



# mindful moments

SPRING 2012

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## Dear Parents,

In this issue of *Mindful Moments*, we are focusing our attention on **transitions** because they are such an important aspect in our process with the children. Our relationship with change is affected by many influences: how we feel about it, what our past experiences were like, how our temperament guides us. Sometimes change is fun and exciting; sometimes it causes doubt and worry. Sometimes we may feel a panoply of emotions when going through a transition.

Our children experience many changes and differences as they go from classroom to classroom or from home to our center. Part of our work is to help to ensure that the children can adjust in a warm, supportive, and gentle way to create a foundation for each child to feel secure, even as things in their world evolve or transform.

One of the important differences I notice when I look at our Montessori program as compared to other traditional programs, is in our approach to the process of transition when it comes to a Phase-In into a classroom. For the most part, our children transition individually rather than as a group. During the Phase-In period, each child is matched with a teacher/partner and is allowed as much time as s/he needs to become comfortable and establish trust in his/her new classroom.

Another difference is the way in which our curriculum emphasizes a collaborative environment consisting of multi-aged children, in addition to the individual, self-directed learning and discovery periods for long blocks of time. A new child can enter into an already functioning hive of children and find a place for him/herself,

either with a small group or with a work or an activity that is attractive to him/her alone. This helps the child begin the process of integrating into the classroom and ultimately into the community.

A third aspect is reflective of the conscious designs of our environments. We offer a range of places and settings for the child to explore during their day here. A child who is more of an extrovert—who needs and wants lots of interactions and stimulus with others—will find numerous ways to engage himself. A child who is more of an introvert—someone who needs time alone for thinking, contemplation, or quiet time without stimulation—will find plenty of contained, safe spaces and corners to crawl into to find some peace. It is delightful to see the children discovering how to better meet their own needs—even as young as in infancy—when they reach out to find a friend if they need to connect or discover a peaceful oasis to rest when they need to unwind.

Transitions are part of all our lives. In our everyday work here at the Children's Center, we try to create a place where they can occur in a safe and trusting atmosphere. We rely on each other to make that possible, to help our children and to support our parents. Along with you, we share some of the twinges and some of the joy that comes with letting go as the children begin to take their early, first steps toward independence.

“If **teaching** *is to be* **effective**  
with young children,  
**it must assist them**  
**to advance on the way**  
**to independence.**

It must initiate them into those  
kinds of **activities** which they  
can perform themselves...

**to express their needs**  
in a way **that is clearly**  
**understood** and to  
*attempt to satisfy*

*their desires through*  
*their own efforts.*

All this is part of an  
**education for independence.”**

★ -*Maria Montessori*

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Dear Parents,

This is the time of year when we begin to prepare for the 2012-2013 program year. Part of that process is the enrollment planning for our three classrooms. In addition to reviewing which children will be phasing over from one classroom to another, we are expecting several children to leave the Center, as they graduate on to Kindergarten.

Enrollment contracts will be sent out in April to all families that we anticipate will be returning in September. Please remember to return your contract by the due date so we can save a space for your child(ren). If your child(ren) will not be returning in September, please notify us, in writing, no later than sixty days from the withdrawal date so we can apply your enrollment deposit to your last month's tuition.

Tours for prospective families have already begun. Parents who are interested in enrolling their child(ren) this spring, summer or fall, have been visiting the Center in the morning, while the children are engaged in their daily classroom activities. Tours begin with a brief overview of our Center and a summary of the Montessori philosophy for children three months to six years old. We then walk through our beautiful environment, beginning with the Infant Room and ending with the 3-6 Room. During that time, parents view the classrooms through the windows, while standing quietly in the hallway. This is a time when parents can ask questions, in addition to sharing what they are observing. Our outside environment is shown from the 3-6 deck, where parents are able to see the separate classroom decks, and our spacious and well-designed play yard.

In addition to prospective families touring our Center, we have had and will continue to have, observers from other schools, both Montessori and non-Montessori. Observation of other early childhood programs is a professional development requirement for experienced and student teachers. These teachers also spend time in our classrooms, observing quietly while sitting in a chair.

As we plan ahead for the summer, we have begun to interview potential substitutes, as many teachers tend to take their well-deserved vacation in July or August. Most candidates have early childhood teaching experience, childcare experience, and/or an education in early childhood. Once our summer staffing is finalized, we will introduce our new substitute teachers in a separate letter that will be sent before the summer.

Summer is also a time when the adult learners enrolled in the CME/NY courses visit us. Since the Children's Center is a lab school for our training programs, students enrolled in the Montessori Infant/Toddler and Early Childhood courses will observe at the Center, which is part of their course requirement. Administrators enrolled in the Course for Montessori School Management and Leadership will also tour and observe at the Center.

The feedback we receive from prospective families, visiting teachers, administrators, and substitute candidates is very consistent. Everyone comments on how beautiful our environments are and how well behaved, focused, self-directed and independent the children are in all of our classrooms. The teachers and administrators who observe in the classrooms are very impressed with how calm, nurturing, and respectful the teachers are to the children. They also comment on how respectful and helpful the children are to each other.

The Montessori Children's Center is truly a magical place. As we go about our busy day and daily routines, we sometimes forget how wonderful it is here at our Center. It's refreshing and very empowering when visitors remind and applaud us for the great work we do for the children in our care. Thank you for being part of our community and for trusting us to care for your child(ren) every day.

Best regards,



# MOMENTS FROM...

## THE INFANT, TODDLER, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD ROOMS

### Infant Room: Transitions How We Phase-In Our Infants

By Donna Pellegrin, Infant Head Teacher

Our relationship with a new infant begins even before the child enters our environment. When we begin the Phase-In Process for infants, we truly are beginning our relationship with the entire family. We have an initial visit a few weeks before the child starts, to give us the opportunity to hear from the parents about the child from the very start: including the pregnancy, birth, early post-natal experiences and first months. We learn about the child's temperament, rhythms, siblings, and extended family. This information gives us a glimpse into the world that our new friend has known. Our goal is to establish trust with both the child and parents as we learn the different ways the child communicates his or her basic needs.

One member of our Infant team pairs with the new child and parent, observing how they help the child feel comfortable during feeding, diapering, transition to sleep, etc. We know that basic trust develops in an environment that is responsive to the child's communication of his or her needs to be loved,

respected, and accepted. Infants have unique ways of communicating and we are interested in learning the specifics of all those expressions—cries, words, movements, gestures, facial expressions, and body positions—so that we, too, can be attuned to the child.

The Phase-In period typically takes one to two weeks and allows us to begin to learn the nuances of each child's individual "voice" while the child begins to develop trust in our ability to respond and meet his or her needs. Children adapt differently to new situations so the length of the Phase-In depends on the needs of each individual child. Because we are working with such little ones, their time with us will always be a time of process, growth, and change. Because of that responsibility, we work to ensure the consistency of our routines and responses so that the child feels safe and secure as s/he grows and develops. The Phase-In enables us to create a strong, trusting foundation on which to build our relationship with the child. Our goal is to have laid this secure foundation by the end of the Phase-In process.

This initial time of Phase-In is also an important opportunity for the adult (mother, father, grandparent, or nanny) to become comfortable and trusting of the new environment that they have chosen for this child. While they are in the environment as the child phases-in, the adult observes our team-teachers with all the children, listens to our language, watches our methods and movements, and feels for him/herself the rhythms of energy and calmness in our environment. As the adult gains trust in us, so too will the infant.



Sometimes we have an older infant (12-to-16 month-old) phasing into our program. This process can often be a little more challenging because of the child's older age, but ultimately it is very rewarding. Before coming to us, the child has been with Mom or Dad, in another center, or cared for by a grandparent or nanny. Sometimes the child has been in a child-care situation that was not completely successful or was not a good match for the child. Depending on how the early experiences have been and on the personality of the child, the child might have a difficult time relaxing enough to allow a connection to be made with a new person. In this case, it can take tremendous patience and understanding on the part of both parent and teacher as the process can take a few weeks. We watch as the child slowly becomes curious and begins to connect to the environment while s/he continues to struggle to let go of the security and known comforts of their primary caregiver. The familiar adult



remains a beacon for the child and s/he stays with us as long as the child needs until the child can engage with the new environment. We watch closely as the child looks around the room. When something seems to spark an interest—it might be a material or another child—we then try to help the child make that connection. With patience and respect for this process, we observe and assist as the child slowly opens up to this new and exciting experience. Tentative smiles become playful laughs and eventually we see the child feels safe, secure, comfortable, and competent.

The children experience many new accomplishments and developmental milestones in our environment, as they grow and develop from infancy to toddlerhood: from crawling to walking; from sitting with assistance to sitting on their own; from making sounds to speaking; from having a bottle to drinking with a cup. The final transition in our environment occurs when our young toddlers are ready to expand their horizons and join the toddler community next door.

We will begin this next process by sitting with the child at the low window that separates the Infant Room from the Toddler Room and showing the child their friends in the room. They see their friends moving around the room, using attractive, enticing materials, interacting with the other children, interacting with the teachers, as they offer their help and guidance. On the playground and in the



hallway, the toddler teachers begin to make friendly, positive interactions with their future friend. When the time comes to take this next big step forward, one toddler teacher is selected to be the child's partner. The child has a first visit to the Toddler Room for an hour. The visits then increase a little each day until the child is comfortable and feels secure with the new environment and the many changes that come with this new experience. Typically within a week or two the child is ready to start the morning with drop-off in the Toddler Room.

We are always a little sad to see the children move up, but we are joyful too, as we celebrate each child in his/her work toward independence, self-actualization, and developing the richness and comforts that come from connections with others in our community.

As I write this I am reminded of the many—sometimes difficult but ultimately wonderful—changes that our very young children make in such a short period of time. How awesome is our responsibility in helping them to experience this important period of their life with peaceful, loving, and positive transitions to enable each and every one of them to have the confidence to continue their journey of self-discovery.

## Toddler Transitioning

*By K.T. Korngold*

Most of our Toddlers come from the Infant Room and, as such, we already know a little about them. When a friend from the Infant Room will soon be coming to join us, we begin to reach out to him/her throughout the day, in the playground, in the hallway, and of course, across the window that connects our classrooms. Then our new Toddler will visit us first for an hour, and then in gradual increments, depending on the comfort level of the child. During the time of Phase-In, the child will start each day in the comfort zone of the Infant Room, until s/he is



completely ready for a morning drop-off. As always, a consistent drop-off ritual with the parent helps the child to let go with confidence.

The process of Phase-In for a Toddler who is new to our school will begin with a meeting of the parents and child with the Head Teacher. At the start of the Phase-In, the child will come into the classroom for a short visit of a half an hour. On subsequent days, the visits will extend, according to the child's comfort. If the child is new to the school, the parent will sit in the classroom during these initial visits. The presence of the primary adult in the classroom serves as a beacon to the child as s/he begins to explore the possibilities of the new environment. We ask that the parent bring a book or magazine to read (we prefer that the parent not use their cell phone or computer in the classroom), so that s/he is available to the child if needed, but also engaged in "work." This conveys a message to the child that the parent is confident and supportive of the child. "I am here for you when you need me. I know this is important work that you have to do to separate from me. I will help you and I am not worried about you." The parent in the chair serves as a kind of "safe base" for the child. The child can stay close and get a hug, and then venture out into the classroom.



Little by little, depending on the temperament and personality of the child, s/he begins to move out into the classroom with the help and support of the teacher/partner, and begins to feel secure in his/her ability to function without Mom or Dad nearby.

We often suggest that parents try to take this Phase-In time off from work (as a vacation time), as it is often challenging for the child to feel at ease if they also feel the pressure of the parent's need to leave or return to work. The time in the classroom can be very valuable for the parent as well, as it gives a chance to observe the interactions of the teachers with the children and see how our Montessori classroom works on a daily basis. This also contributes to the parent's sense of trust and confidence in the new environment. If one or the other parent is unable to give this time to the Phase-In, a close relative or nanny can substitute.

When a child experiences their own separation from their parent in a calm and accepting way, we believe that it helps the child develop a strong inner foundation and sense of trust that stays with the child for a long time. Through our process of transition, each child develops feelings of being supported and being secure, and this, in turn, helps to nurture the child's self-esteem and confidence.

Each new Toddler is given a teacher/partner to help guide the child during the Phase-In process. The teacher serves as the link to the classroom. Because the children are guided toward appropriate

behaviors in a consistent, non-judgmental atmosphere, they begin to understand the balance between freedom and limits. With the presence of comforting, reassuring teachers, the Toddlers learn very quickly that our classroom is safe for them, both physically and emotionally. To successfully overcome separation anxiety is one of the major learning experiences for a Toddler and it is our goal to help make this a success for each child.

Most Toddlers quickly adjust to the Montessori environment of our classroom. Because the Toddler age is a time of insatiable curiosity and boundless enthusiasm for activity, most Toddlers literally propel themselves through their busy day! As their muscles, core strength, limbs, vestibular system, and coordination develop, they discover a newfound freedom and capacity for movement: walking, running, climbing, balancing, jumping, even sitting still! Along with these accomplishments comes a flourishing of concentration on an enticing array of activities. The children begin to focus and engage in hands-on activity, music, movement and song, group time, and participate both in the daily care of their classroom and in their own personal care. Patience, self-control, and respect of peers emerge as children participate in community life.

The prepared Montessori Toddler environment is specially designed to help in the critical areas of Toddler development, including: separation, development of trust, thinking, problem solving, and learning to care for him/her self and for others. By giving the Toddler the opportunity to establish new and bonded relationships with other children and new adults, while at the same time offering specifically designed activities appropriate for this age, we help the Toddler fulfill the tasks of self-development and move toward self-mastery.

Maria Montessori wrote in *The Absorbent Mind*: "An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue,

adds to the child's energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self-mastery." It is exciting to see the little ones who first toddle into our room, emerge a year and half later ready to take on the challenges, pleasures, and discoveries of the Early Childhood program.

## Early Childhood Transitions



By Pamela Serra,  
Early Childhood Head Teacher

As we look ahead toward the late spring and summer, we can see that this is a busy time of transitions in the Early Childhood classroom. During the next several months, we will all be experiencing a series of phase-overs, phase-ins, and phase-outs. We look forward to welcoming new friends to our community and to wishing our current children congratulations as they graduate.

The transitions that occur in our environment touch every child in the room: the child phasing in from outside, the child phasing over from the Toddler Room, the child graduating, and the children continuing in the classroom, all influence the experience of our community of children. Change affects all of us in different ways. Changes can bring a feeling of uncertainty that may produce anxiety or can be unsettling until the new pattern becomes the norm. It is for this reason that we have established a gradual, consistent, and peaceful process that centers on following the needs of each individual child



**We consider that the transition into the classroom is the first step in preparation for the many transitions the child will have throughout his/her life.**

as the child makes the adjustment. This process allows each child to develop trust in his/her new environment at a comfortable pace. Once trust is established, the transition is a success for the child.

Part of our Montessori philosophy is to consider that the transitions a child experiences early in life play a definite role in how they experience transitions later in life. Transitions are a natural part of our everyday lives—beginning when we enter the world and take our first breath, and even at the end, when we take our last. This is another reason we take such time, care, and planning in transitioning from one class to another.

We know children go on to experience many more transitions after they leave our program, so we want to make sure we give them every opportunity to have this transition be a success so we can create a good foundation for future experiences, such as moving on to Kindergarten and elementary school, the addition of a sibling, sleeping over at a friend's home, taking the bus to school, going off to sleep away camp, leaving for college, getting married, starting a new job, moving from one house to another, becoming a parent, and much more.

#### **How do we know it is time for a Phase-over from the Toddler Room to the Early Childhood Room?**

When we know there will be an opening for a new child in the Early Childhood Room, we begin a discussion in our Head Teachers' meeting by looking at the readi-



ness of children in the Toddler Room. We consider age, toileting skills, and whether the children are ready for the activities that occur in the new class in terms of their social, physical, and cognitive development. The process may include an Early Childhood teacher observing in the Toddler Room to gain additional insight into the children's interests and abilities.

To ensure a successful phase-over for the child, the Early Childhood Head Teacher will want to learn as much information as possible about the new student. The next step is a meeting between the Early Childhood Head Teacher and the parents of the child. The meeting gives parents and teacher a chance to talk together about the child's development, interests, temperament, routines, eating and sleeping patterns, teachers' backgrounds, classroom schedule, classroom procedures, curriculum, and for the teacher to explain to parents the ways the Early Childhood curriculum is designed to provide a balance of freedom of choice with boundaries within a structure, as appropriate to children of this age.

#### **In the Early Childhood Room the phase-over process looks like this:**

- The first visit is held on a Monday and lasts for one hour only.
- For six subsequent days (Monday to Monday), the visit time is increased

each day, according to how the child adjusts.

- During visit days, the parent continues to drop-off the child in the Toddler Room, in order to help the child begin each day by connecting to their familiar surroundings.
- At 9:30 am, an Early Childhood teacher arrives in the Toddler Room and invites the child to join her in the Early Childhood class. If the child is hesitant, either a Toddler teacher will escort them or an Early Childhood child will join them.
- The Early Childhood teacher becomes the child's phase-over partner and introduces the child to the other children, teachers, activities, rituals, patterns, and habits of the class. Often, an older child also becomes a phase-over partner. It is a joy to observe the connection the two children make with each other and to witness the nurturing that is given so freely from the older to the younger.
- Usually by the following Tuesday, the parent is asked to drop off the child in the Early Childhood Room.

#### **DROP-OFF PROCEDURE:**

To support your child in this new transition, it is vital that the drop-off procedure you establish be consistent. Keep in

mind the idea that change may produce anxiety. Not every child wants to get older or bigger, or feels ready to take on the challenges and increased responsibility that come with the next step of his/her development. It may be difficult for your child to say goodbye to you or to let you go: your child may cling, cry, or be hesitant because now s/he is entering a new class or because s/he is worrying about you. You may wonder why your child seems to be having trouble going into the Early Childhood class, when previously s/he walked easily into the Toddler Room. This may be because the Toddler Room has become like a home base, where the child feels a sense of trust, and now s/he is having to leave that familiar place behind before the trust in the new classroom has fully developed. We will work with you to help transfer the trust the child felt in the Toddler drop-off experience to their Early Childhood drop-off.

**Here are some helpful hints to encourage the development of trust in the morning drop-off and make it easier for you and your child:**

1. Arrive at 8:30 am so your child can enter the classroom with friends;

*It is often very difficult for a child to walk alone into a room once all the children and teachers are actively engaged and working. It is similar to the feeling an adult may have when we go to a party and arrive alone, late and have to walk into a room when everyone is already talking in groups. If you find you are consistently arriving after 9:00 am and your child is having a hard time coming into the classroom—try to alter your morning schedule to come early and see if that helps make it easier on the both of you.*

2. Arrive anytime before 9:00am so your child will be greeted at the door by a teacher, who will help draw her into the classroom;

3. Establish a consistent routine of a series of events or rituals that your child can learn and anticipate, and that would conclude with him/her walking into the classroom. Knowing what happens next helps lower anxiety. Your child will learn the routine and will begin to know what is expected and what comes next. It can become a source of shared pleasure and joy each morning as you go through the steps of your shared ritual.

- a. Put the jacket in the cubby (have your child place it him/herself if possible) "It's time to put your coat away, now."
- b. Have your child sign the attendance card.
- c. Bend or kneel down to the child's eye level and look your child in the eye: "It's time to be with your friends at school, now."
- d. Let your child know now is the time for hugs, kisses, etc. "It's time for two goodbye kisses, now" (Give the specific number of hugs, kisses, or high-fives that is in your ritual)
- e. Tell your child who will be picking him/her up: "Gramps will be picking you up today, after school."
- f. Make a positive statement about having a fun day and remind him/her when you will see each other again, for example: "Have a great day and I'll see you before dinner."
- g. Have a closing line that you use each time: "Time to say goodbye, now. See you later, alligator!"

We're glad to work together to help all our children gain and establish trust during their transitions at school and in their lives. If you have a morning drop-off ritual or transition ritual that works well for and your child or children, let us know. We'd love to share your ideas with our families.





# BRINGING MONTESSORI HOME

## MORNING AND BEDTIME TRANSITIONS

By K.T. Korngold

When we talk or think about transitions, we often focus on life's major milestones: the birth of a child, starting childcare or school, moving to a new home, changing jobs. But for children, in addition to the monumental changes in their timeline, their every day world brings a series of transitions that may or may not be easy for them to navigate and experience. Like adults, children have different temperaments and this means some are naturally easy-going and flexible, while others may have a hard time with change or transition.

My second child was born late, and we always say she showed her temperament from the start—from the moment of her birth. She wasn't ready to leave the womb; she wanted more time. She continues this pattern—even as she grows older—so we have chosen to make adjustments to accommodate and help support her to enable her to take the time she needs in transitions without creating havoc for our family and our schedules.

At the start of each day, even waking up is difficult for her, which I didn't understand at first. When she began the Montessori Toddler program, it was difficult getting her to school on time. Then, whenever she was late, it made it even harder for her to walk through the door. If she missed the opportunity in the morning to walk into class with her friends, it made the daily separation from me an even greater challenge.

One of our Toddler teachers mentioned that my daughter might be having a hard time with transitions and she suggested I give her more time to do things, rather than try to speed her up. This didn't necessarily make sense to me, but I thought it was worth a try. We started to develop two routines that have made a considerable difference for both of us, in terms of helping her get to school and enabling me to get to work on time. I share these with you in the hopes they can serve as a springboard for generating your own ideas and rituals, in the event that you too, are going through some of these struggles with your child.

I noticed she was going to bed later and later. Obviously, if she was a person who had a hard time with transitions, the transition from being awake and active to going to bed was going to be a challenge. We had been reading the book *Ten Minutes to Bedtime*, which was a favorite. We used to joke and say it should be called "Two Hours to Bedtime," because it seemed that our bedtime rituals were stretching on and on into the night. We began by looking at the nightly routine. Then we developed a new routine called our BIG BEDTIME

BOOK, which we continue to follow, even though we no longer need to read the book to know what comes next.

Together we made a list of all the things she wanted to do and all the things she had to do before bed each night. At the time, she couldn't yet write, so I took a big blank book and wrote it down for her. Then we drew little pictures next to each action so she could "read" what it said.

1. **Drink warm milk or tea**
2. **Pick out clothes for morning**
3. **Brush teeth**
4. **Take bath**
5. **Put on pj's**
6. **Put stuffed animals to bed**
7. **Read two stories out loud**
8. **Get kissed on the nose, cheeks, and forehead**
9. **Wish good night to everyone we love**
10. **Go to sleep**



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## **She knows she only gets two books for reading in bed, but she can pick the two books. If she asks to read more than two, I'll tell her that we can read it tomorrow, when we see each other after school.**

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As we began winding down the day, I would ask her to get the Big Bedtime Book. We would then start reading and tackle each item, one at a time. "What comes next?" I would ask. She would read the next item and then set off to accomplish her task.

I have found the warm milk and tea to be a beautiful little ritual to help us take some time together and wind down. We sit together at the low table, I drink my tea and she has her milk. This gives us a few minutes to share our day: something good that happened; something we are grateful for. This is not a time for re-hashing bad memories or worries. It is a time to be grateful and share something that we feel blessed about. It puts us both in a warm mood – sometimes the whole family sits down together for our evening tea.

After the warm drink, we go to her room to pick out clothes for the next day. We put out her clothes each night so she doesn't have to struggle with that decision in the morning. We create a figure on the rug with her outfit for the next day and put everything down that she will need to get dressed: shirt, pants/skirt, socks, and underwear. By the way, we put the underwear on top of the pants or skirt, even though it will be "under," as she needs to see it to put it on first. If there are layers of clothing (a sweater or vest), we place the item in the order that they will be put on, rather than the order that they will appear once on: for example, the sweater is first on the rug, the shirt on top of the sweater, the undershirt on top of that.

We follow the rest of the schedule, moving through each step. She knows she only gets two books for reading in bed, but she can pick the two books. If she asks to read more than two, I'll tell her that we can read it tomorrow, when we see each other after school. She knows that after the kisses (and sometimes a hug!), we start the list of naming everyone we love. We call out goodnight to each person in our family, and then we wish goodnight to grandma and grandpa, our aunts and uncles, cousins, and friends. It is very soothing for her to gather in her mind all the people

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*Sunrise Simulator – available from [www.shopgaiam.com](http://www.shopgaiam.com)*

who love her and whom she loves. It is as if they are surrounding her with their love as she drifts off to sleep. Some nights she falls asleep before we get to middle of the list. This ritual is a form of counting sheep, but in this case, she is affirming the abundance of people in her heart. It is a very beautiful and effective way to help her make her own transition to sleep.

In the morning, I begin to wake her a half hour earlier than her actual wake up time. We have a sun clock that has already started to brighten her room. The sunrise simulator gradually releases low levels of light, to help her awake naturally and slowly, in comfortable increments

I find the sun clock to be especially helpful when there are time adjustments – such as daylight savings or returning from a vacation – or when it is still very dark in the morning when we rise. I usually come in to greet her with a light touch on her forehead. "Good morning, sweetie."

At this point, I am not speaking very much, as she isn't awake. It is a just a soft checking in. I leave her room to begin my own morning routine and then come back again ten minutes later. Next, I open her window shades just a crack, to let a little more light in. Too much and she is overwhelmed, so the opening needs to be provide just a little light at a time. Then, I begin to help her wake up her body. I stroke her forehead first and then move to the arms and back. I tell her "I am here to help wake up your body." Basically, I am giving her a good morning massage. I say the names of the body parts as I touch them:

"Good morning arm, good morning hand, good morning fingers, 1-2-3-4, good morning thumb. Good morning elbow,

good morning back." Sometimes she likes a strong touch; other mornings she wants a gentle one. Then I leave her again for some time to adjust, and I continue to get myself ready. About ten minutes later I come back and at this point she is awake. "Good morning sweetie, ready for your day? What's on the plan for breakfast today?"

I don't have to rush her, because we have now built in that extra time. This is very important for a child who has issues with



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## We make plans and lists before things happen. If we go on errands together, we talk about the different places we will be going beforehand. We talk about what is coming next.

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transition. Rushing only makes her anxious, and of course, makes me more anxious as the time seems to disappear out from under us.

I let her know I am going downstairs to start breakfast. She has a choice of three breakfasts on school days, all consisting of protein, which I have found is very helpful in her waking up and functioning well at school, as carbohydrates seem to make her sleepy and slow her down. Her breakfast choices are:

- Cottage cheese with apples
- Hardboiled egg on multigrain bread
- Yogurt with fruit

Before I leave her room, I take her order. Then we meet in the kitchen for breakfast. We now have a good start to our day: she is ready and energized and we can get out the door on time!

These two changes have made a tremendous difference in our lives. True, I have to get up earlier than I would like—but now I go to bed earlier too, and because I do, so does she. Truthfully, she is tired at the end of a long day. It is a lot of work for all children, and especially for a child who has trouble with transitions, to have the psychic energy to deal with the challenges of the day. She is most likely what would be considered a sensitive child—she feels things strongly and they affect her deeply. Like many children, she has sensitivities to certain clothing, foods, and textures. For many years she would not wear anything on her legs (even in winter) and refused socks. The work of being at school—learning new things, going from activity to activity, and interacting with teachers and children—is exciting, but can also wear her out.

Now that I know she has trouble with transitions, I think about her day differently. We make plans and lists before things happen. If we go on errands together, we talk about the different places we will be going beforehand. We talk about what is coming next. I know I have to limit the number of “stops” along the way. If she is at a friend’s house, I tell her beforehand what time the play date will end. She not only gets a “five-minute warning” that it is time to leave, she gets a half hour “reminder” that the play date is coming to a close so that she and her friend can pick one last activity to do together. Then she’ll get a 15-minute reminder that it is time to wrap things up.



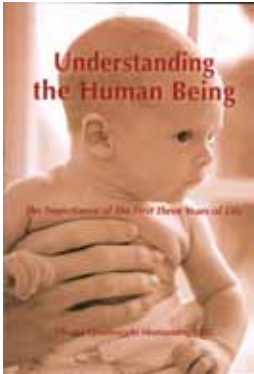
Available from [www.landofnod.com](http://www.landofnod.com)

I realize life is unpredictable and there are many instances when things happen that we do not anticipate. Sometimes I get home from work later than I promised. Sometimes I get stuck in traffic. I call and tell her. Sometimes, we have to change our plans. Some days it is easier for her to accept change than others. It is not my goal to remove the transitions from her life, rather, my aim is to help give her the skills and support she needs to better meet the challenges of her day in a way that suits her temperament and personality.

**The extra time she is given to help her to prepare herself for what comes next has enabled all of us to function better and move throughout our days with more calm and peace. I might even go so far as to say that we’ve all transitioned into a new relationship with transition, and I am relieved to say, it feels much better for all of us.**

# BOOK NOOK

## RECOMMENDED READING FOR PARENTS



### Understanding the Human Being: The Importance of the First Three Years of Life

*Author: Silvana Quattrocchi Montanaro, M.D.*

*Reviewed by Robert DeRosa, Director*

**S**ilvana Quattrocchi Montanaro is a medical doctor who specializes in psychiatry. In 1955, she started teaching child neuropsychiatry, hygiene, nutrition, and obstetrics for the Assistant to Infancy Training Program at the Rome Montessori School. She conducts workshops world-wide for parents and educators regarding the importance of the first years of life in shaping the personality. Dr. Montanaro is the Director of Assistants to Infancy Training Programs, for children from birth to three years, for the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

In this well written and easy-to-read book, Dr. Montanaro addresses several very important topics, which include: prenatal life, breastfeeding, weaning, brain development, independence, and the development of movement and language. She discusses these topics from the vantage point of both a medical doctor and Montessorian. The valuable information that she addresses is based upon many years of practice and experience, as opposed to new theory to be tested on children from birth to three years. It explains from a medical viewpoint, the development of the infant and what can be done to aid in their growth.

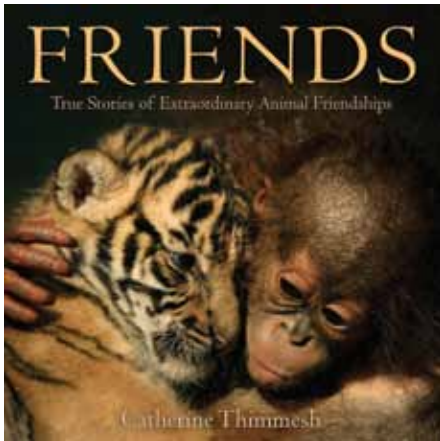
Montanaro's book is one of the required readings for the Montessori Infant and Toddler Teacher Training Course offered by the Center for Montessori Teacher Education, New York (CMTE/NY). Adult learners in the course have in-depth discussions to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the child from birth to three years. They are then able to transfer that knowledge to the classroom, so they are better prepared as early childhood educators.

I would highly recommend this book for expectant parents, new parents, and anyone who has or works with children ages birth to three years. I continue to turn to it, as a valuable resource, for understanding a variety of issues that arise in my work with the children.





## TO READ WITH YOUR CHILD



### FRIENDS: True Stories of Extraordinary Animal Friendships

*Author: Catherine Thimmesh.*

*Reviewed by Donna Pellegrin, Infant Room Head Teacher*



Recently, while I was browsing in the Children's Book Section of Barnes & Noble in search of a gift for a special friend, soon to be turning two, I came upon a truly exceptional book by Catherine Thimmesh, entitled, *Friends*. I was enchanted and delighted, so much so that I bought two copies: one for my little friend and one for the classroom! Thimmesh uses simple prose and beautiful photographs to tell true stories of extraordinary animal friendships from all around the world. For example, she shows how a tabby cat brought new life and the will to live to an aging orangutan at Zoo World in Florida. With short rhymes and heartwarming photos, the book speaks to the comfort of the connections we make in our friendships.

These real, documented stories and photographs teach us trust, kindness, curiosity, and affection; one can't help but be touched by these unique pairings.

This is a perfect picture book to share with infants and toddlers, illustrating the beauty of language, nature, and friendship. Older children—adults, too—will be captivated by the photographs and stories, while learning about tolerating differences and challenging previous notions of compatibility.

The appeal of this charming book knows no boundaries. It is, simply put, a beautiful illustration of how meaningful life, love, and friendship can be.

In speaking of the young child, Dr. Maria Montessori tells us, "The things he sees are not just remembered, they form part of his soul." This lovely little book will help the soul sing while teaching us to open our eyes to the kindness of animals while expanding the potential for friendships in our lives.

*"A friend comforts...  
a pat,  
a hug,  
and a new friend is  
made;  
no longer alone,  
no longer afraid."*



# BOOK NOOK

## RECOMMENDED READING

### To Learn more about Montessori Education

**David Kahn**

*Montessori Talks to Parents*

**Paula Lillard**

*Montessori Today*

*Maria Montessori: A Modern Approach*

*Montessori from the Start* (with Lynn Jessen)

**Maria Montessori**

*The Secret of Childhood*

*The Absorbent Mind*

*To Educate the Human Potential*

*Education for a New World*

*The Child in the Family*

*The Discovery of the Child*

**Tim Seldin**

*How to Raise an Amazing Child the Montessori Way*

**Susan Stephenson**

*The Joyful Child: Michael Olaf's Essential Montessori for Birth to Three*

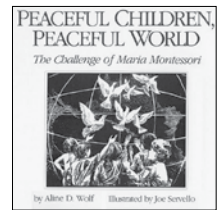
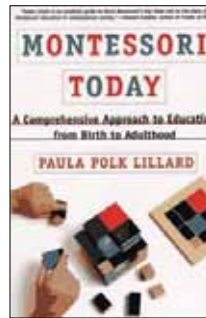
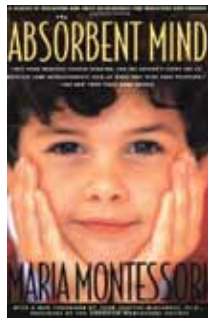
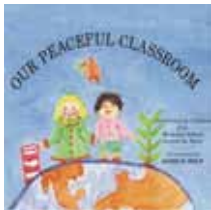
**Aline Wolf**

*A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom*

*Peaceful Children, Peaceful World*

*Our Peaceful Classroom*

*The Spiritual Development of the Child*



“The first **essential** for the child’s development is concentration. The child who **concentrates** is *immensely* happy.”

*-Maria Montessori*

# HEALTH

## DENTAL DISCOVERIES

by Beth Freimour

We all know the importance of a smile: a smile makes us feel better, creates trust, and instills confidence. A smile is contagious and helps us stay positive. Smiling can boost our immune system, relieve stress, and even lower blood pressure!

On April 12th, Dental Hygienist Joann Roos, from Dr. Penny Resnick Graulich's dental practice in Tuckahoe, New York will be coming to the Montessori Children's Center to meet with the children of the Toddler and Early Childhood Program. The children will learn the importance of caring for their teeth and gums, visiting the dentist, and having healthy eating habits to ensure healthy teeth. As part of our curriculum of teaching self-care, we are excited to bring Joanne to our center to help the children begin the process of caring for their own teeth.

The children are in for a treat! Joann uses puppets as well as a giant toothbrush to demonstrate how to correctly apply toothpaste, use a toothbrush, and shows the children how to brush their own teeth.

Helping your child begin to learn to brush his/her own teeth effectively takes time, attention, and practice. We are pleased to offer this opportunity for the children to meet with a professional and have a positive starting point to developing their lifetime habit of caring for their own teeth each day.

*“All people smile  
in the same language.”*

Author Unknown



Shutterstock image

# CALENDAR

## THE CHILDREN'S CENTER WILL BE CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS:

|                                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Friday, April 6                       | Good Friday         |
| Monday, May 28                        | Memorial Day        |
| Wednesday, July 4                     | Independence Day    |
| Monday, August 27 – Friday, August 31 | Center Renewal Week |
| Monday, September 3                   | Labor Day           |

We will re-open for the next program year on Tuesday, September 4, 2012.

### PARENTING WORKSHOP

*Open to Montessori Children's Center Parents and Employees of Burke*

#### **Positive Discipline: Infants to Children 9 years old**

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

at The Montessori Children's Center

Presented by Robert DeRosa, Director

Based on the book, *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelsen, Ed.D., this workshop will provide practical and useful ideas to help children develop self-discipline, personal responsibility, and interpersonal skills through principles of encouragement, kindness, and mutual respect. Come join Robert DeRosa for a discussion on how to introduce Nelsen's concepts into your parenting toolkit and with your interactions with your own children. An overview of Nelsen's ideas will be discussed, followed by a discussion and sharing of our experiences in a supportive and understanding environment.

As space is limited, please RSVP to Beth at: (914) 597-2253.

### PARENT EDUCATION

We will be offering various Parent Education programs about Montessori curriculum, parenting, health issues, and bringing Montessori principles into your home.

The purpose of these programs is to provide information about Montessori educational principles and practices, parenting, and child development to our parents and also to help you in your important work of raising your child.

If there is a particular topic that you would like us to address through future parent programming, please let us know.

*Special thanks to all our photographers for the beautiful photos of the children: Melissa D'Angelo, Eugene Listi, Diana Mendez, Donna Pellegrin.*