



# 1000 DAYS

*Change a life, change the future*

“

*Under this label we aim to raise awareness in the Grahamstown community about the importance of the first 1000 days of a child's life...”*

It's all about the first 1000 days **2**

Breastfeeding: A healthy option? **4**

Literacy in the early years **6**



**1000**  
DAYS

“ a UNICEF concept that is dedicated to spreading awareness about the importance of the first three years of a child’s life”

# It’s all about the first 1000 days



REBECCA KARLOVIĆ

**A** child’s interaction with the world begins with the parent’s interaction with their child. Young children are often dismissed as being unable to grasp the happenings of their environment but, as a matter of fact, even a foetus responds to stimuli and actively engages in events that surround the mother.

1000 Days is a UNICEF concept that is dedicated to spreading awareness about the importance of the first three years of a child’s life and their eventual development. When babies are born they are pre-wired with wide-ranging capacity for social interaction but it is up to those who surround the child to ensure that the right kind of interaction is taking place.

It is important for the baby to not only interact with the mother but to be interacting with other adults as well as children as early as possible to ensure healthy social development.

Development is not limited to that of the social kind. An Irish project of similar aims, called First 1000 Days, focuses specifically on the nutrition aspect of this period. On their website they state that, “the right nutrition during this 1000 day window can have a profound impact on a child’s ability to grow, learn, and rise out of poverty. It can also shape a society’s long-term health, stability and prosperity”.

This suggests that the effects of successful and healthy early childhood development not only benefits the child in this period of its life but also stretches well into their future.

Learning a language helps increase babies’ nerve receptors which stimulate their other interests, such as maths and literacy. This is why literacy is such an important part of a child’s development. A child can, and

should, be read to while still in the womb to ensure familiarity with literature from a young age. Parents are encouraged to read with their children to ensure bonding, interaction, and literacy development.

The key issue is that many are misinformed of the consequences of not assisting in the child’s development in their first 1000 days. In Ireland, the First 1000 Days project launched an awareness week from 16-20 September this year in hopes of emphasising that the first three years shape a child’s future.

The research suggested a poor grasp of the importance of this period. Recently released findings showed low levels of awareness of the long-term positive implications of good nutrition throughout the first 1000 days of life.

Mike Gibney, Professor of Food and Health at University College Dublin, also highlighted the importance of these years, saying, “unlike most animals that are born ‘hard-wired’, the human brain is highly flexible in the early years of life in man, which has had the evolutionary advantage of allowing infants to learn different languages, cultures, cuisines, religions, and so forth”.

Even if a child cannot physically speak, they are taught ‘sign language’. This helps to develop the child cognitively and provides essential stimulation.

He added, however, that, “this highly valuable flexibility comes with a price. If brain nutrition is not properly addressed in this crucial period, the ensuing loss of cognitive capacity becomes permanent”.

In South Africa, the need to raise awareness about these facts is exceptionally important. In a country where last year’s National Senior certificate (NSC) matric pass rate was a 73.9%, as oppose to 98.2% for the Independent Examination Board (IEB), perhaps the solution lies in developing the children academic career earlier: from their first 1000 days.

Young children exposed to the clinic literacy programme grin when they receive the complimentary books. The literacy programme is a Lebone Centre initiative. Photo: Ashlee Wilson.

## Our community project: meet the 1000 Days team

SEAN BLACK

We are a team of fervent 3rd year journalism students, studying at Rhodes University. We are currently part of a project called Journalism, Democracy, and Development where we look to reach out into the greater Grahamstown area and apply core journalistic skills for the overall betterment of the community. Our team consists of a group of multi-disciplinary journalism students, including undergraduates in television, radio, writing, photography, and design.

The area where we have chosen to concentrate our efforts falls under the ‘1000 Days’ banner. Under this label we aim to raise awareness in the Grahamstown community about the importance of the first 1000 days of a child’s life, which is an essential time for his/her lifelong development. We intend to address key areas of concern; in the vein of emphasising the development of a child begins *in utero*, while the child is still in the mother’s womb.

Finally, we aim to cover the broadest spectrum possible by addressing issues pertaining to the literary, nutritional, and psychological development of babies, so that the youth of South Africa today may reach their fullest potential tomorrow.



The 1000 Days team, at the Journalism and Media Studies School at Rhodes University, where we worked to put together this publication. From left to right: Amy Ebdon, Sean Black, Alexa Sedgwick, Lucy Holford-Walker, Rebecca Karlović, Ashlee Wilson, Kristen Birch, Joshua Oates.



“ Little Flower is concerned with building a concrete foundation at the beginning of a toddler’s life ”

**1000**  
DAYS



Lungelwa Mtwalo, of Little Flower Day Care Centre, feeds one of the young children at the centre. Photo: Joshua Oates.

## The daily routine at the Little Flower

KRISTEN BIRCH

**I**t is 6:45am. Lungelwa Mtwalo pushes a key into the classroom door. She is meant to begin her day at 7:30am, but toddlers are filing in from the early hours of the morning due to working parents who check in early. Between over-exhaustion and assisting a wailing newcomer, this is the life of a preschool teacher.

Mtwalo airily welcomes me to Little Flower Day Care Centre and she is calm when answering my numerous questions, with the sounds of squealing laughter and shouting doing little to ruffle her. She describes her life as one that is always busy, but that always has room for more. She would love to welcome more children into the preschool, but chooses to keep it at its current size to ensure that every learner receives appropriate love and attention.

Little Flower, located in Extension 7, Joza, began in 2009, but the group that started it began compiling paperwork and funds a year earlier. “We were putting away up to R500 each month,” Mtwalo said, “From 2009 to 2011; nothing was going into our own pockets, only into the preschool.” The Sunflower group is taught by Mtwalo for children aged two to three. Her colleagues are; Neliswa Tshabibana, the administrator and educator of the Strelitzia group for babies and toddlers; Nobuntu Libi, the educator of the Rose group for the children aged three to four and Nomonde Mtwalo, the cleaner and cook. “We are all-rounded in my team,” Mtwalo said, in reference to how all of the four women are willing to step in for one another.

Mtwalo achieved her diploma in the foundational phase of early childhood development from the Centre of Social Development (CSD) at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. Although she has her educational training, the defining factor that influences Mtwalo’s work and keeps her ahead of the frenzied environment is God. “It is a gift from God because really, I like to work with them and show them that they are very special,” Mtwalo said, “You can’t do anything without God.” Many of the learners come from backgrounds

of domestic violence and substance abuse, she said, and it would be impossible to work with them unless one had love and passion.

Mtwalo’s aim is to give them selfless love. “When they come here, it’s their time now to be free. I am not here for myself, it is solely to allow them to be able to express whatever they want to,” Mtwalo said.

Little Flower is concerned with building a concrete foundation at the beginning of a toddler’s life. “It’s all about grooming that flower so that every time one of the learners sees a flower, they can be proud,” Mtwalo said. They teach and care for 40 children between 0 and four years. Little Flower follows a daily programme that is filled with activities linked to that month’s particular theme. October’s theme is farm and wild animals; therefore every activity is related to this theme, whether it is solving puzzles, finger painting, story time or dancing and movement.

The displays in the classrooms are also linked to the month’s theme because the young learners absorb information particularly well through pictures. Guidance concerning how to use the toilet or washing hands is also provided visually.

“They can’t write, they can’t read, but if you can just always give them the pictures, you give them the chance to learn and remember,” Mtwalo said. She sees her learners as the leaders of tomorrow who need to know how to help themselves before arriving at primary school.

Mtwalo’s day does not end once the parents start arriving and learners are awoken from their 2:00pm naps. Some leave at this time, while others remain until 5:00pm in the aftercare session, to be picked up by parents returning home from work.

As I returned to the main classroom to bid farewell, my departure was noted by the sweet singing voices of the two to four year old children.

“Goodbye, goodbye, it’s time for you to go” is sung to every visitor as they leave: a delightful ending to a busy, but illuminating day.

## Do you know?

We asked citizens of Grahamstown what they know about the UNICEF 1000 Days concept. This is what they said ...



Sibu, a Grade 12 learner at Victoria Girl’s High School had never heard of the concept before. “Maybe you have 1000 days to make sure your baby is healthy.”

Felicity, a maternity nurse, was not aware of the concept. “I’ve never heard of it, I can’t think what it could be.”



Noconjo, a Hi-Tech security guard, had also never heard of the concept; 1000 Days. He said, “I don’t know what it is, maybe it’s because I don’t have children.”

UNTIL ...

Matthew, a Rhodes student, had heard about the UNICEF concept. “Its about how critical the first 1000 days are in a child’s life, for their development.”

Well done Matt!



By: Lucy Holford-Walker and Joshua Oates





## Immunisation

### Child immunisation guidelines

<b>Birth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polio vaccine (1 of 2)</li> <li>Anti-tuberculosis vaccine</li> </ul>
<b>6 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polio vaccine (2 of 2)</li> <li>Rotavirus vaccine (1 of 2)</li> <li>Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis, inactivated polio, haemophilus influenza (type b) combined vaccine (1 of 3)</li> <li>Hepatitis B vaccine (1 of 3)</li> <li>Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (1 of 3)</li> </ul>
<b>10 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis, inactivated polio, haemophilus influenza (type b) combined vaccine (2 of 3)</li> <li>Hepatitis B vaccine (2 of 3)</li> </ul>
<b>14 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rotavirus vaccine (2 of 2)</li> <li>Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis, inactivated polio, haemophilus influenza (type b) combined vaccine (3 of 3)</li> <li>Hepatitis B vaccine (3 of 3)</li> <li>Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (2 of 3)</li> </ul>
<b>9 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measles vaccine (1 of 2)</li> <li>Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (3 of 3)</li> </ul>
<b>18 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis, inactivated polio, haemophilus influenza (type b) combined vaccine (3 of 3)</li> <li>Measles vaccine (2 of 2)</li> </ul>
<b>6 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tetanus and reduced strength of diphtheria vaccine (1 of 2)</li> </ul>
<b>12 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tetanus and reduced strength of diphtheria vaccine (2 of 2)</li> </ul>

### General tips:

- Rotavirus vaccinations should NEVER be administered after the age of 6 months
- As a general guideline you should aim to take your child to a clinic or doctor once every four weeks after birth. Until approximately 14 weeks of age. Following that the child should be brought in at 9 months, 18 months, 6 years, and 12 years respectively.

Photo: Alexa Sedgwick



An infant suckles his mother at Raglan Road Clinic in Grahamstown. Mother and child were visiting the clinic to complete his next phase of the immunisation process. Photo: Alexa Sedgwick

## Breastfeeding is healthier for your baby

SEAN BLACK

The first 1000 days of a child's life is of the utmost importance in his/her physical and mental development. During this time mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their children because breast milk contains nutrients and antibodies that help to protect against dangerous illnesses. This includes the two diseases that have the highest infant mortality rate worldwide: diarrhoea and pneumonia.

There is also evidence to suggest that infants who are breastfed have lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, lower obesity rates, and lower rates of type 2 diabetes later on in life.

Breastfeeding benefits not only the child's wellbeing, but also the mother's. It is suggested that breastfeeding your child may reduce the risk of breast and ovarian cancer later in life. Breastfeeding has also been shown to help with weight loss after pregnancy. Many women consider breastfeeding a special type of bonding with their child, and research has suggested that simply holding and interacting with your child during the first 1000 days of his/her life is integral to his/her emotional, educational, and psychological development.

The World Health Organisation advises that mothers should breastfeed their child for 6 months after his/her birth; only after 6 months should the mother introduce other sources of nutrition. They also advise that, if possible, a mother should start breastfeeding within the first hour of birth because this mother's body naturally produces colostrum – which is a thick and creamy milk that is easily digestible for infants, and encourages the clearing of the baby's intestines, helping to prevent jaundice.

It is also widely accepted that breast milk contains higher con-

centrations of nutrients than its formula replacements. As far as the child is concerned, it is harder to digest formula solutions (as opposed to breast milk) and bottled formula solutions can lead to small cuts on the throat of the infant.

This is, naturally, not something that mothers would want for their children, but on top of that, the cuts can present a problem if the mother is HIV positive. The small cuts caused by formula solutions are easily and readily susceptible to HIV infection – even if the mother is on ARVs. It is, therefore, encouraged that mothers who are HIV positive strictly maintain a breastfeeding regimen, as well as a strict ARV course during a child's infancy. Studies have shown that exclusive breastfeeding for up to 6 months can lead to a significantly reduced risk of infection.

In some cases mothers find that they are unable to breastfeed, perhaps because of illness, breast surgery, or the oestrogen in birth control pills. In these cases, the mother's best option is to use formula, but it is of the utmost importance that the bottle used is cleaned properly and sterilised completely before feeding. It is also important to ensure that the water used to mix with the powdered formula is filtered, clean, and safe for your child to drink.

These processes may appear obvious but the importance of breastfeeding is often lost on many people. One may be led to believe that baby formula that is sold in pharmacies contains more nutrients and antibodies for your child, but that is a misconception.

Breastfeeding is one of – if not the – best way that you can ensure proper development for your child.

It not only provides a nutritionally healthy way to feed your child, it also allows mothers to hold and bond with their child – all of which ensures that the child can develop emotionally, physically, and mentally to the highest degree.





Dr Lisa Saville Young speaks about the psychological aspect of parent interaction with toddlers.  
Photo: Joshua Oates.

## Be there during the first 1000 days

KRISTEN BIRCH

**“The child’s healthy body is usually the focus, but it is not just about how well the baby is physically, it is also about its emotional life.”**

These are the words of Dr Lisa Saville Young, Senior Lecturer in Psychology and the academic coordinator for Professional Training Programmes in Clinical and Counselling Psychology at Rhodes University. She is also familiar with the concept of 1000 Days, during which a parent can stimulate their child psychologically from the moment that they are born. Young warns mothers that their mental state has a great impact on their ability to interact with their baby.

“There is a link between a baby’s emotional and physical well-being,” she said, referring to how if a child is unhappy, they will not develop mentally, as well as physically. A major framework that is used regarding the close relationship between parents and their infant is called attachment theory: a concept termed by British psychologist, John Bowlby.

Some evidence suggests that infants who develop a secure attachment will have a greater attention span, positive emotions and use tools confidently, while infants with an insecure attachment may be less socially able, be more dependent on a teacher, hostile and/or distant with their peers.

“Generally speaking, a child’s first relationship is with its mother. If it is a good one, subsequent relationships will be good too,” Young said.

Arietta Slade, a visiting research scientist at the Yale Child Study Centre writes in a paper entitled *Keeping the Baby In Mind* that “it is the beginning of life for the baby, the beginning of a long and complex journey whose contours are established during the first months and years in the world.”

Young echoes this point by stating that if a parent is constantly stressed or overwhelmed, the infant may develop defence mechanisms preventing it from forming solid relationships in the future, including a relationship with its own child.

“It has been categorically proven that if a baby has a good attachment with its

mother, it will have a good attachment with its own baby one day,” Young said.

Associate Professor of the University of Cape Town and Child/Adolescent Psychiatrist, Astrid Berg, writes in her article entitled *Beyond the Dyad*, regarding the first three years of a child’s life, “it is during this time that the foundation is laid down for the future development of the child. Not just whether the child will be happy or unhappy, but whether the child will be able to learn and concentrate in school.”

If a child has a secure relationship with her mother, she is likely to be able to regulate her own emotions. Young said that people who struggle in psychiatric wards cannot regulate their own emotions because they have not had a positive interaction with their caregiver. This is linked to learning in school: “Many think of learning as purely cognitive, but it is based on relationships too,” Young said, “it is difficult to concentrate if a child is easily distracted by the person sitting next to them and they are using all of their energy to regulate their emotions.”

### Top tips for parents raising toddlers

Advice from Dr Lisa Saville Young to new parents: steps to ensure a psychologically healthy baby.

#### How to support the primary caregiver

- Listen to them.
- Help them care for the baby so that they can rest.
- Give them positive encouragement.
- Offer to take part in feeding and nappy changing.

#### Interacting on a psychological level

- Be available for your baby.
- Touch and cuddle your baby.
- Talk to your baby.
- Body language is important when communicating with your baby - try to be relaxed and warm, and face your baby when talking to him/her.
- Play with your baby. Example: play together in the bath.
- Read to your baby.
- Regulate your own emotions and show the baby that you are happy.
- It is essential to respond and praise a child’s development.
- Make your home baby-friendly
- Design the child’s first bedroom in such a way that is organised, fun, safe and able to be explored. This means visual stimulation, musical value, artwork and toys.
- Follow babies, do not direct them. Independence is the greatest drive for a young child.
- Ensure discipline by being a role model showing compassion, demonstration, reassurance and unconditional love.
- Place objects at a young child’s eye-view.





The literacy programme run by the Lebone Centre encourages mothers to engage with their children by means of reading to them, from as early as when the child is *in utero*. Photos: Ashlee Wilson.

## Page one from age one

REBECCA KARLOVIĆ

The bedtime story. The fairy tale. The improvised narrative of swashbuckling pirates and fair maidens. All these literacy aspects form a special part of our childhood experience. Their benefits, however, reach far further than mere entertainment as little-known evidence shows links between early childhood literacy and successful development.

A child should ideally be read to whilst still in the womb. What is often underestimated is the child's ability to not only understand her environment but also how much of that is retained well into the child's future. The majority of brain development takes place in the first eight years of a child's life and begins while the mother is pregnant.

By reading to your child you are not only expanding their vocabulary but are also creating a familiarity with literature. Although a child may not understand exactly what is being read, they are still engaging with what you are saying as well as what you are reading from. Dr Tanya Remer-Altman, a trained paediatrician who runs an "Ask Dr Tanya" interactive website, says, "They won't understand the story or be able to follow along, but they will benefit from the intonation and inflection in your voice". A child chewing on a book, making sounds and interacting with the parent is all stimulating brain development and imagination.

In an article about the importance of reading to your infant, Alice Sterling Honig, PhD, states, "You'll find that babies a few months old stare hard at black-and-white circles or simple face illustrations. By eight to 12 months, they listen attentively as you chant nursery rhymes, especially when the poem corresponds to the picture".

Phillip Pullman once said, "After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world", and this is true especially for early childhood development. Basic needs are often the main focus of a child's young life, especially in poorer areas, but what needs to be emphasised is the importance of developing a

child mentally, not just physically.

The Lebone Centre, situated in Grahamstown, dedicates a literacy programme to relaying these very facts to parents living in the less fortunate regions of the city. Comprising of 70 workshops at five local clinics that are visited three separate times, this programme speaks specifically to mothers of young children to raise awareness about the importance of reading to their babies and young children.

Angela Hibbert, one of the programme's main facilitators,\* uses a very interactive approach to her sessions. She encourages the participants to hold their children on their laps and practice reading the books, provided by the Little Hands Trust, with them. This allows mothers to see how taking a few minutes out of their day to read to their child boosts emotional and mental activity.

During Hibbert's sessions, books are brought along and given to the children who are present, in the hope that they engage with the text and the mothers then feel a little more comfortable with the talk. Hibbert specifically mentioned an instance where a little girl was so intrigued by the book she read to her that her "eyes were wide" and she was "gasping in astonishment". It was then that the mothers wanted to know more about what they could do and how this benefitted their children.

Stories are a critical part of a young child's life, but the interaction between parents and children through literacy is what ensures successful early childhood development. Who doesn't enjoy an excerpt from *Goodnight Moon* before bed anyway?

*\*At the time of going to print, Hibbert no longer works at the Lebone Centre but has moved to Child Welfare. Lulama Mankabane now runs the early literacy programme in her place.*

## Ready, steady, READ

**It can be a little difficult to keep young children focused. Follow these steps to ensure successful literacy interaction with your baby or toddler.**

1. Choose the right time: Make sure your baby isn't restless, tired, hungry or grumpy at reading time. You want to make memories of the experience as fun and enjoyable for the baby as possible.
2. Select the right book: Remember that babies use all five senses when they explore the world. You're welcome to read whatever book you wish but chewable, thick children's books add another fun dimension to reading.
3. Repeat: If you read the same story over and over, your baby will follow what comes next through the changes in your voice, building their own understanding of the narrative in the process.



# A poster to take home

**1000**  
DAYS  
**A**  
**B C**

## The **EDUCATIONAL** importance of the first 1000 Days

Read to your child through the first 1000 days of their lives and help in the development of their brain

---

**Birth to 6 months:** A baby's vision is still developing so choose books with few words and big pictures. For babies, reading is about the tone of your voice and cuddling up to you.

---

**7 months to a year:** Babies will now begin to understand some of the words read to them. The most meaningful words are the names and things from their everyday life like "mommy", "daddy" or "milk".

---

**1-2 years:** Now you can begin reading books with a sentence or two per page. The more you act out the story, the better. For example, if you're reading about animals, make animal noises so that your baby interacts with both you and the story.

**A**  
**B C**



**1000**  
DAYS



## Ukubaluleka kwemfundo kwiintsuku ezi-1000 zokuqala:

Fundela umntwana wakho kwiintsuku ezi-1000 zokuqala ebomini bakhe uncedise ukukhula kwengqondo yakhe.

---

**Ukuzalwa ukuya kwiinyanga ezi-6:** Ukubona komntwana kusakhula ngoko khetha iincwadi ezibhalwe kancinci okanye engenamibhalo kunye nemi-fanekiso emikhulu, kubantwana ukufunda kumalinga nelizwi lakho kunye noku-dela kuwe

---

**Ukusuka kwiinyanga ezi-7 ukuya enyakeni:** Abantwana bayaqalisa uku bamba amnaye amagama obafundela wona. Awona magama anentetha ngalawo abhekisele kwizinto ezisabangqongiley mihla le anjengo :”mama” ; “tata”, okanye “ubisi”.

---

**Unyaka ukuya kwemibini:** Ngoku ungaqalisa ukufunda incwadi enesivakalisi esinye okanye ezimbini ephepheni elinye. Kukona kungcono ukulinganisa amabali umhlelise. Umzekelo, ukuba ufunda ngezilwanyana, linganisa ingxolo eyenziwa sisilwanyansa eso ukwenzela ukuba umntwana anxulumane nawe kunye neba

---

