



November 2007

## Message from the President

Dear Montessori Parents

As another year comes to an end, we wish you a safe and fun holiday season and all the best for 2008. Holidays can be challenging for parents, particularly working parents, and we trust in between all the challenges, there are many wonderful moments to share with your children.

During the holidays, why not see how many of the following life skills your children are able to do, and if they don't know how to do them, why not teach them a few? Sue Palmer, author of *Toxic Childhood*, says that there are basic life skills all children should have in place by around 12 years old. Maria Montessori also emphasised the importance of life skills through the practical life exercises. These are often extended in primary and high schools to include things like first aid, caring for pets and even completing basic car maintenance. If we give our children independence, we give them the freedom to live their lives.

Warm Regards  
Sam Streak

Sew on a button  
Use a vacuum cleaner  
Change a plug  
Iron a shirt  
Clean and dress a wound  
Change the bed  
Wash a car  
Find the way home using a map  
Take phone messages properly  
Make a hot drink  
Mow the lawn  
Clean the oven and stove  
Change a fuse  
Put out the rubbish  
Wash the dishes  
Use a washing machine  
Use a screwdriver  
Cook a basic meal  
Hand wash clothes  
Use a potato peeler  
Grow and take care of a plant

Unblock a drain / sink  
Look after a pet properly  
Use the phone book  
Go shopping (with a list)  
Weed the garden  
Defrost the fridge  
Change a light bulb  
Sort the recycling  
Clean the windows  
Stack and empty a dishwasher  
Make a conversation with a guest  
Give simple first aid (e.g. clean and fix a cut)  
Know your home address and a parent's phone number

## Book Review

**Toxic Childhood** How the modern world is damaging our children and what we can do about it. By Sue Palmer – Orion Books, 2006. U.K.

Having recently read this book and also having been drawn into the very same discussions by parents around me I found this book affirming my instincts as a teacher and a parent. This is definitely recommended reading.

What I took pleasure in most was that at no time was there any 'finger wagging' taking place, but insights to why we do the things we do and how to comprehend our modern society and make the best of it.

As a teacher I can only identify with this book as we notice the effects of modern society on children in our classrooms. It stems from the foods we eat, disruptive home routines (or lack thereof), modern technology, the effects of marketing and (*shudder...*) the dreaded television in the bedroom to name but a few. We as teachers are called on more and more to guide our parents in ways of practical parenting. Parents only want to give their children the best start in life possible. Here Sue Palmer gives lists of ideas and resources for future research.

This is not your "*you should be doing*" book, but a book full of depth and encouragement to cope and adapt to life's daily demands and to help make some wise decisions whilst we take on the responsibility of parenting our children from birth to young adults.

Jacky Price

## Four Steps to a Healthy Parent-Teacher Relationship

A good parent-teacher relationship can be the difference between knowing how your child's doing in school and knowing how he tells you he's doing. Education expert Dorothy Rich suggests the following four tips to get off on the right foot with your child's new teacher:

- Introduce yourself to the teacher, and let the teacher know where you can be reached.
- Ask questions. What is the class going to cover this year, and how can I help? What can we do at home to help?
- Say a few words about your child's special interests and positive qualities, but you don't have to go into every dark secret. Your child may behave differently with this teacher; talking about negative qualities at this stage could put those expectations in a new teacher's mind.
- Volunteer to help out. Let the teacher and the principal know when you're available. You could help chaperone a field trip, read to kids for an hour a week, or print the class newsletter on your home computer. But don't bite off more than you really have time for. Be consistent. Be someone the teacher can count on.

"Remember," says Rich, "You don't have to kowtow to a teacher to have a relationship -- relationships are built on partnership." And Rich adds not to get discouraged if you can't volunteer at school: "Though important, I don't think volunteering is the most significant part of parent involvement. The biggest piece is what you do with and say to your child at home."

Taken from <http://school.familyeducation.com>

In her book **Understanding the Human Being**, Dr Montanaro shares her views on dummies, or pacifiers as the Italians call them:

"... We have seen that children, in their first few months of life, discover their ability to produce sounds with their speech organs, which should, therefore, be free to be exercised. However, all too often, and for much too long, the mouth is occupied with a pacifier, with very negative consequences. Continued sucking leads children to use these organs only for taking in food. It is much more important that they are made aware of other uses, in particular that it is possible to produce sounds for communicating with others. This is a passage from using the mouth for the personal pleasure of sucking to the social pleasure of exchanging information with the surroundings. This is also a development from the pleasure derived from an object (the dummy), to the pleasure linked to human interaction. Although children want to relate to and communicate with the human beings around them, we induce them to seek false forms of gratification that limit communication, instead of promoting it..."

By Dr Silvana Montanaro  
Director of training of AMI Assistants to Infancy



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