

Development of Inner Discipline



**PRINCIPLES
&
PRACTICES**

Introduction



- In our previous talk we emphasized the development of Inner Discipline from various contexts:
 - **Philosophical** – Interdependency of freedom & limits in society
 - **Scientific** – Construction of the cell in the cerebral cortex is molded by input from the social environment and rooted in the early attachment relationships
 - **Social** – Principal task during childhood is adaptation to the social group, where adaptation is seen as the “correlation between life & the environment”

Basic Principles



- Inner discipline refers to the capability to regulate one's own behavior and emotional responses.
- The capacity to internally regulate behavior and emotions is a developmental milestone during the period of infancy.
- It is necessary for adequate functioning within a social context: family & friends, school, work & greater society.
- In early childhood the acquisition of self regulation is embedded in the development of brain structures: 100 billion neurons
- Montessori system engages in a form of “active discipline”: the individual becomes a master of himself & follows rules voluntarily because of an understanding of self & community

Regulatory System



- Develops in relationship with the principal caregivers around the child: from “brain to brain/heart to heart”
- Provides the possibility of co-creating, with infants, positive emotional development & the ability to regulate emotional states and behavior
- During the very early period of life, a strong foundation for emotional growth will depend on a secure relationship of attachment with the mother/primary caregiver
- During childhood, adult responses to children’s behavior may determine how the child reacts to myriad situations

Importance



- The need to consider how the origins & regulation of positive emotions is a central aspect of an individual's capability to regulate emotional states and behavior
- The need to understand how intricately intertwined are the relationships & responses of the adult to the development of the regulation of behavior & emotions in our children
- The need to understand & regulate our own emotions & behavior to provide a positive response to stimulate positive emotional growth & behavior in our children

Infant Stage



- **Last trimester of pregnancy to 2 years**
 - Critical period of brain development & self organization of brain structures
 - After the first year has achieved an “adult like” appearance.
- **First year**
 - Child’s task is the development of a secure bond of attachment characterized by communication & reciprocal regulation of emotions between the child & primary caregiver
 - These lifelong regulatory effects of attachment are caused by its impact on brain development during the first year when the total brain volume increases enormously & depends on experiences available in the environment

Toddler Stage



- The brain is engaged in developing all kinds of neuronal connections to achieve:
 - Voluntary movement - fine & gross motor
 - Basic speech – internal & expressive language
 - Sleeping – patterns of sleeping independently
 - Eating – patterns of eating independently
 - Toileting – patterns of independent elimination
 - Understanding basic functions & activities as well as basic limits to behavior
- Adult must strive to create a positive environment for independence while establishing parameters for appropriate fostering and/or regulation of behavior
- The child functions at an “unconscious level” and can only regulate his behavior if they are in correspondence to one of his vital urges
- Simple choices can be offered to begin developing the will, as well as simple “rules”, especially related to caring for others and the environment

Primary Stage



- The child acquires “consciousness” with the ability to refine his movements, communicate & engage in purposeful work
- The child gradually can develop the ability to make simple or more complex choices within the boundaries of understanding established rules of expected behavior and care for environment and others
- The child can offer the highest levels of obedience, when he has achieved self regulation & the consequent inner discipline that comes from developing his will and understanding his role & participation within his community

Practices for Infants



- Respond to your child needs: trust in the environment brings trust in self
- Hold your child while breast feeding and make eye contact
- Allow child to move freely to attain voluntary movement: offer plenty of “tummy time”
- Talk & communicate with your child
- Show care & be attentive while encouraging any signs of independence
- Be balanced in your approach letting the child do as much as he is capable
- Do not use “contraptions” – they hinder natural development
- Start toileting exposure early
- Maintain an awareness of ever changing needs & development to re-structure environment

Practices for Toddlers



- **Setting Limits**

- Be positive, keep calm but firm
- Make eye contact & go to child's level
- Avoid “long distance” commands or corrections, approach the child
- Hold the child's hand for more attention if needed
- Use NO only when necessary, when safety is a concern
- Use body, sign & verbal language, be expressive
- Tell them what you want: “gentle”, “careful”, “take turn”
- Use grace & courtesy: “thank you”, “please”, “more please”, “no thank you”
- Model the behavior, show them how to do things deliberately & take turns
- If the child persists in unwanted behavior, try to distract his attention to other activities
- Be consistent, be clear
- Use the same words every time: single or two words
- Allow time for processing commands and requests

Practices for Primary



- **Continue to follow all previous recommendations for setting limits**
 - Clearly present rules & communicate expected behavior
 - Encourage participation and sharing responsibilities in the home
 - Model right use of materials & how to care for environment and others
 - Model grace & courtesy, create an awareness of “how to...”
 - Discuss situations appealing to positive emotions
 - Discourage mistreatment of objects – remove
 - Discourage mistreatment of others – interruptions & annoyance are not acceptable
 - Be consistent, be loving but firm
 - Do what you said you would do: do not threaten to do something and then budge
 - Use time & preparation before activities to avoid distress
 - Make a routine of examining the day for positive and/or negative situations when the child is receptive
 - Listen to the child

Special Topics



- Recurrent negative behavior: lack of controls, excess of controls & inconsistency of controls
- Long distance discipline
- Rewards, punishment & bribery
- Calling attention through negative means
- Temper tantrums
- External control, screaming & violence
- Cause & effect

“The education of a young child does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life”

Maria Montessori



**MONTESSORI OF ALAMEDA
PARENT EDUCATION SERIES**

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