

March 30, 2020



FCMS PRIMARY

Weekly Care Package

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Re-examining Expectations

As we all settle into this unprecedented time at home, we acknowledge the challenges of being thrown together as a family, the removal of school days, extracurricular classes, and social events that dictate day's schedule, and the inevitable lack of structure that creates. Our focus this week will be beginning to establish a basic structure to provide freedom for the child and the adult.

How do we maintain a semblance of routine when we are at home all day?

How do we carve out time for ourselves as adults when our children are craving activity?

Re-examining Expectations

Establishing Expectations

It may be helpful to pause here and think about what your expectations are as a family. Some of this will be dictated by external factors like the specific needs of each family member (*How many caregivers live at home? Are one or both parents working from home right now?*) and the physical space in which you live (*Do you have a home office with doors that close, or will you be sharing a family space as your work from home? Do you live in an apartment, or do you have a fenced backyard where children can safely play independently?*).

Some of this comes from the expectations we hold around what the “role” of an adult is with children. Many of us come from years of traditional parenting and schooling, in which the adult is seen as the entertainer, the educator, or the solver of problems. The danger in this approach is that it creates a belief in the child that she *needs* to be entertained, taught, or rescued.

Re-examining Expectations

In Montessori, we don't follow the conventional education belief that smaller class sizes are better. Why? Because the smaller the class, the more adult-dependent the children become. The larger the class, the more we see the development of social cohesion, independence, and community that is the magic of Montessori. And we've been seeing this across all socioeconomic groups, across all cultures, for the last 100 years. So how do we do this? This has to start with the expectations of the adults: a shift in what we see as the role of the adult, and a shift in what we believe children are capable of.

Re-examining Expectations

- The expectation, from the child's first day of school, is that the adult will simply not be available to him all of the time. *(Of course, the adult is always alert and paying attention. The child knows that in an emergency, she is welcome to run across the room, shout, etc to find an adult.)*
- The child and the adult will have one-on-one lessons together periodically, and this will be a really special time of connection, in which it feels like they are the only two people in the world. The adult will be completely present and authentic during this time.
- The rest of the time, the child will not have the adult's attention!

This does not come from a place of apathy, or unkindness.

This comes from a place of trust in the child. *I trust you to solve your own problems. I trust you to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes, and I've created a space in which you can safely do that. I trust you to get "bored" sometimes, and I know that boredom is the birthplace of creative ingenuity. I trust you to get upset, and I am comfortable with all of the feelings you need to let out. I trust you to care for yourself independently, because I know that independence is the root of true self esteem.*

Re-examining Expectations

Staying Consistent

A famous Montessori trainer likes to say that “young children need order like they need oxygen.” A young child *needs* to be able to depend on her environment so that she is free to experiment, take risks, and make mistakes.

A key piece here is not exactly *what* happens in your routine, but that you stick to it.

Examples: going to bed and waking up at the same time each day, eating meals at regular times, having the same chores or expectations for children each day, etc.

Be gentle with yourself here! This week, bring awareness to what “roles” you may be playing as the adult and how those might shift. Focus on what is *consistent* in your daily schedule, how that feels, and what could be more consistent.

Self Care for Parents

Self Care for Parents

It is imperative that you, as the child's model, prioritize taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Remember that your child will benefit most from a centered, grounded, present adult. If you are feeling uneasy or find yourself overwhelmed, take a moment for yourself to reset.

You may find this podcast helpful in times like these:

Janet Lansbury: ["Parenting in Anxious Times"](#)

Spoken Language

Song: “Robin in a Pine Tree”

by Sanford Jones

Robin in a pine tree,

Sings a merry tune.

Crocus on a hillside,

Tulips coming soon.

Robin sings of sunshine,

Wintertime is past.

Time to build a nest,

Spring is here at last.



Click the image to see a video!

Spoken Language

Poem: “The Bird’s Nest” by John Drinkwater

I know a place,

In the ivy, in a tree

Where a bird’s nest is

And the eggs are three.

The bird is brown,

And the eggs are blue.

The twigs are old,

But the moss is new.

And I go quite near,

Though I think I should have heard

The sound of me watching

If I had been a bird.



Click the image to see a video!

Spoken Language

Grace and Courtesy:

“Please Respect My Work”

This is a phrase we use in the classroom as we all share physical space throughout the day but are generally doing individual work.

Use this phrase or adapt another that works for your family. Practice daily!



Click the image to see a video!

Spoken Language

Topic for Conversation: Birds

Now that Spring is here, observe the birds that visit your yard! Have a conversation with your child that provides them with opportunities to express ***their observations, ideas, and feelings.***

Remember to keep questions open-ended. The reason for the conversation is not that the child answers or can answer your questions. ***The point of the conversation is to allow the child to think, make their own discoveries/connections, and to have quality time together.***



- *“I’ve been noticing so many birds outside the kitchen window! What colors do you notice?”*
- *“Do you think they are building a nest?”*
- *“What do you think they use to build their nest?”*
- *“What do you notice about that bird?”*

Activities to do at Home

Preliminary Activity

Picking Up a Glass

To an adult picking up a glass is effortless, but it may be difficult for a child. **When we model actions slowly it allows the child to observe, absorb, and understand the movements they must do to complete the action.** When showing a child a Preliminary Activity the action should be shown in isolation (ex: do not talk, touch your hair, etc.). After you present the Preliminary Action to your child, allow them to try!

Often Preliminary Activities are shown to the children based on observed needs. If you notice the child is continuing to slam their glass down, model the action again a few days later.

Preliminary Activities are something that is modeled at a neutral time. If a child slams their glass, do not provide them the modeled action at that time. That can make them feel embarrassed. In the moment, just notice that they slammed their glass and provide them with the Preliminary Activity at a later time. **It is so empowering to the child that we provide them with opportunities to learn how to function in our world!**



Click the image to see a video!

Activities to do at Home

From the Shelf

Banana Slicing

Preparing food is a wonderful way for your child to be engaged in the daily ongoings of the home. In this video, you can see how we would show slicing a banana. This video is intended to demonstrate to *you* a way you could show the activity to your child (they will absorb the most if they are *experiencing* the activity with you, as opposed to watching a video). I gathered items I had around the house for this demonstration. See what you have around your house to set this up for your child.

Remember to *isolate movements* (showing just one thing at a time), use *analyzed movements* (be clear of how you will move), and to *just show* (limit the amount of words).



Click the image to see a video!

Activities to do at Home



From the Shelf

Banana Slicing

Materials you will need Banana Slicing:

- An apron
- A cutting board
- 2 paper towels
- A knife
- A plate for serving
- Toothpicks in a holder

Notes:

- Be sure to wash hands before handling food!
- For this demonstration, the activity is set up how we would do it in a classroom setting. You can certainly adapt this to meet your home environment.
- The principles of banana slicing can easily be applied to any food preparation that your child is helping with. You can modify each activity to fit the level of skill that your child has mastered (i.e. younger children might only help with simple peeling and chopping activities, and older children might be entrusted with preparing an entire dish for a meal).

If you do this activity with your child, we'd love to see how you set it up. Send along a photo of your child slicing a banana or another food preparation activity!

Activities to do at Home

Working Outside



With the arrival of spring, now is the perfect time for your child to get outside! Outdoor play has so many benefits for the child's development, and it can provide you, the adult, with a much needed break. Playing outside gives the child the opportunity to connect with nature, to observe the natural world around her, to use her body, and to use her innate curiosity. *The outdoor environment can easily be an extension of play that is happening inside the house, and should be made use of as a second work space for your child as the weather warms up.*

Families have shared that they are enjoying spending a lot of time outside as a family (some activities that have been shared already include going for hikes, bike rides, cleaning out and preparing garden beds, stacking firewood, and collecting leaves and other objects from nature to use for art projects). Having this connection as a family, especially during the turbulent times that we currently find ourselves in, is so important.

It is also essential to allow your child time and space for self directed work outside. Providing a few simple tools or activities that your child might enjoy is a great way for them to connect their mind, body and spirit to the world around them. **A child size table** where your child can work and eat can provide a special place that is just for them. **Child size tools** (rakes, spades, shovels, buckets, etc) and a place to dig can provide your child with hours of open ended exploration. **A comfy quilt or blanket** spread on the grass with handwork or books can provide your child with a space for quiet, contemplative work, or simply to do nothing.

With Gratitude

“We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity.”

—Dr. Maria Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential

We appreciate the unique and resourceful ways in which you’ve been supporting your children so far during this time. We appreciate the time you’ve taken to reflect on what is working for your family and in which areas you need support.

We look forward to connecting with you this week during our individual office hours and our group check-ins!

Be well, everyone!