

The Montessori Notebook S02E11

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SPEAKERS

Simone Davies, Jeanne-Marie Paynel

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Hi everyone, Simone Davies here with another episode of The Montessori Notebook podcast. I hope you've had a lovely week and I'm looking forward to sharing another fun conversation with you today. And I haven't got just one amazing guest for you, but to form a conversation about Montessori at home. So I invited Jeanne-Marie Paynel, Your Parenting Mentor, and Pilar Bewley from Mainly Montessori, to look at how we can apply Montessori principles in our homes, whether or not we're homeschooling our child, or they go to a non Montessori school, or they haven't started school yet. But we want to be applying Montessori at home. So we cover children from zero to 12 in this conversation, and we look at how much sorry can be done on a budget, things like Montessori and minimalism, Montessori training and a whole lot more. So I hope you'll enjoy it as much as I did. But before we get to my conversation with Jeanne-Marie and Pilar, I wanted to revisit the idea of looking through our children's eyes, because it's definitely been a common theme on the podcast, you know, looking from their perspective, to help us understand what's going on for them, and to give some guidance when necessary. And it was back in 2015, when I had a kind of aha moment when I was speaking to a parent who couldn't really understand why their child was behaving in the way they were doing. So it came to me and I said to them, oh, we're kind of being their translator, because a baby or a toddler may not be able to express themselves. And we can translate or guess that what they're trying to tell us. And we might be saying, like, for example, oh, that was a big bang, did it give you a shock. And even a child who has the language, they might also need a translator in those times when they're having trouble expressing themselves, like a child who's hitting or throwing something, and we can again, see his behavior, and instead, we translate for them to help give them the words for what might be going

on? I can't let you hit me. Are you telling me that you're frustrated? It didn't work? And like when I was speaking to this parent, you know, you see their eyes light up? Ah, okay, I get it. Yeah, it's we're kind of being the translator. And I think that being the translator can be super useful, because it also helps other people to understand what's going on for our child. So for example, if we're in a playgroup, and our child's reaching out to someone else's toy, we can say, Oh, it looks like you want to play with that, let's ask if they'd be happy for you to have a turn when they're done. So we translated what it looks like them trying to snatch a toy, to actually being helpful to give them the language to ask if they can have a turn where they're done. And then the other adult also understands what's going on for our child. I think it really also helps our child see that we accept them and their feelings, like as I always say, all of the feelings, even the big, ugly, scary ones. And you know, when those feelings, obviously, coming out is hitting or biting, we're going to stop that behavior which could hurt someone or something. And then we can translate. And then we're modeling the words for them to say, maybe it won't come out this time. But we know that we're giving them the words for another time. And I think also with siblings, or friends, it can be really helpful to translate what we see, rather than taking sides or blaming one of them, or asking them like what happened, you know, you're never going to get the truth in that situation anyway. So instead, we can translate for them both like, Oh, it looks like you want to play with your sister, and looks like you want to play all by yourself. And then we can be that guide to see if they can work out a solution together. And you might hear them say, Oh, it's not that I don't want to play with you. I just want to finish this first, and then I'll be available. So it also helps them start to articulate and translate for themselves. So when we are translating for our child, we also answer busy, we're taking the child's behavior as personally because we are thinking about what they're trying to tell us. And this means that we can support our child without us getting upset, too. And that said, I am sure that there are moments when we wish that someone would just invent google translate for children, when we really have no idea what's going on. And then I'll just translate for myself like something like, I wish I knew what I could do to help you right now. But I'm here if you need me. Some other examples I can think of would be like a toddler who's about to push another child. And we can observe and like, Oh, actually, I see that they're worried about that child going to touch my toys. So we could translate. Are you saying that you want to play by yourself right now? Or I've even seen toddlers run up to other kids and push them. And it looks like they're actually just wanting to play with them. So then the translation would be something like, oh, did you want to ask if you can play too. And many of us have had that child who's hiding behind your leg. And again, we can translate for them. Oh, is it that you don't feel like talking right now. And I also love using it with a baby who has an older sibling who hasn't been so gentle and they start crying and so then we can translate for the baby. Oh, I think the baby's saying that they like it when you're gentle.

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And one other thing about translating, and in fact, many of the Montessori principles, I would say

is that it works with adults too. So when a friend or a partner is upset or hurt, we can guess at what they're feeling or needing and translate for them. And if we ourselves, we shattered it, our kids or we nag them, we can also say, Oh, I'm sorry, I shouted. I think what I was trying to say is that I'd like some acknowledgement when I cook dinner for the family, and then we're translating it into a way that's more likely to be heard. So I think that being a translator might be the answer we have been looking for. And I'm curious to hear if this resonates with you, too. And now it's time for my conversation with Jeanne-Marie and Pilar so enjoy.

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Hi, everyone, Simone Davies here and I am so excited. This is going to be such a fun conversation because we have two wonderful monster educators with us today. I'm going to be talking with Jeanne-Marie Paynel and Pilar Bewley who have both been working in Montessori for many years and are both Montessori parents. And so I can't wait to share their wisdom with you today. And so, Jeanne-Marie, let's start with you. Um, I have known you actually for quite a long time. Because we have done the Montessori show together. You turned up one year in Amsterdam, and we had lunch at the Montessori AMI AGM which was a delight to get to meet in person, we went to Prague, and it got to be roommates. And so it felt like you're my big sister. So I don't need too much introduction. But I'm sure that everyone listening would love to hear how you came to Montessori after actually quite a different background. So Hello, everybody. And thanks, Simone, for having me always a delight to chat with you. So Montessori came about in a kind of, I don't know, a very bizarre way. But it was meant to be kind of way where I picked up just one book when I was expecting my first child, that was the secret of childhood, by Maria Montessori. Read it, the only book I read gave me this very strong intuition and knowing that I just had to follow my child and that she would show me who she needed me to be as her parent as her guide. And then fast forward eight years later, I've had a second child. I've moved to the United States in San Diego. And I'm contemplating moving back to Europe after

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My Montessori story. Thank you so much. I'm Marie and I love that. It's just like you're in the right place. It's almost like you answered the question with one sentence that she knew as well that it was a good fit for you. Exactly, exactly. I'm feeling you actually were a Montessori child yourself. So, you were about to have a family and you went back to become a Montessori educator. I mean, how did that come about? Yeah, so I was a Montessori child through the third grade. And the only reason I left Montessori was because we moved to a city where there were no Montessori elementaries. And so, we, my parents had to put me in public school. But I never thought that I would be a teacher until so I was a I went into the hospitality industry, I had my own event planning company, I was very, you know, financially successful. But I wasn't feeling this sense of contributing of giving back, like Jeanne-Marie was saying, I was just working for money. And it got

to a point where that was not fulfilling anymore. And, and so at that point, I was dating my now husband, and we knew we wanted to start a family. And I knew I didn't want to continue with this pace of life. And so I sat down to meditate, because I was 30 years old, no clue what to do with the rest of my life. And I sat down to meditate. And I put this question out there and I said, you know, what should I do with my life, and a voice came back, that said, you need to work with children. And I remember opening my eyes and be like, I don't really even like children.

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And, you know, a couple of weeks into it, it was very interesting from a, you know, psychological perspective, and, and all of that, but a couple of weeks into it, I, there was the model classroom, which I think was Jeanne-Marie's classroom, actually, um, and I was standing outside the model classroom with the one way windows, and I was watching this little four year old girl, I'm never going to forget. And she was doing a metal inset, and she stood up and she put all her materials on her tray, and she got up, went to the metal inset rack, put everything back where it belonged. And she her sense of composure, and dignity and maturity at the age of four, just blew me away. And that's what I knew, Oh, my gosh, like this, this is what I want to do. This is what children are capable of, you know, we've we've been shortchanging them, and like, I've been shortchanging them. And so that child, that experience, totally set me on on a path. And then I became a primary guide, I worked for two years, the primary guide, and, and to kind of wrap up the story. My husband, who's a professor of mechanical engineering came to my primary classroom and I showed him the trinomial cube, you know, he asked, What is this? And so he explained the mathematical, you know, concept behind the cube. And he looked at me, he said, Every child deserves to learn math this way. What do you need to do? Where do you need to go? So that you can learn how to teach this in elementary like for for children who actually understand the formula? And I said, Well, you know, the best training center that I know of is Italy. And we got short, long story short, we got married three weeks later, I was on a plane to Italy, and to train in bergamot and from then I went on to become an elementary guide. And then after almost the, I think was like seven or eight years in the classroom, I ended up homeschooling my children, which is a whole other story, but that was my journey. Yes, we'll be getting the I think it's really inspiring because I think many listeners aren't working in Montessori

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And then they start to think, oh, but I've been doing this other career for a long time, but it's not really, you know, feels to be my, I'm good at it. I'm successful at it, but it doesn't really feed me. And so I think it's really inspiring to hear Yeah, you don't have to have it all figured out. You can go and do a Montessori training and you can change your life. So it's really, really fun. And Jeanne-Marie, going back to you. If someone asked you today, what does Montessori mean to you that might be different to what you might have answered at the beginning of your Montessori

journey. So today, what's coming up for you? What is Montessori mean to you today? For me, it's really the the understanding of human development, it's really kind of a

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gentle guidebook to to help us understand what each human we encounter needs from us, and especially our children that the young humans, and yeah, it's really, it's a way of life for me. It's not it's definitely not, you know, just for the classroom. It's from prenatal through career. So it's really a whole lifespan. Now we have it with with our elders. So it's really, that understanding human development and how we can respectfully engaged and guide each other. Yeah, I think that's amazing. That is like through our whole lives, it's a way of not just dealing with children. Because I think when I first heard about Montessori, I only thought it was like a three to six age group in the UK, because that's where I'd first been introduced to it, and it's where most of the classrooms are. And then you learn about it from birth. And you're like, that makes sense. Oh, then you hear about in utero? Oh, that makes sense. Oh, let's actually empower the elders as well. So hearing about the dementia work that's going on is really amazing as well. And Pilar hasn't evolved for you as well, you'll maybe have Montessori as you've been in longer, longer. Absolutely. And I think a big part of where it evolved, it was when I left the classroom. And, you know, I spent my entire career I think about 12 years that I was in the classroom, thinking that I was doing Montessori. But when I left and I started homeschooling, it was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders restrictions had been taken away. And I realized that for the first time, I was truly able to follow my children, follow their development follow their interests, because I was no longer beholden to schedules and impose routines and assessments and, you know, parental concerns and all of these things. I was just free to follow my children haven't what what struck me was that Montessori looks so different in the home than it than it does in the classroom. And it even looks different from what you read in some of the books, right because most of Dr. Montessori's work was in classrooms, most of our observations were in classrooms. And so at home, it's going to look very different. And so I had to go back to the true core principles. And, and kind of re envision them in a home setting, and with the parent as a guide, kind of playing that rule, dual role of parents and guide. And so it gave me a whole new understanding of Montessori of the role of the adults of the potential of children. And once I stepped out of

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and that is why I have both of you in our podcast conversation today is because it's Montessori at home. So Jeanne-Marie is going to talk more about how you apply the principles maybe if you have a child at school, and how you would still apply the principles at home and paella from the homeschooling perspective, where you have those double heads and actually peel out How does your day look in the homeschooling world? Do you have certain times of day when at school? Or is it really that it's just learning whenever learning happens? Or a bit of both? Yeah, so this is one

thing that has been so fascinating is that our schedule our routine or rhythm changes, literally week to week. And so you know, a school routine always stays the same. And, and the children can have to fit into that routine, but at home, I can really follow my children's moods and and just just their vibe, and I've noticed that the more I try to make them fall into what I consider a good routine, the harder it is. And the more that I kind of sit with them and say what do we want collectively our week to look like? And you know, here are some of the things that are available for us like for example our nature club, or a field trip or you know, a library visit.

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How are we going to work or weak around it? The more I can involve them, the more receptive they are, and the more connected they are to the whole learning process. I've had to let go of a lot of these preconceived notions of school routine. And the parents that I work with asked me, What is your routine look like? Because I need my routine to look like your thing. And it's like I feel, you know, there's a pressure to say like, well, this is what you need to do. But the reality is that we need to follow our children. Right. And so, some weeks, there's very structured, this is what we're going to learn, you know, this is when I'm available for lessons. And then other weeks. 9pm is when we are, you know, all of a sudden developing an interest in geography. And my son is asking questions about the world map, um, my daughter is an early riser. And so 7am I'm doing read aloud. 7am we're doing art, I'm my son wakes up at 11am. And so you know, he kind of gets going by 3pm is when he wants to get ready to do division. And so I've had to learn to kind of embrace a little bit of the of the chaos. And also realize that learning happens all the time. And so that was very liberating. When I was able to step back, observe and realize that 90% of what they learned does not come from me sitting with them and doing a formal lesson. But it comes from the questions that they're asking me, you know, while I'm parallel parking, or Well, you know, I'm in line for the grocery store, things like that. And that's when their questions come up. And that's, those are the learning opportunities.

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Yeah, that's brilliant. Actually, I wrote down, he'd written, I've learned that monster isn't something you do, it's a way to live. And I thought that was such a good, like, summary of what we're going to talk about today. Because you don't just stop learning when you get picked up from school. You know, there's learning happening all the time. And what if they are having like,

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just the rhythm for a couple of weeks, maybe might stop and they're not doing any traditional learning, that kind of thing? Yes. And it can be really stressful for parents who haven't taken the time to step back and identify all of the different modalities that that learning can come in.

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Yeah. And so don't worry over it at the home when you're working with families who have their children at school but still want to apply Montessori principles at home. How can you engage learning at home if you wanted to be applying the Montessori approach? What do you tell parents?

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So the the basic really is about involving your children in just family life. And I think that that's a big that's a big part of you know, quote unquote, doing Montessori at home it to me it is something that I think I did very intuitively so I will I do have a caveat. My children never went to Montessori School. My daughter went to a Montessori inspired school for about two years before going to the the local public school. My son, I was told was too old to enter a Montessori School, which was very sad to me when he was about to be a five year old. But that's that's life, right? And so for me, Montessori can be done for you know, anyone, whether they go to Montessori schools or not, and it's really about how we really welcoming our child into our home, how we adapting our homes, so that our children can adapt to, to life on planet Earth, to their time, place and culture with ease. Because we, we do live in a very adult centric environment. And, you know, we want to, you know, create a beautiful local nursery for them and everything, but sometimes when we look at those, there's nothing really developmentally appropriate for for our babies, or our toddlers, and so on. So I really, you know, working with parents, I have them sit on the floor, and look at their home from their child's perspective and, and really learn to observe and see, you know, what it is, what is it that their child keeps on asking for, like, is there a way that we could make it accessible for them so that they can reach things on their own do things for themselves and such? So that to me, is part of that learning? You know, and like PLR You know, when you're, when you're living with children, it's it's 24 hours seven of learning there, they go through different phases. And you know, remember that, you know, that phase with my son is the whys. Why why why, why everything why and when you say, I don't know there are why. So that's, that's, you know, that's to me, just just lifelong learners. And that's what we have to remember is children come to us eager to learn curious of everything, and constantly learning so we have to be constantly learning with

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them. And I know that you're so passionate about like Montessori and minimalism, like because that could be the other extreme is yes, the adult centric or is the other way around is that there's just toys everywhere. And they can't find anything. They're bored all the time. And we don't set up our spaces for them to have an interesting, curious place to. So could you talk to that, like, what is minimalism and Montessori and how do they fit together?

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So for me, it's, it's really about creating an environment that is going to be pleasing to you. Like, I feel that when a lot of families when they, you know, welcome children into their homes, all of a sudden, you know, the living room has to look like a daycare and a preschool. And there's there's things everywhere, like you say, and actually, it's funny, because I was working with a private client yesterday, and they just moved into a bigger place. And she was creating her office space in kind of the, you know, playroom of these two, two little children. And I could tell that it was stressing her because there was like, a lot of things on the shelves, and I said, You know what, let's sit down on front of the shelf, take everything off, and only put eight items back because there were eight cubes.

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And you'll see it gives you kind of a sense of relief and all this and I could see just, you know, that sense kind of disappear from her. So when I say, you know, minimalism and Montessori it's really this idea that in Montessori, we're creating an environment, we're preparing the environment for our children, they're often very beautiful, because we know that beauty attracts, and we, we have beautiful little objects like you do in your, you know, beautiful environment that you have for the children. And so I really want parents to understand that for themselves, that it's going to kind of lower their own anxiety, right, it's going to be about creating a place that is harmonious for everybody. It's not letting the child you know, stuff tape over and and, and and honestly, children are just happy to be playing with sticks and stones like they don't need all that much right it's that's that's the the baby industry that is very wealthy that just keeps on pushing stuff on. But honestly, they are just so satisfied with helping you in the kitchen with with folding laundry with you with with reading books with with ripping up paper, like they don't need so much. So to help you understand that that's where my kind of, you know, very minimalistic approach. And I've always been that way. I think it just comes from having moved many times traveled a lot. I I don't have that many possessions. And I think that, you know, it has made life with children that much easier. Yeah. And I think that children also learn to be more conscious of the world and what we're taking out of the earth, and actually what we could be putting back into the earth instead. And so Pilar, what does this prepared environment look like then as a homeschooling family, I mean, there's so many different elements, because I think minimalism would be great, but what if my child needs all these things so that they can learn to read? And how do you balance the both of those sides? It is it is a huge juggling act for sure. I live in 1000 square foot home, which I don't know what it translates to in meters, but it's small, it's very small. And it was pretty tiny. And our living room has become our, you know, classroom, if you will. But the reason that I have everything in our living room is because that's where we spend most of the day. And so it allows me to be cooking or you know, the children to be in the same area that I am, and engaging independently in their own work or in their own curiosities. And what I found to be helpful is

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without necessarily having to walk them through all of the different materials that they would walk through in a Montessori classroom. And that's, that's a lot of what I see online is the parents being overwhelmed with like, you know, I need these five different materials to walk my child through to be able to do addition on paper, it's like, well, no, that's not that's not true. I'm in an elementary classroom. Yes, that would be wonderful. But it's not necessary. Right. So what is what is essential? And what is, you know, technically, what you would see in a classroom are two different things. And, and the home allows for that kind of minimalism to happen in your choice of materials. I think it's interesting, isn't it, because it becomes more like invitations. And I guess, we've talked on the podcast before about going out in elementary class, where you actually don't want every material in your home anyway, because you want the opportunity for them to exhaust what you have at home, so that they need to go out and find materials and the answer is somewhere else. So has that have you ever had some fun going south maybe more virtually, at the moment, but what does going out look like in your homeschooling? Absolutely. So in we've really had an opportunity to explore nature, which we didn't when my children were in school, I'm you know, I was working to my husband was working and so weekends, we're just kind of running errands and cleaning the house and things like that. And so now we make it a point to go explore in nature at least twice a week. And everything that nature is able to provide to us from you know, sticks and stones like Jeanne-Marie was saying to, you know, to play with and to create with and to make art with and to lifecycles being able to look at a pond and actually see the frog and the tadpoles and the eggs and the whole ecosystem of the pond.

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That has been what then we bring home in our minds, and turn into conversations and research and, and, and learning opportunities. And so you know, I don't need to have the three part cards for the lifecycle of the frog, I don't need to have the cute little et CIE material for the lifecycle of the frog, I just need to take my children out in nature and let them Putz around in a pond and see what they discover and then bring that home. So that has been such a powerful kind of, it's been very cathartic to realize that the prepared environment goes outside of what I can create in my home. And and that it's available outside. And the other thing that has been really kind of relaxing for me is the realization that I don't need to know everything, when you're when you're a classroom teacher, you kind of need to be you know, a know it all. And if the children are interested in you know, history, you become a history expert, if they're interested in engineering, you become an engineering expert. And at home, I've let go of that. And I've become much more of a facilitator, especially for my son who's nine, and his knowledge of things like engineering are starting to go way beyond what I know. And so now, these kind of virtual goings out, like, like you said, is connecting him with the resources and the kits or the experts that will allow him to make progress in his area of interest without me needing to know it all. And so so that's been very reassuring that I don't need to, to be an expert in in electrical engineering. I can just, you know,

connect him and then he shows me which is so beautiful. To have that reverse learning experience.

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Yeah, John rages at resonate for you as well, like not having to be the expert in everything that a child's going through. Oh, yes, yes.

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Because I mean, I think that that's our role as parents is to be like Pollara says the facility. It's really about know, when they ask you something, it's like, oh, wow, that's a great question. I don't know, let's find out and, and really explore and be able to orient them to maybe somebody who is more knowledgeable or or a book or, or such. I think that that is part of what we were talking about earlier of us, you know, having these curious minds that need to keep on, keep on feeding that curiosity and being curious with them. We learned so, so much from our children. So

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yeah, so I think that actually, the term going out is often associated with elementary class, but I really feel like I'm doing it with toddlers and with babies, like, I don't know, let's find out. And I might say that even if I do know, but it's really fun to make the discovery together. And then it really becomes authentic in the elementary age. So I think it's really fun. And actually, below, I would love for you to talk to us about your wonder wall. Because this is well, instead of just googling something, what is the wonderful in your home?

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Yeah, so that I want to kind of give credit where credit is due. So I learned that from Julie Bogart, who does who wrote the book, brave learner. And she, she's very aligned with Montessori without, you know, saying it, but the way that she approaches things is to embrace the qualities of the home, and, and not turn your home into a classroom, which is, you know, what we all we all speak to. And so she recommended making a wall, having sticky notes and a pen available, and just having a part of the wall where anytime your child asks a question, write it down, slap it on the wall, anytime you have a question or your spouse, write it down, slap it on the wall, and it can be, you know, going to be something profound, like, you know, why are we on this planet? And it can be something silly, like, who won the World Series last year?

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You know, it's

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just anything? Because what you want to encourage? Is that question asking, right? Nowadays, question asking is so much more important than having the right answer all the time, right? Because we need to figure out how to ask questions, to look for the answers on the internet, or, you know, all the massive number of resources we have available. If we don't know what to ask, then we're not going to get the right answers. And so, you know, encouraging children to be question asker is also kind of breaks with the scheme of knowing it all, or knowing the right answer. Because when you invite your child to ask questions, and you put them up on this wall, then you can kind of hypothesize as a family and say, Well, you know, why? Why do you think this? You know, why do you think clouds are white? Well, you know, and then the, the four year old might come up with their own idea, and the seven year old might have their own idea. And, and so you, you get them thinking, and you get those creative juices flowing. And so it has so many different aspects that that are beneficial for the home. Um, and, you know, one of them is that it creates your curriculum. And so instead of having to pour through albums and say, Okay, now what am I going to present? And you know, which, which track am I going to follow? You just look at your Wonderwall and you say, Okay, so this child wants to learn about horses, and this child wants to learn about soldiers, and how can I kind of combine that and, you know, make it into a really cool exploration? Which books do I need? What, what stories can I tell, and boom, you have your you have your lesson planning for the week on your wall, you know, so it's, it's so powerful in so many different ways. And it's very easy. You know, you don't need any special technology or special training. Just listen, write down. And then don't forget that the questions are up there. Because, you know, and because sometimes in our zeal to teach what we think is important, we forget what's important to the children. And we start there.

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I think that following the child, I mean, don't worry, we work with younger children, zero to six. And so in some ways, because they're not asking the questions, we have to be observing very closely what their interests are. So we're like being there curated. So when you were talking about that minimalist shelf, and just choosing eight things, how do you help parents select what are the things that my child is going to be interested in? Because if you choose the wrong ones, they're also not going to be super engaged. Right?

39:21

Right. And it's in it's through that, you know, beautiful skill that we need to learn is, is observation is really observing, with with a clear mind, you know, without judgment, without preconceived ideas of seeing what is fascinating to them, you know, well, one time it was a parent describing their child taking all of the coasters from the coffee table and sliding them in between the books on the bookshelf. I went, Oh, that's interesting. You know, maybe a little coin box would be would be good because it was it was like it was an interest that they were Showing, or, you know, oftentimes I have parents telling me that, you know, they're making a mess with water. And I said, Well, that's, that's a great observation, they probably need some, you know, some water transferring or, you know, maybe engage them in washing the dishes, and, you know, they're showing you the need. And to me, that's what observation teaches us is that we see what it is that they are needing to master at any specific time. And especially for the young child, that we know go through these, you know, moment in time when they're when they're fascinated with with a particular aspect, you know, that we call the sensitive periods. But if we can detect those and feed into them, then wow, you know, we're making progress. And we're seeing that in our child being so focused and engage in just just very satisfied. So yes, and and I just wanted to add to to that beautiful wonderworld, it reminded me of a quote, and I'm sorry, I, I'm drawing a blank as to who but it's, it goes something about the quality of our life depends on the quality of the questions that we ask. And I think it is just beautiful, because that is so much, you know, of how enriching pilares children's life is from from just being having a space to, to ask those questions freely. And that it that there are, you know, no, no questions off the table, everything goes up on that wall. I think that is just beautiful.

41:37

And can I can I add something to that? Yeah, the reason that the the Wonderwall resonated a lot with me when I first started homeschooling, so I didn't have a Wonderwall in my classroom, but I should have. But the reason it really resonated with me is because when I was a classroom teacher, I noticed a lot of anxiety with my students to get the right answer, right, because they live in an Alexa society, right? They live in a series society, where the answers are at our fingertips. And so there's this pressure when the child says, you know, Daddy, why is the ocean blue? It's like, hey, Alexa, why is the ocean blue? And and immediately, there's an answer, right? And so the message that the child gets is, oh, I must have a right answer for everything. And I must have it now. I must have it immediately. And when we disengage from that, and allow the children to ponder their questions, and we honor and celebrate their questions, they relax, they relax into the question asking, and they're no longer worried about whether they are right. You know, and so and so we just kind of honor the process, as opposed to jumping straight to the answer.

42:48

Yeah, that's beautiful. Oh, okay. Let's make question answers about children, you know, because if

they're asking the right questions, they're being curious about the world. They're not also waiting for this top down approach. And really, I think for people who come from a traditional background, it takes a lot of unlearning for ourselves to stop, you know, teaching, we always want to say, oh, what color is that? And we're pointing to so many things. I'm trying to teach all the time. And to just step back and just be curious with the child. It's a big shift, I think, for a lot of parents. So I think some people are worried that Montessori at home would be expensive, you know? So if you're doing it after school, and I need to buy all these materials, do I or homeschooling is that also expensive. So with either of you like to start on that one, does Montessori have to be expensive.

43:34

So I'll start just because I'm more the the earlier years, and I'll let PLR go into the whole homeschooling and I know she does a lot of work about keeping it at a reasonable price. For me, like I said earlier, you know, you don't need much, and you just need to really be observant and see what you already have in your home. There is just so many, you know, tools that you have in your home that your child is interested in. And for me, it's really about, like I said, is really about including them in everything that already happens in the home. The child has been observing you from the time they were born, they've been they've been watching you they want to do what you're doing. So it's really about inviting them into those tasks. And it's, you know, that's the Montessori curriculum for the toddlers in primary its practical life. So we have all that at our disposal at home. You don't need any material for that. So So, you know, I would say, you can definitely do on a budget. Yes, you can. You know, there's some beautiful subscription boxes and things where you can buy material if your budget allows, but there's also, you know, I've helped families here, just do kind of a communal where there's one

45:00

Have toys they buy and they, they, they exchange. So kind of a co op type thing. So there's plenty of different ways we just need to think outside the box. There's, you know, wonderful little things that you can make at home yourself. You know, in our training, we're taught to do a lot of things to make materials. So there's parents that can make that. So yes, no, definitely. You know, Montessori is for for everybody. small and big budgets. And I really the myth that Montessori is, you know, expensive or only for the wealthy. We need to take that away, because it's so not true. Yeah, it would be great to make it more accessible to more people for sure. And so Pilar Yeah, now with the older children, do you find that it gets expensive or? Well, what I've noticed is that people tend to buy materials out of a sense of fear. Like, if I buy this one more material, then maybe my child will get excited about learning, right? Or maybe Finally, they will sit and do a lesson with me. And all that happens is that that becomes one more material gathering dust on the shelf. And so

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one question to ask is, am I going to do this homeschooling thing, short term or long term? Am I hybrid homeschooling in a weekend homeschooling after schooling, or am I in it for the long haul, through middle school or even beyond? Right, so if you are in it, for the long haul, then investing in acute, you know, few key materials is important, especially because of the precision that is necessary to really transmit those those concepts. And so for example, fractions, the you know, you might be tempted to make them by yourself. But the reality is that they might not be as accurate as you need them to be for, especially for a younger child to really be able to understand and get that that correct impression. So there are certain materials that that you do want to purchase. But one of the blessings of the whole pandemic is that people started being pushed into creating printables, right, they had to go the digital route, because children needed to continue learning and they needed to do it at home. And so suddenly, you have this explosion of very well made very accurate materials that you can print out for a couple of bucks. And you know, just just be very careful with how you create them pay attention to what you're doing. And you will have, you know, a perfectly functional material that usually would have cost you 40 \$50. And I even have one of the parents that I work with now, she's creating materials with this Cricut cutting machines that I wasn't even aware of. But she's making, you know, the cubing material, which is hundreds of dollars, and she's making it very accurately with this machine. So, really, your creativity is the limit when it comes to making materials for the elementary years. And also identifying what your child really needs. And what is coming from your sense of fear and, and, you know, feeling of lack, and if I only had this material, then my child would, you know, would participate more. So really honing in on on what's necessary. And I think investing in yourself, like in your own education, in a good set of albums, a good curriculum, and a good understanding of what Montessori is, goes a lot farther than having a shelf with \$4,000 worth of materials that you have no idea how to use no idea how to connect your child to it, you know, so so investing in yourself is going to go a lot longer and a lot more of a return than just throwing your money on a bunch of materials.

48:54

I think that's really important. Actually, I'd love to talk about Montessori training because it's something that I haven't spoken about on any of the podcasts. Like for usual Marie, was your Montessori training, like a transformational experience and how much work was it? What was your experience of Montessori training?

49:13

So I did my Montessori training, like I buy, you know, shared at the beginning, you know, left to left a career, corporate job and such and, and it was a lot of work. I, you know, I was I was older 43 I had two young children at home. And it was a full time job, being a student because I was in

school all day. And then you know, this is I'm going to date myself, but we weren't allowed to have laptops in the classroom. So everything was handwritten notes. And in the evening, it was to transcribe everything on to you know, onto my computer because basically in the training at least in the AMI training, you actually create your own albums. So, these are basically going to be the textbooks that you will use for the rest of your Montessori career, you, you will add to them as you go to refresher courses or you, you know, you listen to something and you will you will add to them. But there are the foundation. So you have, you know, an album for practical life, sensorial mathematics, language, and music and all of the extensions, but you are the one creating them. And so that was a lot of work. And I think, especially for me coming from the graphic design world, I wanted to make them perfect and beautiful. So, so it was a lot of work. But yes, it was it was transformational. And, and I think some of the, like, the pleasures that I got is to you know, you're you're shown presentation, just as if you were children, and the trainer gives you a presentation, and then you get to practice, and I would come home, and I would do a presentation, you know, or, or, or I would show my child and I remember one if you if you know in the primary, there's this cloth folding presentation where there's little lines, and you fold and one of them is you fold all of the corners into the middle, there's a little central point. And so I was showing this, and lo and behold, at the dinner table, all of the napkins were folded that way, that day, and I was just like, oh, so beautiful. So so I was able to share it with my children as I went along. And yes, it was transformative. And just so many, for me, aha that I got because I had already had children going through these phases, without me having this knowledge was was just beautiful.

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And so there is there's that making the album space, there's learning to observe. So you do a big observation based, there's the practical of actually practice, right, since being the child and those kind of things as well. It's actually very comprehensive. And you and it's hands on and

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you know, just like Laura's husband said, you know, when you have the material, when you have your hands on some of the material, like some of the math materials, like, Oh my gosh, like, Oh, I get it now. Like you, you you understand so many concepts. And one thing, you know, what I did is I did my three to six, first, and then about five years later, I went back to do another training, which was Birth to Three. And that was also transformative, because you really learn about, you know, prenatal life, and just that whole engagement with the parents, which which, you know, transformed my life because that's what I do now, but also a better understanding of the young child, because when you understand where they're coming from, when they are when they're coming into the primary classroom was to me, again, a lot of has, it's like, oh, that's why the two and a half year old does things this way, you know, as opposed to maybe the four year old, and,

and things like that. So um, and there, the zero to three is, you know, very hands on as well. And even more observation, there are 250 hours of observation of you try if you can to observe a birth, a newborn, you know, young children in their homes, young children and communities. So you really hone in on that observation skill. And it's an it's just beautiful, very transformative.

53:45

One of my observations, I thought, I have to observe a child sleeping, there's not going to be anything to observe. And I couldn't believe how much was going on when a baby was sleeping when you write it down. And also funny thing we had to do. We went to the zoo to observe an animal. Do you also do that in the San Diego? Yes, yeah.

54:03

We go to the zoo, we observe a plant we observe objects. Yes,

54:08

exactly. And when I was doing my observation, I was watching a grizzly bear. And so it didn't look like it was doing much. So everyone would walk past and say, are the bears not doing anything? I'm like, get my observation notes. The Bears done lots of things come back. This is very interesting. So it's really so pillow for you. Does anything jump out from your Montessori training, fun memories or bits? You liked bits, the more difficult parts, which was what came up for you? Oh, gosh,

54:31

I think especially my elementary training because I am very much like, you know, stuck in the second plane. I guess. For me, it was a relearning, of all of these things that even through high school I had to go through in a traditional way. And they never made sense because they were taught so in such an isolated way. You know, you sat through chemistry for 45 minutes and then you got up and then you went to geometry and geometry was isolated for 45 minutes, etc. And then you come to this Montessori training and you, you understand and you experience the interconnectedness of all human knowledge. And I remember it wasn't just me it was all of my classmates were like, oh, why didn't teachers present this way? Like, why was learning not given to us in this way? Because now now we're having to rediscover everything, right? So I remember, I remember hating geometry in high school, because it made no sense. It was a bunch of lines on a chalkboard, and the teacher just, you know, rambling out theorems. And suddenly, I had the sticks in my hand, and I understood what an equivalency was. And you know, what, all of these concepts and it was so beautiful, it was so tangible, and I could connect it to chemistry, and I could connect

chemistry to history. And you know, it was this, this total relearning, and it's like, well, you know, forget the children, like I'm doing this for me like this is, this is, for me, it's such an investment in myself. And that's what I try to encourage parents to do now is, you know, learn alongside your child, you don't have to know everything, you have to fall in love with learning again. And if you fall in love with learning, your child will fall in love with learning. And so that's what I think the elementary training gives you is this, this newfound appreciation for life. And now I'm horrible, because like, I'll go out on a date with my husband, and we'll go on a hike, and I will homeschool him the entire way. Like I will, I will tell him, you know, the name of every animal, and if I don't know it, I'll look it up. And they'll tell him, like, how the plants are classified. And, and he just he, you know, he humors me very much, but but you just start seeing the world so differently. I, you know, and, and it is grueling. I mean, the the elementary training is, is a year, it's 10 months of just, I mean, we were, you know, up at eight and still working at midnight. And again, you know, we were, we had to take notes by hand, and we had to write our own albums and take pictures and the amount of materials that you have to memorize, and the stories you have to tell. And so it's, it's an entire year of living outside of your comfort zone, not just moving outside your comfort zone and back in, you're just living outside of your comfort zone. And so it's a massive amount of personal growth, but so worth it. Hmm.

57:19

Oh, well, I hopefully we've inspired a few people to maybe look into taking them through training, because I kind of don't like the idea of someone just buying the album, it wouldn't mean anything to me, unless you've really experienced it and understand the purpose of it. It's not just to learn the math, it's actually like a lot of the learnings not even really in all the materials, but it's in all the interactions that happen in the classroom, because I think Montessori is often known for the materials, but a lot of the interactions that are happening in the classroom, it's the social element, which happens even in the baby class and toddler classes, they're observing others, and then the interactions in the elementary class. And don't worry, I wonder if we go back to when you're working back in the classroom? In the three to six years? Do you have some like Montessori moments, something that maybe came up between the children where you were like, oh, wow, they discovered that together or things you weren't quite expecting that we didn't know exactly how your training would have explained it, but that you just saw that this is Montessori, I'm putting you on the spot a little bit.

58:14

I mean, I was just in all, you know, all the time, just just really mesmerized by the focused and and in the three to six classroom, you have to remember that they're very much they're working on their own, they really like that, that independence. So they might, you know, ask a friend to sit at the table next to them. And they're, they're both choosing different work, but they really, they're

still really liking to be in their in their work. But the beauty that I remember is that social interaction when sometimes a child, you know, has an aha and understands and their their eagerness to want to share it with with children, you know, of wanting to say, you know, let me show you. And, and I know for me, I would, you know, I would observe and if a child, an older child I had seen had really mastered a presentation, I would let them present it to a younger child because I think that they learned so much from being able to share their knowledge to the younger ones. And that to me is the beauty of the three to six is that that wide range of development that goes on because when you welcome a two and a half year old, and then you know you say goodbye to a six year old, they've gone through so much and the children interacting together, sharing their knowledge, and really helping each other. I mean, you know, it's really that beautiful quote of Montessori when she says that, you know, as an educator, we can say we we've kind of accomplished our jobs if we can just step out and let it happen. It really does. happened like that is really you know, it doesn't happen from day one, you need a few months to everybody to, you know, kind of get their their groove and everything. But I do remember delighting in, sitting on my stool and just watching, you know, what was what was happening. And it really is beautiful to see humans interact, do work that they are fully engaged in, and just being being content in their environment because their needs are being met. And to me, that's the beauty of Montessori. And if we can do that in all homes, and all school is to see humans whose needs are truly being met. It's, it's a gorgeous, gorgeous scent.

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And I also love that, you know, for the many of them, the preschool is their first, you know, outside of the family, their first society. And so they're learning to take turns and walk around someone else's work. And it's not available right now. So how am I going to deal with that, or an older child, like you were saying, helping the younger children learn, oh, that's not available for you yet, because you haven't done that lesson yet. And it's done in such a kind and caring way. And then when they move into the elementary, we were talking just before we hit record, about how an elementary classroom is actually very noisy, because they're becoming social, and they want to work in groups, and they don't want an individual desk anymore. So Paula, you worked in the elementary classroom, and then you've got elementary children at your home. It's such a different society in a way that they've moved into when they move into that

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second plane. It is and it's and for most children, it's, it's very exciting. And it can also be very overwhelming at first, I'm, you know, I used to have to tell parents, like your six year old, will not do a lot of academics this first year, right, because most of the time, they just, they just sit with their mouth open, they just look around the room. Right? And, and you're hoping that they're going to be writing or doing their math and, and they're learning, but they're learning about this

the social dynamic, and they're learning about, you know, who's friends with whom, and who is the helper, and who is a leader. And, you know, and they're just kind of piecing everything together in their heads. And so not much academic learning is happening that that first year or that first semester, but little by little, they kind of settle into the routine, and they find their role. Right. And that's, that's, I think he in in the elementary years, whether they're living, you know, living and learning at home, or whether they're learning in a classroom is that they start identifying what they're good at, and what they're not really strong at, and who is, right, and so and so it's a lot of this development of the self in the context of a larger group. And at home, it can be you know, in the context of the family, like Who am I, you know, with my siblings, what am I good at? What am I helpful, you know, with and in, in their social group, because just because you homeschool doesn't mean that you, you know, are isolated in your home. And so you can very much recreate a social environment, in a homeschool setting. But, you know, whether you're homeschooling whether your child is in school, understanding that that is such a big part of their learning, and, you know, and kind of moving past our preconceived notion that, you know, you go to school to learn not to socialize, which is, you know, such a thing that was told to us, like, you know, be quiet and focused on what the teacher is saying. And understanding that, yes, your child goes to school to learn math and writing and all that, but your child also goes to school or goes to a social group that you're homeschooling to, to develop these social skills that are so powerful, and that not only prepare them, you know, to be part of a society, but help them understand who they are. Right and, and, in one kind of last caveat is that a lot of six year olds go through a period of turmoil, because their eyes are suddenly open to a to a realization that they are not the best at everything, right, you know, the four year old is so confident that you know, they will nothing stand in their way. And all of a sudden, they're six and they realize that other people are faster or, you know, better at a certain thing than they are and there's this crisis that happens. And so, we have to be in a really nurture them through this, this crisis, and they will emerge on the other side, feeling a sense of belonging to a group and a sense of identity, where they understand who they are and how they can contribute to this group, so you know, honoring that process. And, um, if if you are a parent and you're homeschooling and you are kind of an introvert and you enjoy just being at home Keep in mind that part of your job is creating a social group for your child. And just because you don't maybe don't like to be with other people or like to be in big groups, doesn't mean that your child doesn't need it. So part of the work of the prepared adult at home is to create these opportunities for your child to do their work of socializing. Because it's work. It's not just play for them.

1:05:23

Yeah. And I think also a lot of children, even if they're at a Montessori schools still have to meet certain curriculum requirements. So I know that in some classrooms, there's even like, this is the folder of things that we need to do because of the curriculum. So they're also learning, we're not allowed to do everything, there are some things that we have to do. And I think that would be

reassuring to some parents, because we get this idea of well, like, if you're homeschooling and they're just following their interest, they're never going to learn that they have to do certain things. Is that something that comes up a lot in questions from parents?

1:05:51

Oh, so much. That is, that is the trickiest balance is how to, I help children understand that there are certain societal expectations that you know, things that every child has to learn, but to guide them there without breaking their spirit, which is what happens in a lot of traditional schools, right? It's like you do it, because I say so. And, and I test you, and that's the end of it. And so how do you guide them? How do you help them understand that it's in their best interest, to develop the skills that will help them to, you know, learn what they want to learn, and that will help them express themselves, and help them to understand the world around them, you know, but but do it in a way that is respectful to their development, but it gets the job done. Right. And, and so, and it is a delicate path that guides walk, you know, a six year old isn't dropped into your classroom, and all of a sudden, you say, Okay, I need you to do reading, writing and math every single day of the week. It doesn't happen that way. It's it's, it's gentle, and it's gradual, and the same at home. Right? It's, it's, it's first, creating a connection between the adult and the child a sense of trust, and a sense that the adult wants the best for the child. And once the child understands that, and a strong bond, a strong relationship is forged. And then it becomes easier because the child knows that the adult is working in their best interest. And so whether it's a school or a home, and yes, you know, it's that balance and that awareness that we have to hold those boundaries. Because we know the child is capable, and because we know that they need it. Right, they need us to hold those boundaries, they need us to help them move outside of their comfort zone. And and

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and help them see that they can do really hard thing. Hmm. Yeah, I mean, Jeanne-Marie, like if you have children, that you come across the the kind of reluctant learners like that you kind of see that they're not doing things that Yeah, what do you like? How do you help parents when they're concerned that their child's not picking up reading because, you know, you would have worked in that age group where they're starting to learn to read and they're not reading? And, yeah, is there a way to engage to be an amazing teacher, I guess, at some point, and what are some tips, I mean, to me, it comes it comes down to to reassuring parents, that they, they will get there, you know, that each child is different as individual has different gifts. And, you know, yes, there's one child that might read when they're four years old, and there's one that might not read until they're seven. And there's no or even later that it's really about you continuing to have faith in your child to trusting that the that they are learning that there is a process to continue, you know, engaging them in what they are interested in, so that if you know they're interested in, in really, the insects that are around well, keep reading about insects, keep keep exploring that because until you have

satisfied that, that that need and, and help them kind of master that knowledge that they want, you know, they will, it will move on to something else. And then then let's count how many Beatles there are there you're introducing mathematics in a different way. You know, there was I remember in my classroom, there was a child who was

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you know, the parent was concerned that they weren't doing that much mathematics but because they were reading so much so what did I do I just did word problems where we were where we read stories where there was something mathematical to to figure out so that's the way that parents can just always, you know, bring new new concepts in through the back door like not in this traditional you know, workbooks and we have to get through this like, you know, just like color says it's like, we have to use our own imagination and their imagination, but most importantly, I think, for parents is to just trust and really have faith in in you are meant to be the parent of your child, and you know your child better than anybody else and just just really have faith in your child and trust that they are learning each and every day.

1:10:18

One of the things I love about Montessori, in the three to six age group is when they ask them to show an interest in reading. And so not forcing them to read early or anything, but what kinds of things could you do at home, you know, like introducing some sounds and things like that, for parents who are wanting to support their child on that, you know, beginning interest in, in learning to read.

1:10:38

So definitely the whole, you know, this whole notion of of sounds like as soon as the child starts showing interest in the symbols of the written language, is really being mindful that it is about sounds, it is not about the name of letters, but it is about sounds like Oh, that looks cool, that looks like a car that looks like a you know, really engaging them in that. But then also, you know, these beautiful little I spy games of you know, I spy something that starts with a car or starts with an L is is beautiful. And then, you know, the whole, this whole notion in Montessori that That, to me was a big aha, in my training, is this whole idea that we write before we read, right? Because this idea that it comes from within, it's really our, our expression that we want to share. And there is this beautiful presentation at one point where we actually write some very phonetic words on a little piece of paper, and we fold it up and give it to the child like a little secret. And when they open it, and they sound it out the look on their face of like, I just read that, like, you know, it's just, it's just fabulous to see that that transformation. So just awareness of the written language. To me, it's it's a lot about reading about singing about, you know, sharing poetry, about conversations,

just the the beauty of language and, and I will also add to do it in all your languages. I work with a lot of multi lingual families. And I really encourage that you share your native language, your mother tongue as much as you can to your child.

1:12:35

Yeah, thank you. And that was a tiny introduction to the language part of the Montessori classroom and feel I'd love to talk about the mathematics because you touched on geometry. And it's so beautiful to see some of the work and how concrete it is. And you building on these concrete materials. So as you were talking about then moving to abstraction, but is there one part of the mathematics curriculum that you could explain to us to give people an idea of how rich the materials are to make it such a concrete process for

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the child? Oh, gosh, um, yeah, I mean, I think every, every sequence is, is so lovely in that it really isolates, um, you know, a particular step. And, to me, one of the one of the sections that I really love is the squaring, which I remember in our, in our training, when we first saw the actual square, you know, you Montessori has the beads. And when you put them together, you know, you put five, you know, five, five bars, it actually makes a physical square. And that was that, oh, that's what that little two on top of a five actually represents. I'm and and so having that impression that's such a young age is something that the children are going to take with them right their entire lives. And that so then moving from that to the cube, for example. And then seeing what that little three means and being able to I still remember having, you know, giving a presentation. And in the middle of the presentation, my first year of elementary teaching and the middle of the presentation of teaching, you know that the little two on top of the number means square and the little three on top of number means cube. And the child asked me, Well, why did they choose the number two? And I didn't know the answer. And I looked down at the material. And I realized it was because the bar that the square grew in two dimensions, right? And so that two was was you know, it grew the base and it grew that height. So it grew in two dimensions. And so that's what that two men so when I looked at the cube, and I was like, Oh, now I understand what the three means that it's growing in three dimensions it was and you know, when I was 3536, something like that, and it never dawned on me. And so then you take that and you you know, you take the square and then you grow by No meals. And so you you you grow, for example, the square of five plus three, and what it looks like, on, you know, physically with the beads. And then you translate it into numbers. And then you go from there to the algebraic expression. And so you say, Okay, well, you know, this side, instead of calling it three, we're going to call it a and this side, we're going to call it B and this one, C, and then we're going to, you know, come up with a formula using those letters. And because it's been such a gradual hands on, isolated process, where you're not giving the child more than he can grasp at any one time, and you're always revisiting what they

just learned, so that it stays in their mind, and so that it becomes part of this new thing they're learning. When they get to this algebraic formula at the age of eight or nine, they get it, they understand what it means it's, it's nothing overwhelming to them, because it's just letters that are just taking the place of numbers. And so you have, you know, nine and 10 year olds manipulating these amazing formulas, like their game, because they can see it in their minds. And so that progression to me, it just just floors me, and it's something that I would present to parents every year, when they would come to understand what their children would be doing in the elementary, and their jaws just dropped. Because, you know, it's things that they were never, never able to understand things that they were just told, okay, well just memorize it, just memorize the fact that a square plus b square, this is how you write it out and, and go with it. And I, you know, nobody told them what it represented. And and so this gift that Montessori math gives right to be able to see in your mind and understand the why the why of these letters, the why of these numbers, and the why of these combinations. Is is just one of the biggest gifts that you can give your children.

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And if I can add to that the like the binomial and trinomial cube that Omar is talking about, we have it on the shelf for the primary children. So for it for the you know, for the three and a half four year old who is manipulating it just as a sensorial material, there is no there is no explanation. It is just an exploration of, of different colors in it and it's a three dimensional puzzle. And and to me that is the genius of Montessori is this this this work from from, you know, giving them what they need at a certain age, which is just sensorial exploration, to then you know, when they go into the elementary years where they've, they've already manipulated this so it's familiar. It's already you know, it's already an image in their mind, and now you're giving them even more information on it. It's just gorgeous, genius.

1:17:59

Genius. Now, summary. Something that we don't get to talk about very often is your love of babies and the doula work that you've been doing lately. Can you share some of the delightful work you've been doing?

1:18:10

Well, because I am a newly empty nester. And I don't have anybody scheduled to mine but my own. I decided to do something that has been in the back of my mind for a long time. And that is to volunteer as a doula. We have this beautiful program here in San Diego that's been around for I think about 25 years. It's called hearts and hands, volunteer doula service and we work with two hospitals. And basically it is when the birthing mother comes the hospital offers them the service of you know, having a doula by their side. And we get called in and, and it has been just beautiful

work. And I think, you know, a lot of it comes from I mean, I've always been, you know, just fascinated with babies, I think I have a real connection with them. For some reason, I just start talking to them. In my native language, French for some reason, and, and during my Montessori training, actually Birth to Three. We are asked to observe a birth if we can, and I had actually a dear friend of mine, invited me into her home in to help care for her older child who was I think she was barely two at the time while she was giving birth, and it was just an extraordinary experience. And then later PLR invited me into her home for her birth. So I've been kind of a doula friend. And so I decided to go a little further and do this training with a volunteer. And it's to me it's just you know, it is such an extraordinary moment. meant in, in life in, in, in a woman's life in in the birth. And we know that the birth environment, you know is that first environment that the child will experience after prenatal life. So if I can do anything to empower the women giving birth, if I can do anything to really make sure that this baby is is welcomed, and they can trust the world that they're being born into, that's, you know, I do it through right now through this volunteer service. You know, maybe I'll become a full, you know, private doula one day, I would love to, I just think it is, it is a moment that is so, so precious and so empowering also for women. And I feel that there is a lot of work to be done around birth and kind of the, you know, the the myths that we are told that it has to be hard and painful and grueling. And all this, I'm not saying it's easy, but it's transformative. And I want to empower the birthing families to really be the ones making the choices that they're not in any way sick or handicapped, or anything this is this is a powerful, powerful moment in your life, and I want it to belong to you. So that's, that's why I do the work. I do.

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Like all these podcast conversations, I could keep talking with both

1:21:31

going to let you get back to your families, but is there anything Pilar that you want to talk about that we something you don't get to talk about often that we didn't touch on yet? Um, well, just one thing came to mind when you guys were talking about the reading and, and I love how we're kind of, you know, representing all the way from babies through elementary here, because recently, I had a friend who had a two year old who didn't want to toilet independently, or it is the toilet independently. And a friend of mine who is very much a proponent of elimination communication, was giving her a lot of advice, like really sound wonderful Montessori aligned advice about just, you know, following her child and modeling and trusting etc. And what struck me was that this same friend, who was giving all this advice, is really struggling because her child is seven, seven and a half, and not yet reading in a way that makes her feel confident that he's going to be able to and, and so it really struck me how we need to to continue with the same mentality of trusting modeling, preparing the environment, and you know, whether it's for a six

month old or a 910 year old, I think it doesn't go away. And so that is the thread that we need to carry. From the day we find that we're pregnant, you know, through the day our children leave our home and move on to to adulthood. And so that was kind of the last little thing that that struck me, especially because we cover such a broad range of ages here. Yeah. Oh, that's fantastic, as I love that, because actually, even those who are struggling with toileting could go back to that moment when the child walks, when we're just supporting, you know, and scaffolding the environment and doing it, then we trust that the child would walk, but and then the child who doesn't walk well, then we go back to but did they learn to rollover? Yes. And so it is a beautiful process that we get to witness and Jeanne-Marie for you, is there anything that you would also like to add that we haven't been able to touch on? No, I mean, just, you know, we read it read a rating to to, to trust in yourself and to trust your child, that, that it is, you know, parenting is collaborative work, and that we were doing it together and I'm just, you know, I strongly believe that we are gifted the children that we need, and that, you know, they have the parents that they need, and it's just sometimes it's, you know, really letting go of the comparisons and the shoulds and, and, and all of that. So just really testing yourself and, and, and also, I will add to remember to take good care of yourself, for me. But the whole notion of really asking yourself, you know, what do I need right now? Because we are As parents, we are so concerned with everybody else that we can we need to take good care of ourselves to show up fully for our families. Yes, I'm researched, important reminder, thank you so much. And I know that everyone is going to want to look you up. So I'll put Jeanne-Marie's links if you want to look for a parenting coach and to pilares amazing work in the elementary helping all the homeschoolers that all the ways the places that I send everyone, so I'll just put your contact details there. So again, thank you both so much for being here and hopefully

1:25:00

Get to hug and see each other soon in person. Yes, thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Bye, everyone.

1:25:21

So fun. Yes, I love the idea of helping our children to ask great questions like when pillow was talking about the Wonder wall in their home. And I think that's such an interesting way to keep children curious and spark interesting research and projects and also to raise critical thinkers who questions the status quo, right. And going back to that idea of less is more that genre you talked about, which can help our children to focus better when we have less things out, to sit on the ground at our child's height to see how the space looks, and to still make the space inviting, which is a very nice segue into our listener question today. So today's question was sent in anonymously and they asked how should someone decorate their Montessori classroom? I like minimalist, but I wanted to make sure that I'm not decorating too much. So to answer that, I think I would go back

to Dr. Montessori, his first classroom, which was called a casa de bambini. And so this means House of children. So I always think then, yeah, the classroom is meant to feel like a home for children. And one of the first things that people notice when they arrive in my classroom is that everything is very low, so that the children can reach everything for themselves. We have low tables and chairs, we have low shelves, that artworks low, and plants are also at their height so that they can care for them too. So this is already making everything accessible for our children and making it like their house. And what else will make it feel like a home I think having comfortable places to sit like a cozy book corner, a place by the window to do art, having the beautiful artwork around the classroom, which represents the community and also might inspire some self expression itself. And we always love having plants in the space. I feel like plants always soften the space. But they also add natural color without being overwhelming. And so they naturally also provide opportunity for the children to have to care for them, watering them or dusting their leaves if they've got big leaves that need to be dusted from time to time. A rug on the floor or a lamp might also make it feel cozy. I put up some fairy lights one winter, I like them so much that they're up just all year round now. And in our book corner, I cut out some pretty paper to make a paper garland or what you might call bunting. And so homemade eminence like this can really make it feel cozy and homely. And the shelves themselves have a lot of beautiful materials laid out in order of difficulty inviting the children to explore. And I love having ornaments and cultural elements around the classroom that can provide beauty and spark interest. Do you remember last week Prue was saying that in her classroom in Nigeria, she loves having objects displayed in the classroom, and the children love to learn about them and also tell and ask their family about them. And in the elementary class, there are often a lot of artifacts rotated on the shelves to provide new sparks of interest for them to study further. But because there are already a lot of materials displayed, you might notice if you walk into a Montessori classroom that they're usually not like a lot of walls covered in children's paintings, and not a rainbow of colored furniture and walls. So we're trying to find that balance between being cozy and inviting a definitely not sterile, and yet not overstimulating either, which for some children can be sensory overload. So the furniture on my classroom and the walls are mostly white. But I do have one wall in the classroom painted like a museum blue kind of color, which provides a little bit of color, but definitely not overwhelming. And I also love using wood furniture having natural materials as much as possible too. So that adds to keep it warm and cozy without being Yeah, sterile. So I think the space is calm, it's attractive. And I've even added curtains to the windows to make it more homely too. And I love when you walk into a Montessori classroom, they all look unique and represent the culture of the families so we can make sure that our classrooms are being culturally responsive to. So obviously what we've been talking about Montessori classrooms, the same principles apply at home as well. So obviously, not all our furniture will be close to the ground. But it's lovely to have an area in each part of your home where your child can feel like it's set up just for them, and they feel really welcome and everything's accessible to them. And actually, one of the online courses I have is a four week self study course about setting up your home Montessori style. For those of you that would like to be walked through the home room by

room and step by step. And I love seeing people's spaces transformed by you know, clearing away the clutter and making the spaces calm and inviting. So I'll pop a link in the show notes in case that's helpful as well. So that's it for today, folks, and next Friday. I'll be back with the final episode of season two and I'm super excited about our guest. So you'll have to tune in next week to see who it is. And until then everyone keep well.

1:30:09

Thanks for joining me for the Montessori notebook podcast. The podcast was edited by Luke Davies from Filmprov media, and podcast art by Hiyoko Imai. To find out more about me and my online courses visit themontessorinotebook.com, follow me on Instagram @themontessorinotebook, or pick up a copy of my book *The Montessori Toddler* or 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.