

The First 1000 Days



The Importance Of A Healthy Care Routine



For a mother and her child, the first 1000 days are of vital importance. The aim of this scrapbook is to discuss this topic in more detail as well as how Early Childhood practitioners can contribute to the optimal development of families. This scrapbook will highlight the challenges and possible outcomes of the first thousand days, as well as ways to assist the families during this transition period. It is imperative to examine the various ways in which rich environments, positive experiences, and different methods and theories can be applied in order to address these issues. The purpose of that is to support and encourage the optimal and healthy development of children in these critical first few years of their lives and for us practitioners to show exceptional care towards mothers and children within the first thousand days.

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There are many opportunities as well as many risks a child faces during the first thousand days of his or her life, from conception until the age of two. In order to categorise the most critical and influential elements for a pregnant woman and her child, we can use Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs model. The first level of the model is 'Physiological'. The functions of eating, drinking, sleeping, breathing, etc, are all integral to the survival of an individual. As these are essential needs, they are clearly of primary importance. When assisting pregnant women during this time, it would be best for

them to consult a general practitioner or an obstetrician for any serious medical concerns, however from the aspect of an early years practitioner, we can offer advice, reassurance and also direct them in a way that meets their needs.

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When it comes to providing health-related advice, it can be challenging, many people would assume that anyone who appears to be of a healthy weight is healthy. However, this is not always true. A woman who is healthy weight may consume unhealthy foods or be inactive, whereas a woman who is obese may suffer from malnutrition (Jennifer, 2016). Many practitioners are apprehensive about discussing weight for fear of upsetting or offending their patients.

Pregnant women should receive exceptional care that addresses weight-related issues. Subliminally highlighting nutrition in conversation can help pregnant women to understand how diet, physical activity and gestational weight gain can affect fetal development. By doing so, you provide them with a reason to reflect on their own lifestyle. Remember what a difference a short light conversation could make to the child's health in the future. Karakochu et al. (2018) stresses the importance of this and informs us that there is inevitably no doubt a mother and her child's long term health is dependent upon the quality and amount of nutrition they receive during these first months of their lives as well as the amount of care they receive during this period. Also mentioned by UNICEF (2013), that the combination of these factors is profoundly influential on the ability of an individual to learn, develop, and flourish. This is why the first 1,000 days of a child's life are one of the most significant times for the development of the child's brain. This is because they lay the foundation for future health and happiness.

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Furthermore, Maslow (1943) states secondly is 'Safety needs. When discussing security needs, people tend to prefer familiarity to the unknown, in the first 1000 days. “Safety needs” may immediately suggest physical safety, however. During these early stages of life, the safety/security needs of the child are primarily concerned with both emotional and physical comfort. It is helpful to examine Harlow's (1958) experiments in order to understand how significant the mother's security is for children. The researchers found that baby monkeys preferred the warmth and security of a comfortable mother substitute to a wire frame mother substitute that had milk.

This is relevant to how crucial safety needs are. As suggested by Brodie (2018), bonding with the mother in the first 1000 days is critical to overall development later in life. If these needs are not met, it is highly likely that the child will not be able to establish connections in the future. The two stages of the hierarchy of needs must be met in order to fully support the holistic development of the child. As such, practitioners can help prepare the child for the transition from nursery to home by making the nursery as comfortable and secure as possible. This level of care is applicable not only within the relationship between the child and his/her mother, but also in an early years setting with practitioners. For example, subtle things like, playing calming music, reading the children books or poems, and providing safe places to sit or lie down can be very comforting and insures the

educational setting is a safe place. Using Plato's development theory (428 BC), Egan (1984) suggests that young children are morally inclined to make right decisions. So, by exposing them to music, beautiful literature and comforts at an early age, it will enrich their future development and they will later come to admire positive behaviour and thoughts. This would not be the case if they had not had this. As practitioners, we should do all we can to ensure that the child is exposed to safe and sensory environments at a young age.

Also, when referring back to Harlows (1958) experiments, this also highlights the importance of touch when building relationships with infants and young children. The primary way that a newborn baby connects with people is through touch, according to Murray (2014). This is due to their inability to communicate verbally. Their bonds are formed through physical contact and holding. Brodie (2018) discusses the fact that skin-to-skin contact with a mother may be the first physical contact a baby has with its mother. This is an essential early step in ensuring children's secure attachment. There is 'strong evidence' that mother-baby bonds are enhanced through skin-to-skin contact. Touch is an integral part of a healthy emotional environment in which babies will flourish (Stanford Medicine, 2013).

Additionally, recommending massages to babies can be a very effective way of demonstrating exceptional care and promoting the importance of touch among mothers. Having a relaxing and calm environment in which to engage in skin-to-skin contact is a pleasant way of interacting with a loved one. In order to establish a closer relationship with your child this way, it is important to do so. It is also believed that when a baby's oxytocin levels rise, they are able to settle more easily and sleep better (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

The Significance Of Relationships



When discussing the importance of relationships with young children, Bronfenbrenner (1977) points out that relationships with children are built upon a complex arrangement of social structures within the child's environment. The impact of each structure on a child is classified in accordance with its nature. Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggests a child's micro-system consists of his immediate environment, such as his parents, siblings, teachers, and classmates. The importance of acknowledging that relationships within a micro-system are bilateral, i.e. a child can both be influenced by those around him/her as well as be influenced by his/her own actions. Children's reactions to other people impact how they behave within their micro systems. A child's very personal interactions within micro systems often play a significant role in his or her development.

It is considered beneficial for their long term social skills to be able to foster these positive interactions with children. In fact, Bredekamp (2009) suggests that interactions between teachers and children can profoundly influence the development of their social and emotional skills. Children who had positive relationships with their teachers were more likely to have positive interactions with their peers. Based on a study of teacher-student relationships, this conclusion was reached. The study also found that students who were insecure about their relationships with their teachers were more likely to engage in conflicts with them. In addition, they had difficulty interacting with their peers (Early Learning Network, 2021).

In our role as practitioners, we are able to make a positive contribution to the healthy development of strong relationships within the micro-system of children by interacting with them. Additionally, we can employ a variety of strategies to create positive relationships with them. There is an increased likelihood that the student will feel comfortable in their relationship with the teacher if

the teacher listens to them, makes eye contact with them, and engages in many one-to-one, face-to-face interactions with them. *Frontiers In Psychology* (2020) highlight the importance for practitioners to speak to children in a pleasant, calm voice and use simple language so as to establish and maintain a relationship between them and the teacher. When students arrive in the classroom with their parents or caregivers, it is appropriate for teachers to greet them warmly.

Stimulating Environments



When considering the impact of creating stimulating environments for children, it is crucial to address the theory of Piaget (1936) on the stages of development. Egan (1984) elaborates on this theory. He believes that the development process depends on the interaction of the organism with the environment. As a consequence, some interactions with some environments will stimulate the process more than others. As a result, we see significant differences between cultures when it comes to levels of development and their rates of progress. The theory of Piaget (1936) on the four stages of cognitive development, suggests there is a 'sensorimotor stage', that it is the earliest stage of cognitive development. It's characterized by infants and toddlers gaining knowledge through sensory stimulation and their manipulation of objects. The notion that during the earliest steps of this 'stage', most of their experiences are based on their reflexes, senses, and motor responses. So when it comes to babies and young children, it is extremely vital to provide stimulating environments that allow them to explore objects in a safe environment (Healthline, 2019). This is as long as they are not injured in any way. It is paramount that they have the ability to engage in a variety of activities as well as allowing them to move about freely. No matter if the children are at home, in a childcare facility, or in a nursery, there are various ways to make sure they are in an environment that is stimulating for them (Krawczyk, 2018). As a practitioner, it is your responsibility to make sure that the child has sensory experiences that are safe and appropriate for them. Several studies have found that sensory experiences are very relevant to the development of a child.

We are responsible for providing a safe and challenging environment for the children. It is one of the most significant aspects of the practice of the practitioner in a multi-agency environment. To ensure that a conducive environment is created for the development of children, certain regulations must be followed (Very Well Mind, 2019). It is necessary to make specific alterations to the environment in order to ensure that it meets the needs of the children in the most appropriate possible way. It is very imperative to take a number of basic principles into consideration when planning a safe environment for children and young people.

Indoor & Outdoor Play



In order for children to acquire cognitive skills at different stages of their development, it is essential that we expose them to both indoor and outdoor play. It depends on the child's abilities and the way in which he interacts with others and with his surroundings to determine how he progresses through each stage.

Indoor environments have a significant impact on the development and learning of children. To meet the needs of all students, indoor environments should contain resources of the highest quality. Classroom arrangements should be flexible in order to meet the needs of each student. Vygotsky (1978) believed that children need a stimulating and pleasing environment in order to feel safe, secure, and happy. Through play, children gain a better understanding of their surrounding environment. In an early childhood program, the provision of a separate room for infants is imperative. Nevertheless, it is imperative that older children interact regularly with infants in order to promote their social and emotional development. A child must be able to both initiate their own play as well as participate in structured activities in order to develop properly (Vamos, 2015).

As well as offering many opportunities for learning and development, natural environments also provide a number of other benefits. The outdoors ought to be a daily part of a child's life. It can never be overstated the importance of recognizing that not every child will be able to have a garden or open space of their own at home. For this reason, outdoor experiences should always be available for every child in an educational setting. It has been shown that being in the outdoors can enhance a child's social, intellectual, physical, and emotional development (Forbes, 2004). In addition to building children's self-esteem and self-confidence, outdoor experiences also enhance their physical well-being. A child can participate in a variety of outside activities depending on his or her age. Piaget (1936) proposes the possibility of analysing children's responses to their educational experiences if the practitioner is skilled at observing children. In this way, you will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the child's perspective on the world as he or she views it. Through play, children develop a wide range of communication skills and a wide range of intellectual skills. It was believed that Piaget's (1936) research was motivated primarily by his desire to discover how children develop a variety of communication skills through play. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of language and communication through play and in the development of abstract thinking and thinking as a process of abstract thought. Our sense of understanding the world around us depends on words. Language is the key to effective communication since it enables us to reach out to others.

Current Attachment Approaches



To gain insight into the relevance of attachment theories in the current era, it is essential to reference Bowlby's (1969) assertion that attachments serve as a protective mechanism for children from physical and psychological harm. Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of cognitive development, sensory development, and the building of strong relationships, among other factors.

The form, nature, and evolution of relationships are of extreme importance in social work. Bowlby (1969) observed that a child's separation from a parent can result in anxiety in that child and can have a lasting impact on that child if that separation is occurring during a child's early years of life. It is critical for children to have a strong attachment to their mothers during the early stages of their development.

In addition, Pikler's (1935) teachings can also be summarized in terms of two key concepts. It is imperative that parents and infants establish respect for each other and peace between them. The most effective way for children to develop their motor skills is by letting them move freely and letting them pace themselves, according to Pikler (1935). Pikler's (1935) notion of freedom of movement is complemented by the Reggio Emilia approach (Edwards, 1998), which places children

at the centre of their own education. Children, as well as their parents, can gain a better understanding of how learning occurs when practitioners observe children and work closely with their parents. As a result of this information, the teacher may be able to plan and prepare activities that are appropriate for the child's interests. By doing so, they are able to deepen their understanding of the subject matter and to solidify their ideas. By observing children's interests, body language, gestures, and cues, teachers can gain insight into their feelings by using Pikler's (1935) theory. The learning pace can also be adjusted by the teacher according to the needs of each individual student, if necessary.

It is imperative that we listen to a child's concerns and respond accordingly when it comes to early childhood education. As practitioners, we should be aware that each child is different and we should be adaptable in our approaches to teaching.

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