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HORME MONTESSORI NEWSLETTER

Welcome back!

It's hard to believe we made it all the way through December and we are now in a new year.
Time always flies in December!

So, to ring in the New Year, I have a wonderful Montessori guide to introduce you to,
Amanda Orfei Munz.

Amanda has her AMI diplomas for Assistance to Infancy (0 - 3 years old) from The Montessori Institute in Denver and Primary (3 - 6 years old) from The Montessori Institute of Milwaukee. She has run Toddler classrooms at Countryside Montessori School in Northbrook Illinois and Diamante Montessori school in Glen Ellyn Illinois and a Primary classroom at West Suburban Montessori School in Oak Park Illinois. Once she had her first daughter, she transitioned to being a stay-at-home mom and began to also explore photography. She now has her own photography business, focusing on children's portraits. She lives and works in the Chicagoland area with her family.

I have known Amanda since 2010. Amanda has been the Montessori guide I have held in my mind as my role model. Her calm temperament, even keel, and insight into the interest of the children in her environment have always stood out to me. Amanda is hands down the most precise observer and note-taker when it comes to her classrooms, it's no wonder that she presents to us what it takes to create a dynamic environment for children to thrive. I learned so much from her during the time we worked together and she has to this day always held an open door to me when I inevitably have questions for her! Amanda was a beloved teacher by all at West Suburban Montessori School - students, families, and faculty.

This month I am pleased to share Amanda's story. She shares with us her experience at home with her own child vs. being in the classroom and how she applies the techniques of the classroom at home, and how it sometimes doesn't always work out the way you expect.

**Amanda gave submitted this article in February of 2021.*



Why isn't my child concentrating 100% of the time?

We are following the Montessori philosophy at home, what am I doing wrong?

I've been out of the classroom for 16 months now. I have a new 3-year-old and a 15-month-old at home. Being a stay-at-home mom of 2 rambunctious littles is just as exhausting as a classroom filled with 30 three to six-year-olds! Okay, to be honest, it's more exhausting. Why? I'm using the same language and following through with consequences. Why is one three-year-old so hard?!

I'm kidding, kind of.

In the classroom, the children ebb and flow through work cycles. Some dive deep into concentration lasting a whole morning while others are lucky to put two minutes of concentration together. Every child was different. Every day was different. The same is true for your child at home. There will be days when he/she has the most incredible working day and days when it is a struggle just to get through mealtimes. Both are normal and expected. The term for when the child is working and deeply concentrating is called normalization. We strive to have a normalized classroom and home but understand, that while this is the expectation, it isn't always the rule.

There was a time when I was struggling with creating a normalized classroom. I spoke to a Montessori trainer about what to do and she offered me some of the best advice to date. I think back to it often and it helps me give space and grace to all the challenges I may be dealing with.

So what did she say, right?

She asked me to think about myself, not just that day but in general. Upon reflection, I noticed there are moments I don't want to work, and times I struggle to begin a project. Times when I am not using my resources as productively or efficiently as I should, or perhaps it's the opposite and I'm in a groove and feel like nothing can slow me down. If an adult can experience all of these reactions to work, why do we expect children to be perfect workers? To expect children to achieve deep levels of concentration all the time is unrealistic and is setting you up for power struggles and frustration.

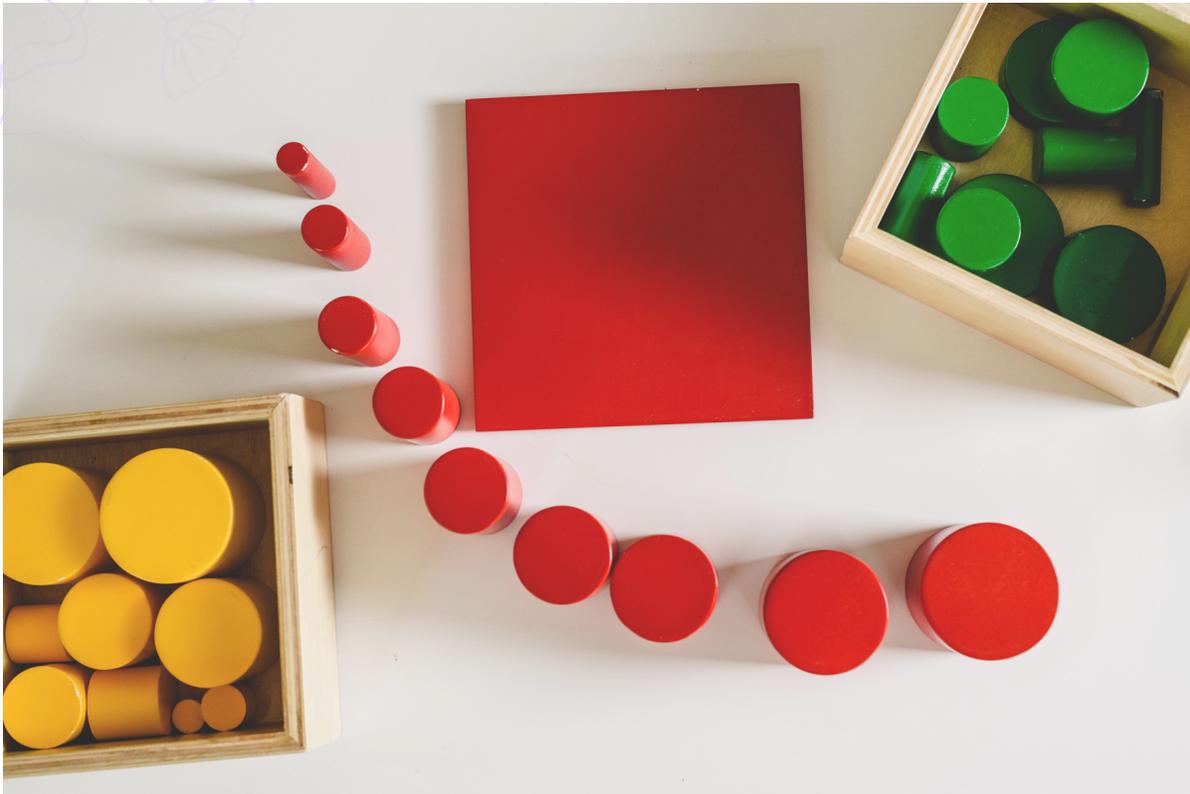
I'm currently hitting a roadblock at home with my three-year-old. There are a multitude of possibilities as to why we are having a disconnect at home and experiencing a rough patch. When I am in the classroom I ask myself a few questions when I feel normalization is lacking. I am currently doing this at home. First, take a look at the environment. Is it meeting your child's developmental needs? Is there order, or has order been lost? Is there a time during the day when the struggle is greatest? Why is that? What can be done during that time to ease the struggle? Have interests changed and does the environment reflect that? Have you as the parent changed? How is your child sleeping? I also look at what is going well. Don't forget to look for the positives too!

The goal is, after analyzing our day-to-day routines and behaviors, to change what isn't working. Observe and see if these changes made a difference. If it did, wonderful! If not, go back to questioning why. The child is constantly changing and so does the environment! Your child will ebb and flow through concentration. Our goal is to keep the environment aligned with their needs so the downtimes are minimal and we can have continued success.

Amanda Orfei Munz is a photographer and stay and home mom in the suburbs of Chicago. She has over 15 years of experience in Montessori education in the Chicagoland area. You can follow Amanda here:

Instagram: @amanda.munz

Website: amandamunzphotography.com



Links I Love

Here are a few links I have been loving lately, I hope you do, too!

[The Dependency Paradox](#) written by Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, Ph.D.
for Psychology Today

[Positive Discipline](#) Creating Respectful Relationships in Homes and Schools

[Cactus Blossom Montessori](#) A sweet small business run by Tarah and based in Arizona with an online shop of cute Montessori activities and great activity ideas

Enjoy the reading!