

RESPECT AND TRUST

Every time a child is born it brings with it the hope that God is not yet disappointed with man.

—Rabindranath Tagore, Poet Laureate of India and Montessorian

NATURAL DEVELOPMENT & A CHILD'S SELF-RESPECT

There is definitely a relationship between the child's mastery of communication and movement and the development of a good self-image and self respect. How many of us would be better at "loving ourselves exactly the way we are" if our own attempts at self-construction had been respected early in life? There is a connection.

The first two years of life are the most important. Observation proves that small children are endowed with special psychic powers, and points to new ways of drawing them out—literally "educating by cooperating with nature." So here begins the new path, wherein it will not be the professor who teaches the child, but the child who teaches the professor.

—Maria Montessori, M.D.

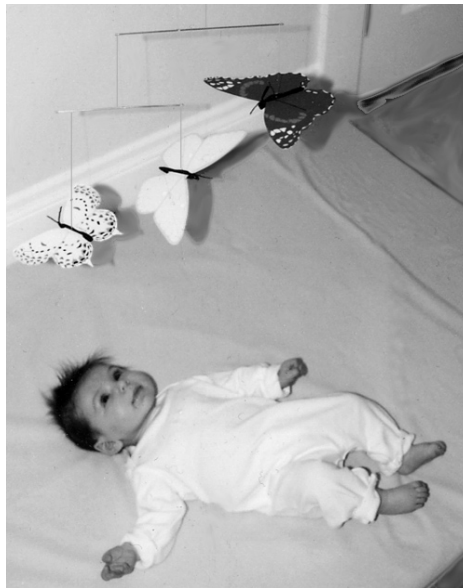
Paying attention to communication attempts, and providing for free movement in a safe and limited space, in the child's room, or a baby-proofed living room, will do more than anything else to help the child develop trust in himself.

Each child has his or her unique blueprint for development. One child may work on eye-hand coordination while another of the same age will be

concentrating on making sounds, another on push-ups or trying to move her whole body through space. One child will be interested in sitting up and eating at a table sometime during the first year and another content to breastfeed. One child will enjoy sitting on a potty to urinate and another will just not be interested. The best we can do to support this individuality is to watch, listen, respect, and get out of the way.

Free movement means being able to move one's body without artificial movement aids, to be able to move according to developing abilities, gradually learning to reach and to grasp, to turn over, to crawl, to sit up, and to pull oneself up to a standing position and walk—all on one's own.

Developmentally appropriate toys help development. For example when a child is first beginning to crawl and needs an incentive to move forward she is aided by using a rolling toy or a ball that only moves a short distance when being pushed. Intellectual *recipes* on helping in this way are abundant and contradictory. The most important advice is to learn to *follow the child*. Each child is unique, and there can be no simple answer for how to treat her.



Exploring the room from the floor bed is important work.

THE FIRST TABLE — FOR EATING AND WORKING

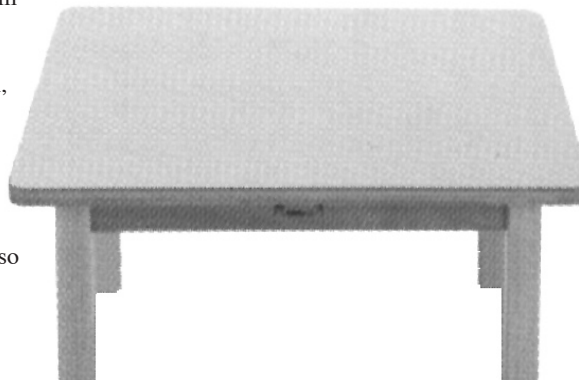
The choice of a child's first table and chair is very important. This is the perfect table for the child's first sitting up to work, or to eat. When a child is able to sit up and get into the seated position completely on his own, he will want to imitate the upright position of others— to play, and to feed himself. At first, for only a few minutes at a time, he can be placed in the *first chair* to eat or drink seated at the table. Just getting his own a sip of water from a real cup or glass (NOT a *tippy* cup), or a few bites of cereal with a small spoon and bowl, can bring an enormous amount of satisfaction to the child at this stage of development.

Eventually he will use this table to have snack and to set the

table and eat regular meals. The table is 14" high, and the top 24" x 24".

We offer three different models, all the same size and all good for use with the *first chair*. Please see pages 62 and 63 for the construction details. The table is shipped directly from the builder to keep the price down so plan on ordering a month ahead.

- (*) CR962 Solid Wood Top \$180.00
- (*) CR968 Wood Laminate Top \$155.00
- CR45 White Formica Top \$155.00



THE FIRST CHAIR

This chair supports a child, at the back and both sides, and matches the *first table*. It is used when a child is gradually learning the skills to feed himself, and for sitting up to play and work at a table. It is beautifully made of Birch plywood. Chair height 15.5", and the seat height 7".

BF300 \$106.00



NOTE: To enable an adult to sit with the child, joining him at this tiny table, see the *stool* on pages 61 and 62.

PREPARING THE HOME

TO WELCOME THE NEWBORN

As you go through the process of preparing baby's room before birth, lie down on the floor in the middle of the room and look around, listen. Will it be safe? interesting? beautiful? calming? Will it allow for as much freedom of movement as possible?

Because of the young child's strong sense of order it is ideal if the room can stay the same for the first year. Thus it is very important to put a lot of thought into just how to arrange this first environment.

One day as I was watching the joyful, exuberant actions of a new kitten in our house, I couldn't help comparing it to the curiosity and needs of the young child. The kitten tested itself against the challenges of moving in every possible way around the living room, carefully examining each object and the best way for its body to move over, under, and around it. I was reminded of watching babies when they are allowed to move freely in a prepared environment.

Imagine how the natural development of kittens would be affected if they were confined to such things as kitten cribs with covers, kitten slings,

swings, walkers, and pacifiers. I am continually thinking about how we can help babies to explore with their bodies and to develop grace and confidence in movement. The newborn has a lot of important developmental work to do, and we can help this work by providing the most naturally supportive environment.

While in the womb a child has already been exercising muscles and listening to sounds. After birth she will gradually learn to move on her own and to explore, with every sensory and motor ability at her command. She will study the room in detail with her eyes and listen carefully to every single sound with her ears. After strengthening arms and legs with baby push-ups, she will head for objects to explore further.

Every child follows a unique timetable of learning to crawl to those things he has been looking at, so that he may finally handle them. This visual, followed by tactile, exploration is very important for many aspects of human development. If we provide a floor bed or mattress on the floor in a completely safe room—rather than a crib or playpen with bars—the child has a clear view of the surroundings and freedom to explore.

A bed should be one that the baby can get in and out of on his own as soon as he is ready to crawl. The first choice is an adult twin bed mattress on the floor. Besides being an aid to development, this arrangement does a lot to prevent the common problem of crying because of boredom or exhaustion.

It helps to think of this as a whole-room playpen with a baby gate at the doorway and to examine every nook and cranny for interest and safety. If the



It is quite natural to move from breastfeeding to glass in the first year, never using a bottle.

NOTE: Sometime in the first year a child is ready to sit up to eat, and wants to imitate older children and adults. This is the time to offer the placemat, real dishes and the spoon and fork shown on page 30.

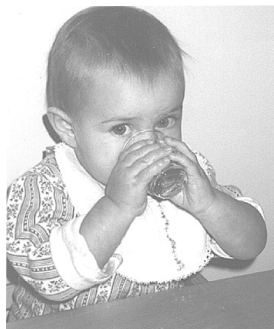
Baby bottles and pacifiers are seldom necessary. Soothing gums with the adults finger, a cloth is very helpful when the child is teething, but a pacifier that is shaped to stay in the mouth for long periods of time, creating a habit of oral stimulation, is not good for the developing teeth and developing language, and can create a bad habit.



HOW I WEANED MYSELF

The Montessori philosophy is to present the tools for independence at the age that has been shown over the years to be the best time, but then to *follow the individual child*, because each child has his or her own timetable independent of the adult's plan.

We do not give the child bottles, modern pacifiers, or tippy cups, but rather a chair, table, spoon, and a little weighted bottom glass (some shot glasses are ideal). We asked a couple who followed this path to weaning to write this up to share with other parents; we recommend reading it in the first months of the child's life. There are 4 pages.



GB58

\$3.00

INDEPENDENCE BIB

During Montessori 0-3 teacher training course we made a bib like this—that a very young child can learn to *take off* independently and later *put on* by herself or himself. The allows the child to participate more fully in a meal.

This *independence bib* is made of white Egyptian cotton with colorful trim. It is about 12" long and 8.5" wide.

GB600

\$8.50



TIBETAN BIB

This beautiful new version of our independence bib is handmade for us by the Tibetan refugees in India. It is made of lovely traditional Tibetan/Bhutanese cotton fabric, fully lined with red cotton, with a horizontal strip of fabric across the bottom to give it more shape. Many different kinds of fabric are uses, each order a pleasant surprise. About 12.5" long and 9" wide. Not always available it is worth waiting for.

(*) BC015

\$11.00



newborn is going to share a room with parents or siblings we can still provide a large, safe, and interesting environment.

Eventually he will explore the whole room with a gate at the door and then gradually move out into the baby-proofed and baby-interesting remainder of the house.

These are the beginning stages of independence, concentration, movement, self-esteem, decision-making, and balanced, healthful development of body, mind, and spirit.

CLOTHING THAT SUPPORTS FREE MOVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

It is quite natural for a baby's hands and feet to be a little cooler than the rest of the body. Even temperature is important—but so is free movement!

When the child begins to creep (which can happen much earlier than we thought when the environment supports it) children also need to be able to create friction with their knees and toes.

I remember well the day I put the first dress on my first daughter, and put her on the floor. She was just learning to crawl and the bottom of the dress fell just under knees and completely prevented

crawling! Well, that was the last dress for a while because it was much more important for her to be able to crawl than to let everyone know she was a girl!

ATTACHMENT AND SEPARATION, PREPARATION FOR WEANING AND TOILET LEARNING

Children who wear cotton pants in the infant community learn to use the potty at the same time as they learn to stand and begin to walk. The Assistant to Infancy keeps careful record of when the infant urinates and then simply offers the potty at these predictable times—with no coercion of any kind. Children love to learn to sit on a little stool next to the potty, to remove panties, and to use the potty, just as they love to learn to imitate all of the other activities going on around them.

The first year of life is marked by an amazing growth in independence. First the baby leaves the security of the womb— because it is time to be able to move and grow as a separate organism. Next she learns to crawl, then to pull up, stand and walk. She takes in a huge amount of language that will be used later. Weaning and learning to use the toilet can be natural and enjoyable

transitions when the process is prepared for when the child is very young.

It takes careful observation and wisdom for the parents to see when a child is taking each new step—and the support and encouragement of the adult is the most effective aid to this vital growth in security and independence. We must be there for the infant but step back when we are not needed.

The stronger the attachment in the beginning, the more successful will be the separation later.

Breast-feeding is an example of a strong attachment. The relationship



It is best, for both the child's physical and emotional development, to let her stand only when she is ready to do so on her own!



high chair with removable tray

EUROPEAN INDEPENDENCE CHAIR

This is the chair we have been looking for. It is a beautiful piece of furniture, and unlike traditional wood or plastic high chairs, it meet the physical AND psychological needs of the growing child: the needs for physical independence, and social interaction.

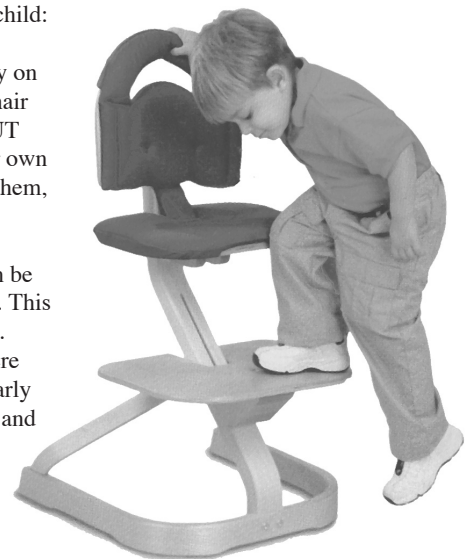
The Swedish Svan chair is the only one that can very early on allow the child the independence of getting in and out of the chair on one's own. It is constructed to be used at the table WITHOUT the tray, so that the child can join the family for meals with her own little placemat, cutlery and dishes (see page 30-31) or sit with them, at their level, as they chat, read, create art, etc.

The height of the footrest can very easily and quickly be adjusted for use by an older child, up to age 8. And the seat can be adjusted to be used without the footrest for an even older child. This is the most versatile and attractive piece of furniture of its kind.

There are two beautiful finishes, cherry or mahogany. There is an optional washable cushion, and a DVD is included. It clearly explains how to change the height of the seat and the foot rest, and how to replace and remove the tray.

NOTE: This piece of furniture is shipped separately from the rest of your order.

PE800 High Chair, cherry	\$250.00
PE801 High Chair, mahogany	\$250.00
PE815 Red Cushion	\$35.00
PE816 Blue Cushion	\$35.00



high chair changed into youth chair

between the mother and child during the times when the infant is nursing is extremely important, as it becomes a standard for future relationships. Think of the message of love the mother gives to the child when she gives her undivided attention, eye contact, smiles, and singing. The message is very different if the child is fed while the adult is reading, watching TV, or talking to someone else. This period will pass soon enough that we should support the parent in the bonding that occurs during feeding.

We must also keep in mind the psychological effects of too much oral satisfaction in the first year. Instead of nursing a child in response to every negative feeling—tiredness, pain, frustration—we should offer loving comfort in those situations and encourage the child to eat only when he is hungry for food. This helps a child stay in touch with his own natural and healthful eating needs, growing into an adult who eats for nutrition and not out of psychological needs.

MATERIALS THAT SUPPORT NATURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-ESTEEM

A small table and chair kept in the environment in the first year will provide

a familiar space for the child who wants to try feeding herself with a bowl and spoon—and these first attempts happen earlier than we previously thought.

Likewise, a potty seat with which the infant is familiar will invite the child to use it as soon as she is ready. Children love to remove their own cotton pants while sitting on a little wooden bench next to the potty. They can start doing this soon after they learn to walk.

There should be no pressure, no reward or punishment, no adult deciding *when* the child should learn to feed herself or use the potty. The environment is prepared and the child is free to explore and to imitate in these natural developmental stages.

A young child develops trust in herself, the basis of self-esteem, as she interacts with the environment. She learns to move out into the world, to touch and grasp through her own effort, those things she has been longing to reach. With the loving support of adults and older children, and in an environment that meets her changing needs, she will learn that she is capable, that her choices are wise, that she is indeed a fine person.

THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR

Once this foundation is laid, future learning for children is easier. These children have a positive self-image, and trust that the world is a wonderful place to be. They trust themselves and their ability to function in this world.

—Judi Orion

Montessori Assistants to Infancy
Teacher Trainer
USA, Australia, Japan, China



Access to clothing gives the child practice in caring for and selecting clothing, dressing, undressing, and putting away the clean laundry.

THE CHILD'S FIRST POTTY

Early in the first year, if the child becomes familiar with seeing this in the environment, and sitting on it, there will be an easy transition to actually using it. At the right time, she will imitate others who are using the regular toilet, and figure out the purpose. Learning to use a potty naturally, when interested, is so much easier than bypassing this early interest and trying to "toilet train" an older child! This is the very best potty for children, light, white plastic, smooth, sturdy, safe-feeling, and comfortable. Its name, "Baby Bjorn," means "baby bear." Don't confuse this with similar cheaper models which do not hold up and are not as sturdy or comfortable. The seat top is 4" from the floor, 11" x 9" in back height and width, suitable for either a boy or a girl. **NOTE:**

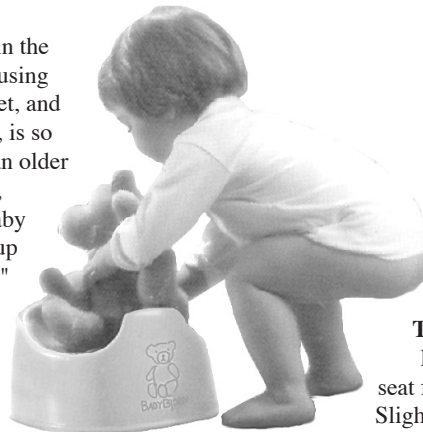
See page 61 toilet step stools, and page 66 for the book *Diaper-Free Before 3*.

BT190 First Potty, White	\$13.00
(*) BT192 First Potty, Red	\$13.00
(*) BT194 First Potty, blue	\$13.00

ONCE UPON A POTTY

Sometime during the first year the child will become interested in using the toilet. It is during this stage of curiosity that we begin to talk about, read about, and introduce a potty seat. Then, when the child can walk, and can dress and undress herself, learning to use the potty comes quite naturally—with no "training." These delightful books are a perfect introduction. Hardcover, color, 6.5" x 6.5", 32 pages. One for "her" and one for "him."

BT210 Her Potty Book	\$6.95
BT220 His Potty Book	\$6.95



TALLER POTTY SEAT

Here is another well-tested potty seat from the Swedish company. Slightly taller and larger, it has a high, comfortable backrest, comfortable armrests, and a removable inner potty, easy to empty and clean. The seat is 6" from the floor, dimensions 13" x 13". Just as *first potty*, it has a splashguard that makes sure nothing lands outside, and a rubber edge that keeps the potty seat from slipping on the floor.

(*) PE830 Taller Potty, white	\$28.00
(*) PE835 Taller Potty, red	\$28.00
(*) PE840 Taller Potty, blue	\$28.00

