



“We are all, though not physically close, closer than ever.”

-Lynne Lawrence, AMI Executive Director

A message of support from Susan Mayclin Stephenson

Dear Friends,

You are not alone in the problems you are facing. As Lynne Lawrence, Executive Director of AMI, said today, “We are all, though not physically close, closer than ever.” Teachers and parents in Montessori schools all over the world are at first confused, afraid, worried, unsure, but in the end hopeful because of the support that is coming from many directions to help all of us through this period in our lives.

Montessori is not a method of getting a list of facts into the heads of children. It is instead a system of careful observation and continued adaptation to create environments that can bring out the best in humans, and this means children, their parents, and all of the adults in schools. This is the greatest gift Montessori education has to offer. The academic excellence, that is a result, is a by-product of meeting the mental, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of children at all stages of development.

So now we are all in the unique situation of using our observation and adaptation skills and abilities to handle a new situation in a world that will continue to change through our lives.

One thing I know for sure is that every one of us is doing the very best that we can with the information and the abilities we have right now!

Parents are the child’s first teacher and every parent hearing these words knows that we would give our lives for our children. But parents have their own needs. And they must be met first. There is a famous saying, “If mama isn’t happy,

no one is happy.” Children are keen observers of adults. We can’t fool them. We can’t smile and say, “Nothing is wrong.” Because they read our every body movement and facial expression and they will push and push until we admit the truth. There are different ways to explain the Corona virus to children at different ages but we must speak the truth in a way that will make our children feel protected and safe.

So think about what you need: rest, private space, healthy food, exercise, and most important think about how you feed yourself spiritually and help each other carve out space for that nurturing – be it prayer, meditation, a quiet moment with a book or walking in nature, or looking at something beautiful, or listening to music – and this will help you see clearer what must be done next as a person, a partner, a parent.

Thinking that we as parents must help our children keep up with what they are missing is backward thinking. Life has become so busy that we seldom have time and space to share in ways that kept families bonded over hundreds of years in the past. Let this crisis provide the silver lining of spending time together just being, sharing stories of our own childhood, our own thoughts about all elements of life, time doing the laundry and cleaning the house together, or planning a meal and cooking and then cleaning up together. Children are famous for being “in the moment” and when asked what they did in school they actually cannot go back and think about it because they are busy living the now. If we can try focusing on these every day experiences that for years we have been too busy to do with any

kind of mindfulness, this can help us in many ways – but you will discover this for yourself, and without taking meditation training or signing up for yoga classes!

My oldest daughter had all three Montessori trainings, 0-3, 3-6, and 6-12, and she did her best as a Montessori parent. But she also studied and worked as her children were growing up and her mind was on many things all day long. Even with this wonderful training she could not be the “perfect teacher” in the home, as she could be in the classroom. So **please don’t be hard on yourselves**. Just be grateful every time you experience a happy moment at home during these times, and give yourself an A+ when you can laugh or make someone else laugh happily.

My own experience began as a parent of a 3-year-old who had entered a Montessori school in San Francisco, California. I didn’t know much about Montessori at that time but I soon began to learn because I could see how happy and excited about learning, how helpful and hard working, my daughter was becoming. Soon I became a Montessori primary teacher, and then a school administrator, and then a Montessori elementary teacher.

During all of these years one of the greatest frustrations was that I could not share all I had learned during my training and teaching with

parents. Over the last 30 years I have written many articles and given many workshops, to parents, teachers, homeschoolers, on how to use some Montessori ideas happily and successfully in the home. Your school can put you in touch with books I have written on such subjects as teaching chess the Montessori way (“No Checkmate”) or basic differences between the child in the primary and elementary class (“Child of the World”) or learning how to recognize valuable concentration in oneself and children (“Montessori and Mindfulness”) or, if there is a child under the age of three in your family, some very practical ideas (“The Joyful Child” - available in Russian), and more. Also, I share freely on Facebook and Instagram.

Take care of yourselves, and each other, and the children will feel it and take care of themselves.

Love,

Susan

Susan Mayclin Stephenson

Trinidad, California

Website: www.susanart.net

Blog: susanmayclinstephenson.net