

CACHE Level 2

Certificate in Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences

POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

FAMILY STRUCTURES

MENTAL HEALTH

RESILIENCE BUILDING

SOCIETAL EXPECTATION

Workbook

Section 1: Exploring childhood and family structures

Biological and external factors that may impact development

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 2.

There are a range of biological, personal and external factors that may affect a child or young person's holistic development. The main biological factors include genetics, hormones and sex; personal characteristics include gender identity, sexuality and racial identity; while external factors are those such as family influences, geographical influences and socio-economic status.

Biological factors

Genetics

A child's genetics come from their biological parents. Genetics influence the physical characteristics of children including eye and hair colour, height and body shape, and to some extent temperament and intelligence. Genetics may also be responsible for illnesses or diseases that are passed on through the parents or due to genetic disorders.

Hormones

Hormones are chemicals that are released into the blood and affect the activity of different parts of the body. They affect development and growth, sexual function and reproductive health, cognitive function and mood, and help the body to absorb nutrients from food and control temperature.

Sex

Biological sex affects physical growth and development and can be seen in the different physical characteristics of males and females but also in temperament and behaviour. For example, girls tend to mature earlier than boys, and boys' physical structure tends to make them more athletic.

Personal characteristics

Gender identity, sexuality and racial or cultural identity are other characteristics that may affect development. Effects may be due to the characteristics themselves or to other people's expectations and attitudes. Negative attitudes in relation to personal characteristics may cause anxiety and depression and interfere with a child or young person's intellectual and emotional development.

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Jake's story

Jake identifies as a boy, but for the first fifteen years of life was raised as a girl. From being very young, he always remembers being uncomfortable with this. As a teenager, he was anxious and depressed because his image of himself did not fit with other people's expectations of him. Jake was referred to the NHS Gender Identity Development Service and the counselling helped him to explore what he wanted and what he could do to achieve it.

External factors

Family influences

Family influences refers to how the child is raised. Whoever raises the child, they need to be nurtured and protected and the extent to which this happens will affect their growth and development.

Geographical influences

Geographical influences are to do with where the child lives. Living in an area that is safe with parks, libraries, community centres, sports centres and organised activities can help to develop a child's interests and talents. The weather conditions may also play a role in the activities and interests the child develops. Good health care support will help them to stay healthy.



Socio-economic status

Research shows that socio-economic status can enhance or limit children's opportunities to grow and develop. Poorer families may not have the choice of educational opportunities and are also more likely to experience poor housing conditions, poorer health support and poor nutrition. All of these can impact on a child's development.

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Knowledge Activity 2: For each of the external factors, comment on one influence on your own life that may have impacted positively or negatively on your growth and development.

Family influences:

Geographical influences:

Socio-economic status:

SAMPLE



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Effects on development of individual needs and circumstances

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 3.

As well as the biological and external factors that may affect a child's development, the individual needs and circumstances of the child must also be considered. All children may face difficulties in their lives, but they will not all be affected in the same way because each child is unique. Individual needs and circumstances include personal characteristics, disabilities and illness and learning difficulties.

For example, all children are curious by nature and will explore the world around them, but some will approach this in a quiet and thoughtful way, while others will be more reckless and take risks to discover new things. While there are recognisable developmental milestones, not all children will move through the different stages in the same way. Some children, for example, may develop their language skills earlier than others, while some may develop better gross motor skills at an earlier age than usual.

Freya and Sam's stories

Freya and Sam have both attended a nursery from being babies due to their parents' working. Freya walked very early and spent a lot of time exploring the physical world around her. Sam, who is the same age as Freya, was not walking at fourteen months old and his parents were concerned about this. However, his language skills are far more advanced than most children of his age. Freya was relatively slow in developing language skills. Staff at the nursery believe that Freya's ability in physical exploration has meant she hasn't developed as quickly with language skills, and that Sam's advanced language skills have meant that he hasn't felt the need to explore the physical world as much. Staff do not see these as issues developmentally as they believe that child development needs to be looked at holistically and that every child is different. They are confident that Freya and Sam will develop all the skills they need within an appropriate time frame.

The case study illustrates that children may develop at different rates in different areas and the difficulties of comparing the development of different children. In both Sam and Freya's cases there is probably little cause for concern as they are developing normally in every other way. This shows the importance of looking at development in a more holistic way.

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Disabilities and illness can impact on the development of a child. For example, a child who does not have full physical movement and is in a wheelchair may not be able to take part in physical play activities with other children. This may affect the child developing any level of gross or fine motor skill even taking account of their disability. A child who has asthma may not be able to take part in active games and sport resulting in them missing opportunities to develop social skills. Any child with a chronic illness who frequently misses school will also miss out on opportunities to develop alongside their peers.

Learning difficulties may affect a child's development. For example, dyslexia may affect their reading and written language skills; developmental co-ordination disorder (formerly known as dyspraxia) can affect the development of gross and fine motor skills. However, such difficulties can also affect social and emotional development as children may feel different or left out. So, learning difficulties may have developmental impacts beyond the obvious challenges that their difficulties present.

Socio-economic factors can affect a child's development. Social inequality can lead to poor nutrition, which may have an effect on children's physical growth. Living in deprived areas in poor housing can lead to physical health issues. It can also lead to mental health issues where the child does not feel safe or secure because of the area in which they live. Where a child is neglected or abused, this can also impact on mental and emotional development and well-being.

Indicators of positive and negative childhood experiences

Please read the following as it will help you to answer questions 4 and 5.

Research shows that early childhood experiences can have implications for mental and physical health and well-being and for development and achievement, lasting even into adulthood. Measures of health, educational achievement, and the rate of child growth and development can act as indicators of positive and negative childhood experience. Children with more positive life experiences, for example, are more likely to be happy and healthy and meet development and academic targets.

Indicators of positive childhood experiences might include:

- Good physical and mental health. This includes having no serious physical or mental illness or disability, and having good general well-being and self esteem.
- A healthy lifestyle including healthy eating and exercise, and an understanding of the importance of taking care of their health.
- Achieving their potential academically, gaining qualifications and having a positive attitude towards education.

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- Being secure in relationships and having the ability to form positive relationships with others around them. This includes family relationships and relationships outside the family with teachers, peers etc.
- Achieving developmental and growth milestones within the expected age range.
- Having self-confidence, for example confidence in approaching new and different situations.
- Having resilience to deal with setbacks and problems and having the ability to 'bounce back'.
- Being well cared for and loved by parents or guardians and family.

Indicators of negative childhood experiences might include:

- Poor physical and mental health. This may include general poor health, serious illness or disability.
- Poor lifestyle choices such as a poor diet and minimal exercise and a general lack of self-care.
- A negative attitude towards education and poor attendance at school, probably resulting in a lack of educational achievement.
- An inability to develop and maintain healthy relationships with family, peers and others such as teachers.
- Failure to achieve expected growth and developmental milestones within the usual expected age ranges.
- Lack of self-confidence and poor self-esteem, possibly indicated by a lack of social connections and poor self-care.
- An inability to deal with difficult situations, potentially resulting in avoidance or challenging behaviour.
- Signs of anxiety and stress such as nervousness and tiredness indicating lack of sleep.
- A suspicion of authority, possibly resulting in defiant behaviour.
- Poor family structure or family breakdown.
- Evidence of domestic violence, neglect or abuse.
- Sick or disabled parent meaning that the child becomes a carer.

It is important to appreciate that these are possible indicators of positive and negative childhood experience. Where they are present, they may indicate that a child's experiences of life are positive or negative, but this is not certain.

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