

- I am Irish, I live in Ireland with five generations of wonderful family around me.
- I started to study Montessori 53 years ago. My jaw dropped when I read the first chapter, and I don't think my jaw has quite come back into place since!!! I loved it!
- I was a Montessori teacher for kindergarten and elementary school for 20 yrs.
- I had a Montessori school in an old house beside a park with a pond. Waterpark House!
- Then I came to Norway and have been coming for the past 34 years.
- I came to Oslo for one year, I thought! I lived here for 3.5 years and then back to Ireland.
- Flexible learning and the internet became my tools to deliver Montessori.
- I am happy to be here today as a founder member of Montessori Europe.
- We started in 2000 although it took us a few years to register the organisation.
- Two groups started and the websites were just becoming common so
- We found each other and joined together. We are proud of that!
- This is a special occasion for me personally because ME is in Norway.
- Norway (in particular Oslo Montessoriskole) has supported me for those 34 years as I (and other amazing Montessorians) delved deeply into Montessori.
- And being Norway ☺ they ensured that what was developed was of a very high quality.
- And so Waterpark Montessori International training college was born.
- And, now as I have stepped back, with the guidance of some powerful and talented young people (all here today), it will move forward as European Montessori College.

No Need to Take Notes



Headings only.

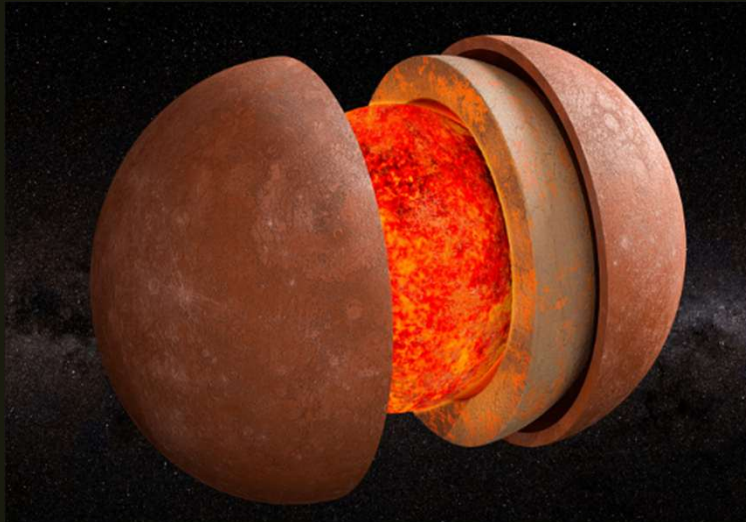


Notes available on a QR code at the end of the session.



Use your phone at the back of the room

- Montessori Presentation – sacred space - full attention – afterwards you can use/read.
- I am preparing my environment!
- QR code on screen
- OR go to the Waterpark Montessori /European Montessori College stand and the QR code is there too.



CORE MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES TODAY

SUMMARY - Today I want to show you that the method will survive if we identify and protect the core principles!

All Montessori principles are core to everything we Montessorians do!

- But which are the CORE principles? Those that are a foundation; and the method will not work without them. (for example: Montessori in poor locations)
- They are **life enhancing principles** focussing on what it is to **be human**.
- The **same principles** can be applied to **all ages** - infants, toddlers, younger children, older children, adolescents, adults and elders, **neurodivergent** children, **socially challenged** children and so on.
- The **same principles** that were applied 120 years ago, **can be applied today**, and in another 120 years!
- **BUT** they **need some “out of the box” thinking** to apply them in practice.
- Why? Because they are common sense **NOT common practice**
- And because we **need to adapt to a modern world** and **use modern developments/inventions** to support our work **without losing the core**.

Think of one Montessori principle that you consider is very important.

Think of one problem that would arise if you neglected that principle.

Activity

2 minutes

2 people

IS MONTESSORI OUT OF DATE?



Does Montessori suit a modern world? The standard criticisms are...

- Is it not old-fashioned?
- Perhaps some activities are out of date?
- We need to incorporate new ideas such as computers

Montessori and its interpretation are culturally dependent.

But there is a **core that relates directly to being human – whoever, wherever and whenever.**

Montessori got that! She understood human nature!



MONTESSORI
WAS ALREADY
“OUT OF THE
BOX”

Montessori was a radical, a lateral thinker – *example when she managed to get the “neurodiverse” children to pass examinations what did she do? She applied her knowledge to ALL children.*

- Her method was to make **learning fun** – all her ideas led to that!
- And yet **children learned more**, with ease! **Why?**
- Because she focussed (through observation) on what the children **really needed**.

She saw what made **human beings thrive** –

- Creativity – a basic human characteristic that dies in a stifling box
- Joy of living & learning – a basic human need & talent
- Coordination of mind and body - **concentration** through focussed activity)

INSIDE & OUTSIDE THE BOX



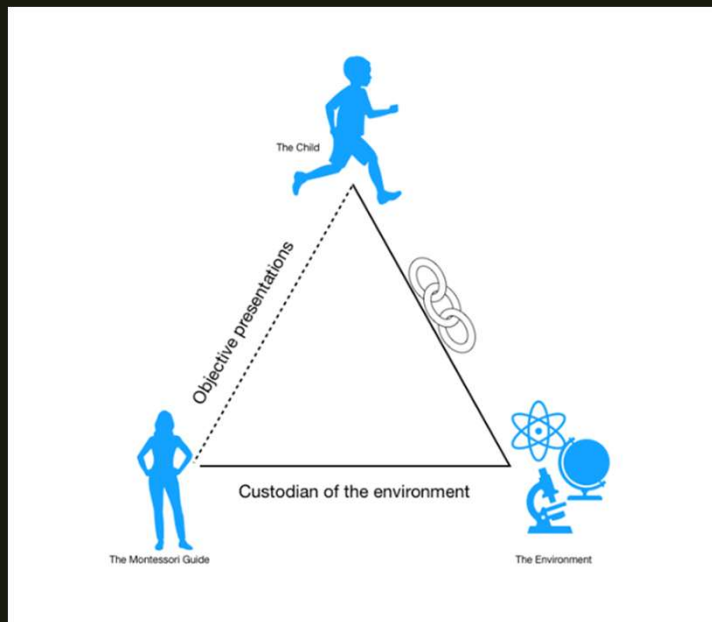
BUT **how did Montessori do this in practice?** In the classroom?

She provided a **type of box** – a prepared environment

- Wide enough to allow **independent learning**
- Learning that is guided through observation – based on **the child's needs, not the adult's**
- Limits that are fun, to be **tried and tested**
- This allows for true **individual creativity** – each one learns in **their own way**

BUT everyone **must be free** to flow “**In & Out**” of the box

- **freedom to choose** (two limits-no harm to others & environment)
- Beware! you (the adult) may get **trapped** in the box (**more later**)



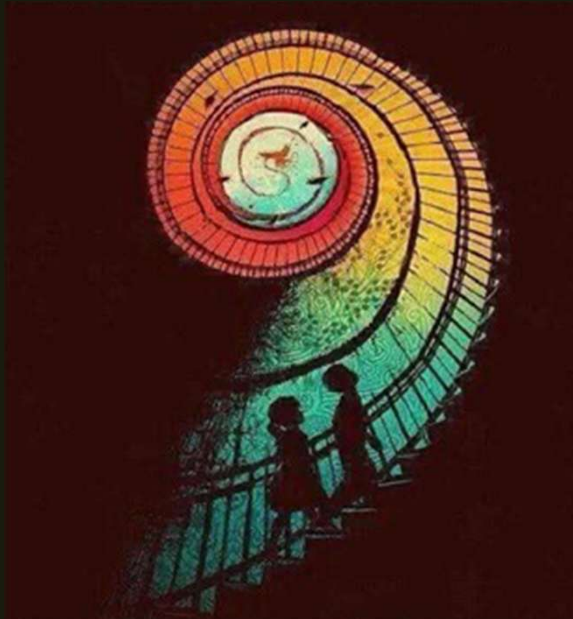
TRIANGLE

Here we see the radical difference in the Montessori method-

- Role of the Adult
- Role of the Prepared Environment
- The child teaches themselves! Type of *auto-education*

Here are some of the advantages of this system:

- Space for freedom yet Safety
- Order without controlling others
- The sky is the limit to learning – creative power is being used
- Demonstrate/Present – don't teach – why? – The material is there to allow child/ adolescent to teach themselves.



MONTESSORI CURRICULUM

CONCENTRATION

UNIVERSAL/COSMIC

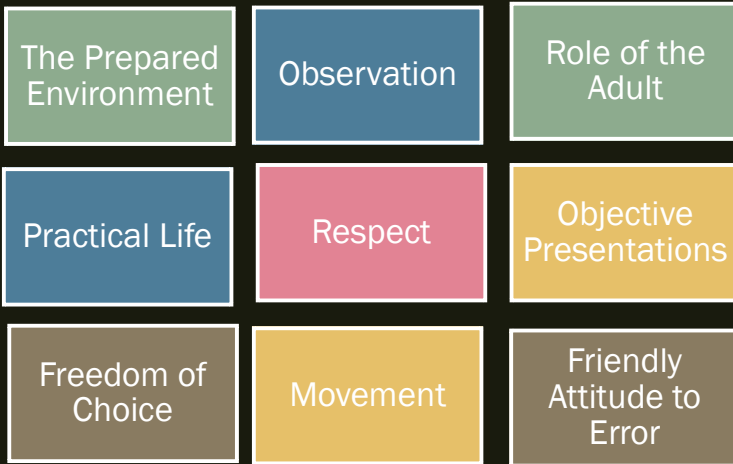
ORDER/PRECISION

Montessori Curriculum – curriculum is top of every teacher's mind☺

- **Concentration** – throughout everything – then learning flows; gift for life!
- **Cosmic/ Universal** – yet order and precision – learn about the world
- **Not linear!** Follow the child! (the adolescent, the infant, the adult, the elder)
- **Good records; self-assessment activities; OBSERVATION**
- It was 100 years ago BUT anything can be added (f.ex. technology!) BUT keep the **core principles**.

Montessori AND another curriculum – MONTESSORI FIRST

1. Run a Montessori class – do not water it down or adapt for State Curriculum.
2. Keep good records of what has been presented, used and learned.
3. THEN (after 3 months?) compare your records to the State Curriculum
4. THEN add other activities/materials to fill any gaps



What are the Core Principles?

1. **Role of the Adult**
2. **Role of the Prepared Environment**

These two are radically different from other methods!

The rest of the principles relate to those TWO because of the way they function.

There are more! But today we will focus on these nine principles!

WHICH PRINCIPLES DO WE NEED?



A Holistic Method

The principles are like a **jig saw puzzle**. Or **building a house**.

We need the full method. BUT - **Priorities matter!**

The Montessori Principles –which are essential? Core? Foundation?

If I present a material in exactly the right way but I forget:

- Objective presentation and I correct the child
- Freedom of choice and I tell the child when they must use it
- Respect and I interrupt the child and tell them they need to give time to something else

Perhaps I am a good teacher, but I have lost the main benefits of Montessori education.

Principles make **the method to flow**.

They protect the freedom and therefore strong personality development!

PREPARED ENVIRONMENT



Why?

- Impersonal (Objects!) which frees the child to “be in charge of themselves”.
- To allow the child to learn independently
- To allow for different learning styles
- To make space for creativity in all learning
- Problems – change to the environment, not the child

OBSERVATION



Why observe?

- Observation is the key to making the right decisions
- Follow the child – by observing to find out what they *really want*

A skill

- Train yourself to observe, and be **observant**
- **Pause before reacting, if possible; pause afterwards if it was not possible!**

PRACTICAL LIFE

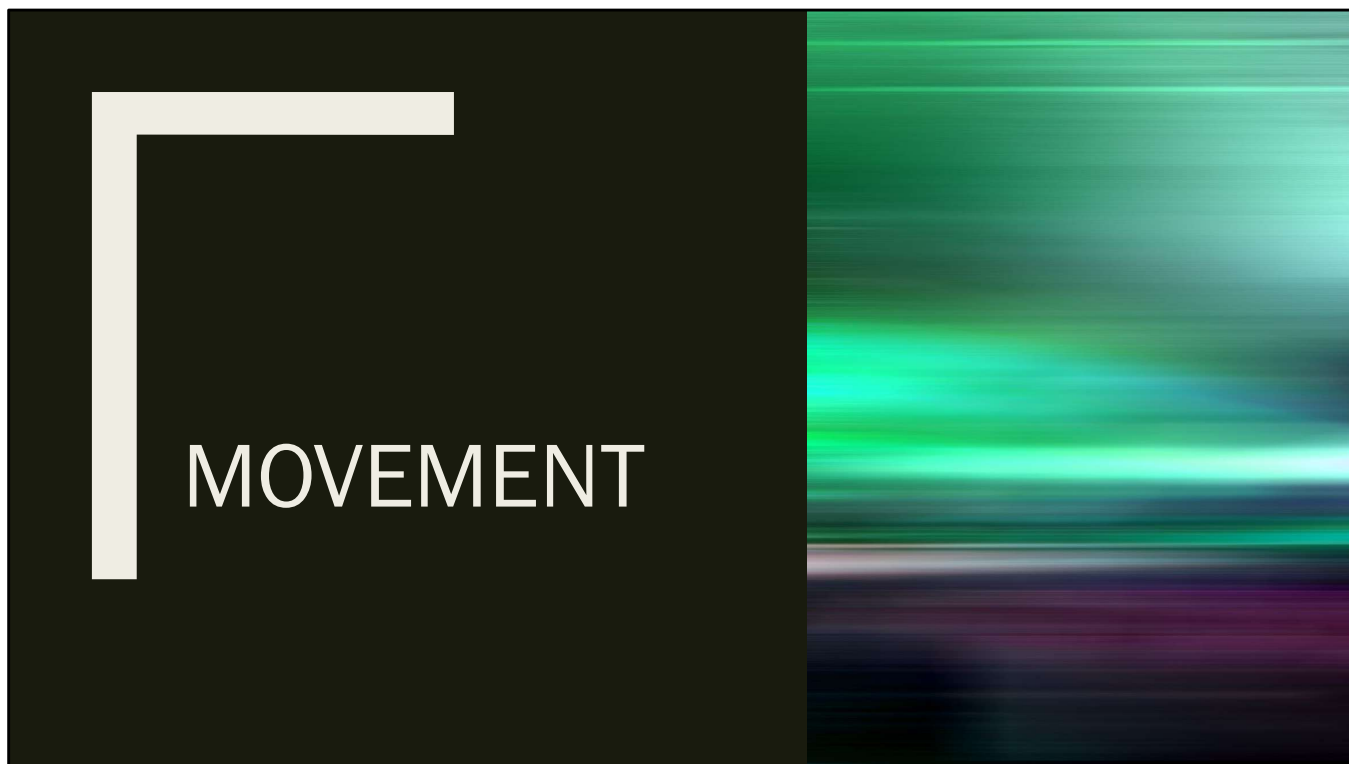


Why?

- Coordination of Mind & Body – a human need
- Preparation for Life,
- Confidence, self-worth – when “I can do it myself”
- Preparation for managing my classroom work

How?

- Objective presentations – not correction of errors!
- Clear steps, orderly, slow, as little talk as possible



- Movement in as many activities as possible
- Example: Shared pencils/ paper and so on – the need to move to get them!

Let us try it! A Game! We all need to move!



Demonstration or Presentation – Objective NOT traditional lesson or teaching

- Materials/Activities are a system to implement the Core Principles
- Precision in presentation is important – for the adult, not the child!
- Whatever the subject – if no materials, **make one** using Montessori principles!

How important are the materials?

- Essential as part of the prepared environment, the child teaching themselves.
- If used as teacher's aids without the overall principles, they lose much magic!

Food for Thought about learning tools/materials in the environment:

*A sequence for use: **Exposure, Exploration, Experience, Evolving,***

Expression Thanks to Sarah Kennedy-Berge and Jordi Freixnet! (See Montessori in the Digital Age ISBN 9781913120528)



RESPECT

Respect is core to humans living together! ESSENTIAL!

- We do not do very well as a species but as educators we try to change that!.
- Montessori asked to give the child respect, equal to that given to adults.
- **We have different roles but equal as human beings!**
- Now look at the work done for **elders! See newborn!**
- **See** every person

REFLECT ON THIS! No time for details but....

Special Needs/ Neuro-divergent/ Gender Identification/ Racism and so on:

*Montessori schools do not need to make special policies – respect for all is so deeply inherent! Every person has special needs. **Total respect!***



FREEDOM!

Freedom is a human right! Respect in Practice! At all ages!

- Human nature = I will fight for my needs – a core human trait! Freedom of choice allows me to look for my needs (see limits).
- Human nature = if my needs are met then I will be caring of others because I have the space to enjoy others, and it is my nature to care for others.

BUT- freedom within two limits Montessori gave us!

- **Don't harm others OR the environment!**

Do not be afraid to say NO! Limits protect freedom!

Suggestions for Respect

- **Why interrupt?** Is there another solution?
- **"Fairness"/Taking turns is NOT always respect!**
- Respect is not always "helping".

FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TO ERROR

“Error is not feared in Montessori: it is picked up, shaken like a wrapped gift, *opened, examined, smelled, tossed up and down a few times and then cast aside in search of something else.* Error is like a telescope through which one can more clearly see what success will look like.”

Trevor Eissler

This is our magic tool! *It makes the method much easier to put in practice!*

- **Criticism** – it annihilates – it is control. Leaves a negative voice in our heads.
- **Rewards & Punishments** – they remove power from child to adult; they remove self-esteem, self-motivation, self control. OK short term, not long term!
- **Judgement & Grades** – *see all of the above! Other ways to assess without comparison!*

Alternatives!

- Understand the value of learning from mistakes! **Learning must be fun!**
- Observe with an open mind! Allow experimentation.
- Show how first! (Demonstration, not a correction or a lecture).
- Bad behaviour - could we help children to see each other, to heal each other?
- Show how to self-assess work – from an early age, in a fun but realistic way!
- Relax a bit – example of a child learning how to walk!

We need a full day to study this one 😊

ROLE OF THE ADULT



Another radical Montessori out of the box idea!

Guide or Educator - not Teacher in the traditional meaning

- We do not give knowledge & skills to the child.
- We show the child where and how to fetch their own knowledge & skills.

Custodian of the Environment

- We create the environment
- We adapt that environment based on observed needs
- We protect the environment as needed.

The Golden Madonna of Essen, one of the oldest known sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Child, dating back to around 980 AD.



HUMAN NATURE & TWO SIDES OF ONE COIN

Montessori Two sides of One Medal – Swinging between Opposites

- Montessori classroom – flow between freedom and limits/structure
- Human nature - constantly flows between two sides - we make mistakes, we fix them; we are charming today, nasty yesterday! Human!
- **Flow between order of the old vs new world** creative inventions. *That is how change happens. We try, we give up, we try and eventually a change!*

Montessori observed that - a **characteristic of humans** - as did many others - for example: Carl Jung and opposites!

- Dark & Light! Good & Bad. **It is natural to swing if we swing within limits!**

It is the way we are! Why do PEOPLE need both?

- Fear of change – we freeze, then boredom, we want freedom! A natural swing.
- **But a big swing may cause problems**

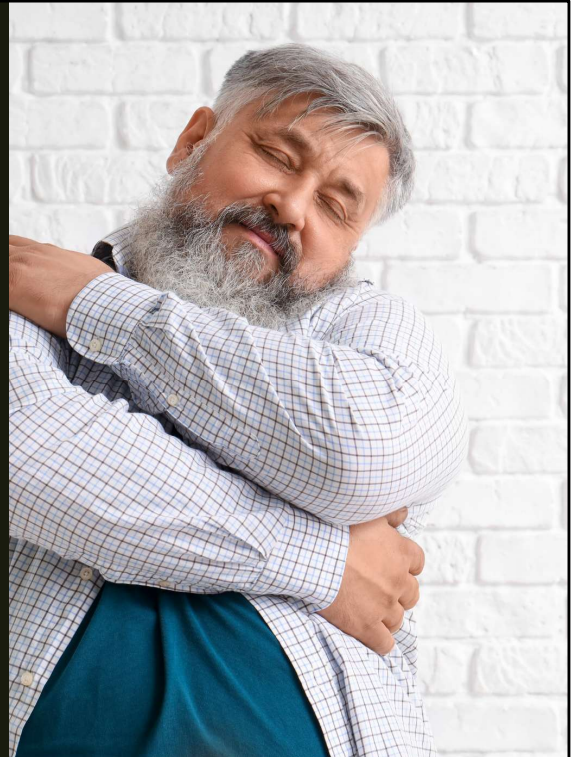
CONSCIOUS MONTESSORI



- Adults have swings! But by **being aware/ conscious we manage it.**
- Jung stressed the value of **Consciousness (self-awareness)** to manage the swing.
Most swings come from the Unconscious (which we cannot control).
- The Montessori method **helps children to become conscious of themselves** and how they function as humans. ***Education for Life***
- **Preparation of the Montessori Adult** helps us to become conscious of ourselves, how we function as educators, as humans. **Observation of self!**

Add new things to Montessori consciously.

PREPARATION OF THE ADULT



Why?

- “I just finished studying to be a Montessori teacher? Is that not enough?”
- Spiritual or Psychic Preparation? Is this a religion?

Answer: This is about doing **something that is “out of the box”** - not the norm!

- Montessori is “common sense”, not “common practice” - needs self-awareness
- Montessori explained we need to **root out anger and pride!** She talks about love.
- (In **today’s terms** -self-aware, sensitive to others, willing to change!)
- **And that needs practice! And guidance! And self care!**

Self care – this is an important part of self-awareness! **Why?**

To do a good job **we need to be ready to change; And to change we need...**

- care for ourselves – in a healthy way – not self-pity
- a Friendly Attitude to Error towards ourselves
- forgiveness for ourselves for past mistakes or we carry a load to pass on to children
- freedom to be creative human beings - self-criticism kills creativity!
- And we need to buy into **common sense** limits to keep us safe!

CUSTODIANS OF MONTESSORI CORE PRINCIPLES



In the face of the level of **over-stimulation** and **new technological developments in our current society.....** HOW will we manage?

We are already Custodians of the Prepared Environment.

To prepare for a rapidly changing future we must also become the

Custodians of the Core Montessori Principles.

As Custodians – we need

- To understand the core principles
- To understand ourselves

Let us explore some possible ways of doing this!

MENTORS

A Resource



Mentors – we are surrounded by wise Montessorians with experience

- They have been through this process. They have learned to be self-aware!
- They know that observation is more important than your album.
- They know how to interpret “follow the child” in a busy day.

Yet we tend to prefer to find our own way! Believe our own albums!

- We need BOTH! **Fresh thinking and experienced mentors!**
- We should all **listen** – old and young.

For example: young Montessorians will bring new ideas such as technology and the experienced Montessorians will help keep the core principles around them.

All you experienced Montessorians, classroom educators, principals, trainers - we need open discussion about Core Principles.

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A PATH FOR THE FUTURE

There is a big **Montessori community** throughout the world.

Montessorians keep falling out with each other! It is the same in every country.

- *Idealists tend to do that! Human nature - that swing! So, let's take a friendly attitude to error!*
- Why can we not agree? Perhaps because we have not yet identified what is essential/ core!
- Can we accept differences and focus on core principles?

Let us start with one core principle that is in serious danger today.

- Preparation of the Adult is the most challenging in this modern time – I believe!
- Without it who will protect the method? This is urgent!

A METHOD TO PREPARE THE MONTESSORI ADULT?



What?

Let us *together* create a modern adaptation of Preparation of the Adult.

Then the true benefits of a Montessori education will survive. This is **our future!**

How?

Montessori gave us no materials, no method for Preparation of the Adult – we must find a way!

A system that is **meaningful and manageable** – just like all Montessori activities

We can include **a few basics:**

- Stand back – become self-aware
- Be patient with others who are “not yet there” (as we do with children).
- Know Montessori core principles deeply
- No criticism – of yourself!
- Love and respect for yourself before you can truly love a child



Where are we going?

- It is a Cosmic journey - But don't leave your compass behind!
- A simple compass – the core principles - life enhancing principles

The Challenges

- Technology, AI, social media, wars, new curriculum, new governments, tariffs, fanatics.
- These are all part of life - since ever – we cannot change everything!

Our journey

- It gets much easier when we become aware of what is important and what is not!
- We have the core Montessori principles to guide us.



BE LOYAL TO THE CORE!

If we think we should interrupt or correct a child who is holding or using the pink tower, or any material, in the wrong way, (according to our albums), **we have completely missed the point.**

Should we neglect the Montessori core principles

...we are simply not following the Montessori method.

Let us be loyal to what matters!



THANK
YOU

It is challenging but we can do it!

The core principles are

- for all ages
- for all types of learners
- in a variety of situations,
- **re-interpreting them** for an ever-changing world

Let us revisit the Montessori them **again and again – every single day!**

Not only for the children, but for all of us!

Thank you!