

Blog 1 – Social and Emotional Development.

Social and emotional development is a massive part in child's early years development. In this blog, I will discuss this in full. The social development of a child means that they are learning to communicate with their expressions, actions and words as they grow up. Interactions between themselves and others. A developing child should have lots of communication within their early years. Not only with their parents but their friends and play partners too. All children will use their social skills to portray their emotional wellbeing. These skills are vital as every human will show their emotions frequently in their life (Some more than others). Mental health is becoming a very current situation within the UK and it is a necessity for children to be able to show their emotional well-being from a young age. Broadhead (2004) (P.G 122) has cited the Mental Health Foundation and states that many children as young as four are being diagnosed with depression. This shows that mental health problems within children are rising in our current climate. Broadhead (2004) (P.G 123) explains how children should always have the freedom to play and have positive relationships with adults and role models. These relationships will ensure that a developing child will have a social upbringing, teaching them how to express their feelings. A healthy social development for a child will make it more likely for the child to be able to deal with social situations and will be more tolerant of others. These children will also gain more developed communication skills in the long run. In a research document written by Alexander et al (2013), a woman's account of their child's social life is explained.

‘She finds it quite easy to interact socially and maybe that's because she went to childcare when she was quite young, and she's always kind of been around other children, and she's not really the shy type.’

This is an example of a child having a very active social development due to them preparing to go to school. A child that is prepared for a social place like school will find it easier to develop and make more friends throughout school. As we all know, friendships are vital whilst growing up so it will ensure they have peers when growing up. Emotional development goes hand in hand with social development. All children show their emotions from the day they are born with their crying, smiling etc. A healthy emotional development stage will make it easier for the child to deal with issues later in life. You have probably met people who have had a not so good emotional upbringing within your life! I know I have. These types of developments in

children are very important to educational practitioners. This is because children will spend a great amount of their younger lives with their teachers and pre-school practitioners. Educational practitioners must take this into account and help their pupils develop their emotional and social side. The early intervention foundation (2018) have produced an info sheet on the importance on this and they state that schools should create a teaching model to give children the opportunity to put their social and emotional skills to the test. From personal experience, I believe that children that have an amplified social upbringing thrive in using their social skills as they go higher through school. I believe that trips and group activities can aid children in gaining social skills. In my opinion, the Finnish education system has hit the nail on the head in putting emphasis on social and emotional development from a young age. Dickinson (2019) states that Finnish children learn through play and social interaction, following the approach of the theorist John Dewey who believed that children should solve problems socially in groups. Finland's education model ensures that children can express their emotions to their peers and practitioners through an amplified amount of communication. I believe that every nation should take influence from Finland's education model as it is working very evidently. Here in Wales, the new curriculum of 2022 seems to be taking influence from Finland's education framework. According to the Welsh Government (2020), social and emotional wellbeing is being emphasised in the new curriculum of 2022. A quote taken from the new framework says Wales is aiming for 'confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.' (Welsh Government 2020) In conclusion I can see that healthy social and emotional development is vital to achieve this. As you can see, countries are starting to see how vital these developments are in children.

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Blog 2 – Physical Development

Children have many dramatic stages of development in their early lives. One of the main drastic developments they will go through is their physical development.

Children will develop physically very rapidly within the first year of their life as they are starting to discover their environments and how things work around them. It's like small children are doing calculations in their heads to work out what they're doing!

Families find great joy when their children start making their first physical changes and improvements. Many parents see them as milestones in the child's first stages in life. Young children will take time to explore environments around them as they grow up. The WHO (2020) state that environmental hazards can 'easily disrupt children's rapid growth and development' Children must have positive environments to explore to ensure they stay healthy and safe during their development within their early years. Children explore in many ways as they are growing up and they have many stages to their ongoing development. Woodfield (2004) (P.G 6) describes that children are born into the world as active learners. They now have to learn about a completely new world around them outside of the womb they made their first steps of development in. These must be delightful moments for families to experience.

Parents will start to see very visible growth in the child over the first few months of their life. Woodfield (2004) (P.G 11) explains that children will start to grab and reach objects between the ages of three to six months. This will mean that children will explore the feel and sound of objects using the pincer grip. Over time, a child's muscle strength will increase massively, meaning the child will try to explore lifting themselves onto things. In turn, this will cause some nervy moments for parents as they start to see their children start climbing like a mountain explorer. I may have used hyperbole in that last sentence, but young children are very curious beings! All of these steps lead up to one of the biggest steps in a child's early years. This being their first steps! As stumblely and unstable as the child might be, this is a massive part in their beginnings of life. As Woodfield (2004) stated, this massive step will happen around 6 months to 1 year. This is called a developmental milestone the CDC (2020). They state that the parents should take precautions leading up to the child's first steps as they will be starting to move around their environments more.

Children need to be kept safe during their developmental stage in their life. Whilst children develop, they are always using their fine motor skills. Children will start to involve their smaller muscles by using coordination. According to Lin et al (2015) drawing at a young age is a major developmental stage in a child's fine motor skills use. Children will use their fine motor skills extensively in their early years of school learning how to write. In my experience in a field of education, there has not been a day where a child has not used their fine motor skills throughout the day. These motor skills can be used to detect problems within their development. For example, if a child has poor handwriting, they may have a disorder such as DCD. DCD or more formally known as dyspraxia is a condition where a child may be slower at reaching developmental goals. These children may face problems with co-ordination and may have problems with activities on the playground NHS (2020). Although some children may be diagnosed with this, the symptoms may come and go. Physical development is seen through a child's developmental stages thoroughly, parents must ensure that children get enough physical activity in today's modern times. In my opinion, children can be negatively affected by the ever-increasing use of technology. These devices can cause interruption in a child's physical development. Too many children are becoming couch potatoes! Ok, we can admit we all have to be somewhat lazy at times, but a balance is needed. Children need to physical activity and a healthy diet to develop to their full potential. In America, the levels of physical activity among the youth has decreased significantly over the last few decades (Hills et al, 2007, P.G 2) In my opinion this is due to the technology advanced era being too dependent and submersed in them. If this happens to children, it is likely that a child will not develop as effectively as a child who is not stuck inside using technology. In conclusion, physical development is the most visible factor in a child's development and they physical develop all throughout their childhood.

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Blog 3 – Brain Development.

What do you think is the most interesting part of child development? I personally believe that it's the development of the brain and how it works. The brain is such an amazing and interesting organ and it develops very heavily during a child's early years. The brain is a vital part of every human that's ever put foot earth on this planet and that will never change. Some people know how to use theirs to make better decisions than other people but that's for another blog! In all seriousness, a child's brain is developing day by day during their early developmental years. This is a very interesting stage in their life and seeing how they adapt to the changes around them. Although children's brains develop naturally, they still need guidance and a good environment around them to aid their mental development. Research shows that children must have a social upbringing to aid healthy brain development. 'Human beings need loving relationships for healthy brain development' Cairns (2014). Children thrive with communication and happy relationships these relationships help children adapt on their mental ability and mood. Cairns (2014) also state that a healthy diet and lifestyle will help develop the brain, but positive relationships are just as important. Physical health is as important as mental health is in today's society with children also dealing with mental health issues. All children are born with cortisol but in stressful environments, children may experience elevated levels of the hormone. Cortisol is basically known as the stress hormone. Cicchetti (2014) explains what can happen with excessive cortisol levels in children. 'Abnormal cortisol function and reactivity to stress are established markers of depression in adults and youth' If a young child is brought up in a stressful family environment then the cortisol levels can cause an adverse effect on a child's developing brain. A good healthy environment is needed for a child's brain to adapt to life positively and healthily. Babies will feel a loud and abusive environment, this may mean that they will carry these feelings with them as they grow older. Drug abuse is also a cause that may harm a child's brain within their developmental years. All of these environments must be avoided at all costs for a child. I believe that negative experiences that a child endures at a younger stage will follow them through their lives bringing adverse effects. Many people believe there are 5 factors that a baby should experience to have a healthy mental upbringing. The Hertfordshire County Council (2012) call them the 'Five to Thrive' These are 5 rules that parents should

follow to ensure that the child has a healthy brain development. Research shows that conversations with babies strengthen their capacity to interact and aid development of their neurons. Communication helps the brain form (Hertfordshire County Council 2012). The 5 to thrive rules are;

Respond

Cuddle

Relax

Play

Talk

All of these things should be done every day to help develop a growing child's brain.

Here is a brief explanation of the 3 I find most important.

Respond – As Bowlby (2005) 'The roles of the care giver are first to be available and responsive' Responsive conversations with young children help develop their brains, making them used to conversing showing emotion. This also aids their social and emotional development. Children's brains work very slowly at first, responsive conversations help strengthen the connections made within their brain.

Communication will develop over time from this. (Hertfordshire County Council 2012)

Cuddle – Physical affection with your child will always have a positive impact on their brain, babies cannot have too much parental contact. When a child feels safe, it will help their mental ability and will ensure that cortisol levels stay low. The physical contact with the baby will make them feel attached and happy. Less tears and crying for the parents to deal with, happy says for everyone!

Relax – With everyone, it is always important to have down time and a relaxation period. I love to relax! Children also have to have this time for their brain to have a rest time. Children should have time outside of their lives to wind down and be themselves. These relaxation periods can help children keep their mental health positive!

In conclusion, the brain is the most complicated but interesting aspect of child development. This is due to the physical and mental side of the brain. I find it very interesting that children's brain develops and learn through aspects you never think they would!

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Blog 4 – Environmental and Bronfenbrenner

There are many examples of theories on child development and how different experiences can have a negative effect on a developing child and their future. An example of something that can cause a problem in a child's development is the environment that they grow up in. I'm sure we all have different experiences of environments growing up, but a negative environment can cause children a problem with their development over time. The main theorist who believes that a child's environment can cause a problem in a child's development is Bronfenbrenner. His theory of 1979 explains how human development is impacted by environment and the experiences children go through. Ettekal et al (2017). His theory is based on a 'ring system'. The closer in the ring, the more impactful it is. These rings are called the Macro, Exo and Micro system. The micro system is the closest layer to the child. For example, their personal or family experience. If any of these impacts the child negatively, it will affect them at a higher level than the rings on the outside. If a child has a family that is affected by crime or drugs, then it is likely that this will affect them negatively. The exosystem is the next outer layer of the system. This is environmental things that do not directly affect the child. The child will not have direct experience with these elements of the system, but it will cause a knock-on effect causing them potential problems in development. For example, a parent's lack of work could cause a child to live in poverty, meaning that the child may not be able to be physically fit to develop to their full potential. The macrosystem is the type of things that a family cannot change within the system, but it can also have effect on a child's overall development. This could involve a child's ethnicity or the neighbourhood the family live on. Bronfenbrenner's whole theory shows how smaller issues can cause a knock-on effect in a child's development, even if the child cannot control them. His theory states that environment can cause a big effect of a child's life without them realising themselves. As stated by Drakenberg (2013), Swedish schools have taken the theory into account when looking at their personal values. The schools aim to make sure that all of the children face as little impacts from the system as possible. This will mean for better wellbeing and development in the long run. All of these issues can cause lack of emotional and physical wellbeing in a child which in turn, impact development to some extent. The Welsh Government (2014) are also taking a stand to make sure issues do not affect a child's development. The Social Services and Well-being act of 2014 states that all people should have

physical and mental well-being, and protection from abuse and neglect. All of these environmental issues can cause stress in a child's life and it proves

Bronfenbrenner's theory is correct. The Welsh Government (2014) Also state that the suitability of living accommodation should be sufficient for every child as they have their rights and they need their physical needs to be in check. Ferguson et al (2013) explains that the housing situation of a family can have adverse effects on a child's cognitive development. This is due to lack of toys and books in the home for the child to interact with. This links to my brain development blog (see above) as all children need an interactive upbringing to develop their brain. I cannot imagine being a child and not having my WWE wrestling figures to play with! But this is happening across the world and having a negative impact. Children living in negative environments can have experiences with crime and drugs in their environment (Ferguson et al 2013) This follows Bronfenbrenner's theory further as it describes the exo-layer of his system. All of these environmental issues can affect every area in child development, so I believe that it is very important that every child has a good environment to live and grow up in. In conclusion Bronfenbrenner's theory of 1979 shows a very interesting system in how environment can cause problems in a child's development. I personally believe that a negative environment can have an adverse effect on all the features of child development I have explored in my series of blogs.

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