



MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY





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MARIA MONTESSORI & THE SECRET OF CHILDHOOD



María Montessori dedicated her life to researching childhood, education and the meaning of peace. She became convinced that the child really does construct the future adult and came to the realisation that education is the only route to truly changing humanity.

A doctor and educator, Montessori launched a campaign for educational reform in schools and her scientific form of pedagogy quickly became popular across the world.

Her proposal—the Montessori Method—is based on the observation of children around the world for more than **40 years**. Thanks to this work, she discovered the “secret of childhood”

In 1950,
UNESCO

Recognised María Montessori as a symbol of great hope for education and world peace.

In the consecutive years of 1949, 1950 & 1951 she was nominated



For the Nobel
Peace Prize



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BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

1. Learning as a natural and inevitable process.
Learning is a natural process that happens in a spontaneous manner. Under this theory, children are capable of developing their own psyche and learning for themselves without adult interference.

2. The Prepared Environment
Education happens through lived experience rather than simply listening to words. As educators, our role is to prepare and facilitate an adequate environment for experimenting: the prepared environment.

“**The prepared environment** is a physical and psychological space designed to provide the child with learning opportunities fostered through personal experiences.”

3. The Role of the Adult
The adult acts as a link between the child and the prepared environment. The adult accompanies the child and ensures that their learning experience is as fruitful as possible. How does this work? By avoiding putting up obstacles or barriers and providing a physical and psychological space that gives the child freedom to take what they need from their environment using their interior teacher as a guide.



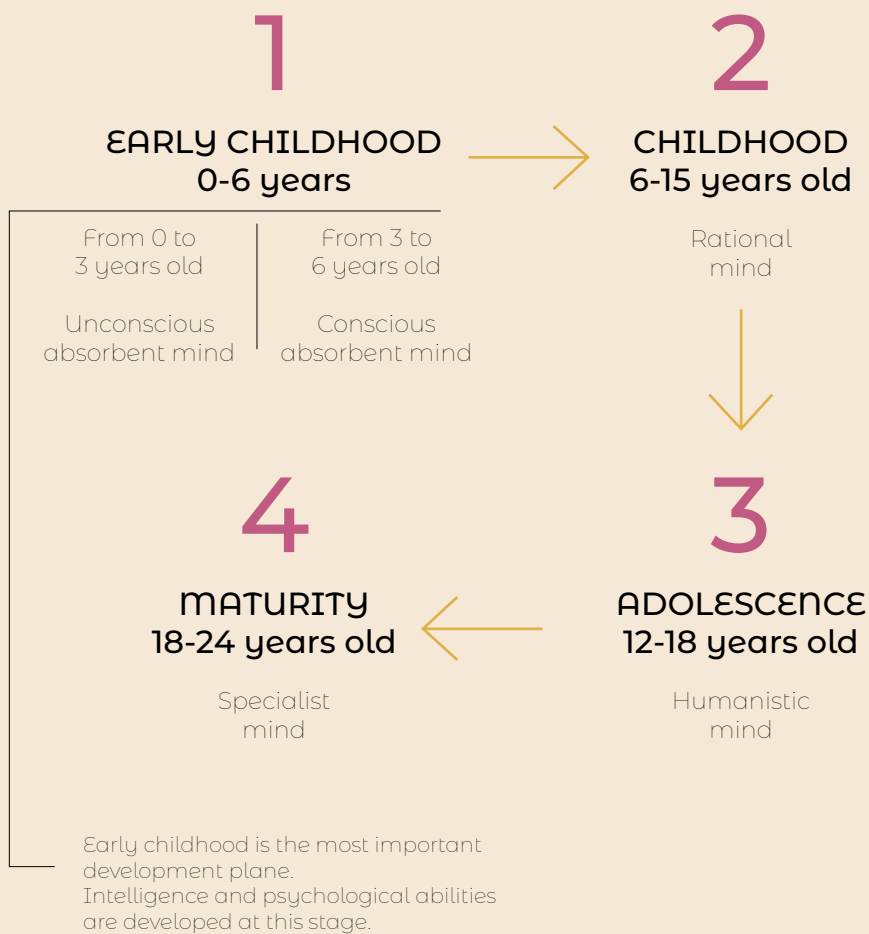
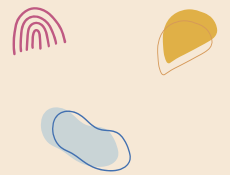
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THE CHILD

By observing children's behaviour all over the world, María Montessori discovered the **planes of development, the absorbent mind and sensitive periods** as key concepts.

● Planes of development

María Montessori identified four stages or planes of development in the evolution of each human being, based on different characteristics and needs. Of these so-called planes, the first is considered to be the most important as it sets the pattern for the rest of the person's life.





From 0 to 3 years.

The child absorbs all the information that surrounds them in a natural and unconscious way. This includes language, culture, traditions, etc.

From 3 to 6 years.

The child is able to voluntarily focus their attention on certain elements in order to perfect their abilities.

From 6 years onwards the child has adapted to the world and culture around them and seeks a conscious way of expanding and enhancing their knowledge. They start to rationalise and understand reasoning.

● The absorbent mind

María Montessori explains that, during early childhood, we have an innate and indiscriminate ability to naturally absorb all of the information in the environment around us: this includes both the physical and emotional, as well as behaviours, values and attitudes. She defined this as the absorbent mind.

The absorbent mind is best understood as a sponge:

Children absorb everything around them like a sponge: if there is little water, the sponge will absorb very little, if the water is dirty then the sponge gets dirty, and if the water is dyed the sponge will turn the same colour. The abilities the child develops depend greatly on the environment around them.

However, in the case of a sponge, it only needs to be squeezed and all of its water content will come out, taking away dirtiness and dyed colour, whereas children will retain that information forever. For this reason, nothing that the child lives is banal and while a sponge has a limited capacity for absorption, a child's is unlimited.



● The sensitive periods

In the Montessori method, the sensitive periods are transitory periods that appear as time lapses during which the child shows sensitivity to a particular stimulus or environment. Thanks to these internal sensitivities, the child can choose the elements that are necessary for their growth.



When a certain sensitivity is awoken inside a child, it's like a light shining over certain objects or elements and their whole world starts to revolve around them.



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THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

According to the Montessori philosophy, the child will feed off of their environment, meaning that they will absorb everything around them as natural and this will stay with them permanently. That's why it's important that adults prepare an interesting and attractive environment as soon as the baby is born.

● Family, the first environment.

Through their family environment, the child learns what it means to be a human being and how they relate to others. They learn to love and what it means to be loved and develop basic human characteristics: language, movement, order, sensorial abilities.

This family unit is also the basis for adaptation to culture and emotional development. At this stage, they learn to recognize objects in their environment and recognise themselves as a valuable person.

Family is the first environment the child experiences and the most important in a person's life.

● The importance of a prepared environment

The goal of providing the child with a prepared environment is to facilitate the necessary experiences for a child's self-construction. Environment can have a huge influence on the developmental process, both positively and detrimentally. By the same token, the quality of the environment will affect the quality of the child's self-construction process.

Therefore, the environment should be prepared according to the needs of the development plane that the child is in any given time.



When it comes to the first plane (early childhood), the environment should facilitate:

- Autonomy
- Independence
- Initiative
- Order

● Features of the Prepared Environment

The prepared environment acts as a bridge between the child and the world. Furthermore, it should provide a space that allows for human tendencies: exploration, orientation and order, work, manipulation, repetition, accuracy, etc.

- Spacious, but not in excess as to facilitate adequate movement.
- Clean and ordered. Order allows the child to orient themselves.

Proportional to the size and strength of the child.



The child should be able to use all of the necessary tools to carry out their daily activities (wash, get dressed, order and tidy things...) For this reason, furniture should be light and positioned in a way that they can be easily transported or moved around.

Safe, both physically and emotionally.

- Simple, free from decorative overload.
- Limited. Equipped with limited materials to facilitate choosing.
- Culturally rich.
- Welcoming and attractive.



There is a mathematical relationship between the beauty of a space and the child's activity. A beautiful and pleasant space, with natural lighting and nice objects from the child's perspective encourages good work.

- Error identification. The environment should identify errors for children to clearly see (noise, disorder...) in order to foster consciousness without the adult needing to intervene.

- Fragile. Fragile objects should form part of the environment to allow the child's development in managing real everyday objects. It's essential to give more importance to the coordination and movement itself rather than to the actual object.

To sum, up, the environment is prepared for real life and should be considered a living element in continuous transformation.



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ROLE OF THE ADULT

● THE CHILD'S MODEL

The adult acts as a connector between the child and their environment. But there's a lot more to it than that. The adult is the model that the child observes, copying their movements, tone of voice, habits, reactions, etc. This means that it is fundamental that the adult is conscious of this in order to react to the child in a conscious and humanised way.

The goal of the adult is to be the best model possible for the child. According to María Montessori, the ideal characteristics of an adult person are:



● REMOVING OBSTACLES TO GROWTH

The adult should observe carefully in order to recognise the corresponding sensitive period at any given moment and adequately prepare the environment, removing any obstacles (including unnecessary help) to allow for the child's development.

Most importantly, the adult should contain their energy, allowing the child to exercise the effort necessary to gain their own independence without relying on their help provided there is no physical danger.

In the words of María Montessori:

“Any unnecessary help is an obstacle to development”



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