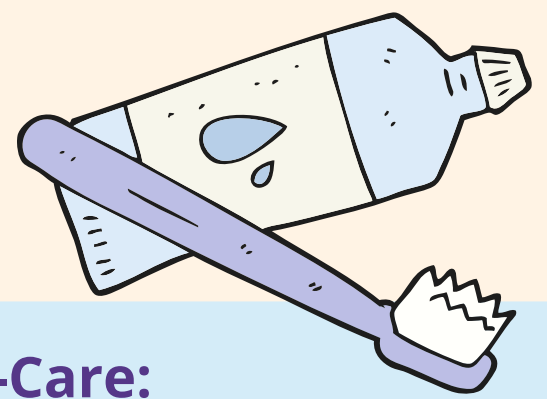


Toddler Newsletter

April 8, 2020



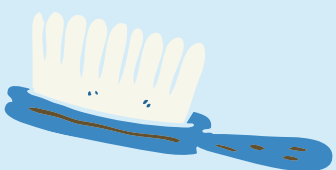
Toddlers and Self-Care: What is it and how do we implement it? *by Rachel*

What is Self-Care?

A popular term heard in a Montessori Toddler environment is Self-Care. The term itself might seem fairly straight forward: my toddler is taking care of themselves. Yet, what does that exactly look like? Montessorians associate Self-Care with independence in dressing, toileting, hair brushing, brushing teeth, handwashing, and listening to one's body and meeting those needs. With such busy lives, it might seem daunting to provide your child with space to explore this area, especially if you're trying to get out the door in the morning! The benefit of the amount of time at home we have right now is the ability to slow down our routines and focus on these areas of Self-Care.

Routine & Order:

When it comes to Self-Care, establishing Order and Routine is crucial. Our toddlers are in a sensitive period for these areas, needing consistency in their daily lives to find success in their developing independence. Fitting Self-Care into our daily routines is easy! You probably already have a routine of getting up, brushing teeth, getting dressed, etc. Just use that framework and implement space for independence. Accessibility is part of the order and routine. Having your child's bathroom set up to aid with toileting, dressing, handwashing, hair brushing, and teeth brushing is important. Have all the tools they need within arm's reach, or in a drawer they can get to. Provide a stool for the toilet and one for the sink. Make sure a towel is available for them to dry their hands/mouth. Keep an accessible hamper nearby for dirty clothes and towels. In order to promote success in independent self-care, we need to provide scaffolding that leads to this success. Through a prepared environment, modeling, and patience, we can provide the structure our toddlers need to achieve success and independence.



Implementing Self-Care Independence

Hand Washing:

This one is fairly simple, and if you are practicing toileting, this goes hand in hand (no pun intended). Modeling is the best way to relay this skill. Often, Toddlers are enamored with water and could spend many minutes washing their hands! If they are concentrating on sudsing their hands, rinsing, and repeating, let them do it! If you're worried about wasting water, plug up the sink and fill it just enough for them to rinse off their hands. We're constantly working on concentration, and in a Toddler Montessori environment, Toddlers are often practicing their concentration skills while washing their hands. For more tips on hand washing, read Kristen's How-To!

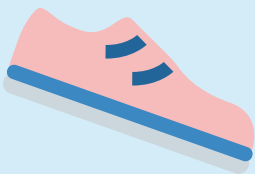
Brushing Hair/Teeth:

Toddlers love doing things they see adults doing and brushing their hair or teeth on their own is a great way to foster that independence. Walk them through how you do it and have them try alongside you. Throughout my years of teaching Toddlers, I have noticed how much pride they put into their appearance! This all comes back to order. Providing independence with hair brushing is a great way to give your child some autonomy in the morning. A small travel brush is the perfect size for Toddler hands. Leave the hairbrush near a mirror so they can watch their progress. They might need some help with the tangles, but wait for them to ask, or if they seem frustrated, step in and say, "Would you like a little help with that tangle today?"

A great way to implement independent teeth brushing is to allow them to practice after a snack or after lunch. At my previous school, we provided the children with the option to brush their teeth and their hair after they had awoken from their nap. They loved the option. Provide a control with the amount of toothpaste provided by either preparing the toothbrush for them or keeping a small amount of toothpaste in a small travel container that they can easily unscrew the cap from.

Dressing:

We have already discussed a lot of techniques in last week's newsletter about dressing and independence, but here are a few tips on making it a painless process in the morning. Choose a dresser drawer in your child's room that is easily accessed by them. Clear it out and leave space for three outfit choices for the day. This way, they have the freedom of choice, but within limits. If the battle wears on with accessories, include those in the outfit choices as well. Continue this freedom within limits with shoe options.



Often, we are met with a confrontation over appropriate outerwear. Is it thirty degrees and they don't want to wear a hat? Is it rainy and they don't want to wear their rain boots? No need to get frustrated! Let them try it. Self care is also about understanding their own bodily needs. While we usually equate that with toileting, or hunger and thirst, regulating our needs with our clothing is also important. When their ears get cold, simply say, "Your hat will help keep your ears warm." When their shoes get wet, simply state, "We'll have to come in and let them dry. Next time, let's wear your rain boots so your feet stay dry." Allowing a little freedom within limits for our Toddlers around dressing is important. We are often met with resistance over dressing; the need for control over our appearance is strong, even at two! Providing your child with the tools for success over dressing will prove to be rewarding for the both of you in the end.

Toileting:

Ah, the dreaded topic of toileting! It's easy to feel overwhelmed by this topic, but I like to remind parents that everyone learns to use the toilet. Toddler age is the perfect age to start this process. They are ready for it! Toileting takes three important things: time, consistency, and a redefined idea of success. We often hear people say that their child has learned to use the toilet in three days, and while that might be true for a small group of toddlers, it is not the truth for all. Often, toileting takes weeks, with fluctuating success. Some days will be drier than others, and that is okay! Your child is learning how to read their body and understand what it means to be wet, to go in the toilet, and to interpret the signals from their own body.

Consistency in toileting is key. I repeat: consistency in toileting is key! Always stay in underwear (other than nap/bedtime), always set a timer for 30-45 minutes, always handle an accident in the same way, always use the same (and correct) terms for what is happening and for each body part, and always stay calm and matter of fact. It is so important to remain patient. Shaming a child or punishing a child for something natural happening to their body will only discourage them. If you are consistent with your schedule and your reactions each time, your child will have more success with toileting.

Redefining that idea of success is also important. Your child might not have any accidents for a week, but then have multiple in a day. It's all part of the process. It's important to look at toileting as a process, rather than a product. Like any new habit, or skill, it takes practice and time.

If you have any questions about toileting, please reach out. We know it can be a frustrating experience, and we're here to support you!



Ways to Implement Self Care with Older Toddlers:

Is your child getting ready to move to primary? Does your child have success in many of these areas already? That's great! Here are some ways to further develop self care independence.

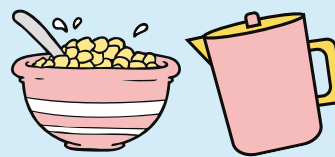
Food Prep:

Allow your child to help prepare their meals. They can peel and slice a banana, peel and segment an orange, help rinse produce and spread condiments on bread or crackers. You can leave these things in an accessible area so they can choose a snack when they feel hungry.



Breakfast:

Got an early riser in the house? Place a dry bowl of cereal and a small pitcher or cup of milk on an accessible shelf in the refrigerator. They can get up, get the bowl out, and then pour the milk in for an easy breakfast! Walk them through the steps a few times before letting them do it on their own. Practice makes perfect! (Leave out a towel or two for spills!)



Water:

Provide a pitcher of water on a low shelf in the fridge that they can use to pour their own cup of water when they need it! A small creamer pitcher works best for this because it allows a control for how much water they can access at a time.

Lose Time to Make Time:

Self-Care takes a lot of patience and time on our parts. We often want to do for our child, and it can be hard to step back and let them figure it out on their own. Through modeling, extra time, and patience, we can help our children learn these skills. Step in when necessary, but watch and wait a bit before offering your help. In Montessori, we try very hard to allow children to experience their own successes. It's a fine balance knowing when to step in and when to back off. Offering help verbally is a good way to start. For example, "I see that the shirt you chose to put on is a little tricky. Would you like some help?"

We have a saying in Toddler: "Lose time to make time." When we put in the extra time to allow children to develop their independence, we are giving them the structure to grow and ultimately become independent. Before you know it, your Toddler will be dressed and ready to go before you are! Please reach out with any questions or concerns. The Toddler Team is here for you!



Montessori MacGyver Tug Box by Rachel



There are some of those true Montessori materials we just cannot re-create, but if we look around our house, there are plenty of things we can turn into Montessori materials 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!

Tug Box- (Wonderful job for any younger brothers and sisters around) Great for developing grip strength. ** This is a great project for your kids to help with. Stringing the yarn/ribbon with beads is a great fine motor job, as well as threading the yarn through the holes on the shoe box.

Items You Will Need:

- 1 Shoe Box
- 1 Box Cutter
- 1 Pair of Scissors
- Variety of Ribbons or Yarn
- Beads (Big Size preferred- I only had pony beads)



How to Make It:

1. Take the lid off of the shoe box and place the box to the side.
2. Take your box cutter and make small holes in the top of the lid.
3. Cut long strips of ribbon or yarn.
4. Have your child help you string beads onto one end of the yarn. (If a younger child might partake in this job, knot the beads in one place- so knots above and below the bead.)
5. Thread the yarn through the holes of the lid, beads at the outer side of the lid.
6. Knot the other end of the yarn so it won't pop out of the holes you made.

How to set up:

Once you have set up the ribbons and beads in the lid of the box, just place the lid on and let your child pull the strings back and forth. This will help develop their grip strength, which aids the greater fine motor strength. Feel free to decorate the box any way you wish! This project can be a big art project for one afternoon. Add stickers, paint, crayons, etc. Have fun!

Setting Up Self-Care Stations for Your Toddler

By Leslie

In her article, Rachel outlined many wonderful ideas for implementing self care at home. Now I'll provide a few ideas for setting up the spaces in your home where your child can practice that independent self care.

In the bathroom:

If you have a small bathroom, the simplest way to achieve a self care station is to set items up on the existing vanity or countertop. You could also hang a low shelf beneath a mirror if you can't fit a table. Provide a stool so that your child can get on the toilet by him/herself and another so they can reach the sink. Remember that in Montessori, we set things up left to right and always in a tidy way. If everything has a place, it's easier for toddlers to keep spaces neat because they know where items belong. You could keep your child's hairbrush and hair accessories in a basket, their toothbrush and toothpaste in a cup, and a supply of small washcloths for them to use as hand towels in a basket. You could also add a nail brush, tissues, or lotion. Provide a mirror so they can see themselves! If you have more space, you could create a separate toddler-sized station. Here a few beautiful examples:



Use a low shelf, a crate, or small side table to create a bathroom station. This example includes a basket for dirty clothes, a tray with a hairbrush and comb, a basin for hand washing and tooth brushing, soap, a toothbrush holder, a pitcher and tub for transporting water independently, and a towel. (I'd suggest a smaller pitcher for a toddler and a few extra towels for potential spills!)

Photo credit:

<https://www.instagram.com/akara88/>



I love the book selection next to the potty. They used a simple plastic tub for the "sink". You could also use a large bowl. It doesn't have to be fancy to be effective. Including a mirror is a nice touch so a toddler can wipe their face, brush their hair, or wipe their nose and see how they did. You can also add a basket of underwear/pants if your child is still learning to use the toilet.

Photo credit:

<https://www.elternvommars.com/>

In the kitchen:

Rachel gave the great idea of setting up a bowl of dry cereal and a small pitcher of milk in the fridge for an independent breakfast and some food prep ideas. Another fun activity in the kitchen (if you're a toddler) is dish washing. A dish washing station is easy to set up and toddlers really love it. Again, you can just use a crate or small table, or even just set two plastic tubs on the floor with a towel underneath after dinner. Fill one with soapy water and one with clean water (or better yet, let your toddler fill them with a pitcher) and provide a sponge or small dish brush. Include a towel for drying or a drying rack. Of course, you'll probably have to wash the dishes when they're done, but it's the process that counts! [This table](#) from IKEA would make a great dish station.



A simple dish washing station with two tubs, a drying rack, soap, dishes, and a bucket for water. I'd probably use a pitcher for getting water because it would be easier to pour!

You can also set up a special prep area in the kitchen for your toddler. Again, using a small table (you could use the same table for dish washing and just switch out the materials), stock the station with a few snack choices, child sized utensils that are safe for toddler use, dishes, and towels for clean up.

Put snacks in individual serving containers if you are worried about spills (for example, a small container of cereal, a small block of cheese in a container, a few crackers in a container and a serving of nut butter in a container, or single bananas or oranges). You could also include a basin and pitcher on the kitchen station for hand washing or washing dishes there instead of having a separate dish washing station.



This is a fairly intricate example, but how beautiful!

Photo credit: *The Kavanaugh Report*.
[Click here for full article on this kitchen station](#)

In the bedroom:

A small dressing chair like [this one](#) can be very helpful for toddlers learning to dress themselves. It's often easiest for toddlers to sit down to put on socks, pants, and shoes. As Rachel mentioned, it's good to provide a few choices for clothing daily, but only a few. If you are battling with your child over outfits often, you don't have to store all their clothing in their room. Keep their seasonal clothing in your room or in a storage tub, then select a few options to put in their room each evening. You can do this for accessories and shoes as well. Toddlers don't always do well with an abundance of options.



I love this closet set up. Just a few options within the child's reach and a chair for dressing.

Photo credit and article link:
howwemontessori.com

Hand Washing at Home Activity

by Kristen

Materials:

- Small table or shelf for hand washing “station” (See picture for in home set up)
- Small bar of soap
- Small pitcher or container for water
- Bowl
- Wash cloth or hand towel



Procedure:

1. Pick up pitcher and have your child take it to an accessible sink. (Accessible = a step stool at the bathroom or Kitchen sink)
2. Push up one sleeve and then the other.
3. Have your child turn on the water and talk about the temperature. “Warm water feels good when washing hands.”
4. Fill the pitcher with water
5. Bring the pitcher back to the bowl and pour the water in the bowl.
6. Have your child run the water over their hands.
7. Pick up the bar of soap and lather on the hands. Sing “ABC’s or Happy Birthday.”
8. Rub whole hands together, wash the back of hands to your wrist, rub each finger and palm.
9. Look at the bubbles
10. Rinse hands in bowl of water.
11. Dry hands with cloth.
12. Bring bowl to sink and dump out.
13. Bring back to “Station”.
14. Dry the bowl with the cloth.
15. Repeat often as hand washing is very important!



Photo Credit: The Kavanaugh Report

Options/Variations: Liquid soap. Vary the bowl, cup, pitcher, Add hand lotion at the end. Use a small nail brush. Add a bath mat under the table to catch water spills!

Developmental Aims: Physical: Develop large and fine motor coordination. Cognitive: Complete a sequence of events. Social/Emotional: Develop concentration and independence. Language: All words spoken during process.

Baby Doll Bath Time: Water Play Activity

by Leslie

Materials:

- Baby doll
- A basin, bucket, or tub
- Small bottle of baby soap or shampoo
- Small pitcher or cup for pouring water
- Wash cloth and hand towel
- Clothes for baby doll
- A large towel to set the whole activity on



Photo Credit: Natural Beach Living

Procedure:

1. It can be helpful to do the activity one time with your child so he/she can see the steps. Set out materials left to right for your child. Set the baby doll and pitcher/cup to the left of the tub and the soap, towel, and clothes on the right of the tub.
2. Show your child how to carefully fill the pitcher with water and pour it into the tub.
3. If the baby doll has clothes on, ask the child to carefully and gently undress the baby doll. Offer help if needed.
4. Place the baby doll in the tub and show your child how to pour out a small amount of soap.
5. Show your child how to gently wash the baby with the washcloth.
6. Rinse the baby by filling the pitcher/cup with fresh water.
7. Dry the baby off gently and slowly with the hand towel.
8. Dress the baby doll. Your child might need a little help with this part.

Toddlers love water and bubbles! This activity will help develop concentration and learning a sequence of events. Undressing and dressing the baby is great fine motor practice, and they will also learn empathy from being shown how to very carefully wash, dry, and dress the baby doll.



I love this set up. The only thing I would change is putting the pitcher on the left of the tub.

Photo Credit: Living Montessori Now