

A Child Friendly Home

Our homes are designed for adults and most of our furnishings reflect this. One of the reasons children are so joyful in a Montessori environment is that they are able to function so effectively in the child size room. If you feel awkward or ill at ease in their small-scaled environment, it may give you a hint of how they feel in our oversized one.

One way to make your home more comfortable for your child is to include something child centered in every room. A small rocker and a basket of books are a nice quiet addition to more formal living areas in your home. A small table and chair in your dining room or kitchen are nice for meals and simple food preparation. If you don't have room for another table just placing a small stool at a coffee table creates a great space for your child.

Stools are a great help to the child in general. A sturdy stool in the bathroom makes hand washing an easy thing for the child to do throughout the day. A utility stool in the kitchen makes it easier for the child to assist you in simple food preparation tasks. A toddler who has a few dishes to wash at the sink, or lettuce to tear will be a much more relaxed companion during that often hectic early evening time.

Some other suggestions for the kitchen can make it easier for your child to be successful. Find a low cabinet or shelf to store child sized plates and silverware. Keep child friendly snacks and drinks on low shelves in both the refrigerator and the pantry. A child size pitcher with a lid can be used to store milk or juice. A small thermos works well for this as well. The kitchen is also a great place to store child size cleaning tools. Try to create tools for your child that are similar to the ones you use for cleaning. If you use sponges for cleaning spills, cut one in half for your child. Keep a small broom for him next to your larger one. Children in this young age group still love to participate in cleaning. However, it is important to remember that while you are sweeping to achieve a clean floor, they are sweeping just for the joy of the process. When you invite your child to join you, focus on the process not the product!

Several things can be done to support your child in the bedroom. Wherever your child sleeps as an infant, a low mattress on the floor can be a nice transition before the big single bed or the exciting bunk bed. The low mattress is easy for the child to get in and out of in the morning or at night when he or she needs help. Your child may be more comfortable in the little bed because there is no risk of falling and no space for any thing to hide under the bed! A low bureau with easy to open drawers or low open shelving will make it easier for your child to choose clothes and dress independently. Small pictures on the outside of the drawer or the edge of the shelf can help your child locate clothes and make it possible for him or her to put clothing away when it comes back from being laundered. Low shelves are also a nice location for your child's toys. Baskets and small containers can be used to help your child keep toys sorted and stored. Young children are only able to keep things orderly if there are a small number of items that have clearly defined locations.

If it seems difficult for your child to keep things put away, consider reducing the toys available and either storing or donating excess toys. Plus, at this young age it is important to remember that our children have short attention spans. As the adult caregiver it is our responsibility to remind them to put things away as they are finishing not after they have already moved on to something else. If your child has moved on and is engrossed in a new activity, quietly return

your child's old activity to its place. The transition time between play activities or between play and other life events is the best time to help your child clean up with you.

Remember these are just suggestions. Some will work for your family and some will not. You may have other ideas to share with this community. Please do. It is through working together that we will create a true community for our children.

If I were to establish a primary principle, it would be to constantly allow the child's participation in our lives ... To extend to the child this hospitality, to allow him to participate in our work can be difficult, but it costs nothing. Our time is a far more precious gift than material objects. " MM