

Early Development of a Child

Posted on October 2, 2018

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To understand early development, psychological researchers, together with parents, tend to ask questions like whether early experiences leave enduring impressions on the minds of the children and their personalities. Another question is whether the first relationship with parents or caregivers shapes their lifelong social relationships and self-understanding. Or is the world of an infant a buzzing confusion that requires adults to offer clarity and organization? Moreover, people question if the environment is a catalyst for healthy child development.

It must be noted that about 90% of a child's brain does develop in the first three years of his or her life. It is a period of rapid cognitive, social, emotional, linguistic, and motor development (Thompson & Nelson 2001). That is, the brain of the child grows as he or she feels, sees, tastes, and hears. This is because every time a child applies a specific sense, a neuro-connection is established in the child's brain. The creation of positive developmental progression via daily, repeated experiences shapes the child's thinking, feelings, behaviors, and learning. Therefore, parents or caregivers, when playing or talking with the baby via banging pots and pans and filling buckets or boxes, help a child's development process. In such a case, the obligation of any caregiver is established by all the needs of the developing child. Therefore, healthy interaction between a caregiver and a child triggers good brain development and growth.

Theory of Mind

Individuals intuitively understand the actions of others. The understanding is motivated by desires, feelings, goals, intentions, mental states, and thoughts. One prominent discovery of young kids is that they often develop their intuitive path of the mental process right from the beginning of early life. A child's developing theory of mind transforms how it responds to people and how it learns from people. Infants and young kids begin to understand what goes on in the minds of people and how their feelings and thoughts are similar to theirs.

Brain Development

Brain development takes place during early life and advances rapidly during the prenatal months. Brain development starts within the first six months after conception when both the brain and spinal cord have started to take shape within the embryo. By the sixth month of pregnancy, all the nerve cells shall have developed. Once the neurons are formed, they go to the brain regions and are

differentiated to take specialized duties and form connections or synapses with other neurons, thus allowing for communication and storage of information (Thompson & Nelson 2001). The formation of synapses with other neurons continues during childhood. Hence, at the time of birth, most neurons have been located appropriately within the immature brain of the child and begin to function like the mature brain; moreover, given the need for novelty and attention to sensory experiences and likings for social stimulations, the architecture of the neurons of a newborn starts to change significantly (Macvarish, Lee, & Lowe 2014).

What occurs is that before and after birth, the blooming of brain connections happens. That is, neurons form more synapses with other neurons in quantities that cannot be retained by a mature brain. The proliferation of such synapses forms a potential for brain development but still makes the brain inefficient and noisy with unnecessary and redundant neural connections. Hence, such proliferation gives birth to the stage of “pruning,” where little-used synapses are eliminated gradually to attain the required number to allow the brain to operate (Bruer1999).

How are synapses selected for either retention or elimination?

The stimulating experiences are what activate particular neural synapses, thus triggering growth processes that consolidate the connections. Hence, through the principle of “use it or lose it,” synapses that are not progressively activated wither over time, thus allowing the structure of the developing brain to adapt to the needs of daily stimulation and experiences. For instance, during early months, a child’s visual sharpness increases just because the neural pathways that connect the eye to the brain are consolidating as the child gazes at his or her surroundings. However, if an infant experiences visual deprivation, the pathways shall remain unorganized because the neurons are not consolidated, thus hindering vision. Just like language learning, it reflects the brain blooming and pruning (Thompson & Nelson 2001).

Thinking and Learning

Right from birth, the minds of newborns are active, but their thoughts and behaviors are disorganized. From such a stage, newborns crave originality because they are bored with familiarity. Their sensory organs, like eyes and ears, are attuned to occurrences that are unfamiliar. Their eyes are drawn sharply to movements and contrast, thus helping them distinguish boundaries between objects. They also learn sophisticated interpretations of size, shape, rigidity, and wholeness. Newborns are also capable of integrating knowledge from various senses. Hence, they tend to look towards the source of an interesting sound or objects that match the texture of pacifiers that have been placed in their mouths. Such early capabilities establish surprising growth in concepts, problem-solving, causation, and memory during a child’s early years. For instance, in causation and problem-solving, infants tend to be fascinated with making things happen. For instance, they learn to pull tablecloths to gain access

to the milk on the table or manipulate people to attain their goals. Memory, on the other hand, becomes flexible due to routine actions or events (Cusick & Georgieff 2014).

Language

A young infant naturally can distinguish speech sounds. As early as fifteen to eighteen months of age, their language learning is rapid. They can put words together into modest sentences and master some grammar rules and vocabulary (Thompson & Nelson 2001).

Learning and Relationships

All learning during child development takes place in a social context. Even a newborn baby responds in special ways to social stimuli. However, the stimuli they portray are offered by the individual providing care to the child. For example, a baby's interest in social sights, speech, and sounds is focusing his or her active mind in trying to interpret and understand human facial expressions, social behaviors, words, and vocal intonations. Therefore, achievements in the mind contribute to a child's social and emotional development (Sullivan, Perry, Sloan, Kleinhaus & Burtchen 2011). For instance, the child's early learning is founded on the child's interest in the intentions of adult speakers. Therefore, a child does learn about the world when assisted. The child's mind's innate abilities and never-ending activity offer a powerful avenue for understanding things when they are assisted by daily experiences and the social behaviors of people around them. Secure, safe environments and things for play that are easily accessible allow a child to explore things and take part in activities (Bornstein & Bradley 2014).

Attachments: Secure and Insecure

The first attachment between a baby and a parent is biological. The growth of emotional attachment at the age of one is always preceded by several months of social interaction during which the newborn and the mother exchange playful gazes, smiles, laughter, touch, and smiles. Hence, such interaction offers a sense of security, which allows for confident explorations and reassurances (Thompson & Nelson 2001).

Self-Regulation and Social Understanding

The caretaker guides a child's behavior by applying indirect strategies like bargaining and explanations, which suit the child's development abilities for self-control. For instance, a caregiver helps a three-year-old understand the consequences of misbehavior by showing the consequences of it to create a social understanding and self-regulation (Thompson & Nelson 2001).

Self-Awareness

The personality growth of a child begins when a child learns about the phrase “Who am I?” in an insightful manner. The psychological understanding establishes avenues for greater self-awareness as infants slowly learn the difference between “other” and “self.” Hence, in the second year, a child develops visual self-recognition and verbal references. At the age of three, he or she refuses assistance. She or he will insist on doing things alone to assert autonomy and competence. Moreover, during preschool years, the child develops self-monitoring and enthusiasm to succeed. At three years old, events are now remembered with mentions of personal significance. Here, autobiographical memory is constructed to create a consistent identity throughout the events of life (Thompson & Nelson 2001). Moreover, at this stage, self-awareness is strongly dependent on the assessment of those to whom the child is emotionally attached. Consequently, at the age of two to three years old, the child’s emotions broaden beyond simple emotions to include shame, guilt, pride, and embarrassment, which are elicited by a social situation. Hence, self-concept is determined by social interactions with others (Hawley & Gunner, 2000).

The Importance of Caregivers

The sensitivity of the caregivers also influences an additional catalyst for intellectual growth. Caregivers stimulate a child’s mental growth through a variety of activities. Most importantly, they establish daily routines that enable a child to anticipate, represent, and remember the routines of activities or events like preparing breakfast, going to a mall or daycare, going to bed, or taking a bath. Moreover, caregivers are responsible for constructing shared activities that are manageable for a child and can promote new skills and form a sense of pride in achievement (Phillips & Adams, 2001). Such activities can be storytelling and jigsaw puzzles, among others. In such a case, a caregiver, through singing, assists the child in developing and advancing language growth. Hence, both parents and caregivers do a lot of intentional actions to promote the learning and cognitive growth of the child. Most importantly, the catalysts they offer are uncoached (Lally & Mangione 2017).

Conclusion

In conclusion, healthy interaction between a caregiver and a child triggers good brain development and growth. Rapid brain development happens in the first three years of life. Brain development starts within the first six months after conception when both the brain and spinal cord have started to take shape within the embryo; due to the need for novelty and attention to sensory experiences and likings for social stimulations, the architecture of the neurons of a newborn starts to change significantly. Moreover, through the principle of “use it or lose it,” synapses that are not progressively activated wither over time, thus allowing the structure of the developing brain to adapt to the needs of daily stimulation and experiences. Several months of social interaction always precede the growth

of emotional attachment at the age of one. Therefore, caregivers are critical to stimulating a child's mental growth through a variety of activities and establishing daily routines that enable the child to anticipate, represent, and remember the routines of activities.

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