

THE MONTESSORI POTENTIAL
How to Foster Independence, Respect, and Joy in Every Child,
by Paula Lillard Preschlack

SUGGESTED BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS:

Introduction

1. Growing up, what was your own experience of school?

What was your experience of learning- (outside in nature, with your extended family, what you witnessed and the attitudes you absorbed)-?

2. What do you think “Education Should Be”? What are the 3 most important things that you want your children to experience, or learn, from school?

Chapter One

3. One of perhaps the most vulnerable times for our children is middle school. Starting on page 34, what about “Maggie’s” experiences as a 13 year old do you think are most impactful? Why do you think these experiences are important for a teenager growing up today?

Chapter Two

4. On page 48, Paula explains Montessori’s paradigm: “The Child Forms Himself”. Do you agree that this is not an easy perspective for adults to adopt? Why do you think this is?

Do you find it hard to treat your children according to this paradigm? Where do you find it easy to do so, and where is it more challenging?

Chapter Three

5. Paula describes the ways that a Montessori school might support and partner with parents. What actions or guidance do you find most helpful to you as a parent? Have you had any experience where you were struggling with your own child and a teacher or school leader helped you change your view of the situation in a positive way?

Chapter Four

6. Which quality of Paula’s three observations of authentic Montessori (respect, joy or concentration on pages 144-150) is something you witnessed in your first tour of Montessori classrooms? How did seeing this affect you?

Chapter Five

7. Maria Montessori believed humans everywhere and in all times are born with universal qualities (see pages 6 and 156). What do you think is universal in all children at birth?

On pages 156-159, Paula claims that looking for this universality could help adults to better support children in school settings. Do you agree? How could doing so change our children's experiences and outlook in life?

If you think this would be positive, why?

Chapter Six

8. Paula writes on page 189, "Raising children in a Montessori-inspired fashion can be as simple as removing some temptations while providing others." Where have you done this in your own home and what was the immediate outcome?

Is there some area you'd like to apply this with your children at home? What are you hoping might be the outcome?

9. Was it helpful to learn more about the Four Planes of Development on pages 202- 216 (first mentioned on pages 16 and 45), and the differences in your children's developmental characteristics and needs based on their ages?

How has this informed your parenting decisions, your interactions, or your behavior?

10. What about the section "The Parent's Heart" on pages 216-219 resonated for you? Do you have a story to share, too?

Conclusion

11. On page 223, we learn about Maria Montessori's ideas about free thought and indoctrination in education. What did this make you think about?

12. Paula points out on page 226 that "Even though it is unconscious, [children have a] yearning to find one's place in the grand story of life—a deep and necessary quest to find purpose..." Why do you think it is important that we as a society—as citizens, educators and parents—respect this fundamental need for children?

How do you think we can do this in little interactions and in things we say, do and model every day?

Thank you for reading and discussing!