



how to raise an
AMAZING
CHILD

the Montessori way to bring
up caring, confident children

TIM SELDIN
President of the
Montessori Foundation

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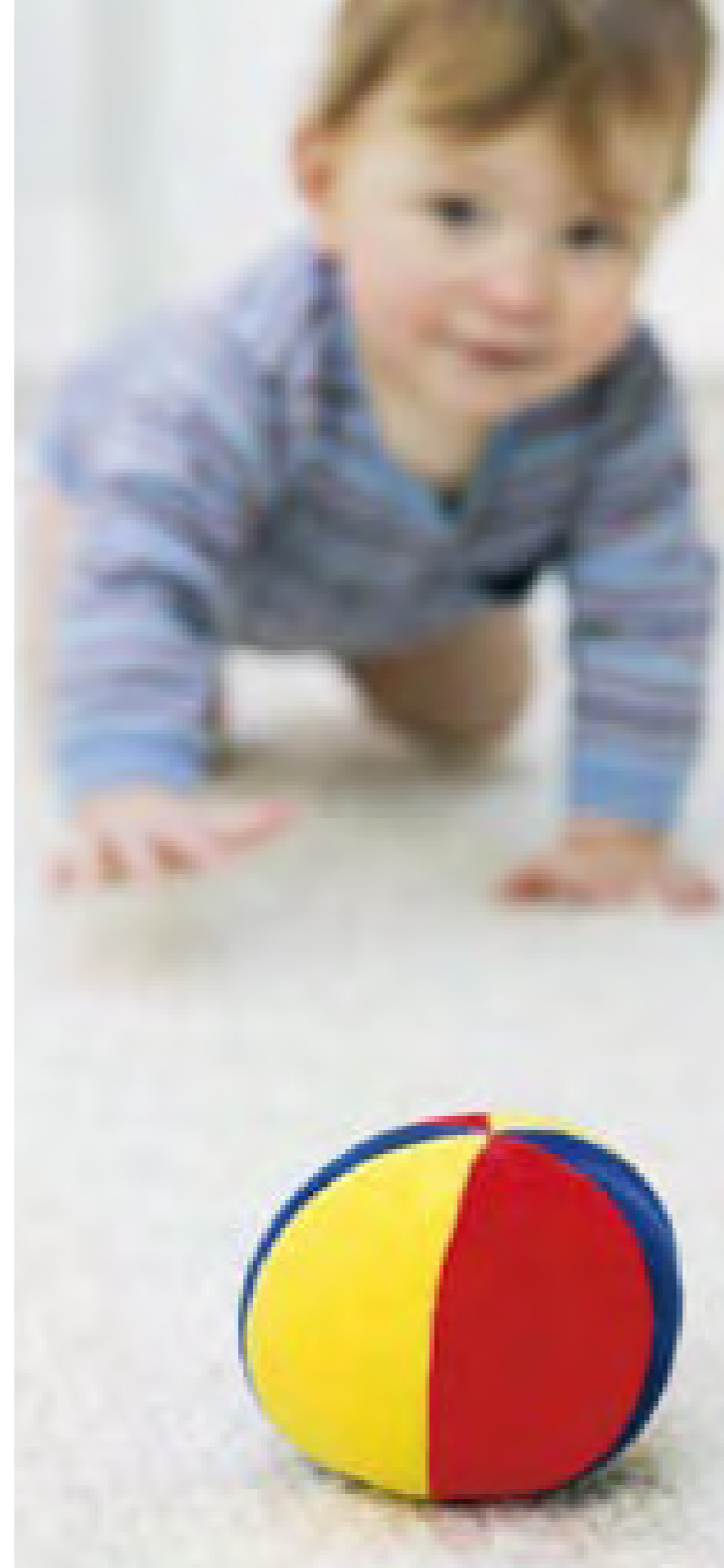
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introduction

I can't remember a time when I wasn't involved in the world of Montessori—for me it is a way of life.

This book is a compilation of my personal experience as a young child, as a father, as a Montessori guide, and as something of a coach to many families who have sought a better way to raise their children in a spirit of kindness, partnership, and respect. Much of what I have learned came from observing and listening to my children, and from my mistakes.

Being a parent is a full-time job. Once upon a time, raising a family seemed straightforward. Moms stayed at home and looked after the children, while dads went out to work. Children were generally obedient, if only because their parents punished them severely if they were not.

Today, things are different. In many families, mom is not at home all day. She may have a career or business or she may have to work just to make ends meet. Young children are often cared for in preschools or in the home of another woman who earns her living by looking after a small group of children too young to go to school. In many countries divorce has become quite common, and many mothers, and some fathers, juggle the responsibilities of work and parenting in a single-parent household.

Meanwhile, stories in the newspapers, magazines, and on TV report recent findings showing how important the right environment and experiences are for infants, toddlers, and young children. We understand that

children's brains are programmed to learn, but only if they are stimulated at an early age. As if we didn't have enough guilt before, now we get to worry about whether we are good enough as early childhood parent-educators.

Most of us long to give our children the best home environment that we possibly can, within the limits of our time and resources. If you have a young child at home and are eager for a fresh perspective and some practical suggestions, then this book is for you! While not every teacher is a parent, every parent is a teacher. The mission that we've undertaken is not simply to feed, cuddle, and protect our children. We will also need to teach them to become independent, self-confident, successful adults, who are happy and fulfilled in their lives. While that journey takes many years, it helps to have some idea of where you are heading and why we do what we do along the way.

I hope this book will encourage you to enjoy your time with your child more than ever. It is filled not only with ideas for activities to do together, but with a message that life can be celebrated. The small everyday things that we can do to mark special occasions and to reaffirm our love for one another can make all the difference in the world, both for your child, and for your own life as a mom or dad.

Tim Seldin
President, The Montessori Foundation

“while not every teacher is a parent, every parent is a teacher”

the highs and lows of parenting

Children are one of life's greatest gifts—but raising caring, happy children in this modern world can be a challenge to any parent.



A bond for life From the moment they are born, our children become the most significant focus of our lives.

Our connection with our children is formed before birth, and lasts for our entire lives. Over the years, we are there beside them as they learn to smile, crawl, speak their first words, take their first steps, and together we mark the milestones in their journey toward adulthood.

Life with children is not always easy. Sometimes, along with the hugs and cuddles, we share their sleepless nights, the times when they get sick, their temper tantrums and fights with siblings, and the many other challenges of being a parent. As they get older, it seems that our children come to know us better than we know ourselves. They learn what buttons to push to make us aggravated, and how they can best manipulate us into giving in on something that they want. There are times when we wish our children came with a parenting manual.

It's not unusual for parents to be unsure about how to raise nice kids in this modern world. All around, our children see and hear other children talking back to their parents, fussing on the playground, and saying unkind things to one another. Parenting advice abounds, but much of it doesn't seem to work that well. This is in part because it tends to offer a cookbook approach with detailed suggestions about what to do in specific situations, rather than a comprehensive, systematic approach to parenting.

a different approach My life has been touched deeply by the work of a brilliant woman: Maria Montessori. As a child, I went to a wonderful school that was inspired by her work, and as an adult I have had the privilege to teach in and later lead that same school for 25 years. Her message, and the insights and practical strategies that she taught, have influenced hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of parents and children around the world. The Montessori approach is best known in the schools that bear her name, but it is equally useful and easy to adopt in your home.

Montessori's principles for working with children are based on a holistic approach that begins at birth (or as young as possible) and builds over the years as children become more mature. Understood correctly, it has the advantage of working very well with a wide range of children. It is an entire system that has been tested over the past 100 years and can be implemented as a whole or in part. Try it—you should find that it works for you, too!

To do this, you don't need to become a Montessori teacher, nor is there a need to create a Montessori school in your home. But by implementing as many of the suggestions in this book as you can into your home and your family's life, I believe that you will find yourself becoming more effective as a parent, and able to build a home filled with warmth, love, kindness and respect.



On the run As children grow, the challenges of parenthood are demanding but rewarding.

what is montessori?

One hundred years ago a young Italian woman devised a new approach to education based on a foundation of encouragement and respect.

Maria Montessori was born in 1870 in Italy, a country that at that time was especially conservative in its attitude toward women. Despite many obstacles, Montessori was the first Italian woman to become a physician. She went on to teach at the medical school of the University of Rome, and, through its free clinics, came into frequent contact with the children of the poor. Through her work she became convinced that all children are born with an amazing human potential, which can develop only if adults provide them with the right stimulation during the first few years of life.

Anxious to prove her point, in 1907 Montessori started to oversee a daycare center for working-class children who were too young to go to school. Located in one of Rome's worst slums, this became her first Casa dei Bambini or "children's house." The conditions were appalling, and many of the children who entered were aggressive, impatient and disorderly.

Montessori began her work by teaching the older children how to help out with everyday tasks. To her amazement, three- and four-year-olds took great delight in learning practical living skills. Soon these children were taking care of the school, assisting with the preparation and serving of meals and helping to maintain a spotless environment. Their behavior changed from that of street urchins running wild to models of grace and courtesy.

a child's world Montessori recognized that little children experience a sense of frustration in an adult-sized world, so she had miniature pitchers and bowls prepared, and found knives that fitted into a child's tiny hand. She had carpenters build child-sized tables and chairs that were light enough for children to move without adult help. The children loved to sit on the floor, so were given little rugs to define their work areas and quickly learned to walk around them rather than disrupt each other's work.

After spending countless hours observing and interacting with children, Montessori concluded that they pass through several developmental stages in the process of growing up (see pages 14–17), each one characterized by specific inclinations, interests, and ways of thinking. She found that children have their own logic at each stage of development, along with certain preferred activities and natural tendencies in behavior.

She observed how children respond to a calm and orderly environment in which everything has its allocated place. She watched the children learn to control their movements, and noted their dislike of the way the calm was disturbed when they stumbled or dropped something. She gave them the opportunity to develop their sense of independence and recognized their increasing levels of self-respect and confidence as they were taught and encouraged to do things for themselves.

international appeal The first children's house received overnight acclaim, and interest surged around the world. As an internationally respected scientist, Montessori had a rare credibility and she captured the interest and imagination of national leaders and scientists, labor leaders and factory owners, teachers, and mothers. She gave up her medical practice to devote her energy to overseeing the spread of Montessori schools around the world. A tireless advocate for the rights and intellectual potential of all children, she continued her research until her death in 1952.

Montessori's work lives on today. Her systematic approach can be replicated and sustained in almost any situation. Some people are attracted to the calm, responsible behavior shown by these students, and appreciate their love for learning. Others applaud the freedom, spontaneity and independence that Montessori gives young children.



A new beginning Italian physician Maria Montessori founded a new approach to educating children.

KEY
ACTIVITY



the magic of montessori schools

The Montessori message is just as meaningful today and is thriving in schools around the world.

Children who are treated with respect and who are encouraged to try new skills learn more readily to do things for themselves. Montessori taught that a child who feels respected and competent will develop a far greater level of emotional well being than a child who is simply loved and doted upon.

Montessori teachers share a conviction that success in school is directly tied to the degree to which children believe they are capable, independent human beings. Young children are shown how to pour liquids, write letters and compute sums. Older children are shown research techniques, internet search routines and more advanced forms of writing. When children develop a meaningful degree of independence, they set a pattern for a lifetime of good work habits, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility.

freedom to learn In a Montessori classroom there are some basic ground rules about behavior and tidiness, but beyond these children are free to choose whatever activity they wish, and to work with it for as long as they want to. They are free to move about, work alone, or with others at will. Much of the time children select work that captures their interest, although teachers help them to choose activities that will present



Getting ready to play When playing on the floor children mark out their play area with a small mat.



Neat and tidy The Montessori classroom creates a sense of order that encourages children to become self-disciplined and independent.

new challenges and new areas of inquiry. When they are finished with an activity, children are expected to put the materials back where they belong. Students are taught to manage their own community, and they develop independence and strong leadership skills.

Such guidelines easily adapt to the home. If you create a welcoming but orderly space for your children and allow them to work and play freely, their confidence and independence will blossom.



BUTTONING UP Practicing on dressing frames helps children master the skills needed to dress themselves.



SHOE POLISHING Children love to polish brass and silver; then move on to polishing their own shoes.



LEARNING TO POUR Small pitchers just right for children's hands are used to teach them how to pour.



LEARNING LETTERS Children learn to read phonetically. They compose words and sentences using the "Moveable Alphabet".



HANDWRITING To help develop the hand-eye coordination needed to correctly grasp and write with a pencil, children trace shapes onto paper.



SENSORIAL EQUIPMENT These cylinders, graded in size and depth, help children explore and refine their senses.

right from the beginning

Babies are born curious, creative and intelligent. Alongside basic baby care, enrich your baby's world to help him achieve his full potential.



Absorbent minds From the moment they are born, children are responsive and receptive to all aspects of their environment.

While babies are different from adults in many important ways, each is a full and complete human being who is present in the room with us, absorbing every sight, sound, smell, and touch that he experiences into his deepest memories. When, as parents, we truly understand this, we can become more aware of the impression left by what we do, what we say, and what we allow our children to come into contact with from the moment of their birth and through the first days, months and years of their lives.

a gentle birth There was a time, not so many years ago, when babies were delivered in hospital operating rooms. After nine months floating in the warm, cozy, dark environment of their mother's womb, experiencing only muffled sounds, babies went through the trauma of birth and entered a brightly lit, noisy room where the air was cool, and where they were handled roughly. It seems difficult now to imagine a newborn being held by a leg as the doctor gave it a swat on its rear end to get it breathing, yet this used to be common practice. Next, rather than allowing mother and baby to meet one another and rest, the umbilical cord was swiftly cut and the baby taken off into another room to be weighed and washed.



A wonderful journey Every physical milestone your baby achieves is driven by the need to experience more.

“babies are full and complete human beings ... absorbing every sight, sound, smell and touch that they experience”

Today, thanks in part to Montessori's influence, more compassionate health care professionals assist in the process of birth. Modern birthing centers and hospitals use subdued lighting; the room temperature is kept warm; soothing music can be played, and everyone speaks in hushed voices. After the birth, the newborn is placed on the mother's tummy to rest and bond before being washed off, weighed and checked over. Except in rare medical emergencies, everything is handled at a relaxed pace.

adapting your home to a growing child

As your child becomes more mobile and interactive, try to arrange your home to accommodate her wherever the family gathers.

“young children have a tremendous need and love for an orderly environment”

Left to their own devices, young children may tend to create chaos, but they also have a tremendous need and love for an orderly environment. Try to arrange the rooms where your children spend most of their time to make it easy for them to maintain a neat, well-organized atmosphere. It's surprising what an impact this can have on their developing personalities.

in the family room

Family room, living room, parlor, playroom—whatever you call it, families tend to congregate in one room in the house. Plan yours with all of your children in mind. It should include accessible shelves where your children can keep books and toys neatly and attractively organized. Avoid putting out too many toys and books at one time. Divide toys into three or more sets: favorites, which are kept out on the shelves continually, and two or more sets that are rotated in and out of the closet every month or so.

Provide a child-size table and chairs where your children can work on neat projects. Furniture should be at the right height to support good posture while your child reads, writes and works. Include a basket holding some small rugs that can be spread out to define your children's work areas when they choose to play on the floor (see page 83).



Child-friendly space Accessible shelving and baskets for storage allow children to maintain an organized environment for themselves.

Kitchen craft A child-size work table in your kitchen allows your child to work and play alongside you.



AGE GUIDANCE?

in the kitchen

If at all possible, make room for a child-sized work table for young cooks. Use a bottom drawer to hold forks, knives and spoons and a low shelf to hold your child-sized plates, bowls, glasses, forks, knives, spoons and napkins. Set aside the bottom shelf in your refrigerator for your children. Here you can store small drink pitchers, fruit, and the ingredients for making snacks. Use non-breakable plastic containers to hold peanut butter, jams, lunchmeats, and spreads. A child of two can open the refrigerator and get her own prepared snack or cold drink stored in a cup. A slightly older child can pour her own juice and make her own snack (see pages 104–5). Prepared snacks, such as yoghurt, can be purchased in small individual servings and stored on this shelf.

in the bathroom

Cast your eye around your bathroom to see how you can make it easier for your child to use what she needs to. She should be able to reach the sink, turn on the water, and reach her toothbrush and toothpaste without help. There should be a special place where her towel and washcloth are kept so she can reach them. Most parents provide bathroom stools, but small, wobbly stools often do not provide enough secure, comfortable space for bathroom tasks. If possible, build or buy a sturdy **wooden platform** 6–8 in (15–18 cm) high that fits around the toilet and sink.

in the hall

Make your hall child-friendly by providing a low bench where your children can leave their shoes neatly pegged together and position coat hooks at a level that children can reach by themselves.

in the bedroom

As your child reaches age two, you could either continue to have her sleep on a futon, or purchase a bed that is low to the floor. This makes it easy and safe for young children to get into and out of bed on their own, and helps to give them a sense of independence. As long as your child is more than one year old, you may wish to allow her to use a duvet or sleeping bag on her bed instead of sheets and blankets. This makes it much easier for her to make her own bed in the morning.

In addition to providing child-size furniture, make sure your child can reach door knobs and light switches without help. Light switches can be modified with extenders to allow your child to turn lights on and off independently—these are sold in most children's shops.

Plan your child's bedroom up to a point, but then let it reflect her personality and current interests. As well as space to play with toys, provide an art table for non-messy art work, such as drawing or paper and paste projects. Hang a bulletin board low on the wall so your child can hang her own artwork. Small shelves and tables also make good display areas.

Music should be an important part of every child's life. Provide a simple stereo system and give your child a step-by-step demonstration on how to use it carefully and sensibly.



Step up Children need to be able to reach the sink—make sure your bathroom step is sturdy and solid.



Hall order Easy-to-reach coat hooks, a low bench, and a stool help your child to get ready by herself.



An orderly environment When everything has its set place your child can easily maintain order in her room.

You and your child may like to create a model town or farm on a piece of heavy plywood. Placed on a low table, your child can create wonderful displays with model buildings made of wood or plastic.

Avoid clutter. Place toys with many pieces in appropriate containers, such as plastic boxes with lids or small baskets. Have a look at the shelves in our Montessori classroom (see pages 18–21) and try to duplicate the look. Store building blocks in a colorful and sturdy canvas bag with handles. Sew on strips of Velcro to fasten the bag closed. When you travel it is easy to pick the bag up to come along.

bedroom design



Open storage Small baskets are ideal for toys with lots of pieces and enable your child to tidy up herself.



Crayon box Keep crayons sharpened and stored in a box which is easy for your child to reach and carry himself.



Nature's display Provide space for a small nature museum where your child can place natural objects he has found.



Basketware Instead of a chest of drawers, install a low shelf unit on which you can place small baskets for socks and underwear.



Low shelving Store toys on low shelves, then set up a rotation system so that not all his toys are available for playing with at the same time.



Coat rack Mount a coat rack low on one wall so your child can hang up his coat, hat and dressing gown, and get them down easily by himself.

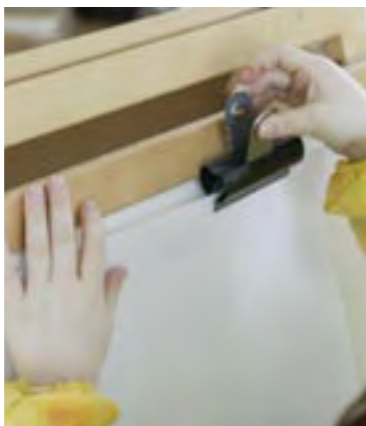
an art and crafts area

Most of us are anxious to encourage our children's creativity. Every home with young children benefits from some sort of art and craft studio. This might be in a corner of the kitchen, the child's bedroom, or a hallway—really it can be any place where you are comfortable allowing your child to work with art materials, such as paints and pastes, which obviously can spill and stain. You will probably want to choose either an area with a tile floor so that spills can be easily cleaned up, or lay down a large plastic drop cloth.

It is a good idea to set up an easel for painting and an art table covered with a washable tablecloth for drawing, craftwork and working with clay.



ONE Fred puts on his plastic overall, spreads out newspaper, and pours his paint into wide-necked pots.



TWO It took some practice at first, but Fred is now able to attach a sheet of paper to his easel with a clip.



THREE Fred lets the drips fall from his brush and scrapes the excess on the edge of the pot before he paints.

A small shelf unit at a height your child can reach can be used to store his art supplies, brushes, paper, and so on. You might want to add in a freestanding clothes-drying rack so your child can hang up his finished paintings to dry with clothespins. Once the arts and crafts area is set up, show your child how to proceed using the same step-by-step process each time for getting started and for clearing up when he has finished.

Children's art supplies can be neatly stored in separate plastic containers. Depending on your children's ages, the art supplies that you prepare might



FOUR "This is the house we all stayed in on holiday", Fred tells his Mom. When he has finished he uses clothespins to hang his picture on a drying rack, puts lids on the pots to keep the paint wet, and washes out his brushes.

include washable magic markers, crayons, paste, paper, fabric scraps and recycled household articles for making collages. You can keep tempera paint fresh by mixing it in plastic containers that are divided into three or more inner compartments. It is important to provide the very best art materials—paints, brushes, drawing pencils, crayons, paper, and such like—that you can afford and to teach your child how to use them correctly and how to take care of them, including how to store them properly when they are not being used.



art appreciation

Encourage your children to display their finished work for the rest of the family to see. While the refrigerator is a time-honored art gallery, try buying some nice matts and frames, and help your children to mount and hang artwork in other places around your home. Properly matted and framed, a child's art takes on an entirely different look and prominence.



Look and learn Young babies are keen to explore with their eyes and hands in the early months of life.

together and talk about what you see. Mobiles, as they slowly spin, present an everchanging view of interesting objects that are moving. You might even want to have two or three around the house, and rotate them every so often to create interest and delight in the new sights.

musical impact Listening to music is an important sensorial experience. You can introduce your baby to music in many ways. Some parents begin by playing recorded music to their developing baby during pregnancy, sensing that their unborn child can hear sounds and rhythms, just as we can when we are underwater.

the most attention to things that show clear patterns with high contrast, especially things that are black and white.

At about three months old, babies are beginning to focus on things that are farther away. They will watch people's faces intently. Their eyes follow moving objects. Now they can recognize familiar people and objects at a distance. They begin to reach for things that they see. By about seven months they have developed full color vision and fairly mature distance vision. They can easily track moving objects with their eyes.

There are all sorts of things that you can do to help develop your child's visual perceptiveness. Talk to your baby, and when you do, make direct eye contact with him and notice how he responds. Look at things

“your baby will use her hands, eyes, ears, mouth and nose to investigate everything that crosses her path”

In the early years, the experience of hearing recorded music is certainly taken in by infants and young children and is stored as part of the ongoing stimulation of the environment. Talk and sing to your baby from birth. Melodies and lullabies are very important, and become deep-rooted memories of early childhood. The sound and rhythm of the music that you play in your young child's room, the words to familiar songs that he will begin to learn as he gets older, all lay a foundation for a music education.

Music has also been shown to be directly connected to the development of those areas in the brain that are associated with mathematics and pattern recognition. In other words, music not only makes children more artistically sensitive, it makes a very real contribution to their brain's development.

hand to mouth From his very first feed, your baby's mouth becomes a source of exploration and pleasure. Weaning your baby is about much more than introducing solid food—each new food generates interest and excitement as your baby explores tastes and textures. As he grows, every object within his reach will go straight into his mouth.

getting a balance In no time at all your baby is able to pick up objects and explore their weight, texture, and temperature. She will use her hands, eyes, ears, mouth, and nose to investigate everything that crosses her path. And by the time she is one year old your child will become increasingly curious and able to focus and concentrate, watching or examining something that catches her attention with infinite patience.

It is important to avoid over or under stimulation—babies are good at letting us know how they are feeling. Too much stimulation, and babies become stressed and tend to go to sleep. They also fall asleep when there is too little stimulation. Ideally, we need to establish a good balance.



Tastes good By six months, everything within reach seems to end up in your baby's mouth.

KEY
ACTIVITY



basket of treasures

All around your baby is a magical world of objects just waiting to be discovered.

Once your baby is able to sit and hold things she will love to explore a “treasure basket”. This is a low basket or sturdy box you have filled with lots of interesting household objects and things from nature. The objects must be large enough not to be swallowed and free from sharp edges or anything else that would be harmful when they are touched and quite possibly mouthed by a young child. Older toddlers enjoy the treasure basket, too—just keep introducing new objects.

what’s inside? A treasure basket should create a sense of wonder, surprise and discovery. Gather between 50 and 100 objects, each of which has distinctly different characteristics: shape, color, texture, weight, and smell—use your imagination and common sense. You might include things such as a wallet, a large walnut shell, a pine cone, a brush, a feather, a silver bell, a smooth stone. Infants and toddlers use all of their senses, whereas adults tend to rely on sight. Objects that have a distinct visual pattern or texture on their surface, a distinct aroma, that are cool to the touch (such as a stone), or which make a noise when moved are especially intriguing. To a young child, everything is a new and exciting discovery.

Treasure trove The treasures in this basket fascinate young children. They will return to explore them over and over again.



ideas for treasure

- **metal:** plug and chain • bells • measuring spoons • small whisk
- **natural:** pine cone • sponge • avocado stone • feather • large pebble • shell
- **wooden:** spoon • wooden egg • pastry brush • clothes peg • brick • shoe brush
- **glass:** egg cup • spice jar • salt cellar • small paperweight • string of beads
- **fabric and leather:** satin and velvet ribbons • ball of wool • small purse • silk scarf • pompom • keyholder

objects to avoid

- small choking hazards • objects with sharp edges • objects with loose threads or pieces • anything that might be harmful if mouthed • materials with non-colorfast dyes



Objective investigation One enticing object has particular appeal and becomes the most precious. Your baby returns to it time and time again to examine its properties and see what she can make of it.

The treasure basket can entertain young children for long periods of time: a half an hour would not be unusual. With infants, keep in mind that it is very stimulating, so is best offered when your child is rested and alert. When young children are first exploring the basket it is best not to say a word—just select an object, carefully examine it, and put it back in the basket. Your child may reach for it as soon as you put it down, or she may choose something altogether different. Allow her to explore things on her own. Children like us to be nearby, but they do not always want us to interfere.



TASTING Sucking has been a source of great satisfaction for your baby since birth so expect every object in the basket to be sampled in her mouth. As long as objects are clean and safe, you don't need to limit this experience—your baby will decide what tastes good and what doesn't.



LOOKING Sharp contrasts were important in the early days when her vision was still developing but your baby now has adult acuity. She can appreciate natural colors, subtle shades and combinations of shapes. A simple household item such as a pastry brush can have great appeal.



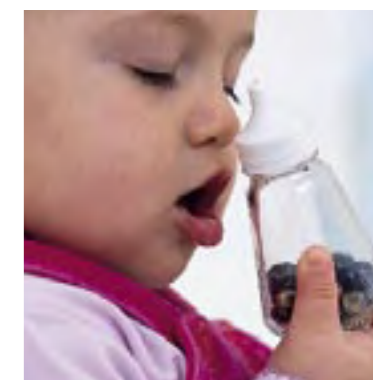
HEARING Beans and seeds in small sealed bottles and jars make interesting sounds, as do tiny bells or crackly paper inside tightly tied drawstring bags. Metal chains, strings of beads and measuring spoons clatter against other objects and jangle when they are shaken.



TOUCHING Things that have a distinct visual pattern or texture on their surface, such as a fir cone, are especially intriguing. Glass objects and polished pebbles are interestingly cool to the touch, unlike plastic toys which all feel the same.



EXPLORING When your child has exhausted the possibilities of the treasure, there is still a textured basket to be investigated. Your baby may spend 20 or 30 minutes exploring the contents of her basket—allow her to decide when she has had enough.



SMELLING Your baby has a highly developed sense of smell and will appreciate some carefully chosen scents in the basket. Try bags of herbs, sachets of lavender and a lemon. Or put scented sweets, vanilla pods or coffee beans inside a salt cellar.

practice first

Encourage your child to practice dressing skills before trying them out on clothes she is wearing.



Fastening buttons Allow her to practice buttoning and unbuttoning skills on a piece of clothing with large buttons laid on the floor.



Bow-tying frame This has two different colored ribbons, one attached to each side, to help master the skill of tying bows.



I can dress myself! At about 18 months your child may start to develop a keen interest in putting her clothes on by herself.

As children get older and fussier, it is a good idea to give them choices. Set out two outfits that your child can choose from each morning. As the day draws to a close, discuss with her which clothes she might like to wear the following morning. You can also help by buying clothing that is easy for your toddler or young child to put on and take off by herself. Look for pants with elastic waistbands, rather than belts. Avoid clothes that have lots of buttons or zippers. Choose shoes that slip on or fasten with Velcro. Try to be patient as your child learns to dress herself! Young children need lots of practice.



GETTING READY Putting on simple items such as hats and scarves is a good starting point when your child first shows an interest in learning how to dress himself.



SOCKS ON Putting on his own socks will require manual dexterity from your child. Show him how to get them the right way round and pull them on.



VELCRO SHOES Shoes with Velcro fasteners are the easiest for young children to learn with. Later on they might like to practice with buckles.



TYING LACES Learning to tie shoe laces usually takes a lot of demonstration and practice to perfect. Making a bow-tying frame be useful (see facing page).

step by step: putting on a coat



ONE Eden lays his coat on the floor with the lining uppermost and squats down at the top where the hood is.



TWO Slotting his hands into the sleeves, he lifts the coat over his head. The sleeves slide down over his arms.



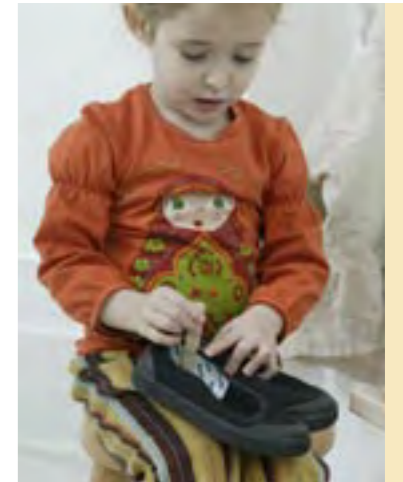
THREE The coat falls neatly down over his back and Eden straightens out the front. "See, I can do it myself!"

Putting on a coat can be the most awkward aspect of getting dressed for a young child. From time to time even adults struggle to find a sleeve left hanging somewhere behind. In Montessori nurseries in winter when perhaps 20 small children need to put on coats at the same time to go outside, there is a simple technique to help them get ready with the minimum of assistance. It's just as easy to use at home.

preparation helps Start by organising your hall with shoe racks and a low peg on which your child can hang his coat (see page 41). Show your child how to pull his coat sleeves the right way out each time he hangs it up. Now show him how to put on his coat following the steps in the sequence above. Approaching the coat from the collar end is important (many children end up with an upside down coat the first few times) so demonstrate this step carefully. When your child masters this trick he will feel a huge sense of independence and achievement so let him practice as much as he wants to.



FOUR Having practised to perfection, Eden can now put on his coat all by himself in less than 30 seconds. He beams with pride.



shoe order

Pegging pairs of shoes and boots together helps your child to find them easily and presents her with right and left in their proper order when she is ready to put them on.