



Montessori in the Home



"I Will Do it Myself!" As your toddler told you that at school she pours her own juice? Does your 5 year old insist on dressing himself? Have you marveled at the remarkable order of the Montessori classroom? Encouraging **order, independence, and self-motivation** are fundamental to the Montessori approach. Carefully designed classrooms allow students to develop competence in caring for themselves and their surroundings. And from the sense of pride that "I did it myself!" blooms the confidence to take on the world. ***Bringing Montessori principles into your home can be a valuable bridge to what your child learns at school. Here are some ways to build that connection.***

Create an Ordered Environment

Having a place for everything, on a child-friendly scale, encourages both independence and self-discipline. Children know where to find what they need, and where to put it when they're done. An ordered environment also has fewer distractions, allowing children to focus on the task at hand.

Teach Real-Life Skills

Montessori students are taught to take care of themselves and their classroom and to be helpful to others. They wash tables, organize shelves, prepare their own meals, and assist younger children. In addition to mastering real-life skills, they come to see themselves as valued members of the community.

Having your child help at home can bring similar rewards. Take the time to teach each skill separately and to repeat the lesson as needed. Each task your child masters adds to his confidence and self-esteem.

Some examples of what we've heard that our CH students do at home:

2 year olds: scoop pet food into the bowl, put their dirty laundry into the hamper, put their toys back where they belong (or close enough!)

3 year olds: match everybody's socks in the clean laundry, dry clean dishes, set the table

4 year olds: peel vegetables, pour water into dinner glasses, wash their endless supply of cups

5-6 year olds: dress themselves completely, fold their clean clothes, read to a younger sibling, sort and wash dishes

Promote Concentration

Imagine, parents, 10 whole minutes to yourself...***The ability to focus and concentrate is an important skill for learning.*** You can help develop your child's concentration by observing what sparks her interest. Set her up with the means and materials to explore it, and let her work without interruption. And it's a wonderful opportunity for mom or dad to be able to get their own "work" done knowing that their child is engaged and absorbed in whatever task they are doing.

Nurture Inner Motivation

Notice how often you say "good job!" when your children do something they have had mastered for a while. For example, when your 3 year old washes their hands, or your 5 year old tells you they did their work at school that day. A better response might be: "It's so important to have clean hands!" or "I love how hard you work and how smart you are!" – acknowledging their pride without overly rewarding them for something that is "expected" as part of their age and maturity.

Children are most willing to apply themselves when they feel there's intrinsic value to their work. Some parents use external rewards as motivation, but only pride and pleasure from within has lasting, and meaningful, effects. Montessori teachers refrain from using traditional classroom rewards such as gold stars and merit-based privileges. Instead, they focus on nurturing each child's personal sense of accomplishment. Even praise is given sparingly—saved to acknowledge a child's effort, rather than the outcome of her work.

By expressing encouragement and appreciation for your child's efforts, you—like her teachers—help nurture an inner motivation that will serve her for life.