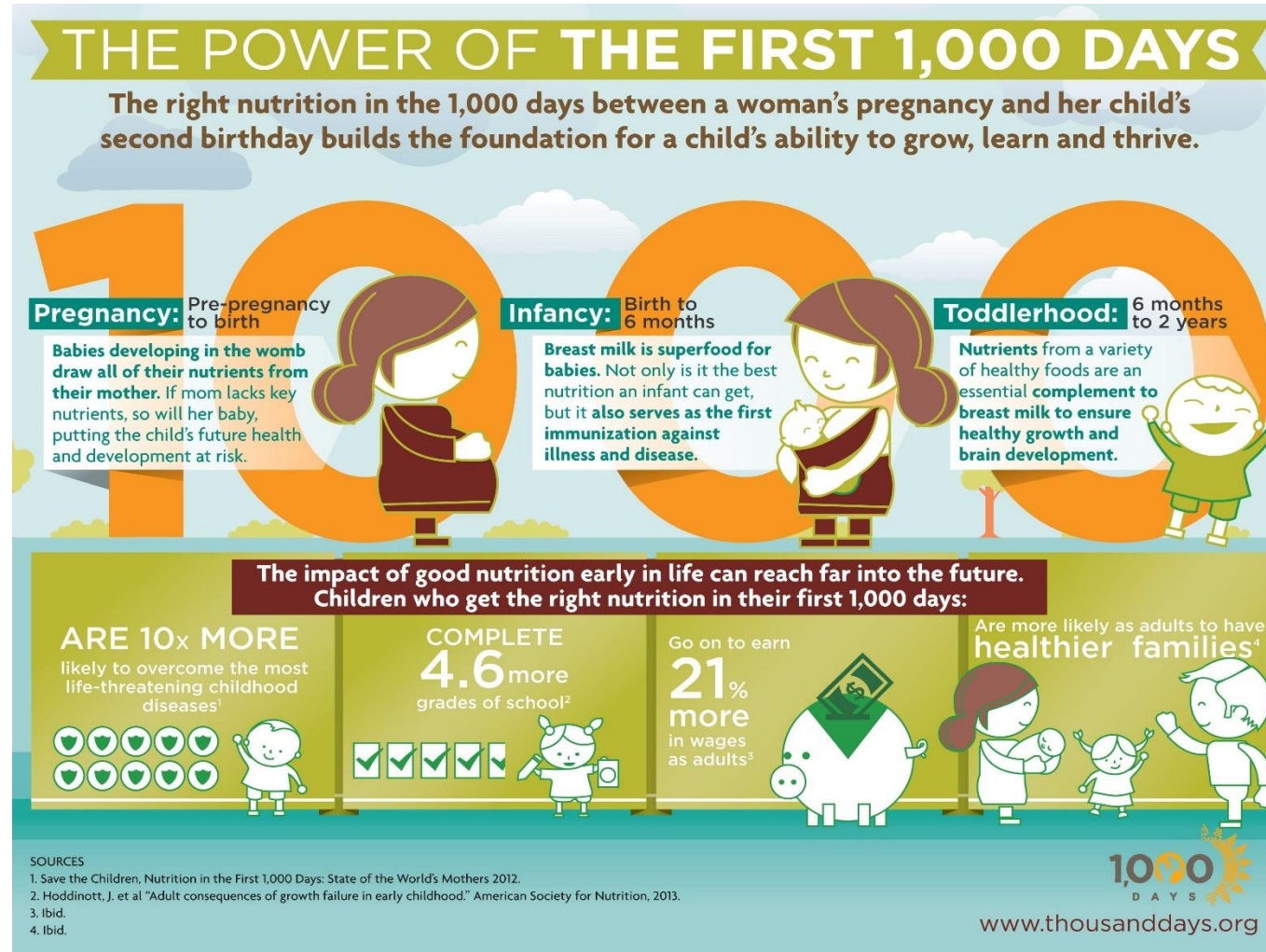
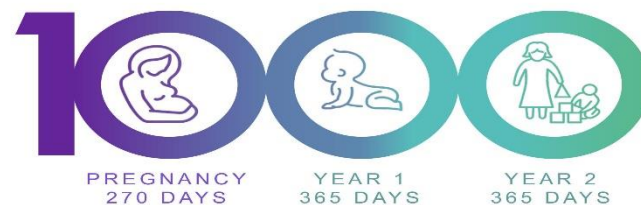


The First 1000 days - ECEY4005

(Source: Dyke, 2016).





(Source: astartemedical.com, 2019).

This scrapbook is for the purpose of conveying what exceptional care could look like. The first 1000 days, according to Dyke (2016) commences at conception, a period encompassing the prenatal stage and the first two years of a child's life. This comprehensive timeframe plays a fundamental role in shaping a child's development, starting with the intricate process of foetal growth during pregnancy. Factors such as maternal nutrition, health, and environmental influences during pregnancy significantly impact the developing foetus (Martin, 2023).

A mother's nutrition according to Karakochuk *et al* (2018), their physical and mental health, their surroundings, and their lifestyle choices all have a significant impact on the health of their unborn child during pregnancy. These elements affect how a child's immune system, metabolism, and organ development start. It could also impact a child's birthweight or premature birth, which can have long-term effects on the child's health far into adulthood (Martin, 2023).

Once born, the focus shifts to providing a nurturing and stimulating environment for the infant. The basis for a child's physical, cognitive, and social and emotional growth according to Marshall (2016) is laid at this stage. The brain develops remarkably throughout this period, creating important neural connections that influence learning and behavior in the future. The care, nutrition, and stimulation an infant receives in these formative years have a significant impact on their long-term health and development (Martin, 2023) therefore, interventions and support during the first 1000 days, from conception onward, are crucial for optimizing a child's developmental outcomes and ensuring a healthy start in life (Dyke, 2016)

These first 1000 days are a whirlwind of discovery and growth and Marshall (2016) states that from the moment they enter the world, they embark on a journey of exploration, adapting to new sights, sounds, and sensations. During this period, infants establish emotional bonds with caregivers, and experience the wonders of their senses unfolding (Marshall, 2016).

Stages of Fetal Development



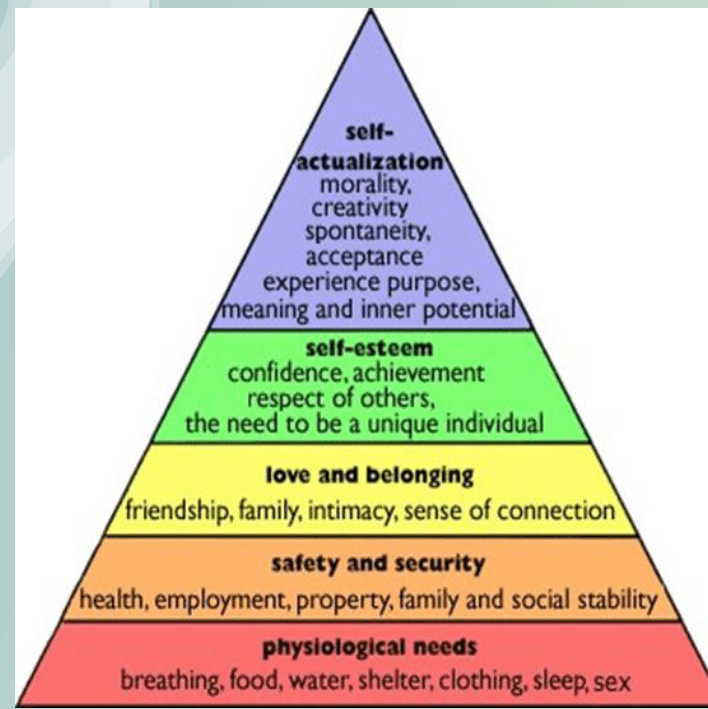
(Source: Pinterest, 2023)



https://youtu.be/eyrG_EFd4-k?si=mzD4fj7i-ysCFYxp

(Source: The first 1000 days of life | Sergio Pecorelli | TEDxHECParis, 2023)

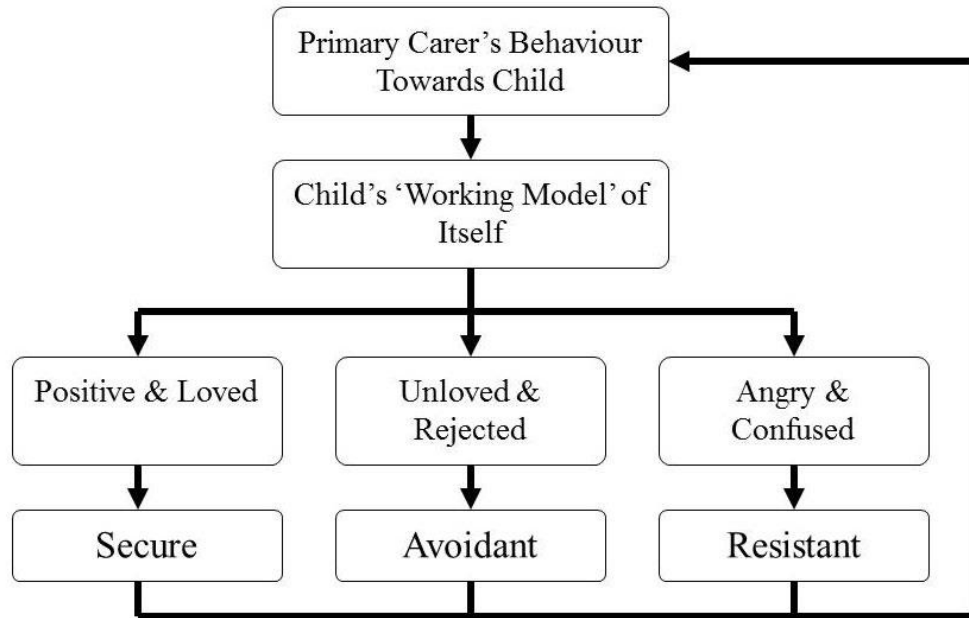
Infant development



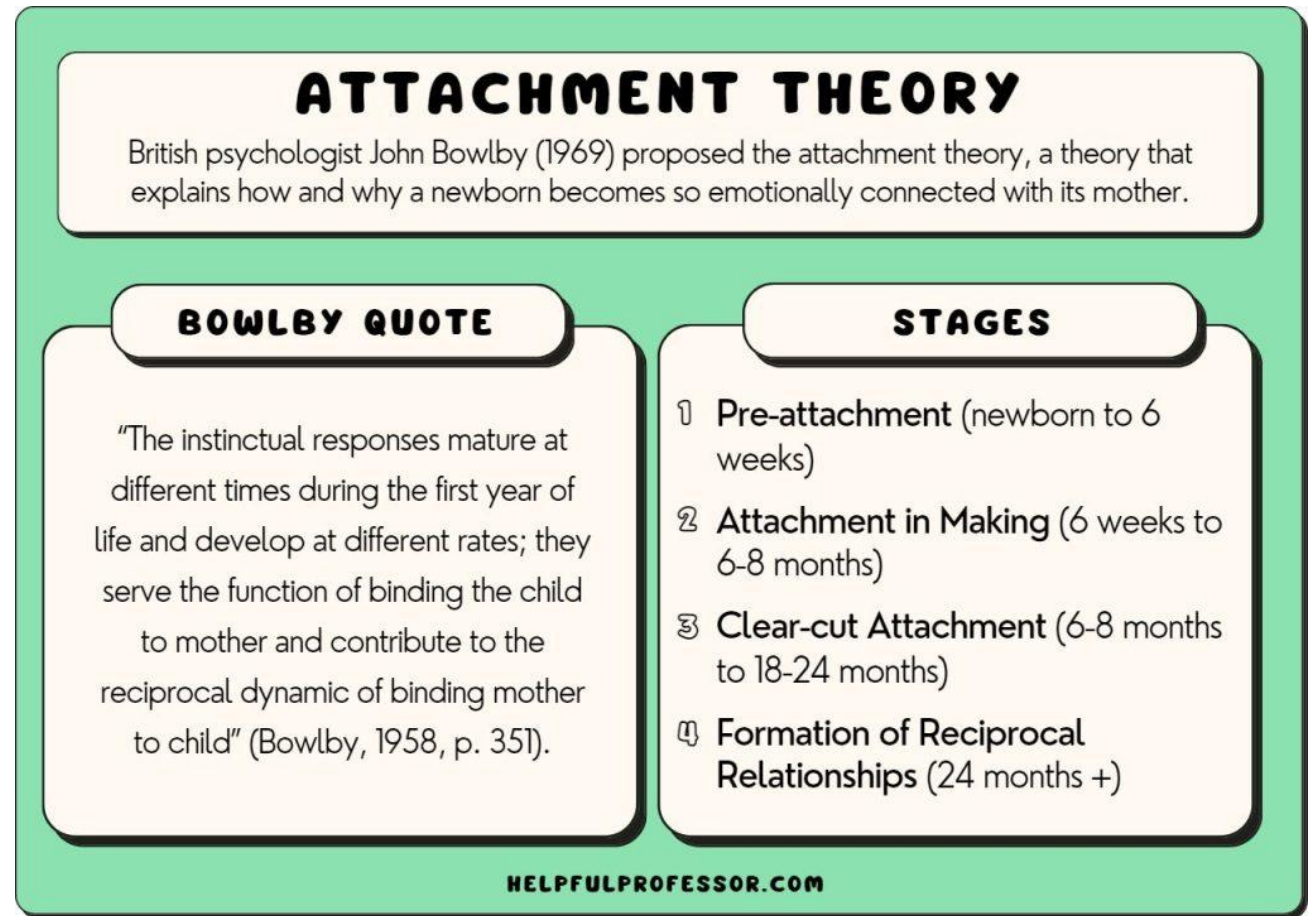
(Source: *Maslow Need Hierarchy theory* | Abraham Maslow *hierarchy of needs*, 2008)

In the initial weeks, a baby's primary focus is on basic needs which is at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, like feeding, sleeping, and bonding (Marshall, 2016). As their senses sharpen, they begin to respond to stimuli, recognizing familiar voices and faces. Tummy time and gentle interactions contribute to the development of essential motor skills, such as head control and grasping reflexes. The first smiles, coos, and other early forms of communication emerge, creating a heartwarming connection between the baby and those caring for them. Each milestone, whether it's the first time they hold a rattle or make intentional eye contact, becomes a cherished moment for parents and caregivers (1000 days, 2023). Throughout these initial 1000 days, the baby undergoes rapid physical growth, transforming from a fragile newborn into a more robust and responsive infant. This period is suggested to also presents challenges according to Dyke (2016) like sleepless nights and the adjustment to new routines, yet the joy of witnessing a child's development makes it a magical and rewarding journey for families. Capturing the essence of these early days involves documenting the small triumphs, the late-night cuddles, and the shared laughter. It's a time of profound change and tender moments that lay the foundation for a lifetime of growth discovery(Dyke, 2016).

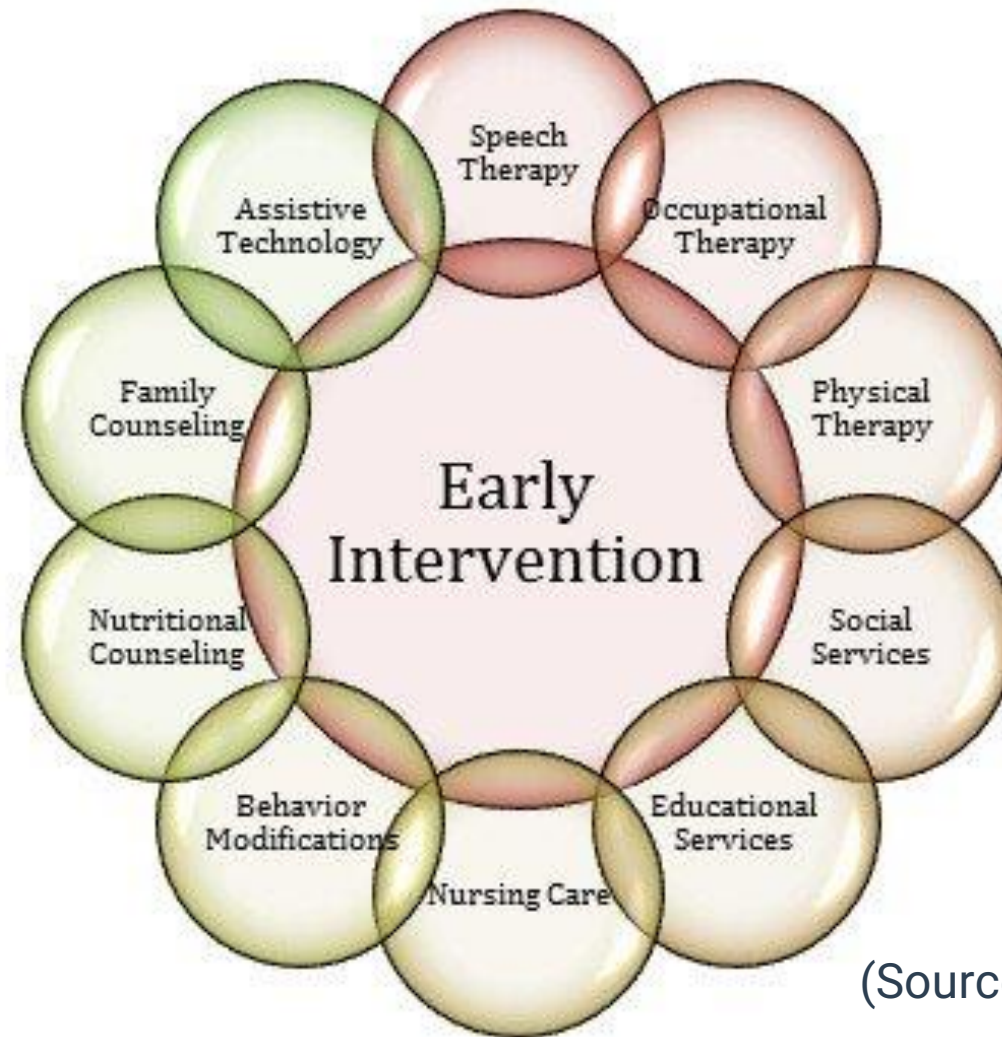
John Bowlby's attachment theory emphasizes the significance of early bonds between children and caregivers, which contribute to emotional and social development. Critics argue that the theory oversimplifies complex relationships and neglects individual differences (McLeod, 2023). Bowlby's work greatly influences developmental psychology, highlighting the importance of early relationships in shaping a child's emotional well-being. McLeod, (2023) emphasizes John Bowlby's attachment theory and the significance of early bonds between children and caregivers.



(Source : Simply psychology, 2023)



Early Interventions



(Source: Cleaver, 2023)

Regularly assessing and monitoring a child's developmental milestones, identifying concerns, and collaborating with parents are essential for Early Intervention. Effective partnership working enables early support, potentially preventing long-term issues (Cleaver, 2023).

An Early Years practitioner plays a vital role in supporting children and families during the first 1000 days of life and Vamos (2019) along with Clement (2022) suggest that exceptional care is crucial because this period represents a window of rapid development. During this time, the brain undergoes significant growth and Save the Children (2016) suggests that the foundations for lifelong health are established. Investing in exceptional care during this period can lead to positive long-term outcomes, influencing a child's ability to learn, adapt, and thrive throughout their life. (Shafai et al. 2018). Clement (2022) suggest that the practitioners responsibilities include:

Everyday activities such as mealtimes can be turned into learning experiences when caregivers engage with love and attention (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2018)

Supporting and using serve and return interactions with infants enabling healthy development (*Serve and Return*, no date).

Serve and Return Interactions<https://youtu.be/E-WcZjNOWfw?si=bCYWtAajV9JMwz6m>

Promoting healthy habits and lifestyles, including physical activity, and regular health check-ups, tooth brushing for both the child and family (Martin, 2023).

Offering support and guidance to parents, fostering their confidence and competence in parenting skills (Vamos, 2019).

Respectful care suggested by Brodie,(2018) involves treating infants and children with kindness, empathy, and dignity, responding to their needs promptly and gently. It builds trust and secure attachment, leading to healthy emotional and social development (Clement, 2022).

According to Jackson (2023) offering parents information about nutrition, health, and early childhood development to ensure the best start for the child.

Gerhard (2015)believes that Showing professional love is vital to brain development in the early years, and how these early interactions can have lasting consequences for future emotional and physical health.

Supporting children with ALN (Welsh Government, 2022).

By actively engaging with families and providing comprehensive support, early years practitioners contribute significantly to the holistic development and well-being of children during the first 1000 days of life (Jackson, 2003).

Effective Environments

In the first 1000 days of life, effective environments in early years settings are pivotal according to Marshall, (2016) They play a significant role in shaping a child's neural connections. A well-structured environment supports sensory stimulation, exploration, and learning, creating a foundation for future development. It enhances the child's overall well-being, ensuring that the early years are nurturing, stimulating, and conducive to healthy growth (Vamos, 2019) (Clement, 2022).

Using observations to plan exciting activities and environments suggested by Welsh Government (2022) that promote early learning, language development, and motor skills Clement (2022) suggests.

Using the indoors and outdoors is crucial for an infant's holistic development, as it promotes a sense of calm and connection with the natural world children are encouraged to play bare foot and explore with nature in their surroundings, according to Clement (2022).

Environments that are welcoming and that promote Welsh ethos (Welsh Government, 2022).

Spaces for children to explore, and express themselves physically, creatively and imaginatively Pacey (2018)

Problem solving opportunities and areas to develop creativity and critical thinking Clement (2022).

Organised environments which scaffold development. Opportunities to develop gross motor skills indoors and out, climbing opportunities and safe risk taking (Welsh Government, 2022).

Areas that children can access independently supporting independent learners (Pacey, 2018) .



(: ChildCareResourceMT, 2012)

<https://youtu.be/fm7hlwLXuTU?si=dxGuXWsdgxz3kzoq>

Child centered approach

[unicef-convention-rights-child-uncrc.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/indonesia-childrens-rights-convention-uncrc)
(UNICEF, 2023)

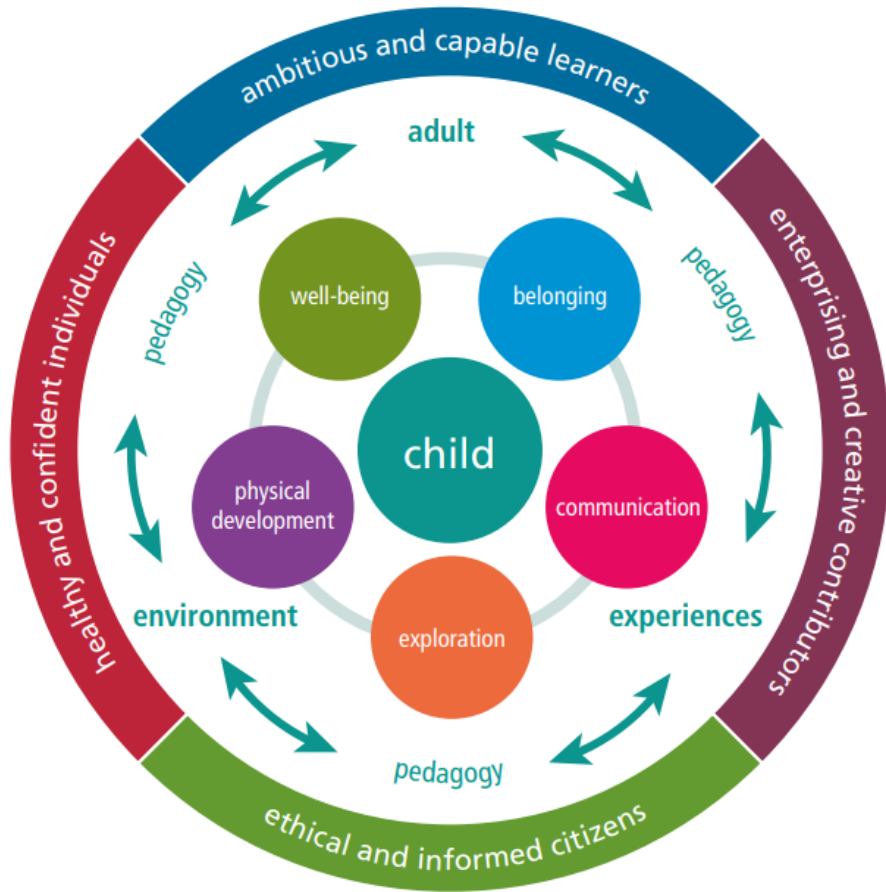
Every child has rights (UNICEF, 2023) .

The child should ALWAYS be at the centre (*Curriculum for Wales, 2022*) .

To understand each child's unique needs, practitioners should investigate the motivations, goals, and interests of the children, including the child's voice in the planning process. Using a child-centered

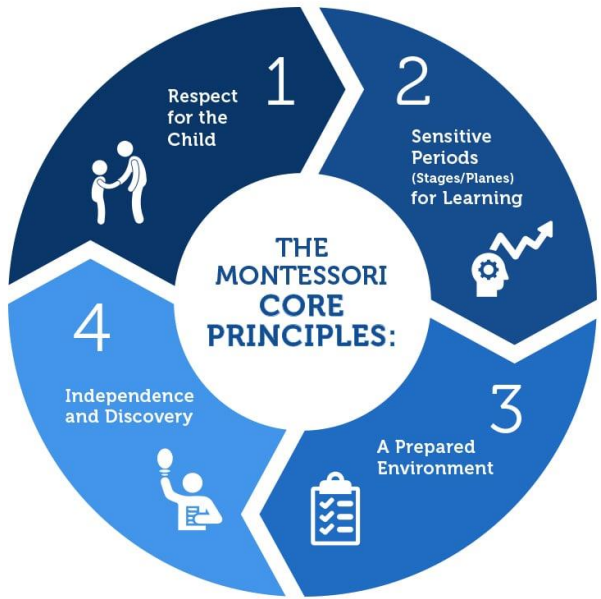
Practitioners have the license to use topics and activities to combine meaningful learning from different Areas, disciplines and concepts. Using cross curricular skills (*Curriculum for Wales, 2022*).

Creating a Pedagogy that suits the practice (*Curriculum for Wales, 2022*) .



(Source : Curriculum for Wales 2022, no date)

Maria Monterossi Principles



(Source: Main,2023)



Implementing the principles of Maria Montessori
(Source: Pinterest, 2023)

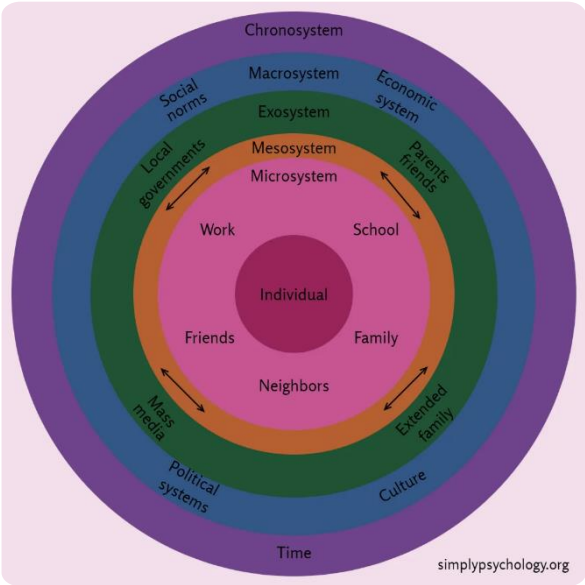
<https://www.slideserve.com/juan/dr-maria-montessori-her-theories> (Main,2023)

Montessori education, developed by Maria Montessori, emphasizes child-centred learning and self-directed activities that are hands-on activities. It provides a prepared environment where children can freely explore and engage with materials that promote their cognitive, social, and physical development. Research suggests that Montessori education can have positive effects on children's academic and social outcomes (Main,2023).

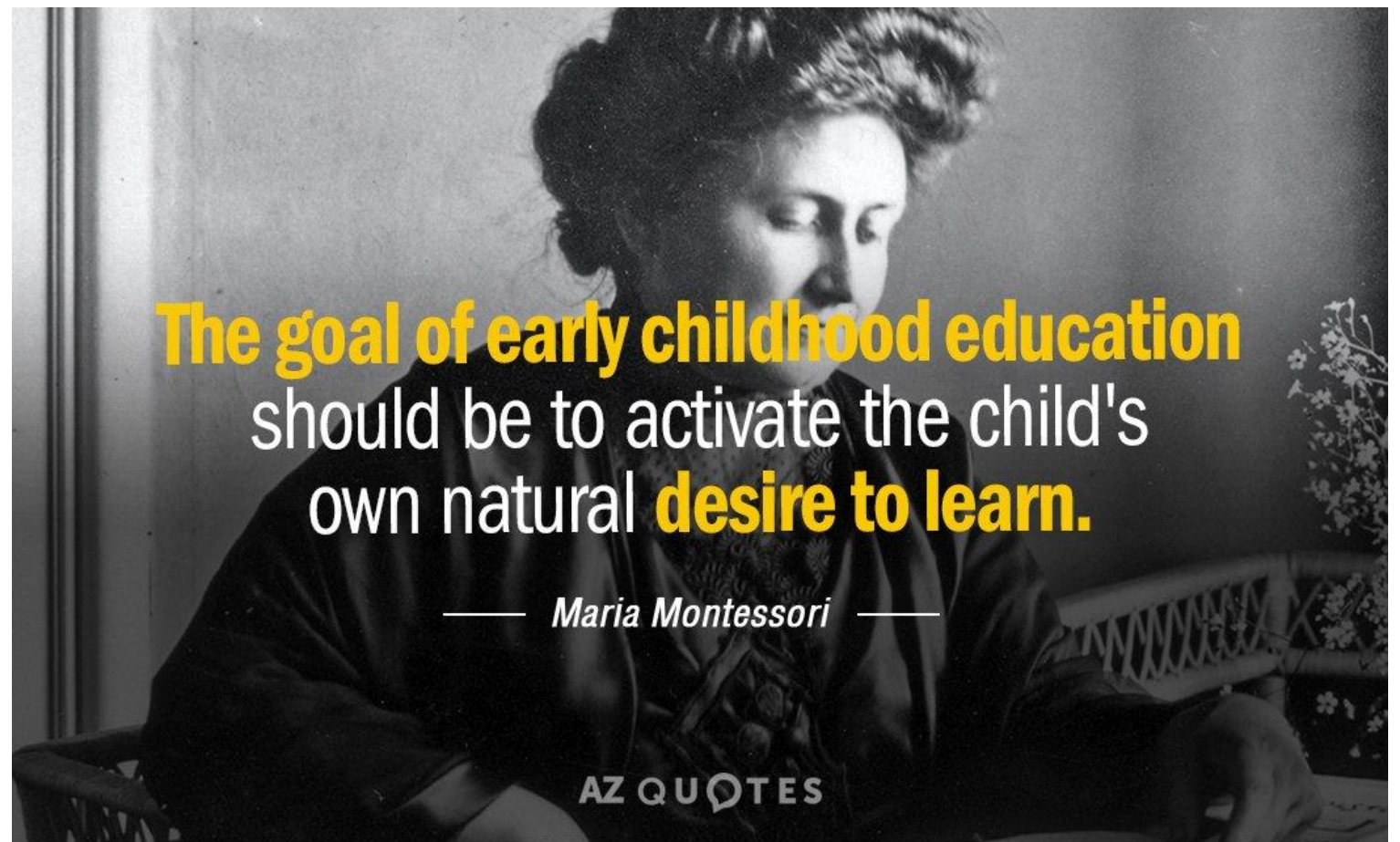
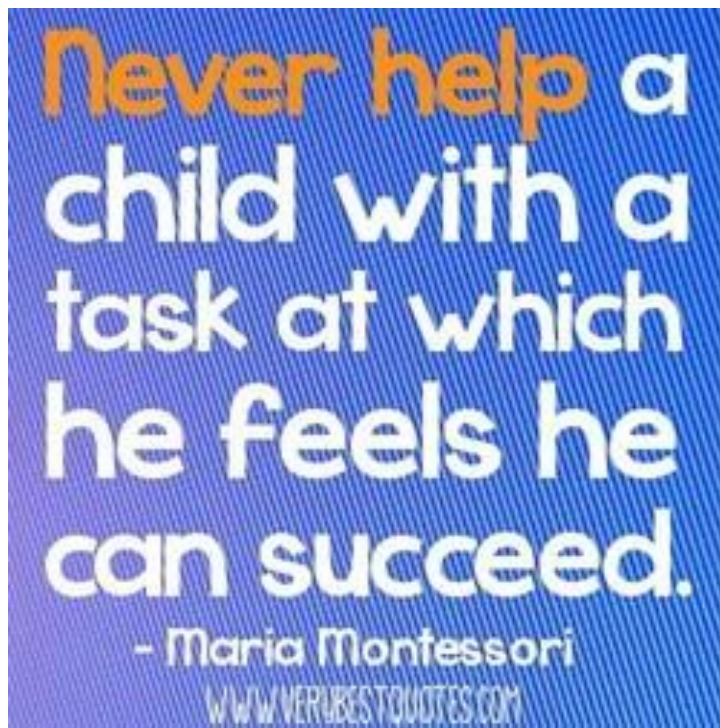
When it comes to caring for infants, there are several approaches that have gained recognition. One of them is as mentioned is the Montessori approach, and another approach is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the influence of the environment and relationships on a child's development (Main,2023) and (Guy-Evans,2023).

Guy-Evans, (2023) found in his research that Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory focuses on the influence of various environmental systems on a child's development. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the child within the context of their family, community, and culture. This theory highlights the interconnectedness of different systems and how they shape a child's development. It has been influential in understanding the impact of multiple environments on children's well-being (Clement, 2022) .

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory



(Source: Simply psychology, 2023)



(Source: TOP 25 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION QUOTES, no date)



(Source: TEDx Talks, 2015)

<https://youtu.be/EG3XeNti3Cw>

The Reggio Emilia approach, developed in Italy, views children as capable and competent learners. It emphasizes child-led learning, collaboration, and the use of expressive arts to foster creativity and critical thinking. The approach values the role of the environment, documentation, and the partnership between teachers, children, and families. Research suggests that the Reggio Emilia approach can promote children's social skills, creativity, and engagement in learning. Balancing flexibility with educational standards remains a key consideration in evaluating the effectiveness of the Reggio Emilia approach(Marshall, 2016).



<https://youtu.be/7n2hCebmT4c>

(Source : Reggio Emilia Education, no date)



<https://youtu.be/LL3sSKtBVZY>

(Source: Emmi Pikler is 120, no date).

The Pikler approach, inspired by paediatrician Emmi Pikler, focuses on respectful, child-centred care and emphasizes free movement according to Kayir (2022) autonomy, and secure attachments. Research indicates positive outcomes in motor development and emotional well-being. Critics argue potential challenges in adapting the approach to different cultural contexts.

Critics argue that it may lack a comprehensive educational framework and may not align with some cultural parenting norms (Melhuish, 2018). Respectful care in early years is crucial for holistic child development, fostering a sense of security and trust. Pikler's approach emphasizes the role of the enabling adult who observes, supports, and adapts to the child's individual needs, promoting autonomy and self-discovery. This approach nurtures a strong foundation for a child's lifelong learning and well-being (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2018).

Working Together

Collaborative efforts involving healthcare professionals, educators, social workers, ensure a holistic approach to supporting families. This comprehensive support addresses various aspects of a child's development, including health, education, and emotional well-being. (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2018)

Professionals from different fields bring diverse expertise, enabling the sharing of knowledge, best practices, and resources, enriching the support provided to families during this critical period cooperating with Bronfenbrenner's theory (Guy-Evans, 2023).

This collaborative approach ensures that families have access to information, resources, and assistance, promoting their active involvement in their child's development (Jackson, 2003).

Collaborative efforts to community-level engagement, can contribute to community awareness, education, and support networks. (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2018)



Challenges faced whilst caring for an infant

Infants have distinct personalities, preferences, and routines. Providing individualised care tailored to each baby's needs can be challenging where caregivers must balance the care of multiple infants simultaneously (Jackson, 2003).

Maintaining appropriate caregiver-to-infant ratios is crucial for ensuring quality care. In some childcare settings, staffing challenges may arise, affecting the ability to give each infant the attention, interaction, and responsiveness they require (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Effective communication between caregivers and parent can be challenging due to time constraints and language barriers. The demands of caring for multiple infants. Providing detailed updates on feeding, sleeping, and developmental milestones becomes crucial for maintaining trust and collaboration (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Infants are particularly vulnerable to illness, and maintaining a clean and safe environment is a constant challenge. Childcare providers must adhere to strict hygiene practices, implement illness prevention measures, and navigate health and safety protocols to protect the well-being of the infants (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Aligning childcare practices with parental preferences, such as sleep routines, feeding methods, and cultural considerations, can be challenging. Striking a balance between standardized care procedures and accommodating individual family preferences requires open communication and flexibility (Jackson, 2003).

Keeping childcare staff well-trained and updated on the latest research and best practices in infant care is essential. Investing in ongoing professional development ensures that caregivers have the knowledge and skills needed to address the evolving needs of infants (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative approach involving caregivers, parents, and childcare practitioners (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Children have the need to play and the right to play according to Bongiorno, (2019).

(Source: *The 6 Stages of How Kids Learn to Play*, no date)

The 6 Stages of Play			Pathways.org
Unoccupied Play	0-3 months	When baby is making movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves.	
Solitary Play	0-2 years	When a child plays alone and are not interested in playing with others quite yet.	
Spectator/Onlooker Behavior	2 years	When a child watches and observes other children playing but will not play with them.	
Parallel Play	2+ years	When a child plays alongside or near to others but does not play with them.	
Associate Play	3-4 years	When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not much cooperation required. For example, kids playing on the playground but doing different things.	
Cooperative Play	4+ years	When a child plays with others and has interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing.	

The Power of Play

How a single play activity can strengthen development in multiple areas



Fine Motor Skills

Manipulating and stacking blocks of varying size and shape.



Gross Motor Skills

Walking across a row of blocks like a balance beam, tossing blocks into a nearby container.



Cognitive Skills

Organizing different towers by block color or shape, counting the number of blocks in each tower, and problem solving.



Communication Skills

Collaborating with other students to make a tower or building out of blocks.



Social-Emotional Skills

Learning to share, take turns, and make a calm transition to cleanup time.

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Adapted from Lynn Briggs, *Early Childhood Development: A Handbook for Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development*, by Nancy M. Edwards, Ph.D. © 2018 Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.



(Source: *The power of play*, 2024)

Children learn through play, let them explore, let them get dirty, let them learn, let them have fun let them play! Is *Piaget's Theory of Play* (2014).



(Source: *Ballyhenry Nursery*, no date)

Engaging in sensory activities, such as playing with textured materials, exploring different smells, or listening to soothing sounds, helps stimulate a child's senses and promotes their cognitive, physical, and emotional development. These activities encourage curiosity, exploration, and the development of fine motor skills. They also support brain development suggested by Shafai et al, (2018) and help children make sense of the world around them (Brodie, 2018) .



(Source: Burnett, 2023)

Reading or telling stories to children from an early age has numerous benefits. It enhances language development, vocabulary, and communication skills. Stories also ignite children's imagination, creativity, and critical thinking abilities. They expose children to different cultures, emotions, and perspectives, fostering empathy and understanding. Additionally, the bonding experience between the child and the storyteller promotes a sense of security and strengthens the relationship (Burnett, 2023) .

Music has a powerful impact on a child's development. It helps stimulate various areas of the brain, including language, memory, and emotional centres. Listening to music, singing songs and nursery rhymes, and engaging in musical activities enhance language skills, rhythm, coordination, and social interaction. Music also has a calming effect, reducing stress and promoting relaxation (Budson,2020).



(Source: Story Time, no date)



(Source: Dehner, 2020)

Inclusive Practice

Inclusive practice involves creating a welcoming and diverse environment, building strong relationships, promoting effective communication, and recognizing and celebrating uniqueness pointed out by to Welsh Government (2021a) .

Additionally, it promotes a sense of belonging, acceptance, and equality (Jackson, 2003).

Lastly, Welsh Government (2021a) and Jackson (2003) maintain that showing genuine care, empathy, and understanding, and involve families in decision-making processes.



(Source: Antonia 2020)



(Source: tesSpecialNeeds, no date)



Outdoors

Forest schools began in Denmark according to Bruce (2011) the curriculum was influenced by the Froebelian approach at the time. The forest schools' approach was used to take the learning opportunities outdoors. Children are over protected according to Bruce (2011) and are more likely to have accidents if they don't learn and think for themselves, making mistakes helps them to learn, falling helps them to think and these forest school approaches are becoming more popular in Wales. Forest schools currently are a great opportunity for children to achieve and develop self-confidence through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland environment *A guide to Forest School in Wales* (no date) believes.

(Source: Weinstein (2015)).



"When you asked me what I did in school today and I say, '**I just played.**' Please don't misunderstand me. For you see, I'm learning as I play. I am learning to enjoy and be successful in my work. Today I am a child and my **work is play.**" -Anita Wadley, 1974

saltmeadowacademy.wordpress.com

facebook.com/SaltMeadowAcademy

Salt Meadow Academy

www.cdatraining.org



I am 3

I am not built to sit still,
keep my hands to myself,
take turns, be patient, stand in line,
or keep quiet.
I need motion,
I need novelty,
I need adventure,
and I need to engage the world with
my whole body.

Let Me Play

(Trust me, I'm learning)

~ Unknown



(Source : Quotemaster, 2024)

Conclusion

During the journey of the first 1000 days of a child's life, it unfolds its tapestry of experiences, weaving a narrative of growth, challenges, and moments of joy. These days symbolize a mosaic of lessons learned, relationships forged, and the resilience discovered within each child. As we reflect on this period, it becomes evident that life's essence lies not just in the passage of time but in the meaningful connections and self-discovery that occur along the way. Embracing the diverse chapters of this journey, we find that each day contributes to the evolving story of each child's existence, shaping them into the individuals that they are meant to become. Families, friends' practitioners all have a vital part to play in this essential period which Karakochuk *et al* (2018) and Bruce (2011) both agree as a final point.



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