

Toddler Newsletter

March 24, 2020



Simple Care of Environment Activities



Table washing can be set up a variety of ways based on what you have on hand. A handheld scrub brush would work instead of a sponge. A caddy would suffice instead of a tray. Here's a link for more on this: [Montessori Album](#)



Caring for indoor plants. A small pitcher, watering can, or glass would work. Here are more ideas: [How We Montessori](#)

Teaching Grace and Courtesy by Leslie

A really wonderful aspect of the Montessori method is teaching grace and courtesy. Teaching grace and courtesy is exactly what it sounds like - teaching children how to be polite and considerate of others as well as the environment (including home, classroom, and outdoor environments). Working with toddlers involves a lot of grace and courtesy because they don't have fully developed impulse control and they can't use logic like adults. So even though this is an age where we can't and shouldn't expect self control and perfect peacefulness from them all the time, we can absolutely model and teach polite behaviors. Toddlers can be self absorbed, but we can show and teach them how to consider others.

1. Model Grace and Courtesy

If we want the toddler(s) in our care to display kind and respectful behaviors, we must behave kindly and respectfully, especially to them. Have you ever noticed that when you say a word or phrase frequently, the toddler(s) in your care will pick it up quickly and use it with gusto?

I say, "Oh my goodness" a lot and as a result, many of my students say it frequently by the end of the year and I've heard plenty of stories of toddler repetition from friends with children who have let a word slip while frustrated or if they dropped something. Toddlers add these words to their vocabulary with glee. The same goes for behaviors. The best way to teach grace and courtesy is to model it because young children notice what we do and often try to mimic us. Earlier this school year, I observed one child trying to put her legs in the exact same position as mine while we sat and sang songs. Another day, I saw child run a hand through her hair after watching me do it. We can use the fact that they watch us like hawks to our advantage and behave how we want them to behave. If we don't want them to yell at people when frustrated, we shouldn't yell at people when frustrated. If we want them to speak with respect, then we should as well. If we want them to push in their chair carefully when they get up from the table and take their dishes to the sink, then we need to do that too!

2. Showing Empathy

As I mentioned before, toddlers can't use logic and reason the same way adults can and they are very impulsive. So if two-year-old Timmy thumps Ted over the head with a play truck, it does not mean that a) Timmy is a bully, b) Timmy is a bad child, or c) Timmy is going to grow up to be a terrible person. While we shouldn't ignore this behavior or brush it off, we also shouldn't blow it out of proportion at the toddler level. Toddlers are impulsive. But we can work with them to broaden their views and illustrate how their actions affect others.

One thing I avoid is forcing children to apologize after a conflict. I feel this sets a precedent for Timmy that as long as he apologizes, he can whack Ted with that truck as much as he darn well pleases. So in this truck debacle, the first thing I would do is check on Ted and show empathy for him. I'd say, "Oh, Ted. I'm so sorry that happened to you. How is your head? Are you feeling okay?" I might offer Ted some consolation, maybe an ice pack for his head or a hug. After checking on Ted, I'd talk to Timmy. I would keep the conversation very simple with Timmy. Always remember that toddlers can't use logic like we can and they process things slower than we do. In my opinion, the best tools here are simple speech and natural consequences. Not shaming, not yelling, not time out. I would kneel to Timmy's level and speak to him calmly, saying something like, "I can't let you hit Ted. Hitting can hurt. If you want to hit, you can hit this pillow (or another acceptable behavior)." If it happens again, I would say, "Timmy, if you hit Ted again I will take the truck." And if there is another hit, I'd take the truck.

If you caught *why* you think Timmy was hitting (for example, he wanted to use the ball Ted had), then you could also add, "You can ask Ted for the ball. You can say 'Ted, may I have that ball, please?'."

That was a long example, but the point is: teach empathy to toddlers in a simple way. Show them how to be kind and care for others. You can apply this to taking care of animals and plants too. We don't allow students to rip leaves from trees or chase the rabbits around our playground because those are both living things that deserve respect. If you have a family pet, show your toddler how to touch the animal gently (e.g. petting a cat on its back from head to tail).



3. Expecting Respect for Yourself

I show respect for the toddlers in my care and I ask for respect in return. I completely understand that we all have bad days. I can empathize fully with the toddler who is laying on the rug, beating his/her fists wildly, and crying furious tears. We all have those days (maybe now more than ever).

So while I will accept any emotion from a toddler, I don't accept any behavior. Here are a few examples: Feeling and expressing anger is fine and encouraged, but you may not hit. You may feel frustrated or tired, but you may not throw things. Toddlers may feel goofy, silly, and crazy, but they may not run into me with bikes or pull my hair. This never involves yelling, shaming, time out, or other unpleasantries. It's a great teaching opportunity. We can address the child's emotions and talk about them, validate them. We can say, "Oh, maybe you're feeling frustrated? I understand. We all feel frustrated sometimes. Hitting this pillow might feel good, but I can't let you pull my hair." When we show a child that we expect to be respected, we are teaching them how to not only show empathy and consideration for us, but also how to stand up for themselves.

If I have a student who is angry for one reason or another, that's totally fine. I'm not going to tell him/her that they can't be angry (in fact, I want them to express their emotions and learn that talking about feelings is healthy and good), but I am going to make sure they are not hitting anyone, myself included. If a child hits me, I back away and say (kindly, but confidently), "I will not let you hit me." If a child runs into me with a bike or truck, even if they are being playful, I will say something like, "I see that you are enjoying the bike, but when you run into me it hurts. Please go around my body."

If we respond by shouting and shaming, what is the lesson? That every time someone does something we don't like, the response is to shout and shame. Toddlers are so young and we can't expect them to be perfect all the time, but we can show them appropriate ways to talk about and express their emotions and model empathy and respect. They will eventually learn how to be respectful to others.

4. Respecting the Environment

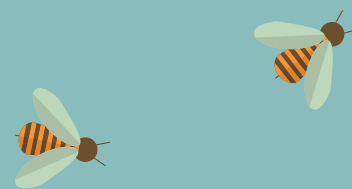
Grace and courtesy can be applied to environments as well. In the classroom, we show toddlers how to set materials down gently, push in chairs with care, and hang up their jackets. At home, they can be shown how to gingerly put away dishes, clean up spills, hang up their wet towels, and put their dirty clothes in the hamper. On a hike or walk, show them how to stay on the trail and pick up dog droppings if you brought along a pet. Show them how to properly dispose of trash and recycle, how to care for plants and animals, and how to be good stewards no matter where they are or how old they are.

Something we have worked on in our classroom this year is saying "May I have more water please?" at the snack table instead of "Water!!!", "I need water!!!", or "Get me water!!!" and the children have learned so quickly how to ask politely!

Hopefully these tips will provide some support during a time where we are home together in close quarters. Being home together can be a great time to practice and learn respect for one another, our pets, and our home environment!



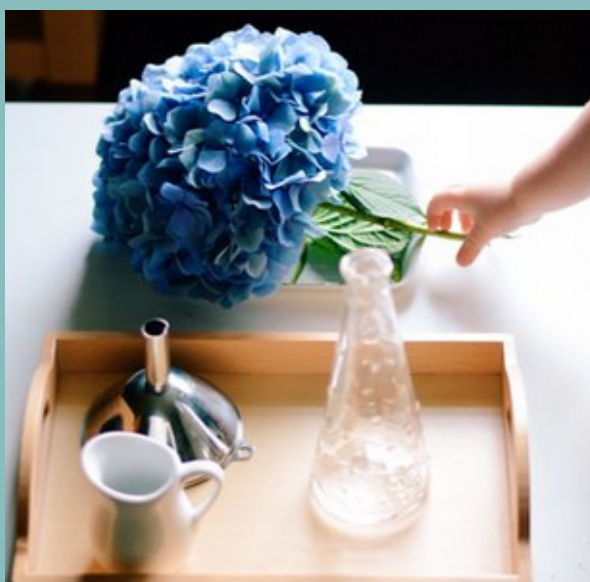
More Activity Ideas



A bike/tricycle/outdoor toy wash with soapy water and a sponge or rag!



Towel folding activity. All you need is a basket of washcloths! See more here: [Stir The Wonder](#)



Having fresh flowers is such a nice way to brighten things up! Read more on flower arranging here: [Montessori in Motion](#)

Montessori MacGyver Cutting Work by Rachel

There are some true Montessori materials we just cannot re-create, but if we look around our houses, there are plenty of things we can turn into jobs for our children! In this series, we'll walk you through a step by step process of making your own materials from items found around your house! Recycle & Reuse! Get your child involved in the making process for more at-home fun!

Cutting Job- Great for fine motor skill and concentration development

Items You Will Need:

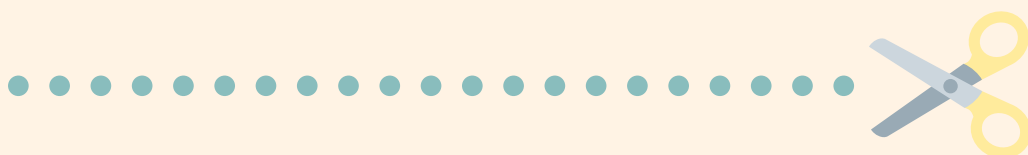
- 1 Small mason jar with perforated lid (can be purchased at craft stores or Amazon)
- 1 Small makeup bag
- 1 wine cork
- Embroidery floss, butchers twine, or yarn
- One set of children's scissors (these are good ones!)

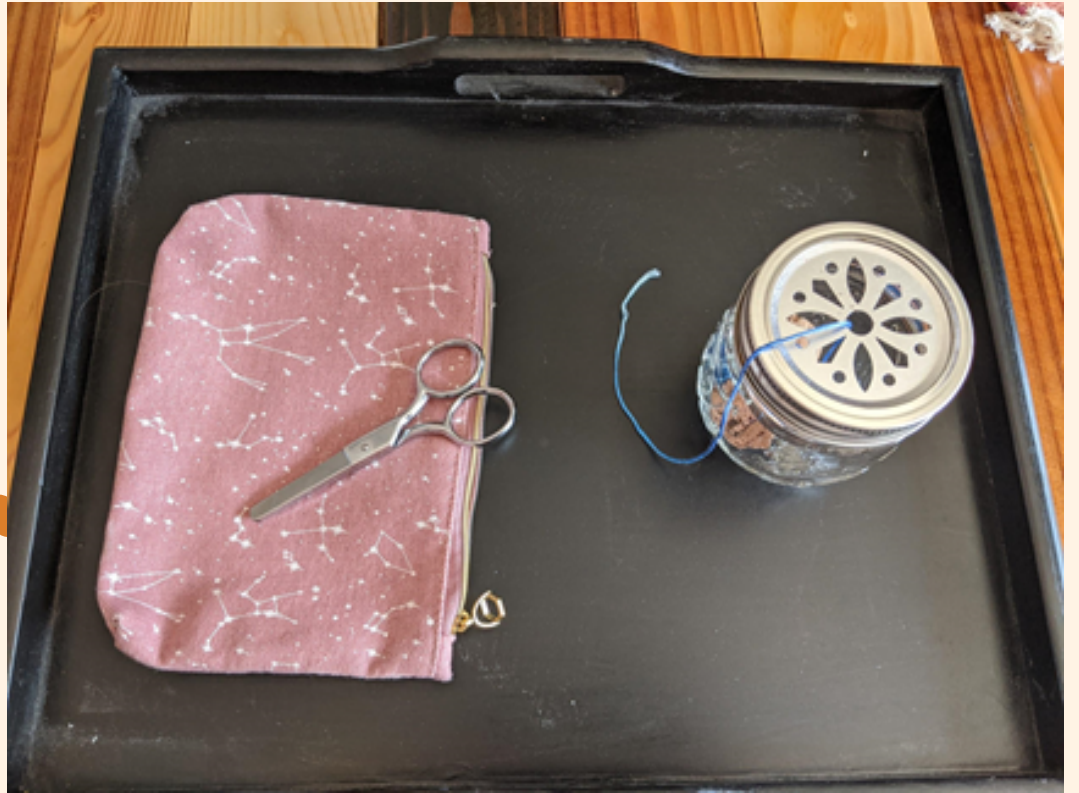
How to Make It:

1. Take your wine cork (I have found that a sparkling wine cork is best for this, but to each their own taste of wine), and wrap your embroidery floss, or other type of string around it. If you do not have a cork, try a clothes pin or chip clip. It just needs to fit in the mason jar.
2. Place the wrapped cork in the mason jar and pull the string through the perforated lid, leaving enough out for your toddler to hold.
3. Take the toddler scissors and place them in a makeup bag. This adds one extra step to the job, and also keeps scissors away from younger siblings.

How to Set Up:

Remember, all of our work in the classroom is set up from left to right to mimic the way we read from left to right. So, place the makeup bag with the scissors on the left of the tray, and the jar with the string on the right. If you do not have a mason jar or string to cut, simply cut strips of paper and place 2-3 strips on the tray for your child to cut. For an added challenge, draw lines on the paper strips for your child to follow as they cut.





And finally...

Leslie made chocolatey cinnamon rolls last week. Toddlers would love to knead the dough! Here's the recipe if you want to try them out: [Bakingdom](#).



And here is an update on Rachel's seed experiment! The sunflower seed is sprouting!

