

## FREEDOM AND SELF-DISCIPLINE

### Considerations:

1. Children given freedom, within boundaries, will develop character and self-discipline and they will naturally learn through activity (Montessori, 1948/1976).
2. Prepare the environment to guide the children's freedom "so that they could act according to their inner needs, rhythm and tempo" (Montessori, 2015, p. 12).
3. Observe, guide and give a child freedom with responsibility via a set of specific limits.
4. Specific limits include limiting a child's freedom by other children and adults in the environment; they only work with an activity whose purpose they understand; they use activities in appropriate way; activities should be limited in quantity; consequences (life is a sequence of endless decisions that turn into actions which have consequences, e.g., taking a tray, holding it incorrectly will result in falling, a child learns that they must now clean up the mess, place the tray back, practice holding the tray correctly). Consequences give a child immediate feedback on choices.

"Following some inner guide, the children occupied themselves in work different for each that gave them joy and peace, and then something else appears that had never before been known among children, a spontaneous discipline" (2018, p. 59). Montessori recognised that children need freedom to explore without interruption, her training therefore taught adults to observe and guide, rather than to teach. "In order that individual action should be free and useful at the same time it must be restricted within certain limits and rules that give the necessary guidance" (1948/1976, p. 113). Freedom within boundaries and limits is an empowering concept as it embraces the notion of a child as a pathfinder who is capable of learning and doing things for themselves and so achieving inner discipline. Discipline is created by societal parameters, being present in the limits set by the environment and presented in form of order, it is precisely the sense of order setting standards for self-control to emerge. In a prepared environment, independence, order are key characteristics that facilitate child's constructive choices and sense of control. "It is only through freedom and by experiences upon the environment that humans can develop" (1949/2012, p. 78).

Montessori stated that "an individual is disciplined when they are the master of themselves and when they can, as a consequence, control themselves when they must follow a rule of life" (2017, p. 50). Discipline can only arise through the activity of the individual by carrying out purposeful work in an environment that gives them a sense of freedom and discipline together in unity. Great respect for the child as an individual is revealed, one that promotes a holistic view of preparing the child for society. In a prepared environment, a child can learn freedom within boundaries by understanding what the limits of their actions are. These limits are modelled by the prepared adult and presented and practiced in daily life. "A child's liberty should have as its limit the interests of the group to which they belong. We must, therefore, prevent a child from doing anything which may offend or hurt others, or which is impolite or unbecoming. But everything else, every act that can be useful in any way whatever, may be expressed. It should not only be permitted but it should also be observed" (2017, p. 50).

Freedom and discipline are two basic links in the chain of values that form a healthy society: discipline, socialisation, freedom, and independence are all closely linked, therefore as parents, there is a responsibility for guiding the development of independent, free, disciplined, and social beings. "Life is activity, and it is only through activity that perfection of life can be sought and found" (1949/2012, p. 79). "To assist the child, we must provide them with an environment which will enable them to develop freely." (1966/1982, p. 110). A prepared environment will promote the free choice of activities, always surrounded by beauty, simplicity and "thus channel their random energies into orderly and well-executed actions" (2017, p. 63). A child finds in a prepared environment that: if they are thirsty/hungry, they can drink water or prepare food to eat; if they need to rest, they can; they can repeat the same exercise as many times; they can choose work freely and follow what interests them most.

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