

Top Ten Helpful Montessori Tips for Parents

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Ten Little Reminders for (even the best) Parents

I’m not perfect. I am a loving, well-meaning, very caring, sometimes forgetful, often-busy parent. This, I think, puts me in the same boat with a whole lot of other people. Sometimes it helps to have a little reminder of all those good-parenting practices we really know deep down, but can sometimes forget in the hustle and bustle of our daily lives. So here, inspired by Maria Montessori’s great wisdom, is a list of ten helpful tips for us not-quite-perfect parents.

Don’t forget the basics. Is your child getting enough sleep? Is she eating a healthful diet? Keep bedtime calm and consistent. Read or tell stories before bed. Keep bedtime the same throughout the week. Also, help your child learn to like nutritious foods by offering healthful options, but don’t force the child to eat. Limit alternatives and beverages other than water. Talk with your children about foods. Ask them to describe the look, smell, and taste. Invite children to help with cooking and food preparation.

Let them help. In addition to helping out in the kitchen, involve children with many of life’s daily duties, especially those they express interest in. Some examples: setting the table, sorting silverware or laundry, dusting, helping to wash the car, etc. Take the time to show them, step by step, how to accomplish such tasks successfully. Don’t forget Maria Montessori’s wise words,

“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.”

Provide the right tools. You’d be amazed how much children can do for themselves, especially when they have child-sized tools, furnishings, or utensils. Provide low shelves so that they can put away their own toys, books, etc. Even very young children can return things to their proper places, hang their own coats, put laundry in the hamper, and much more. Start with things like: a step stool, a small table and chairs, a scaled-down dustpan and broom, or cups, bowls and spoons just the right size for little hands.

Be consistently consistent. Unrushed, regular routines provide comfort and security. Whenever possible make every effort to allow adequate time, stick to schedules, and be on time (to school, etc.). Also, routinely leave some time unstructured to play, explore, or just “be.” When things are out of the “norm,” prepare your child for what’s to come. As much as possible, let them know in advance where you are going and when.

Grace and courtesy. Teach and (more importantly) *model* the way you want your children to act. This is NOT the time for “do as I say, not as I do.” Use polite manners and speak respectfully. Make eye contact, get down on their level, but don’t talk “down” to them. Talk about patience, kindness, honesty, sharing, helpfulness, and any other principles you value. Don’t interrupt, and teach children to do the same.

Read, read, read! Read together with your children every day. Make trips to the library or bookstore. Make reading a pleasant, enjoyable experience. Also, play games, sing, and tell jokes. Talk about words, and help them become aware of the sounds that make up the words. For example, ask “what begins with *mmm*?” or “what rhymes with *cat*?”

Give the gift of gab. Our children learn words and language through listening to us. Talk to your children at every and any opportunity. When you are in the car, talk about what you are seeing out the window. When

you are in the grocery store, name the various foods as you cruise the aisles. You may feel silly doing this at first, but remember that you are giving your child the precious gift of language and a rich vocabulary.

Stop and smell the roses. If possible, get outside with your children *every* day. Take walks together. Let the child set the pace. Stop and take notice of your surroundings. Talk about it, “what do you see/ hear/ smell/ etc.?” Let the child have a place (could just be a flowerpot) to grow things. Hang a birdfeeder and watch the birds together. Bundle up and go outside even when it’s cold or raining. Or help your child start a nature journal or collection.

Safety first! Teach your child to be safety-savvy. Most of us parents have “child-proofed” our homes, and we’ve tried to think of *everything*. The only drawback is that our children aren’t always at home. Explain the dangers of electric sockets, matches, heavy doors and lids, water, stairs, etc. Also, teach your child his address, phone number, and how to call 911. And finally, make sure your kids learn to swim.

Continue your own education. Build on your existing knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of your child’s stages of development. Age of Montessori offers a wealth of knowledge through their website, webinars, and classes, which you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home. This is perfect for parents who want to experience their child’s development through understanding, awareness, and joy.