

Montessori Pedagogical Guidelines for Supporting Learning at Home During COVID-19

by Kitty Bravo

Montessori Pedagogical Guidelines for Supporting Learning at Home
During COVID-19
Montessori Collaborative Teacher Support Task Group

“It is necessary that the human personality should be prepared for the unforeseen, not only for the conditions that can be anticipated by prudence and foresight..... For success in life depends in every case on self-confidence and the knowledge of one’s own capacity and many-sided powers of adaptation.”

(Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence, Appendix A, 1948)

Dr. Montessori’s words are certainly applicable in our time right now since we are clearly in the middle of the unforeseen! Therefore, as Montessori guides, we need to adapt our way of guiding our children and supporting their families according to our new situation. The goal of this document is to provide some guidelines for consideration so that Montessori principals can remain the base of our decisions and actions.

Respect

We respect humans of all ages, recognizing each as having their own unique way of learning and being. As such, we seek to provide individualized learning opportunities and guidance specific to each child and family’s needs. We acknowledge that children and adults, parents, teachers, and school administrators are experiencing a great amount of stress and trauma, therefore flexibility and genuine concern for the wellbeing of all takes precedence over academic learning goals.

Adaptability

Montessori philosophy and practices by design are meant to be adaptable to any culture and social needs. The needs of the children and families we serve during this time call for us to look beyond our typical classroom prepared environments, beyond our tried and true Montessori materials and beyond the lessons in our albums. We recognize that the child’s prepared environment is now the home and we must adapt lessons and expectations based on the wide variety of resources both physically and emotionally available within these home environments.

Community

In this time of physical distancing, social cohesion is more important than ever. All of us need each other. We need to expand the community spirit we cherish in our Montessori schools and classrooms bringing it into the hearts and homes of our children and families. Connection must be our main focus. Using a variety of digital platforms to be together in ways that make sense according to the age, size, interests and culture of your class. Have lunch together. Sing together. Dance together, Do yoga together. Play games together. Have sharing time. Foster ways for students and families to collaborate remotely in large and small groups. Encourage the role of social responsibility for all community members. Each member's contribution to care for the home and family, as well as participating in the remote learning environment is valued.

Order

All humans thrive when there is order in their lives. Children especially need predictability and structure. Establish a prepared remote environment through routine. Carry on with the rhythm of your classroom as much as possible, as appropriate for your age group. Regularly schedule on-line lessons/gatherings. Present familiar songs, stories, classroom rituals. Create new structures for learning together remotely. Evaluate their effectiveness with your students and/ or parents as appropriate for your age level. Adjust when necessary, but as much as possible create routines, then stick to them. Provide resources to families to help them establish order and routines that will work for their family and child.

Independence

Help them help themselves is one of the foundational principles of Montessori. Our classrooms are designed to enable children to independently meet their own needs and contribute to the community. As children grow older in Montessori environments, they increasingly become more responsible for their own learning. Our current learning at home situation provides both challenges and opportunities related to this vital need for independence. Parents of younger children are likely to need support in preparing their environment to encourage independence. Activities recommended for young children must consider the ability of the child to do the work independently and parental limits to support children with complex activities while meeting other responsibilities. Older students can be encouraged to own their own learning with teachers providing guidance and accountability appropriate for each individual child.

Choice

Education is not something we do for or provide to children. Real learning and personal transformation are the result of engagement in freely chosen meaningful activities. Choice can happen naturally in well prepared school environments where there is an abundance of materials and activities that call to the child. The home environment may or may not provide for the same level of independence and choice. Our goal must be to help parents and children create opportunities for meaningful

engagement and purposeful work at home. Resources, suggested activities, and lessons must include opportunities for choice with clear age appropriate expectations. Given the stress of the current situation, we must be flexible and offer choice for when, what, how and how much work will be done.

Creativity

Being thrust into this new way of teaching and learning can be a catalyst for creativity on our part as guides and on the part of our students. It is perfectly ok to use resources outside of our albums. Be open to experimentation and discovery. Be kind to yourself and your students if these experiments do not turn out as desired! Model for our students how we learn from our mistakes! Many students have fascinating projects of their own going on in their homes. Encourage this as an integral part of their learning and have them share to inform and motivate their peers.

Grace and Courtesy

Teach expectations for on-line interactions, both for guided class time and for when students interact with each other on social media without adult guidance.

Acknowledge the need for grace and courtesy in our own homes and the homes of our students, recognizing that all of us are house-bound and experiencing more family togetherness than most of us are accustomed to! Practice and encourage kindness, patience and acceptance, with humility. We are all learners and doing the best we can in a stressful situation. Find the grace within and the courtesy to support each other.

Preparation for Life

Always keep in mind the higher goal of supporting the development of healthy capable flourishing human beings. Every moment in life is precious. Remember this in setting a positive tone and in appreciating the challenges everyone is experiencing. Address and incorporate world events and the current situation as appropriate for the needs of your students, acknowledging that these events may be taking a personal toll at many levels on many of the students' families and on ourselves. Encourage students to participate in the work of their families at home: laundry, cooking, dishes, yardwork, sibling care. Support students' grappling with their new living situations.

Love

Dr. Montessori said, "Of all things, love is the most potent." It is love that will get us all through these difficult times. Work from your heart as much as your mind.

Approach children and families with a generous eye, recognizing that everyone is doing the best they can. Be available to your students and families. Know that much of what will be accomplished right now is the establishment of a safe and comforting space. Set personal boundaries on when and how you can be reached to create a safe and comforting space for yourself and your family as well.

When Montessori Goes Viral: Supporting Families of Infants and Toddler at Home Following Montessori Principles

During this time of “lock-down” when most parents are suddenly in the dual roles of their professional work and caregiving, our advice and support are important for everyone’s wellbeing. Parents are quickly recognizing their need for their children’s independence, as they seek to telework while keeping their children safe and happy. Our mission is also two-fold. We may be tasked with providing frequent and varied lesson plans and group classes. Yet our hearts and minds call us to view each child holistically and consider the context of stress and trauma that underlie our present circumstances.

Thank goodness our work is grounded in the child-centered, developmentally based theories of Dr. Maria Montessori. Let us examine core principles and how they should guide our support to families.

Children learn best in a prepared environment. At school, we strive to make our classrooms home-like. Now that children are home, let’s avoid making their living spaces school-like. We should help parents understand the importance of the prepared environment in supporting their children’s independence. We can suggest how to organize and display toys, keeping in mind each child’s unique interests and developmental abilities. We can explain how children do more with less, that children become overwhelmed when a toy or building block set has too many parts. We can give tips on how to rotate toys and activities to inspire interest, always leaving in place current favorites.

Children thrive on order and consistency. When children can find and care for their own belongings, they feel capable and responsible. When they can anticipate the routines of the day, they feel secure and confident. Children can be independent for long stretches of time when they have carefully arranged spaces for dressing, hygiene, preparing food, cleaning-up, and independent play.

Learning and development are dependent on movement and spontaneous activity. Parents need to understand that young children are driven to move in order to learn and develop. We serve this need by providing opportunities to challenge their bodies and to manipulate objects. In every area where the family spends time there can be a space where children can do gross motor and fine motor activities. We can meet with parents and help brainstorm ways to make this possible with what can be found at home.

Concentration occurs when a child’s mind, body and will are engaged. We can help parents recognize the “sweet spot” where an activity has the right amount of challenge without frustration. We can emphasize that young children are most interested in what is real and purposeful; that they want to participate in the daily life of the home.

Children need freedom of choice of developmentally appropriate activities in order for deep engagement and concentration to take place. Because we want to protect this deep mental state we provide time for uninterrupted work. The type of play that children do when their bodies and minds are fully engaged we elevate to the status of ‘noble work’ as a recognition of its importance in helping children reach their fullest potential.

Once parents understand the importance of concentrated work, we can caution them to avoid interrupting it. Through observation we can help parents recognize when their child is focused on an activity, only stepping in when their child is clearly frustrated. They will come to appreciate their child’s interests and abilities and recognize their needs. They will notice the tendency for repetition as their child exhausts an activity in order to learn a new skill. We need parents to understand that their child’s focus is in the process not the product. This will help them avoid placing undue attention on their child’s end results and minimizing their efforts.

It is important to note that we are always in relationship with children. It is through collaboration that we learn and teach. We model, observe, offer points of interest, and observe again. Children watch and imitate in order to learn to be like the adults they love, to fit into the world they love. Our caregiving and guidance is a partnership based in love. Parents intuitively understand and appreciate this, but need a reminder in hectic and stressful times. Providing techniques to help them slow down and de-stress may be the most helpful support we can give. Each family’s situation is unique and what parents are able or willing to do will vary. We should meet them where they are with utmost humility and grace. As Dr. Montessori said, “Of all things love is the most potent.”

Early Childhood Considerations

Respect

- Recognize the unique developmental needs of children 3-6 when preparing and providing remote learning experiences and activities.
- Be flexible in your schedule expectations. Limited or no participating is an option and must be respected. When possible record virtual group meetings and make available for viewing at another time for those who are on a different timetable.
- Keep in mind the limited attention span of young children during group time. Use interactive songs and movement activities to keep young children engaged. Invite children to share.
- Use a variety of methods to reach out to your families to assess their needs and do it often as situations change frequently.

Adaptability

- Focus on concept versus materials. For example, young children like to classify so make suggestions on how to provide experiences for them to classify their home

environment such as sorting laundry, finding items and sorting by color or shape. Encourage practical math with everyday objects and life experiences such as cooking or counting pinecones or flowers found in the yard. Encourage language development through reading, storytelling, sound games, listening games.

- Appreciating that learning does take place through all meaningful activities such as building materials, drawing, movement, free exploration.
- Provide suggestions that take into consideration varying abilities, interests, time restraints and available resources at the home.

Community

- Children are missing friends. They need to see each other, laugh together, and play. Make virtual group meetings fun and interactive.
- Have virtual sharing time encouraging children to share their pets, a favorite toy, something found on a nature walk, art projects, cooking projects...
- Connect with each individual family for weekly check-ins.
- Set up shared folders or classroom FaceBook pages for sharing of pictures and videos.
- Provide/encourage opportunities for families, children and/or parents to socially connect virtually.

Order

- The role of the teacher shifts from creating the orderly classroom environment to now coaching families on how to create order within the home and practical spaces for children to work and play independently within the home.
- Virtual options should be limited and flexible allowing families to fit things into their own personal schedules. For example, providing predictable on-line gatherings helps to establish a routine but also having recordings of those gatherings allow families to participate within their own schedule.

Independence

- Be mindful of how much parental involvement is needed with suggested activities
- Provide clear guidelines and procedures for parents so that they can set up activities with the child's independence in mind.
- Help parents understand that clean-up of the activity is also the child's work and provide guidance on how to help children learn clean up processes.
- Send lists of materials for projects ahead of time whenever possible. Provide ideals for alternative materials with the consideration that everyone will not have all the supplies at home and may have a limited ability to purchase them.
- Give parents permission to be observers and allow the child space for exploration, mistakes, and independence in their interaction with the activity.
- Promote process versus product

Choice

- Remind parents that participation is optional and not mandatory
- Provide a variety of activities so children and parents can choose the best fit for the child's ability, interest, and family situation

Creativity

- Be mindful that recommendations “outside of the box” are in alignment with core Montessori principles (concrete to abstract, process versus product, hands on, isolation of a single concept or skill, etc.)

Grace and Courtesy

- Encourage parents to discuss and model expectations and procedures instead of assuming children know these.
- Give parents suggestions and resources for positive and respectful guidance and redirection of challenging behaviors
- Provide resources for self-care and supporting emotional wellbeing for children and families

Preparation for Life

- Be mindful that the best preparation for later school success and life is to provide a safe, secure, loving environment that meets the present needs. Supporting children and families to get through this challenging time is the most important thing we can do to secure a healthy future.

Love

- Let love be your strength and guide.

Elementary Considerations

Respect and Grace and Courtesy

- Engage the elementary students in defining what respect looks like in this new online learning environment. Create agreements about ground rules and grace and courtesy.
- Encourage grace and courtesy both in virtual learning and in the home environment

Adaptability

- Balance curriculum expectations (from district, school, parents) with individual needs and learning styles of children. Adapt expectations as needed and help each child feel successful.
- Provide options for follow up work and projects so students and families can adapt according to the time and resources they have available and according to each child's needs.

Community

- Elementary children may be feeling particularly isolated given their great need for socialization. Consider this sensitive period when planning activities. Provide

opportunities to learn collaboratively and share their experiences. Encourage students giving lessons to one another.

- Encourage presentations or reading in virtual meetings to younger levels in the school.
- Encourage a sense of responsibility to the community, especially in Upper Elementary, providing opportunities to participate as a vital part to the whole group such as in a group writing project or planning a community service project.
- Be creative in providing opportunities for virtual class and school community events such as art or talent shows or field trips.

Order

- Establish a prepared remote environment that complements the structure and routine that your children are familiar with from their experience in their Montessori classroom. Regularly schedule on- line lessons/gatherings keeping as many class routines and traditions as possible. Meet for literature circles on the same day each week. Hold community meetings on the same day each week.
- Engage the students in the process of creating, evaluating and adapting new structure for online learning.
- Be clear about expectations, ground rules, and procedures and provide consistency but be open to the students' feedback and work together to adapt as needed.

Independence, Responsibility, & Ownership

- This is an ideal opportunity to really guide our students toward owning their own learning.

Encourage ownership of lessons, in their work and contribution in lessons, and in suggesting how lessons can be given.

- Encourage students to take responsibility for their home learning environment, to be prepared and to create an appropriate space for learning.
- Help students to work on their own effectively. Adapt student work plans used in your classroom into shared documents between you and each student for guidance and accountability.
- Support student independence individually according to their needs, just as you would in the classroom.
- Use online meeting spaces like Zoom for community time, class lessons, small group discussions, and one-on-one meetings, but allow significant off-screen time for independent 2nd period work. When there is correctable work, have students self-correct and self-report as much as possible.

Choice

- Just as in the classroom, provide acceptable work choices across the curriculum.
 - Avoid the tendency to send out one size fits all curriculum and learning packets.
- Engage the students in determining what is meaningful work and in proposing ideas for research, projects, and presentations.
- Establish expectations together for how much time students should be reading, doing mathematics, and writing daily. Students can choose when and how and can offer their

own ideas.

Creativity

- Embrace and encourage creativity. Be open to unique follow-ups on the part of your students.
- Continue providing visual and performing arts exposure and experiences. There are many avenues for this online.

Preparation for life

- Appeal to the elementary student's natural interest in understanding the world around them by providing age appropriate opportunities to explore the current situation as it relates to social responsibility, and the political and scientific implications of this crisis.
- Assign life skills projects as part of the child's at home /school learning projects
- Teach and model care of self and care of others. Mindfulness, a time of day to be silent, practice counting ten positive things per day, an attitude of gratefulness and appreciation.

Love – Let love be your strength and guide.

Ideas for Adapting Existing Elementary Curriculum to Accommodate Remote Learning

- Use shared documents for accountability and feedback.
- Focus on cultural studies and high interest independent research and expert projects. Have students prepare presentations of their work to share on-line.
- Incorporate math learning into cultural work: graphing, measuring, probability, statistics.
- Encourage student initiative. Have students design a project, a learning plan, or the schedule of their new days at home.
- Make use of eBooks for literature study.
- Guide chemistry experiments through cooking, botany with houseplants (with permission!) or gardens or woods, or astronomy with sky observations. Use online science videos and interactives for demonstrations.

Ideas for Incorporating the Pandemic into Elementary Curriculum

- Hold a seminar on what Peace Education brings to a pandemic.
- Keep a class pandemic journal or a blog to personally document this time in history.
- Teach the law of supply and demand, stock market/investments/gold standard/currency.
- Study the geographic spread of the pandemic.
- Write a projected ending to the current situation or respond to the crisis through poetry.
- Explore and evaluate the many ways that pandemic data have been represented.

Teach log plots.

- Connect with other schools in other states or countries for cultural sharing.
- Examine local sustainability efforts or home gardening.
- Study historic pandemics and the outcomes. What can we learn?

Ideas for Service Work

- Write friendly letters to the elderly and letters of gratitude to community service workers.
- Make face masks.
- Weed someone's garden in the neighborhood.
- Help with an online after school club for neighbors.
- Connect with younger children in earlier levels of your own Montessori school for read aloud.
- Create care packages for postal office workers and other delivery workers.
- Donate time or food to local food banks.

Pedagogy in a Pandemic: Secondary Goes Online

Despite our newly formatted online prepared environments, the primary focus of secondary guides should remain the same: to meet the developmental needs of our adolescent learners.

Those include the need for:

Independence

Community

Adaptability

Self-expression

Self-reflection

Choice

Grace and courtesy

And above all else, Love

Adolescents in both middle and high schools want to understand the social world and how they fit into it. They want to understand how organizations work and how they are constructed, the different roles needed to uphold society, the values that hold social organizations together, how they relate to the society as a whole, and how they relate to those within it through their roles. This drives them.

As at other educational levels, the needs and the unstoppable growth can't get shuttered even in a pandemic. Just as our secondary learners can't help physically changing, neither can they shut down the irresistible urge to grow intellectually, socially, and perhaps now even more acutely, in matters of the spirit. Despite all that is going on around them, they are doing what they have always done and can't help doing: steam ahead toward being an adult and changing from the mindset of a child to the mindset of a newly forming social member of society. That can happen as much online as it does in a brick and mortar setting, because it happens within.

Young adult learners are well-versed in change, sometimes clumsy at it and other times navigating with great skill. But they are now facing change on a new front and with surrealistic intensity as they craft their life in a pandemic. Their mission – to grow up – now includes the distraction of mid-school year changes in their prepared

learning environments. The social role they have been developing outside of their home has been redirected to either a former or new role at home, perhaps that of helping working parents with younger siblings and more critical household jobs. And they are being asked to invent new virtual roles required to support an online classroom community. If they are not grieving for the loss of a family member or friend due to the virus, they may be grieving over the loss of expected rites of passage this year, i.e. a prom, a performance, a college tour, an end of year trip, or a graduation. Remember, all of this is on top of trying to navigate adolescence.

The pandemic has jarred us all, and we need stability. But we know that stability comes from adaptability. If we have done our work to help our young adult learners become adaptable and able to innovate in the uncertain and unforeseen, then they have a leg up on grappling with the new, real-time, real-life challenges.

Our job is to balance the challenges our young adult learners are facing with unconditional love as a caring and supportive guide, to continue to make the space for an intentional social community and their unique role within it, and to provide opportunities to support the developmental needs listed above. In the transformation of in-person learning to online learning, we take great care to continue our real mission of meeting developmental needs. As secondary guides, we are in a unique position, because unlike at the earlier levels, we can more easily transform to an online format. It is not desirable. But it is by degrees easier because we are not so dependent on the concrete materials and more about the abstract experiences and challenges we build for our learners. We can continue to provide for the social needs through continued relationships. Thankfully, most are experienced with virtual interaction with their peers through social media. We can use our online platforms to share lessons, work, presentations, small group discussions and private meetings in breakout rooms. We can offer such learning experiences as Socratic Seminar Discussions of current events and social justice issues, diagramming of governmental and social structures and proposals of change, collection of scientific data for analysis, interdisciplinary projects that include inquiry and reflection. And we can even establish community roles. Even in a virtual environment can we offer opportunities for jobs in resource management, class meeting facilitation, collaborative projects, and the continued development of the class business.

Change, the unforeseen, the ambiguous – all are authentic facts of the adult world. Let's model what we do with it, share our struggles and successes as we face the challenges of the pandemic, and ask for our learners to collaborate in structuring their learning experiences. Let's stay true to Montessori and not hang onto content as the end and only result but as just one means to the end, albeit important. But no amount of content can teach growing up. And no amount of content will attract them to learning and growing if it takes them out of the context of their social world and their interests – especially now. To the end that content can help build the deeper learning that satisfies their fundamental and developmental needs, it is useful. Consider the desired outcomes and zero in on how to use content to support not dictate. And above all as you design learning experiences, let us let our learners take time to reflect,

connect, and continue their questions as they demonstrate their cosmic task in the face of the unforeseen but authentic.

Adaptable innovators will understand what holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said. “You have to turn it into something else.” * So, we are turning an unprecedented historical moment into something else. A practical life experience for our young adult learners, where they can continue to learn independence, adaptability, community, inquiry. We can do it online as long as we stay focused on what they need. It’s never solely about history or math or language arts any way. It’s always about character, empathy, peace. It’s always about their becoming adults. So, we need to turn their prepared environment into “something else” something other than what we thought we would be doing this year. And we can do it!!! It’s a new prepared environment. We are a very precious resource for initiation and support, and above all love. If they can understand that they are still loved, still heard, still valuable, then our work can continue. We just need to be creative in how we deliver.

Secondary Considerations

Respect

Dr. Montessori admonishes us to respect the adolescent with the greatest of care and not treat that emerging adult as we would a child. Therefore, we can respect our learners’ needs to become part of the pandemic conversations if not solutions through Socratic discussion, research on current events, studies that do not circumvent the pressing issues at hand. We are not responsible for taking their minds off of the pandemic, neither should we dramatize it. But since their social world has and will continue to be disrupted, we can respect their need to take a role in thinking through what the future should look like for their generation. We respect that while change is inherent in adolescence, sudden change requires patience and intuition on the part of the guide. Not typically do the normal changes in adolescence become overpowered by grief and trauma. But when they do, we rely on our relationship with our learners and the power of their adaptability.

Adaptability

Adaptability is one of the top distinguishing qualities of a Montessori adolescent. As a society, we are recognizing what Montessori wrote about so long ago – that we must prepare our learners for the unforeseen. Our structures of inquiry that foster independence through inquiry-based learning and Socratic reasoning equip our youth to understand what they know and how to find answers to what they don’t know. And most of all, it prepares them to understand that there is much they don’t know they even need to know yet. But being adaptable enables them to be ready, flexible, and capable. In our third period lessons, adolescence focus on innovation. Tasking them to take on the role of innovating in their own learning, in their new format, with new distractions, is the training that they now need and what appeals to their developmental readiness to deal with the practical life of the 21st Century adult.

Community

Most adolescents have already embraced an online community through gaming and social media. Many adults have shaken their heads in dismay, but the modern teen has less of a journey in this transition to online learning. While nothing can replace the importance of sharing a physical space with another individual, our socially oriented young adult learners can continue social interactions and collaborative learning virtually. Being part of an intentional community – regardless of format – brings occasions for discussion, resource management, stewardship, accountability, intellectual challenge, and social exchange. Adolescents need to feel they are important, and a role in their online community continues their development of self-esteem and valorization. Let's let the community work its magic and help its members to tackle the challenges we are facing together.

Order

Structure is no less important for teens than for children. Order is a fundamental need that is satisfied by providing certain routines, many of which can be accommodated in an online format. Morning meetings, regular Socratic Seminar Discussions, even regular deadlines provide the rituals that comfort and demand integrity. For the adolescent learner who is facing not only extreme internal but extreme external changes, the predictable and orderly structures to their newly prepared environment support their grace and growth.

Independence

Independence does not mean severance from community. Independence describes the ability to function on one's own through one's strengths and creativity. At the secondary level, independence is a quality brought to a group as one learns to stand on one's own and be of unique value to a community. Independence is the support that one brings to interdependence, the heartbeat of adult society. It begins at birth when a child masters movement then continues through acquisition of language, moving on to social skills and then to social roles, where we find our young adult learners. Independence on all levels is a key to success as an adult. It is especially important in a secondary online learning environment where learners often find themselves alone and accountable for their schoolwork and community roles, independent of parents, teacher and peers. Socially driven learners are challenged despite the specific learning format to be honest, supportive, and respectful members of the community, independent of structured supervision.

Choice

Deep learning that leads to understanding and application is the result of choice. Choice allows learners to connect to interests and skills and enables them to place what they are learning in a meaningful context. Today's choices seem limited given the stress of the current situation, so we must be innovative in making choice part of our lesson plans and schedules – even as they are occurring virtually. While we

continue to guide choices and outline reasonable expectations, we must be flexible and offer choices for when, what, how and how much work will be done.

Creativity

Being thrust into this new way of teaching and learning can be a catalyst for creativity on our part as guides and on the part of our students. It is from the authenticity of real life that we form our lessons and it is real life itself that hands secondary learners their materials. Be kind to yourself and your students if these experiments do not turn out as desired! Model for our students how we learn from our mistakes! Many students have fascinating projects of their own going on in their homes. Encourage this as an integral part of their learning and have them share to inform and motivate their peers.

Grace and Courtesy

Teach expectations for on-line interactions, both for guided class time and for when students interact with each other on social media without adult guidance.

Acknowledge the need for grace and courtesy in our own homes and the homes of our students, recognizing that all of us are house-bound and experiencing more family togetherness than most of us are accustomed to! Practice and encourage kindness, patience and acceptance, with humility. We are all learners and doing the best we can in a stressful situation. Find the grace within and the courtesy to support each other. But remember that our adolescent learners are trying out new ways of relating and communicating, now as young adults. Sometimes we need to be explicit in teaching appropriate language, social media practices, and humor. Online learning enhances these lessons.

Preparation for Life

Always keep in mind the higher goal of supporting the development of healthy capable flourishing human beings. Every moment in life is precious. Remember this in setting a positive tone and in appreciating the challenges everyone is experiencing. Address and incorporate world events and the current situation as appropriate for the needs of your young adult learners, acknowledging that these events may be taking a personal toll at many levels on many of the students' families and on ourselves. Encourage students to participate in the work of their families at home: laundry, cooking, dishes, yardwork, sibling care. Support students' grappling with their new living situations. Loopback to the idea that their family has unexpectedly become a bigger part of their social network and that they have an important role in it and need to be a steward of it.

Love

Dr. Montessori said, "Of all things, love is the most potent." It is love that will get us all through these difficult times. Work from your heart as much as your mind.

Approach adolescents and families with a generous eye, recognizing that everyone is doing the best they can. Be available to your learners and families. Know that much of what will be accomplished right now is the establishment of a safe and comforting

space. Set personal boundaries on when and how you can be reached to create a safe and comforting space for yourself and your family as well.

Work

We all need work to feel useful, to grow, and to learn. It is through work that we construct ourselves. The format of work is not the issue as much as what the work entails and the meaning and authenticity of it. To be of use through work, to be empowered through work, to make connections through work is a present necessity and possibility.