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The first 1000 days
ECEY40005

Introduction... Why are the first 1000 days so important for a newborn?

Back to the very beginning...

Within this document it will discuss everything from conception to pregnancy and up to 2 years old. The first 1,000 days refers to a child's life from the moment they are conceived up to 2 years old, which is 24 months. This is the time that their brain, body and immune system grow and develop remarkably. When a woman is pregnant what their health, nutrition and stress levels are like can influence the unborn baby (pregnancy birth and baby, 2022).

It is often said that babies within their first 1000 days need to have:

- Be given healthy foods
- Have loving relationships with those around them
- Be brought up in a secure, safe environment
- A chance to play and explore their surroundings (pregnancy birth and baby, 2022).

Babies are made up of chromosomes. An egg from their mother and sperm from their father. The egg and the sperm have chromosomes and both these carry half of the chromosomes needed for the babies' DNA but when they are together, they make up the full set of chromosomes for their baby. The baby then has half of the mother's DNA and half of the father's DNA (Kids health, 2021).

Gerhardt, 2004, p15 states that there is something effective about the premature concept of our lives, which turmoil theory may help to clarify. It advocates that those minor differences at the start of an action can lead to extremely different aftereffects. Nevertheless, this time of a baby's life is what neuroscientist Doug Watt has referred to as ‘unrememberable and unforgettable’.

Within Simply Psychology it states that John Bowlby's theory of attachments suggests that babies come into this world biologically pre-programmed to form attachments with those around them as this will help them to survive. Bowlby’s theory also states that a baby has a natural need to affix themselves to one major attachment figure. This is then to indicate that this one relationship is far more important than the rest. According to Bowlby a babies central working model is a mental representation of their relationships with their guardian, and this then becomes a format for future relationships and allows them to control, predict and manipulate their environment (Mc Leod, 2017).

Development...

What is conceptful care and the key concepts in early childhood development?

When caring for a child within your setting, it is your responsibility to show engaging, nurturing behavior whilst being protective and acting with affection and care. Conceptful care focuses on the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs to build a solid and inclusive foundation for long- standing learning and welfare (Nuffield Foundation 2021)

Physical Development

Physical development is an important area of children's overall development. Although children do develop many skills naturally as they grow, it is crucial that they can develop them in several ways, and they will need support and guidance with this. They will need to develop the following skills; gross motor skills- this is using larger muscles such as arms and legs. For example, walking or throwing. Fine motor skills- this is using smaller muscles such as fingers. For example, using a pencil. Within the period of 0-3 years this is a fast physical development for children (Burnham and Baker, 2010, p. 3). Piaget's recognized four stages in his process, from birth through to adulthood and the first stage was the sensorimotor stage and Piaget marked out that the first two years of a child's life as the sensorimotor stage. This stage was when babies and toddlers' comprehension and perception are above all drawn from physical actions and their senses such as sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. He suggested that within this stage babies and toddlers remain interested but become aware of object stability (Pound, 2006, p 37).

Communication and intellectual development

It is extensively recognised that communication and intellectual development are jointly linked due to the significance of language and its connection to learning (Burnham and Baker, 2010, p. 4). Even when babies are newborn, us adults will aim to communicate with them despite them being unable to respond or even understand what is being said. It is vital for babies to be stimulated and have interest in them. From 0-3 years babies will enjoy listening to songs and games as they will then listen to the

language around them (Burnham and Baker, 2010, p. 5). As said my Piaget, he saw the children as constantly constructing and reconstructing by increasing simple concepts into more complex ones at each stage of development and this could be using communication and intellectual development together like sing a long song and then encourage the babies to sing along with you (Pound, 2006, p. 37). Many important brain connections are made in the first three years of life.

Social, emotional and behavioral development

This area of development is about how babies feel about themselves and how they relate to adults. At this stage of development, babies may start to have tantrums through frustration and will want and need to start doing things for themselves. They will also need to form a strong attachment, this mainly being the parents, but sometimes within a childcare setting a child will be given a key worker who will then be their main contact (Burnham and Baker, 2010, p. 7). According to Bowlby's attachment theory the above attachment for a child is a critical feature within a child's development which has lifelong influences on social relationships. Bowlby also believed that it is 'human nature' to make strong emotional bonds (Human discoverers (2022). Also, Bandra's social learning theory suggests that children's behaviors are influenced by observing others (Human discoverers (2022).

Environment...Jones, (2022)

Indoor and outdoor environments to support holistic development...

Babies need several needs to be able to have the best start in life as the first 1000 days are the most significant as this is when their body, brain and immune systems develop the most (pregnancy birth and baby, 2022). The environment plays a vital role in underpinning and extending children's development and learning. Enabling environments inspire babies and infants to play because they feel at ease, secure and at home in them (early years matters, 2022). A stimulating environment both inside and outside supports a child's holistic development.

In approaching this issue, it is a well-known fact that Frobel believed that ‘play’ is the highest appearance of human development in childhood. Frobel also states that in playing children construct their understanding of the world through direct experience of it (early education, 2021).

No matter what the weather or what season we are in, outdoor environments provide unique and abundant experiences for babies to engage in play based learning and sensory activities. This is critical for their developing brain. This is also important as it gives them the opportunity to explore, discover and appreciate the world around them. They get to be active and strengthen fine and gross motor skills, test physical limits and get messy. Many outdoor experiences are an important part of every child’s healthy growth, learning, wellbeing and development. The benefits range from health benefits to physical development as well as help with sleep patterns (children's education and care, 2019). Frobel emphasizes that all children should experience all aspects of nature and the outdoors. He states that all children should play outdoors in the garden and in the wilder natural environments. In Froebel's outdoor play theory, he saw children as curious, creative and active beings who best thrive when they're in an engaging and stimulating environment, close to both each other and nature. Frobel thought that children needed space and light to learn effectively (twinkl, no date).

1 - Outdoor play

Relationships...

Parents and caregivers are the most crucial influence on the child. It's important for them to have stable relationships and interactions. We as practitioners have the responsibility to make strong connections with the child's home and community. This will enable them to strengthen their sense of belonging through embracing past and present experiences. According to Maslow, within his theory of needs he suggests that children's potential to be promoted by growth needs for example educational needs, these first require contentment of deficiency needs, for example love, belonging and safety needs. Given the extensive number of children experiencing deficiency needs, a better understanding of these relationships can be set out as an essential for establishing conditions that enlarge learning outcomes (Noltemeyer, 2021 p. 1862-1867). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner original theory is shown as rings around the child, so the child is the centre. Sometimes these rings are called circles of influence. Bronfenbrenner believed that those who are closest to the child have a direct influence on them. This could be their family or home environment. This is said to have the greatest impact on the child. The aim within this theory is to create a supportive ecology around a child, which then means the adults around them should reflect upon that child's microsystem and ensure it is supporting the child (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022, p.18-21).

Challenges when caring for an infant within a setting...

There are many challenges that can arise during a setting within early years. One of the most recent and most challenging of all has been the global pandemic which started in 2020. This had a massive impact on nurseries and schools due to closures of both throughout to try and stop the spread of the virus. A couple of private nurseries were able to stay open for key workers' children. As said within the Gov.uk website, they state that it was apparent that the pandemic had negative effects on children. It is a well-known fact that the pandemic did and still does continue to affect children's communication and language development. Some providers suggested that they noticed speech delays. Gov.uk have said that there are several key issues from this which are an impact and children's personal, social and emotional development as well as children lacking in confidence in a group. All the above points to the conclusion that many settings are making more referrals for external help as well as ensuring us as practitioners are making sure that all children are learning in an environment rich with language, with a focus on extending vocabulary and practicing speech. Finally, childcare settings are focusing on helping children to express how they feel and give them more opportunities to mix with larger groups for socialising (Gov.uk (2021).

Also, according to Ashdown and Bernard, they identified socio- emotional development with five core abilities, such as self- awareness, social awareness, self- management, relationship skills, and responsible decision- making. All these above skills allow children to interact positively. Children who display poor socio- emotional skills will then possibly display poor behavior skills. Socio-emotional skills can be described in many ways. Often, it is referred to the process of which children develop the ability to take the first step in trusting relationships with adults and their peers, so they are then able to

process emotions in the correct ways. Within the global pandemic some children were less able to have social interactions therefore their socio- emotional skills may be affected (Egan et al.,2021).

2 - Covid Vaccination

Curriculum and International approaches...

All children learn in different ways. Some learn by reading, some by doing and some by hearing. All children will benefit massively from a wide variety of experiences. Within early years has will mainly learn from play which is unstructured and free (Raising children. Net (2022). Our current curriculum for

funded non-maintained nursery settings within Wales acknowledges that every child is an individual and that their development is brisk between birth and five years old. It underpins an entire expansion by keeping the development needs of the children at the front line of our teaching practice (Gov.uk 2022). In comparison with our curriculum is the New Zealand curriculum. This curriculum has the same pathways as us in Wales apart from one. The pathways that are the same as us are: Belonging, Communication, Well-being and exploration. The one that is different here in Wales is our fifth pathway which is Physical development and New Zealand's fifth pathway is contribution (New Zealand curriculum, (2022).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCMLnc8lMxE (Education Wales, 2022).

3 - Doing activities

4 - Reading

5 - Outdoor play

Activity ideas and play... Jones, (2022)

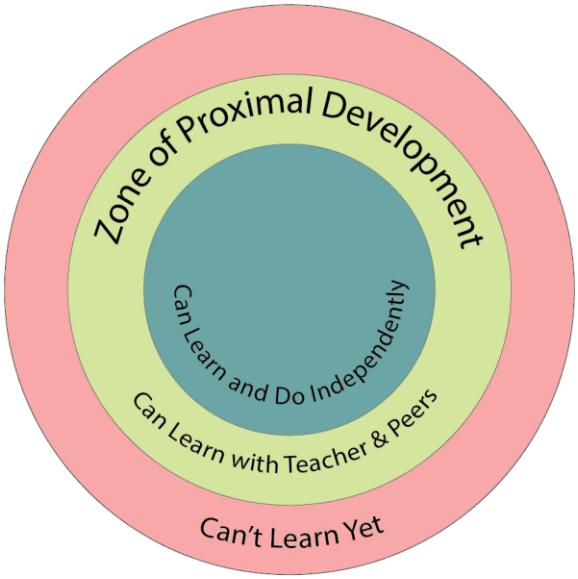
Play and activities are more than just fun for babies and children, it is how they learn and develop. With babies' everyday talk is learning. Talk to them when they are having their nappy changed or when out on a walk or things they point to, for example a bird in the trees. As well as singing and bouncing your baby to the rhythm of the beat of the song you are singing or listening to. Reading to your baby and child is hugely beneficial as well as leaving books around where they are playing as this will encourage them to look at them themselves (Rasing children. Net (no date). Sensory baskets are also a good idea for babies and children to play with, with different types of materials in them, for example wooden blocks or different materials with different textures. Babies and children need to explore as much as possible, whether this be tummy time as a baby or crawling or walking when older. Outside is a great place for babies and children to explore and it is important to try and not wrap them up in cotton wool, so they are able to explore freely. Outside play can be things like nature walls, ball playing, muddy play (Rasing children. Net (no date).

There are a few theorists who are important when it comes to play. I am going to speak about Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who both have different theories about play. Jean Piaget believed that play is split up into 3 parts called “Play behavior”. They are called practice play, symbolic play and play with rules. Practice play is the most commonly play which is used by babies in their first few years of life, for example same movement and actions like peek-a-boo. Symbolic play is when children like to recreate

their own play with what they have around them (Community playthings, 2016). According to Lev Vygotsky, he believed that children socially construct what they know by using language. Vygotsky's theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the assortment of tasks children can do with help but cannot do on their own. He believed that play, practically make-believe play, creates a zone of proximal development as the child plays (community playthings, 2016).

*6 - **Flour sensory play... Jones, (2022)***

*7 - **Number recognition from 1-10... Jones, 2022)***

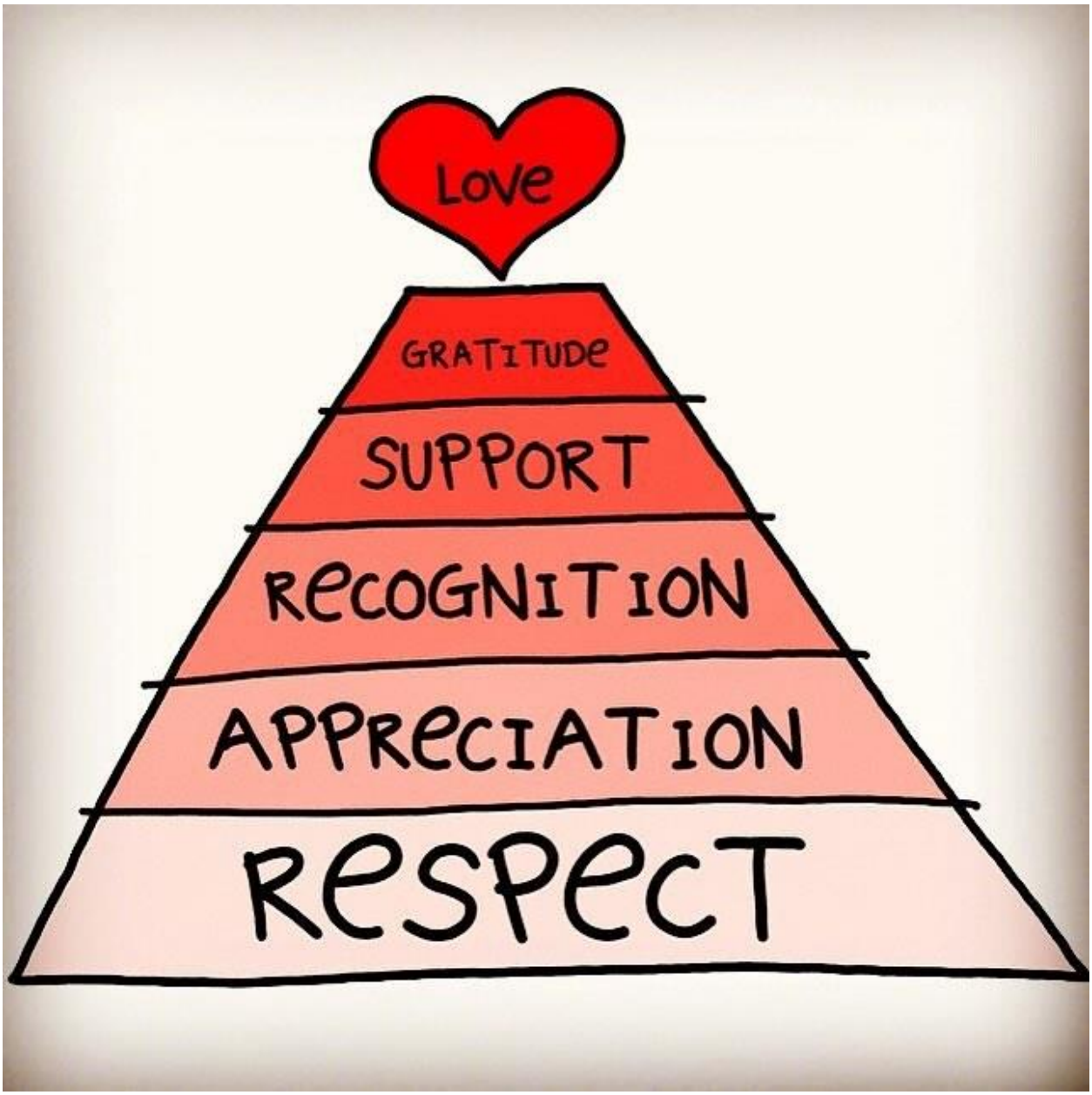


*8 - **The zone of Proximal Development***

*9 - **Lev Vygotsky***

*10 - **Jean Piaget***

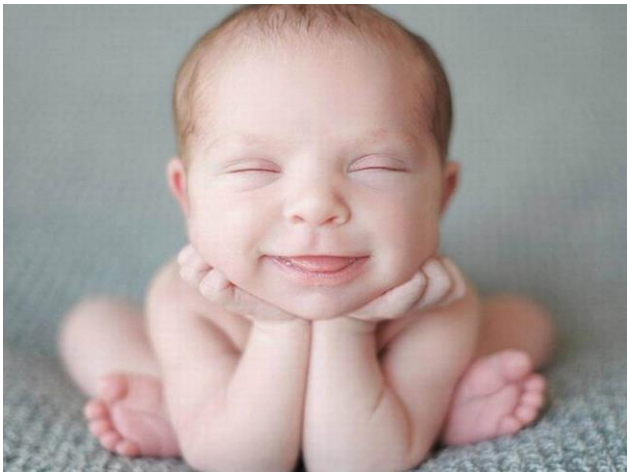
Respectful care...



Respectful care comes under a huge umbrella of principles. These are the 3 main ones for early years: primary caregiving, freedom of movement and respect for infants' confidence and competence. Firstly, primary caregiving is important as this will allow children to make a bond with a small group of children and practitioners. Sometimes it might be easier for a child to bond with one or two practitioners to start off. This will enable them to settle into their environment better and have an ongoing relationship. Freedom of movement is essential for a child as this plays a massive part in their mind, emotions and body. The third aspect of respectful care is confidence and competence. It is one of the main factors as a practitioner. We need to be able to engage in involving children in the process of activities. For example, changing nappy, changing clothes, washing hands or taking part in activities. Children like things to be explained to them. For example, discussing what they are eating at mealtimes (top day

nurseries, 2022). The pickler theory believed that both parents and practitioners need to take time to change a nappy, change clothes, wash hands or face or engage in an activity so that this is a pleasant experience for each child Pickler said that it is time to slow down, give full attention and build a trusting relationship (the learning space, 2020). Pickler's aim was to ensure children's physical and psychic health was key and to achieve this, it was creating secure attachments. As well as this she saw that giving respectful care, especially during times of bodily care, was one of the main tools for achieving this (teachearlyyears, no date). Every opportunity is a learning opportunity.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_BbAiPQYAs (Willoughby, 2022).



Inclusion and disability...

Inclusion within early years is about settings ensuring that everyone belongs. Children with or without disabilities can be involved within the same inclusive program, same daily activities and routines. All settings must ensure that every child is included. It's not necessary to treat the children all the same but treat each child fairly and pay full attention to their individual needs (Pacey, no date).

As said by Bailey et al, they argue that placement in inclusive settings should be a goal for all children with disabilities, but that placement should also be of high quality and have consistent family interaction (Bailey et al.,1998).

As Nutbrown and Clough state, there are four main points to consider: (1) Children's views can contribute to the development of inclusive practices (2) children's voices are central (3) Identity and self-esteem are key to the successful promotion of young children's positive sense of inclusivity and belonging within their early year's settings and (4) supported practitioner research can enhance early years practice. As well as this it is said that including children in the exploration of important issues promotes a positive sense of inclusivity and belonging (Nutbrown and Clough, 2009). Nutbrown and

Clough also argue, ‘respectful educators will always include all children’. It’s us practitioners that play the vital role in bringing about real inclusion (Cologon, no date, p. 4).

As early years practitioner we should never underestimate the power and influence we have on shaping the lives of children and their families. The Equality Act 2010 provides a framework to protect the rights of individuals. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines the basic human rights to which children up to the age of eighteen everywhere are qualify: the right to survival, the right to the development of their full physical and mental potential and the right to protection from influences that are dangerous to their development; and the right to involvement in family, cultural and social life (entrust, 2020).

11 - Downs syndrome disability

12 - All as one

Reference List...