

Module: The Social Child

This module is all about what makes the child a 'social child'. What are the factors that affect a child as they grow and develop during their early years (0-5 years).

Please feel free to use these notes to the best of your abilities for your assignments and to aid your general understanding.

Please also do not hesitate to contact me on my email zainabalam24@yahoo.co.uk if you need any more information or advice.

At the end of this module, I used these notes to submit our end-of-module examination which was a podcast, and the result was a 2:1.

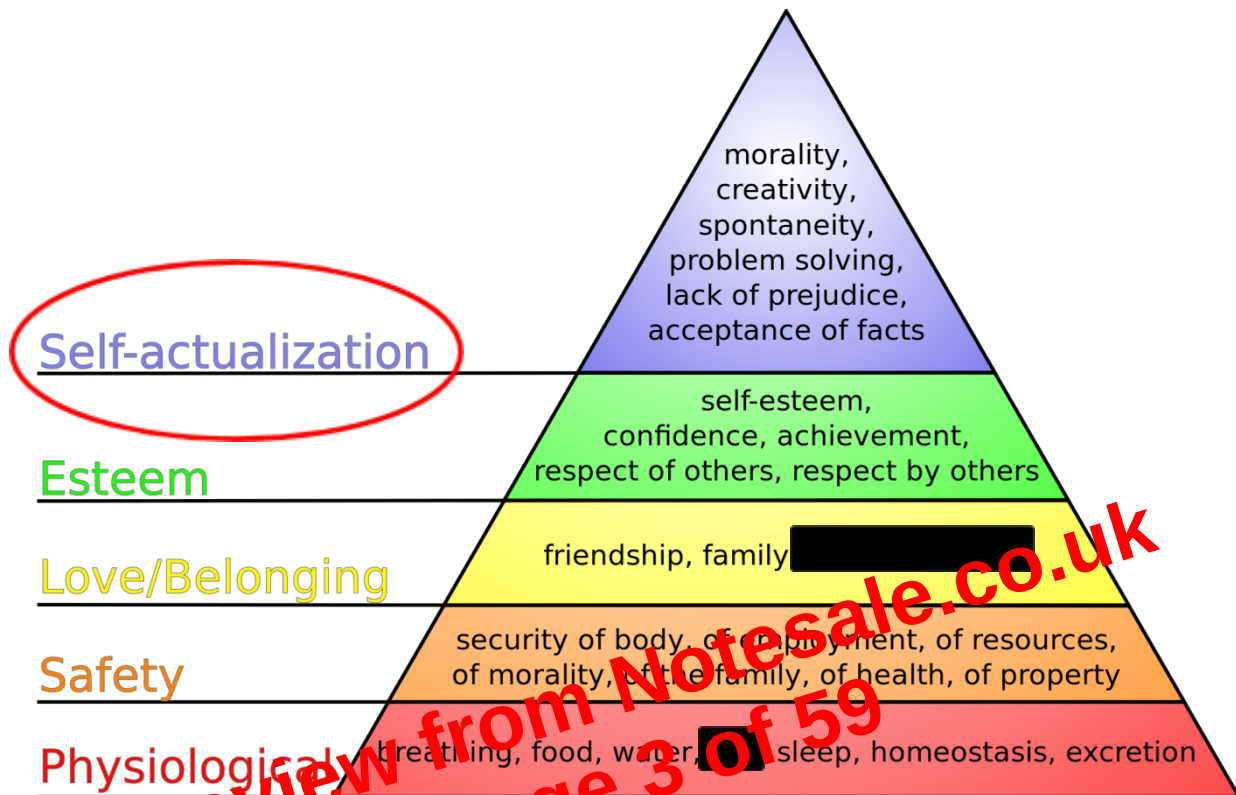
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Session 1: Introduction to Social and Emotional Development

These three key strands are the key building blocks to allow children to develop both efficiently and effectively.

The Needs of Children

Abraham Maslow (1970) created the Hierarchy of Needs. It outlines the basic needs for the child and what the child needs to achieve self-actualisation.



[Do not need the words behind the black box when referring to children]

Each level of the hierarchy must be met before moving onto the next level. If none of the levels of this pyramid is met then the child will not develop personally, socially and emotionally.

Session 2: Understanding Young Children's Behaviour

However House in 2010 quotes:

“With institutionalised early childcare rapidly becoming an unquestioned cultural norm, flying in the face of all we know about the importance of early attachment relationships for lifelong health, it is crucial that the economy-centred priority of driving parents, and especially mothers, back into the workforce at the first available opportunity does not go unchallenged”

This details that House is against child care, as he describes day care for children as an unquestioned cultural norm. by using the words ‘fly in the face’, he means that by putting children in day care it goes against everything we know about early childhood attachments. He also says that the government’s priority is not for the children but saving money by putting parents back into work as soon as possible. He concludes that children should be at home so that a child can have a consistent attachment formed with the primary caregiver (mum).

Characteristics of different attachments later on in childhood

1. Secure attachment
 - High in self-esteem
 - Confident
 - Cooperative
2. Insecure – avoidant attachment
 - Avoid close contact
 - More concerned with the environment and objects around them
 - No guidance on how to regulate strong emotions
 - Find it easier to deny, suppress or avoid feelings and expressions
 - Calm or even withdrawn but arousal will still be high
3. Insecure – resistant attachment
 - Preoccupied and focused on attachment figure
 - Constant state of hyper-vigilance
 - Ready to make a bid for attention
 - Exaggerated feelings
 - Attention-seeking behaviour
 - Clingy
4. Disorganised attachment
 - Do not rely on having a safe or secure place to return to (learnt that from past experiences)
 - Contradictory behaviour patterns
 - Show wariness and apprehension as they cannot predict adult’s response
 - Main function is to gain attention from their attachment figure

Session 4: Self-Esteem

- Take to most new food easily
- Smile at strangers
- Adapt easily to a new school
- Accept the rules of new games with no trouble

2. Difficult...

This group is categorised by:

- Irregularity in biological functions
- Negative withdrawal responses to new stimuli
- Non-adaptability
- Intense mood expressions – frequently negative
- Irregular sleep and feeding schedules
- Slow acceptance of new foods
- Prolonged adjustment periods to new routines, people or situations
- Frequent and loud periods of crying

However is it right to call a child difficult?

According to Chess and Thomas in 1996...

“... the term difficult tends to have a negative connotation and overlooks the positive aspects that a difficult child may actually show as invaluable elements of behaviour. The terms ‘fiesty’ and ‘spirited’ temperament, which suggest positive attributes, have been suggested.”

So basically the message that Chess and Thomas want to get across to people through this quote is that a child should not be labelled as difficult as the term itself seems to say as if the child is all negative, nothing positive. Therefore we should use the terms feisty or spirited because it communicates to us that a child has negative behaviour but also has positive behaviour as well.

3. Slow to Warm...

This group is categorised by:

- A combination of negative responses of mild intensity to new stimuli
- Slow adaptability
- If given the opportunity to re-experience such new situations over time and without pressure, such a child gradually comes to show quiet and positive interest and involvement

What do we mean by sex and gender?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) state:

“Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.”

“Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.”

Nature – The way the child is born

Nurture – The way the child has been brought up

According to Browne (2004)...

“Gender is inextricably linked with all aspects of ourselves, including ‘race’, ethnicity, social class, language background and disability. Furthermore, each child’s life experience is unique and children have different ‘needs’, desires and pressures to conform to certain ways of being.”

Nature or Nurture?

It is difficult to argue that sex differences between male and female are anything other than biological. However what about gender differences?

For example, Harry likes to play with his train set whereas his sister Sophie prefers to play with her dolls. Is this gender difference a result of nature or nurture?

If it were due to nature, then the differences would lie in the genetics of the child (the traits they have inherited from birth).

If it were due to nurture, then the differences would be from all the environmental influences around the child as they are growing up.

Nature...

Asperger Syndrome

Some consider Asperger Syndrome to be a high functioning form of autism. Others consider the syndrome to be a unique condition in its own right.

However Asperger Syndrome shares at least some characteristics with autism.

- Engage with repetitive or irritating movement (Brownhill, 2007)
- Resistance to change (Wall, 2004)
- Need for routine and structure (Wall, 2004)
- Uncomfortable with physical contact with others (Kay, 2007)
- “Another difficulty experienced by many children with autism is that of understanding speech in a literal sense.” (Wall, 2004)

Inclusion

This is the process by which we value all individuals, recognising their unique attributes, qualities and way of being.

All children should be seen as individuals in terms of their learning and development needs.

An inclusive approach to education and care means that difference is recognised and celebrated, and that professionals identify and meet any associated needs through their provision.

It gives every child the same opportunities to succeed.

[Rodgers and Wilmot, 2012]

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Therefore negative reinforcement is when some factor which is irritating or annoying makes a person (e.g. a child) do what they are supposed to do.

Punishment

In Skinner's third box, the rats were given an electric shock when they pressed the lever. They very quickly learned not to press the lever to avoid this uncomfortable occurrence.

Skinner believed that by punishing children we could prevent them from repeating unwanted behaviour.

Note: They used the rats that were used in boxes 1 and 2 as these rats were used to pressing the lever.

It is important to not confuse negative reinforcement and punishment. They are DIFFERENT...

Negative reinforcement involves an increase in a behaviour.

Punishment involves a decrease in a behaviour.

Behaviourist Philosophies

Therefore, behaviourist philosophies are based on the idea that any behaviour that is rewarded will be repeated and any behaviour that is punished will be extinguished (Miltenberger, 2011; Skinner, 1974).

This is called Behaviour Modification.

Features of behaviour modification:

- The locus of control for behaviour modification is external
- Adult – external controlling force to manipulate behaviour

However...

It has been suggested that external means of attempting to shape children's behaviour will ultimately fail (Miller, 2009).

- Authoritarian
- Does not take into account of children's emotional needs
- Does not address the reasons behind the behaviour

Although behaviour modification may appear to improve children's behaviour in the short term, as soon as the reinforcement is stopped, children's behaviour reverts back to how it originally was, or sometimes to a worse state (Hall et al., 1968)

and control young children rather than support and encourage them (Porter, 2006; Kohn, 1999).

Rewards damage self-esteem:

- Rewards send the message to children that they are only accepted and approved of when they meet the standards set by adults (Porter, 2006; Kohn, 2005)
- When they fail to receive a reward, children can feel they are not accepted and can doubt themselves and lower their self-esteem

Rewards can damage children's self-esteem by teaching them that other people's opinions of them are more important than their own opinion which can lead to children who do not feel good about themselves or their achievements as they are trying to live up to someone else's (possibly unrealistic) standards (Porter 2006).

By increasing external rewards (extrinsic motivation) adults can actually decrease children's intrinsic motivation to behave in an appropriate way (Kohn, 1999)

When rewards are used with children in order to encourage a particular behaviour, the reward "decreases the attractiveness of the behaviour and increase the attractiveness of the reward" (Porter, 2011) which results in children only behaving in appropriate ways if a reward is on offer. No rewards means the child has no motivation or incentive to behave well. The child may also behave in inappropriate ways to achieve the reward.

Rewards are unfair:

- Children who behave in inappropriate ways often get many more rewards for their behaviour when they do behave well

However

Children who always behave well rarely receive the same level of rewards. This may lead to resent from the well behaved children. It may lower their self-esteem as well due to the fact that they are always well-behaved but as soon as a child acts up, that child gets lots of rewards.

The problem with rewards and punishments

Empirical evidence has been largely gathered in experimentation on animals and applying principles used in the training of dogs and rats to young children is degrading and does not recognise each child's individuality. It is also not ethical to experiment with animals. There is a vast difference between animals and young children, once again not recognising each child's individuality.

Session 12: A Guidance Approach to Supporting Young Children's Behaviour

There are a number of different philosophies of how to deal with children's behaviour. Two of the most common are:

1. Behaviourist Philosophies
2. Guidance Philosophies

Kohn (1999) says the following about behaviour modification:

"The time to worry is when [an] idea is so widely shared that we no longer even notice it, when it is so deeply rooted that it feels to us like plain common sense. At the point when objections are not answered anymore because they are no longer even raised, we are not in control: we do not have the idea; it has us."

Just because when one thing is agreed by everyone, it does not mean it is right. Objections should still be raised. The strategy has control.

Sometimes a problem can seem impossible and therefore practitioners often resort to using controlling techniques such as behaviour modification to deal with challenging behaviour.

The Guidance Approach aims to present an alternative way to supporting children's behaviour which respects them as individuals and supports them in developing positive behaviour.

Guidance Philosophies

Guidance philosophies completely disagree with the concepts of behaviour modification.

Guidance philosophies can be seen in two books. 'The Guidance Approach' (Gartrell, 2011; Porter, 2003, 2006, 2011) – Australian and British ; And 'Positive Behaviour Support [PBS]' – American.

Features of a Guidance Approach

The locus of control for the guidance approach is internal.

- The guidance philosophy proposes that children will make decisions about how they will behave based solely on their own internal needs
- This suggests that behaviour is not shaped by external forces but comes from within the child.
- Therefore, rather than attempting to use external controls to manage young children's behaviour, a guidance philosophy proposes that children should be encouraged to develop their own internal understanding of appropriate behaviour

[Last two points: Gartrell, 2011; Miller, 2009; Porter, 2003]

The goals of a guidance approach are: