**New Ways to Create Empowerment through Montessori Education**

***Becoming Aware of the True Impact of Your Communication***

***Making Incremental Changes Based on Your Desire, Comfort and Success***

***Used for Older Toddler Programs (age 2-3), Children’s House (age 3-6), Lower Elementary School Programs (suitable for students age 6-8)***

There are many ways that Australian society interacts with children that have become so ingrained that most don't think to question them.

I assert that if teachers make subtle changes to their intentions and language use, they can hugely impact students’ sense of empowerment and how inspired they feel in the classroom. Lessening the need for behavioural management.

The scenarios I have created are for under eight year olds but these principles equally apply to older children, teens and young adults.  In fact they could be equally applied to every human you communicate with.

For our purposes here these communication strategies can be utilised to instil self-direction, self-discipline and responsiveness to the wonders of education in your students. Or more accurately, you are less likely to undo these natural tendencies in children whilst using these communication strategies.

The students will more likely become calmer, cooperative, less needy of teacher's time, joyful, peaceful, internally motivated, self-confident, helpful, and ready to focus and absorb. They will be authentically independent and align themselves spontaneously with the class routine. Most importantly, they will be emotionally safe in your presence.

You may look at the 17 strategies contained in this article and think this approach is either too time consuming or too child intensive. However, many teachers have found if they communicate this way consistently, the students become agreeable and truly independent of them. They go on to experience a sense of more time in the day. I believe it is possible to reap some long term benefits from changing how you communicate in one of the scenarios provided. I understand people often feel busy, so my article is designed so you can choose to read small sections of it, or read the whole article.

I appreciate that I am not privy to the intricacies of every class, teacher and student. I am definitely not wanting to tell you how to run your classes. You will of course have your own list of success stories. Please know these strategies have a long history of success for me and others. I am very excited to share them publicly.

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I worked as a university lecturer and TAFE teacher for ten years.  It was very obvious which of my students had been disempowered by their schooling, parents and peers and which ones were inspired and thriving. Initially by instinct and later by research, my focus became empowering and inspiring thousands of students, then later my daughter and other young children.  Once I shifted my headspace it was actually simpler than I could have imagined.

As a university lecturer and TAFE teacher I regularly obtained over 90% in student satisfaction surveys. I had exceptional student attendance and participation. I reduced failure rates. I didn’t spend any extra time with the students than my colleagues. I simply communicated differently.

I discovered that some words make it impossible for students to concentrate and there are some that free the natural desire to learn.

There are words that trigger confrontation and ones that invite cooperation and connection.

Some are words that demoralise and suppress true feelings and some that give courage and open students emotionally.

Until I was told directly it was often hard for me to know the difference. Language truly does becomes ingrained.

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A regular complaint I hear from all levels of teachers is that their students are not reflecting the values they hold. Some call this ‘classroom behavioural issues’.

I hold true to the fact that I have taught my students and daughter very little.   I live my values which they absorb in their own time, assess my thoughts to think about the impact if I say them, allow feelings, give choice, and communicate my feelings with them as they have an impact on me.

It is totally acceptable for you and everyone in the class to express their own feelings and needs. It may be initially difficult to put your own feelings into words as it is not something we likely practised as we grew up.   Part of the journey of the absorption of societal values is an adult letting a students know the true impact of what they are doing. It is also difficult to wait, hear and interpret what a student is really telling you in their own feelings and words.  Up to the age of ten children often say the opposite of what they mean. (Solter, Rose) This article will help you interpret what students really mean when they talk.

*A better way to help a child….is to consistently model the behavio(u)r you want them to exhibit. If you would like the child to speak softly, you should speak softly and not shout across the room. If you would like him to pick up after himself, you must be tidy too - Dr Montessori*

I assert that all skills are best learnt this way. A student will learn to be empathetic if they are shown empathy, they will learn to listen by being listened to, they will absorb motivation if others around them are motivated, and they will learn to empower others if they feel empowered.

There are numerous ways we speak to children in our society where we think we are helping children develop these skills, when we are actually unconsciously doing the opposite.  I believe that through the course of this article I will share some of these distinctions with you.

In short there are several key ideas that underpin my method: Becoming aware of the impact of your communication; choosing only the ideas that resonate with you from this article; using the ones the students respond positively to; having a focus on eradicating and replacing certain words from your vocabulary; making eye contact, acting and speaking the way you want the children to; consciously attaching the students to you; noticing and mentioning ‘positive behaviour’ no matter how small; telling the students individually or as a group you like them; being playful and kind; thinking about the true impact of what you are saying on others; waiting without expectation for students to absorb classroom values and use the language changes recommended while this occurs; explaining the students true impact on you and others; offering the students closeness to you if they choose until they are ready to be apart from you; validating their feelings; being proactive not reactive; using empowering language instead of shaming language; listening to the words inside your head; as often as you can try new things if you do not like the response you get from your old ways; and very importantly remembering that it is the intention that matters most and not putting pressure on yourself to get the exact words right every time.

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Many of these ideas have been in practice in a small subset of the Western population for 30 years.  It is my goal to one day take them to all Australia's public and private kindergartens, schools, universities and TAFES.

As they seem to align most closely with Dr Montessori's way of thinking I believe the directresses and assistants of Montessori schools are the group most likely to embrace them.  You or your colleagues may already be using some of them.

Once again I am not suggesting you have any extra contact with the students in your class. I appreciate that in the Montessori Method, teachers are wanting to fade into the background. I am suggesting you subtly or overtly change your language during the times you already are in contact with your students.

Having witnessed several Montessori teachers in action now I’d like to say that their ability for spontaneous eye contact is exceptional.  This is the best connection I’ve seen.  I see mutual spontaneous eye contact as one of the starting points of healthy connection and mutual respect. Also when I read the MMS charter which supports children feeling emotions my heart literally sang.  I imagine other Montessori schools have similar charters. Please note: there are significant cultural differences regarding eye contact. Some indigenous people and migrants would see this as an insult. However they will likely be in the minority in your classes.

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By providing solutions to potentially difficult situations this article will help you draw upon your current skills while handling everyday problems that interfere with your students’ learning with ease. These ideas that can be tailored to one’s own personality and that of your students.

These 17 techniques that I have developed and discovered may be different to others that you have tried, some counterintuitive even, but if you're into best practice and would like to make your life more fulfilling and that of your co-workers and students, you might like to try something new. My scenarios and techniques are also interchangeable.

I have taken 17 possible scenarios in your classroom and matched them with communication tools I would recommend trying.

Humans love choice and this article provides it.  This document has a summary list of all the scenarios that I have developed tools for. Plus there is a larger document available on my website [www.expandingminds.com.au](http://www.expandingminds.com.au) called ‘Tools in Practice’. Here you can look through to find a tool and a full explanation of it for each scenario that interests you.

Trust your instincts and start with the tools you find the easiest to use. Your students will sense your comfort with them and will be more likely to respond positively. I’ve started by listing the scenarios that are likely to be the easiest and fastest language changes first.

**Scenarios**

1. A student completes a job while you are with them
2. A student hesitates saying goodbye to their parent/carer
3. A student is entering the classroom
4. A student looks like the need to use the toilet
5. A student tries to combine two jobs or is not following the classroom routine
6. A student is aimlessly wandering around the class disrupting others
7. Two students have an altercation
8. A student says they don’t want to do any jobs
9. Being proactive to allow students to follow the class routine spontaneously
10. A student is being too loud and distracting others
11. A student is interrupting a group activity
12. A student is displaying tricky behaviour
13. Listening to the words inside your head and reacting to others words
14. A student is sad at drop-off but is inside
15. A student looks like they have hurt themselves
16. A student tells you they feel scared or they hate something
17. A student does not use polite language yet