

Quotes on Practical Life from Dr. Maria Montessori

Distributed by Debra Gorman Cagle

“The exercises of Practical Life are formative activities, a work of adaptation to the environment. Such adaptation to the environment and efficient functioning therein is the very essence of a useful education.”

“Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity, which is derived from a sense of independence.”

“If teaching is to be effective with young children, it must assist them to advance on the way to independence. It must initiate them into those kinds of activities, which they can perform themselves. We must help them to learn how to walk without assistance, to run, to go up and down the stairs, to pick up fallen objects, to dress and undress, to wash themselves, to express their needs, and to attempt to satisfy their desires through their own efforts. All this is part of an education for independence.” - Maria Montessori, The Discovery of the Child

“The children of three years of age in the "Children's Houses" learn and carry out such work as sweeping, dusting, making things tidy, setting the table for meals, waiting at table, washing the dishes, etc ., and at the same time they learn to attend to their own personal needs, to wash themselves, to take showers, to comb their hair, to take a bath, to dress and undress themselves, to hang up their clothes in the wardrobe, or to put them in drawers, to polish their shoes. These exercises are part of the method of education, and do not depend on the social position of the pupils; even in the "Children's Houses" attended by rich children who are given every kind of assistance at home, and who are accustomed to being surrounded by a crowd of servants, take part in the exercises of practical life . This has a truly educational, not utilitarian purpose. The reaction of the children may be described as a "burst of independence" of all unnecessary assistance that suppresses their activity and prevents them from demonstrating their own capacities. It is just – these "independent" children of ours who learn to write at the age of four and a half years, who learn to read spontaneously, and who amaze everyone by their progress in arithmetic.” (From Childhood to Adolescence, p. 66)