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Setting up Montessori at Home

While many of us have been spending this extra time at home, and now we'll be looking ahead to summer, it can be helpful to think about ways in which you can bring Montessori to your home setting.

Just as children tend to try new foods if they take part in preparing it, they will have more investment in caring for their environment if they have ownership of it. Small changes can make a big difference in allowing children to be independent and take part in set up and clean up.

Children ages 3 to 6 are in a sensitive period for order and crave it. In our classrooms, the children are expected to put the materials back where they belong. This can be more easily adapted to home if you help create a space where your children can get and return their supplies.

Kitchen

In the kitchen, set aside a low drawer to store child size utensils, plates, bowls, glasses and napkins. If there is a part of the refrigerator they can reach, consider storing a small drink pitcher, pieces of fruit and other ingredients they might use to prepare a snack.

Bathroom

In the bathroom, is there a stool so they can reach to wash hands and brush teeth? Find a spot to keep a towel and washcloth just for them.

Bedroom

Some bedroom set-ups allow for a child-size closet so they can reach clothes, or get them from drawers. In the closet or on the wall, you can attach 3M hooks easily to allow them to hang their own coats or robes. If allowing them to choose their clothing seems overwhelming to you or them, try giving them a choice between two outfits. Days at home are great times to allow your child to independently practice getting dressed, when no one is in a hurry to leave. Even if all you can do is store their socks in a basket (don't forget to have them match their own), it gives them a sense of independence in choosing and putting on their clothing.

Toys

In areas they spend a lot of time, try to include accessible shelves where they can keep their toys and books neatly arranged. Instead of toys clustered in toy boxes, place them on shelves in individual baskets/containers. A few toys go a long way, rotating their toys allows them to really engage in some and appreciate others when they rotate back in. Small open storage is best to allow the child to see the toys and be invited to use them. Each toy having their own home to return to will help the child clean up and makes the task less overwhelming.

Art

You can set up an art area to store their brushes, paint, crayons paper and etc. Show them how to set up their work and stay through cleaning up, explain that this is how they can do it every time, just like in the classroom. Encourage your child to display their finished work for the rest of the family. If you have any extra frames it can make their art display extra special. Consider using velcro 3M strips for easy on/off movement without nails in the wall. (For the time being, the fridge also works!). If space or younger children prevent you from keeping some materials out all the time, try to store things in a way that can be brought out ready for use. Small shoe size plastic containers are helpful for storing supplies out of reach, but easy to grab and set up.

Any way that we can set children up for success will help build their independence, confidence and create healthy home habits.