

Parent Education Corner
Order and Family Schedule's
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“It is necessary for the child to have order and stability in his environment because he is constructing himself out of the elements of the environment” (Standing, p.126).

Order is what you can expect from a Montessori environment and is something that should be implemented at home. Because children are in their sensitive period of order, it is important as educators and parents to maintain that order as much as possible. Daily routines are very important to maintain, so developing a schedule is very helpful. The best thing to do is to sit down as a family, even with your children, and talk about daily routines, making sure everyone has input. I sat down with a family a few years ago, who were having trouble with a fast paced lifestyle, to help them figure out a schedule that would meet everyone's needs. The child had been very stressed, from running around too much, and was craving routine. The family agreed on the schedule with part of the agreement being not to argue or compromise. Once a schedule was in place, the family stuck to it and the child was much more satisfied and relaxed. The parents were relieved to have a schedule on the refrigerator to help keep everybody on the same page. This can be done in any household.

Here is a list of things you should discuss when meeting about your daily schedule:

- Make a list of activities that each family member values. For example; Joey playing soccer and going to bike with friends, Ella going to ballet class and having time to play with her dolls, Mom doing Pilates class and having alone time for a bubble bath, Dad having the guys over for football night or working on a project in the garage. Include everything on your list that each family member is interested in, even alone time.
- Make a list of things that have to be done each day. For example: meals, baths, everyone helping with something in the house, cleaning rooms, trash, laundry, and especially family together time.
- If there is a holiday or day that will change the daily schedule, make sure you discuss it ahead of time as a whole family. If children are involved in the whole process, they will be much more willing to help; they will not argue when asked to do something that has been planned; and parents will actually have a moment to breathe!
- Remember to keep helping activities (not chores) fun for children and give them lessons before you expect them to know how to do everything.
- Make sure children have areas of their own in each room. For example: a low shelf with a few fun activities, a small table in the kitchen, a child size chair or pillow with a basket of reading books in the living room. Brainstorm what your children will value.

- Toys and games should be organized in smaller baskets or containers. Large toy chests or huge tubs should be avoided as they promote chaos. Each item should have a place. Keep extra toys put away and rotate toys or books once in a while. Not everything a child owns needs to be out. This will avoid over stimulating the child and also maintain the child's interest in the toys.
- Involve children when making a big change in the house. If you are rearranging a room, you can talk to them and get their opinion. This can be a fun activity to do together and then they will not be thrown off when they come home and the room looks completely different. In a Montessori environment we try to maintain the comfort level by leaving the furniture in one place. If we find, when observing the classroom that an area is not being used efficiently and needs a change, we involve the children in a group discussion to decide how to change it around. The children even help us rearrange. When we are finished we can always tell the children own what they did, and are so proud of themselves and their room.
- Stick to the plan! Don't let your children rule, by caving in. If you compromise even once, they will always remember how easily it is to get their way. For example, if you said "no dessert unless you eat your veggies," you have to stick to your words. Children remember everything, even when they pretend they do not. Just think about when they are sixteen years old. You have told them they cannot take the car out unless they maintain a 3.0 GPA. If there is always compromise they will think, "I'll get the car anyway." Think long-term before caving in to those puppy dog eyes.

"Order is one of the needs of life that when it is satisfied, produces a real happiness"
(Montessori)"

If you have any questions or would like help in planning a family schedule, feel free to contact me at Cmouldale@thehms.org .

References:

Montessori, Maria. (1967). The Discovery of the Child. New York: Fides Publishers, Inc.

Standing, E. M.,(1998). Maria Montessori: Her Life And Work. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc.