

freedom & limits from 12-18 years old

notes from Jenny Marie Höglund's lecture

- Children from 6-12 years old have a reasoning mind, but abstractly.
- Adolescents have a reasoning mind.
- The child was born into a culture, but now they are born into being part of society and they need to be free from their family.
- They need a good foundation in first 12 years of life planes, so they are firmly based in their culture. Then they will be separated from their family in order to be able to attach to something else.
- The environment itself must be changed in order for this attachment to take place.
- It's very different from the prepared environment 0-6 and 6-12. They need **a mindfully unprepared environment**. It must be restricted within certain rules that give the necessary guidance.
- The adolescent has to discover these rules, supported by the adult, to create their OWN social organisation, community, and ability to work together. This creates their limits.

“The environment must promote not only the freedom of the individual, but also the formation of a society.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori, Education and peace, ch. 14

- Purpose is important because it keeps the adolescent motivated and gives them energy and the opportunity to give their best to others and have a positive impact on their community. This is what they need to experience.
- They need loyalty. *The work is not done until all the work is done.* If one finishes one part, you don't leave your friends, you go to your friends and help them finish their work.
- It is the work that gives them the energy and knowledge and understanding that they have a common purpose.

The ownership of accountability:

- The adolescent is accountable for their choices, work, and responsibilities. The freedom is that of the community, a code of conduct and civility of the social organisation that is set up by the adolescents themselves together to have a harmonious community.
- The adolescent learns what freedom is in a social context: the freedom to participate in the social organisation with discipline and accountability.
- Each adolescent is responsible for themselves and their role in the community.
- A **higher self control** must happen when you live and work in a group. It isn't all about the individual anymore and requires more self discipline that develops out of the needs of the group/social organisation.

“In speaking of the [adolescent] child we are now dealing with the manners and rules of social existence, and we come to the need of the laws regulating work and exchange....”

- Dr. Maria Montessori

- The child doesn't have the same kind of responsibilities or consequences as adults. We find this out through observation.
- Observation has to be done constantly. Adults jump in and interfere constantly because the adult is faster. In order to give the child what they need, we have to step back.
- For adolescents, we sometimes have to facilitate difficult situations, but usually they sort things out themselves. They only want affirmation and support from the adult.

“One of the things the adult should practice is the observation of different mental states of the child and the actions which accompany them.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori, NAMTA Journal

- We are a source of information to the child on values and language use. We don't have to use the child's language. We want to stretch their vocabulary and we want them to feel confident in the adult conversations they will have and in academic environments.
- We offer them demonstrations so they can become independent of the adult and feel capable in an adult setting.
- The adolescents have a community meeting every week, which is a formal meeting with a set agenda with a chairperson and secretary. They can venture issues, discuss rules they come up with, discuss problems, discuss moral dilemmas, come to consensus with guidance for their community...

- Through literature or reading seminars, they find out about the adult world and themselves. They ask questions about human interactions and what can be behind different moral codes.
- While they are reading a novel they can explore their own value system to see if it agrees with the characters in the novel.
- The adult must be very observant of the relationships, interactions, and language in the community. You may say to an adolescent "If I were you, I would rephrase that."
- If an adolescent is being rejected by the group, it needs to be addressed by the child, with the support of the adults. The adult helps the adolescent to be aware of their choices and that they are accountable for their actions.
- Discipline is not imposed by the adult, but they are reminded of it by their peers.
- Limits are not set by the adults, but by the adolescents themselves depending on their expectations of themselves as members of a community. The adult gives a framework for them to set limits.
- Setting limits with adolescents is different because you can't pick up a teenager off the table if they put their feet up on the table! You don't have to do anything, but the school manager could take the table away as a consequence. They need to respect their space. If they respect the space, they won't put their feet on the table.
- We have to know when to intervene and when to wait. Limited intervention by the adult, is a Montessori pillar. Maria Montessori is very clear about when to do that.
- HOW to do that requires practice and learning. Maria Montessori is clear that we need to have expectations and know what they are and parents need to have the same expectations in the family, as do the teachers in a class.
- Adolescents know their parents well. They know which parent to speak to about what. Never be afraid of saying "NO" when no is needed. If you don't say 'no' when needed, you are abandoning the child.
- The adolescent needs adult work - not only practical life like baking and cleaning - they have been doing that for 12 years, creating their potential. Now they need to realise their potential. **Their work needs to be relevant to their life.**
- The mathematics need to be applied. If their schoolwork is not relevant or applicable to their life, they will not be interested in it. They need to be able to use the information they are learning.

- The freedom of the community now overrides the freedom of the individual. They need to run their own community life. And the roll of the adult is to help them to do it by themselves. *Help us to do it by ourselves.*
- The adult needs to decide if they are ready to allow their child this freedom.
- Freedom is not a reward. It is not something that can be earned. (For example, when you are done, you may....) This kind of freedom is conditional, but in Montessori, our goal is for the child to have active freedom of choice. This will allow the adolescent to live their life to their highest potential.
- The child needs to be challenged in order to change themselves and adapt. But this is not a freedom from conditions, but the freedom to take a stand from the conditions that you face.
- Work has to be there, but there also has to be a social context. When the adolescents live, work, and study together, they experience that they have a duty that comes with the freedom. They have a new awareness. They had one individual life, but now they have a group awareness and a duty to society.
- Adolescents plan projects in their community meetings. So much happens through dialogue. Their plans are supported by the adult with their adult experience. We support the adolescent to understand possible consequences because they are very optimistic.
- They learn to make choices and they learn to think about the things that matter. Some choices are significant or insignificant. The adolescent may feel ask, "what difference will it make in 100 years?" They start to pay more attention to what does matter and less attention to what doesn't.
- Their freedom is a conquest, a point of arrival, not a point of departure.
- Freedom allows children to enjoy their environment to the fullest. discipline can turn this enthusiasm into motivation to explore deeper worlds they hadn't thought of before. Freedom and discipline are beautiful friends.
- There is a difference between "freedom FROM" and a "freedom TO": the freedom *from* is coercion; the freedom *to* shapes one's own life and give it significance.
- Adolescents need freedom from their parents. They still love them, but they need to increase their self-respect, confidence, and participation in society.

“The child is the victim of events but have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the gutter of human society.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori, Education for a New World, introduction

Adults get so involved in their own self-importance and adult attitude, but please try to practice self-discipline. Act as if you are being observed every moment by a child and do your best to practice self awareness and social awareness.

Even when you are alone, try to practice the same freedom and limits with yourself that we expect for the child. If you finish your work, look around to see if anyone else needs help. If you want to go to your sports practice, but your husband is overwhelmed with his studies, then perhaps stay home to cook dinner for your family, without even mentioning the sports practice.



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