

The Montessori Notebook S02E08

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Hi everyone, Simone here again, How are you all doing? As usual, I'm hopefully here to bring you your weekly dose of peace and positivity in conversation with one to three friends about how they bring the Montessori approach into their lives. And so back in April, I got to talk with Theresa for Montessori in real life, and she liked me doesn't need much introduction to you if you're following her on Instagram. But through her work, she truly gets to give us a peek into Montessori in their home, which now looks like two children, a partner and living in the northwest in the US. Theresa is a trained Montessori teacher currently not in the classroom, but applying the principles in their home with lots of time outdoors to she loved working in the classroom, helping parents and now her work online allows her to do the same inspiring us from involving the children in the kitchen, to helping her children master the thing that they're interested in right now. So I hope you've enjoyed the conversation as much as I did. But before we get to my chat with Theresa, I often get asked if Montessori really prepares children for the real world. So for example, if we're so kind and respectful, how are they going to deal when people are mean? Or things get competitive, when things don't go their way? and giving them freedom is great, but like what about when they have to do something. So firstly, I need to say that Montessori doesn't mean that your child isn't going to have any struggles, that they're not going to have ups and downs. I think it's simply a more respectful way to be with them as they navigate everything that life throws at them. And they know that that will be there not to fix their problems, but to support them, to give them space to give some guidance if they want it. And that we love them even when they get things wrong. So we can't change the rest of the world. But we can change how we react. We can also remove obstacles. So we're trying to set up our homes and our classrooms so the children can have as much success as possible. And then the child receives an enormous amount of satisfaction from mastering something and feeling super capable. And they're motivated to continue to be curious learners and seek out information. And so yes, we remove those obstacles, but we also allow for them to work things out for themselves. So as my Montessori friend, Nichole Holtvluwer always

says, she says the struggle is essential. And they also need to have things that are a little challenging, and then they work it out. So they're learning like, I can do this, or I can learn this or I can fix this or if I work at something, I can do it. And I also believe that the Montessori approach is about building skills in our children, so that they can deal with things that life throws at them. And when things go wrong, they can learn and practice skills for the next time, include working together because there actually are a lot of opportunities to work with others and being community with different age children. You know, sometimes they're helping someone and sometimes they're the one being helped. And I really love the Montessori allows children to make discoveries for themselves not simply to rote learn things to pass tests. And these children then learn how to find out things that they don't know about how to follow their interests, and how to become enormously creative thinkers to solve problems. And another important aspect of Montessori, I think, is having kids learn to take responsibility. So they put things away so they're ready for the next person. They're supportive if they need to make amends if they've heard a friend or something in the environment. And they learn to look after the classroom and others from the youngest ages. And we also do have limits so that when things do need to happen, we do it kindly And clearly, and usually making it in a way so that they feel like they have some control over it, even if it's something that prefer not to be doing. So all this to say that Montessori can help children build skills, being in community with others have difficulties and learn to work out solutions and do things they don't love doing too. But children are still going to have their insecurities, their anxieties and their weaknesses. They won't like it when someone gets angry at them. And I don't think any education or parenting approach can promise that children will be happy 100% of the time. And I don't think that's the purpose. But I do think that Montessori supports our children to be curious learners and responsible human beings. And they know that they can keep brushing themselves down and keep learning just like we're all doing really. And I love this quote by another Montessori friend, Aubrey Hargis. She wrote respectful education prepares children for life. He doesn't train children for job success. It nurtures their creative and intellectual powers, divorcing them from any external mark and doing so keeps alive that intrinsic love of work. So I think that sums it up pretty well. And I hope it's a useful perspective for people. And now it's time for my conversation with three verbs. So I hope you enjoy it.

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Hi everyone, some idea and I'm very excited to introduce you to Theresa

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from Montessori in real life, I'm sure that many of you already follow her on Instagram, and I can't wait to get to find out the person behind the Instagram account. So I hope you all enjoy this conversation as much as I'm sure we are going to. So, Theresa, welcome. And would you like to start by introducing us to your darling D and S? on Instagram, we see them in their daily life. And

I'd love to know a little bit about them. Yeah, well, thank you for having me on here.

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D turns four at the end of June. And she is both fiercely independent, as well as incredibly nurturing, especially with her little brother, and her beloved baby doll.

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She has such a wonderful imagination and zest for life. And she can just make up games and play outside for hours. When it comes to the shelf, she is also interested and is drawn to number work and scissors and sewing and tracing. So it's been really fun to see. And then S is turning 2 at the end of May. And he is I know it's gone by so fast.

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He is our snuggler. He's independent, but he also wants to have plenty of time near on my body as much as possible. And he adores D and tries to do every single thing that she does, with some success. And though he's open to trying any kind of work on the shelf, his true passion lies with anything with wheels, or involving movement.

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And he's starting to really talk up a storm and entering that stage where he lets us know exactly what he likes and what he does not like. So it's been fun to see him enter that that true toddler time. Yeah. Oh, that's amazing. I mean, I still remember when Yeah, he was just such a wee baby. And you're introducing him today? And yeah, so I can't believe that he's gonna be too. And I love that age, and also how fast the second one seems to grow up. Do you find that like, because you said yes. He's trying to do everything that he's doing. Mm hmm. Yeah, he is growing up so fast. And it's I'm finding it a lot harder to watch him grow up. So fast. You know, I think I was so excited for D to hit those milestones and grow up and I'm wanting time to really slow down. Now that asked us growing up so it's, it's a different experience? Yeah. Oh, for sure. Oh, that's really nice. Um, so now people mostly know you from Instagram. And I'm curious what your work kind of looks like because you are a full time mom, and you do Instagram and you're very active on Instagram? Do you have some kind of set structure to your day? And how? How does it look? And why did you stop there? Yeah, work is pretty flexible. I mean, it really has to be because I am home with the kids D is in part time. So she goes to Montessori School, most mornings. But as is home with me all the time. So there are weeks I fit in more writing and creating. And then there's weeks when the kids and I are just playing outside all day, and I really catch up at night. I do really enjoy waking up early before the kids, at least an hour before them. And that's really when I

do my best thinking and I drink my tea or coffee and it's just silent in the house. And I really enjoy that time. And I find when I give myself that time in the morning, I'm able to be much more present with the kids later.

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So that doesn't happen every morning, but almost every morning. And then also weekends are a time when I really plan out my week as far as Instagram goes and writing. And so I find

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when I let my husband take the kids out for like a half day adventure, and just spend that time working on the weekend without interruption. I'm able to plan out the week in a way that makes it less stressful for me throughout the work the school and work week. Yeah, I mean, when did Instagram become really work? I guess because at one point you were just sharing and then you're like, Oh, actually, I really love sharing and I can help families as well. Yeah, it really was a, I don't know, just kind of a natural shift that did. It went from just a journal kind of, of our life to, you know, offering inspiration and suggestions. And, you know, responding to people's questions. So it really did shift from from just something for fun to work. It's still fun, but it's also work. Yeah, I mean, I think you started with Bridget with the Montessori Guides first. Is that like the first kind of offering you had? Yeah, yeah. And so that's kind of when it also began to gradually shift into you know, we created that business. And so along with offering peeks into our day to day life, we were sharing our monthly guides and then we started offering

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The parents guide course.

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So it's been fun but more of a juggle, you know, to also work on the course and the guides, as well as the Instagram and the blog. So trying to really find time for each of those is something I'm still figuring out. Yeah. And I think that I was initially joined to your account to because you were one of the few Montessori teachers who or was also a parent. And so when you actually were did your Montessori training before your kids were born? Is that right? And you were working in the classroom? Can you tell us a little bit about maybe something that happened in the classroom or Yeah, yeah, well, in my path to become a Montessori teacher was not exactly linear. I worked in a Montessori school as an assistant right after college, but I was already planning to get my PhD in developmental psychology. So I continue with that, but then realize that although I loved doing all the research I was doing on social emotional development and infancy. I was getting more, you

know, into academia where I realized I wouldn't be working directly with children and the families. And that's really what my where my passion lies. So I did leave with my master's degree. And then that's when I went back to a Montessori School. Worked again, as an assistant, they got my training really quick, like enter training program, became a Montessori teacher and taught in a toddler classroom as well as led parent infant Montessori class. And I think it was the first time the school I worked at had offered a parent child class. And I realized how much of course I love working with toddlers, but I just really loved helping parents incorporate Montessori into their daily lives and incorporate it into their home. And so once I had D, I did stop teaching. But I can wanted to continue that parent education piece. Because I think that, you know, toddlers, most toddlers are at home or at least a lot of them. And parents isn't didn't really have any any tools or any idea of how to what Montessori meant beyond a school setting. Yeah. Oh, no, I think that's really interesting. I'm also passionate about working with parents and because then the children get to benefit even if they are at Montessori Preschool for a few hours. You know, they get to benefit 24 seven from the Montessori approach. And it's really interesting that you hadn't planned to but that's exactly how you managed to transition to bring Montessori and helping parents at the same time, right? Instagram. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And I may go back to teaching. I'm just kind of leaving it open for now and seeing where life what direction I go in? I'm not sure. Yeah. Oh, that's exciting. And I mean, I always like to ask people, from time to time I say, like, What does Montessori mean to you? And like maybe today because maybe when you started in Montessori, it meant something and what how has it changed? And what does it look like? If I asked right?

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Yeah, I think especially as D has entered school, you know, where I'm not there. And I'm, I'm not homeschooling, at least not anymore. Since schools have opened. I think Montessori has become so much more about a way of parenting and a way of living for me. I've learned so much over the course of having two little kids and with the chaos that that brings, and I love Montessori materials. But there's just so much more to Montessori. And I think that has just been highlighted, especially in the last year. So instead, what really guides me in Montessori and parenting is that respectful communication piece and developing an appreciation for our natural world and just raising capable and confident and kind humans. And so I feel like I'm just seeing the bigger picture more than I did when I worked in a classroom or even when it was just a little one. And it seemed like the materials were kind of the big piece. Yeah, no, it's really interesting to see like how it actually changes when you maybe have your own children or maybe even that Montessori I think we had some preconceptions about it. And now we're actually getting to the core of what is Montessori it's not just a beautiful shelf, although that is really inspiring. I mean, actually, that's quite a good point. Because I sometimes feel I don't know how you do. If I post a picture of my classroom and it's perfectly sunny. That's the type of day I'm gonna take a nice photo of my classroom because it doesn't it's not always sunny in Amsterdam, as it probably isn't in the northwest where you live. And I kind of worry that I want to post it to inspire people but on the

other hand, I've been working in Montessori for over 15 years and my classrooms developed over these years and I wouldn't want people to expect that that's all Montessori is do you feel like that sometimes as well? Oh, I feel that a lot I in fact, I feel like I post fewer and fewer shelfie quote unquote, pictures because I do struggle with that and you know, that is just one small piece of our day and also a lot of times the shelf is not

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looking beautiful, the toys are all on the ground and the kids are independently plain and busy. And that, you know, there's this era of perfection on Instagram. That isn't completely false all the time, right there is a beauty to Montessori materials and an environment but often, especially at home, it's, it's a bit more chaotic. And, you know, it's messy materials are mixed up or repurposed. Um, you know, lessons are half finished. And so I feel like more and more, I'm trying to share both sides of it on Instagram, but it's hard, you know, because you you want, you know, you want to share the beauty, but you also want to share the reality. And there's there can be both, I think, and sometimes you don't feel like sharing when you're in your darkest moments like those are. Those are tricky sites where like, I feel like posting on Instagram when I'm having a good day. Oh, exactly. Well, and I, I also deal with that in terms of the children's privacy. So out of respect for the children, I am not going to film them in their hardest moments, or when they're throwing a tantrum a doesn't feel respectful. And be you know, I need to be there present with them to help them through what they're going through. And so I'm not going to post those really tough moments and tough days, because it's just not respectful. So I just hope that people realize on Instagram, too, that, you know, we do want to share our reality. But you know, we can only share so much too. But I think that what you've really managed to do is like just like the, your Instagram handle is Montessori in real life, you're showing people what Montessori could look like and how capable your young children are, like I love just seeing, you know, as caring a little bucket

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of water and just how slow and that you're not interrupting. And people might think, Oh, you know, mine could do that, too. And I remember I think it was a long time ago when you were featured on my blog. And there was it was one of the first IKEA kitchens, you know, that we'd seen just show people like, yeah, if you have an Ikea kitchen, instead of using it as a toy kitchen, you could use it as a real kitchen. This is like an example. Hmm, completely. And so I always want the takeaway to be you know, this is an example like you said, this is inspiration, nothing is something that you must do or must have. You know, I think it's nice for people to see, you know, ideas and to see what toddlers are capable while knowing that every toddler is different. Every home is different. There. There's no one exact way to you know, quote unquote, do Montessori at home? Yeah, one thing that I've really enjoyed doing with you was featuring some of the different voices from my Montessori community. So I first started with, you know, some takeovers and then

reached out to you saying, Would you like to take over the takeovers, and I love seeing all the families that you've reached out to and to, would you like to talk to us about some of the things that you've been working on yourself and your antibodies journey, and also this raising and uplifting of different voices? Yeah, I think

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the takeovers have been wonderful. So thank you for passing that on. To me, it's been so great to hear just those different perspectives. across the world, even within one place, whether it's Montessori or not, I think that we can learn so much from other people's perspectives on, you know, there could be one topic and five perspectives on the same topic. So that's been really important.

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And then I'd say for my anti bias journey, I mean, anti bias education and practice is ongoing work for me as a parent, as an educator as a quote unquote, influencer. And it's really ongoing work for our society as a whole. I grew up in a predominantly white left leaning, upper middle class part of the Pacific Northwest. And I remember feeling like I was already really open and inclusive and informed. So I think until a year ago, I, my gut reaction to being called out for a bias was to be a little defensive. So I have one memory and in mind of, about a year ago, I posted a selection of books that featured diverse characters, you know, for kids, and feeling good about that. And then someone brought to my attention that zero books in my selection were written by

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black authors or people of color, and I remember feeling accused of something that I hadn't intended to do. So in the weeks that followed, though, I really reflected on the idea of intention versus action, and how even with good intention, actions can be problematic. So I, From then on, really reflected on the authors that I chose to highlight and I did a lot of research and took that feedback to heart and so I kind of shifted where I buy my books and the and who wrote those books. And so that's just one thing.

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Example. Obviously, there's there's many others. But I think that was kind of a turning point of really beginning to appreciate constructive criticism, especially when being called out for, you know, a bias. And almost all of us do carry unconscious or subconscious biases. And we need to check ourselves and learn from others who have been on the other end of these biases. And it's really important and, and humbling honestly. And so we often don't have the answers within

ourselves. And I have found it helpful to turn to courses and podcasts and books. And the course that I learned the most from and have reflected on the most through this last year has been the one by Britt Hawthorne, and Tiffany Jewell, their anti bias and anti racist parenting workshop. So one course is just one starting point. But it's an ongoing journey. And so I think my big takeaway has been, you know, steering away from being defensive, and leaning into critiques and to admitting that I was wrong, and you know, trying to learn more and do better the next time.

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Yeah, and I think that that's kind of our goal as a society too, I hope. Yeah. I mean, I'd say we're all just starting and like, this is like a layers of the onion. You think, Oh, I got that right. Oh, I just made a big mistake. Oh, I need to do that again. Yeah. But shifting gears a little. I loved reading. I love reading actually a lot of your posts because I feel like they always bring joy. But I read specifically a post about how Montessori has brought you more joy. And I would love to share that with people because I think that people think oh, Montessori has to be perfect. And it's so much work and all these kind of things. And I love to share with others how much joy it brings me. So I'd love to hear what you say about that as well. Yeah, I think this came up on this blog post. I remember writing because I was having a conversation with a family member about

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parenting being boring, or someone saying that parenting is boring. And I I relate like, I think that we all have those feelings sometimes right? Where things feel anything can feel boring, or you're in a routine that just kind of feels constant.

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But then I also thought to myself, there's so much that isn't boring about parenting, and especially I said, maybe it is because of a lot of what Montessori gives me, for example, I feel like Montessori allows me to find joy in those simple everyday tasks. So what once was chores, when you're involving your toddler in it feels really meaningful and purposeful. And they feel like they're contributing right to the beauty of your environment and to the shared space. And so when I can kind of start to see some of those mundane activities, from their perspective, then like, all of a sudden, it becomes more enjoyable for me too.

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So I feel like finding joy in those, you know, the everyday routine is something that toddlers do, and we can really learn from them in that capacity.

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And then another thing I think that Montessori has given me is I find joy in observing everything they do and how they play. I'm always observing what new skills are they developing? What is their play? whether or not that's with a toy? What does that tell me about their interests or their challenges? And how can I adapt the environment or add a material to help them through that skill? So maybe it's, you know, putting on socks for us? And how can I offer him some hand strength exercises, some scrunchies to pull over his feet or other things where he has to really

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practice those motions that will help him put on a sock. And so I think that keeps things interesting for me. And I'm just constantly observing all those small details of their play and work. Yeah, that's so lovely. And I think like people think parenting can be stressful as well, because I think we often giving orders and things like that, and for people to step back and actually see parenting can be joyful when you step back, and you're guiding them because sometimes we also take it personally, don't we when a child behaves in a certain way? And I think, with Montessori, you're a guide and you're like, Oh, this child's actually needing my help right now, as opposed to, they're giving me a hard time. I'm trying to get out of the door when mentally doing this. And yeah, yeah, that's another really good point. I think about that a lot. And, you know, ever since graduate school, I have geeked out on developmental research. And so I find when I'm able to really dive into the research of why toddlers do this, why three year olds do that, then I

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I'm able to really empathize and, and see things from their spirit perspective. And, you know, there's that quote that we hear a lot of, they're not giving me a hard time, they're having a hard time. And I always keep that in mind, and it helps me stay calm. It's so much more than I would otherwise, because they're not purposely trying to make me mad or manipulate me. They're, they're having a hard time they're going through something, and they really need me to be,

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you know, strong and stable and calm and help work that work through their regulate regulating their emotions. Yeah. And with some s, you definitely do Montessori from birth. Did you also do it with D from birth? I did. Yeah. I mean, I really went straight from teaching. I mean, I was teaching a week before I had D. So it was, it was toddlers, you know, but it was kind of a natural progression.

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But I think even with D as a baby, or even more, so perhaps, you know, I quickly realized that there were parts of Montessori that, you know, might not play out exactly as I had imagined at home versus in a class of children. So.

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But in those early days, I really did begin to focus just on, you know, the idea of respect to the child and developing that close bond. That symbiotic period of the first six weeks is really just about getting to know each other and being close. So that's really what I focused on.

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And respecting just by, you know, moving slowly talking to them about what we were doing before we did it. And as we did it, and just responding to their needs. I did a lot of babywearing in the first few months for both of them.

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So that really helped and honestly was really helpful when I had D as a toddler and had to just keep going about our day without a lot of time for rest. Yeah. And so Esther slept in the little carrier while you went on and did what you were doing. Yeah, I mean, he we did both he would sleep also like on his little topponcino, or, you know, sometimes even our stroller, bassinet, he was much more adaptable than D probably because he had to be. Yeah, yeah. I mean, I love the newborn days. And I think it also has to be because I know, that's not how I did it. When Oliver was born, I was so caught up in I need to do everything while they're sleeping and play and entertain them non stop. And it actually can be very simple to just let them explore their body on the ground and to stretch. And yeah, I think you see that a lot more with your second. Why did I think this was so hard. And of course, some infants are a lot more challenging than others, as happened to be a really, you know, quote, unquote, easy, baby. And so I think we were lucky in that way. And it also helped that D was just so excited to be helpful. She loved getting to help change his diapers, or bring him bring, you know, a wipe over or a burp cloth.

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She loved reading him books. And so seeing that relationship develop pretty early on was really rewarding and special. And I think made those early days easier to how much how far in advance Did you tell her about the baby? Because it's a long time for a toddler, right? me she was so young, she was, you know, she was 23 months when he was born. So she knew all along in the sense that

she came with me to every midwife appointment. She really had to she was just home with me, you know, and my husband was working. And so I don't know exactly how much she understood.

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But definitely towards the end, she did. And she would listen to the heartbeat with the midwife It was really special.

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And so we told her all along, but I don't know how much, you know, she grasped until the end.

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Yeah. And she was surprised.

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Yeah, there's a little baby. That's pretty special. And I think what's really interesting is that her voice would also be a point of reference for us when he came out, you know, as we talk about points of references a lot in the newborn and the first year, because it's a big transition for a baby to be from in utero to the outside world and things like our voice and the songs we sang, and the books we read are all things that they've taken in in the womb. Yeah, so true. I think her voice was probably pretty comforting to him. She was she talked to him as much as I did. Yeah.

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Really fun. And I think that one thing that we all love about your Instagram account is observing your children and when they're at work, and there was one real that really made me laugh, which is about toddlers needing movement. And, um, you know, can you talk us through how you made it. toddlers need for movement and I think as you're saying

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Yeah, loves to do anything with movements. So what kind of things are you exploring in that area right now? Right, yeah, everything really involves movement. And toddlers in general needed so much movement. And I realized that a lot of my videos on Instagram, showed him sitting still and working really carefully with materials, which he also does do. He's a pretty precise kind of child. But I all but then I hear from these parents who are really concerned because their toddler won't do any work on the shelf. And all they want to do is they will climb the furniture and move around.

And so my goal and making that real was just to reassure parents that it's really normal for toddlers to want and need to move. And so I always, you know, of course, you can set up pictures and just go outside and set up lots of kinds of movement work. But I also try to think of creative ways to incorporate movement into other work. So for us, this often means practical life, where he gets to fill in carry buckets of water, where he gets to wash really large surfaces or help in the garden. And so he's getting both the purpose and the movement in one activity.

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And sometimes all he wants to do is simply take trays off the shelf, and then carry the heavy ones back on because it's an exercise for him in maximum effort and balance in movement. And so observing and seeing Oh, okay, that's, that's what he needs right now. And that's okay, you know, he's learning so much still from that. And even D, you know, it almost four needs a lot of movement in her day. So sometimes I'll incorporate that into the shelf work. For example, with three part cards, I could put one set of cards on one side of the room and then put the other matching cards and words on the other side of the room. So she gets to walk back and forth, as she matches. And so there's just so many ways to incorporate movement and kids of all ages really do need that. Which is why Montessori classrooms are so wonderful compared to traditional. Yeah, because the people often say, Oh, you know, can you only go to Montessori if my child sits still and has to wait, like, What sir, is actually perfect for children that need to move because they can concentrate on one thing, and then they can get up and they can walk around and they can watch another child, then they can go and do lots of big movement work and practical life, which we'll talk about in a second, you know, is so full of movement, all of the getting something from the show is going to get in the water. And yeah, what are some of your favorite practical life activities at the moment with DNS, because it's such a big part of Montessori and I see it in your home a lot, right? Yeah, the buckets of water are a big one so carrying buckets of water to clean the table or to do mopping work or lately anything outside so watering the garden I'm DEA loves to fill up you know, a big tub of water with the hose and then as it gets to you know, dunk his watering can and water. So anything outside, they've washed pretty much every piece of furniture we have outside the the wheelbarrows, you know, the bike, so anything like that they love. And then I think food is such a big part of our life and cooking, I love to cook. So I'd say practical life in the kitchen is something that is a big part of our every day. And I shared a video on this recently. But I think we imagined practical life food prep as this very neat and tidy kind of activity as it would be in a classroom where everything is on a tray with small jars and little pitchers. And there's definitely a place for that kind of work. But in our home, it definitely looks like a really messy counter with the kids in the kitchen helper, scooping and dumping and flour going all over the place. And so I realized that if I try to make all the practical life activities small and neat and tidy, then there's such a barrier to entry versus when I'm just already going with something and invite them in. They just want to help and be a part of what we're already doing. And I can always find an opportunity for them. You know, just yesterday, D was helping me

make pesto and peeling garlic and taste testing and letting me know what what other ingredients we needed to add. So I think just involving them, and what we're already doing is a much better use of time than trying to create perfect practical life activities for them that are separate. Hmm. And that's the whole point isn't it is to include them in our daily life and they feel capable and that they're contributing. So that's a very natural way to have a practical life activity that also contributes. Exactly, yeah, I just think you know, we're not modeling after the classroom, right, the classrooms modeled after the home and that's always important to keep in mind. Yeah, thanks for sharing that perspective. I know that one.

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One thing that parents ask all the time is like, how do I get my kids to put away things away, because in a Montessori classroom, they put them away at the end of each activity. So they're available for the next child. But I'm kind of curious how it looks in your home and how that's worked and how you've built that up over the years. Yeah, I'd say this really depends on the time of day. Usually in the morning, we are working at the shelf, and I'm sitting with them, whether it's both of them, or just S, if D is at the school. And during that time, I'm engaging as he wants to. So often, he wants labels for everything right now. So that's what I'm doing. Or, you know, offering verbal assistance, a piece frustrated. And so when I'm sitting there with him at the shelf, observing and assisting as needed, that's when I'm also modeling putting one work away at a time, and I've been doing that since you know, he was really little. And because of that he at this point, really initiate that on his own. And so when he's doing his shelf work, he's putting one away, and then getting the next one out. But when the kids, you know, let's say at lunchtime when I'm getting food ready or doing it for a task or writing, and they're playing independently with lots of open ended toys and other things, they are definitely not putting one toy away before they pick the next one. And it's not realistic, you know, to interrupt or really kind to interrupt their, their flow and their concentration on play to get them to clean up. So in those instance, instances and independent play, we usually just clean up together, before we move on to rest time or whatever act going outside whatever activity comes next. So we're pretty flexible about it, I'd say it just depends on the type of play that's happening.

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I will say that, because cleanup is really a part of our activity cycle.

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It's something that just happens and it's not something that I really have to force or nag my kids about, the more routine it becomes the less of a battle it is. It's really just, oh, we always clean up before we go outside, like, do you want to put away the blue blocks or the red blocks first? That

kind of thing? Yeah. And there's less of tidy away anyway, because we're trying not to fill out homes with so much stuff and rotate things so that it keeps it interesting for the children and based on their interest. And so there is less things to put back, which makes it a bit more manageable. Right? Right. That's a good point, too. We only put out as much as we think they can put away. It does get hard with two kids, there's always going to be more toys than you want, just because they might want different things. But in general, I don't put so many pieces out that it's going to be impossible for them to put them away. I guess people would ask that, too, is like do you have? How do you manage the different age groups? Do you have higher things on higher shelves for D? Or do they play with some things together? And how's that looking at the moment? Right? Yeah, when s was younger, I separated it more just because of, you know, safety issues. Now they do share a shelf. Technically, D has the top of the shelf, and S has the bottom of the shelf. But really they play with each other's work a lot in different ways. You know, it's really cute to watch us attempt to do D's work. And he's really out of the mouthing phase. So as long as I'm supervising I feel okay about it. And D still enjoys S's simple work and finds new ways to use it. And then we also have open ended toys on a different shelf

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across kind of from the Montessori shelf, and they both engage with those. So

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it's really shared at this point. But I think that depends on the age. And when you're talking about mounting and safety. You kind of have to gauge based on that. Yeah, and also, I mean, if I interrupt that's a whole nother part of just being a sibling, isn't it? Yeah. Oh, yeah. And they definitely do interrupt each other. You know, that's a constant work in progress of, Oh, you know, she's using that right now. You can, you know, wait for your turn or you can work with this instead. You know, luckily because D is in school S has time most weekday mornings to kind of focus without his big sister interrupting and she has time at school to focus on her work. So I'm really grateful that school was able to open back up this year for her it's been really, really good for her and for us. Um, so I think that's why often when they're both home in the afternoon, it's less about shelf work and more about open ended where they really are starting to engage in play together. And when all else fails, we just go outside because they're always best friends and everything is fun when we're outside. Yeah, it is. It's so it's such a I don't know what are your favorite things outside at the moment, but I just found it easy to be outside with children. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Pretty much everything outside is our face.

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It

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The springtime. So we're doing a lot of gardening, this is our first time we planted vegetable seeds. And so we've been watching those grow and caring for them. And we're all really enjoying that. Of course, they always think that it's the peas are ready to eat and it's still going to be a little while.

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And then another cool thing we've been doing this spring is we got Mason bee cocoons, and Mason bee house. And so we watch the mason bees hatch from their cocoons and pollinate our garden. And hopefully they'll come back.

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And you know, make a little home in the in the bee house we made or that we got and help put together. So that's been kind of an exciting thing that we'll get to see through the season. Yeah. Other favorite things are a mud kitchen that my husband made a couple years ago. It's just always ahead, as D is big into imaginative play. she just, she creates Farmers Market scenes, and she makes lots of rock soup. And it's really fun to see what they come up with there. Yeah, I think it's a misconception about Montessori that, you know, Montessori children aren't imaginative because we don't expose them to so much fantasy, but real life, so then they get this wild imagination and but once they get to two and a half, three, you start to see them play out the scenarios from their real life in these little imaginative play. Yeah, it's really beautiful to see how they, how they do act it out. And I think that's where the difference lies is that they're acting out scenes from real life from their experiences. And it's really helping them process, those things that they do and those things that they see, versus if they're exposed to a ton of fantasy than their pretend play replicates that instead of their real life often. Yeah, definitely. And I know that something that people find really difficult when they first learned about Montessori is to stop saying good job all the time. I think it's just something like that. You just say, with dogs, and then with young children, oh, good job, a good boy, good girl, and those kind of things. And you have, you know, other ways to say that. So maybe you could help parents understand first, why we avoid saying good job so much, and other things that you do instead of this praise, right? I mean, saying good job comes automatically to all of us. So I want to preface with that. We, I have said it, you know, we say it sometimes I think I just think about what?

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What can we say that's that's better, that's more helpful. And I think one thing that's problematic with good job is just how vague it is. It's really not descriptive, or getting into any detail of what

we're saying good job about. Another issue is that it's, it's putting it on, you know, our judgment, where, of course, we feel proud of our children, they accomplished something. But we really want our children to be focused on their own efforts, and their feelings about what they accomplish, rather than focusing on how we feel about it.

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And I always think about the research at Stanford by Carol Dweck, who coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset. And so a child with fixed mindset believes that they are either good or bad. And there's just there's only two options, I'm good, or I'm bad at something. And that that can't be changed. Like, that's just who I am.

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The opposite, or the other end is a child with growth mindset, who believes that if I work hard at something, I can get better at it, like I can grow, and I can learn. And so it's probably not a surprise that children with growth mindset are more confident, more successful and more motivated to work through challenging problems than children with a fixed mindset. And so saying, good job kind of promotes that fixed mindset. And there's other phrases to say that would help encourage growth mindset in our children. So a few examples I can think of, are pointing out effort. So saying, Oh, that looks really tricky. You're working so hard on that, that's acknowledging that they're, they're trying really hard at it. And that's what matters, rather than just the outcome. And also acknowledging that it's hard because often, toddlers want to feel, you know, supported and acknowledged, like Yes, thank you. This is really hard, because it usually is for them, even if it doesn't seem like it to us. And another thing I do is try to make it more specific. So I could say something like,

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I noticed that first you tried it this way, and then you figured out how to turn the piece the other way and that made it fit. And so pointing out the details of maybe how they adjusted and wow, like you made that fit by doing this and that

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and then also asking how they feel rather than saying I'm so proud of you saying how did you

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Like, I saw that you did that, and how did it make you feel? And then they get to think about Wow,

I feel really proud of myself, which is, you know, a much more motivating feeling than them doing something to make us proud. Hmm.

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Yeah, no, definitely I have this really weird thing. Like if someone says, Oh, I'm so proud of you, I'm like, What did you do? I'm just really, but it's just something that we say, I think without even thinking about it, and to switch it so that we're actually like, helping them build that feeling of themselves as opposed to what we think about them. And because that's what they're going to need as they get older. Right? They say so, yeah, it's kind of like when de is doing art. And I project, you know, on accident, what I think she's drawing or what if, and she's like, No, that's not what this is. And like, this isn't about you. And yeah, it's not, this is not about me at all she is creating. And all I can do is, you know, comment on what color she's used or ask her about it like, Oh, do you want to tell me about that without assuming that she's drawing something? Or assuming that, you know, it has anything to do with me? It's really just her work? Yeah. And it's even more evident, I think, in SSH, when they're not necessarily drawing anything at all. And all of a sudden, we're trying to make it a tree or things and no, actually just let it be. Mine. Yeah, when you notice when I change as well, when they do draw it for something like this is for grandma, and I've drawn the data, and all of a sudden, there is a story. And so yeah, you don't have to, you can just wait until they tell you about it's really, really lovely.

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And then another question that people always ask about is how do you get your child to play independently? Because so many children, you know, need their parent there to, you know, start the play? Or what to choose? Or what are we going to do or I'm bored. And if that doesn't happen in your house, we want all the chips.

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I think it depends if we're talking about toddlers versus you know, preschoolers, it's quite different for us versus t so asset almost to

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he, he can play independently, but only to a certain extent, right, because toddlers are developmentally wired to want to be near us to mimic what we're doing and to seek our attention. So I think with us and with most, you know, infants and toddlers, we really act as a link between the environment and the child. So I see it as my job to spark interest in an activity by doing my doing it myself and modeling, and doing it with him. And then step back, once he's

engaged with something,

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I also always make sure our play space is in our main area, so I wouldn't expect him to be in a room where he can't see me, he's not going to want to play in a space where I'm not present. So instead, you know, our play space is right next to the kitchen. So if I'm in there, he's more comfortable playing where he can still watch me.

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Because they really just want to feel safe and connected. And that independence grows with time, it's not something that we can just force overnight. So I think really spending that quality time together. And making sure that happens before attempting to do something separate. And always still being in their sight can go a long way. Versus preschool age, I think, you know, the expectation shifts a bit, and they're more capable of truly playing independently for longer periods of time.

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And in that, at that age, I always just recommend starting small and building up. So start with five minutes, you know, and set the expectation and be confident and clear. Like, okay, I have to go fold the laundry, you know, I have to do this. And you can even say you can join me or you can go play and often they start with you and then go play. And then kind of gradually make it longer and longer. But the important part is staying consistent about it. So if you say you're going to do this for 10 minutes, do this for 10 minutes, it's okay, if they're upset and you can acknowledge, you know, I hear you

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I see you're upset you want me to play and I need to finish this task and then I will play with you. So consistency, being clear and kind and you know, making it a gradual progression to build up to more independent play is always my best tip for that age. Yeah, I mean, cuz I think we that connection, you know, they're not going to go off and do all this anyway. No. So it is so much about being there as their base and their guide, and we will continually link them we will always maybe be the link. Oh yeah, it looks different at different ages. A lot of us love the freedom side of Montessori so that the children are weak and follow the child. And actually what we find harder is because it's not well modeled, I think it's giving setting kind and clear limits with children because it is hard to like not lose your temper.

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When they're not listening, but it's also like that we start nagging. It's such a fine balance. So yeah, how do you manage to give these children freedom, and then when sometimes, you know, you have to leave the park or something has to happen, how you set a kind and clear limit? Right? I do think that is the key to being a calm parent. And I find that freedom within limits really helps me stay present and kind and firm at the same time. So I'm really grateful for that whole idea that came from Montessori. And so I always say like, we give freedom within limits rather than giving free rein. So yes, we allow our children to be independent, but that we give them independence in age appropriate ways. And we give them choices and free play, but also age appropriate choices. So maybe that's two choices, not 12 choices.

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And also, just always keeping in mind that there's such a thing as too much control and freedom, I see this a lot on Instagram, of you know, that children have complete control. And that's not actually what toddlers want. Children of all ages want predictability. And they want to know that their adult is in control. And they want to know that their environment is safe. And so when they receive mixed messages about limits, and parents are going back and forth, they they feel insecure and confused, and they want to test until they feel like they're able to predict their environment again. And so we set consistent limits both through the environment, ideally, and we set limits by us. And so there are times we need to set limits ourselves. So you know, some of our limits are around a consistent bedtime, you know, our children, it can waver like a half an hour, but it's not really their choice, if they want to go to start bedtime at seven they choose when they fall asleep, but they don't choose about bedtime.

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It's also not a choice to you know, hit somebody. So that's something that I'm going to stop gently with my body, if any unsafe action to themselves or others. That's that's a limit that I have to set. But I think we can also think about how we create an environment that has built in limits. And so we're not having to constantly stop an action or say no. So I think about limits up in the environment. Examples include child proofing. So maybe you do have something that you can't, your child won't stop going to and it just really isn't safe. Can you put up a baby gate? Can you put up a lock on that so that it's not something your child can access? Or can you offer two sets of shoes by the door instead of a lot more so that that's what your child they get the autonomy of getting to choose what shoes they wear, but both are like seasonally appropriate shoes. And it doesn't create a big

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power struggle of like what shoes I'm going to wear.

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And another big one, I think that I get a lot of questions about is the water access. And so yes, they have access to water, that's a freedom. But the limit is that I'm only going to put so much water in there, I'm not going to put enough water that they're flooding the floor when they're first learning how to use it, I'm only going to put one or two cups of water in it to fill

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and then gradually increase from there. So I think when we're able to set limits through the environment, then it makes our job easier. And it's much more clear to our children to when they just experienced limits naturally, if I think it actually goes back to what we said right at the very beginning about how respectful the Montessori approach is, it's kind of like really showing respect and in the way we set the limits as well. And when we set them intentionally And clearly, then we don't have to get to the point where it's crossed our limits. And then we're snapping and because I can be the other side of like a laissez faire free rein kind of approaches that then you get really angry when the child goes too far. And it is really unpredictable for this child. Right. Right completely. And I think it really helps to talk with your partner and think ahead of time of what what are the important limits, you know, you don't need to set a limit on everything. There are things you can let go of, but what are the limits that really matter in your family?

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Typically, you know, its limits around safety and health and, and sometimes sanity, right? That's okay to set limits around your own sanity. And so I think, thinking about what's most important and what you can let go of is important, like better to have fewer limits, but be really consistent about those limits, then to have limits about everything. I think the going back and forth is what can really confuse and upset children and

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The parent. Yeah. And I love to sometimes saying like, Oh, I didn't know, let's, let's see, as opposed to that it's a yes or no at that moment, because if I don't know how tired we're going to be or whatever, let's see when we're feeling I mean, that's an okay response to it's better than changing my mind. put it that way. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And it's hard. We all have to change our mind sometimes. Right. But it's just kind of thinking ahead a little bit more. And like you said, if you're

not sure, let's say you're not sure.

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It's perfectly acceptable. And I think that leads on nicely to like having other people working without kids. So there's grandparents and caregivers and partners. And sometimes they're not on board with how we do the Montessori approach. And you have come up with some really lovely tips that you share with caregivers in infographic kind of versions and things like that. Have you used them successfully? And?

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Yeah, well, I've been lucky because my everyone in my family on both sides yo follows my blog and Instagram, so I don't really have to give them my tips. They're pretty funny, though. They'll catch themselves saying good job. Like I'm not supposed to say that. It's okay.

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I think it helps to consider also like, how much time is this person, this caregiver or family member really spending with your child? If they're just visiting? Or you're seeing them every now and then does it really doesn't matter if they follow the Montessori philosophy? I think in in my view, it doesn't. I mean, of course, there are certain hard boundaries, right of respectful communication and,

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and that but a lot of it, I feel like I can just let go when we're with family or friends that don't do Montessori, I don't really see it as an issue. And I don't try to bring it up. But I think that if it's a caregiver or a loved one who's caring for your child regularly, then that's when you kind of consider like, Okay, how can I, you know, help them understand this philosophy better. And adults learn

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through modeling just as well as toddlers do so often the best way we can teach us just by modeling how we interact with our children ourselves.

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And learning that way, I think, obviously, sharing interesting articles, if they're open to it, and I've

heard mixed things about that, or little cheat sheets, things like that can be helpful.

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And at the end of the day, really, it's holding boundaries on what you really need from the caregiver and what is okay and not okay with you. Because at the end of the day, this is your child, and you get to choose, you know, how they're spoken to and how they're treated, and what not what values matter most to you. So I think holding boundaries is something that can make us really uncomfortable, but is really important and models that for our children, right, we want our children to be able to, to hold boundaries, too. So we have to model that ourselves. Yeah, saying like, Oh, it's important to me that and actually following through on it, it's uncomfortable at the time.

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But that's, you know, we have to be okay with that. If, if we really matters to us, like how our caregiver or whoever is watching our child and relative, you know, he's interacting with our child. I think it's really interesting. Also, watching people who don't practice the Montessori approach much when your toddler is about to fall down, for example, they like, want to rescue them, or they tell them not to climb in the first place and all those kinds of things. Do you find that like, it's a switch? Isn't it for people? Well, yeah, for falling? That's a good one to bring up. Because I think that is one of the most common reactions. I'm like, Oh,

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it's either it's one or the other, right? It's like, Oh, no, are you okay? When it was something really small, or it's, you're fine, you know, brush it off, you're fine. I hear that one a lot. And it's hard because that's not how, how I would read or how we, my husband and I react to that. So I always think about it when I do explain it, you know, I probably wouldn't stop someone in the moment if they say that and just kind of let it go. But when I do explain it, I just say, you know, it's really, we don't really want to assert our own judgment of how that fall felt for our child. So it's really up to them to decide how that fall made them feel. It's not up to us. So when we say you're okay, you're okay, brush it off, we're invalidating our child's own feelings and we're not giving them a chance to to pause and decide how that fall made them feel. And again I'm talking about a minor fall and the obviously if if they fell in you know are very hurt we go right to them but often if it's a small fall, I just, I practice pausing and waiting for you know them to show a reaction and then from there, checking in like, are you okay?

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How does that make you feel and then offering comfort when they want it but always asking first, you know, because some kids want more comfort.

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than others. And I think acknowledging the fall checking in and offering comfort helps validate their feelings and allows them to come to that feeling on their own without our our judgement about it first. Yeah. And I think sometimes we act like, you know, all of a sudden, they're like, oh, it must be really bad. I'm going to cry. Now wait, and see if you can just put that pause. And it can make a big difference because they were wanting them to learn the limits of their own bodies. And if we continually say, Be careful, don't do that. Or we even I see sometimes that we're trying to put them up on the climbing frame up higher than they could possibly get to. And then we're also putting them into uncomfortable positions. It's hard, but we're like, not in a rush for them to get to the top of the climbing frame as hard as it is.

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Yeah, that's a big one, too. I know. It's really letting them figure out their limits. their feelings, their Yeah, all of it. Yeah. So I guess we're coming to the end of our time, and I thought we could maybe close with a couple of common misconceptions about Montessori. So what are some things that you hear a lot about? Our Montessori children are meant to do that and you're like, Oh, that's actually not Montessori. I think some of it actually is perpetuated by social media because you know that all wooden toys me that a Montessori you what kind of things do you hear? Yeah, a big one I hear is that Montessori children are not social.

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And so I think that it probably does look that way on Instagram, because well, we're in a pandemic. So we're not seeing a lot of that. I know that we have started, you know, getting together with a couple of friends for playdates, but I also don't share that because it's a privacy issue.

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And then I think the other reason people say that is because you know, you look into a Montessori classroom, and you see a lot of children working quietly and individually. But the truth is that Montessori in Montessori classrooms, home anywhere, children always are just offered a choice of whether or not to play with others. So children can choose in a classroom, whether they want to

work alone, or if they want to work in a small group.

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But honestly, before the age of three and a half or four depends on the child children may enjoy being around other children, but they're not really playing with that child. So it's just a developmental, you know, milestone where children began to play more cooperatively, and then collaboratively. And by that, I mean, they share a common goal in their play. So I'm just now seeing D enter that phase where she's so interested in playing with friends, she, you know, is collaborating with friends on the same activity. She wants to be around them. And before that, especially in toddlerhood, you know, we see parallel play where they're working next to a child, but on something different, or even the same toy, but they're not actually using it in the same way they have no interest in what the other child is doing.

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So I think it depends if we're talking about toddlers or preschoolers, but either way, it is definitely a misconception that

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we don't, you know, encourage being social. I think it's also really interesting because an infant community is called the infant community, which is a totally group for children from, say, 16-18 months through to three years old. And even though they're doing this parallel play, they are starting to be in community, like we have to put something back on the shelf so that it's available for somebody else. So we're learning to take turns and respect other people. When someone drops a toy with many hundreds of pieces, it's really sweet to see other toddlers come over. And the older ones, particularly like a two and a half year old, will it help to tidy it up and, or when a child brings a tissue over to a child that's crying, and you're like, these are learning to be in community with others. And then as they get to six to 12, the whole classroom changes. It's really noisy. And they actually have big tables so that the children in work in these big groups, because it's all about the herd being a part of the group and moral development and things like that. So it's definitely a misconception for sure. Right? Yeah, yeah, it's so much about that's a really good point, because it is so much about community.

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It's, you know, you see less of that obvious community in a home, but our home is a community too. And there's still a lot of social development happening with a toddler and a parent with a toddler and a sibling. So, yeah, that social piece is always important and always there. And so as

we start to wrap, we could talk forever, as I always kept in these interviews. But I wondered, is there something that you don't get to talk about very often that you'd like to share or something that's coming up that you're excited about? Well, one thing is I get asked a lot right now as people are thinking about returning to school in person,

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and what they should look for and what is a Montessori School. It can be pretty confusing right now because there are so many schools that have Montessori in their name that aren't Montessori

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Don't want to say because it's okay if a school uses that name. But they may not be the type of Montessori School, they're looking for a more traditional Montessori school. And so a few things that I always look for is that the guides are AMS or AMI certified.

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There are other teacher training programs too. But those are the ones that I know of right now. And also, the mixed age classrooms is so important, like we were talking about with social development, it's so beautiful to see a primary class of ages three to six, where the six year olds are helping the three year olds and the three year olds are able to learn from the five year olds, not just from the teacher, right, a five year old could be given a three year old a lesson. There's just so many benefits to having younger and older children in the same class. And that sense of community that brings. And the other thing I look for is that work period. So there should be you know, for three to six, that's a three hour work period, but it is shorter and toddler classrooms, but it's a time that children are just able to choose their work freely, and that the teacher isn't the guide, you know, isn't forcing, you know, one activity, it really is a free choice, and time when children can concentrate on something for the amount of time they really want to.

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And then lastly, your gut instinct I think can go a long way. Like how do you feel when you're tour the school? Do you feel like it's, you know, a good place? Do you feel like you connect to the adults, so that instinct is important too. And then as far as my own, I feel like you know, Bridgette and I are starting our third session of our Montessori parents course. And we're really excited about that. It's been such a great opportunity to connect with parents, you know, we have a discussion group. And it just feels like each time we've done it, it feels like kind of a, a close, you know, network of parents. And it's been fun to get to know everyone and their unique challenges

and successes and journeys and Montessori.

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So that's been really rewarding and fun. And I'm glad we're continuing to offer that again this spring. And I'm sure we'll offer it again in the summer or fall. Yeah, beautiful. Well, we'll definitely put your links to your website. And for those of you who aren't following me on Instagram, we will put links to that as well, in the show notes, which are over at the Montessori notebook calm. And Theresa, thank you so much for taking the time today to talk with us and keep sharing thank you for all the work you do in sharing one story and spreading it around the world and making it accessible to even more families. Yeah, thank you for having me, this was really fun.

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I think that's going to be a great episode to keep coming back to because Theresa has a way to make things easy. But I also loved her honesty about how the difficult moments are always shown on Instagram out of respect for her children. And she gave so many examples of how we can be respectful parents, and that it's not all about the materials. And now it's time for our listener question. Today's question is from Scarlet. Hi, I'm just discovering Montessori and I have a three, almost four year old, she has developed a fear of bugs so much that she cries when it's time to go outside. I'm a working mom. So I try to get her outside as much as I can. I do let her hold my hand and I let her know that she's safe. We talk about bugs that are okay to observe close up versus bugs that we want to observe at a safe distance. Basically, how do I navigate through this time where in Michigan, so it's quite buggy right now and the summer months are upon us, my husband and I love being outside camping, gardening, etc. But now she's so afraid that we're finding ourselves inside a lot to respect her emotions. So thank you, Scarlet for this question. And I think it really happens to be quite a good question for this episode when we're been talking about how to help children deal with the real world. So we actually don't know what has happened to make her scared of bugs. And we can't force her to like them. So I think that we are just going to help her build skills, getting her to a place where she can live with them. And we may not like everyone but we're respectful to them. So it's kind of like the same. And we can start by like talking to her about bugs and asking her how she feels. And we can acknowledge how she feels. So rather than just trying to cheer her up, you know, we can say oh, you sound worried about them. You really don't like them, and kind of questioning so that she feels safe to talk about it. And now we're wanting to go out to the playground to play on the swings and they're going to be bugs. They're like what could we do to make you feel comfortable outside? And you know, saying things like that and we'll you know, let's keep working on it together. We'll find a way so you can enjoy being outside and the bugs feel okay, too. So I love this idea of getting her involved as opposed to just trying to cheer her up and say oh, it's okay.

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Don't worry about it. And I think that you're already doing a lot like telling her which ones we can observe close up on which ones not. But some other things you might want to do is to get lots of books about insects or bugs, you know, count the number of legs make her curious about them. She could be comfortable watching maybe from a different distance, like, where would you feel safe to watch, when we're outside, she might be more by your front door. And while you're doing something in the garden, until she felt safe to come and join you. She's also at the age where you could roleplay like, what can we do with a bug falls on us. I'm not sure if she had a negative experience of that kind, that kind of thing. But you could kind of like say, oh, when it falls on my arm, I go swish, swish, and you show which way it's safe to push it away. Or, you know, you can take turns in different situations that would make you make her feel more comfortable. So as we roleplay them, then it's not always gonna make it easier outside. But we know that we're still building these skills, you might have fun with it by like taking photos of the bugs, you see. And then looking them up in books and finding out why they're special and what role they play in our, you know, cosmic task of the different bugs that she sees. Are there any preventative things that you could do? Like, for example, Could she wear some clothing with some long sleeves, if she's worried about it touching her arms, or because she wears a hat that has something covering her face, we can check also how we're talking about bugs, you sound like you're very comfortable outside. So that's probably fine. But other people might say like things like that annoying fly. And you know, giving negative associations with things that happen. So just always making sure that we're very positive about the way that we speak about bugs.

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But really, I think the biggest thing is really understanding how she feels. So continually checking in not saying we're not going to go outside, but what is going to make you feel comfortable to go outside and just build up slowly. And slowly. I think you are being a great role model. And so they're learning a lot by how we are, if you see a bug inside, you know, you can show them how you respectfully maybe put a glass over top of it and a piece of paper underneath and put them back outside and showing how comfortable we can be. I know that I actually was really scared of spiders. And then I had my son and realize he was picking up my, you know, scared negative feelings about spiders. And in Australia, where we were living at the time, they are really big spiders. So I was constantly trying to at least model that I had it under control and making sure that we were safe at the same time.

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You might look for ways to make her really curious about bugs, like a Bug Catcher, she might find, like nice to watch through a bug catch that might make you feel safe. And then make sure you always release the bugs afterwards. Maybe even a nature journal where she could draw in them

and you know, draw different wings, which ones does she feel comfortable with to start with a butterfly or a dragon fly or something that she feels comfortable with. And then maybe you could even make some fun cards where you have to do like a little treasure hunt to find these different bugs. So instead of avoiding the bugs, you actually make it something that she might want to get interested in. So hopefully that gives you some ideas. I mean, I wouldn't talk about it all the time, but allow her to talk about it as much or as little as she wants. Because sometimes I find that we actually are trying to cheer them up and make them feel okay about it like Oh, don't worry about the bugs, it's all going to be fine. Where it can actually sometimes be helpful if they want to talk about the time that you know the wasp gave them a fright or, and then we're actually allowing them that time to process it and eventually move on. And you can read about that in the whole brainchild by Dan Siegel. So that's it for today, everyone. And before we go, if you're listening to the podcast when it comes out, you might like to join us in June and July for the Montessori retreat, which starts on Monday, the 7th of June. And it's an eight week program for parents or carers. where each week we focus on a different topic with each topic building on the next. And so each week, you'll get a short prompt and a video like just a five minute video for you to then practice this skill for the week. And here's the lovely community that's going to be on mighty networks to help each other. And there will also be an hour live call each week to answer your questions and connect with others following the retreat. We did it last December in January and had so much fun. It's US\$49 for eight weeks, so it's just over \$5 a week. And you can spend five minutes a week on it, just watching the video or you can join for all the calls and take part in the community and you'll spend a couple of hours a week on it as well as practicing through the week. And so you can spend as long or as little as you want. So I'm excited to be able to help you to bring one to three into your homes and also excited that next week I'm going to be back in my classroom here in Amsterdam to as we can finally reopened classes with some small groups and before the summer break, so it's all very exciting. It's been way too long, and I really missed all of the families. Okay, everyone. I'll be back next week with another episode of the podcast and until then keep well you all. Bye.

1:14:55

Thanks for joining me for the Montessori Notebook podcast. The podcast was edited

1:15:00

by Luke Davies from FilmProv media and podcast art by Hiroko Imai. To find out more about me and my online courses visit themontessorinotebook.com, follow me on Instagram at [themontessorinotebook](https://www.instagram.com/themontessorinotebook), or 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, audio books, 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.