health for her and the baby. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of each stage and how to ensure the child is best served by having all their needs met.

Why is it important?

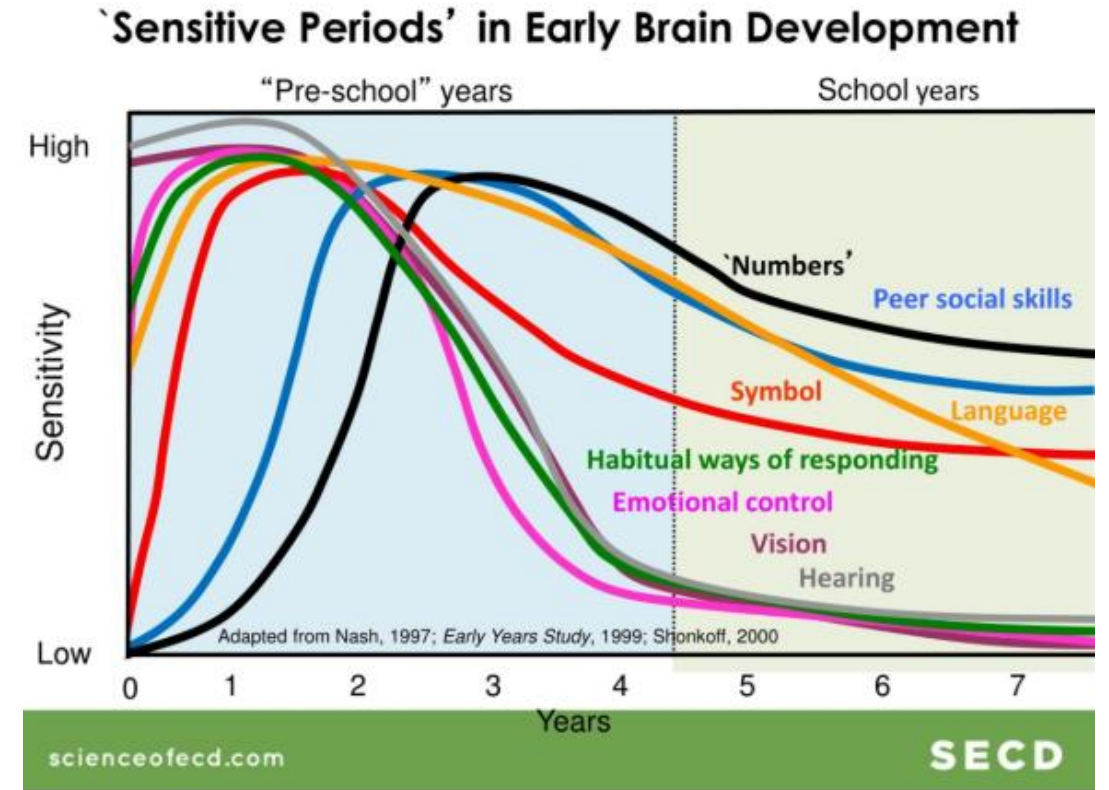
The first 1000 days are important, as this is when the brain will develop the most (Cusick et al. 2016). These first years 'form a critical window that shapes lifelong well-being' (UNICEF, 2021). Insinuating that the first 1000 days are the foundation to an infant's outlook. There are many fundamental elements during the first 1000 days to ensure a child has a fair start in life. These being healthcare and nutrition, which have a fundamental impact on 'brain development, immunity, and growth' (UNICEF, 2021). Ensuring good health and opportunities in these early years enables children to develop their cognitive and physical development, providing them with benefits that will help them as adults (UNICEF, 2021).



(Team, 2023)

Why is it important?

As shown on this graph, a child's brain development peaks from birth to two. This shows us that these crucial years are when a child will learn and develop in areas such as emotional control, language, and ways of responding. These skills are vital for children to be successful and to have a good start in life, meaning that it is vital for infants in their first 1000 days to be provided with opportunities to develop these skills, as these first years are when it matters most.



(Dcoughlan, 2019)



(Yates, 2015)

Why is it important?

This video goes into depth about the importance of the first 1000 days in giving children a fair and equal start to life. The video emphasises that every moment in these early days counts and the impact that they have on a child's social and emotional development. The video also explains the importance of 'starting early' (Yates, 2015) in terms of engaging and communicating with a child, as children learn and mimic from birth.



Caregiving

What is exceptional care?

Essentially, exceptional care is creating a space where a child can feel comfortable and safe, with the opportunity to develop and thrive.



Caregivers play a key role for providing babies with exceptional care. A few elements that could support exceptional care are building warm, responsive relationships with an infant for them to feel safe in an environment. Building a positive relationship could also help the infant feel as though they can trust in their caregivers (GOV, 2025). Creating a safe and welcoming environment enriched with opportunities, that promote all areas of a baby's development will help give the baby a sense of safety and engagement. An enriched environment may also encourage the babies to participate in the learning opportunities as they will feel comfortable to explore and experiment. Ensuring inclusion and equality should be a priority so that young children can see themselves represented in their environment, giving them a sense of belonging. Creating partnerships with families through effective communication is fundamental to an infant's care to ensure the child is at the focus (GOV, 2025). By providing exceptional care, it ensures that the children are at the center of everything caregivers do, enabling them to thrive to the best of their abilities.

Enabling environments linked to exceptional care

What is an enabling environment?	How does an enabling environment lead to exceptional care?
• Safe, predictable, warm, and welcoming • Encourages independence and exploration • Supports positive relationships between children and caregivers • Ensures children's interests, culture, and developmental needs are reflected (Pite, 2025)	• An enabling environment could help support infant's emotional security, as a calm, welcoming space may help the children feel safe, meaning they may be more likely to trust in their caregivers, therefore creating positive relationships. • A consistent use of routine and boundaries should give the infants a sense of stability and familiarity which should help make them feel safe and comfortable and as if they have some control. • Children's exploration should be supported through sensory play, natural materials, and outdoor play, giving them the opportunity to be curious and imaginative as children are active learners. • An enabling environment should promote inclusion through reflecting the children's cultures and interests in the environment to make the children feel valued

Holistic Approach

Enabling environments encompass emotional, indoor, and outdoor aspects, supporting all areas of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning, assuring comprehensive development and well-being for every child involved.

Child-Centred

These environments prioritise children's interests, needs, and developmental stages, ensuring a nurturing space tailored to each child's unique journey and supporting individual growth and engagement.

Flexible and Responsive

Flexibility in these environments allows for adaptation to children's changing needs and emerging interests, ensuring a dynamic and conducive learning atmosphere that grows with the child.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS IN THE EYFS

Comprehensive support for
EYFS learning

Inclusive Practice

Enabling environments cater to all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, promoting equity and ensuring every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Parental Partnership

Extending enabling environments to homes strengthens learning continuity, fostering strong home-school connections and ensuring a cohesive support system for the child's development.

Continuous Evaluation

Regular assessment and improvement of enabling environments ensure they remain effective, reflecting best practices and adapting to new educational insights and children's evolving needs.

Risk and Challenge

Providing appropriate risk-taking opportunities is vital in enabling environments, as it helps build children's confidence and resilience, fostering a sense of independence and self-reliance.

This photo demonstrates the importance of an enabling environment and how it helps with supporting children's development. This photo also shows how it is a caregiver's responsibility to create this environment to enable children to be in a calm, interactive environment with plenty of opportunity to develop holistically.

Theorists' links to providing exceptional care

Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory highlights how children develop through their surrounding environments, including the caregivers that are around them (Antony, 2022). This demonstrates the importance of providing exceptional care, as a caregiver is responsible for key elements of a child's development. Bronfenbrenner also believed that children thrive when their environment is consistent, emphasizing the importance of routine, which helps children feel safe in their environment (Antony, 2022). When children feel safe they may be more likely to create positive relationships to their caregivers.

John Bowlby

Bowlby's attachment theory emphasises the importance of a primary caregiver for children (Holmes, 2014). He demonstrates the importance of a responsive and consistent caregiver, as a close and positive relationship will help make the infant feel safe. Bowlby believed that babies' emotional development shapes how they will build future relationships, demonstrating that the relationships babies make in their first 1000 days will have a drastic impact on their future. Equally important is the relationship to provide the child with what they need, therefore providing exceptional care (Holmes, 2014).

Why is providing exceptional care important?

By going above the expected and providing children with exceptional care, it ensures the child is centered and that all the child's needs are being met.

Exceptional care supports holistic development. With opportunities for different learning and play experiences, it ensures all areas of development are being considered and built by the child.

Exceptional caregiving helps promote secure attachments, as with good care a child should feel safe and secure, therefore building positive relationships and secure attachments with caregivers (Friedlander and Perks, 2022).

Exceptional care should create a nurturing environment where a child would feel calm and safe, allowing for the child to explore and take risks (Friedlander and Perks, 2022).



(N. Bharatan, 2021)

Role of an early year's practitioner

An early years practitioner plays a pivotal role in supporting children's holistic development within their settings. Practitioners should aim to create a safe, nurturing environment to implement intentional practice to support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (Abbott and Langston, 2005). Early years practitioners should create a safe and nurturing environment to help children feel safe and secure. Early years practitioners have the role of planning and delivering developmental and age-appropriate, meaningful activities to enable children to engage in purposeful play and experiences that are tailored to individual needs (Abbott and Langston, 2005). Practitioners should adapt learning opportunities by observing children and getting to know their abilities. Practitioners should also promote inclusive practice by ensuring that all children, including the individuals with additional needs are fully supported, with activities and learning adapted to ensure all children can participate (Abbott and Langston, 2005). Furthermore, practitioners have the role of modeling and encouraging appropriate social behavior, while also encouraging peer interactions to develop children's social skills.

In addition, practitioners should promote independence in the children, such as encouraging them to start putting on their coats and shoes independently, making decisions, and trying new things. This will promote children's self-esteem as they will believe in themselves (Abbott and Langston, 2005). As well as this, practitioners should focus on meeting children's care needs such as toileting needs, developmental needs, and care needs (Abbott and Langston, 2005). This could make the children feel safe and comfortable in a setting, as they will feel as though they are being listened to and understood. Practitioners should also promote children's language development by singing, reading stories, and talking to the children. Practitioners also play a part in the role of nutrition in a child's life. They could promote good nutrition by enabling children to be given balanced meals and by teaching children the importance of a healthy lifestyle (Chow and Humbert, n.d.).



(Lovevery, 2020)

Role of an early year's practitioner

The role of an early years practitioner in partnership with families is to build trusting relationships. Building a strong relationship with the parents will make them feel confident in the setting and also involved in their child's learning (Sims-Schouten, 2015). This includes listening to the parents' views and concerns in order to follow a child-centered approach and create a plan for the child if needed and ensure early intervention (Sims-Schouten, 2015). Also, to show respect for the family's culture and respect, and to ensure they intertwine that family's culture in their learning so that the child feels a sense of belonging. Practitioners also have a responsibility to share information with parents about the child's development, learning, and behavior (Sims-Schouten, 2015). This will ensure that both the setting and families are on the same page, ensuring the child's needs are met.



(Kimberly, 2016)

What is effective partnership?

Effective partnership could be described as a positive and collaborative working relationship between more than one foundation, such as schools, health visitors, behavior specialists, and parents, who come together, communicate openly, respect each others' views, and come together in the best interest of an infant (Frank and Smith n.d.). It is vital that all people working in partnership ensure they recognise each other's professions and knowledge to get what's best for the child (Frank and Smith n.d.).

Why is it important?

Effective partnership between early years practitioners, other foundations, and families is important, as it creates a consistency in the infant's care and development, as all parties should be communicating effectively if there are any problems, therefore ensuring early intervention if needed (Frank and Smith n.d.). When all professions work collaboratively, children should receive coherent support across home life and in a setting. This should strengthen the infant's emotional security and sense of belonging (Frank and Smith n.d.).

Maternal factors that could impact development	Support strategies
•Physical and mental health A mother's physical health during pregnancy can affect an infant's development. Poor nutrition, smoking, alcohol, or use of drugs can lead to low birth weight and developmental delays (Benhalima et al. 2022). •Education and knowledge A mother's level of education and understanding of child development could affect how she would support an infant's learning and behavior (Benhalima et al. 2022).	Access to appropriate health and mental health services, working in partnership with other professionals to ensure proper care (Benhalima et al. 2022). Practitioners could help build the mothers' confidence through guidance or advice on any developmental problems their baby may have. Supporting a mother's physical and mental health is essential for her and the baby's well-being, as well as the baby's development (Benhalima et al. 2022). To support a mother with limited education or knowledge, practitioners could provide clear, accessible information to help the mother learn more about her baby's development and health (Benhalima et al. 2022). Practitioners could also signpost the mother to certain workshops or programs to further expand her knowledge (Benhalima et al. 2022). Doing this will develop the mother's confidence to provide her baby with the support it would need to develop effectively.

Challenges to providing high quality care

Routine Line Approach

A routine line approach could be beneficial to children, as it could help children understand expectations and transitions, ensure learning is part of every day, and create a calm environment (Eyeworks Limited, 2024). However, by following a routine line approach, a caregiver may become too focused on providing a schedule that they forget to prioritise the child (Cowley, 2025). By using this approach, it may mean caregivers could forget to listen to children's needs, and if a child is hungry or tired, this may be pushed to the side as the caregiver is focused on the schedule. Furthermore, by following this approach, a caregiver may feel as though they must complete a certain number of activities or tasks each day. By doing this, the caregiver may not realise that they are reducing the opportunity to build positive relationships with children, as there is not much positive interaction between the caregiver and child throughout the day (Cowley, 2025). In addition, by following this approach, a caregiver may feel the pressure to have to stick to a strict time schedule, which could limit opportunities for children to participate in child-led play. If a caregiver feels pressure to complete a certain number of activities, they may be accidentally rushing children from one activity to the next, meaning that the child is not benefiting fully from each activity and having the opportunity to develop and learn from the activity.

Funding

One of the main challenges to providing high-quality care in early years could be insufficient funding. Many early years settings may struggle to cover the cost of delivering quality provision whilst also keeping prices affordable. Limited funding could lead to fewer learning materials, reduced resources, and outdated equipment, meaning the children may not be provided with the best opportunities for their development (Zigler and Finn-Stevenson, 1996).

Furthermore, funding issues may also affect staffing. Settings may be unable to offer competitive wages, which could lead to staff shortages or a high turnover. As a result of this, other practitioners may have a heavier workload, leaving less time to interact and play with the children, which could mean that the children's needs are not being met (Zigler and Finn-Stevenson, 1996).

Knowledge and understanding

A challenge that could be overlooked may be a lack of knowledge and understanding from the caregiver. Therefore, meaning the child may not be provided with the best level of care. For example, the importance of serve and return. A caregiver with a lack of education and knowledge may not understand the importance of serve and return for a baby's development. Serve and return is when a baby serves by making a noise or an expression and the caregiver returns to that cue by responding to the child (Reynolds and Burton, 2016). This communication is essential for a baby as it develops their language and communication skills, builds secure attachments, and helps them to regulate their emotions (Reynolds and Burton, 2016).

Activities

Loose parts

(Haughney, 2023)



According to Casey and Robertson (2016), loose parts encourage children to ‘enter a world of “what if” that promotes thinking that leads to problem solving and theoretical learning’ (Casey and Roberston, 2016, p. 9). This highlights how playing with loose parts encourages children to use their imagination and think independently while developing their problem-solving skills. Through playing with loose parts, children have the opportunity to develop their fine and gross motor skills. By playing and picking up the small parts, the children can develop their fine motor skills and their hand-eye coordination. They may also get the opportunity to develop their gross motor skills, as they may want to move the loose parts from one area to another or pick up as many as they can and challenge their strength. Flannigan and Dietze (2017) state that ‘Providing children with loose parts will expand their imaginations and positively influence their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development’ (Flannigan and Dietze, 2017). This puts emphasis on how important loose parts are for children's development and how many areas of development they can be exposed to whilst playing with loose parts. Furthermore, practitioners can also interlink loose parts into outdoor play to further widen the developmental opportunities. As children are exposed to natural resources and loose parts, it can widen their sensory experience, and they will be able to experiment with natural textures, sounds, and materials.

Activities

Messy play

(Play matters, 2022)



Messy play is fundamental to children, as it supports various areas of their development, including sensory, cognitive, physical, social, and language (Gascoyne, 2025). Messy play activities can also develop fine motor skills, encourage creativity, problem-solving, and a child's self-confidence (Gascoyne, 2025).

The opportunity of experimenting with open-ended materials, such as sand, water, paint, and mud, supports areas of development as children can also have fun. Messy play allows children to explore cause and effect through thinking independently; for example, what would happen if they mixed two paint colours together, or what would happen if they added more water? Experimenting like this should help develop children's problem-solving skills and resilience if something does not go the way they thought it would. In addition, messy play could develop a child's self-confidence, as there is no right way to play or no right outcome to messy play. As children can explore independently, it may give them confidence to grow their own ideas.

Furthermore, messy play should develop children's fine motor skills through squeezing, pouring, scooping, and molding. Developing fine motor skills is important early on in a child's life, as it is essential for tasks later in their lives.

International learning

Reggio Emilia

The Reggio Emilia approach bases their child-led learning on the fact that children are strong, capable, and curious (Hewett, 2001). The teachers observe the children and then base their learning on what the children show an interest in. This would benefit young children as they would be more engaged in learning if it was of interest to them, meaning they would get more out of it (Hewett, 2001). This approach also encourages children to express their ideas, make decisions, and take responsibility for their learning (Gardner and Jones, 2016). Through this, children should develop strong communication skills and problem-solving skills. The aim of the environment is to stimulate curiosity and exploration to support holistic development (Gardner and Jones, 2016).

Forest school

Forest school focuses on learning through a natural outdoor environment. Forest school aims to develop children holistically by supporting their confidence, independence, resilience, creativity, physical skills, and emotional well-being (Harris, 2017). They would do this by allowing children to explore and participate in hands-on activities such as building shelters, climbing, and using tools. This approach to learning could enhance physical development through active outdoor play as well as promote confidence, independence, and resilience as children learn to manage risks and overcome challenges (Harris, 2017).

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