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THE EVERYDAY MONTESSORI *Preschooler*

SIMPLE WAYS THROUGH THE "WHY," THE MELTDOWNS AND THE FIRST SCHOOL YEARS



3 TO 6 YEARS

YOUR FREE SAMPLE

Welcome to *Montessori Preschooler*

These pages are taken from *The Everyday Montessori Preschooler*, a practical Montessori guide for parents of children from 3 to 6 years.

Read them in one go, or start with the part you need today. Every idea in here works in an ordinary home, with what you already have.

This book shares a parenting approach. It doesn't replace your pediatrician or your own judgment. When something worries you about your child's health, development or safety, ask a professional.



INTRODUCTION

Your Child Isn't Behind. *They're Building.*

> Between 3 and 6, the work your child is doing rarely looks like progress. It looks like questions, meltdowns and a lot of mess. It's progress anyway.

WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW AS A PARENT

"Everyone else's kid seems to be reading, sharing and sleeping through the night. Mine is doing none of those."

You hear it at pickup, you see it online, and it lands at 10 p.m. when the house is finally quiet. The question underneath is almost always the same. Is this normal, or should I be worried? This book answers that question every time it comes up. Not with "every child is different," but with what's normal, what to keep an eye on, and when to ask someone.

At three, your child is still a toddler in many ways. By six, most children can hold a real conversation, follow the rules of a game, look after much of their own body and start to read. Few stretches of life hold this much change.

That change doesn't arrive in a straight line. A four-year-old can explain how volcanoes work and then fall apart because the banana broke. A five-year-old can hold it together for six hours at school and come undone in the car. The unevenness isn't a sign that something is wrong. It's what building looks like from the outside.

Maria Montessori opened her first Children's House, the Casa dei Bambini, in Rome in 1907, for children of exactly this age. What she noticed there still holds. Children between 3 and 6 learn through their hands and their senses, through real work and through repetition. And they want to do things for themselves far more than most adults expect.

What Your Child Is Actually Doing

Most of the behavior that wears parents out at this age has something sound underneath it. The behavior looks like the problem. Often it's the message.

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT'S GOING ON
"Why? Why? Why? All day long."	They're building a model of how the world works, and you're their main source. Some of the whys are also a way to keep you close.
"Perfect at school, a wreck at home."	They held it together all day. Home is the place where it's safe to let go. Module 3 is all about this.
"They lie, even about obvious things."	They've discovered that what's in their head isn't in yours. Testing that is a real step in thinking, even when it's maddening.

"Everything has to be the same cup, the same seat, the same way."	A strong need for order. Predictability helps them feel in control of a world that mostly isn't.
"They beg to help, then refuse to tidy up."	They want work that matters, on their terms. A job they own feels very different from an order.
"They argue about everything."	Their words have caught up with their will. They're practicing negotiation, the clumsy way.

What Montessori Gives You at This Age

Montessori isn't a shelf, a set of wooden toys or a look. It's a way of watching your child and deciding what to do next based on what you see. Between 3 and 6, it rests on four ideas.

FOUR IDEAS TO HOLD ON TO

1 **Real work, real tools.**

Children this age want to contribute. They want to pour, cut, clean and cook. Small, real tools and a few minutes of showing them how turn that drive into skill, and skill into calm.

2 **Watch, then decide.**

Before you fix, push or worry, look. What is your child working on? What's hard for them right now? Watching is how you know whether to step in, step back or ask for help.

3 **Freedom inside clear limits.**

Real choices where there's a real choice, and clear limits where there isn't. Kind, firm, and the same tomorrow as today.

4 **The hands go first.**

Letters you can trace, quantities you can hold, sounds you can play with. Abstract ideas come later, and more easily, once the hands have done the work.

Three Things to Try Today

Each module ends with practical steps, but you can start before you turn the page. None of these needs equipment.

1 **Answer one "why" with a question**

Next time your child asks why, try "What do you think?" Then listen to the whole answer, however strange.

Why it helps. You learn how your child is thinking, and they learn their ideas are worth hearing.

2 **Hand over one real job**

A small pitcher so they pour their own water at dinner. A damp cloth to wipe the table after. A butter knife to slice their own banana. Show them once, slowly, then let them do it.

Why it helps. Contributing builds the kind of self-respect that makes cooperation easier.

3 **Meet them with food, not questions**

At pickup, have a snack in your hand. Say "I'm glad to see you," and leave the "How was your day?" for later.

Why it helps. A tired, hungry child can't answer questions, and this one change calms the end of the day for many families. Module 3 explains why.



MODULE THREE

Good at School, *Falling Apart at Home*

> The teacher says your child is a joy. Then they see you at pickup and everything comes apart. It's one of the most common, and most exhausting, patterns of these years.

WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW AS A PARENT

"I miss the child I had before school started. At home he's someone I barely recognize."

Many parents describe exactly this. A child who was easy before preschool or kindergarten now screams, hits or sobs from the moment they're picked up. You've tried snacks and quiet time, and you've started to dread 3 o'clock. This module explains what's happening and gives you a plan for the first hour after school, plus clear signs for when it's more than tiredness.

All day at school, your child has been following rules, waiting their turn, sitting still, holding in feelings, eating fast in a noisy room and keeping it together among twenty other children. When they see you, the person they feel safest with, it all comes out.

Parents and teachers often call this “restraint collapse.” The name isn’t a diagnosis. It describes something real. Self-control is like a tank that empties over the day. Young children start with a small tank, and a school day can drain it completely. The collapse happens with you because you’re safe. That’s a sign of trust, even when it doesn’t feel like one.

It’s usually strongest in the first weeks of a new school or a new year, after school breaks, and during any other change at home. For most children it eases as they get used to the rhythm. While it lasts, a few changes to the first hour can make a big difference.

What Empties the Tank

Hunger

School lunches are often rushed, noisy or barely touched. Many children arrive at pickup running on almost nothing.

Fatigue

Early wake-ups, no nap or a short one, a long day. Tired children have very little patience left.

Noise and people

A classroom is loud and busy for hours. Some children soak it up. Others need hours to recover from it.

Holding it in

Not crying when a friend was mean. Waiting to use the bathroom. Following rules all day. The feelings wait for home.

The First Hour After School

This plan asks very little of your child for the first hour, so they have room to refill. It also asks less of you, because you stop fighting the crash and start getting ahead of it.

1 **Food in your hand at pickup**

Bring something filling, with some protein, and water. Cheese and crackers, a banana, yogurt, a muffin. Nut butter only if the school allows it, and no whole nuts before age 4. Let them eat in the stroller, or in the car before you drive off. Food offered isn't always food eaten, so keep offering without pushing.

2 **Few words, no questions**

"I'm happy to see you." That's enough. Save "How was your day?" for bath time or bedtime, when they've had time to land.

3 **Move or rest, their choice**

Some children need to run, climb and shout. Stop at the park on the way home. Others need quiet. A dim room, the couch, an audiobook. Let your child pick from a small picture menu, like the one in your free printables.

4 **No demands for a while**

For the first thirty to sixty minutes, no chores, no practice, no errands if you can avoid them. The demands can come later, once the tank has some fuel in it.

5 **Connect later, not now**

At bedtime, try "Tell me one good thing and one hard thing about today." Many children open up in the dark, side by side, when they're not on the spot.

Why it helps. Your child learns that their feelings about school have a place to go, at a time they can manage them.

A Sample After-School Hour

Here's what the first hour can look like on an ordinary school day. Adjust the timing to your family, your commute and your child.

SAMPLE RHYTHM · AFTER SCHOOL

MOMENT	WHAT'S HAPPENING	YOUR MONTESSORI TOUCH
Pickup	Tired, hungry, maybe grumpy.	Snack and water in your hand. A hug if they want one. "I'm happy to see you."
Way home	Eating, quiet or chatty.	No questions. A song or an audiobook in the car, or just quiet.
Home	Bag and shoes off.	Shoes on the rack, bag on its hook, then straight to their chosen landing spot.
Landing	Thirty to sixty minutes of refill.	Outdoor play or quiet play, chosen from the menu. You nearby, not directing.
Back on track	Calmer, ready for small jobs.	A real task beside you, like setting the table or washing vegetables.
Bedtime	Books, lights down.	One good thing, one hard thing. Listen more than you advise.

When There's a Baby or Several Children

Most advice about the first hour assumes one adult and one child. Real life often looks like a baby on your hip, two children melting down at once and dinner to make. A few changes help.

- **Prepare everything earlier.** Snack bags packed in the morning, dinner made the night before or in a slow cooker, bath things laid out. The after-school hour is no time for decisions.
- **One landing spot per child.** Twins and siblings often set each other off. Give each one their own place to land, even if it's just a different corner of the room.

- **The baby goes in a carrier.** Your hands and attention stay free for the older child who's struggling.
- **Lower the bar for dinner.** Eggs, toast and fruit is a perfectly good dinner on a school night.
- **Protect the most important ten minutes.** If you can only give one child your full attention, do it on rotation. Monday one, Tuesday the other.

Activities to Help Them Land

1 The after-school menu

FROM 3 YEARS

Print the picture cards from your free printables, or draw your own. Snack. Quiet books. Outside. Blocks. Bath. Cuddle. Stick them on the wall by the door. When your child gets home, they point to what they need.

A tired child can't always say what they need. Pointing is easier than words, and choosing gives back a little control after a day of following instructions.

KEEP IT SHORT
Four to six choices. More is overwhelming at the end of the day.

NO SCREENS ON THE MENU
Unless you've decided it works for your child. Then it's one card among others.

2 The landing basket

FROM 3 YEARS

Fill one basket with quiet things your child only gets after school. A sticker book, playdough, a puzzle, a few special picture books, a box of small figures. Change one item each week.

The novelty draws them in, and quiet hands help calm a busy body. It also gives you ten minutes to unpack and start dinner.

WHAT WORKS
Things that need hands but not much thinking. Threading, molding, sorting.

SIBLINGS
One basket each, so nobody has to share at the hardest hour.

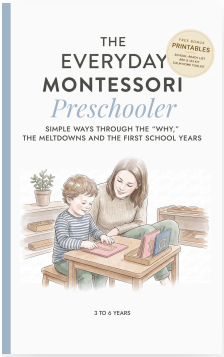
3 One good thing, one hard thing

FROM 3½ YEARS

At bedtime, lights low, ask for one good thing and one hard thing from the day. Then share yours. Keep your answers simple and honest. “My good thing was lunch with a friend. My hard thing was a long meeting.”

When you share too, it’s a conversation instead of an interview. Over weeks, you’ll learn more about your child’s day than any pickup question could.

WHAT YOU DO	IF THEY SAY “NOTHING”
Listen. Ask “And then what?” Hold back the advice unless they ask.	Fine. Share yours and try again tomorrow.



KEEP READING

The whole book, one hard moment at a time

This sample is a small part of the book. Here is what the full guide covers.

- 7 Montessori myths that keep preschool parents stuck
- What your child is building between 3 and 6, with the CDC milestones and what to watch
- Not listening, meltdowns and hitting, with what to say and what to do
- Real jobs by age, letters, sounds and numbers the Montessori way, in five-minute games
- Choosing a school, getting ready for kindergarten and the first goodbyes
- Friends, siblings and playdates, Montessori at home for real, and straight answers on sleep, screens, death and bodies
- Free printables, a ready for school list, a letters and numbers starter kit and a calm home toolkit

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