

*How child and  
mother evolve together*



An introduction to Montessori  
education and Matrescence.

**BY ADELINE DUBREUIL**

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# Préface

When I was an Elementary teacher in France, I would always end up in these classrooms with many levels to teach – which meant double the work I would have done in a single level class. I was young and my motivation had no limit. My goal was always to support children through their learning. I was eager to learn in order to make the work of the child feeling easier but I could not see how. Something was missing.

Fast forward 15 years, I live in Canada – where the problems I had in France were the same in the classroom – and I have found answers to so many of my teacher questions, I found these by discovering Montessori education. Little did I know, that when I entered the world of Maria Montessori it would also shape the mother I was going to be and my career altogether.



*Hello !*

Hello, I am Adeline, mother of two toddlers, Montessori guide and Matrescence educator, I am also the founder of Chez Mahé Montessori and Oh Mama!



## About this book...

In this ebook, I want to introduce you to Montessori education (which can also exist in the home) and Matrescence

1. I am hoping you, Mama, can feel empowered by keeping Montessori simple and align with who you are as a mother with less pressure. Becoming a mother is a major change and brings so many questions about “Who am I as a mother?” and “what are my parenting (mothering) principles and values?”.

2. I want to tell you it is ok to feel overwhelmed by so many mothering advice (whether it is from family and friends or social media and more). It is also ok, to want to keep it simple and not compete with anyone else.

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What we want is growing as mothers alongside our child(ren).



# What is Montessori ?

Maria Montessori was an Italian physician who had a major influence in the world of education at the beginning of the 20th century. From her work in hospital with children, she discovered that what they needed was more than medicine, it was also love and respect. She created material for them to play/learn and brought them to a level of education many would not believe.

Later on, in 1907, she created a special type of classroom: the Casa dei bambini (Children's house). This was the first Montessori school. Fast forward a few years, she was training teachers all over the world to open more of her type of Children's house. Alongside her son, Mario, she created AMI (Association Montessori International) that now trains hundreds of teachers every year all over the globe - I am lucky to be one of them.



My timing was lucky as well since I did take my AMI training right after I had my first child, I hence, became a Montessori guide and mother and I loved every minute of it despite the fact that it was a very challenging year.

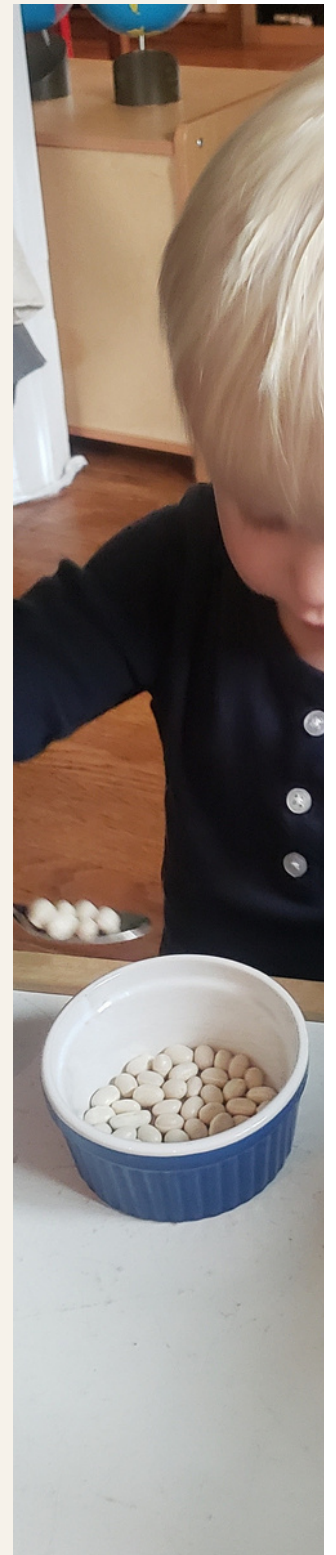
I will not spoil you with what could be in your home for your baby and your toddler right now, this will be the subject of a full course but I will give you 3 basic principles that exist in both Montessori classroom and household:

1. Love through observation
2. Respect of all beings and things
3. Slow down

This is what we need first and foremost. You could have all the Montessori material in the world that it would not make it a Montessori environment without these 3 principles.

## OBSERVATION

When we train to be a Montessori Guide, we are shown how to observe. Not just looking at the child and jump to conclusion on what to do... OBSERVE. This means, keep your whole attention on the object of your observation and just look closely at what is happening, right in front of you. If you take notes, it could look like this:



(Name of) child takes the pencil with 2 fingers, pencil falls, child's face contracts, tears are coming down child's face.

OR

The leaf is light green with shades of darker green, it is immobile. Wind blows. Leaf moves sideways.

So these are examples at their extreme but I want to illustrate here is that we observe without bias or interpretation of what is happening. That part can come later.

When we observe a child, their activities, their body language, their emotional reaction, we do it with LOVE. We observe so we can support the child in answering their needs. Each observation will bring you many information on where the child is in their development and how you can respond to their needs. Simply. Example: Child runs in the house - you don't want them to run in the house. We can jump at it by thinking the child is going against our house rules OR we can see it as a manifestation of a need. "It seems you want to run, let's go run outside!". Your child might also be showing interests in doing everything like you - cooking, moving furniture, cleaning up... and that's a moment to provide opportunities for the child and maybe do things together.

## RESPECT

Montessori goes hand in hand with a respectful approach to parenting and communication. In a Montessori classroom, we observe and connect with children with respect. We also guide them, show them that by being respectful, we receive respect in return. Of course, it is the work of quite a few years of parenting and it is being challenged in many ways - and yes Mama, it is normal to not be calm all the time...

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you are human, just like your child. Give yourself some grace when you cross a line and you can always come back to the child later on with a respectful conversation or apology. This also shows the child how to be human, self-compassionate and respectful – we are allowed to make amends. It is not all or nothing. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. It's a myth... it does not exist! There is your child, there is you and you are both doing the best you can... by living together in Respect.

Some examples of respect : our body, other's body, the words (how we communicate and connect), taking turns etc

We also show our children that respect goes further than just human beings. We respect Nature, we respect things around us so we can keep living in a (somewhat) harmonious environment.



## SLOW DOWN

This is one that I have learnt to embrace as a mother by working in a Montessori classroom. During the work cycle (uninterrupted 3 hours in a classroom), children get to choose their work, ask for support, connect with others with respect when appropriate, work alone, work in group and they are also allowed to wander, be bored, look for the next thing to do.

At first, I found it strange, I was coming from a regular classroom where schedules are tight and busy, this was a shock. But then, I was seeing, toddlers walking freely in the classroom, peacefully, choosing work that seemed to attract them. No pressure. No teacher talking over. I was in awe. How was that even possible?

Now that I have my own classroom and my own children, I know why and how it is possible. We slow down, we pair down. There is less overwhelm. Less activities, less places to be, less pressure.



It might not feel as easy to do in your own home and it takes practice to be able to get these moments where children are just looking for what to do next, chill, with no time pressure.

Of course, this is not always possible, but we can aim for at least a couple of these moments everyday, for children and adults' sake, in the home. Then, it will be followed by noise and time for dinner, appointments and other miscellaneous. It is ok. We are looking for progress, not a quiet house at all times, that is not realistic.

Preparing the environment for this to happen is also a big part of it in both classroom and home.

If you ever need support with this, I am happy to work with your family.



# What is Matrescence ?

We believe that children want to feel loved, respected with less pressure in life. So do mothers.

Why would we treat mothers differently? Of course, a mother is an adult with responsibilities. I do have many of these responsibilities myself.

However, this constant nagging mothers about doing it all, about being perfect builds the pressure we have on our shoulders.

Mothers need to be loved. Like we would do with a child, observe how much a mother does in one day.

Hey Mama, observe how much you do in one day, how many steps you take, how many squats you do, how many lists you keep. What does it tell you about motherhood ?



Well, it tells me this could be too much. We are human. We deserve love, we deserve that other people care for us and read our body language and words as well. We deserve to be respected with nice offerings, kind words, pampering (which can look different for everyone) and please oh please, take pressure off our shoulders!

I had the opportunity to train with Nikki McCahon when it comes to Matrescence and if I have to tell one thing about what I have learnt it would be this : we need to honour mothers way more than we are (in our western culture).

Whichever stage a woman might be in her motherhood, there is too many voices around her telling her who to be and how to be.

So Mama, I will not tell you who to be, what kind of mother to be and how because this is not up to me.

What we can do to support mothers is loving them, respecting them in their choices and offer any help they would take to support their well-being.

So you see ? Montessori principles are life principles that totally apply to adults as well.



## MATRESCENCE

You might have heard or read this term before. It is in the dictionary since 2022 which I see as a step forward.

Matrescence is defined as such in the Cambridge dictionary:

### **The process of becoming a mother:**

Those physical, psychological and emotional changes you go through after the birth of your child now have a name: matrescence.

This transition is not just about giving birth and the few first weeks, which is how the medical world tends to treat mothers. Past the last appointment where they make sure you don't have postpartum depression or any other medical related challenges, mothers are left alone with all the changes that becoming a mother encompasses. It might go smoothly for some, to go through matrescence. However, it is not that smooth and easy for most. Many changes come with becoming a mother and we (almost) never acknowledge these changes and support the mother through it. We assume it is normal, common to go through this transition but honestly, it is huge.



Personally, I was raised into a family who loves children, I am a teacher so I feel like it helped me, this made for a smoother entering into mothering. But there was so much more to deal with, starting with birth trauma and only being able to talk about 4-5 years later. I also went through the guilt and shame of not breastfeeding easily at the breast like many others - I have pumped and used formula for both my children.

I can also talk about not feeling able to complain on how hard it is to parent 24/7 because we made the choice not to live close to our families, which meant close to zero support and feeling exhausted that it is always on us the parents. Where was my village to care for my children when I needed a break ?

I made the choice to want to be the witness of my children's lives as much as I could so I take responsibility for this, but from there I created this saying :

"It takes a village to go through matrescence."

That's my reality and I would say the reality of many mothers out there.

Where is the support to talk about how hard pregnancy was, to talk about birth trauma, to talk about how hard mothering can be – even if we chose to be at home with our child(ren) – to talk about how our reality has shifted, our identity exploded, our career, our body, our... everything. Where is the village to support us in acknowledging that? We, mothers, all go through matrescence but our journey is unique to who we are and our circumstances. This is what needs to be acknowledged.

We, mothers, need the same love and respect than we talk about in respectful parenting for children: we need respectful communication, respectful listening, understanding. We need people to hold space for us.

Putting pressure on mothers to be a certain kind of parents seems pointless. It can't work.

We need a smile, a nod from others to tell us that it's ok to feel this way, it's ok to say it's hard, it's ok to love our child(ren) beyond limits, to want to be with them and also want to be alone. It's complex, it's ambivalent, it's beautiful and difficult.

This is matrescence.



## Conclusion

Based on both my trainings with children and mothers, I have developed this understanding that there is no real separation between how we should treat both... we are human beings. All we want is feeling heard, loved, respected so we can go through the amount of work it takes to be an individual, part of a society which is not always easy to navigate. There are many ways to feel supported, some options you might have are : family, close friends, women/mothers circle, workout program, a baby-sitter etc

I truly believe that matrescence and infancy/toddlerhood evolve together and that we would understand each other better with all keys in hands. This is and will be a part of my work so I can support mothers (and children). Stay tuned for more and in the meantime Mama, don't forget that we are in this together.



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🌐 [www.ohmama.ca](http://www.ohmama.ca)

*Thank you!*

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