

The Montessori Notebook S02E01

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Hi everyone, Simone Davies here and welcome back to the Montessori podcast. I'm delighted to be back with you for season two. And this season. I look forward to sharing more of those long phone conversations with Montessori parents and educators around the world about how they apply Montessori in their life to inspire you to bring more Montessori into your home. Today we'll be talking with Nusaibah from Rumi Montessori. I know you're going to love this conversation, as you'll hear her talk about her experience raising her son who's nearly 17, with Montessori all the way from birth and how each stage builds on the next. It's really fascinating. And she also talks about setting up a trilingual Montessori School raising an autistic child with Montessori, what is Islamic Montessori and how she's been able to practice Montessori in different cultures because she's moved from the UK to Malaysia, where her husband's from, and just so much more. But before we get into the conversation, I always love to have a quick chat about something that I've been thinking about lately. And perhaps it's because we've been living through a pandemic the last year, and parents are needing to be even more involved in this like educational process. But I think there's never been a better time to talk about applying Montessori principles as an adult. I mean, how can we apply the same principles we were applying to our children to ourselves. So the first thing I thought of is trust in ourselves and in the world around us. From birth, for example, in Montessori, we're showing our baby how to build trust in themselves and that they're capable. And by responding to them, we're also allowing them to build trust in us and the world around them. And how many of us can say the same about ourselves that we like ourselves that we see ourselves as capable, that we've been kind to ourselves. And I'm curious, you know, to start this conversation about how we can rebuild that trust in ourselves and others and the world around us. And then we usually talk about the child in society in Montessori. And I was kind of curious of this idea of the adult in society. So how can we be our unique selves, and respect others in the world as well? So yes, Montessori is about independence, but independent so we can serve in our community and in the country we live in or the world at large. So what would that maybe look

like? Or how can we meet our needs, and be in community with others? And then we often talk in what sorry about showing respect to the child, especially how we talked with them. And as adults, do, we show the same respect when we talk to our partners or our families, how we talk about other people on the street, or the person on the phone, who kept us waiting. And really, our children are watching us all the time. So it doesn't hurt for their

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benefit for us to show respect to others in our lives as well.

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We talk also about allowing all feelings, but not all behavior with children. And we allow them then when we've been practicing Montessori for a while for them to really feel their feelings, support them. And then if they need to, they can make amends and that kind of thing. And so I wonder when something triggers us, rather than brushing it away, like, Oh, I shouldn't feel upset about that. Can we also maybe feel that deeply, like a toddler having a tantrum? And then we can see later? Why it's triggering us? Is there something maybe we need to work on? If I'm triggered by someone being late or not showing up for an appointment? What work do I need to do on myself? Like, was I clear that this was important? Or if it wasn't actually that important? Am I holding on to control too tight, I don't know. There's always a discovery there something to think about. And then learning from mistakes. I mean, children would work do well to see us make mistakes, and admit when we got it wrong, particularly when we get along with them. And we don't lose face when we apologize, were being a model for our children, like saying what I should have said is bla bla bla, or what I should have done is and you know, we can actually do it over. And so it not only helps it to make it up to the other person, but it means that we can also let go of the guilt around it too. And it doesn't build up until we explode, saying how ungrateful everybody is. I listened to an interview with a spiritual teacher once who said in her relationship, the key to their happiness had been to address all the little things that bothered them, rather than letting them build up. And then in Montessori, could we as Montessori adult, be a lifelong learner? Do our children see us continuing to learn? What are our passions? And just as we follow the child, could we perhaps start to follow our interests as well? Sometimes we overlook ourselves and we want to be lifelong learners to get so much joy out of this. And when I think about being a Montessori adult, as well, I think about exploring our identity now intersectionality all the parts that make up ourselves. So we can start to see where our privileges are and our biases. And in the past year, I've seen how much unlearning there is to do. I mean, what the dominant culture says and if it's even true

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And how we can create safe spaces for everyone. It could be the smallest questioning things like if we put out that Easter themed craft activity, is that true for everyone? I mean, I've done that. And now I start to think, Okay, well, how can I make sure that every child who came to my class could see themselves represented in my classroom?

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What other celebrations are there around spring, looking at the children who are in my class, and if I had an old white classroom, what would be in my society, in my community around me, and in the greater world, so that we can start to start to represent all children in our spaces. And then lastly, amongst every adult, could maybe allow time to pause, to be in nature, not over scheduling ourselves, having some quiet time to be bored, not always like trying to fill in every moment at the moment, like when you notice you're picking up your phone all the time not to get bored. Imagine how creative we could be. And indeed, our children are also watching us and what we do. So don't get me wrong. I'm definitely not perfect at any of this. And it's not about being perfect. But I do think that it's worth thinking about how can we continually prepare ourselves, which will help us not only apply Montessori with that child, but looking at ourselves as a monitoring adult.

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We don't just become an adult and stop learning. We're like a work in progress. So maybe it's something to think about in your homes too. And I'm curious if that resonates for any of you. Okay, enough for me. For now. It's time for my conversation with nusseibeh from Rumi Montessori. And I'll be back after the conversation to answer a listener question. I hope you enjoy the conversation as much as I did.

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Hi, everyone, Simone here and I'm really delighted to get to introduce you today from Rumi Montessori. Nusaibah and I she's calling in from Malaysia grew up in the UK, a Montessori child herself and now spreading Montessori around the world with not only her own child and family, but you set up as school in the UK and now in Malaysia. So welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much for having me. This is gonna be such a lovely conversation. Just before we hit record, we were saying that we felt I felt like we were on parallel journeys because I've been raising my own children. I became a Montessori parent in 2002. And my children are 20 and 19. And Nusaibah is also being on a similar journey. But also being a Montessori child, she's bringing some other things to the table. And so I can't wait to get to share all your wisdom experience with everyone today. So let's get straight into it. I like to maybe start today with What does Montessori mean to you? Maybe today? I think if I asked that question, I would probably answer it differently every day. But today what's coming up for you what Montessori means to you. It's really funny actually, that you

asked this now because just like 10 minutes ago, I was lying on my bed and I was just thinking, what what am I doing? And I said, this is service, you know, Montessori is serving the child, like, what Montessori is, is truly taking on this idea of serving the child in the way that is according to their nature and according to how they will naturally grow and develop. So it's not imposing yourself on the child are imposing some pre conceived idea whether it's an educational idea or a parenting idea, but it's actually stepping back from all that you know, and then being present with the child so that you can actually serve the child. And that's kind of what came through my mind today is like, you know, remember that all what I'm doing is for the service of the child, I mean, that's really powerful, isn't it? Because I think in traditional parenting, traditional education, it's usually the adult who knows all the information, and we're meant to impart it onto the child. And I think it takes a lot of trust to let go like, Oh, this child actually naturally wants to learn. If I'm in service of the child, does that mean that they can do whatever they want? Do you get those kind of questions coming up, like with parents around the world? Yeah. Because, you know, I lived in England, I live in Malaysia now. And it's a global thing that, you know, as adults, we, we feel that maybe we are supposed to impart our knowledge on the child or that we are supposed to lead the child or that we are in a way superior to the child. So we, you know, like, we're constantly trying to give the child from what we have, but then we actually miss what is really happening, which is that the child by nature has this abundance of curiosity, and they want to learn everything, you know, they are incredibly curious. They want to learn everything and our you know, we don't actually have to pull them along or lead them somewhere. They are actually capable of leading us and not just leading us for their own learning and development, but also leading us so that we can change to be a better version of ourselves as well. So it's like, you know, that whole concept of parenting and teaching is like flipped on its head, you know, rather than it being you know,

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Don't focused as the adult as the, you know, the one who's completed their childhoods. And now we can take these children through childhood, but actually, it's the child now who's going to take us through life, and show us a different meaning. And, you know, over the years of being a Montessori educator and working with different children in you know, different countries, and then it's just like, it's just so obvious that that's what our role is, whether it is as a parent, or as an educator, or even if it's just somebody who's, you know, a grandparent, or someone who's just facilitating in any way, our role is really to serve the child so that they can go through the stages and, you know, complete their development and create themselves, which is actually what children are doing create themselves. And our role is to be there to serve them. And you know, it, when you think of it like that, you're just like, wow, it's a totally different perspective, from, you know, what is happening all around us. And people do say to me, does that mean, we just leave children to do what they want to do? Or does that mean hand and foot on the child. And again, you know, that idea of serve in the Montessori for, you know, the monster concept is, is very

different. It's not serving as in you do everything for the child, but it's as in serving us in stepping back, and then watching and waiting, and only giving the exact amount that a child needs so that they can be successful themselves. Not that we do it for them, you know, so it's not waiting hands and foot on the child. It's like, just just being that and observing and being aware and ready that when they do need something from you, you can give them just the right portion, and then step away, and allow that development to continue on its own natural rhythm. Yeah. Do you think that you could give some examples, like maybe what that would look like for a young child? Because maybe for people who are new to Montessori, they might think, I don't know what service would mean, maybe to a newborn or to like a toddler, and that kind of thing? Yeah, like, I probably give lots of examples. As a mom, I know, I've been working with loads of children, but you know, I think it's the parents and examples that like, you know, like, you know, how, you know, this is such a huge impact on us. And I think it's things like, you know, like, I remember, like, with my son, when he was really young, like saying, the first pincer development, you know, something as simple as maybe like, you know, trying to open a bottle lid, or, you know, like we see you know, every parent or see the child go through the stage where they're trying to open and close things. And that, you know, it's just like observing that and not going there and opening it for them if they're struggling, but keeping that in mind that you know what, that my child is really interested in this. So let me serve them by providing them bottles that they can open or close safely.

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don't contain detergent, or whatever it may be that you're

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putting something that that follows what that child is trying to accomplish. And you're serving them by giving them what they need to they can be successful at it, but you're not doing it for them. So I'm not opening the lid for him, I'm just serving Him by putting things there. So he went through this stage where he would just any bottle he saw, he would just want to unscrew it. So then, you know, looking at that, and observing that and then giving him them. And as I see that his ability to open them, you know, get to better than giving him once a little bit more challenging, so that he just putting them in his environment. You know, I don't even have to say, hey, look, I've got these bottles for you know, it's just put them in the environment, and then he's able to then, you know, explore it himself. So then it's not my discovery. It's his discovery, you know. And I think that when you serve the child, that's what you're doing is you're not robbing the child from their experiences of making their own discoveries, you're just giving them what they need, leaving them up to that point, but they always do the learning themselves, they always make the creation themselves or, you know, they always have that discovery that it's their own experience. Yeah. And, of course, like, as through the planes, I mean, so many, you know, so many

examples, even now as an adolescence, you know, like, you know, allowing him the space to discover who he is and what he wants to do. So he's 17 in a few weeks, and then, you know, instead of me like leading him down the line, and kind of, you know,

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guiding him towards something that I think he might like, instead, it's like, having the environment ready so that he can experience and see different things. And then he can then follow his own interest and show me what he wants, you know, and that all comes from being able to step back and observe and come from a place of humility and serving, serving rather than leading and directing. And what do you think is given you such trust that this is enough for them, you know, that they're still going to develop to their full potential? Is it because you are a Montessori child, do you think, or do you think it's because you see it unfolding and you see it's working? Definitely being a Montessori child has had like such a huge impact on me, and I really believe that I'm

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I am who I am today because of the experiences that I had in my Montessori classroom. And the voice that, you know, talks to me in my mind, like we all have voices is a voice that's been shaped by the direct trust or the, you know, the monitoring guide that was there in my classroom that was guiding me and make, you know, seeing that I could do everything that I wanted to, you know, like, you know, so I know that I have been shaped by that. And that has given me a lot of trust in the Montessori method, because I know the impact it's having on me. And later on in my, you know, schooling years, when I was older, I did go into private mainstream school, and I could straightaway see a huge difference. I can see, like, you know, like, you know, the first thing that, you know, struck me was, Why do these teachers not know who I am. So when you come from a Montessori environment, the teacher knows you as an individual, they know your strengths, they know what you need to work on, they know how to talk to you to, to excite you, or to inspire you. But you know, when I went into a mainstream environment, it's like, they don't know who I am, what I'm capable of. So that was one of the first things that struck me. So that has always kind of sat with me, throughout my whole life, that experience that I had, and I know that that's allowed me to have a lot of trust in the Montessori method. But then also, you know, having my own son from, you know, I was a Montessori teacher, before I had him. So, you know, being able to apply, you know, you know, give him that journey through Montessori education. And at that time, you know, like in 2000, to 2003, you know, you can't find information on the internet, right, there aren't so many books, your book wasn't available that you didn't have that there weren't so many books, it was really hard to get hold of, like, good, wholesome materials, or, you know, even like, you know, whatever it is that we need is, it's more that we applied the philosophy, we applied the principles, you know, it's not so much that we went out and bought everything or, you know, we're able to read so much, but it really took those principles and apply them. So having applied them

to him, and seeing what he has taught me, has, of course, given me so much more trust in the method, and, you know, seeing him as he's gone through all his stages, and now he's like, 17, he's coming to the end of the third claim development. And seeing that, and just thinking, wow, you know, this, Dr. Montessori, his work is phenomenal. You know, it's phenomenal. And, you know, if we can understand it, and we can apply it, as parents, even if it's in a very simplistic way, you know, we will be having such a profound impact on on the child and not just the child, it will impact humanity or have a ripple effect on humanity. Yeah. And I think that's when we're starting to see it is when the Montessori children become what three parents just as you are, that is when we're going to be having even more impact. I mean, I didn't grow up with Montessori. So I want to reassure parents who didn't grow up that you can learn it, it takes some practice to undo and unlearn some of the things that we were told, you know, it's such a natural thing to say, Oh, look at this, this is yellow and wanting to teach and teach and teach all the time, and do that in a more curious way. But still giving them a lot of input when they're young in the Zero to Three, three, and three to six age groups. Also, just a quick revision. For those who don't know what the plains of development are. We'll talk about that a lot. I think today in the interviews as we talk about Noah's journey through the plains of development. But just to say that Dr. Montessori recognized there were four planes of development in children with similar characteristics in children from the ages of zero to six, six to 12, 12 to 18, and 18, to 24, recognizing that we're still a child, while our prefrontal cortex is still developing things that she couldn't have known of, but they're now being backed up by science. So I always find that really beautiful. So I think that the next thing that I would love to ask you about is like, do you think how can you explain to parents that actually parenting in a Montessori way is actually less work and more joy? And I would actually even heard you say that in your classroom, you find it entertaining to be with the children and not stressful? Yeah, that's the thing is that, you know, like, it can appear that being a Montessori guide could be stressful, because you've got, you know, the children are making their own choices, and the children are like, you know, you can't predict what they're doing. You don't have control over what they're doing. So it can like, appear to be challenging, like to be a monster educator. But actually, when you step away from that idea of control, and you see that actually, these children are really capable, and you trust them. It's like watching a movie. It's like watching the most thrilling movie because you never know what's gonna happen next. And there's all these little interactions that you see between the trading and there's all these discoveries that they make, and when you're able to like experience it firsthand with them. It's so fulfilling and it's so so beautiful. And I think that even us as adults, we we are, you know, beings that are curious by nature and we are beings that want to learn

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We want to improve ourselves and want to develop I don't think that ever goes away from the human being. And when we in that environment with children we're living with, with these, you know, we in our living environment with these small beings,

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on a moment to moment, they are improving themselves and developing themselves and fulfilling that curiosity that they have, and discovering new things. And so, when you shift your mindset, and you know, even though I am, I went to Montessori as a child, I was not raised by Montessori inspired parents can make that claim my mom, she did amazing thing of putting me in a Montessori school, but it was, you know, an experience I had at school, and I had a completely different experience at home. So of course, like, you know, there are a lot of things that I had to change that I would have absorbed or experienced as a child that was not Montessori. And then I had to kind of change that. And even, you know, I think that the change never ends, even till now, we're always changing, and we're always having to rethink the way that we see things. And, you know, like, when, when you're with children, whether it's as a parent, or whether it's as an educator, when you're with children, and you're in that environment with them, if you can switch your thinking from being that you have to control them, or you have to leave them or you have to direct them, and switch that off. And just turn it to be with them just be you know, just just be in that moment with the child, actually, you get this burst of useful, exciting energy that comes through you, because that's what the children are living on all the time. That's who they are, you know, they're completely in the moment. And they're completely one with their environment, and they are enjoying their environment and the discoveries that they're making. And that energy, when you tap into it, you yourself feel like you are having the most enjoyable experience. So even as a parent, we can do that we can just step back. And, you know, be with the child, just be in the moment and watch them. And not only will you enjoy it, but you will learn so many things about yourself and about your environment that will help you to lift up to you know, a more enjoyable state of being Yeah, I always say that monster is actually a really joyful and more relaxing way to parent. But I think it's difficult for parents, for example, who have a child who's throwing a tantrum or a teenager who's you know, not feeling well, and having a big outburst and things like that. So, how do you keep calm in these moments? How are you able to step back, even when your child is having this enormous explosion and having a hard time with toddlers, for me, you know, a tantrum is always a form of communication. And, you know, when I see that in a child, I actually, I, first of all, I am struck with curiosity, of what is the child trying to communicate. So that curiosity that I have, straightaway helps me to see that tantrum through a different lens, rather than seeing you know, that the child is challenging me or the child is, you know, choosing, you know, to be you know, some people might see it as choosing to be difficult. Instead of seeing it through that lens, I see through what are they trying to say, you know, what are they trying to communicate to me. And the other thing is that when you know, when these children are going through this, it's, it's, you know, it's that that compassion, or that love that comes up in you to know that, you know, this is part of their journey to discovering who they are and discovering what this world is all about, even when they have a tantrum, they have to go through all these things. Life is not just you know, this, you know, there has to be these moments. And those moments are often the biggest life lessons that help us to grow in many ways. So when you actually embrace that moment in that positive direction, and know that through that moment

that your child is having a tantrum, there can be an amazing breakthrough that you can have with the child, that they can have a breakthrough, and you yourself could also have a breakthrough. I mean, for me, you know, like, I do find that I'll be very honest, I do find that the adolescents,

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Tantra already touches, I do find those a lot more challenging.

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And I probably find it more challenging with with Noah because he didn't really have tantrums when he was younger. And I really believe that he didn't have them because there was always that open communication. And I was always that searching for the root of the issue. So before it actually escalated and became huge. We're always looking at what the root of the issue but once we came to the teen years as an adolescence, you know, it's no longer you know, now he has to start looking for himself.

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So it's like, I have found Vizio as challenging. And then that's one of the reasons why I actually went to take adolescence training. Because I was like, I want to understand this state

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But I can also have that same perspective as I have had with the younger ages.

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But I think that really just like not taking it personally and not taking it as a power struggle and not taking it as a threat, even if even if it appears like the child has power struggling in that moment. You know, it's like power struggling with Well, there's no, there's, if you are not trying to have power over the child, then there's no power struggle. It's just being with the child being with the child and trying to understand what is going on, what is the message that they're trying to get through? and helping them to find a way to get that message through in a in a positive and constructive way? Yeah, I love that. You mentioned that it's not without struggle, because it sounds like oh, what did I do like childhood, they are allowed to do whatever they like, but there's going to be things that come against, so they live in society, things aren't always going to go their way. Maybe they don't agree that they, they want to stay up and it's really time for bed. And so I guess that doesn't mean that they can do whatever they like either, right? No, definitely not. And I

think that's, that's maybe one thing that a lot of people misunderstand about Montessori is that they think that, okay, being a Montessori parent means let your child do whatever they want, and follow them. But actually, you know, Montessori is very clear about giving freedom within limits. And we, you know, Montessori tells us that education is for life, and we're preparing the child for life. So, you know, education has to always be something that is going to build the child, your way of parenting has to be something that's going to build a child towards real life does that later on. So there is always going to be there are there will be boundaries, and there will be times that they experience things that are difficult, and they have to experience that because it's through those difficult moments that the child experiences things, or we experienced them as adults, it's through those difficult moments that we grow or that we become wiser, become more sensitive to certain things. So Montessori always has that balance, we give freedom within limits. And you know, that it shows that the child kind of grows up in a very well rounded manner, so that they can participate in social life, they can be a contributing member of society. And they have all of those characteristics. If you look in a Montessori classroom, you see so many times where the elder children who have been there for a while you see so many times where they will give out what they want for the betterment of the environment, or the betterment of another child or to serve somebody. Right. And that comes from a deep in a natural state of a human being that we want to do what is right, not just for ourselves, but for the society that we're in. Right. And that comes from giving freedom within, you know, limits giving that that right freedom so that the child is able to develop, have that inner discipline and develop those inner characteristics that help them to be with others. So it's not that the child can do anything that they want all the time. Otherwise, you know, we won't be guiding them along that way. It's just giving them the right amount of freedom within the writer out of of limits. And as a parent, I've always had clear limits with my my son things about like bedtime about, you know, eating bedtime things that we have always had, like, clear limits, but they're not enforced.

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In they're not enforced in a harsh way. But they're enforced with the understanding and the conversation at whichever level that he's at enforced with those, and with that kindness and without love. And so the outcome is that, you know, it, they embrace it. So I can give an example. Yes, I was gonna say, Can you give an example, I would love to see how that works in practice. But one of the things that I was really concerned about when I had him was about the impact of screentime, on a, on a child's development. And I did a lot of reading.

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I believe everyone's entitled to their own opinion, and I respect that, but for my own for my own reading, and my own research, I thought that it's, I really want to give him the chance to be himself without the influence that will come from a screen. So I was, you know, quite, you know,

we had like screen free. First of all, I was like screen free until two. And then we got to two and I was like, Well, why don't we do it to like, select four, and then we've got default. And I said, well, let's do screen free until he's six. And he was totally fine with it because instead of having a screen he had lots of different things that he could work with, you know, things like a marble Ron, or like, you know, things that had cogs he had all this like constructive, you know, toys or games that he could work with at home. And he also had lots of time to be bored, which I think is really, really important. And often nowadays, children when they're bored, they go to the screen and they don't get that opportunity to be to be bored and you know, in board leads to be creative. So he was a very, very

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A creative child. So I thought let's, you know, let's wait until he's six. And then when he was six years old, I thought, well, we've got this far, you know, why don't we just see how far we can go. So, you know, we maintain this kind of screen free life until he was about 12. And which was huge, because everywhere around this, the screens, you know, of course, sometimes he'd go to his cousin's house, and he'd see the screen or, you know, and what something like, the rare occasion, but it wasn't like regular. And I remember that when he was, you know, the way that we had those conversations is, when he was about six or seven, we actually sat down, and we looked at the brain, and we looked at the neurons, and we get to the minor sheet, and we looked at the impact that you know, too much screen can have on that. And we looked at the research together, even though he was six, we looked at it together, and whichever level he could take on, you know, he took on and he himself decided that, you know, I don't want to do this, you know, I don't want to, I want to give my brain the opportunity to be the healthiest it can possibly be. So he himself decided, so it was like us working together. And then recently, he was one night, he was sitting in my bed, and he goes to me, Mommy, you know, when when I have my children, I'm not going to let them use screens until they're 12.

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I thought coming from somebody who's like, experienced that, and it wasn't

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forcefully put on him. But it was like, working together to this, you know, and seeing how he kind of not only, you know, he embraced it as a child, but now as someone who is 1718. And somehow he's thinking about his own children. So you know, I don't know where that's coming from, but thinking that that's the right way to be with children. And I asked him why. And he said that, as he's observed many children, and he's observed his friends who've had screens, and he's observed other children, you know, young children around us now, he said, he can see the impact, he said, I

can straightaway tell when somebody has had screen and, and hasn't had a screen. And he says, and so

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I don't want that for my child. And he said, but it's up to everybody, they have their own choice, if they want to, you know, and and he just said it in such a very mature, beautiful way. And, you know, that's an example where there's a limits, you know, it's not freedom to do everything, there is a limit there. And there is some way where we were, you know, we put a limit that's going to help them for their betterment, you know, for their good. So we put that limit in place, but it's not enforced, you know, we're not enforcing it like a tiger, but we are enforcing it together with them. And then what happens is that it's not only that they, they follow with that, but they embrace it. And then later on in their life, they embrace that healthy habit, or that healthy lifestyle. So that's one example that, for me, has been quite profound. I think, you know, in the younger ages, you're setting the limits, and then they become collaborative, you know, you sat down at 612. And then as screens may be opened up, you don't just say, here's a screen, but you start educating them what it's like and how to interact on perhaps social media or other things like that. I'm not sure how is exposed with that. But how did that that kind of transition then happen? Was he curious with what other kids were watching on TV or games, what other kids were playing? And how did that then unfold, he was really curious, of course, about what they're watching, but he was always reading. So he wastes felt like he had his own movie, but he's watching his mind. And he would often say to me, when I imagine it, in my mind, it's much nicer than when it's on the screen. So he would say that, and he's an avid reader. And I always ensure that I invested that time to, you know, always have, you know, wonderful books available for him to read chapter books. And you know, and choose good authors that can really pull in the reader and give him that feeling experience. So when he was in his elementary years, his you know, his friends who may be watching movie and he might have read the book,

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they would have all these conversations about that. And he would be like, No, no, no, it shouldn't be like that, you know, it shouldn't be like this in the book is like this. And I imagined it like this. So that that was one one way where he, and then with games, he always played his own real games. And I remember that the children would be attracted to him, because he was able to play these fantastic games and the scenarios and play them out in real life, you know, with using props or making things and the children found it so exciting and like fascinating. And that's because he wasn't playing the games on a screen. So he was able to then play them in real life, and we just provided whatever he needed for that. So he actually says that he loved his love that part of his childhood. He absolutely loved it. He that he loved being able to, you know, read the books, make up the stories in his mind, play out games and you know, in real life, and then, as a teenager, when

he did start to go on a screen or people told me he's going to be behind he won't know how to use the screen.

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You know, I actually come from an IT family. So, you know, I was sat in front of a computer, like from birth,

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I actually come from an IT families, I kind of went against what they do what they did. And when he was 12, and he started to go on on a laptop, or, you know, he was just, he's able to do so much more. I mean, he can even hack my computer, and like, and like, control it from another location. So, you know, and that comes because he's been able to develop his imagination, he's been able to develop his intellect, he's been able to develop his character without that influence. So when he's come to actually be using these devices, he can use it, I, you know, efficiently and very creatively, I would say, Oh, thank you. That's reassuring, I think for many parents, because they do say, What if I don't put them in front of these shows, and everything else is, everyone else is getting these experiences, what's going to happen to my child, and it's just nice to hear that they have the skills, but then they apply them to technology, and just the same way as they would any other things and those hands on learning experiences. So rich, actually, which is a great place because I would love to go back to when Noah was in those zero to three years. And like you wrote about how he had plenty of real life experiences and exposure to nature in those years, and what zero to three looks like, and then maybe what then three to six looked like. So with zero to three, we didn't have a beautiful mandatory South shelf at home, just so everyone knows, we didn't have that middle shelf. We didn't have like the object, permanent box and things like that, because I couldn't get them. But I really took those principles. And I really, you know, I first of all really took in the fact that he's creating himself, he's creating his movement, he's creating his language, he's creating his social interactions, he's he's taken this opportunity to create himself. So the best way for anyone to develop something in themselves is through having those life experiences. So you know, we were lucky that we had like a park that was just behind where I lived, and he would be in the park every day, for hours, I wasn't working mom as well. So I just kind of made it like, I would drive home, I would park my car and I'd go to the park, before I get into my house, because I knew once I got into my room, we're gonna get out again. So I would take him to the park, and I would give him that time to be in the park, and just let him be free, it wasn't going to the park to teach him something is going to the park to let him just be. And through those experiences of, you know, having ducks follow him or like, you know, spotting swans sitting on, you know, it was he saw like Swan sitting on on eggs in a nest in the middle of the lake. And, you know, seeing that every day and seeing what you know, everyday going there to check on them. And, you know, going through all of those experiences where he was able to, you know,

experience it himself hands on, even, you know, when you know, when the weather was bad, you know, you know, and he couldn't go to the park, there are so many opportunities in the house for life experiences, getting him involved in everything. So from when he was really young, I'm talking probably about eight or nine months, he was in the kitchen helping me somehow or another whatever he could do, he was helping me with that, whether it was just washing, you know, like an apple or, you know, cutting something or he was always involved in that. And I think that those life experiences actually work, you know, gave him this foundation that he's built everything else on.

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I think nowadays, you know, we tend to focus more than buying things and putting things out to meet, you know, kind of directing, but actually, it's fine to do that it's fine to buy things, and to have a beautiful shot is fine, but don't let it take place of the real life experiences. Because it's actually those real life experiences that have the biggest impact on the child. And we want to give them as much of those real life experiences as possible. And I was lucky that, you know, being in a time where we don't have Instagram, we don't have I wasn't kind of kind of distracted by all of that I was able to just take the principles and think he's creating himself. So let me give him all these experiences that will allow him to create himself and immerse him in, in the culture in the country and in you know, in life in most of it in life. And that zero to three was really much was really based on that. And actually, no, it is autistic. I don't know if you've picked out from my Yeah, so he's autistic. And I knew for when he was quite young, he was autistic and I decided to take it on as a gift that he has, rather than taking it on as a challenge.

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And, you know, knowing that he was autistic meant that I needed to ensure that he had a lot of these experiences because he wasn't just going to pick up socialization or pick up things just from the normal experiences that another child may have had to he needs to have it

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repeatedly, so that he can break through whatever challenge that he's going to face due to his autism. So I really took that time from zero to three to give him those, you know, opportunities to engage in real life as much as possible and observe him, you know, I would just spend tons of time. I mean, he was my only son, and I, you know, and of course, every parent is in love with a child. And one of the ways that I express my love was to observe, to observe him, you know, observe and see, find out who he is, because it's only when you step back and you observe your child that you can truly understand who they are, and what they're doing what they're trying to do. So observe him, and then just have that environment where he can be fully involved. And because he's absorbed, absorbing everything around him, just ensuring that that environment was very

rich, very rich, the language was rich, the, you know, the experiences that he had was rich, and the opportunities that he had was which i think that that observation, and when you are being objective and looking, you don't see it as a deficit, you do see it as this gift. Yeah, not at all, you don't see it as a deficit. And they do, you know, he did many things differently. So observing him was like, it was always

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a thrill to see, whoa,

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I've never seen anyone do anything like that, you know, and, and then seeing that, and then taking it back and thinking, wow, you know, how incredible is this mind, you know, this mind of this small child and this mind that this autistic child, you know, so really taking it like that?

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You know, yeah, I think when you step back, especially if you have any children who have special needs, if you step back and you just be with them, and you observe them, you begin to actually see what gift came with this, whatever it is that they experiencing what gifts came with it, because every I really believe that every child who has a form of special needs, also has a special gift, you know, that is needed for humanity. And when we step back, we can see what this gift is. And then we can help, you know, support them so that they can be who they're supposed to be with that gift that they have. Yeah, thank you, I think that will be really helpful for parents who may be struggling to accept this wasn't the job that I was expecting, you know, and then let's take continue this journey, you move then into the three to six age and the child starts refining and crystallizing everything that they learned in the first, you know, sub plane of that first plane of development. What kind of things were you seeing in that three to six age group, when he was about three, that's when he started attending a Montessori school? The one that I worked in, and, you know, because he's had those rich experience, I was actually talking to my friend Margaret, who was it was her school. So he actually attended that school. And I said to her, do you remember, you know, when there was about three or four, he was doing the binomial cube. And he just, he just took one block, and he just dropped it on the table. And he just turned around, he goes, this one is not worked. And everybody was like, Huh, what is it?

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Why is that? How can we saying one of these blocks are not word, you know, nobody kind of realized what he was talking about. And then, you know, you know, we he came up to us, and he

showed us, he said, this one is not wood. And then, you know, we actually looked at it and did some investigation. And actually, it wasn't wooden, you know, that cube from the binomial cube had actually come from another set of blocks. And it was the same size, but it wasn't wooden. And it was put in there and it was black. And it was the same color as everything else. But it was, it was, you know, it was like plastic or something like that. But it wasn't obvious. So many people had worked with it, but not realize that.

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And this is where the crystallization has come. So he's had all these experiences from zero to three. And he's used his his senses to take in all this information about the world around him. And he's had this rich experience. And I've never been the man who's given a run running commentary for everything that he's doing. Because I've always kind of been somebody who just keeps you give rich language just in the right proportion, but you don't overdo it. So it's not like he's had all these experiences. And I've constantly be saying, look, this is what and this is this, isn't it? No, it's just at the right time, I gave him the right language that he needed. And that comes from the Montessori training that I had to know just what just what's the right portion. So when we saw him like in the three to six stage, we could then really see how these experiences that he's had now through his opportunity to work with them on certain materials or to be in that environment. With those materials, he was then able to now call back on those experiences that he's had before. And then kind of formulate them and categorize them and, and even get the language that was associated with them. And then to be able to, you know, really differentiate between this wooden block I mean, I don't think I would have noticed this wooden block at this, this non wooden block but didn't sit there and have the ability to express it.

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And then to try and solve the problem. And I think that's what that's one of the beautiful things about Montessori education is we we, you know, children, by nature, they are, you know, having these experiences, and they are problem solving, you know, there's so much problem solving that's going on naturally. And when we apply the Montessori philosophy, and we adopt it as parents, whereas educators, we create this environment where they can actually solve their own problems, and they can actually differentiate between things. And without us giving them a problem to solve, like, nowadays, problem solving is we give a child a problem, and then they have to solve it, and we observe them as they solve it. And then we're like, you know, you know, this is what technique they use, but actually, the child is naturally doing that. And in that three to six days, we really got to see how all of those experiences influenced who he was and how he approached the, you know, the monster materials or his experience in the classroom.

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And then it's not just limited to the to the classroom, of course, it's beyond that. Seeing him now that he has the basic, the basic foundation from zero to three, seeing him now being able to communicate him, you know, himself or lead himself or direct himself as this more kind of conscious worker towards those things that he he wanted to learn or he wanted to engage in, or he wanted. And that was really beautiful, because that's really when I was able to then start to see this, you know, the concept of follow the child or, you know, following the child's interest, I could really see it in a much more profound way emerging in that three to six stage. And I was able to step back and observe and see now as he not only moves, but he also tells us, and he also communicates with us what it is that he's interested in what it is that he's doing and what he's discovered. And I that really led me to think, well, I don't want his Montessori journey to end at six.

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I was like, I don't want this, to me, this is so so beautiful to watch this journey. And at the time, in England, there were only like a handful of elementary schools. And it was really hard to get elementary training at that time very, very hard, you know. So that's when I enrolled myself to train as an elementary teacher, because I wanted to be able to continue that journey beyond the age of six. And what I love is that Dr. Montessori recognized that they move from first plane to second plane Rio between five and a half and six and a half. And it's like, she told him a series of rebirths, because all of a sudden, you have this new child with different characteristics. And I'd love them with your training, and then following no on this journey, like what it looks like now, where they take everything from the first period and they're expanding on it. It's like this period of expansion, I would say the second plane, yes, yes, it definitely it's, it's the second pane of development, the way that I see is, it's like this thrilling, this thrilling journey that you take with this elementary child because they've got this powerful imagination, and they've got this huge curiosity and this huge interest in the world around them. And, you know, having had the foundation in his zero to six stage and you know, he was he was able to read and he was able to, you know, use, he knew how to use books, and you know, all of that, when he entered the elementary stage, she was able to kind of take all of the skills that he had acquired, the practical life skills, you know, all of these things, able to take them. And then to lead his own learning. One of the things for me, that was always in the back of my mind, ever since he was born was that I wanted him to be an autonomous learner, I wanted him to, to really show me what it was like for someone to direct their own learning. And in the elementary stage, that's really where this complete autonomous learner just emerged. And he was beyond me, beyond me and beyond anybody, you know, the things that he taught me the things that he went into the things that he discovered, were beyond me, it wasn't things that I prepared a lesson or I prepared, you know, I read up on something and then I'm, you know, giving him a lesson or I'm delivering knowledge to him, it was not that at all. And in the elementary years, they have this huge capacity. And, and, you know, being an educator or parent in the elementary stage, our role is not to fill them with

knowledge at all. You know, in fact, you know, a lot of people ask me, I can't homeschool my elementary child, or I can't be an elementary teacher, because I don't have enough knowledge about the world. And I would say to them, you don't have to know everything, like nobody knows everything. You know, you just have to be ready to go on this journey with the child and they will show you the world in another light. And he he took me through so many different interests that he's had and you know, all self directed using all

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have those skills and that foundation that you had in his first plane of development, all of that language and those, you know, all of the things that he acquired in that first and you're using them now, and following his own interests. He also because of his autism, he also when he gets into something, he really gets into it. And he kind of like, everything else is blocked out. When he was six, he started this interesting birds, which lasted for about 18 months. And every single thing about the work that the bird kingdom, he knew it every single thing, and I remember that when he was about seven, we went to a birds of prey park in England, and he walked into the birds of prey Park, and he was like, this is this, this is that this is this one eats this, this one's from this country, this is really the end. And the guide was like,

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Who is this child. And you know, a lot of people, they, when I tell them the story, they said, That's because he's, he's autistic, or that's because he's this, that's because he's that, and I say that, it's actually nothing to do with that, it's because he's been able to be himself from birth, he's been able to develop according to nature, he's been able to make full use of his gifts that are given to him by nature, his sensitive periods, his absorbent mind, you know, whatever it is, he's been given the opportunity to make full use of them. So what you see coming out now is that huge capacity and a huge potential that's started off from birth, being able to follow his own interests, being able to, you know, go, you know, you know, I always protected his concentration from birth. I know, a lot of people think, how does a newborn baby concentrate, but they can concentrate very well. And I always protected his concentration, something really simple as if I was reading a book to him, when he was a newborn, I would not turn the page until he's looked away. So that concentration that he has, when he's looking at the book, I would protect that. And then once he's looked away, then I would turn the page, something as simple as that. So in the elementary stage, we could really see all of that coming together. And then we could see this amazing knowledge, this amazing capacity to, to explore the world around him, and to articulate it, and to show and share it with everybody. And, you know, it's not just him that I've experienced this with, I've experienced this with, you know, so many children that I've worked with, you know, from all sorts of backgrounds, even children who haven't had a Montessori home, you know, in the elementary classroom, if they've had that opportunity to have that three to six, experience and

then moved out to the elementary class, and we just see this like this, you know, you cannot contain their curiosity, and they lead you in so many directions down this earth that is endless, endless, an endless pool of knowledge. So down these and you begin to learn so much, I learned so much from just being with him. And and, you know, sharing this, these, this journey that he's on with him, sharing them, and as he went through his different interests of birds, or cars, or horses, or whatever it may be being able to, you know, experience that with him. And I myself have learned and enrich me and enrich my own knowledge. But we can only really allow it to enrich ourselves if we're willing to, to, to learn from the child and to be there and be present. And we have that humility to really accept what the child is trying to show us. I love that you talk about how the imagination exploded, that the work ethic really explodes in a second plane and imagination when they have a very concrete, you know, ground base that they developed in the first six years, then if you've seen a tower, then you in the sixth 12, as you can imagine any type of tower so that concrete and reality is really important in the first plane so that they can have this huge imagination solve problems from the world. No every bird like no, we did, and all those other kinds of things. So it's really fascinating. And I think that it's really interesting then to see how that moves into adolescence where normally the workload gets bigger. And we're thinking that they need to work more intellectually, but they're fragile. Again, they go back to like being in a parallel plane. So the first plane of development where they're fragile, like a newborn, and actually you wrote a beautiful thing in one of your Instagram posts. It says, the transition from child to adult is a turbulent time and the child is in need of love and care like the newborn, I learned that I have to shift my role from adult to being a friend. We're not finished yet. He's still got one more year of the stage, but I feel like we're now on the upward slope. And the most important has been to trust the child on his journey. Yes, definitely. I think that, you know, the elementary stage for me was like you, I really saw the intellect of him and many other children like operating on this level that is phenomenal, is unbelievable. And then when he got to the adolescent stage, we just suddenly saw as he transitions, we just saw a shift, you know, and he

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would say to me, my brain is not like it used to be.

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Just say that, to me, my brain is not like it used to be, I can't think the way that I used to think. And it's really profound that Dr. Montessori she shared with us that the adolescence is going through this huge, huge changes in the body. I mean, every one of us has gone through it, we know,

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huge changes in the body, they wake up one morning, and then legs are longer or, you know, whatever it may be, and humungous changes in the brain, I mean, the changes in the brain. Now we've got all this, you know, brain research to back up what Dr. Montessori said, right, and so many changes that are going on in the brain. And, you know, this is not a time that the child should have this pressure to, to learn intellectual knowledge or to you know, complete a curriculum or to complete certain studies, I think that that, you know, in, in the mainstream school of thought, as the child gets older, you add on more, right, and you put you give them more, and that they should be capable of more, but actually, what I've experienced with him, and with all the children that I've worked with, is that, you know, they can take this, they can take so much intellectual knowledge joyfully happening without any pressure, with eagerness and curiosity in the elementary stage. But when it comes to the adolescent stage, now, this is the time where they need to be really working with their hands, and they really need to be experiencing life, like social life. And, you know, Montessori spoke about ERD kingda, the model for the adolescence school. And, you know, the children are involved in running this community, it's like a mini community, and they're involved in running it, whether it's collecting the eggs from the chickens, so that they can cook their their breakfast, or whether it's, you know, cleaning the stables if they have horses, or growing vegetables, or, you know, even like doing office work, you know, we have adolescents here, and, you know, they take over all the office work. So we know that the adolescents needs to be involved hands on in real life work, that is part of their transition to adulthood, they don't need to be sitting there with a textbook, and a curriculum and being pressurized to learn certain things or memorize certain things. And you know, so that they can pass an exam or they can get a certain grade. So they need this hands on opportunity. And they need as much opportunity as possible to take on responsibilities, adult responsibilities, not traveled as adults take on these adult responsibilities, and be able to see the consequences of their work, they really need to be able to see the consequences of the work. So if they don't, if they don't clean out the stable one day, because they've decided not to, then the next day, when they go, it's going to be much harder to clean it out, they need to face that consequence. Right. And we can we can provide that in so many ways as parents at home, you know, I mean, Montessori did talk about, you know, the adolescents going to this herd kinja it's like a farm school and they're kind of not living with the parents. And you know, if if, if there is a environment like that in your area, and you are happy with it, and you trust everyone, now, then it's beautiful for the children to experience that. But I know that like not everyone is capable of doing that. So you know, even in your home environment, just try to give them these opportunities. And if it's not working in your home environment, then give them the opportunity in another environment. So, for example, Noah might not be as helpful as a he in the home as he would be if he was in another environment helping so give him as much opportunity to, to be both have those responsibilities in the environment that works for him. So that he can, it can be part of who he is, you know, and this is what they need in that space. They need these opportunities, they need this hands on connection to the earth connection to to life, you know, through the through water through animals through other people and they need to be in a community where they are respected. The adolescence is

very sensitive and they're very vulnerable. They need to be in an environment where they're respected for who they are and not judged constantly. And Dr. Montessori tells us that they are like newborns, you know. So you have to, you know, do we judge our newborns every time

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So, we can't judge our our adolescents, you know, we have to give them this endless love. And one of the biggest shifts I had to make in myself is his shift away from being the mom or being the teacher, or, you know, shift away from that. And I'm talking about even being a Montessori guide, shift away from being that to now being a friend because in an adolescence community, they would have these adults who mentor them and who are like friends to them rather than like teachers to them, shift away from that because it's

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through that experience of him, you know, making his own choices and having his own discussions that he's able to construct his adult self. And if we don't step out the way, they can't construct that adult self in the way that it's supposed to be constructed, so we need to step out the way and and be with them rather than, you know, be their friend, rather than seeing ourselves as the one who's, you know, direct to them. And it's very difficult. I mean, I don't know how you did it.

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With with adolescence, it's very difficult. And then when you have an an adolescent, who has been through the Montessori philosophy, from birth, they're very self directed, they know who they are, they know who they want to be, they don't, they don't get impacted by prep peer pressure as much because they have their own kind of concept of who they are, and what it is, you know, what's right, and what's wrong, and what they want to do and not do. And it's just really beautiful, when you give them that freedom to begin to be able to see who they are, and what they what they show you. And, you know, it's been really good for 12, from 12, to about 16, he was just free to do what he wanted to do. And I mean, like, totally free. So I do want to say that there was like two years where I don't think he picked up a pen. And he's somebody who loves language. I mean, as a, as an elementary child, he loved language, he would write stories, non stop, and you'd write letters, and you do all these things. But you know, from there were two years in his adolescent stage where he just wouldn't pick up, he didn't want to pick up a pen, he didn't want to buy anything. And I let him be, I took a lot of trust, took a lot of drugs, but I let him be. And it's only recently that he, he knew that he had to take his igcc high school exams to get into university. And he's thinking about studying psychology, or philosophy or sociology. So he knows he needs to take some exams to enter university. So it's only recently that he decided to work

towards them. So it wasn't his whole life working towards it, it was just a part of his life. And he actually, you know, took the English having not written for so long, took the English exam, and, you know, got an ace, or he just showed me, you don't need to be writing all the time to build up to that you don't need to you can, you can let your child be free. And just trust that when the time comes, that they will do it. And the time comes, they can do it. If you've allowed them to develop according to nature, and according to their planes of development, and you've allowed them to really capitalize on those powers that they're given at each stage, then you can give them that freedom in the adolescent stage and they will show you that what they're capable of is beyond what you imagined. That's so beautiful. I there's so many things that I would love to ask you about your Montessori parenting, but I also would love to touch on some of the work that you're doing your school and I know that Islamic Montessori is something that you're really passionate about, and how you believe there's Islamic education and Islamic parenting and how would you touch on that for us how you bring that into your home, in your school and that kind of thing. I think that the Montessori method itself is it's a very holistic method. And it's based on the nature of the human being how the child naturally is and how they naturally learn and develop. And there's a huge emphasis in the Montessori philosophy about respecting the child and trusting the child. And for me, you know, as a Muslim, I see that that's that's part of my faith, you know, that part of our faith is to trust the child and to respect the child. So it's when I you know, with my work in Islamic Montessori, it's not that we are. It's not that we're trying to

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make Montessori Islamic, but it's trying to understand that all of this Montessori is already part of who we should be, as Muslim people, we should be these people who have this, this trust and should be this people have this love for the child, we should be this people who who follow the natural development of the child. This is actually who we should be. And, you know, in Montessori education, there's, you know, all in all of Montessori, his work is on this backbone of cosmic education, right, of being able to discover your own cosmic task, and seeing the universe around you and seeing everything in the universe around you has a cosmic task and we too, have a cosmic task and we have a purpose and we want the child to discover their purpose and their contribution that they're going to make to this this Cosmos of life, you know, this inter interconnected web of life. And, you know, as a Muslim, that's, that's something that is very much ingrained in my faith. That, you know, we are, you know, everybody has a purpose in life and we are part of this interconnected web. And we are you know, we are here to serve

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Have, and here to find a way that we can serve and that we can facilitate for the betterment of, of life, whether it's the betterment of other humans or the betterment of animals or the betterment of the environment, or whatever it may be. So for me, you know, Montessori in Islam

go really well together, actually, it's, it's one thing, you know,

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and when I do my work at, you know, in Islamic Montessori, it's more to just bring, raise that awareness amongst other people who have the Islamic faith to raise that awareness that this is not something that is different from who you should be. Anyway, this is the same thing. And so a lot of the work that I do is just connecting the terminology, you know, it may be given in a different way, but it's actually what we what, you know, Muslim people should be doing anyway, you know, we should be these people who are full of respect and humility and love and, and trusting the child and supporting the development, that's what we should be. And that's what we should be wanting for all of our children, you know, so just really connecting the two together, there isn't much hard work to have to do to do anything is very well deserved, because for me, it's it's not about teaching a child Islam or about, you know, it's just about allowing the child to be who they are, and grow according to nature. And then they will show us, they will show us the capabilities that they have. So even in my school that we have here, you know, lots of people will come to visit my school and I say, you know, how do you teach your children about God? Or how do you teach your children about Islam? Or how do you teach them to pray? And, you know, I just say to them, you know, the nature of the child is that, you know, when they see something amazing, they just say, wow, you know, that is the prayer, you know, that amazement, and that appreciation of whatever they have experienced. That is the prayer. That's the connection that they have. So we don't necessarily teach our children religion, but we have, but through the environment of respecting the child and loving the child and having all have these beautiful qualities that we try to develop in ourselves and being spiritually prepared and aware, you know, that in our faith, you have to spiritually purify yourself and Montessori said, you have to spreadsheet verify us.

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In our faith, you have to strip yourself of your deep rooted defects. And then Montessori also says strip yourself of your deep rooted defects. And so the work that I do is, is just really letting people see that it's the same thing. It's not something different so that, you know, people who do follow a particular religion, they don't feel like they can't embrace the Montessori method. Because it's, it's different, because it's not different. This is a very human natural method, and it's suited to anybody in any faith or in any culture on any country. You know, on any tradition. It's because it's all based on nature is based on Dr. Montessori, his observations of the child to see how they naturally grow and develop. That's wonderful. It makes me really excited because you're like a translator, like I'm just translating the terminology so that people understand maybe from Islam or from Montessori, how they fit together. It's really, really exciting. And I think that, you know, you spoke so beautifully about, like the universal child, how this is all the children the same, but also

culturally, like so now that you're in Malaysia, and you grew up in the UK? Do you see Montessori playing out differently, like the different things that parents are worried about, or the children you know, they have the same human tendencies, but culturally, we're also raising them to absorb their culture and their time in place. So that this was one of the things that I was really excited to experience when I first opened my school in Malaysia. So I already ran a school in England for five years before I came out here. And you know, I had all of my experiences mostly been with, you know, children in England. And when I came to Malaysia, and I set up my classroom I remember the first few weeks feeling like really excited to see how do these children who have a very different culture, very different style of upbringing, near the Malaysian people are really lovely people, like so lovely people. When I when I came out here, the first two weeks I just melted. So I just melted I was like, you know, this is just so beautiful. The speed of life here is different. You know, it's not as rushed as, as what it was when I was in England. You know, it's just a really beautiful country. People are really, really beautiful. And I was really curious to see how would these children

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being amongst learning environment. And I know that, you know, before I opened my school, a lot of people did come to me and say to me, you can't do Montessori in Malaysia. It doesn't work with Malaysian children. Yes, a lot of people. You can't do Montessori in Malaysia. It doesn't work with Malaysian people. And, you know,

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you're going to need to make changes. There are things that you're going to have to put in that are not Montessori but

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This is what the Malaysian child needs. And I said to the, you know, I said to everybody look, you know, I believe that Montessori is a universal method, it's suitable to all children everywhere. And I'm just going to go with what we did in in England, but of course, in the cultural setting,

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and, you know, offer that to the child and see what they show me. And it's been really, really beautiful to experience, there are differences in how the children will approach, let's say, certain activities or, you know, different interests that they may have had, that I haven't ever experienced when I was working in England. So there are differences. But, you know, they are, they have enjoyed the environment so much. And it's been, you know, such a blessing to see these children

who come, you know, Malaysian children who come to this Montessori environment, see how they interact, and see how they are. And it's taught me a lot, because, you know, it's taught me another way of how children might be, it's not. So it's not completely different, it's still the universal child, but it's just another way that they are. And it's been absolutely, it's been such a beautiful experience, and it's expanded my understanding of the child so much expanded my understanding of the child, and I try my best to keep my school within the culture, Malaysia at the moment is kind of shifting away from its culture. And I'm the kind of person that really likes to stick to culture, you know, and at least give those children that experience of that culture. So, you know, when I was putting in our kitchen, in our three to six classroom, I decided to make it a tiled kitchen, like you would commonly see in a Malaysian country house. And, you know, we got these little straw mats that are traditionally made in Malaysia, you know, so the children were using those instead of maybe using like a carpet mat that we had in England. So we tried as much as possible to bring in like, the cultural elements of their environment into the classroom. So there are differences from what I had in England, but the way you know, the child is the child is universal, universal, you know, they, they embrace the environment, the same way that it was embraced in England. And I haven't had to make any changes to Montessori itself. I haven't had to, like, make any changes. It's been absolutely beautiful, absolutely perfect. And, you know, I would, I could never walk away from this.

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I could never look around and think I want to go back to England to do that. Because it's just been so you know, when you're in a country where children don't have this opportunity, and they don't have this experience, and some of the children that come to us, they would have never had early as experience, you know, so when you're in a country like that, and you do it, you just feel like you it's a it's a big sense of fulfillment. And I feel like that what I got as a child, from my experience in Montessori school, I can now give it back to the children that are here. And that's been really, really beautiful. Oh, wow, that's so fun that you've had such a different experience. And yet, it's kind of the same experience as well, in many ways. And I know that your school is actually multilingual, where you have Malay, Arabic and English. And I guess parents would probably be curious how that works in practice and how these children absorb the different languages. Do you have different teachers with the different languages? Is that how you do it? Yeah, so we are trilingual. In Malaysia, there will be children who speak Malay as their first language. And they'll also be children who speak English as their first language. So the Malaysian cultures is already mixed. And there's also Tamil and, and Mandarin that are commonly spoken in the environment. So the children are exposed to different environment, different languages in their environment.

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I always try to honor the Malay language, the language of the country, I, you know, I had the

choice to make my school an English medium school, but I didn't want the children to feel like it's better to learn English central on their own language. So we've always ensured that their Malay heritage was rich in the school, the language is rich in school, I didn't speak any Malay five years later.

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So you know, but I always have an adult in the environment who can speak Malay very well. And then we also have an adult in the environment who can speak English very well. And then we try our best to have another adult who speaks only Arabic to the children, so that they're having those three languages. And if we had someone who could speak Chinese, we would also have the Chinese in with bring me I would bring in the different, different languages. So the first way that the children are really experiencing is through their interaction with the adult, you know, through their interaction with the adult their day to day interaction, the day to day conversations that they have, that's the first way and then of course, we offer the you know, the oral experiences in those languages. And then we offer the language materials in those languages. And, you know, I have always had this approach to language that not to pressure

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Eyes children into learning another language, but letting it come naturally letting it come from their own love. And children are very curious. I mean, I don't speak Malay. So when I'm in the environment, I'm only speaking in English. And when they want to speak to me, they have to speak to me in English, otherwise, I won't understand. So you see all these like three and four year olds trying to translate each other, you know, it's incredibly cute trying to translate each other so they can express something to me. And then when I say something, they're like translating it back. And it's, it's really beautiful and incredible to see. And I think that, you know, it's, it's totally doable to have a multilingual environment, in a Montessori classroom, and it just really enriches the child's experience and allows them that opportunity to, you know, to be exposed to another language in a way that's quite natural. rather than it being a formal lesson. It's just a natural living part of the environment. And because you're the owner of a school, something that I often get asked is, you know, why do you only have one of everything in the classroom? Because, I mean, why are you teaching them to wait when they even hurt to have two pairs of scissors? Or why can't they work at the same time on the same thing? I think that comes all the way back to what the purpose of Montessori is. And Dr. Lazaro tells us education is we're educating the child for life, we're preparing them for life. So in a real life situation, you have to you have to wait your turn, right, you have to, you know, when you go to, you know, in your house, you don't have like, hundreds of of, of ovens available, that everyone can bake at the same time, or you don't have many of one thing available, you actually it's in the natural environment that we have, you know, your office will have one photocopier, you have to wait, you know, things like that. So we're

preparing the child for real life, right. And everywhere around us, the child, you know, the adult has to experiences this, you know, where we have to wait, and we have to be patient, we have to take turns, or we have to whatever it may be. And we that's also reflected in the classroom, we provide the most natural setting. That is, according to the to nature, the most natural setting, and in the natural setting of life, there aren't going to be multiples of everything. So in our classroom, we don't provide multiples of everything. And that having one material of you know, one of each material creates so many opportunities for learning for developing your will, for taking turns, for respecting somebody else's work for honoring somebody for appreciating somebody else, there's so many opportunities that come out from that. So for us, it's not just that the child works with the material, and then they get whatever concept is in that material. But it's the whole process of being in the environment. And you know, the whole process of even getting to that material is developing their character and developing their will and developing their personality. So that later on in life, they already had, they've already gone through that. And they've developed their life, that their personality according to what real life is like, and then they're able to then be a contributing member of society. Well, I think we've come full circle. Thank you so much for sharing all of your wisdom with us. Is there anything that you passionate about that you didn't get to share in our conversation? I think I think I've spoken a lot. Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Simone. It's been lovely. And, you know, thank you for your questions. And for the time that you've given me today. It's beautiful, and everyone is going to want to check out Rumi Montessori. So I'll put all of the links to your website and your Instagram and all the places that you are on the internet in the show notes. So check those out. And you said, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it. Thank you so much, Simone. I appreciate it so much. Thank you.

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So pretty cool, right? We're teaching our children not to learn just for learning sake, but for life. So I know you're gonna want to check out Nusaibah and all her work. So I'll put the links to roomie Montessori over in the show notes at the Montessori notebook calm. And now it's time for a listening question. And Karolina asks, I have a three year old son who has been raised in a Spanish environment, even though we live in the US. I've never wanted to label him as a shy person. But I think that's one of the descriptions that the rest of the people that gets to know Him say about him. So how do you work with people that are shy? Or have some personality traits of shyness? And how do you help these kinds of people to succeed? And what can I do as a parent to encourage my child to be more open to others and to play and work with others.

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So, indeed, I've also learned to try not to label children as shy or any other labels that could be like a clown or naughty as they can really keep a child in that role, and even more positive labels.

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Like, Oh, you're so smart or can be unhelpful because actually it becomes a lot of pressure for the child to live up to those. You might even want to think about like, reviver labeled as a child, and am I still trying to unlearn that label? So what I first like to do is to acknowledge if the child is finding it hard, like, kind of translating for them. Are you not wanting to talk yet? And would you like to warm up a bit first, and come and say, Hi, when you're ready. So that can be really helpful. Or if someone else calls them shy, we could translate the other way for them, oh, they'll get talking once they feel comfortable. So then you can kind of be in between translating for your child or translating for the other people so that they don't have this level of shy boys being put on them. And then what I also really like to do is yes, I don't want to change in my child is, but we can start to build the skills that they might need. So for example, if you were going to a birthday party, you could practice on your way there. Like when we go to a birthday party, we bring your gift, and we say happy birthday. And so you could practice it on the way so that when they walk in, they automatically say happy birthday. And that is like a social grace that you've been able to teach them.

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You can also give the child a choice in how they greet people. So like when it's not a pandemic, in my classes, we practice shaking hands when a child arrives. But I never forced them to. So sometimes the parents so interested in like, Oh, can you shake hands, and I then can pull them aside and say, listen, maybe your child might like to come to class in a different way. So some children like to tell me a story, or they bring something to show me or they find a leaf or a flower along the way, which they like to bring as well. And that's their way of saying hi.

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That can make your child feel a little bit more in control of the situation. And they feel more empowered. And it's like someone coming to visit your house, and you have some control of how to set up that situation. You can set up some activities maybe ahead of time that your child finds fun to do. And so when the visitors arrive, it might be like, you've set up some playdough and a few other things. And then they usually so excited to show the visitors what they've set up and they can get on and do that together.

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And then it could also be something to do with the confidence in the language. So I'm kind of curious what kind of input they have in English. So if you're speaking Spanish at home, they may feel not so confident with English at the moment. So how can you increase the input of English?

So do you have a babysitter who might be a native English speaker, or maybe a teenage neighbor who could come over and read books with them once a week? You know, things like that, that they can start to help them feel more confident in speaking English. And then I also have a book recommendation. I really love Susan Kane's book, it's called quiet the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking. And not to give too much away. But the first chapter is my absolute favorite, and basically talks about why is it in any way that it's expected that everyone's an extrovert and can immediately warm up to people and make small talk? So it's also like starting to shift that paradigm of like, yeah, is it not okay to be shy and to take some time to warm up. So I hope that helps, in short, kind of allow your child to be who they are, because that is their beautiful person, that they will be in the world. And then also just help them to start to learn the skills that they'll need in society. So, everyone, that's it for today, I hope you all enjoyed the first episode of our new season a podcast, and I'll be back next Friday with a new episode where I got to interview Kara, who is six years old, and her mother Mars, who you may know on Instagram, as Montessori from Mars, Kara and I spoke for over an hour and you're not going to want to miss it.

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I am also getting super excited as the Montessori baby book is nearly here. And it's now available for pre order and will come out on the 11th of May. I wrote the book with Jennifer who's a deca from Nigeria who is amazing. And the book covers everything how you applying the Montessori principles from right during the pregnancy and right through the first year. And we also have some super fun bonuses for those of you who are pre ordering so I'll pop a link for all of that in the show notes if you want to check it out. One of my favorite bonuses is a poster for you to download and print for your fridge which is written from your baby's perspective to any visitors grandparents babysitters and things about how they can apply Montessori with them as the baby so everyone needs that cheat sheet alone. Okay, so I'll keep you updated all about the book launch as it gets closer. And till next Friday everyone.

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Thanks for joining me for the Montessori notebook podcast. The podcast was edited by Luke Davies from filmprov media and podcast asked by Hiroko Imai. To find out more about me and my online courses visit the Montessori notebook.com. Follow me on Instagram at the Montessori notebook for pick up a copy of my book The Montessori Toddler for its new prequel The Montessori Baby from your local bookstore, Amazon or where books are sold. They're also available as ebooks or

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ebooks and have been translated into over 20 languages. I'll be back in a week with more Montessori inspiration. And in the meantime, perhaps you'll join me in spreading some more peace and positivity around the world.