



# National Newsletter

September 2008

## Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents,

At the suggestion of one of our school members, we will be trying to make this newsletter for parents more practical, relevant and helpful.

To help us do this, please feel free to send through your questions, concerns and comments with regard to general parenting issues, Montessori education and child development and let us know where you would like support.

You can send these to  
[president@samontessori.org.za](mailto:president@samontessori.org.za)

For parents of teenagers, there is a very informative website available – [www.lifetalk.co.za](http://www.lifetalk.co.za). The forum and newsletters provide insightful and practical guidance aimed at parents. Although not specifically 'Montessori' many of the issues are handled in ways supportive of Montessori philosophy.

I was recently privileged enough to attend a talk by Dereck Jackson. Mr Jackson is a well-known expert in the area of discipline and has been a speaker at SAMA national conferences in the past.

According to Mr Jackson, discipline is quite simple: children need basic rules to understand that in life there are consequences and children need rules because they give us predictability and order. He emphasised not being too rigid but consistency was a key. This is very similar to Maria Montessori's philosophy of discipline: if we give children freedom within very clearly defined limits, they will learn to become respectful, self-disciplined individuals.

Mr Jackson mentioned FIVE BASIC RULES that have been found to be clearly defined in functional families. They are so simple and yet very effective. These are:

1. Time to go to bed and time to get up. There must be a bedtime. While you cannot force your child to sleep, having a set bed time is very important. This can be negotiable on weekends and in school holidays but during term time, in the school week, it should be set and non-negotiable.
2. Time to eat – mealtimes should be set and enough time given to eat. There shouldn't be fighting over forcing to finish vegetables etc. But meals are eaten during the agreed upon meal times – if the child chooses not to eat then, this should be respected. But no other meals are arranged later.
3. Time to tidy up after yourself – even from 17 months old, children can take responsibility for tidying up. This is not negotiable either. Parents can facilitate in the beginning to help get the ball rolling but ultimately the child must take responsibility for tidying up their own mess.
4. Time to bath – there is a set time to bath. This helps give children a sense of routine and order.
5. ALWAYS speak to your mother and father with respect. This will usually carry forward to all other adults but the starting place is respect towards your parents. We are often taken aback by how some of the children at schools speak to their parents and it is critical that disrespect towards parents is stopped firmly.

If we all have basic ground rules, we allow for structure, order, routine, predictability and ultimately discipline. Mr Jackson also emphasised the importance of maintaining leadership roles – as parents and teachers we are not to become the children's best friends. We can be friendly, love them, engage with them but at the same time maintain the role and position of authority and leadership.

Last but not least – discipline and reinforcing of boundaries should begin when children become mobile (i.e. start walking)...and the later you implement discipline, the longer you will struggle with it.

**Maria Montessori said we cannot be truly free unless we know and understand the limits of that freedom. By providing children with boundaries, we are allowing them to exercise true freedom.**

Warm regards  
Sam Streak  
SAMA President

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