



## **The Joyful Child: Montessori, Global Wisdom for Birth to Three**

*Susan Mayclin Stephenson*

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Every culture has wisdom but in modern times much of it has been lost. The first three years of life are too important for experiments, but the Montessori guidelines presented here have held true all over the world, no matter what the culture of the child, for over 100 years. It is the goal of this book to help parents look for, discover, appreciate, and support the mental, physical, and emotional needs of the child in the first three years of life. There are over 180 black and white pictures from the author's work around the world with children from birth to three years of age. "The Joyful Child" is used in Montessori teacher training centers, middle school human development classes, birth preparation classes, and it is of interest to anyone studying education and child development. It has been translated into several languages and is often used as a text for parenting classes. Chapters: The First Year-The senses: Before birth; music and language; crying as communication; seeing and processing; the absorbent mind; materials The First Year-Reaching Out and Grasping: The development of movement; toys that aid the natural development of movement; natural materials for toys The First Year-Sitting up and Working: The child's Work; eating and working while sitting up; safety concerns with new movement abilities; number of toys available at any one time, and learning to put them away; suggested toys The First Year-Freedom of movement; a safe and natural environment; crawling, pulling up, standing, and walking; toys and equipment that aid movement development The End of the First Year-Unique Development and the Child's Self-Respect: Each child's path of development is unique; aiding the beginning of a good self-image; preparing the home to welcome the newborn; clothing that supports free movement; attachment and separation, preparation for weaning and toilet learning; sign language and elimination communication (EC); materials that support optimum growth and development; unconditional love; the end of the first year Age 1-3-Care of Self, Others, and the Environment: Participating in the real life of the family; kinds of practical life activities; the work environment and concentration; materials; undressing and dressing; a place for everything and everything in its place; The child's purpose; the needs of the parents; adults and children working together; the child's research of the rules of society; teach by teaching, NOT by correcting; offering choices Age 1-3-Toys and Puzzles: Selecting toys; organizing and rotating toys; learning to put toys away; respecting concentration; visual discrimination and eye-hand control; puzzle toys; open-ended toys Age 1-3-Music: Dancing and singing; percussion instruments and other music materials Age 1-3-Language: Listening comes first; a second language; listening and including the child in conversation; vocabulary, words, pictures, and books; formal language; storytelling, reading and writing; biting; imagination? lying?; materials; supporting language development Age 1-3-Art: Art is more than drawing; art materials; art appreciation; art work Age 1-3-People: Daily life of people of the world; materials Age 1-3-Plants and Animals: A natural love of nature; experiencing and naming plants; gardening; observing and caring for animals; materials Age 1-3-Physical Science and Math: The beginnings of physical sciences; the beginnings of math Age 0-3-Preparing the Environment: What do we need for a new baby? safety; general environment principles; the environment and the absorbent mind; the outside environment; materials; conclusion Age 0-3-Parenting and Teaching: A gentle birth; gentle family togetherness in daily life; clothing and materials; developing trust in the world; a gentle beginning, the role of the father; a sense of order; the changing environment; the child's needs; modeling, setting limits, and time out; educational materials for 0-3; conclusion

## **The Joyful Child: Montessori, Global Wisdom for Birth to Three Details**

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## From Reader Review The Joyful Child: Montessori, Global Wisdom for Birth to Three for online ebook

### Laura says

Hey, I read a book! (Wow, has this pregnancy been bad for my read-in-2013 count.) One of my favorite bloggers recently said that this book and its companion (for ages 3-12) have become her go-to recommendation for people interested in Montessori. I totally agree.

This is a fantastic, readable overview of the Montessori philosophy and method for birth to age three. I would argue that even if you're not specifically interested in Montessori, it's a wonderful guide to gentle parenting. It's broken into bite-sized pieces about setting up the environment, responding to different situations, and following the child's interests and needs.

5 stars might be a little generous if Goodreads defines that as "amazing," but I AM planning to ask for a copy for Christmas so that I can return to it in the future. It definitely seems like the kind of book where different parts of it would resonate at different points in parenting.

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### Talia says

I enjoyed this easy, readable book -- and wish that I had read it during my pregnancy. Now that my baby is 19 months old, we've already outgrown many of the suggestions. It is not a recipe book on how to "do" Montessori, but a gentler overview that hits at high points and provides some nice global comparisons. I loved the pictures.

p74: A child learns self-control, and develops a healthy self-image, if the work is real -- washing fruits and vegetables, setting or clearing a table, washing dishes, watering plants, watering the garden, sorting, folding, and putting away laundry, sweeping, dusting, helping the garden, any of the daily work of his family. This real family work, known as *practical life* in Montessori schools, is seen to be the most effective path to the development of concentration and happiness. Allowing the child to participate in the life he sees going on around him is an act of great respect for, and confidence in, the child. It helps him to feel important to himself and to those around him. He is needed.

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### Meghan Mildenberger says

Not very helpful as far as ideas or activities to implement with your child. I would recommend Montessori From the Start by Paula Lillard instead.

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### Douaa Magdy says

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### **Gena says**

Excellent book giving an overview of Montessori for 0-3 year old children. I chose to read this first over Montessori From the Start because the chapters were shorter and easier to read while Montessori From the Start is a more detailed read. I recommend this as a good introduction to Montessori for those that just had a baby.

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### **Alex Tolmie says**

This book was a beautiful complement to my Montessori understanding and really helped me to reshape my thinking about how to implement the Montessori philosophy in our home. I highly recommend it to anyone who's interested in gentle, structured parenting.

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### **Moonstone says**

Montessori was hardly heard of when I had my son 31 years ago, but now re-reading this as a grandparent I think what a gentle and peaceful way to educate children and am pleased that there is greater interest in alternate methods.

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### **Miranda says**

Gave me a better understanding of Montessori but I felt like there could be more in terms of what parents could do to implement in the home

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### **Tibby (she/her) says**

Wish I had known about this book when my daughter was an infant. Excellent resource for both the philosophy behind applying the Montessori philosophy to infants and practical how-to information. Especially good resource for creating a good environment for your baby using Montessori principles.

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### **Asmaa says**

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### **Leanna says**

I think I would have eaten this book up before my son was born - but now? I agree with the general philosophy, but the actual suggestions seem largely aspirational and the tone is all sorts of judgy/preachy. Two stars for some good toy/activity ideas and pictures of them in use.

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### **Joshua Wong says**

This is the first parenting book that i have purchased and what a fantastic decision that was. This book is great for first time parents of kids 0-3 and trying to gain a general understanding of Montessori teachings. It is a practical book meant for you to understand what your child expects at different milestones and how you as parents can aid him/her to achieve it. It states that each child has his/her own schedule on what to learn next and we parents are just there to give them a helping hand. It also demonstrates many examples based on the author's observations and the response from parents. This book is simple to read and i spent roughly a week of casual reading to finish it. I have highlighted all those areas which i found important in our kindle so the wife only needs to read the highlights. I wished i had this book earlier but though my daughter is 19 months i still see the value in it. This book also teaches parents to be how to prepare for your child's arrival. First time parents or parents-to-be will feel more confident on their parenting methods after reading this book.

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### **Leslie Green says**

This is an amazing book! It is very easy to read and gives a great introduction to raising a child with the Montessori method. This would be a great read for early child educators and parents of young children.

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### **Tina says**

My favorite excerpts from this book:

Pg 12 On a visit to a hospital nursery at the University of Rome during my Assistant to Infancy training, I watched a profesora respond to the crying of infants in the following way: first she spoke gently and soothingly to the baby, reassuring him that someone was present. In many cases this was all that was necessary to comfort the child and to stop the crying. However, if this didn't work, the profesora made eye contact or laid a hand gently on the child. Often this calmed the infant completely. If not, she checked to see if there was some physical discomfort, a wrinkle of the bedding, a wet diaper, the need to be in a different position. Solving this problem almost always reassured the child and eliminated his need to cry. Only very rarely was a child actually in need of food.

Pg 87 With practice we will begin to learn from the child how to bring our whole selves, mental, physical and spiritual, to the task of the moment, to focus on each thing we do, and to enjoy each moment in life.

Pg 89 Here is an example of the meaning of the word No. I remember an incident in our home between a good friend and her two-year-old daughter, Julie. The two-year-old had climbed up on the piano bench and was reaching for a bust of Mozart kept on the piano, just barely within her reach. As she moved one arm toward it she looked expectantly at her mother, obviously waiting for some kind of a response. The mother said "No, don't touch it." Julia stopped, lowered her arm, waited a few seconds, and then reached toward Mozart again. Her mother said "No" again, a little louder. Again the daughter reached and looked at her mother. This happened several times with no resolution.

I watched this communication, and the confusion on both sides, and offered the suggestion "I don't think she knows what 'No' means and is trying to find out". The mother laughed and said "Of course." Then she went to Julia, said "No," gently, and, as she said it, picked Julia up and moved her across the room to a pile of building blocks. Both were completely satisfied.

In the first exchange perhaps the child thought "No" meant, "I am waiting and looking and expect you to eventually pick up that statue. And I am getting mad at you." In the second exchange the message was clear. "No" meant, "stop doing what you are doing and move away to another part of the room or another activity," (and, thanks to the clear and gentle way of speaking, "I am not mad at you").

Children do not understand the language of reasoning at this age; they need clear demonstrations along with words. It is very helpful for parents to realize that their child is not trying to be bad, but he is being a normal, intelligent human being trying to find out how to behave. He is carrying out research.

Pg 93 Manners lessons, like saying "please" and "thank you," come from the culture in which the child lives. In our family and with neighbor children, we used to practice over a large bowl of popcorn, offering and thanking over and over and sometimes laughing hysterically at the end of the lesson, at the exaggerated and fun manners. We became known as the most polite family on the block because we were always making up games to learn manners in a fun way.

Pg 94 Let us say we are in a situation where a certain action is necessary-such as a child getting down from a table he has climbed up on. The less effective approach is to say "Get down from there!" The child will be embarrassed and will try to save face by refusing. Try saying, "Do you need help getting down from that table or can you do it yourself?" The child will recognize the respect in the voice and the words, and feel powerful in making a decision instead of blindly obeying (or not obeying). ... I know of no behavior on the parent's part more assured of creating a peaceful atmosphere in the home of a two-year old than that of giving choices.

Pg 102 Praise, help, or even a look, may be enough to interrupt him, or destroy the activity. It seems a strange thing to say, but this can happen even if the child merely becomes aware of being watched. After all, we too sometimes feel unable to go on working if someone comes to see what we are doing.

Pg 117 often a child is so excited about talking and being able to express himself that he stutters. This is a very natural stage in the development of verbal language and a sign for the adult to stop, look and listen, NOT to supply the missing word, or to comment on the stutter. When the child is sure that he will be listened to, he will usually calm down and learn to speak more clearly.

Pg. 131 Imagination? Lying? Which is which? For the child at this age there is no difference. Sometime around age 5 to 7, the child becomes interested in fairness, morality, truth, and he will explore such concepts in depth. But at the end of the period from birth to three, and during the fourth and fifth year, a child's attempt at communicating should not be interrupted with questions about truth.

[If they give] a whopper, it is a good idea for the adult to say something like "Wow! What a great imagination you have" or "What a wonderful story!" In this way you validate the child for using vocabulary,

imagination, verbal skills, and at the same time introduce concepts such as imagination and story, which will eventually help her sort out the difference between imagination and lying.

Pg. 136 As with all other activities, there are many steps in each process and children revel in learning them. For painting as an example, first the apron is put on, then the paper to the easel (often with help), then learning to dip the brush into the paint container and wipe it on the edge of the container to prevent drips, then to apply the paint to the paper for as long as interested, then to remove the apron and wash hands. In the first lesson, since there is so much to learn, usually the child is given only one color. As the process is mastered, he will be able to handle dipping into two or three different paint containers and paint with more colors.

Pg. 206 Every unnecessary help is a hindrance to the child's development - Montessori saying

Pg. 207 The following is a list of a child's needs; this list is emphasized in every Montessori training course and some say should be posted where the teacher can see it at all times. When the needs are not met, some children will exhibit temper tantrums, anger, sadness, excessive violence or shyness, inability to concentrate, and so on. It can be very helpful, when a child is upset or unhappy, to check with this list to see if these basic needs are being met:

Gregariousness (being with others)  
Exploration (physical and mental)  
Order (in both time and space)  
Communication (both verbal and non-verbal)  
Movements (hands and whole body)  
Work (participating in family work)  
Repetition (in many activities)  
Concentration (uninterrupted)  
Exactness (challenging work)  
Striving for perfection/doing one's best (work)  
Imitation (good role models)  
Independence (dressing, eating, etc.)  
Self-control (instead of by others)

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### **Heba Albaba says**

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