What are the first 1001 Days?

The first 1001 days of a child’s life are from conception, through to birth and then to the age of two. It is seen as a time when development comes at a very quick pace if the right nurture and input is given.

A child's first 1001 days of existence, from conception to age 2, represent a window of opportunity. It is a period when brain development and growth are very rapid. Leading child health specialists concur that a child's destiny is most affected by the care they receive during their first 1001 days of life than at any other point in their lives. Leicestershire County Council (2023)

“Science tells us that a child’s experiences from conception through their first five years will go on to shape their next 50. It tells us that the kind of children we raise today, will reflect the kind of world we will live in tomorrow. It tells us that investing in the start of life is not an indulgence, but economically, socially and psychologically vital to a prosperous society.” (Knauf. 2014, pp 13)

Sheriden and Nelson (2009) say that the first 1001 days are crucial because without them, a baby cannot have a good start in life. This is true because a baby's brain develops optimally throughout these days, giving him or her the best possible start in life.

Brain Development

Babies' brains are prepared to start connecting from birth, and many significant connections are created in the first three years of life. Development happens as a result of being active and involved, learning via inquiry, discovery, and relationships with others.

A child's brain changes a remarkable amount between conception and age three. It has nearly all of the neurons it will ever have at birth. In the first year, it doubles in size, and by age three, it has grown to 80% of its adult volume.

The formation of synapses occurs more quickly during these years than at any other time, which is even more significant. The brain actually makes many more of them than it requires; by two or three years old, it may have up to twice as many synapses as it will in adulthood. Throughout youth and adolescence, these extra connections are gradually cut away, a process known as blooming and pruning. The Urban Child Institute.org (2023)

Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0fiu2S0_3M

Children's prospects of success, achievement, and happiness are greatly influenced by their early experiences.

Challenges

But in various cultures around the world, parents and children can encounter a variety of obstacles that can hinder or completely halt a child's development.

International research indicates that if a baby's development lags behind the standard in the first few years of life, it is more probable that it will continue to lag behind rather than catching up to others who have had a better start. NSPCC (2015)

Nutrition is very important to both the mother and the infant but can be a challenge. To ensure that the baby gets all of the nutrients it need during pregnancy it is essential that the mother maintains a balanced diet. According to research, a baby's food can have an impact on their health during pregnancy and as they grow older. Inadequate nutrition during pregnancy raises the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure in adulthood. NIDirect Government Services (No Date)

Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpG9OCD5G1g

Child obesity

A higher maternal pre-pregnancy BMI was consistently associated with later-onset childhood obesity in the children. According to additional research, stress, tobacco use, and

other contaminants can also contribute to obesity in the long run. (A Woo Baidal. J et al, 2016, pp 761-779)

Child poverty

On the other side of this children in countries that struggle with high poverty can suffer from mal nutrition. Poor diets deficient in essential nutrients during pregnancy, such as iodine, iron, folate, calcium, and zinc, can result in anaemia, pre-eclampsia, haemorrhage, and mortality in mothers. They can also result in a stillbirth, a low birthweight, wasting, and problems in a child's development. According to UNICEF, more than 20 million new-born’s suffer from low birthweight every year. (Unicef, No date)

When a baby is born it is suggested that breast milk is best. It has the ideal quantity of nutrients. Additionally, it is mild on the developing stomach, intestines, and other bodily systems of your infant. It is advised that a child is breast fed until they are 6 months old, after which babies continue to be breastfed until they are at least 1 to 2 years old. (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023).

This is not always easy or practical for some mothers who choose to bottle feed. Commercially made infant formulas are a healthy substitute for breast milk and even include several vitamins and elements that breastfed infants require supplements for. However formulas do not contain the

antibodies that are found in breast milk and cannot protect babies from infection and illness. (Ben-Joseph, E, 2018)

Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf12W0zPnJ0

Early adversity can have a lasting impact on wellbeing, especially if there are no nurturing relationships present.

Some parents find it challenging to connect with and interact with their infants, whether due to inexperience, lack of confidence, poor mental health or difficulty dealing with poverty. The babies' brain development can be significantly impacted by this lack of attention. Emotional and cognitive development can be harmed in the absence of a supportive relationship. Babies who have not received attentive care may find it more challenging to learn how to control their emotions, which may impair their physiological reactions and have long-term effects on their mental and physical health. (Parent Infant Foundation. Org, no date)

What is exceptional care?

We know that children need a healthy start in life. Babies are entirely dependent on their parents/carers, and the strong emotional bond they form with them has a profound impact on their future development. Being aware that a child's emotional health, brain development, language skills, learning capacity, and ability to build and sustain healthy connections with others are all supported by a loving, secure, and reliable relationship with parents and other carers. A baby's contacts with prominent adults in their lives are some of the most crucial events that will determine the architecture of their brain. Babbling, facial gestures, and movement are all ways that babies intuitively seek out engagement. With sounds and gestures, the grownups who are watching over them reply in kind.

This reciprocal exchange, also referred to as "serve and return," is crucial for the wiring of the brain to mature.

However some children can come into difficulties. "Adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) are distressing incidents that can be brought on by, among other risk factors, parental drug usage, maltreatment, and poor mental health. It is crucial that parents and carers receive the proper aid and encouragement to give babies the greatest possible start in life. This could be through the support of midwifes before the baby is born. A midwife offers professional personalised care for Mums to be and babies. This care continues until the baby is 10 days old. When the mid wife steps back the health visitor takes over to support the parents and the new baby.

Health visitors play a crucial part in assisting parents and maintaining the health and safety of infants. In addition to seeing sure the infant is gaining weight and reaching developmental milestones, the health visitor will talk about developing a bond with the child and attending to its needs. Most importantly, health visitors are ideally positioned to spot situations where parents or their infant may need extra support. As a result, they are crucial in giving early help, pointing people in the right direction, hiring specialists like social workers, and collaborating with others when they notice additional requirements, a disability, or safety issues. HM Government (2021)

Enabling environments

Children's real experiences should be centred on the surroundings we create, both inside and outside. Children begin to build a sense of belonging and an appreciation for the world around them through exploration of their surroundings. The environment should be adaptable and diverse, offering risk and difficulty while encouraging children to grow in self-assurance, independence, and resilience. (Education Wales, 2022)

Play is essential to a child's holistic development in the early years because it gives them a chance to connect their skill sets and learn about the world around them. Play is likely the most powerful teaching technique available in early years settings since it helps children develop physically, emotionally, psychologically, and cognitively.

In early year’s settings, the idea of holistic development is not new. For generations, early childhood educators have emphasised the value of play, placing more emphasis on the meticulous design of early childhood settings than on formal teaching methods.

Curiosity Approach ????

Montessori believed children should enjoy learning in an environment designed to meet their needs.

Enabling adults

Early Years practitioners acknowledge that their contribution is essential to every child's development and is especially important at this early learning stage. Making the most of the educational moments that arise organically when observing or participating in children’s play, adults should promote and support children's natural curiosity while modelling a joyful attitude to learning. We must recognise that young children develop their thinking skills best when given the chance to repeat and practise actions in a variety of situations. Encouragement of children to take measured risks and challenge themselves will help them to grow in resilience, independence, and confidence. A holistic approach to child development recognises the close connections between a child's physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual welfare. By assuming this, professionals concentrate on the overall development of the child as opposed to only the cognitive parts of learning. (Morin, 2012) explains that Vygotsky is best known for developing ideas like the zone of proximal development, which describes the range of abilities and problem-solving skills that the infant can achieve independently as opposed to those that the infant can achieve in conjunction with adult support, and scaffolding, which describes the behaviours that parents and other older interactive partners use to enhance the infant's capacities.

Enabling experiences

Experiences that are enabling should encourage learners' independence by providing challenge and the chance to succeed while they are learning. Every student should have opportunities to enjoy physical activity. Regular access to a variety of physical activities, both indoors and outdoors, using a variety of tools and resources. Experiences should offer multisensory chances for learners to respond to and be inspired by the creative expression of others while also assisting in communication and creative self-expression. Welsh Government (2021)

The act of changing a baby's nappy can be turned into a teaching opportunity. Regular nappy changes can make the baby more comfortable and help stop the spread of bacteria and viruses. Children can better grasp what is happening and what will happen next when adults communicate with them using appropriate vocabulary and respectful language throughout the process. It can be a significant way to improve language abilities. Face-to-face interaction is encouraged by naming and pointing to the baby's bodily parts or even by singing a song.

Treasure Boxes.

A treasure basket is a collection of commonplace items intended to appeal to each sense. It is one approach to give immobile babies, from roughly the time they are 6 months old until they begin to crawl, a variety of experiences as well as the chance to explore and choose what to play with on their own. Treasure baskets can contain objects like shells,

pine cones, spoons, keys, ribbons and makeup brushes, objects that children can investigate independently and safely. Reach for Montessori (2023). Margaret Montessori suggested that children learn through movement particularly the movement of the hand which she believed was linked to the development of intelligence

Story time

A baby won't comprehend all you're doing or why you're doing it. However, reading aloud to your child is a great shared activity you can carry on for years to come, and it's beneficial for their brain development. Lewis (2019) says that story time with a baby can teach a child about communication. It provides toddlers information about their surroundings and strengthens listening, memory, and language abilities. Introduces concepts like numbers, alphabet, colours, and shapes in an entertaining way.

Water Play - Hours of engaging fun in the water help children develop critical life skills. Splashing, pouring, spraying, and making waves are all things that children enjoy doing. Their imagination and creativity are enhanced, their health and wellbeing are encouraged, and they have the chance to study in fascinating scientific and exploratory ways. Paxman (2020) says that in the Early Years Foundation Stage England water play may promote the growth of both gross and fine motor

skills, and by providing various additions, you can focus on particular developmental skills.

Messy Play

Messy play is the unrestricted investigation of materials and their characteristics. At the proper developmental level for them, it enables children to employ their inborn curiosity and engage their senses. As they practise their physical, verbal, and social abilities, toddlers pick up basic cognitive concepts. Head Start (2022).

Loose Parts

Simple, commonplace objects can promote inclusiveness, foster creativity, and enhance social and problem-solving abilities.

A loose parts' toys usage is limitless; children can mix it with other loose parts through their imagination and inventiveness. The best place to find loose components is still in nature, which stimulates all the senses. Play Scotland (2023).

The theory of ‘Loose Parts’ was originally developed by Simon Nicholson in 1971. Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach believes that materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, disassembled, and then put back together in various ways are referred to as loose parts. The concept of "loose parts"

makes use of objects to inspire imaginative play. Lyons Early Childhood School (No date).

Being Inclusive and Professional partnerships and relationships

Since parents are the ones who know their children the best, practitioners must be able to interact with parents in a sensitive and effective manner while also meeting the children's needs for care and education. An effective, meaningful, and sincere relationship with parents and people with parental responsibility is crucial for a practitioner.

Hartin (2022) writes that Bronfrenbrenner believes that the growth of a child takes place inside an ecological system, which consists of several settings or systems that interact to mould the child as they mature into adults. The most significant component of a child's microsystem is their family. Children learn how to develop into healthy, capable, and independent people mostly from their families. The mesosystem links the parameters in a child's microsystem. By speaking with educators and attending parent-teacher conferences, parents frequently get involved in their children's educational experiences. The relationship between a child's home and school life can have a big impact on how well they do in school.

It is also important to have good professional partnerships within the setting and with outside agencies.

(Nutbrown, 2013) analyses the significance of understanding every child in order to comprehend and meet their unique requirements, which are specific and different for every child. She focusses on the adult's role and how the key person approach can be utilised to support young children and their families when gathering and exchanging information and organising the children's upcoming experiences.

Children's unique requirements can be identified by gathering information from parents and observing in the environment. These needs can then be communicated to and discussed with the appropriate outside agencies, such as the health visitor, speech and language therapist, or physical therapist. Every child in the setting needs to get the greatest care possible, and a practitioner's job is to put the child at the centre of that care. (Brodie 2018)

Respectful Care and Meanigful learning,

Nappy time language development

Baby feeding

Nap time routines importance of interacyting with babies through these.

International Approaches

Forest School

The philosophy of the forest school is consistent with significant themes in the history of Western European educational theory: Rousseau, Froebel, Montessori, and McMillan have all, in their own distinctive ways, argued for the advantages of learning in a natural setting and emphasised the importance of play, movement, and sensory stimulation for children's healthy development. For children of all ages, the forest school programme encourages sensory, child-led outdoor play while also fostering and stoking a sense of wonder, investigation, understanding, and self-reflection. Babies are sensory learners, adults must create a stimulating environment for them that includes a variety of textures, temperatures, colours, smells, and sounds. Horvath (no date)

Te Whariki

New Zealand emphasises the importance of connections and social and cultural learning for young children from birth until school admission. The term "relationships" has traditionally been used to refer to relationships with other people, but this method of teaching also emphasises relationships with other places and things. Veazey (2020)

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. Early Child Curriculum, New Zealand Ministry of Education (2018)

The main principles are empowerment, Holistic Development, Family and Community and Relationships.

Reggio Emilia

The Reggio Emilia school of thought acknowledges that young children actively participate in their learning. The teacher performs the roles of mentor, friend, nurturer, and researcher.

Children are seen as capable, inquisitive, knowledgeable, full of potential, and eager to engage with the world around them. Teachers build all of their work and the surroundings around the children's experience in order to respond correctly since they are well aware of their potential.

They have set up schools for infants and toddlers as well as older children. Reggio Emilia Approach (2022)

All curricula hold that each child should be valued as an individual and supported by adults in a holistic manner in order for them to succeed.